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Immortal Worms and Unquenchable Fire

"Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched."—Mark 9:44.

THESE words from the lips of our Master, the Great Teacher, have been grievously misunderstood. The teaching of our Protestant childhood was to the effect that only the saintly elect would go to heaven and that others would not only lose heaven, but gain an eternal life in torment. Thus our text was understood to portray what practically the whole world of mankind would be compelled to endure. This hell was pictured to our childhood minds from outside the Bible as heated to a white heat. If we expressed wonder or surprise that any human creature could endure such conditions so long the answer was that God would exercise his omnipotent power to make us fire-proof and pain-sensitive. Some theologians of the Thomas à Kempis school of thought went so far as to picture the poor creatures in their sufferings and to show that the heat would form a kind of an asbestos covering which would shield them from a measure of its intensity. But those deluded theologians proceeded to explain that these outer coverings would crack and shell off every little while, leaving the poor victim freshly tender that his suffering might be the more intense.

Of course, these theologians of the past had their difficulty in dealing with the worms. They could imagine devils who would oversee the torture as being made immune to pain by the chief torturer, the Almighty God. But just how to imagine the worms getting along in so great a heat and how they would in any wise increase the torture of the poor sufferers was to many a perplexity. But patient thoughtfulness along these cruel and devilish lines enabled some to formulate the theory that the worms would be fiery ones, living in fire, delighting in fire—worms that would bore through the incrustations and add still further to the horrible sufferings of the world of mankind.

Was This What Jesus Meant?

Did the Great Teacher intend that such conclusions should be drawn from his language? And did he stop short of the description from reasons of sympathy or modesty or shame? Is this the general teaching of God's Word or has a great and terrible mistake been made? And have we mistaken a figure of speech and treated it as literal? We erred. We misunderstood. The Great Teacher who rebuked his disciples, James and John, when they desired to call fire from heaven upon the City of Samaria, because the people thereof refused to sell them food for the Master—the sympathetic One who said to them, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them"—could that Son of man in any wise intend to tell us that our great Heavenly Father had less of the spirit of love and righteousness than the two impetuous disciples? Did he mean to intimate that while the disciples might impetuously have been willing to destroy the earthly life of the Samaritans, the Heavenly Father, of still more demoniacal disposition, would treat practically all mankind ten million times worse than that and use Divine Power to all eternity to perpetuate the sufferings of his earthly creatures which his own Word declares were born in sin, shapen in iniquity, in sin did their mothers conceive them—earthly creatures, too, whose environment was unfavorable and whose Adversary, the devil, God neither destroyed nor bound?

Such an interpretation, my dear

readers, is not supposable. We must look for some explanation of the Master's words more consistent with his own character and with the Heavenly Father's character, and more consistent with our conception of what a Just, Loving, Wise and Powerful Creator would do. It does not answer the purpose to say, as so many do, "Bosh, do not discuss such a matter. Nobody now believes such things!" This one Scripture repudiated would shake our confidence in the whole Bible. But rightly explained and understood it would settle and increase our faith in the Scriptures as a Divine message.

Entering Into Life

Let us go back to Jesus' day and in mind place ourselves with those who heard him utter the words of our text and context. The Teacher had just said, "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off—it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than, having two hands, to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched." He said the same in the following verses respecting the foot and the eye. Was he speaking literally or figuratively? Does any sane person suppose today that Jesus advised a literal cutting off of a hand or a foot or the plucking out of an eye? Assuredly not. And the person who would follow his counsel in that way would be considered unbalanced in mind.

All recognize what he did mean, namely, that if any who desired to have eternal life found that they had hindrances of appetite or pleasure or what not, as dear to them as an eye, foot, hand, these precious, but disqualifying sins or wrong-doings, should be put away—no matter how precious they were—no matter how highly esteemed. By way of contrast, the Master suggested that if the retaining of these things would hinder them from entering into life they could not afford to retain them—that even if they were to carry the figure further and suppose that in the future life they would be deprived to the extent of being maimed to all eternity it still would be preferable to them to practice the self-denial now and to enter into life.

Be it noted that the reward here indicated is in the entering into life, and the intimation is that those who fail will not have life at all—that they will fail to attain life; that they will have no eternal life, either in pain or in pleasure. Let us examine our text further and see this.

Gehenna Typed the Second Death

The word **hell** in our text is from the Greek word **gehenna**, which, in turn, was a corruption of the Hebrew word **geh-hinnon**, which signifies **valley of death**. There are two other words in the New Testament Greek, translated **hell** in our common version. One of these, **tartarus**, has no reference to humanity whatever, but merely signifies our earth's atmosphere—the place where Satan and the fallen angels are restrained in chains of darkness (II Peter 2:4). The other Greek word rendered **hell** in the New Testament is **hades**, which corresponds exactly to the word rendered **hell** in the Old Testament, namely **sheol**. And all scholars know that both of these words signify the same thing. They are used interchangeably in the Scriptures to designate the state or condition of death—the tomb. No person, of even slight education, would for a moment attempt to claim that eternal torment is taught by **sheol**, **hades** or **tartarus**. The

great stress of all who teach eternal torment falls, therefore, upon the word **hell** found in our text—in the original Greek, **gehenna**.

A Valley Outside Jerusalem

I wish that those of you who have modern Bibles with maps at the back would turn to the map of the City of Jerusalem and there notice on the Southwest side of the City, just outside the wall, the Valley of Hinnom. That is the Valley that in brief was called **Geh-hinnon**, the Greek of which is **gehenna**. All of our Lord's uses of the word **gehenna** stand related to that Valley. For the sake of our large number of readers it will be worth while for us to take a glance backward at the history of that Valley during many centuries before Jesus' day.

The first mention of this Valley in the Bible is found in Joshua (15:8), where it is given as one of the boundaries of the tribe of Judah, according to the lot cast by Joshua in the division of the land that had come into possession of the Israelites. It is again mentioned similarly in Joshua 18:16. The next reference to this Valley is found in II Kings, 23:10. There we read how Josiah, the good King of Judah, instituted a great reform in the nation and abolished idolatry, one of the most heinous forms of the idolatry having been practised in this Valley of Hinnom, which had gotten a new name, namely **Topheth**. History tells us that the Israelites built in this **Topheth**, the Valley of Hinnom, a great brass image to the heathen god **Moloch**.

In various places they had groves in which a licentious form of worship was enacted and then they resorted to this Valley of Hinnom to offer sacrifice of a most revolting kind to the heathen deity. Sometimes it was a boy and sometimes it was a girl that was placed naked in the arms of the great image after it had been fired to a red heat with fuel piled underneath the image and passing through it as a flue. The cries of these infants so horribly sacrificed were drowned by the cheers of the worshippers and various musical instruments.

All of this, indeed everything akin to suffering, was strictly forbidden by the Divine Law given to Israel. And they had been specially warned against this very form of idolatry (Lev. 18:21; Deut. 18:10). It is a gross mistake and slander of the Divine character and Law to suppose that it ever sanctioned torture. And it is a still worse slander upon God to suppose that he would himself do, and that for all eternity, what he condemned in his fallen creatures.

The Lord declares all this through the Prophet Jeremiah (7:31-34). Here God particularly warned the Israelites that their wrong course would eventuate in the terrible time of trouble which came upon Jerusalem in the year A. D. 70, when it was estimated that over a million died at the siege of Jerusalem. In fulfillment of this prophecy the Jews cast the dead bodies over the wall of Jerusalem into this very Valley. Thus we read, "Behold, the day is come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be called **Topheth**, but, **The Valley of Slaughter**; for they shall bury in **Topheth** till there be no place. And the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth."

After the reformation made by King Josiah the Valley of Hinnom was desecrated to the intent that it might never afterward be considered fit for any kind of religious worship, sacrifice or ceremony. It became the valley of defilement. It was used at certain times for the burning of the offal and rubbish of the city. It became the dumping place of dead cats and dogs,

etc. If any of these fell upon the ledges of the rock, no one thought worth while to interfere, and the maggots and worms destroyed them. Fires also were lighted occasionally to burn the combustible rubbish, and brimstone was added so that the fumes might destroy any malarial tendency, in the interest of the health of the city.

The Lesson Jesus Taught

We have before our minds now the **gehenna** fire which no one ever attempted to quench, but which was designed to consume utterly everything cast into it. We have in mind also the worms of which he spake—worms which were permitted to feed on the carcasses undisturbed until the carcasses were consumed and the worms themselves died. Another item here should be noticed, namely, that a saying amongst the Jews was, Whosoever commits such a misdemeanor will be in danger of going from bad to worse until he will be brought before the tribunal of the Sanhedrin, a culprit. Jesus took the same line of proverbs and declared that anyone violating the Golden Rule to the extent of calling his brother a fool would be in danger eventually of such digression from righteousness as to bring him under sentence of the greater tribunal of Messiah's Kingdom, and, "Whosoever shall say unto his brother, Thou art a fool, shall be in danger of **gehenna** fire."—Matt. 5:22.

What the Great Teacher meant was that the earthly Jerusalem was a picture or type of the heavenly Jerusalem, which represents the Divine Government or Kingdom—the New Jerusalem, which by and by, will come down to earth—when God's will shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

As **gehenna** lay outside of the wall of Jerusalem, so our Lord intimated there would be an antitypical **gehenna** outside the New Jerusalem. As the trash and offal of the typical city were consumed in the Valley of Hinnom, so the offal and trash of humanity who will refuse all of God's favors, mercies, blessings and opportunities, will be treated as disgraceful wretches and be consumed, destroyed, in the antitypical **gehenna**—which is the Second Death. Concerning this antitypical **gehenna**, the Second Death, we are definitely informed of the characters which will there be destroyed utterly, as Peter says, "as natural brute beasts."

We have a description of this symbolic New Jerusalem or Divine Kingdom (Rev. 21), composed primarily of the Church, and secondarily of all from the world who, during Messiah's reign, will enter in through its gates and enjoy the blessings of Divine favor and life eternal. And then we read, verse 8, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the Second Death."

Note that this lake of fire and brimstone into which all the offscouring of humanity will be cast is a symbol, and the meaning of the symbol is plainly stated in the words, "Which is the Second Death." The first death passed upon all mankind on account of father Adam's disobedience. Our Lord Jesus was appointed the Savior of Adam and his race and gave his life a ransom for all, to rescue all from death, to give to each and every member of Adam's race one full, fair opportunity for a test of loyalty to God and righteousness and to secure life eternal in the New Jerusalem. Contrariwise all who will reject that full opportunity will die the Second Death, from which there will be no redemption, no resurrection, no recovery of any kind.

An Independent, Unsectarian Religious Newspaper, Specially Devoted to the Forwarding of the Laymen's Home Missionary Movement for the Glory of God and Good of Humanity.

Prophecies thousands of years old are fulfilling before our eyes. The wilderness is being made to blossom as the rose, not only in the arid regions of our far Western States, but in the supposed cradle of the human family in the land of Mesopotamia, where Abraham lived. The power which is accomplishing these things, in fulfillment of God's Word, is human. The force behind the energy is not spiritual, but financial. The motive is not the fulfillment of the Scriptures, but selfishness—the desire for wealth.

All classes of people seem to be amazed at the increasing preparations for war, and these, notwithstanding the cry of "Peace! peace!" and the realization on the part of all that warfare has become more terrible than ever before, by reason of the advancement made in the production of destructive explosives and every conceivable device for hurling them at opponents. Statesmen seem to be impelled by an unseen but dreadful power to almost bankrupt their governments in adding battleship to battleship, device to device, for the destruction of those whom they profess to recognize as fellow-Christians.

"I have never united myself to any church, because I have found difficulty in giving my assent, without mental reservation, to the long, complicated statements of Christian doctrine which characterize their Articles of Belief and Confessions of Faith. Whenever any church will inscribe over its altar, as its sole qualification for membership, the Savior's condensed statement of the substance of both law and gospel, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself,' that church will I join with all my heart and all my soul."—Abraham Lincoln's Confession of Faith.

A scientific gentleman in England startles the world with the declaration that he has discovered a certain electric ray that can be focused like light and be used to paralyze armies as easily and as quickly as though lightning had desolated their ranks. This new weapon of destruction, it is said, has been tendered to the British War Department. It is called an "attribute of high-frequency electric current," which can be separated and, by mechanical contrivance, be deflected and aimed in much the same way as a stream of water from a hose pipe.

The "Scientist" has the following to say: "The most striking experiment of all had a horse for its subject. By a mechanical device, which is, of course, a secret invention, it was brought to bear upon the horse at a range of four miles. The results could not have been more rapid or more destructive had the range been four yards. The brute staggered as though dazed by a blow from some unseen hand, then fell stone dead. The same thing would have happened had the range been doubled or trebled, and the fate of a horse might have been the fate of an army corps."

Surely the increase of knowledge of our day can be safely entrusted only to perfect beings controlled by the Law of Love, or controlled by a higher power, until their uplifting shall have been effected—or their destruction in the Second Death, exactly as the Bible shows.

"Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in Heaven."

Thieves in Paradise

Luke 23:43.—This greatly misunderstood text explained in Peoples Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 7.

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Which is the True Gospel?

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."—Romans 1:16.

CHRISTENDOM was startled recently by a communication which announced that the Christian Alliance had lifted a collection of \$60,000 in a few minutes—\$300 in cash, the remainder in promises. Then followed the startling announcement of Brother Simpson, its President, that the collection lifted would probably be the last at Old Orchard, because the Camp Grounds directors had rented its Auditorium for three days for the use of the International Bible Students Association. He declared that he disagrees with the Association's theology. This was a veiled threat that the directors of the camp ground must break their contract with the Bible Students. This they promptly did, and the money paid in advance was accepted back, rather than go to Law. It was for that reason that it held its convention "outside the camp." We are glad that its fence does not separate us from our great Redeemer and Teacher.

Explanations Surely in Order

Since Brother Simpson may not care to tell the whole truth about the matter and since the Christian public is interested and ought to know the facts, we shall tell them. The unpleasant duty, however, will not necessitate the saying of an unkind word concerning Mr. Simpson and the Christian friends who are in alliance with him.

There are two reasons why Brother Simpson thought it doubtful if he could come next year following the Bible students' three days of this year.

(1) He knew instinctively that his collections would be smaller, hardly worth coming for, if the people should begin to get the eyes of their understanding more widely opened respecting what really constitutes the Gospel of Christ.

(2) The \$60,000 "raised" was not cash and a large proportion of it never will be. Some of it is promised over and over again and telegraphed over and over, as was the case with the young woman who in the spectacular manner offered her jewels from time to time and had it mentioned in the papers. Such repetitions of "charitable work" are considered entirely proper by many in connection with religious work in various denominations, "for the good of the cause." Subscriptions are given publicly without hope of payment, to influence others who are more sincere—some of whom in the excitement give more than they can afford.

Chicago Stockyard Method

This same method is illustrated in the Chicago Stock Yards. A fine, large, trained bull gallops out to meet the cattle designed for slaughter. He waltzes before them and becomes their leader. Following him in a grand rush for a narrow passage they crowd one another to the executioner, who knocks them senseless. A special place, just large enough, is provided for the decoy bull, who, later, goes out to lead on another herd for the slaughter.

We do not mean to say that those who give their money are slaughtered or otherwise injured. We believe that they are blessed—that everyone is blessed who sacrifices anything heartily unto the Lord or to what they suppose to be his service, whether it is or not. It is the method of getting the money from the people and the deception practiced which we deplore. However, the Alliance has plenty of company in this method in larger Christian denominations. It is part of the "business" method of recent years. Some who did not understand this "business" method wondered where all the money apparently contributed to the "Christian Alliance" work was spent. An investigation of its financial accounts was made, which revealed the fact that they were chaotic, and other "business" methods were advised.

"The Darkness Hateth the Light"

Some one may inquire why the Christian Alliance should fear us and whether or not we have ever done them harm. We reply, Never have we injured them in the slightest degree, nor ever even publicly mentioned their name before. Their opposition to us is on the lines of general principles

mentioned by the Great Teacher, "The darkness hateth the light;" "All things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light" (Eph. 5:13). Our work is to proclaim the true Gospel—to incite Christian people to Bible study in the light of the Bible's own testimony and without sectarian spectacles, which, in the past, have so distorted the Word of God and set it forth in false colors.

As Christian people come to see the grossness of the errors by which they have been blinded, the light not only has a blessed and transforming effect upon their minds, but it influences their pocketbooks also. They no longer appreciate the "business" methods of the Alliance nor the brand of Gospel which it sets forth. The more God's people come to a correct understanding of the teachings of his Word, the smaller will be the collections of the Christian Alliance. That is the real secret of their opposition. We would that it were true that they would never take up another collection at Old Orchard! The heathen have already had too much of their Gospel of damnation. God's name has already been slandered and blasphemed enough by the false Gospel message—that nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of humanity ever born are to suffer eternal roasting because of father Adam's sin and the ignorance, stupidity and meanness which have resulted.

Which Is the True Gospel?

Catholic and Protestant orthodoxy have set forth for centuries two general views of the Gospel of Christ. To whatever extent they now disagree with these they should publicly disown and abandon them. Until then they are besmirched with whatever odium attaches.

The Catholic Gospel (Good Tidings) is that all the heathen, all Catholics and all Protestants, except a mere handful, go to a Purgatory of awful suffering, terrible anguish, lasting for decades, centuries and thousands of years, roasting, boiling, agonizing, and thus purging away their sins and cross that they may ultimately attain to heavenly bliss for the remainder of eternity.

Our Protestant Gospel

Our Protestant Gospel, of which we are so proud that we want to thrust it upon Jews and Catholics and heathens everywhere, we should thoroughly understand, enjoy and appreciate before we waste good time and money giving it to others. Here it is: Four centuries ago our forefathers were not Protestants but Catholics and believed in Purgatory, etc., as above. Then what was known as the Reformation Movement set in. Catholics, Jews and infidels will admit with Protestants that a great blessing of enlightenment and civilization has come to the world in the train of the Reformation Movement.

The Reformers criticized the Catholic teachings which they had formerly believed. They examined their Bibles and found nothing there to the effect that Mary was the mother of God, nor that we should pray to saints, nor that we should use pictures or images in our worship, nor that their sacrifice of Christ in the mass was proper, nor that there was a Purgatory anywhere. The Reformers threw out these things as unscriptural. They completely demolished Purgatory in their minds, declaring that it had never been anything more than imagination. Then came another thought, viz: What must we do with the thousands of millions of mankind that we and our fathers for centuries supposed were in Purgatory, roasting, stewing, tortured, but hoping for heaven. They looked at one another in consternation. They had hearts and sympathies and felt that as it had devolved upon them to smash Purgatory, it must also devolve upon them to re-locate all those thousands of millions whom they had on their hands. They felt the weight

of the responsibility. Could they demand of God that they should be put into heaven? Surely not! Surely only the saintly few are fit for heaven! They, as well as all, recognized that fact. Then, with blank consternation, they determined that they must crowd the entire mass into a hell of eternal torture and shut the gates upon them forever and write upon the gates, "Who enters here abandons hope."

Brother Calvin to the Rescue

Taking from practically all humanity all future hope made the Reformers for the time heartsick. It would be awful to do that for one person, but to thus "do" all humanity seemed terrible.

But Brother John Calvin helped them amazingly and took from them their burden. He told them that they should not worry, because it was all God's fault and not theirs. God had predestinated them to that awful future long before he created man. Now they should merely try to think of themselves as the "elect" and try to forget everybody else. Of course, it seemed horrible to charge all these things against the God of all Justice, Wisdom, Love and Power. But it was the only solution which occurred to them. John Calvin's theories were afterwards embodied in the "Westminster Confession of Faith." And that confession of faith became the foundation of nearly all Protestant creeds. Brother John Wesley afterwards objected, but admitted that only the saintly went to heaven and everybody else went to eternal torment. His protest was that, instead of this being by Divine foreordination and intention, it was, on the contrary, because of Divine unwisdom and incompetency.

"Good Tidings of Great Joy"

Surely no sane person can any longer defend any of the above "Gospels" as the true one, of which St. Paul was not ashamed! Surely St. Paul never preached any of those Gospels, nor did any of the Apostles—nor does the Bible support such theories, except by the turning and twisting of language, misinterpretations of the original and misinterpretations of some parables. The plain statements of the Scriptures are all directly to the opposite.

The Bible teaches that "the wages of sin is death," not Purgatory nor eternal torment. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Adam, the perfect, was placed on trial for life eternal or death eternal. He sinned and the sentence against him was, "Cursed is the earth for thy sake; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread until thou return unto the ground from whence thou wast taken" (Gen. 3:17-19). St. Paul declares the same: "By one man's disobedience sin entered into the world; and thus death passed upon all men, because all are sinners" (Rom. 5:12).

Looking about us we find this true. Everybody who is not dead is dying. As the Bible says, we are living under a reign of Sin and Death. Nothing that man can do can either eradicate sin or lift him out of the dead and dying condition. God alone can help us! He proposes to help us, and the message respecting that help is, in the Scriptures, called the Gospel. Its announcement by the angels on the night of Jesus' birth is full, complete, satisfactory, viz: "Behold, we bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people; for unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior (life-giver) which is Christ the Lord."—Luke 2:10.

Ah, now we have the Truth! The penalty of sin is death! And the "good tidings" is that God has provided for our recovery from sin and death. The Savior gave his life for the cancellation of our sin, for the satisfaction of Justice, that in due time Adam and all his condemned and imperfect race might be released from the condemnation and be lifted out of the sin and death conditions which now prevail. That uplifting is Scripturally called the resurrection of the dead. Hence, the preaching of the early Church was, "Jesus and the Resurrection"—the Redeemer and his work.

"WHERE ARE THE DEAD?"

This sermon was published in PEOPLES PULPIT, Volume one, Number 3. The interest aroused and the great demand for copies of this sermon have been remarkable. A sample copy will be mailed to any one free.

The Seas in the Hollow of God's Hand

"Who hath measured the seas in the hollow of his hand."—Isaiah 40:12.

THE wonderful force and immensity of the thought of our text cannot be appreciated by those who have never been upon the great Ocean. As we travel through the water at railroad speed and keep watch in every direction, yet seldom see a vessel, large or small, day after day, we begin to get a little conception of the world in which we live. It is so much larger than previously we were able to comprehend. Yet by the aid of the telescope and the mathematical calculations we perceive that our earth and its seas are small, in comparison to many other worlds. We perceive that our solar system (our sun and his planetary satellites) constitutes but a small fraction of God's creation. Astronomers tell us that by the aid of sensitive photographic plates they are able to count about one hundred and twenty-five millions of suns, around which planets are revolving, as our earth revolves around our sun. And they estimate that only a small portion of these suns is visible to our naked eye—so far distant are they. Astronomers estimate that there are millions of other suns so far distant that their light cannot even be discerned by photography.

We stand appalled at the immensity of space and the law and order which everywhere reign. We heartily assent to the words of the Prophet David, "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge; there is no place where their voice is not heard." The person who can look upon this wonderful display of superhuman power and who can believe that these worlds created themselves, shows to the majority of us that, if he has brains, they are sadly disordered, unbalanced. The person who, after intelligent thought, concludes that there is no God, that everything came to be what it is by chance or by the operation of some blind force—that person is described in the Scriptures in the following words, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."—Psa. 14:1.

"The Half Was Never Told"

On first reading our text some of us might have been inclined to say, Ah, a beautiful poetic extravagance! But not so, dear friends! As scientific instruments demonstrate to us the immensity of the universe we perceive that the Prophet used very moderate language indeed in his description of the majestic power and greatness of the Creator, representing him as weighing the mountains in his balances and holding the seas in the hollow of his hand and that, from his standpoint, a thousand years are but as a watch in the night. How insignificantly small we all feel in the presence of our God! No wonder some great men have been inclined to say that humanity is too insignificant from the Divine standpoint to be worthy of the least consideration—much less to be objects of Divine care and providence! The Scriptures encourage us to reason from the known to the unknown. They tell us that although God is so great, so wise, so powerful, he is also just and loving. And the more we consider the matter, the more reasonable this Bible description of the Almighty appears. His power we see demonstrated. The wisdom of One so great cannot be doubted. Then we come to consider, Could One so wise and so powerful be unjust or ungenerous? Our hearts answer, No; no one is really great who is devoid of justice and love. So surely as our God is Jehovah he must possess these qualities.

When we came in contact with the Bible, and particularly after we learned something of its teachings and got rid of the misrepresentations which gathered about it during the dark ages—then we began to recognize it as the message of Jehovah to his creatures. It informed us that the great Creator of the Universe is not only Almighty and All-wise, but loving and kind, with Justice as the very foundation of his Empire. From the Bible we learned, too, that our Creator had been pleased to make us in his own image, in his own moral likeness, to the intent that we might enjoy him and the fruits of his righteousness to all eternity. From this standpoint we began

to realize that the loftiest sentiments of the human mind and heart are merely the reflections of this Creator.

Thus coming into sympathetic accord with our Maker we can comprehend the principles of his character—what justice signifies, and mercy and kindness—what is wisdom as contrasted with foolishness. From this standpoint we were enabled to see the glorious perfection of our Maker's character and attributes, which justify the name which he has taken to himself when he declares through his ambassador, "God is Love." As we come to realize this more and more, we are grasping the Infinite; we are getting near to the heart of the great Eternal One, who weighs the mountains as in a balance and measures the seas in the hollow of his hand.

"Like Unto Your Father"

Godliness is love-likeness, and, as the Scriptures declare, "Love is the fulfilling of the (Divine) Law" (Rom. 13:10). Our great Creator, the only living and true God, is thus seen in contrast with all the gods of the heathen, who are pitiless, merciless, vengeful, devilish. From the Bible we learn that Jehovah, the True God, takes delight in doing good—in the exercise of his Almighty power and wisdom in the creating of beings in whose everlasting life and enjoyment forever he takes pleasure. With such glorious intentions his creative work began with the celestial beings, who are still enjoying his favor. With similar benevolence he created man a little lower than the angels, crowning him with glory and honor as the king of all creatures, on the animal, the human, plane, the likeness of his Maker, who is a spirit.

Harkening to the explanations of the Divine purposes by the Apostles and Prophets, we have received assurances that nothing has befallen humanity in all the dire experiences of the past six thousand years that the great Creator did not foresee. Further, we have the assurances that Divine Wisdom purposes eventually that the tears and sorrows, cryings and dying, the penalty for Original Sin, under which man has suffered all these centuries, the great Creator purposes shall work no real disadvantage to his creatures. Instead of the end of the Divine Program will attest the various elements of the Divine character as nothing else could have done. The holy angels, who have known no sin, will in mankind read to eternity a valuable lesson of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the wisdom and blessedness of righteousness.

And even mankind, although at present suffering seriously under the weight of Divine displeasure and condemnation to death, will ultimately be so blessed and the weight of blessing so outweigh the sorrows of the curse, that every creature shall bow the knee and every tongue confess to Divine Justice, Wisdom, Love and Power, in connection with the Divine dealings with humanity.

"Joy Cometh in the Morning"

A night of weeping six thousand years long, involving suffering and sorrow to twenty-thousand millions, is an awful thought. But the proposition is a different one when we remember that the majority of Adam's children die in infancy and that to those who live their three score years and ten with labor and sorrow, there are pleasing and happy experiences, as well as tears. And when we read that even the tears of a few years are a part of the disciplines, instructions and experiences which God designs shall be valuable lessons in preparation for a glorious and joyous eternity—then the whole matter begins to have a new aspect to our minds.

The night of weeping, six thousand years long, is about to be followed by the morning of joy. The New Day, in which darkness and sin will be abolished and in which the Sun of Righteousness will bless and heal the world of mankind, is a Thousand-Year Day for the blessing and uplifting of our race (II Peter 3:8). The Bible describes that day in most glowing terms. It is the day of Messiah, the day in which God's Kingdom shall come and his will be done on earth as it is done

in heaven, the day in which the poor and needy will be lifted up from the dunghill of superstition and depravity, the day in which the knowledge of the glory of God shall fill the whole earth.

And there shall be no more fear. That day will not end as do others. It will not be followed by a night, but lead on to a glorious eternity for all of God's creatures who appreciate Divine goodness and, using the Divinely provided opportunities, will return to full harmony with their Creator. Such he will in turn recognize as his sons and, at his right hand of favor, they will enjoy pleasures for evermore.

The Revelation of Our God

One of old truly said, "Thou art a God which hidest thyself" (Isa. 45:15). How true! As a result the world by wisdom knows not God. He is near in his wisdom and love, yet he can be seen only by those whose eyes of understanding have been opened. But we are glad that the time is coming when all the blind eyes shall see clearly. "As I live, saith the Lord, the whole earth shall be filled with my glory." "The knowledge of the glory of God shall fill the whole earth as the waters cover the great deep" (Habakkuk 2:14). Then all shall see what God hath wrought and our temporary blindness will but accentuate the glorious brightness of his Wisdom, Justice, Love and Power:

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain!"

In the end it will be seen that the Divine permission of the reign of sin and death in the earth, instead of being a blot upon Divine character and a demonstration of Divine unwisdom and incompetency, will reveal the great Creator to his subjects, his children, as nothing else could have done. Besides, the experiences of mankind during the seven thousand years from Adam's creation to the end of Messiah's mediatorial Kingdom will demonstrate traits of the Divine character which could not otherwise be manifested to angels or to men.

For instance, without the permission of sin, the element of Divine Justice and the unalterable opposition of God to all sin would never have been known to his creatures. His sentence upon father Adam and his race and the permission of the reign of death and sin for all these centuries have demonstrated the fact that Divine Justice cannot be trifled with. And this reign of sin and the strength of the Divine opposition to sin, and the sentence upon sinners, in turn gave opportunity for the exhibit of Divine mercy, compassion, sympathy, love. Undoubtedly God's love was known to the angelic hosts before, but not to the same extent. His dealing with humanity will prove the depth of his sympathy to angels and to men. "God commended his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Surely, as the poet declares, we have in this a manifestation of

"Love Divine, all love excelling."

More than this: Some of us at one time were, perhaps, inclined to criticize our Maker and to say that he had no right to redeem us at the cost of Calvary; that it was wrong to cancel the sins of one and require their payment of another. But we erred. It was not thus. Rightly understood, the dealings of the Father with the Son add still further to his glory—magnify still more his Wisdom, Justice, Love and Power. With all power and authority the Almighty would not command the death of his Son. For Jesus to become man's Redeemer meant his voluntary sacrifice of himself. And how shall we understand this—the Redeemer's willingness to be man's ransom-price? The Scriptures, replying, tell us that it was because of his great love for the Father, his great confidence in him and his willingness to submit to the Divine will and pur-

pose and arrangement in everything. Yet, notwithstanding the willingness of the Redeemer, the Father would not permit him to engage in this great undertaking which would cost himself so much, unless he would give him a corresponding reward. Thus we read of Jesus, that "for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross and despised the shame."

"No! It Is Just Like Him!"

The Divine plan being set forth to an old colored woman, she was asked if it was not strange that God should do such great things for us. Her answer was, "No, Master, it is just like him!"

So we say respecting the great God who made the heavens and the earth and sun and stars, It is not strange that he should have a glorious Plan for all of his creatures—a Plan which will fully exemplify his character—his Justice, Wisdom, Love and Power!

And amongst these wonderful things of the Divine Purpose none is more wonderful than that which relates to the Church class, "the elect," drawn and called and begotten of the holy Spirit during this Gospel Age. These, justified by faith instantly, are a separate class from the world, who will be justified, perfected, through works during Messiah's glorious reign. The arrangement for their faith-justification through the merit of the Redeemer in advance of the world's justification is for the purpose of allowing these, who, by nature are "children of wrath even as others," to become sons of God on the spirit plane, "partakers of the divine nature."

Dealing on lines of impartiality, God's offer to these members of Adam's race, a "little flock" in all, is that, if they join with their Redeemer in sacrifice and walk in his footsteps, his merit shall cover their blemishes and they may become for all eternity his glorious Bride and joint-heirs with him in his Kingdom—that they may sit with him in his Throne and be associated in the great work of uplifting the children of men.

How wonderful is our God, infinite in all his qualities! "Who hath known the mind of the Lord; who hath been his counsellor!" (Romans 11:34). How came all these wonderful things which are written in his Book, unless by his own knowledge? Let us bow before him and adore him and be faithful followers in the footsteps of Jesus until the end of the race—until we receive the crown of life.

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Times of Restoration

"And He shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the Times of Restitution of all things."—Acts 3:20, 21.

ON A FORMER OCCASION we called attention to the "Times of Refreshing" pointed out by the Apostle as the hope for the Church and the world, and to be expected at the second coming of our Lord. We pointed out that this promised shining forth of Divine favor upon the world means the turning away of the curse, the penalty for sin, which has been against the race for now 6,000 years, and that the antitypical day of atonement, a time for sackcloth and ashes and weeping and groaning and travelling in pain under the weight of sin and its death penalty, will soon be past, when the Son of Righteousness shall shine upon the world to bless and to refresh.

The words of our text teach us in what respect the Divine refreshment will come to the world, how the Divine blessing will be poured out. The second coming of our Lord is the key to the entire matter. As the Scriptures declare, the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son, who redeems the world.

Hence, our text declares that with the ending of the night of sin and death, the Heavenly Father's favor will be manifested in the second advent of Christ, who cannot return until certain appointed times shall have arrived. The suggestion is in accord with our Master's words to the Apostles when they inquired, after His resurrection, "Wilt thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" He answered and said unto them, "It is not for you to know the times and seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power."

Foreordained Times and Seasons.

"The Father has these times and seasons in His own power, fore-known, fore-arranged, or, if you please, fore-ordained. When the fore-ordained hour shall have arrived, the second coming of our Lord will take place and the great work He is to accomplish at His second advent will begin. That will be earth's New Day, the Millennial Day. How the Scriptures everywhere keep before us the

thought that the present is a night time, in which sin and trouble prevail; that the New Dispensation will be a glorious dawn of refreshment and awakening and reviving.

Well did the Prophet David speak of the present and intimate the future, saying, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." The night of sin and death, darkness and trouble, ignorance and superstition which has beclouded the world has already lasted six thousand years, but the dawn of the New Day is at hand.

Thank God for the prophetic testimony, "Joy cometh in the morning"—not only joy to the living millions who will then be brought under the sway of the Kingdom of God's dear Son, but joy also to the twenty thousand millions who have already gone down into the darkness of the tomb, into the prison house of death, to which our Redeemer alone has the key—the power, the authority—that He may open and cause the prisoners to come forth.—Isa. 49:9; Luke 4:18; Rev. 1:18.

What Are Restitution Times?

The Apostle refers to these Times of Restitution as though his hearers were all thoroughly familiar with them—as though they all understood that the Divine promise of blessing through Christ implies times or years in which this blessing will be poured out upon the world. He seems also to take for granted that his hearers understood the meaning of the word restitution—that it signifies to restore, to put back again into a proper condition. It is somewhat remarkable that the "faith once delivered to the saints" has been so far lost sight of, and so far contaminated with the errors from the heathen intermingling during the Dark Ages, that remarkably few of the Lord's people today seem to have ever thought of "Times of Restitution."

Indeed, many ministers of the Gospel, hearing our text quoted, have at first presumed that it was some pe-

culiar translation, having overlooked it entirely in their Scripture readings, and never having caught the thought of Restitution, which the Apostle here in our text declares has been "spoken by the mouth of all the holy Prophets since the world began."

If any Prophet failed to speak of the coming "Times of Restitution," the Apostle Peter's declaration implies that such a Prophet should not be regarded as a truthful or holy one. In other words, this message of coming Restitution blessings to the world is so important, and has so large a place in the Divine revelation, that no prophet could be the Lord's mouthpiece without referring to these times; and in harmony with this thought may we not inquire with reason, how can any of the Lord's people today consider that they are in full accord with the Heavenly Father and His inspired revelation while they are neglecting and are comparatively ignorant of this most important subject—the coming Restitution which will be inaugurated at the second advent of our Lord Jesus?

In one of His parables our Lord speaks of a woman who hid leaven in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened. The three measures of meal represent the family baking, the spiritual food provided by the Lord for the household of faith. If any wish to divide the measures we may properly see in the first the great truth of justification, in the second the truth respecting sanctification, in the third the truth respecting glorification, or the final deliverance. A sufficiency of food for the family of God was provided through the teachings of Jesus and His Apostles and the ancient Prophets—"sufficient that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished." But, alas! the parable shows the corrupting of this food by the intermingling of leaven, which in the Scripture is used as a symbol of corruption.

Leaven a Symbol of Corruption.

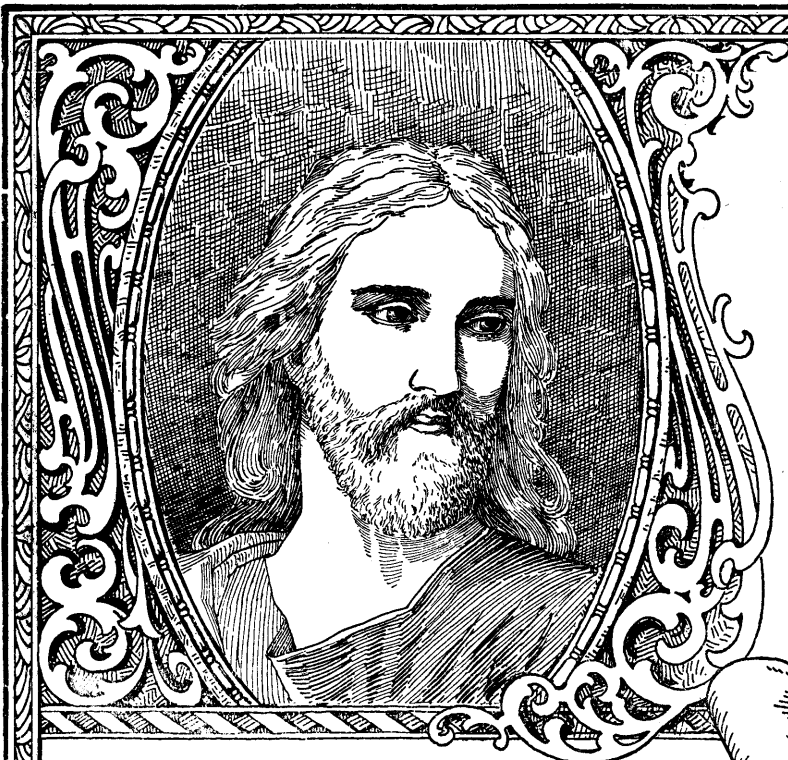
As a "woman" in the Scriptures is referred to as a symbol of the true Church, and in that figure is represented as a pure virgin, so also a woman, a "harlot," is used in the Scriptures as a symbol of an impure church or system. It was the impure system of the Dark Ages which mingled the corrupt doctrines of

pagan philosophy with the pure food which God had supplied for the household of faith. And so successful was the mixture that, as the parable declares, the false doctrines are commingled with the true on every subject to such an extent that the impure mixtures are everywhere called orthodox, while the little there is of the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth is so unpopular that it is termed heterodox.

It is this corrupt bread that is turning the religious stomachs of the whole world at the present time. It is the leaven mixture that is causing the nausea that is becoming so prevalent throughout Christendom, and turning many away entirely from the Bible and from everything that purports to come from that storehouse of grace and truth. Even this was foreseen and foretold by the Lord. Has He not pictured the present day and the various sectarian tables and the sour bread thereon and its nauseating effect upon those who sit at those tables? He has, indeed.

Their turning away from their creeds is not because they are worse than were their forefathers, but because they have truer and clearer ideas respecting Divine Justice and Divine Love, Divine Wisdom and Divine Power, and the exercise of these toward the world of mankind. Let me quote the Prophet's words on this subject, applicable today. He says:—

"The priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink; they are swallowed up of wine; they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision and stumble in judgment." The language here is figurative; the wine and strong drink referred to are those symbolically mentioned in Revelation; they represent doctrines. The picture in Revelation shows the woman—the same woman referred to in our Lord's parable as mingling the leaven with the food—having in her hand a cup full of abominable doctrines, with which she made drunk all the nations, with which she intoxicated with error to the extent of foolishness the people of Christendom. The Prophet proceeds with his picture, describing the various tables of Christendom today as represented in the various sectarian presentations of doctrines, saying:—"All tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean."—Isa. 28:8.



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A FAMINE
IN THE LAND
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BUT FOR
THE HEARING OF THE
WORD OF THE LORD
AMOS 8:11

YE SHALL KNOW
THE TRUTH
AND IT
SHALL MAKE
YOU FREE!

JOHN 8:32

