

NO SALVATION WITHOUT SUBSTITUTION

by Judson Eber Conant

Conant's defense of the doctrine of substitutionary atonement, arguing from Scripture that there can be no salvation apart from Christ's bearing the penalty of sin in the sinner's place.

86 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 01. Introduction
2. 02. The Nature of God
3. 03. Man Needs a Direct Word from God
4. 04. The Fact of God Is Inescapable
5. 05. Can Man Come to Know God?
6. 06. Reasoning from Effect to Cause
7. 07. The Reign of Law and Order
8. 08. The Clue That Never Fails
9. 09. Is Holiness or Love God's Fundamental Attribute?
10. 10. The Final Moral Fact in God's Being
11. 11. The Scripture Intimations
12. 12. Mutual Relation of Holiness and Love
13. 13. How Will God Deal with Sin?
14. 14. The Nature of Moral Being
15. 15. Love and the Power of Choice
16. 16. How God Safeguards Our Happiness
17. 17. Man Needs a Direct Word from God
18. 18. The only Moral Force Is Love
19. 19. Innocence Is not Holiness
20. 20. How a Moral Character Is Achieved
21. 21. No Warning against Satan
22. 22. The Way to Permanent Character Opened
23. 23. Where Rationalism Began
24. 24. The Nature of Sin
25. 25. The Birth of Religion
26. 26. The Awful Nature of Sin
27. 27. All Men Are Born Sinners
28. 28. Sin's Wreckage beyond Telling
29. 29. The Sinner Is an Anarchist
30. 30. The Sinner's Intolerance of Law
31. 31. The Nature of Moral Government
32. 32. Suppose God Had Banished Adam
33. 33. Is Man's Rescue Possible?
34. 34. God's Government an Embodiment of Love
35. 35. The Heart of the Problem of Sin
36. 36. Shallow Thinking on Forgiveness
37. 37. God the Supreme Public Magistrate
38. 38. The Nature of Justice
39. 39. The Nature of Right and Wrong

40. 40. Can God's Will Be Set Aside?
41. 41. Sin's Appalling Destructiveness
42. 42. And This Is Hell!
43. 43. How Can God Forgive Sin?
44. 44. How Leniency Invites Sin
45. 45. Anarchists Have No Right to Liberty
46. 46. The Nature of Mercy
47. 47. God Must Be Saved from Man's Sin
48. 48. Will God's Throne Fall?
49. 49. Sin's Penalty Cannot Be Remitted
50. 50. A Problem only God Can Solve
51. 51. No Salvation without Substitution
52. 52. The Nature of Substitution
53. 53. Who Can Qualify as a Substitute?
54. 54. God's Own Son Offers Himself
55. 55. Tasting Death for Every Man
56. 56. Forgiveness without Substitution Impossible
57. 57. The Cross a Divine Transaction
58. 58. Only God Can Act as Substitute
59. 59. Denial of Virgin Birth Irrational
60. 60. Was Christ's Life Substitutionary?
61. 61. Crucifixion and Resurrection Belong Together
62. 62. We Were Executed in Christ on Calvary
63. 63. The Nature of Grace
64. 64. How the Cross Uncovers Sin
65. 65. The Insult Supreme
66. 66. Brazen Impudence of Salvation by Character
67. 67. Every One a Murderer by Nature
68. 68. How the Cross Uncovers God's Love
69. 69. The Nature of Grace
70. 70. Grace and Obligation Exclude Each Other
71. 71. Man's Weapon against God Goes Astray
72. 72. Salvation Cannot Be Forfeited
73. 73. Substitution in Picture
74. 74. The Nature of Salvation
75. 75. A Dread Foreboding of Eternity
76. 76. We Need a Two-Fold Salvation
77. 77. Christ's Two-Fold Provision on Calvary
78. 78. No Excuse for Spiritual Infancy
79. 79. Man's Side of Salvation
80. 80. The New Birth Is a Real Birth
81. 81. Christ's Two-Fold Ministry in Heaven

- 82.** 82. Christ's Intercession for Us
- 83.** 83. Christ Our Advocate
- 84.** 84. Salvation Good News, not Good Advice
- 85.** 85. How to Believe and Be Saved
- 86.** 86. The Most Outrageous Sin of All

01. Introduction

Introduction

We live today in the midst of increasing denial that there is any final authority in the Bible. The influence of much that passes for science and philosophy, out of which comes the rationalistic criticism of the Bible and the supposed findings of those who sit in judgment on what God has said to man, has brought about a widespread feeling of emancipation to the modern mind, until the refusal to accept the witness of Scripture is to be found in college and university, and even in many a theological seminary, pulpit and pew. The mind that assumes the right to independent thinking, as soon as it comes under the spell of this modern spirit, quickly becomes a law unto itself. And then the Bible comes to be regarded as of no authority over the life, its doctrines out of harmony with reason, and its claims to be the sole revelation of moral truth to be incapable of proof. The doctrine of Christ's atonement for sin by His death in substitution on the cross, together with the related doctrines of His virgin birth, His absolute Deity, His true humanity, His sinless life, His bodily resurrection—indeed, all the doctrines that have to do with the Person and work of Christ—are all objects of special attack.

One thing, however, seems to have been missed or evaded by these modern thinkers. No one is asked to accept the doctrines of the Christian faith simply on the ground that they are in the Bible, but rather because they are true. If these doctrines are not self-evidencing in and of themselves, insofar at least as they come within the purview of reason and logic, and if they are impossible of validation to experience, putting them into a book called the Bible, and claiming for them divine authority, will not give them that authority. The authority is in the word of God as given through Christ and the Scriptures, because it is in the truth of what they say. Truth is truth, whether it is in the Bible or outside of it, and is everywhere and forever the same. It never changes, because truth cannot change in any way without becoming error. No statement of it can make it more true, and no denial of it can make it untrue.

Nothing, therefore, can rightly be done with truth but simply to believe it and bear witness to it. And the Bible is not the source of truth, but the witness to it. God is the eternal Source of truth, and the Bible, being His witness, must itself be unmixed truth, since it must be either the perfect witness to Him who is Truth Incarnate, or else wholly a lie. For if it is not unmixed truth, it is so stupendous a lie that its principles cannot possibly be made to harmonize with honest reasoning and sincere thinking, and this would long ago have been shown up and the Bible would have disappeared off the earth. But it still stands against all the assaults of men and demons, a challenging miracle of evidence, in that fact, to all that it claims for itself.

Moreover, at least a first, if not the full and final meaning of the death of Christ, must not only be spiritually discernible and mentally acceptable to those who follow the prescribed formula for its apprehension, but it must therefore be logically demonstrable to those who are willing to follow its principles, in sincere and honest thinking, to their necessary end. For the appeal of this and all other Scripture doctrine is first to faith; and this would be in vain if the outlines of its central

principles could be shown to be either hopelessly above apprehension, or so fragmentary and unrelated as to be inconsistent, illogical and unreasonable. The doctrine as it comes to us from Scripture must therefore be consistent, and it must be whole, at least in outline, and it must be in perfect harmony with reason insofar as it comes within our apprehension, even though it may at times ascend to heights where reason must wait upon the acceptance of the doctrine by faith. For truth, in order to have corrective power and give moral motive, must be luminous, not impenetrable, and logical, not illogical. It cannot do violence to the power to reason with which God endowed us, and still be regarded as truth. So it is only to be expected that when we turn to the Bible we should hear its Author say: "Come now, and let us reason together," and that the reasoning to which He invites us should have salvation from our sins for its subject—"though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

Cleansing from sin, and how God made it possible—that is the place to start. Indeed, it is the one place where reason must start, if the moral problems of life are to have any solution. For when reason comes to see how a holy God can be just and still justify the sinful, the clue to the solution of every moral problem whatsoever will be in our hands. With the purpose of making some contribution, if even a slight one, to an understanding of God's solution of that problem, the following pages seek to show that the only method of salvation of which reason can possibly conceive, when self-evident, axiomatic truth is reckoned with, is the very plan of salvation set forth in the Bible. The thesis is that both the Word of God and reason agree in witnessing to the absolute necessity of atonement by substitution, as accomplished by Christ on the cross, as the only possible ground on which sin could be dealt with and the sinner saved from its consequences; and that the only philosophy of the cross conceivable to reason, when all the requirements of the whole moral universe are reckoned with, is also the divine philosophy found in the Word of God, and which is therefore eternal and unshakable truth because it inheres in the very nature of things—which is the nature of God Himself. The doctrine of the atonement is and doubtless always will be of unflinching interest. Its depths are so profound that new angles of vision are now and again coming to view, and its principles so comprehensive of all those throughout the moral realm, that they seem to penetrate to the very limit of moral truth. But necessarily the final confirmation of moral truth is to be found in the experiences of the life, not in a logical demonstration to that department of life called the intellect. The issues of life are not out of the mind but out of the heart, for faith is after all a matter of life, not of logic. Logic may satisfy the reason, but experience alone will satisfy the heart and put the life right with God, though logic craves to follow where faith leads, that it may find the reason why. In the experience of the author of these pages, he was saved through simple faith before he reached the teen age. Upon entering the ministry, his attitude toward Christ and His atonement was still one of unquestioning faith. But being of an inquiring mind, the desire grew to find and think out for himself as much of the divine philosophy lying behind the Cross as he could discover from what God has revealed, so that along with the appeal to faith presented to the lost, there might be carried in his own mind as clear an outline as possible of the reason why behind the Cross, that his appeal to faith in working with others might be presented as effectively as possible.

There was for a few years almost no reading of theological works on the atonement, but instead much study of the Word on the subject, with much thought and prayer. Gradually a reason why for

the necessity of the cross seemed to shape itself in the thought, until finally there came a satisfying, though at first tentative, outline, from which to proceed into further study of the doctrine.

Reading on the subject then began, the result being an increasing confirmation of the outline, because the complete centrality of the cross to all else by this outline became more and more clear, while the reason why behind the cross, as he saw it, progressively appeared to throw a divine illumination on all the major problems which sin has thrust into the world. The following pages have that original outline of the doctrine as the framework of this discussion, some of the lines of thought herein having been expanded and clarified as the result of much reading on the subject. The principal authors and titles read follow.

Author

Titles

Dr. Henry C. Mabie

The Divine Reason of the Cross How the Death of Christ Saves Us The Meaning and Message of the Cross Under the Redeeming Aegis

Dr. P.T. Forsyth

The Work of Christ The Cruciality of the Cross The Person and Place of Jesus Christ

Dr. James Denney

The Death of Christ The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan

The Bible and the Cross The Crises of the Christ

Dr. James Orr

Sin as a Problem of Today

Dr. Alexander Patterson

The Greater Life and Work of Christ

Dr. Charles Cuthbert Hall

The Gospel of the Divine Sacrifice

Dr. John M. Armour

Atonement and Law

F.W. Grant

The Atonement

W.M. Clow

The Cross in Christian Experience

J.B. Lawrence

The Biology of the Cross

Dr. R.F. Horton

How the Cross Saves

Dr. Henry Clay Trumbull

The Blood Covenant

Dr. Henry Van Dyke

The Gospel for a World of Sin

Dr. Galusha Anderson

Science and Prayer

Anselm

Cur Deus Homo

Numerous other books not bearing directly on the doctrine of the Atonement, but making their contribution to the shaping of the thoughts here presented. A word about the title of the book will be in place. The wording of the title does not indicate an exclusion of the doctrines of the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Exaltation, and the Intercession of Christ from their essential and integral place with His work of Substitution on the cross, as a reading of the book will show. But it does deliberately design to exclude the "Social Gospel," and all other "gospels," which are made to rest on anything other than the shed blood of Christ on Calvary, as He "bore our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). The author gratefully acknowledges valuable help given by Dr. Wilbur M. Smith of the Moody Bible Institute, and Rev. Norman H. Camp of the Bible Institute Colportage Association of Chicago, in reading the manuscript and offering suggestions that made possible both a clarifying and a strengthening of the argument in several places. As this discussion goes forth, many prayers go with it that God may be pleased to accompany its message with His power, that whatever of help toward the understanding of the Cross its pages contain, may be released upon the hearts and minds of both saved and unsaved, to the eternal glory of Him who died that we might live.

J.E. Conant

02. The Nature of God

The Nature of God

Chapter I The entrance of sin into the universe of a holy and sin-hating God is a mystery that no man can fathom. He has not seen fit to reveal to man how sin could get into the domain of such a God, and it is folly for man to speculate. There is sure to come a time, in the Ages to come, when the wisdom and purpose of God in relation to the coming in of sin will be fully understood, but meantime we must wait. On one thing, however, there is no need for a revelation: sin is here. Both the internal consciousness and the external evidence of its tragic and universal presence in the human race, prove the fact of sin beyond the power of every human desire and all human philosophy to overthrow. The central and awful fact of all history is that the whole race from the beginning has been, and still is, in the grip of sin, and that this slavery dates, for each individual, from birth.

Another thing is beyond denial: sin must be dealt with. No moral intelligence, sinner though he may be, can get away from the ever-present consciousness of that unquenchable demand, lying back in the nature of things, that something must be done with sin. And one more thing is beyond question: God must deal with sin. For the universe belongs to Him who created it, not to His creatures. The responsibility is therefore His to handle everything that enters His universe, and certainly such a tragic and destructive thing as sin. But how will God deal with sin? It is here, and it must be dealt with; and if God must deal with it, how will He do it?

It is impossible even to speculate on what God will do with sin, unless we can form some sort of conception of His nature and character. For it must be what He is in Himself that will necessarily determine what action He will take toward sin. The first thing to do is therefore to learn for ourselves, if we can, at least in sufficiently complete outline to make conclusions possible, what reason may expect God to be in essence and character, if perchance, from that starting point, we may be able to think our way out to what reason would demand that He should do with sin. And so our first need is to find, at least in outline, that which reason would expect the nature of God to be. The complete and final understanding of the nature of God is of course utterly beyond the present capacity of such finite beings as we find ourselves to be, especially when the limitations imposed by sin must be reckoned with. Indeed, shall we not through all eternity be increasing our knowledge of the nature and character of God? For if God is such a Being as reason must conceive He should be, He will be the sum total of all moral truth, eternal goodness, and infinite wisdom, and how shall finite incapacity compass such infinite things? To assume, however, that on this account we cannot come to know at least a first truth about God, His nature, and His character, which will be whole, not fragmentary, and sufficiently consistent, logical and comprehensive to satisfy every necessary demand of both heart and mind, is to assume a God of whom honest rational thinking cannot conceive. For at least an outline of the fundamental facts of His nature must be such that man can grasp and understand it, especially since such a God as reason demands would not fail to get to us, in some way, the knowledge necessary to give us all

the light we need to guide us to the truth about Himself, that thus He might light our way out of our misery in sin.

03. Man Needs a Direct Word from God

Man Needs a Direct Word from God In what way, then, can we logically look for the knowledge of God to come to us which we need? Must we discover it for ourselves by our own effort, without any Being who has a right to be called God doing anything to make Himself known to us? Indeed, would a Being who could be discovered solely by the efforts of such ignorant and limited creatures as we are be worth discovering? No such God as that could satisfy even the passing needs of our natural hearts, let alone the deep eternal longings of our souls. Any God who by man's natural wisdom could be fully discovered, is not the God to meet the needs of a race wrecked and overwhelmed by humanly incurable misery, blindness and despair in sin (see 1 Corinthians 1:21).

We need a God who is beyond and above our utmost natural efforts to discover Him, else we could not believe Him to be worthy of our trust and confidence. We must therefore have a God whom we cannot adequately know, especially in view of our condition in sin, unless He is pleased to make Himself known to us in some way incapable of being misunderstood, by all who want honestly to receive that knowledge.

Reason compels us to assume, therefore, that He not only has revealed Himself, but that any revelation which we need to know, and which cannot come to mind and reason through the beauties and marvels of creation about us and the voice of conscience within us, He may be expected to give to us by direct supernatural revelation, since that is the one other means left by which we can become infallibly sure of the truth which will show us our way out of sin. Of another thing also we can be sure. If God has made Himself known through both a natural and a supernatural revelation, we can be certain that the conclusions which reason arrives at from the indirect natural revelation, if they are correct, must make such a complete and consistent whole with the truths made known to faith by direct supernatural revelation, that there cannot be the slightest excuse for failure to follow the light thus given.

One of the just and necessary criticisms made of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* has been that he purposely discusses God's method with man in sin as though no revelation had come from Him on the reason why, inherent in the cross. Trying thus to resolve a problem that unaided reason has never been able to cope with, he naturally becomes so rationalistic and speculative as to take a view which in important essentials is wholly unfamiliar to the inspired writers of the Scriptures. But logic will not permit us to ignore the inescapable need of a direct revelation, especially when we see heathen philosophers, reasoning in total ignorance that there is such a revelation, come up against an impassable barrier when they search for the ground of a just forgiveness of sin.

Here is therefore at least one place where man must have a direct supernaturally given word from God. And in it there must be found what philosophy can never find—the way to reconcile God's necessary attitude toward both sin on one hand, and the sinner on the other, in view both of the demands of His holiness in His attitude of justice towards sin, and of His love in His treatment in mercy of the sinner. Here is the problem before which the greatest minds of all time have quailed and quit, for there appear to be contradictions that no philosophy can untangle. There is here a

truth, therefore, which reason may expect God to give us by direct revelation.

Advancing now to think upon His nature, whatever the truth about God is, out of an adequate grasp and acceptance of that truth must grow whatever attitude His creatures would be expected to take toward Him. For whatever He is in Himself, that He would be toward His creatures, and whatever He is toward them would inevitably determine their attitude toward Him.

There is thus a demand that the truth about the fundamental attributes of God's character should be so simple and luminous to those who are honestly willing to know it, that it will not only be axiomatic and self-evident, but that it will also shut out all possibility of any misconceptions of God from the minds of those who want honestly to know the things necessary for a sinner to know about His character. For the attributes of God are after all simply God Himself behaving in a particular way, in all the unity of His Being, in the manner His essential nature requires Him to behave in any given situation.

We have every encouragement to believe, therefore, that if we are sincerely willing to receive them, we can come to know the fundamental facts in the Being of God, and that when we have believed them, the reasonableness, consistency and logic of them will be seen to do no violence to the reasons with which we are endowed, because we will find ourselves facing truths that are, because that which contradicts them cannot rationally be conceived.

04. The Fact of God Is Inescapable

The Fact of God Is Inescapable The logical place to begin our inquiry after the truth about the nature of God is obviously at that point beyond and behind which no man can go in his thinking, for from that point we may be able to reason forward toward an understanding of the meaning of our existence, and the solution of the problem of life in such a universe as we are in. Is there a point beyond which it is impossible for thought to go? Without question, there is.

It is impossible to think past, behind or beyond the conception that God is. Some of the greatest intellects of all time have tried it and utterly failed. The Bible opens with the words: "In the beginning God"(Genesis 1:1). And every one who has tried to think his way back to that unbegun beginning beyond which it is impossible to go in thought, has always stood face to face with God as the final fact. The fact of God is thus a first truth, a self-evident truth, an axiomatic truth, and the question of the existence of God is never raised by any one who is capable of rational thinking, provided his heart is so utterly sincere that his thinking is truly honest. Stop for a moment and do a little honest thinking and see if this is not so. In the beginning it must be either God or nothing. Now suppose you set down the first three words of the Bible, "In the beginning," and then put in what you think the next word has to be to satisfy reason.

If you say, "In the beginning, nothing," as the atheist does, you reflect at once that out of nothing comes nothing, and that can never account for our own existence, or that of the material universe around us. So suppose you say, "In the beginning, protoplasm," as the evolutionist does. At once reason compels you to go back of the protoplasm and demand, Who made the protoplasm? For it could not exist without being brought into existence, and to bring anything into existence is creation, and so there must be a Creator somewhere.

There is therefore only one word that a rational being can supply to end that sentence, and that is, "In the beginning, God." For it is the fool only who says: "There is no God" (Psalms 14:1), and even he has to say it in his heart, for his mind will permit no such conclusion. Any one who uses his intellect is compelled to acknowledge his own self-conscious existence in a universe which, along with himself, must have had a beginning, and therefore a Beginner. Reason demands an intelligent First Cause, and is outraged by any one who tries to say that there can be thought without a Thinker, design without a Designer, or creation without a Creator. It is wholly impossible for any honest being to say "No God" with his head. It must be said in his heart, if at all. And the reason is not far to find. It is because of the fundamental wish of his sinful heart that there should be no God to whom he must answer. It is that wish alone which begets his atheism.

If the man who tries to be an atheist would only stop long enough to allow himself a little honest and sober thought, he would abandon all his attempts at atheism as utterly unworthy of any one who pretends to think at all clearly.

He would see that in order to say there is no God without making himself ridiculous, he would have to be omniscient and know every fact in the entire universe. He would also have to be

omnipresent, because if he were incapable of being everywhere, he could not possibly prove there is no God. And if he had these two attributes, reason would be compelled to assign to him omnipotence and all the other attributes of infinity, and he would thus be God Himself, and so there would after all be a God in existence. The fact that God is, then, is that one great first truth behind which we cannot go, and from which no intelligent being in the universe can escape.

05. Can Man Come to Know God?

Can Man Come to Know God? But even though no man can think God out of existence, can we know anything about Him?

Herbert Spencer, high priest of agnostics, said that God is both unknown and unknowable, entirely ignorant, apparently, that he was guilty, in that assumption, of that ridiculous blunder in logic of assuming in advance as impossible or in-capable of proof that which remains to be proved.

Saying that man cannot reach up to a knowledge of God, he followed that assumption with the non sequitur—the conclusion that does not follow, that God must therefore forever remain unknown and unknowable. But it remained yet to be proved whether man may not come into a knowledge of God which may be absolutely demonstrated to be a revelation of Himself sent down to man, by which man may of a certainty come into personal acquaintance with God. That possibility cannot be assumed in advance as incapable of proof without violating the simplest rules of logical thinking. And Spencer furnishes the perfect illustration in himself of the outcome of this impossible logic.

He insists on the axiom that anything we cannot help believing, or the opposite of which is wholly inconceivable, we must hold to be true. Then he refuses the scientific use of his own axiom by insisting on being an agnostic. He first asserts that we must accept our necessary beliefs, and then denies that these beliefs compel us to accept an intelligent Personal First Cause whom man can come to know.

Using his remarkable mental powers to their utmost to rid himself of the knowledge of God, it is most amazing that in formulating the very statement of his belief that God is unknowable, his intellect compelled him to write such a creed of so-called agnosticism as contained an acknowledgment of four of God's fundamental attributes, and an admission, by inference, of two others.

Thomas Hill, former President of Harvard University, wrote concerning him: "Spencer says that our belief in an Omnipresent Eternal Cause of the universe has a higher warrant than any other belief; that is, that the existence of such a Cause is the most certain of all certainties, but asserts that we can assign to it no attributes whatever, and that it is unknown and unknowable. Yet in his very statement of its existence, he assigns to the Ultimate Cause four attributes: Being, Causal Energy, Omnipotence, and Eternity. And afterwards he implicitly assigns to it two others—repeatedly expressing his faith that the Cosmos is obedient to law, and that this law is of beneficent result, which is an implicit ascription of wisdom and love to the Ultimate Cause. All thinkers concede that human reason is competent to discover the existence of the Ultimate Cause, to form inductions of its Being, its Causal Energy or Power, its Omnipotence and Eternity."

Here, then, is one of the keenest minds of recent times trying to think the nature of God out of the realm of human knowledge, and yet compelled, by the very laws of his intellect, to acknowledge the dominant attributes of the character he says cannot be known, and thus denying his

agnosticism in the very act of putting it into words! No more conclusive proof can be needed that the fact of God is inescapable, and the fundamental attributes of His nature axioms, from the light of which it is impossible to escape, even though, ostrich-like, we try to hide our heads in the shifting sands of an unscientific, unphilosophic, unscholarly and unreasoning agnosticism.

Yes, God is, and He not only can be known, but the moment we begin to think in terms of the moral realm, we find that we cannot escape Him, the fundamental facts of His Being coming into consciousness as a thing inevitable. Even the atheist is compelled to face at least the thought of God in the very act of denying His existence.

06. Reasoning from Effect to Cause

Reasoning from Effect to Cause

Then looking at it from another angle, think of the conclusions at which we are compelled to arrive, when we start to reason back from effect to cause.

Man is an effect. That is self-evident. Every effect must have an adequate cause. That is, every cause must contain in essence within itself in some form, everything that is found in the effect. For if there was ever an effect that was not first in the cause, something would be coming from nothing, and there would be an effect without a cause, which is of course impossible. The Ultimate Cause behind man must therefore have at least all that is found in man, the effect.

Man finds himself possessed of intellect, emotion, and will. These capacities being found in the effect, the Cause must therefore have these same capacities.

Now intellect, emotion and will constitute what is called personality. Therefore if man, the effect, has capacities which constitute him a personality, the First Cause must also have these same capacities, and thus must Himself be a Personality. The next obvious step grows out of the universal human intuition, from which no one in full possession of his faculties can possibly escape, that in our relations, both with one another and with the unseen First Cause, we have an inescapable and unchangeable sense of oughtness. That is, we have a feeling from which no one can free himself, that some things ought to be, and are therefore right, and that other things ought not to be, and so are wrong. This we define as a moral capacity. The First Cause must therefore have this same capacity, since He gave it to man. So the possession of such a moral capacity would not only constitute Him also a moral Personality, but would make it inevitable that His relations with all His moral creatures should be expressed in the terms of that which ought to be, and that man's relations with Him should therefore be defined in the same terms.

We are not left, however, to depend wholly on this and similar lines of reasoning for the light we need on the First Cause. For in complete contradiction of Spencer and those who agree with him, God has revealed Himself to man so clearly that it is impossible to escape the knowledge that comes through this revelation, except by willful refusal to believe and receive it.

He has displayed the invisible facts of His "power and Deity"—His omnipotence and Godhead, in the things that we see in creation on every side. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psalms 19:1). This is God's original and universal Bible, open to all and easily read by any who do not deliberately choose to close their eyes to it. The simple fact is that no man, surrounded by nature and following nothing but his own intuitions, can possibly deny the existence of God. Man in his primitive state has never been an atheist. The demands of reason in the man who lives near to nature will not permit him to be an atheist, "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and deity; so that they are without excuse" (Romans

1:19-20). Every atheist has been tampered with by wilfully sinful human influences to make him reach irrational conclusions that are beyond all excuse.

07. The Reign of Law and Order

The Reign of Law and Order To go a little further into this thought, the whole created universe is seen to be under the absolute reign of law, from the electron and the atom to the sum total of all material things. There is order and method in every process of nature, and there is neither exception nor deviation. It is the absolutely infallible and uniform operation of natural law that makes it possible to get any given results in any realm of nature's processes. If any natural law could ever be made to deviate from its proven normal operation, there would then always be such uncertainty as to results by following that law that only confusion would hover over its use. These facts are matters of common and universal observation that no one will dispute. But the atheist, refusing to accept belief in an intelligent First Cause, is thus compelled to leave everything to chance, which forces him to abandon all rational thinking. For chance means a total lack of order, and therefore a complete absence of all law. And so he is forced to prove either that there are no such things as universal, harmonious and unchangeable laws in operation throughout the universe, or else to show how something can come from nothing, before he can prove that the phenomena of undeviating order and infallible operation in all natural law came into existence of itself, either out of non-existence or out of chaos, without an intelligent First Cause.

Chance could produce nothing but chaos and confusion; for as no effect can be greater than its cause, so no effect can be different in essential nature from its cause. Certainly, therefore, no effect could be of such a nature as to destroy its cause in the act of coming into being. So the chaos and disorder of chance could not produce fixed natural law and order, for all such law destroys even the possibility of the existence of chance.

These clues and others like them are, however, but the introduction to the one major clue, both to the existence, and to the nature and character of God, the following of which is so infallible in its results, that no one who has ever followed it honestly has ever failed to come into unshakable first-hand knowledge of and personal relations with God.

08. The Clue That Never Fails

The Clue That Never Fails The oldest book in the world is the Bible. It claims to be a direct revelation of God sent down to man. It claims that man may of a certainty come into personal acquaintance and fellowship with God. It gives the formula by following which any man may make proof of this claim to his full satisfaction. The formula is utterly scientific, for it is the laboratory method of experiment. The One who gave the formula lived and taught on this earth nineteen hundred years ago. He claimed to be God Himself manifested to man in human form. He claimed that the Bible is the revelation of God to man. The formula is such that the truthfulness of these claims can be so tested by every one who wants honestly to know the answer, that all doubt will be forever dispelled. The formula is found in John 7:17, and reads: "If any man willeth to do his (God's) will, he shall know the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself." Nothing could be simpler nor more scientific than to follow that formula. It requires only that one find what Christ and the Bible set forth as the will of God, then what it means to do that will, and then to proceed to follow that clue with perfect honesty. And one can show that he is honest only if he is willing to stay with the test to the end, no matter at what cost to himself. To get the setting of this formula given by Christ, a company of people asked Him one day: "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" This was simply another way of asking how they might do the will of God, for the works God desires from us originate in His will for us. So Christ answered them: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on (rely upon) him (Christ) whom he hath sent" (John 6:28-29). This is then the first step in doing the will of God, as Christ defined it for those who wanted to know how to begin doing His will. The next step is then to find how to believe on, to rely upon, Christ, who claimed to be the One God had sent. What does it mean to rely upon Christ? Let one who followed the formula answer.

Paul is the one speaking, and to Timothy—and to us—he says: "I know whom I have believed (relied upon), and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (the day of his passing from the earth. 2 Timothy 1:12). Paul had committed himself to Christ for time and eternity, thus relying on Him for all that a human being in sin needs from God, and this act of committal had brought him to such an infallible certainty of faith as always comes from the intimate personal knowledge of Christ which the following of that formula makes inevitable.

Any one else may thus come into just such infallible knowledge of God, for "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:10-12). To do the will of God is therefore to rely on Christ for eternal life; and to rely on Him is to go to God in Person, commit oneself to Him as Paul did, and accept eternal life as a gift, "for the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). This done and all else follows. For the experiential evidence that one thus arrives at, not simply as to the existence of God, but of an actual personal knowledge of and acquaintance with God, is too infallible a

certainty ever to be shaken. No one has ever followed this formula through to the end with honesty and sincerity, and failed to arrived at that certainty. One's attitude toward the challenge of that formula thus becomes the test of his honesty of desire to know the facts about God. The agnostic or atheist who refuses to follow this clue is thereby confessing that his unbelief is the product of wishful thinking, not of sincere investigation. He wants to believe there is no God, that he may thus escape fear that he will some day have to give account to Him for his life of sin. But such wishful thinking will in no wise blot out the certainty that God is, nor the sinner's dread of meeting Him.

If such a man makes any pretense, therefore, to clear thinking, he will have to think his way out of this ridiculous inconsistency. He must justify himself for claiming to be an honest thinker, while at the same time he takes that dishonest attitude in logic of assuming beforehand as untrue or impossible that which remains to be proved.

We thus have abundant ground for starting with the first truth, both self-evident, revealed to reason through nature, and possible of direct revelation to experience, that God is, which is the one final truth behind which we cannot go in thought.

We can also couple with it the truth that God is a moral Personality, out of which grows the axiom that all His relations with moral beings must be moral relations.

09. Is Holiness or Love God's Fundamental Attribute?

Is Holiness or Love God's Fundamental Attribute? This permits us to move on to the next necessary step, which is the obvious truth that there must be in God a moral something, at once both primary and final, in which all His moral attributes will find their root, and of which they must be the necessary expression. What does the nature of things demand that this moral something should be?

It is common knowledge to all who are familiar with the writings of great and good men on the nature and attributes of God, that no consensus of belief as to what is the moral fundamental in His nature, so convincing as to amount to a conclusion commanding general acceptance, seems yet to have been arrived at.

Some have argued with convincing logic that holiness is that moral attribute in God which is fundamental to all else, while others have set forth love as that fundamental with equally convincing reasoning. But this only leaves us still undecided in our own minds, and so compels us to make a choice which does not seem final. We long instead to come to rest in our understanding of that in the nature of God which is the ultimate moral fundamental in His Being. This situation leaves the way open, to say the least, if it does not even invite us, to continue the search for such a moral fundamental, if haply we might be able to find some further line of thinking that might bring us nearer to what we seek. May it not be possible that neither holiness nor love is the final moral fundamental in God, but that there may be something in His Being that is the root, so to speak, of both of them? And if this thought is worthy of pursuit, is there any good reason why life might not be such a fundamental? Not simply being, of course, nor self-conscious existence, nor eternity of existence, but a type of life which is essentially moral in its nature, and necessarily, therefore, with holiness and love as the two dominant attributes of the life, and as the two co-equal and eternally harmonious expressions of the perfect moral character of God. In other words, life of such a quality that without that quality He might have eternity, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence—attributes inhering simply in an infinite personality, and yet might conceivably be malevolent; while with that quality only benevolence, sympathy, kindness could be conceived of as necessarily inherent in the life.

It is obvious that in seeking for the moral fundamental in God, we cannot start back of life, for then we would start with nothing and arrive nowhere. And it would seem equally obvious that we cannot start with any of the attributes or qualities of life and start at the beginning. If this is accepted, then does not this conclusion set life between nothing and the qualities of life? For must not life itself lie back of its own attributes? For it is the type of life in a sentient being which determines the type or nature of the attributes by which it will express itself.

10. The Final Moral Fact in God's Being

The Final Moral Fact in God's Being

It would therefore seem that life can be assumed to be that something in the Being of God which is so fundamental to all else in His nature, that it is both the primary, the final, and the all-inclusive fact in His Being. That type of life, we mean, which is of such a quality that both holiness and love form the co-equal sources of every moral attitude and act of His life. In other words, a life that is spiritual. With such a life as the ultimate fact in the Being of God, He would eternally express Himself as the infinite embodiment of the perfect moral all of the universe. That is, He would be the eternal incarnation of that which ought to be, which would thus be both the eternal negation and condemnation of that which ought not to be.

If we may proceed, then, on the thesis that spiritual life is the moral fundamental in the nature of God, we are ready to go on to the inquiry: In a moral universe such as the one we inhabit, what is that moral condition of things which must be universally recognized by all moral intelligences as that which ought to be, the opposite of which would therefore be that which ought not to be? That which ought to be is obviously that moral condition which, in any degree of its expression, infallibly insures the eternal moral well-being, and therefore the perfect happiness forever, of every moral intelligence who comes within the realm of its operation.

Conversely, therefore, that which ought not to be is that moral condition which, to any degree of its expression, inescapably results in the perfect and eternal moral ill-being and unhappiness of every moral intelligence who comes within the realm of its operation. The nature of God, we must then conclude, in which spiritual life is the ultimate fact, must possess that kind of character which will express itself through such attributes as will insure the perfect moral welfare and happiness of all in His universe who are in the realm where that welfare is possible. Such a character would therefore be inevitably and wholly set against every condition which would destroy that welfare. In other words, the kind of God reason demands must have such a nature that the one thing to which He is dedicated, with the undeviating purpose of His infinite Being, must be the securing of the happiness which results from their perfect moral welfare, for all in His universe who are within the reach of such a purpose. The life of such a God will therefore be both the source and the expression of such a character that the object of every attitude and action toward His moral creatures will be the securing of their perfect happiness.

11. The Scripture Intimations

The Scripture Intimations That it is life, moreover, and such a moral life as thus seeks to insure happiness to all who will accept it which is the ultimate moral truth in the Being of God, there seems to be abundant evidence in Scripture.

Some scriptures speak simply of the “living God,” without reference to the traits, qualities or attributes of His life, as when He is contrasted with dead idols. But other scriptures indicate, with unmistakable clearness, the qualities and characteristics of that life. At least nine times God swears by Himself. taking oath by His life, not by His holiness, His love, or any other attribute of His life, using the term, “as I live,” in every instance. This seems clearly to show that God Himself regards His life as the ultimate fact of His Being, and therefore as that by which it is most appropriate, as standing for the whole divine Being, to take solemn oath. And moreover that it is His moral life, not merely His infinite Being, by which He takes oath, since the issues involved in His oaths are moral issues, and are an appeal to His moral integrity.

We find also fully forty occasions when men took solemn oath, a moral action, by Jehovah that liveth, again emphasizing life as the ultimate moral reality behind everything else in God.

Then John, whose heart of love saw more deeply than the other disciples into the nature of Christ, when he was moved to tell the central fact in His Being, said: “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4-5). No kind of life can be a light to men in moral darkness, except one which is the perfect embodiment of the moral all which ought to be. Any other kind would be moral darkness itself.

Then Christ Himself, when He gave reasons why men should honor the Son as they do the Father said: “For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:26). Not love, nor holiness, but life.

He also said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life”(John 14:6). The last word is the climax of His revelation of the Father, and it is life, not love or holiness.

He announced also as His sole mission on earth: “I am come that they might have life” (John 10:10). That kind of life, therefore, of which love and holiness are the necessary attributes, since neither of these is possible except as there is first a spiritual life.

12. Mutual Relation of Holiness and Love

Mutual Relation of Holiness and Love

Then as we think of God's attributes in this light, it begins to grow clear to us that of these two attributes, holiness and love, neither one is fundamental to the other. Instead, they function side by side, so to speak, each conditioning and giving its character to the other. So His holiness is a loving holiness, and His love is a holy love. For His holiness demands that He should be loving, because He could not be unloving and remain holy; and His love requires that He should be holy, for He could not be unholy and be able to love. His love is therefore the necessary expression of His holy life, and His holiness the necessary quality of His loving life.

It thus seems obvious that one of these attributes of God's moral life—holiness, defines the fundamental quality of His character, while the other—love, indicates the fundamental expression of that character. That is, holiness describes what God's spiritual life is in itself, while love describes what that life is toward other moral beings. And so we arrive at the conclusion that holiness is the fundamental passive attribute in God, or what He is in Himself, while love is the fundamental active attribute, or what He is toward other moral beings, with spiritual life lying back of both of them as the final moral fact in His Being.

Now it is unthinkable that such a God should give Himself over to that which ought not to be, for the resulting destruction of both His holiness of character and His power to love, would destroy both Himself and His universe, and bring in the eternal reign of conditions that ought not to be.

He must, therefore, in the nature of things, forever desire the perfect and eternal moral welfare and happiness of all moral beings, and the character from which such a desire comes forth would thus be the embodiment of that which ought to be, and that is holiness. But God's holy life seeks active expression toward all moral beings, because He has for them a holy desire for their moral welfare. And what He does for them must, in the nature of things, be determined by what He is. How, then, will such a holy life express itself toward other moral beings? That can be found in the light of two opposing and mutually exclusive moral principles.

These two principles are the only moral principles in existence. So no being with moral capacity can escape coming under the control of one of them. One principle has one's own interests, with no primary reference to others, as the supreme object of life. The other has the interests of others as the final motive of every act. One is therefore the selfish principle, and the other, the sacrificial principle.

These principles must forever remain antagonistic. It is impossible, in the nature of things, for the interests both of self and of others to be first, for "no man can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24). Every life is therefore under control either to the selfish or the sacrificial principle. There can be no middle ground.

Reverently let it be said that even God's life must express itself in harmony with one of these principles. It could not be otherwise with any moral being. And so, since it is forever impossible for the selfish principle to have place in a God whose holiness, in its very nature, impels Him to seek the perfect happiness of other moral beings, He must therefore express His holy life through eternity on the basis of the sacrificial principle.

Now it is self-evident that the very essence and nature of sacrifice is self-giving, and self-giving is love. It is through sacrifice, therefore, that the holy life of God will forever express itself toward all moral beings in His universe. So it is this active attribute of His holy life that is meant when the Bible says: "God is love" (1 John 4:16). And it must also never be forgotten that His love is a holy love.

13. How Will God Deal with Sin?

How Will God Deal with Sin? The question can now come before us: How will a God with such a character deal with such a condition as sin? What does the nature of things demand of Him, which means, what does He demand of Himself (for the nature of things after all has its source in His nature), when He is confronted with that which ought not to be? This question cannot be answered until we first have an answer to another question. What is that which ought not to be? In other words, What is sin?

If sin is doing wrong, in what way is the wrong done, and by whom, and against whom? And if the wrong is done by man against God, as the universal conscience of mankind compels us to acknowledge, what is it in Him that has been wronged? A Being such as we have concluded God to be, will of course have such moral relations with other moral beings as will be the inescapable outflow of the nature He has. And those relations cannot be based on caprice, but on the inherent laws of moral being.

If the moral being of God has been wronged, then, in any phase of its expression, if we can discover how He has been wronged, that should define for us the nature of sin. But this can be discovered only as we get back to another question and get some clear idea of the nature of moral being. For only thus can the nature of moral action become clear, and so only thus can be defined that which ought not to be, and its opposite, that which ought to be. So we proceed to that inquiry.

14. The Nature of Moral Being

The Nature of Moral Being

Chapter II The most profound, appealing and faith-inviting news ever announced to the sinning inhabitants of this earth is in the words: "God is love" (1 John 4:16). In these words is bound up God's ultimate purpose in the creation of man.

Think what these words mean. Love is self-giving. It constrains the one it possesses to give himself to the one he loves, in any and every way which will insure perfect and permanent happiness. Nothing in harmony with that which ought to be which can bring joy is withheld from the loved one, everything being lavished upon him which can bring true and lasting pleasure and satisfaction.

Love, therefore, because it is self-giving, demands those toward whom self-giving can be expressed; for to have the power and the urge to love, and yet to have no one upon whom to satisfy that urge, is torment indeed. The infinite fulness of love, in the Being of God, is first given perfect satisfaction and joy in the limitless expression of that love which forever pours forth from the heart of each divine Person in the Triune Godhead upon the other Two, in the unspeakable delight of self-giving. The three Persons in the Godhead, also, that they might have the infinite joy of perfect fellowship and communion with each other in the united outflow of self-giving, gave to Themselves myriads of angels upon whom to lavish their common love.

Then came the human race, created that God might pour forth the unity of love from the divine Trinity of Persons in ways impossible with angels, who are not a race. For love cannot be satisfied until it reaches the complete fulness of every form of expression. So expressing His love toward the angels in the form of justice, God foresees that with the race of man there will arise a condition that will call for the expression of His love in the form of mercy. Only thus will love reach its full expression, for it takes both justice and mercy, each in unhindered expression in the presence of the other, to reveal the full content and meaning of love.

Love, however, seeks not only fulness of expression, but also of response. That is, God's love reaches out not only for receivers, but for such receivers as will be capable of responding to His love as freely and fully, up to the limit of their finite capacity, as He gives it with all the fulness of His infinite capacity. For nothing so surely breaks a heart that loves as not to be loved with full response in return.

God therefore endowed both angels and man with the power of choice, which is the capacity to love in response to love. This is easily seen upon a little thought.

15. Love and the Power of Choice

Love and the Power of Choice

Love is preference. This is obvious. The one I love I prefer to myself, and so I defer to him in every way that can advance his proper interests and make him happy. Then when I act on my preference for him and thus commit myself to it, I have made a choice. And that choice is inescapably between the alternatives of selfish love on one side, and sacrificial love on the other, love being the impelling power either way. The power of choice is thus the capacity to love, for the making of a choice is love in action. Thus we seem to see why God gave man the capacity for choice, for only thus could we respond to His love with an answering love of our own.

God's joy, however, in receiving our love in response to His, is not with Him an end in itself, but a means to the end of reaching the full expression, and thus the complete uncovering before all, of what His heart of love contains for us. That is, He created us with the capacity to love Him, not primarily that He might enjoy our love, but that, in our having the capacity to receive His love and respond to it, His love, in unmeasured sacrificial giving, might reach its fulness of expression. For it is more blessed to give than to receive.

God could not have created moral beings that He might selfishly receive glory from them, but rather that He might show it forth toward them. He shows His glory by seeking and promoting, through His sacrificial self-giving, the welfare and thus the happiness of His whole moral creation. He is not looking so much for anything we can give Him, as for our utter willingness to let Him give to us. He thus shows forth the glory of His heart of love before His universe, and it is in this way that we glorify Him, both now and through all eternity.

Everything God does toward man is therefore purposive, just as purpose is written on all else in the universe. The goal of God's purpose toward us is our possession of a character like His own. And as we accept and respond to His sacrificial love, we open His way to display His character, thus to show to us and all the universe that such a character is the sole desirable moral and spiritual value for all moral beings, and that it holds within it the only possible condition of perfect moral welfare.

16. How God Safeguards Our Happiness

How God Safeguards Our Happiness

God has therefore sought so to safeguard man against both himself and all possible outside influences, that he would allow nothing to rob him of this divinely intended welfare. For this purpose He has set in the very fiber of man's being one supreme and impelling urge from which no man can escape. This urge is not for a variety of ends so promiscuous, that a cross section of the desires of all varieties of people will reveal no uniform yearning underlying the outreach of the race. That would be but a blind, confused and purposeless outreach, with man stumbling on in the dark, he knows not whither, and God does not thus deal with the object of His love. The dominant urge of the whole race is rather for one single end so perfectly identical in all men, as to compel the conviction that God must be the Author of such a uniform and universal yearning.

Then along with this, man has been endowed with the intuitive conviction that to reach that goal for which all men alike crave, he will reach that perfect welfare for which he rightly believes he has the perfect right to seek, and that he will thus infallibly insure to himself the complete satisfaction of that innate craving by which all men are borne along.

Thus has God's infinite wisdom seen to it that the end He purposes for men is at the same time the very goal toward which the whole race is reaching out with an urge that no man can escape. No one, therefore, is ignorant as to the goal he seeks. If he is in the dark, it is concerning the means of reaching that goal, not concerning the goal itself.

What is this goal which all men alike seek? It is the universal outreach for pleasure. This yearning is inescapable, for it comes out of the deepest need of every life, and is woven into the very texture of our beings. In all ages, lands and conditions, all men seek and have sought after happiness, shrink from the displeasing and the painful, and seem willing to pay any price and make any effort if only they may gain pleasure. Man's inherent instincts and nature make it impossible for any rational being deliberately to seek misery and unhappiness, and it is equally impossible to keep from longing for and seeking happiness and joy. Man was not made for sorrow, and though God uses it to discipline us here, yet He lures us to Himself by the promise that He will wipe away all tears at last, if we are His, and also by the warning of weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth if we are not (Matthew 13:49-50). The Shorter Catechism says that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, and what is our enjoyment of God if it is not happiness? It is true that most men are on the trail that ends in eternal misery. But it is also true that it is the urge for happiness which has lured them to that trail by the lying promise of its attainment. And God's purpose in setting pleasure before us, as He holds the perfect happiness of heaven before our eyes, is that He may thus lead men to put themselves into that relation to His will which will permit Him to lavish His love on them forever, that thus their unalloyed happiness may be to His eternal glory. We glorify God by enjoying Him, for it was for that purpose that He built the insatiable craving for pleasure into the whole race.

Then God has sought still further to safeguard man against the eternal loss of pleasure by adding a passionate craving for perfection. No one can be satisfied with the partial and the imperfect in any realm of life. In the material realm man is always remodeling, improving, perfecting, and in the proportion in which perfection is approached, by that much is man's pleasure in his works increased. And in the realm of daily life, the chief objection to the doctrine of sinless perfection is not that a perfect life is undesirable, but that those who profess it do not live it. The fact that men do not live a perfect life is never a source of satisfaction, but always of pain and disappointment. The more nearly one approaches the standards of perfection, the more the pleasure of living is increased. The passion for perfection is deeply imbedded in the human race.

Still further to safeguard man in his quest for happiness is the deep yearning God has given him for permanence. The more nearly men approach perfection in anything, the stronger the desire that it shall last. We are ready for a thing that gives joy through its near-perfection to pass away, only when there is something nearer perfection to take its place. And when the perfect appears, and our pleasure in it is complete, we can be satisfied only if we are assured that it will not pass away. For not only is "a thing of beauty a joy forever," but that is true also of a thing that is perfect. In order therefore to put us on the way that leads to pleasure made perfect and permanent, that thus He may safeguard us from being misled in our quest for happiness, God has built into the very fabric of our moral constitution the inescapable "categorical imperative," the imperial word "ought"—that most powerful word in all the realm of moral life and action. The root meaning of that word is something owed to someone, and it corresponds perfectly with every man's ineradicable conviction of obligation to someone outside himself, to whom he is responsible for all he is, has and does. It is said that when Daniel Webster was asked what was the greatest thought that ever came into his mind, he said: "The thought of my personal accountability to God." That imperial "ought" is a word of such moral weight that it outweighs all other moral values whatsoever. And it enters so fully into the very texture of every soul, that for one to disobey it in a final and irreversible moral choice, is for him to reach the end of all purposive living, and thus be cast as a worthless wreck upon the shore of eternally ruined hopes and forfeited possibilities.

If one owned the whole world and yet disobeyed that imperative ought, even the added wealth of the entire universe could not ease to the slightest degree the excruciating torment and unspeakable remorse that follows that word disobeyed. While if one obeys that word, neither the possession of all things, nor the total lack of everything, could have the slightest effect on the exquisite pleasure and ravishing joy that go with that word obeyed. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul" by disobeying that word ought in the great and final choice of life! The entire universe is as nothing beside that word, for it outweighs all else as the universe outweighs the atom.

Then added to all these safeguards to man's happiness, God has built into us a conscience which acts as a hedge of thorns between us and the endless misery of the moral ruin He would keep us from. And it is forever saying to us, "do right," and warning us not to do wrong. In the realm of our moral intentions, it is as infallible as God Himself. Every man knows with absolute certainty whether, in any action, he intends to do right or wrong. Thus God would safeguard us from going wrong. The noted Joseph Cook, in his Boston Monday Lectures, set forth in luminous fashion the functions of our God-implanted conscience. He said:

“There is within us the power of perceiving the difference between right and wrong in the sphere of intentions.

“We have a feeling that right ought to be followed, and that wrong ought not to be.

“We have a sense of merit and demerit, of approval and disapproval of ourselves.

“Our instincts assure us that there is an approval or disapproval above our own.

“We have bliss or pain, according as we feel approval or disapproval from ourselves, and from Somewhat or Some One not ourselves.

“Lastly, there is in conscience a prophetic office, by which we anticipate that consequences closely concerning us, as conscious personal existences, will follow us beyond death.” And all this, as Dr. Cook goes on to say, is without any action of the will, but rather by a “mysterious necessity, which although in us, is not of us.”

What a God we have! What persuasions He surrounds us with to keep us from all that is outside His will for us. What compelling evidences are these of the infinite wisdom which instructs His love, as He pursues His ways with the sons of men.

Putting all these evidences of His heart's desire for us together, He has built into our deepest being an insatiable passion for pleasure, which can be satisfied only by perfection made permanent. Then He has interwoven that passion with that mighty ought, and guarded it by the imperative command of conscience as it forever says, “do right,” that thus we may know beyond all possible doubt that these are the guide-posts to the goal of eternal happiness.

Then as the climax of it all, He seems purposely to have omitted from the faculties He gave us, all capacity for spiritual self-direction, that in our consciousness of its absence, we might not do the foolhardy thing of trying to find our way to happiness without a guide. This is how it happens that we are wholly incapable, by ourselves, of arriving at the certain knowledge of what that imperial ought demands of us. No one's conscience, no matter how it may command him to do right, has ever been able to tell its possessor, either through intuition or by reasoning, what right is. Conscience is infallible in judging us on whether we intend to do right or wrong, but all knowledge of the standards of right and wrong must come to man from outside himself.

17. Man Needs a Direct Word from God

Man Needs a Direct Word from God The answer to all this is obvious. We must receive our knowledge on what that word “ought” requires from some authority outside the race who knows. And who more certain to know than the God who created us? For, knowing perfectly what our nature is, and thus what means will insure our reaching the goal of the perfect and permanent happiness He plans for us, there is obviously nothing else to do but to look to Him for the knowledge we need. And what could be a more practical thing to do?

God is fully able to give us this knowledge. And He can do it only by a direct word from Himself. This word can come to us only in spoken or written form, for He must tell us in some such direct way, or we cannot be sure of our knowledge. And what He tells us we can receive only in faith; there is no other way. For if we do not know, and He does, there is nothing else to do but to rely on what He says, which is faith in His word.

Then when the information we need is given us, we have only to believe it by acting on it and living it, in the certain knowledge that it is the truth, since it comes from One who cannot lie. For as certainly as the God who loves us and desires our love will not deceive us, just that certainly will He give us truthful guidance all the way to the goal for which He built the deepest urge into the heart of man.

Then if this knowledge is given in simple outline at first, with that outline filled in progressively to suit man’s growing capacity to take it in, faith will accept and act upon it progressively, at least to the limit to which confidence in that word continues. At the very beginning of human history, therefore, God revealed this knowledge to Adam and Eve, condensing it into the form of the one great fundamental moral principle which includes in embryo all the further revelations on the subject that could ever be given. Summed up in its simplest form, He made known to them that full and whole-hearted love to Him, in response to His love for them, was the simple but absolutely certain pathway to their perfect and permanent happiness.

Then that man might not blunder, stumble, and miss his way by trying to frame his own definition of love, thus failing of the goal God purposed for him, the full nature and meaning of love was set before him at the very beginning.

Contrary to what might be imagined, love was not set forth as a delightful emotion or a tender sentiment. Some sort of emotion always lies in the heart that loves, but love itself lies back of all emotion and sentiment, for it arises in the central capacities of the being.

Love is that purposed and active outgoing of the whole life and heart toward another, which deliberately and eagerly puts his happiness in the place of supreme preference, no matter at what cost to the one who loves. This means, therefore, as we have already seen, that love is preference.

Now let the analysis be carried a step further. Preference is ratherness. For that which I prefer is that which I had rather have or do. And ratherness in action is choice. To love God, therefore, is not primarily to have tender sentiments in our thoughts of Him and delightful emotions in His fellowship, but to prefer Him to ourselves, and therefore His desires and will to our own. It is giving Him the first and thus the only place in our lives. This marks out the pathway, therefore, to the goal of perfect happiness. And it is the only pathway there is; anything other than this leads in the opposite direction.

Thus there comes before us again a setting for the selfish and the sacrificial principles. There are but two objects of love: God and self. Based on that axiom, therefore, is determined, according to our choice between these two objects, whether our love shall be sacrificial or selfish.

God thus opened the pathway to perfect and permanent happiness before Adam and Eve, in the only way it could be opened. He set before them a choice of wills, as He revealed His will on things they might freely do, and forbade the one thing they were not to do, this being the only possible way for them to achieve characters of their own, and thus arrive at their full possibilities for real happiness, which would ever continue to fill an eternally expanding capacity.

Then He safeguarded them from a choice of their own wills by telling them plainly the inevitable results of eating the fruit He forbade to them. And He had already safeguarded them on the other side by giving them as much experience of what His love to them would mean in insuring their happiness, as they could take in while still in their condition of mere innocence.

18. The only Moral Force Is Love

The only Moral Force Is Love But here we find a question forced upon us. Why did God set an attractive fruit before Adam and Eve, and then command them not to eat it? If He is really a God of love, then He would act in kindness, to say the least, toward those He loved, and how could kindness tantalize our first parents like that? The answer to this lies in a reason why, a divine philosophy, which runs through the whole course of human history, and too few seem able to find it. The reason why rests on basic principles of moral life and action that are self-evident and inescapable. Let them be given in outline. In such a moral universe as God has created, with such moral beings as angels and men as its inhabitants, questions concerning moral attitudes and actions are inevitable.

Man finds himself in a moral realm in which love is the only moral force; with only two possible ultimate objects of love, the Creator and the creature; confronted by two mutually exclusive moral principles, the sacrificial and the selfish; with no escape from one or the other as the dominant life principle, and therefore compelled to make choice between them; these inescapable alternatives, in the final analysis, being a life choice between wills: God's and his own. In such a situation, questions on moral actions and outcomes are inevitable. And so somewhere, if not on this earth, and some when, if not during the course of time, the final question is certain to be arrived at. That question is obviously the one outside of which there can never be any further moral questions, and in the answer to which will be found the perfect and final solution of every moral question that could ever arise, under any possible circumstances, throughout all eternity. That final and all-inclusive question is not far to find. Confronted by the inescapable necessity of making choice between two wills, God's and one's own, as the ultimate moral choice; with God making announcement that His will is best as perfectly satisfying the imperative ought of our moral being; with His will leading to happiness and ours to unhappiness; the question is sure to arise sometime, with some being in the universe: How can I know infallibly that God's will is best, unless I try the experiment of yielding to my own will to find out?

If that question ever arises anywhere in the universe, it must be answered. And the answer must be so full as to be final, so that such a question can never again arise throughout all eternity.

There are only two possible ways to answer such a question. Either by the authority of the Creator, or by the experiment of the creature. The answer of God's authority is, for all who believe His word, and should forever remain, for all His creatures, the abundantly sufficient answer to that question. But the very raising of such a question would in itself indicate an incipient doubt about the reliability of God's word. So there can be no infallible certainty that the answer of God's authority will forever remain the sufficient and final answer for all His creatures. For with the capacity for free choice, and the possibility that any query at all about God's word might grow into doubt, and then into actual unbelief and final rebellion, there would always seem to be a possibility, under the answer of authority alone, for some creature to discredit and turn from that answer, and try the experiment of his own will, perhaps leading uncounted myriads of others with

him. The answer of authority is at least capable of being set aside. This is not, however, to put our own experience above the authority of God and His Word, but to say that those who are determined to try the experiment of their own wills against His, will thereby find confirmed to them what faith in His word of authority would have told them, had they simply believed it. By either pathway to the answer, it will be forever settled that God's will is best. For by experiment, the authority of His Word, instead of being set aside, is confirmed.

It is to say, therefore, that the question of wills having arisen on this earth, and then the experiment of choosing one's own will having been finally tried out and the answer found in the aggregate experience of the whole race, this question can never again recur through all eternity. The answer of experiment is thus the final answer. It can never be set aside, because it is the complete answer, and therefore must be final. For when the experiment has once been tried, no further questions remain to be asked; the information is all in. The babe creeping about the floor is not satisfied with the mother's authority when she warns him that the hot stove will burn. But when at last he eludes her watchful eye and puts his hand on the stove, his cries of pain give ample evidence that he has found out what he wanted to know. His experiment has given him the final answer, for "the burnt child dreads the fire."

Herein is an underlying philosophy in human misery and sorrow. From the crucible of our experiences of suffering here, as also from our experiences in obedience, is being worked out the experiential answer to the question of wills. And when every possible phase of the question has been answered in the aggregate experience of the race, the end of human history on earth can come, so far as we can see.

19. Innocence Is not Holiness

Innocence Is not Holiness

Proceeding with our inquiry, it must be remembered, as already intimated, that Adam and Eve had no positive moral characters of their own, as long as they remained in the state of innocence in which God created them. Innocence they had, and in that state they were upright (Ecclesiastes 7:29), for God could have created them in no other way. But holiness of personal character they had not, for they had experienced neither good nor evil (Genesis 3:5; Genesis 3:22), and so were in a state of simple innocence, with a positive character of their own still to achieve. Having no positive holiness of their own, therefore, they could not go very far into an understanding and appreciation of God's holy character, neither could they give any adequate response to His holy love, for the capacity to respond to holiness from a holy character of their own was not yet theirs. As Dr. Fairbairn has said, "Moral perfection can be attained, but cannot be created; God can make a being capable of moral action, but not a being with all the fruits of moral action garnered within him." The forbidding of the fruit to them was thus for the very necessary purpose of bringing them out of their state of innocence into such positive characters of their own, as would give them adequate capacity to respond to God's holiness and love, that thus they might be able to understand, desire and enjoy Him forever.

Innocence is simply the absence of sin, while holiness is the achievement of a personal character that is not only without sin, but also a positive personal possession acquired by one's own responsible moral decision against sin. Innocence is a capacity for either sin or righteousness, waiting to be possessed by either, but still occupied by neither.

There is a teaching that man was created holy, but this is not borne out either by God's Word or by logic. By scripture we learn that man was created "upright" (Ecclesiastes 7:29), which would mean, without any moral leaning, one way or the other, and would thus be a condition best described by the word "innocence." From no scripture can it be inferred that man was created holy. By logic, also, since it is obvious that man is a finite being, we know that moral progress in some direction is inescapable. So we cannot assume that man was created in such a state that no moral progress is conceivable. We must distinguish, therefore, between the possibility in capacity and the possession in character of holiness, just as we do in fact distinguish in the same way regarding unholiness. For holiness is a state of perfection, and progress in perfection is impossible.

Again, man was created without any experiential knowledge of either good or evil (Genesis 3:5; Genesis 3:22). Good incarnated in a character by a deliberate choice is holiness, just as evil thus incarnated is unholiness, and so Adam and Eve possessed neither in their creation.

Moreover, holiness loathes the darkness of iniquity, just as unholiness hates the light of righteousness (John 3:19-20), the reaction of each toward its opposite being definite and positive. We know that Adam and Eve were not created with an aversion in either direction, and so we must conclude that they were neither holy nor unholy in their creation, but simply in a state of

innocence, with the capacity for either.

Such a condition is thus a perfect setting for them to achieve a character all their own. For it can be accomplished by a deliberate moral choice on their own responsibility, and the single prohibition God gave them offered the opportunity for such a choice.

20. How a Moral Character Is Achieved

How a Moral Character Is Achieved To advance in our thought, any action for the purpose of achieving a moral character must be such as to meet two requirements. The first requirement is for an action of such a nature as to be capable of actually accomplishing the achievement of a personal character. The only action capable of bringing man out of innocence into a positive character of his own is for him to make the choice involved in that one last and all-inclusive issue of wills: God's and his own. For it is the will that is creative of character, and it is one's own will acting on a life choice, that creates one's own character, the kind of character achieved resulting from the nature of the choice made. The second requirement is that the action shall be under such circumstances that the choice made will be valid. This makes it necessary that the action shall be absolutely unforced in any way, that it may be upon the entire responsibility of the actor, and so it must be perfectly free.

Inducements, of course, should and therefore must be brought to bear in the way of persuasion. They must therefore be accompanied by full and complete information as to what is involved in the choice. Action in ignorance, or with any of the facts withheld that are essential to a fully intelligent choice, could not of course be valid. All the facts and issues must be fully known, that the responsibility of the actor may be fully his own, for ignorance of any necessary facts would constitute negative disability. The choice, in order to be valid, must also be free on the positive side from all that could have the effect of force, even to the slightest degree. God must therefore not present Himself, in bringing the choice to an issue, in such majesty, power and glory as to overawe man, for an awestricken man will yield to anything. This would constitute a form of coercion, and would remove responsibility from the actor to the one bringing the coercion to bear. When God put the supreme choice of wills before Adam and Eve in just the simple, natural and perfectly understood prohibition which He gave them, He therefore opened before them such an action as would be perfectly capable of accomplishing for them positive moral characters of their own, and it was valid in that it left them wholly free from every semblance of coercion, and fully informed on the whole issue, action and outcome both ways, which were involved in the choice set before them.

Then besides the inducement of the clearest possible warning that the choice of their own wills in eating the fruit would bring death, God also had frequent loving fellowship with them, that they might have full knowledge of His purpose for their happiness as the reason behind His prohibition of the fruit.

These inducements would appeal to their wills, where the choice was to be decided, through their intellects, as they clearly understood the warning of death as the negative reason for the prohibition, and also to their hearts, as they saw and felt the appeal of His love for them, as the positive reason for the response of their love in the choice of His will.

21. No Warning against Satan

No Warning against Satan

Another thing that entered into their perfect freedom of choice was the fact that God did not warn them against Satan, and they probably knew nothing at the time of his existence. But they were not thereby treated unfairly, but the very opposite, for thus the issue was not confused by becoming a choice between persons, but still remained clearly that of a deliberate choice between God's will and their own. God's word to them alone was a wholly adequate warning against any person, no matter how attractive, who would suggest, however subtly, that they should do, no matter on what pretext, the very thing they were forbidden to do.

Thus they were left entirely unbiased either way in the freedom of their choice when Satan appeared, for by that time they had received enough experience through their frequent fellowship with God to have the presumption fully established that what He said was the exact truth. So even when Satan appeared, they still faced the issue of God's will against theirs. No issue could be more simply nor more fairly presented.

Thus did God make ready for the answer by experiment of the supreme question of wills, that the choice of His will might place them safely within the realm where their eternal happiness would be secure. For if His will should be their choice, their whole being would then be brought, in harmony with the nature of their choice, into a positive and permanent character controlled by the sacrificial principle, like unto God's own character. Exercising their ability not to sin, would become to them the inability to sin. Thus in an eternal response to God with their own sacrificial love, they could be forever happy in understanding and appreciating increasingly the meaning and depth of His sacrificial love for them. But in the nature of things, the opposite choice was possible. For the inducements presented by God to lead to the choice of His will were wholly devoid of all semblance of force, and so the way was left open to choose their own wills, even though every inducement was against it. And if that happened, exercising their ability to sin would become to them the inability to be holy, for it would be the achievement of a fixed character dominated by the selfish principle. Putting himself thus outside the will of God, man would be completely beyond the reach of His love, and therefore forever beyond all possibility of happiness, as far as anything he himself could do to change that condition was concerned. This would mean fixed harmony with that which ought not to be, which would thus be fixed inharmony with God. And this is precisely the thing that happened. The question is often asked, Why did a holy God permit sin?

He did not permit sin! He could not permit sin, for permission is sanction, and sanction is consent, and consent to sin is forever unthinkable in a holy God.

What God permitted was the most perfect opportunity infinite wisdom and love could set before Adam and Eve to achieve for themselves characters that could not sin. God cannot be charged with permitting sin in opening the way for the First Pair to acquire characters that could not sin, simply because they threw away the infinitely loving opportunity He gave them.

22. The Way to Permanent Character Opened

The Way to Permanent Character Opened With these principles before us, we can now look at the actual events by which God allowed the way to open before Adam and Eve, that they might enter into a permanent character of holiness, that thus eternal happiness might be theirs, as He had planned for them.

Up to this time they were happy, up to the limit of their capacity in innocence, in the will of God. Their love to God of course gave them a yearning to be like Him, for love always yearns for likeness to every desirable trait in the loved one.

Then added to their yearning was God's purpose that they should be like Him, as we can see from end to end of His Word which lies before us today. For to be holy like Him would be perfect happiness, and happiness was then, and even now in his sins still is, the goal of man's deepest yearning.

Having therefore created Adam and Eve with a free will, and thus with the power of free choice; also having created them so that a right final life-choice between moral alternatives would bring into full exercise their capacity to love Him; having constituted them also in such a way that such a choice would bring them into permanent characters of their own; and having given them every reason for a choice on the right side and every warning against the opposite choice; when the test comes, God does not step in and interfere.

Why should He? Having given man these capacities to be brought into exercise and development for his eternal welfare, would He interfere with such exercise when the opportunity came? Only if He saw that the test would prove to be inadequate to produce the desired results. For to create a being with a capacity for a moral character of his own, and then to deny him all chance to achieve a right moral character, would be wholly unworthy of such a Being as reason must conceive God to be.

Recall now that there was but one single prohibition—the eating of the physical fruit of an actual tree in the Garden. Not the “tree of good and evil,” however, as some call it, but the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:17), by eating the fruit of which against God's command, they would acquire the knowledge, not only of good but also of evil, and it was the knowledge of evil against which God warned them. They were to choose the good and thus learn what evil was by contrast, not by the experience of it in doing evil. Being but a single prohibition, a test could come in no way but in the terms of that prohibition. A test in any terms outside of it would have been no test at all. For if there is to be a test as to transgression—crossing a line, there must first be a line that is not to be crossed, and that was exactly the nature of God's prohibition given Adam and Eve.

Then as the divinely permitted test came, it proved to be so comprehensive of every possible moral issue that could ever be raised, as to cover in principle every phase of temptation that could ever come to man. Our personalities include both physical, mental and moral capacities, and the

permitted test covered the whole personality.

Recall now that faith is action upon what God says, and is the only means of reaching the goal of happiness. Then notice that the approach of Satan was aimed at faith in what God had said, the import of which was that His will was best. For only as they accepted and acted on God's will to the exclusion of their own, could the permitted test accomplish God's purpose in it for them. So it was in great subtlety and cunning that Satan approached Eve. Instead of frankly suggesting to her that she abandon her longing to be like God, he offered to help her realize it. So he did not boldly propose that she should choose her own will and repudiate God's, but raised a question instead to hint that she might not have fully understood His will for her. For had He really said that she should "not eat of every tree of the Garden?"

23. Where Rationalism Began

Where Rationalism Began So she first allowed herself to listen, and then became willing to consider the “reasonableness” of what he said. That opened his way to reason still further that God’s will could hardly be what she thought it was, for if she would only eat of the fruit, she would at once, by an easy short cut, become like God, Who Himself knew good and evil.

Thus having “listened to reason” instead of believing God, she was deceived and blinded to the extent that she chose her own will and acted on it, at once achieving a fixed character, the central fact in which was a will set against God’s will. This is forever the inescapable result of “listening to reason,” instead of simply believing what God says, and acting accordingly. The whole of Eve’s personality was involved in the choice she made, and so in the effect it had on her. For when she “saw that the tree was good for food”—a physical appeal; “pleasant to the eyes”—a combined physical and psychic appeal; and a “tree to be desired to make one wise”—an appeal outstandingly psychic, “she took of the fruit thereof and did eat,” thereby committing her whole moral personality to the desires of body and mind (Genesis 3:6).

If Eve had refused to “listen to reason” by actively choosing and deliberately committing herself to God’s will, the result would of course have been the opposite of what it was. But choosing to believe and act on Satan’s lie in direct contradiction to God’s word, (everything that contradicts God’s Word is a lie), she went into guilt and unholiness, leading Adam also into the same terrible choice, and thus they both opened their beings to the certainty of eternal unhappiness and endless misery, unless some way could be found, outside of anything they could do for themselves, that could rescue them from such a destiny. The will of the creature has now become dominant over the whole race, which is in Adam, and the will of the Creator repudiated, self-love thus beginning its destructive reign over all mankind. The experiment has thus been entered upon which is ultimately to furnish the full and final answer to the question: Is my will or God’s will best? And when the answer is complete, with the close of human history, that question will never again be raised through all eternity, for the answer of experiment is final. With this outline of the nature of moral being before us, we now have a viewpoint from which we can understand moral action, thus giving us some knowledge of the nature of sin. And when that is before us, we should then be prepared to understand what God must do with sin.

24. The Nature of Sin

The Nature of Sin

Chapter III The whole race is now committed, through Adam, to that which ought not to be. Love has gone astray, abandoned God, and come under the control of self. The sacrificial principle has been repudiated, the selfish principle adopted, and the heart of man now searches for happiness in vain; for it is sought in the will of man, and it can be found only in the will of God.

Moreover, man is by nature, because of the inescapable effect of sin on the whole race, wholly blind to the cause of his unhappiness, and so is forever blaming others for his misery. He is conscious of some sort of strain between himself and his environment, and so in seeking to overcome the tension, he is always trying to change his environment. And since environment always has personalities behind it, he is on the lookout for those who have any influence on his surroundings and circumstances, that through them he may prevent or modify the conditions he believes are to blame for the strain he feels.

It is little wonder, then, that men are so quick to heap blame on others for the things they do not like. It began with Adam and Eve. When God confronted Adam for an accounting on his condition and the conduct that brought it to pass, he blamed it all on the woman, saying in effect: "If You had not given me the woman, I would not have sinned." And when He asked Eve: "What is this that thou hast done?" she said: "The serpent beguiled me," as if she meant, "If You had not allowed Satan to tempt me, I would not have sinned."

Thus they both blamed God for their sin, and their children, from then until now, have been doing the same thing, as their alibis for their sins show when they are fully analyzed. The spirit of this, which more or less possesses the hearts of all under the control of sin, had startling demonstration only recently, when a company of atheists countered our annual Thanksgiving Day services in what they called a "blamegiving" gathering, and in which they went to the blasphemous length of singing to the notes of our Christian Doxology:

"Blame God from whom all cyclones blow;

Blame him when rivers overflow;

Blame him who swirls down house and steeple, Who sinks the ships and drowns the people." The strain that all men feel, however, does not arise from their environment, but from within their own hearts. Causes which they think are external and physical are really internal and ethical, and discords which they lay to an economic system or a moral order are really caused by personal antagonism to a personal God. But the very egotism of sin and the self-conceit of self-love cause a total blindness that must prove fatal, unless removed by a power entirely outside the human race.

Man is blind also to the effect of sin on the race. Being a dependent being, and having declared his independence of God, there is no one left to depend on but man. And since it is impossible to depend on one in whom there is no confidence, the lengths to which humanity goes in its efforts to

build up confidence in the dependability of man would be ridiculous to the last degree, if such efforts were not so tragic in their destructive power.

It is because of man's independence of God through sin that Satan so easily leads him to rely on himself, even when he imagines he is relying on God. Sensing intuitively, as all men are compelled to do, that he is a dependent being, no man can escape the instinct to look to and depend on some supreme being. Only this instinct ever makes it possible to bring any man to true dependence on the true God.

Such dependence, with a view to a happy destiny, is a man's acknowledgement of the worthship of the being, real or imaginary, on whom he relies, and we have shortened the word into worship. Man will worship. No one on earth can stop him, for no power can remove from him the sense of dependence. The coming of sin into the race had no effect on that universal instinct. God created it within man with the precise and loving purpose of leading men to depend on Him forever, and this sense of dependence cannot be touched by sin, even though sin may breed the spirit of independence of the true God. To the depths of our inmost being we know we are dependent creatures.

25. The Birth of Religion

The Birth of "Religion" But one thing that Satan did accomplish with Eve was to separate the ideal of Godlikeness from the Person of God, who was incarnate in His word to her, and then set her to doing something to reach that ideal. His temptation, if put into a fully expressed formula, would read: Godlikeness is achieved by striving after an impersonal ideal, not received by relying on God in Person. Thus was Eve separated from God. This is how works have come so persistently to displace faith in our attitude toward God, whether it be the attitude of independent defiance, or of a simulated dependence. Those who deliberately defy God will go about to build an ideal world by trying to get rid of Him and His interference with their plans for Utopia. While those who think they are depending on God will try to work their way to heaven by striving after high ideals, in the confidence that this is the program of salvation from sin. But it is all effort, with personal faith in God in a saving way wholly impossible. So millions imagine they are depending on God for their salvation, while all the time they are depending on themselves in complete independence of God. For they are following a program of moral self-improvement (as though improvement were possible), without any real surrender to the will of God. They interpret God's will in terms of things to do to insure heaven and happiness, then trying to do these things they imagine they are thereby depending on God, when they are doing the very opposite. They are depending on Him simply to reward their efforts at character building by letting them into heaven. But that is not faith but presumption, for it is wholly foreign to Scripture. When man departed from dependence on God, it was because he had left off faith in His Word. Faith as such did not quit, for man cannot escape believing something in the moral realm; it was faith simply transferred from the Creator to the creature. Man believes as intensely as ever, but the object of his faith is wrong; for it is himself. Whatever dependence on the power of God man may feel the need of, does not hinder his faith in the word of man, which is simply transference of faith in God to dependence on his own wisdom and efforts. This makes necessary a standard, to which his efforts must conform if he is to make sure of heaven. And so one has been formulated to fit such a faith, and it reads: "I believe that if one lives up to his light and does the best he knows how, his happiness for eternity is secure." Such a standard is simply an ideal to strive after, and it is works, not faith at all.

All this is the tragic product of sin, for it is the substance of the first transgression. Man was wrecked by striving after an ideal, and "The just shall live by faith," not by striving after ideals. This is the Scripture meaning of religion, for religion is any one of the great variety of programs on which man depends, by his own efforts, to bind himself back to God. The things James says constitute pure religion (James 1:27) are things to do, the word "undefiled" indicating a contrast between the things named and the unspeakable defilement of the things to do which the heathen on every side were including in their idol worship. The classic meaning of the word for religion, as James used it, is such that Philo, Josephus, Xenophon, Aristotle, Justyn Martyr and others used it as meaning "outward forms and ceremonies," and as expressing a direct contrast with true heart faith. And the "Jews' religion" of which Paul speaks (Galatians 1:14) was certainly a program of works, which set forth ideals to strive for; but salvation from sin is "Not of works, lest any man

should boast" (Ephesians 2:9). Along with faithful Abraham, they were all saved by faith.

26. The Awful Nature of Sin

The Awful Nature of Sin

All the efforts that man puts forth toward God, in the hope of salvation from sin thereby, are but sin added to sin, and as Scripture seeks to describe and warn against its deadly effects, language seems almost to break down in the effort to portray sin as it really is.

Any discussion such as this, however, can set forth only an outline of what Scripture has to say about it, and so the description of its nature must be limited.

1. Sin is transgression, and demands expiation In order for an act to be a transgression, there must be a prohibition to transgress. And that which is transgressed must be something that is essentially right, and thus righteous. It must be a line which cannot be crossed without ruinous moral results. There is only one such line: that between conditions which ought to be, and those that ought not to be.

Stepping over any line from wrong to right could not be called a transgression, for that word carries the idea of going wrong, not turning to the right, the word for that being repentance. That which is right is so because it is good. And the only thing in existence which is or can be the foundation and producing cause of infinite good is good will—the good will of an infinitely good Being. And this we have seen to be the nature of God's will, since perfect happiness is not only the aim of His will for all moral beings, but also the actual condition of all who are perfectly yielded to that will. Good will is the one thing in the universe that is absolute goodness.

Transgression, then, is to step over the line between God's will and ours. This is the sum of all that is wrong, for it is to step out of all possibility of happiness into certain misery, thus robbing God of the infinite joy of lavishing His love on one whom He placed in His universe for that precise purpose. Such a sin demands expiation.

2. Sin is war on God, and demands condemnation

Either the sinner is justified in setting his will up against God's will, or God is justified in condemning the sinner for committing such an outrage, and bringing his defiance to eternal defeat.

Sin is taking arms against that which alone can secure perfect moral welfare and eternal happiness, and such a thing is not only without all excuse, but justly damnable. Justifying God for condemning a thing like that is the only attitude a moral being with any proper sense of right and wrong can take.

God's honor is at stake in the attack of sin on Him. His honor rests on giving such an assurance to His whole universe that He can be utterly trusted to carry out His word and will, that He will thereby command the perfect confidence of every moral being in existence, whether they exercise that confidence or not. His will must be maintained against all who fight to set it aside, for if there is a single knee that will not bow and confess that He is Lord in His universe, He would thus be proven

to be less than omnipotent, and He could not be trusted. War on God therefore demands condemnation.

3. Sin is guilt, and demands a penalty Not only has man transgressed God's will, but he has done it deliberately, defiantly, and purposely, continuing daily to do the opposite of what he knows he should do. This is a crime against God, and thus against His universe. It is the crime of opposing the will of a helpless creature to the will of the omnipotent Creator, thereby setting up a condition which, if it should work itself out unhindered, would destroy the welfare and happiness of the whole moral universe.

Such a crime against God and His moral creation demands a penalty, not simply as the only means of preventing further wreckage, but also as its just desert.

4. Sin is death, and demands a cemetery Not only is man guilty as a transgressor, he is ruined as a creature. Every human being ever born into this world was born spiritually dead, and a dead man is ruined for everything that goes on among the living.

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). Death is separation from the source of life. God is the only source of spiritual life, as of all life. Adam and Eve became spiritually severed from God the moment they sinned. And since we are a race, all the race died in Adam when he sinned, through the inescapable laws of heredity and racial unity. The evidence of their death followed the sin of Adam and Eve immediately. From harmony with God and His will they went at once into inharmony with and antagonism toward Him, and from happy fellowship into intolerance, even of His presence, showing it by hiding from Him when He came to show them His love and enjoy theirs. Such a total spiritual severance from God showed beyond denial that they were completely cut off from all vital spiritual connection with Him, which meant that they died spiritually the moment they sinned, and all their race died in them. A cemetery is therefore necessary, for none of the spiritually dead can be permitted, when they leave this world, to spread the corruption of spiritual death in such a realm of life and perfect purity as heaven. Death, even physical death on this earth, has no place among the living. So when Satan and his angels sinned and died spiritually to God, it was necessary to provide a spiritual cemetery "for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41), and since the corruption of sin is no different in human sinners from that in Satan and his angels, they must inhabit the same cemetery forever, which the Bible calls hell.

27. All Men Are Born Sinners

All Men Are Born Sinners 5. Sin is a nature, and demands displacement

Since every one ever born into the world was born dead, all men have therefore been born ruined, and through no fault of their own. Adam wrought the ruin on the whole race, for “By one man’s (Adam’s) disobedience, the many were constituted sinners” (Romans 5:19); that is, born sinners by constitution. The notion that most people have is that no one becomes a sinner until he begins to sin. The truth is the opposite; we begin to sin because we are sinners by nature. Man does wrong because he is wrong, and he is wrong because he was born that way. We do not become sinners because we begin to sin, but we begin to sin because we are born sinners. Only if a way can be found by which the nature which is sin can be displaced by a nature that cannot sin, can man ever hope to cease being a sinner.

6. Sin is a character, and demands obliteration

Sin is not simply a catalog of evil deeds. Deeds must have a doer, and all deeds are the fruits, the products, of the nature, and the active output of the character of the doer. Out of the heart, the nature, are the issues of life. So sin is a nature expressing itself through a corresponding character, with sins as the deeds of that nature, and the inescapable outflow of that character. This is why “there is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one” (Romans 3:12, marg.). The whole moral personality of every member of the race is by nature a total moral wreck, because every moral capacity of the whole being is wholly empty of God, being completely filled with self. Even what are called the noble impulses of generous and high-born though unsaved souls, are yielded to only because they were born that way, never for the glory of God, for “God is not in all their thoughts” (Psalms 10:4). Such impulses are certainly not yielded to because they are eager to obey His will. The temple of God is a total moral ruin. The ruins may even seem beautiful to some, but the temple is still a ruin, fit only to be set aside for another temple of such spotless and incorruptible character that God can dwell in it forever. And such a temple can never be produced by corrupt and sinful man. A character from which can come only evil can never be trained to do good. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil” (Jeremiah 13:23). A character that cannot be changed, even by God Himself, must therefore be wiped out.

7. Sin is slavery, and demands an emancipator

That every man is a helpless slave to the nature Adam gave him, is the common experience of humanity. Some there always have been who, in the self-conceit of their independence of God, have imagined they could find or fight their way out of this bondage. But when they have gone to their human limit, it has always been only to cry out in hopeless despair, Who shall deliver me from this death that I cannot escape? (Romans 7:24). Who has not said: “When I would do good, evil is present with me”? Every man in sin is conscious daily that he knows better than he does. And he realizes, too, that no matter how doggedly he may resolve to do the good he knows, he does not do it. He is a slave in chains, and no man has ever found a way to escape by his own effort. The only hope is through a liberator. The sum of all this is

the proof of what God says in His Word: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). All humanity, by sin, is dead, and the dead are helpless. One can kick, maul and drag a dead dog around at pleasure, for there can be no resistance. Just so no sinner can escape putting his own will on the throne of his life and obeying it, and fighting God's will because of love for his own. Sin, self and Satan can drag such an one about at pleasure, for the dead cannot resist the workings of the corruption of death. If ever there is to be an escape, an emancipator must arise.

Let the subject now be pursued further, and the nature of sin indicated by various single words in Scripture.

Hamartia is missing a mark that is aimed at. Parabasis is stepping outside the straight pathway laid out for the walk of life, or a going across the lines set. Paranoia is violating a law that has been prescribed. Anomia is lawlessness, or the spirit that is ready to break any law as soon as it is given, simply because it imposes restraint. Parakoeis disobedience to a command that has been heard and understood. Paraptoma is a falling when one should have stood upright. Agnoema means a sin of ignorance of that which should have been known. Hettima is the sin of omitting that which should have been done. Asebeiais the spirit of irreverence toward God. And plemmeleiais discord in the harmonies of the universe. In addition to these mournful but revealing words, there are others that describe the effects of sin on the sinner himself, making him like unto the sin that possesses him. These words include the deceitful effect of sin on the character of the sinner, and go on to the destruction sin works on him, until the final results are eternal banishment from God. There can be but a brief comment on each.

28. Sin's Wreckage beyond Telling

Sin's Wreckage beyond Telling

1. Sin is alie.

It lies to man about his true state of heart, and deceives him into believing he can get along without God.

2. Sin is adelusion.

It leads men to reject God's Word by accepting man's pronouncement on the eternal things of which he knows nothing, and deludes him into believing he can qualify himself, or at least help God to qualify him, for a happy eternity in heaven.

3. Sin is a thing ofdarkness.

It causes man to hide his sins and cover up his wrong doings, while at the same time he tries to keep up appearances.

4. Sin is a crooked, perverse, distorted thing.

It twists the life and character out of uprightness and integrity into crooked ways of living, and perverse, distorted ways of thinking.

5. Sin is asnareto the soul.

It is crafty, cunning, covered, subtle, and so powerful that none can ever escape from its toils by anything less than a miracle worked by divine omnipotence.

6. Sin is grievous, unsatisfyingtoil.

It keeps man laboring for that which is not bread, and spending his life for that which satisfies not, giving him in return nothing but insufferable unrest of soul.

7. Sin is a loss, an emptiness, a hollowness, a nothing.

It turns God out of the soul and keeps Him out, leaving it an aching, yearning, unsatisfied, empty capacity for God which sin can never fill, for sin only empties.

8. Sin is arottenessto the soul.

It so ruins, defiles, and corrupts the soul as to cause it to rot. In Psalms 14:1—"Corrupt are they, and they have done abominable works"—the word "corrupt" is literally "rotten."

Neither these words nor any others exaggerate the effect of sin on the sinner, for it is impossible to overstate a ruin that is total. Language staggers under the attempt to describe man's condition in sin, for the wreck is so terrible as really to be beyond telling. One of sin's chief effects has been to involve all sinners in a loss of all true conception of its enormity, and of our unspeakable deformity

by nature from its effects upon us. At the end of the first chapter, it will be recalled that the question was asked, If wrong has been done against God by man, what is it in Him that has been wronged? It becomes possible to say something here in answer to that question, since sin has also a personal relation to God, as well as to the sinner himself, and through Him to the whole universe.

29. The Sinner Is an Anarchist

The Sinner Is an Anarchist 1. in its relation to God, sin is anarchy The anarchist under a human government says, No ruler. The sinner says, No God. This is the attitude not only of the infidel and atheist, who try to make themselves believe there is no God, but also of every unregenerate sinner. The turned key, the bolts and bars shutting God out of the heart, say in unmistakable language, No God! No God! The stubborn will and the deliberate choice of the heart have shut God out of as much of His universe as the sinner controls, and the absence of God from the heart is as real and complete as though there were no God in existence. As the anarchist in a human government says, No ruler over me, so the sinner against the divine government says, No God for me! The anarchist also says, No government over me such as the ruler stands for, and the sinner says, No government over me such as God stands for. So at this point also the anarchist and the sinner equal each other. When that poor misguided Russian youth shot President McKinley, it was not a shot at the man, but at the United States government. Thinking only in terms of Russian Czarism, Leon Czolgosz imagined that with the President out of the way, the whole government would collapse like a house of cards. That was what did happen in Russia when the Czar was driven from his throne. So when the assassin said, No president, he was thereby saying, No government such as he stands for.

Just so with the moral anarchist in God's government. He is compelled to keep God out of his heart, or he cannot keep God's government out of his life. And since that government is out of all harmony with his selfish desires and purposes, he is out of harmony with that kind of government. If he could have his own way and still be in harmony with God, he would like that kind of harmony, but if having his own way is anarchy, he will still have his own way, whatever the cost. So he says, No God, because he is saying, No government of God over my life. At another point also the sinner and the anarchist are equal. The anarchist, having said, No ruler, for I do not want his rulership, also says, I want my own kind of rulership in the place of his. And this is the ultimate source of his anarchy. A little reflection will convince any thinking person that a condition of complete anarchy, no law, is impossible. Confine a company of professed anarchists on an island, and laws, written or unwritten, would come into operation at once. The very nature and constitution of moral beings makes escape from conformity to law impossible, for every conscious moment of every man's existence is spent in obedience to many laws, whether he wants it that way or not. So an anarchist is simply setting aside law in one form, only to submit to it in another.

Precisely so with the sinner. He says, No God for me, for I do not want His government over my life; I propose to run my life as I please (Luke 19:14). But refusing the will of God over his life does not rid him of the control of law, for that very refusal brands him as the helpless slave of the law of sin and death, and his freedom from the moral law of God becomes abject bond-slavery to the inescapable laws that rule the realm which he has chosen, which laws God could not help establishing when He framed the laws of life. It is impossible, in the moral realm as in the governmental, to get away from law, for all are under the control either of the laws of life or of death. The sinner and the anarchist are thus equal to each other, point for point, which constitutes

sin as the crime of moral anarchy.

2. Once again, sin is intolerance

It is intolerance of the will of God over the life. And for proof that this is true with all who are under control to sin, one needs but to present to a person under that control a call to surrender to the will of God, and it will instantly bring to the surface his spirit of intolerance.

He may react to such a call in sullen silence, or with sarcastic insult, or with courteous refusal, but no matter what his manner may be, it is all the same spirit of intolerance. He may, if endowed with impulses toward a moral life, even appear to yield to God's will, but when his attitude is analyzed, he is found to be wholly intolerant of the will he professes to have accepted, since, for example, he refuses to believe the Scriptures to be inspired and inerrant, and therefore the authoritative will of God. So instead of being yielded to God, he is yielded simply to his own judgment of what God's will is, and is therefore living his life on his own terms, and not at all on God's.

30. The Sinner's Intolerance of Law

The Sinner's Intolerance of Law

Dr. Henry Van Dyke, in his book, *The Gospel for a World of Sin*, quotes from the diary of Frederic Amiel, a conclusion at which every serious and honest person must arrive concerning himself. He wrote: "There is in man an instinct of revolt, an enemy of all law, a rebel which will stoop to no yoke, not even that of reason, duty and wisdom. This element in us is the root of all sin." And John says the same thing in the words: "Sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). But this spirit does not stop with intolerance toward God merely. It is inevitable that any will that is intolerant of God's will, sooner or later will become intolerant of all who do His will. For reaction against God's will must cause a similar reaction toward all who are in harmony with that will.

Christ's life of absolute obedience to God before the Scribes and Pharisees, came to the point where it was forcing them to hate themselves. But they were so determined to prefer themselves and their manner of life to what they saw in Christ, that they had nothing else they could do but to hate Him.

Just so the sinner, in the grip of hatred of God's will, must inevitably come to hate those who do that will. Therein lies the philosophy of persecution. And the time is certain to come, if he is not rescued from that spirit, when he will desire to annihilate all who do God's will. So heaven can certainly never tolerate the presence of any with that spirit. But men in sin think too well of themselves to believe this, and so it has been demonstrated right here on earth, through the presence of His Son among sinners, who was not only God manifest in the flesh, but also Man obedient to the will of God. The constant emphasis Christ placed on His mission to this world was that He might do the will of God. Before He came, it had been prophesied of Him that this would be His mission, in the words: "I come to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:7), and He continued to fulfill that prophecy in the sight of all men until He was received up into glory. His first recorded words were: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49), which meant, doing His Father's will. And when He began His public ministry and called disciples around Him, He taught them to pray to God, "Thy will be done on earth as in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). And all through His ministry that word constantly sounded forth.

He says that the words He speaks are not His but the Father's; the works that He does are given to Him from the Father, and that He always does the things that please Him. He never did an original thing on earth, in the sense that it did not originate in His Father's will.

Here He was, therefore, doing the will that men in sin hate, and thus bringing to light the issue that God had with men. And as He continued in this ministry, the issue became more and more sharp between Him and the Jewish leaders who, by their traditions, had made void the will of God. They first tried to discredit Him, then they went about trying to find how to get rid of Him, until at last, in their intolerance of the One who was doing God's will on earth, they hung Him to a Roman gibbet, and banished Him as far from His own universe as they could get Him. And the spirit in which they

did this showed that if they could have carried out their feelings toward Him, they would have annihilated Him. Not because He had showed them ought but love, but solely because they could not tolerate Him who was doing God's will.

Thus there was full and final demonstration before the universe that sin is forever intolerant both of the will of God and of those who do it. And the final outcome, if sin were not hindered, would be, if such a thing were possible, the banishment of God from His universe and the annihilation of those in it who do His will. Such a spirit would destroy heaven, if it ever had access to that blessed place. A striking illustration of the spirit of intolerance toward God's will which sin compels the sinner to take, came into the early experience of Dr. M.M. Parkhurst, whose last ministry for his Lord was in and around Chicago. As a young man, the influence of a revival meeting he was attending was such that, when his conviction of sin became almost too much to bear, he finally rose to such outrageous rebellion against God that he suddenly cried: "I'll rot in chains in hell for a thousand years before I will so surrender my personality as to submit my will to God." That is the spirit in every unsaved person, the degree and intensity of expression depending on circumstances. No unrepentant sinner can tolerate God's will over him, and so it is only to be expected that God should not tolerate such a spirit in His universe.

All these things that have been said about sin are far from a complete unfolding of its nature, for in its full meaning, it is beyond telling. The utmost limit to which man can go in describing sin falls far short of the reality. Our experiences in the grip of sin help us only faintly to sense its terrible meaning and power, for we see only the earthly phases of its operation, which can only hint what its eternal meaning must be.

We have seen enough of its meaning, however, so that we can now understand with perfect clearness what God must do with sin, and why.

31. The Nature of Moral Government

The Nature of Moral Government

Chapter IV

Man, by sin, has gone beyond the reach of God's love. Stepping out of God's will into his own, he has become spiritually severed from Him, and is therefore a spiritual corpse, as dead to God in spiritual experience as though there were no God in existence. Communication between God and man is still possible, but no communion. From the prospect of perfection in love toward God through a whole-hearted choice of and obedience to His will, man has become fixed in a condition of intolerance toward that will. From spiritual harmony and fellowship with God, he has become so completely antagonistic toward Him as to be intolerant even of His presence.

God is thus confronted by a condition which ought not to be. His holy love has been thwarted, since man is now in a condition of moral ill-being and unhappiness. He must now face the situation on the basis of what He Himself is, and act upon it on the basis of what man has become.

God is righteous; man is now sinful. His love purposes to encompass man with that which will insure his eternal welfare and happiness; man's intolerance even of His presence has put him wholly outside of that welfare. And since man has now achieved a fixed character of hatred toward God's will, there appears to be nothing that can open the way for God to reach man. A love of God's will by man in his condition of sin is now impossible. "The mind of the flesh is enmity (not at enmity, but enmity itself in essence) with God; for it is not subject to the law (will) of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). And of course God cannot tolerate any will set up against His, for that would be against the welfare He has set His will to accomplish for those who will accept it from Him; and therefore even the slightest compromise one way or the other would be equally impossible. So far as anything man can do for himself is concerned, he is thus doomed to eternal enmity against God, with the consequences of that attitude inescapable.

Such a Being as reason demands God should be, however, will not let His purpose for man fail, but will go to any length consistent with His own character, and therefore with the perfect welfare of all the rest of His universe, to find some way to carry His purpose out. But what can He do, confronted by such a condition? That we may isolate the one thing that God, in the nature of things, will be compelled to do, let a supposition, with its necessary consequences, be considered.

32. Suppose God Had Banished Adam

Suppose God Had Banished Adam

Suppose that God should now banish Adam and Eve from His presence forever, seeing that is what they themselves want, as shown in running from Him. Then suppose He puts another order of moral beings on earth in their place. Could such a God as reason demands do a thing like that?

If God had done that, He would thus have confessed that, since His first attempt was a failure, He was now trying again, in the hope of better success. Such a thing would have meant that His first attempt was less than perfect, and that therefore He was less than omnipotent.

It would also have been a confession that He had not foreseen the fall of Adam and Eve, which would have been an acknowledgement that, since He had not foreseen the end from the beginning, He was not omniscient. But worse even than such confessions, it would have meant an acknowledgement that He was not love. For though now confronted by the greatest possible opportunity for His love to go into action and bring back within the realm of its operation those who had stepped out of it, His banishment of them would have been a confession of His unwillingness to undertake such a work. And this would have made it impossible, from then on, for any moral being ever to believe any profession of His love which He might make.

Such a God as reason demands must be One who can be trusted, and therefore One who is able to find a way to bring man back within the reach of His love. Only thus can He make known to His universe that no matter what situation may ever arise anywhere at any time, He is fully able to meet it. In no other way can the confidence of the universe be established in His love, and in His power to carry out its utmost demands.

If God finds a way, therefore, to establish forever the welfare and happiness of those who are already in His will, and a way which also opens to those outside of His will the most gracious and appealing invitation that can possibly be given to accept His way freely and be eternally happy, the whole universe will then forever proclaim Him to be infinite in knowledge, wisdom, power, holiness and love, and thus faith and love will give a response to Him that nothing can ever disturb.

Since God did not banish Adam and Eve and put others in their places, but since instead He went at once to their res-cue, we can then go on to the problem of the basis on which such a rescue could be made possible, and the method by which it must be accomplished.

33. Is Man's Rescue Possible?

Is Man's Rescue Possible?

We will first recall the pertinent facts we have already found concerning the nature of God, as they relate to His purpose of love toward man. The spontaneous outflow of the spiritual life of such a Being as reason demands God should be, toward all moral beings in His universe, is love. His love must therefore be, in the nature of things, the active outgoing toward all moral beings of such a life as forms the perfect embodiment of that which ought to be. That which ought to be is such a condition of perfect moral being as love cannot help desiring for its objects, and as moral perfection cannot help insuring to all who come within the realm where it operates. Holiness thus defines the necessary character, and love the necessary outgo of such a Being as God must be. A condition of moral being which could be defined as that which ought to be, is a condition of perfect and permanent moral happiness and joy, because it is a condition of perfect holiness. That is, a condition of perfect wholeness, completeness, of that kind of character whose sole motive is the undeviating expression of sacrificial love toward God and all other moral beings. In other words, a character like God's. The love of God can therefore seek nothing short of this condition for every one in His moral universe, and still be in harmony with His own holiness of character. In order for God actively to seek such a blissful state for those He loves, He must will it to be so by creating and maintaining by His will those conditions which make such a happy state an eternal certainty. And what God wills for His moral universe constitutes His moral government. (Matthew 6:10).

God's moral government is therefore His holy love actively seeking the perfect moral welfare and permanent happiness of those He created as objects on whom to lavish His love forever (see Ezekiel 33:11). This makes it perfectly clear that the law of God, from its most simple requirement of Adam and Eve in the Garden, to its full expression in the Ten Commandments, is the transcript of His holy and loving will for man. Its sole purpose is thus to win voluntary, eager and whole-hearted yieldedness of the will of man to His will, that thus His love may be satisfied in man's perfect happiness. No matter how God's governmental law is elaborated, that single principle always sums it up, and that single purpose is always its object. That object is therefore always infallibly accomplished, and that end for which He created the dominant craving for happiness in every heart, in all who meet the single condition of submission to His will.

34. God's Government an Embodiment of Love

God's Government an Embodiment of Love To sum up all these principles: God's moral government is His holy love in active operation through His holy will, to the end that holiness, and therefore perfect happiness, might be the eternal lot of those He gave to Himself, that He might forever pour out upon them His infinite love. The moral government of the universe is therefore not a set of rules imposed on man by the arbitrary will of God, but a moral necessity for the happiness of man, growing out of the loving and holy nature of God. Between the nature of God and the moral law there is an eternal identity. He did not set up the moral law with no reference to the moral nature and craving for happiness He gave to man, and then arbitrarily force it on a race whose nature and needs it did not fit, with the demand that they fit themselves into it; neither can He repeal or change it to the slightest degree, as though it were something less than perfect, thus permitting change or being capable of improvement; for it is wholly fitted to accomplish His will to happiness for every one who submits to it. In its nature as law, it is such an expression of God's will, motivated by His love, as can neither admit of change, or of less than absolute conformity to its last jot and tittle, without at once abruptly and completely ending all possibility of reaching the goal of happiness which He purposes for man. On this basis alone, therefore, God must rest all He does, as He prepares to rescue from slavery to their own wills those who are willing to be rescued. And reason requires us to assume that His love will move Him to restore to man at least as much as he lost by sin, provided it can be done in a way that will not affect to the slightest degree the unhindered accomplishment of His purpose of love to all the rest of His universe.

There are myriads of sinless angels around His throne. His love for them must maintain that condition in His moral universe which will keep permanent the well-being and happiness they already have. That there are also sinful beings in the universe, the race-wide experience of man gives sad and painful evidence. And so God's love must also find a way to make possible again the well-being man has lost through sin. When His love, therefore, acts to maintain the perfect welfare of the sinless, such action must, in the nature of things, take the form of justice. For justice is simply maintaining that condition which God's love demands should be maintained for the happiness of those who rely on Him for their welfare. And when His love acts also to secure the welfare of sinners which they lost through sin, just as certainly the action must take the form of mercy. For mercy is the doing of that which love, the same love which acts also in justice, demands should be done, to restore their welfare and happiness to those who have gone out of His will, and are in the realm where the goal is perfect ill-being and misery.

Thus the full-acting expression of God's love, with both sinless and sinful beings in His universe, cannot escape taking the form of both justice and mercy. The operation of both these expressions of love must also be universal. That is, God's love must take in, in its operation, every moral being in existence. For since God's moral government is what He wills, being constantly maintained through all the universe, and since that which He wills is the unceasing expression of His holy love toward all in the universe, both sinless and sinful, His love must therefore seek the welfare of each moral being in His universe, without respect to character, and thus it cannot escape being

universal in its purpose and outreach.

35. The Heart of the Problem of Sin

The Heart of the Problem of Sin This brings our thinking to the heart of the problem which sin thrust into God's moral government. These facts concerning justice and mercy, and the axioms that have led up to them, can mean but one thing. Justice and mercy must each be maintained in full action at all times. For if either one is suspended or interfered with in the slightest degree by the demands of the other, God's love is thus inoperative to that measure, either toward the sinless or the sinful, as the case might be, and that would be a limitation not to be tolerated by such a Being as God.

Mercy cannot permit any interference by justice at any time or under any circumstances, neither can justice tolerate any such thing from mercy. No abatement in action of either justice or mercy can be permitted, for as long as God is God, He can never be baffled or hindered by anything His creatures can do. Such a thing is unthinkable in any Being whom man can accept as God. For God is not a man that He should forget to care for the welfare of the sinless in any program He might carry out for the restoration of the sinful.

These self-evident necessities are being emphasized for the reason that they have escaped the attention of so many people. Blinded by the insufferable egotism sin has wrought upon the whole race, and yet conscious that we need God to be merciful to us because of our sins, we exalt mercy and forget justice. We argue that God is a Being of infinite love and mercy, not seeing that justice also is love, and so we mistakenly think we may expect Him to forgive our sins without reference to any one else in the universe but ourselves, simply because we selfishly want our own happiness secured to us with no thought of others. So if we think of justice at all, we oppose the exercise of it upon ourselves, although we are willing enough for those we think wicked to feel its full force, for sin has robbed us of all interest in having the happiness of those who have never sinned kept permanent.

It is amazing how much careless or shallow thinking on this subject is done, even by many of the leaders in the professing Church. They do not think back to those axiomatic first truths of which we have just been thinking, and so they confuse and blind both themselves and others in proposing a program that sinful and selfish hearts have conjured up for God to follow in forgiving sin, which both ignores justice, and makes mercy little else than a mere sentimental feeling of kindness and pity, exercised by an indulgent God, not toward sinners (that term is impolite), but simply toward the victims of misfortune, which they conceive sin to be.

36. Shallow Thinking on Forgiveness

Shallow Thinking on Forgiveness

Such careless and shallow thinking is well illustrated by what Priestley said on the forgiveness of sin. He said: "It is required of us that if our brother only repent, we should forgive him, even though he should repeat his offence seven times a day. On the same generous maxim, therefore, we cannot but conclude that the Divine Being acts toward us." This sounds reasonable and convincing at first thought, and many of the unwary are caught by its shallow sophistry. If God requires us to forgive one another on the single condition of repentance, why should He require something in addition to our repentance—for example, the death of Christ, before He will forgive us? If He instructs us to forgive our fellows on the simple condition of their repentance, isn't the doctrine that He required the death of His Son before He would forgive us, an immoral doctrine?

We can easily see the sophistry of this reasoning if we will simply recall that there are only two kinds of government thinkable: private and public. So it only remains to ask: Which kind of government is God's?

Since God's moral government must take in the last moral being in His universe, it is very obvious that it cannot be private, and so it is inescapably public government.

Take an illustration from family life. Parental love seeks the welfare of each child, and therefore wills it. The parent's will for each child, then, will take the form of various regulations for his welfare to which the child must conform, if his welfare is to be realized, and this constitutes parental government.

Now no parent has any right to make private regulations for any child, which will not have in full view the welfare of every other child in the family. But just the moment the interests of all the children are reckoned with in the government of each individual child, just that moment the family government becomes universal, and therefore public. Universal, that is, in the fact that it has in view the utmost limits to which the parents' governmental will extends, and public in the fact that the relation of each child to the parents' will is also a relation, through them, to every other child in the family.

Now it can be seen where Priestley's philosophy would lead. It would make God's government private, not public. It would have God found the moral government of His universe on the principles He has given for the regulation of our private relations with our fellow men. Private citizens may indeed forgive private wrongs without in the least disturbing the laws and principles on which the welfare of the State rests. But for a public ruler to forgive public wrongs in that way would be a straight pathway to public ruin.

37. God the Supreme Public Magistrate

God the Supreme Public Magistrate

God is not the Supreme Private Being of the universe, but the Supreme Public Magistrate, and so all our relations to Him are relations through Him to the welfare of every other moral being in existence. This must be so, for the only relations possible with God are relations with Him in Person, and the fundamental thing in His Person is a life of such a nature that its expression is through a character of holiness and love, and the active expression of His character is His will, and His will is the law of His moral government, and His government has the welfare of the whole moral universe as its object.

There can therefore be no private relations with God that are not also public and universal. David saw this when he cried: "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Psalms 51:4), though his sin was against human beings living on this earth. No ruler may forgive in his public office as his subjects may forgive in their private relations. And so God cannot deal with our sin against Him, which is also against His universe, as He asks us to deal with wrongs against one another, and which affect our private relations only. When we forgive one another it is a matter of private adjustment to a fellow being. But when God forgives us, it is a matter of public adjustment to the whole moral universe. Such a forgiveness as Priestley suggests would completely wipe out the distinction between right and wrong, and thus wreck all moral values. If God forgives a sinner at all, it must be on a far different basis from this. What must it be? The Bible tells us that God deals with sin on the basis of the death of Christ. Is this statement to be considered true because it is in the Bible, or is it in the Bible because it is true? Was the death of Christ such a strange thing that it had no essential relation to the forgiveness of sin, or does the reason for it lie back in that inescapable nature of things which required the infinite suffering of the cross before forgiveness was possible? If Christ had to die before our sin could be dealt with in mercy, why was it? If the unspeakable tragedy of the cross was necessary before God could forgive the sinner, what is the reason? How is it possible for the death of God's Son to open a way for salvation which could not have been opened in some other way? How does the death of Christ save us?

These questions are the most profound that ever occupied human thought, and their full answer, if it can be found, contains the solution of every moral problem whatsoever. And so it is of infinite importance that we refuse all answers that do not lie back in those axiomatic and self-evident first truths that are, because whatever is brought forward to deny or disprove them is obviously untrue. So we find such truths as these in the Word of God because they are true, for that Book tells nothing but the truth. The speculations of science which are nothing but philosophic guesses are of no use in such a problem as this, and neither is an arbitrary dogmatism that has no harmony either with Scripture, or with logic and reason. But somewhere there is a reason why for the death of Christ, which is in such perfect harmony with what both the nature of a holy God and the needs of sinful man demand, that it was true before the Bible was ever written or even the world began,

and would continue to be true though every Bible should be destroyed and the world should pass away. And that reason why, when it is found, must not only be a perfect foundation for the simplest faith, but also a complete answer to the deepest demands of reason. As we now move forward to find the answer to these profound questions, it must not be forgotten that both justice, which is love acting on behalf of the sinless, and mercy, through which love acts on behalf of the sinful, must be in continuous and unabated action in the presence of sin. In the nature of things, therefore, the equal exercise at all times of both justice and mercy creates a two-fold problem. First, how can the demands of justice be met without denying the demands of mercy? And again, how can the demands of mercy be satisfied without denying the demands of justice? This is the very heart of the problem that must be solved in any program of salvation for the sinful. The statement that justice is love acting on behalf of the sinless may be difficult to see, at first thought. But the perfect correctness of this statement will appear as we inquire into the nature and enforcement of justice, and then follow with an unfolding of the nature and demands of mercy.

38. The Nature of Justice

The Nature of Justice

Chapter V In any discussion of justice, we are thinking in that realm where God's holiness expresses itself in the maintenance of strict and undeviating righteousness. We are considering that moral condition which ought to be. We are therefore dealing with the life that is in perfect obedience to God's will at all times. Such a moral condition describes the lives of all the angels around the throne of God. But we are also thinking of the relation that such a righteousness must sustain to lives that ought not to be, in that they are out of all harmony with God's will. We are thus considering the action of justice in the presence of unrighteousness, and are asking the question: How will justice proceed when confronted by such conditions? What must justice do in relation to such a life? The answer is obvious. It must act, for the simple reason that it can never cease to act; which means, the demands of justice must be enforced. But in order to understand the principles on which God is compelled to enforce those demands, we need to look a little further into the nature of justice.

1. The Nature of Justice

Justice is that provision of God's love for the sinless which insures the permanence of their moral well-being, no matter at what cost. In the first place, therefore, justice must accomplish the perfect and continuous enforcement of those conditions which secure the permanence of their well-being. This is self-evident.

Then what is that condition which will infallibly insure the permanent well-being of the sinless? That which provided for it in the first place. By what, then, was it provided for in the first place? By God's holy and loving will for them. His love led Him to purpose their well-being, and His will is that holy purpose at work.

Therefore, God's will must be enforced. For in so doing He is maintaining the permanence of His provision, on their behalf, for the well-being of those who are within the realm of its operation.

God's will, then, being the law of His moral government, demands the maintenance of that government in absolute and undeviating righteousness throughout the universe, since it is public, not private. In no other way can the welfare of the sinless be secured to them.

39. The Nature of Right and Wrong

The Nature of Right and Wrong This gives us the definition of right and wrong. There is nothing flexible in these moral terms, for right, or perfect conformity with that which ought to be, is active harmony with the will of God, which is the law of His government, and is thus perfect co-operation with Him in maintaining the eternal welfare of His moral universe.

Wrong, therefore, which is perfect conformity with that which ought not to be, is thus active inharmony with the will of God, and so is perfect antagonism against God Himself, and against all who are in harmony with Him, and it is therefore anarchy in its attitude toward His government.

God, then, did not establish right and wrong by arbitrary fiat, as a thing separate or separable from His nature, and so He cannot unmake them or change their nature without destroying His character. The principles determining right and wrong lie back in the essential Being of God, and if He should change them, He would have to change His own nature to do so. And how can that which is perfect be changed, except in the direction of imperfection? And what would become of God if His very nature should thus be changed?

Dr. Henry P. Liddon once said: "What is God's moral law? Is it a law which might conceivably have been other than it is? Certainly not... The moral law is not a code which He might have made other than it is; it is His own moral nature thrown into a shape which makes it intelligible and applicable to His creatures; and therefore in violating it we are opposing, not something which He has made but might have made otherwise, but Himself. Sin, if it could, would destroy God."

There is therefore no mystery as to why God will enforce His moral law, which is His will, to its utmost requirements, no matter what the cost. For if He should fail to do so, it would have to be either because He could not enforce it, or would not.

If He could not enforce it, He would be less than God, and no one could trust Him with their welfare. For no matter how much His love might move Him to maintain the welfare He wills for them, His lack of power would make it impossible. And if He would not enforce His law, He would thereby take the side of that which ought not to be, which would destroy His character and turn the universe into a moral pandemonium, and how then could He meet the problem of sin?

These principles are paralleled in human government. The true purpose of government is the universal well-being of the law-abiding. All proper government has that end in view. But even though every proper law that could be required is in existence, such laws are wholly useless unless they are enforced. Failure to enforce them is failure to stand for the well-being of the law-abiding. So the standard by which we measure an executive is not his personal popularity, but is, and always must be, his attitude and action toward law enforcement. As he enforces or fails to enforce the laws, he is measured up as a good or bad executive. And if he purposely fails to enforce the law, he is proving to a demonstration that he does not have the interests of the law-abiding as his first concern, and his character as a proper executive is thus destroyed in the eyes of the people. The conclusion is inevitable. Whether looked at in the light of the principles of

human or divine government, God's law must be enforced.

40. Can God's Will Be Set Aside?

Can God's Will Be Set Aside? In the next place, then, the enforcement of God's law can be accomplished only by securing the conquest of all that makes possible the ill-being of the sinless. This is also self-evident.

What condition, then, will make ill-being possible? The opposite of that condition which insures well-being. And again we see, as we have seen from different angles, that the enforcement of God's will is the inescapable demand of His love, for failure to enforce it would work the ill-being of those He loves. He must therefore never allow His will to be set aside. But is it really possible for God's will to be set aside? He certainly will not set it aside Himself, and there is no one else to set it aside but the creature of His own hand, and how can a puny creature set aside the will of the omnipotent Creator?

If some of the self-evident truths already brought to light are recalled and given a setting in the present thought, the answer will be easy.

Happiness is possible to moral beings only. Moral being is possible only to those having the power of choice. The power of choice, or the ability to choose and act in harmony with preference, is the capacity to love and to respond to love. Love is the sole moral force in existence that can determine, and by the action of the will, can create moral character. But two types of moral character are possible: the selfish and the sacrificial. Either character is created by a choice between, and a final committal of love to, either God's will or the will of self.

Now a reaction of some kind, when a choice is made between opposites, is inevitable. If the choice is between God's will and one's own, the reaction will be that of antagonism against every active approach of the will refused.

Then since reaction is always the recoil of action, there must be the reaction, that is, the recoil, of love, against the will not chosen, and the recoil of love is hatred.

Every lover is inescapably a hater. His love compels him to hate in one direction in the exact measure in which he loves in the other, when compelled to choose between two objects that are antagonistic. He will, for example, hate that which would harm a loved one according to the measure of his love, since reaction always equals action. This shows with perfect clearness that if one chooses his own will, he will hate God's will and put it out of his life. That is, even though only a creature, he sets aside the will of the Creator.

It shows also how a moral being can get out of that realm where his moral welfare and happiness are forever secure, and into the realm where moral ill-being and unhappiness are humanly inescapable.

It is impossible for God's love to operate in the realm from which His will has been excluded. For His love can accomplish nothing in any life that refuses to receive it. Those sentimental souls, therefore, who assure us that we can never get beyond the reach of God's love are talking

nonsense. It is terribly true that we can get so completely out of the reach of His love acting in mercy, that He will be compelled to say to us as He said over Jerusalem: "How often would I—and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matthew 23:37-38). Desolate indeed is the soul that has shut out the only real love in existence!

41. Sin's Appalling Destructiveness

Sin's Appalling Destructiveness In previous pages there was given an outline of some of the prominent aspects of sin, as it affects the sinner himself. Its final effect, not only on the sinner, but also on the universe of moral beings, and even on God Himself, must now be set forth, that we may see why God, because He is love, is under infinite obligation to put sin down.

Sin destroys the sinner. The destruction which sin works is proclaimed with such compelling eloquence across the pages of all history, that none who read the story can escape the appalling terror of its message. Even current history, to all who read the daily destruction wrought by sin all over the earth, speaks with a terrible power that none can evade. Not only this, but sin is contagious. It is the most contagious thing in the universe. When once it obtained a place in the heart of Lucifer, though "Son of the Morning," its contagion spread from his own ruined heart until a great host of angels were caught by it and ruined with him for all eternity. And among men, no sooner had Eve been struck with the disease, than Adam was caught by the contagion and died with her (Genesis 3:6). And their race, every one of them born with the contagion of death already in their being (Romans 5:19), by that very means, as long as they remain spiritually severed from God, influence those about them in no way but to more pronounced activity in the corruption of the death by which the race is held. But more important than any other consideration, what about the effect of sin on God Himself? Is there no tragic effect upon the heart of God? Is it nothing to Him to be robbed of those upon whom He has set His heart, and toward whom His infinite love burns to lavish eternal happiness and joy upon them? Do not all other crimes whatsoever find both their meaning and their source in this one?

Disappointed love among men can give those who experience it some of the most excruciating natural suffering of which men are capable. And yet those who experience it most keenly can get from their greatest pain but the faintest hint of what disappointed love would mean to the heart of God.

Think of what the poignancy of that grief must be to God, as interpreted in the terms of the dread and horror of death and eternity which He has made instinctive in the heart of every sinner, that thus He may bring him back within the reach of His love. No one ever escaped the persistent dread and foreboding of future ill-being, when once he has reached the age of accountability, for it speaks in the still small voice of every sin-laden conscience. Why has a God of love set such a dread of the future in the hearts of those living in sin, unless it is because He is love; and because He Himself is seeking to escape disappointed love. The awful meaning behind the terror of such souls is the most appalling truth any human being can ever face. It is the truth thundered at us from a thousand angles every day, that the will of every one outside of God's will is daily hardening in the direction in which it is set. This can mean but one thing. The one who has chosen his own will and turned God's out, is moving, with tragic and inescapable certainty, toward final fixity of his will, with no power, even in God Himself, that can arrest the progress of that hardening, as long as he lives in sinful persistence in that choice. And it makes inevitable another thing, the full horror of

which is wholly beyond all power of human conception. It is the fact that when one reaches that degree of hardness of character and fixity of will in which even the least desire for a change of choice has become impossible, he is forever doomed to slavery to his own evil desires, and with no possibility forever of having them satisfied. He has made the deliberate choice of a character controlled by the selfish principle, and being now fixed in that choice, he must abide eternally with those who are in control of the same principle, all of them wholly incapable of satisfaction (Revelation 22:11, R.V. marg.).

42. And This Is Hell!

And This Is Hell! This is hell. For hell is ultimately a place, only because it is primarily a character. For when a character becomes fixed in rebellion against the will of God, reason demands that there should be some place where such characters can be forever separated from those who have chosen obedience to the divine will. And so, in perfect harmony with what reason demands, we read in the Word of God that there is such a place. We read also that it was prepared for the devil and his angels, when they fell. That is, it was prepared as a place only after the characters that demand such a place had come into existence (Matthew 25:41). And this is the place where human beings who die in their sins will go, and appropriately enough. For their characters are modeled after the precise pattern of those of Satan and his angels, for all of them came into their condition of sin by choosing their own wills and becoming intolerant of God's will.

What an unspeakably awful place hell must be; a place beyond the imagination of man to conceive. Think of the uncounted myriads of beings who will never know any law but their own wills, from which it is impossible to escape, thrown into eternal association with each other! Would you like to be one of such a company? Yet you must be—there is no escape, if you become fixed in the rejection of God's will and the choice of your own.

What else could God do with you? Where else could He place you in His universe? There is no other place but heaven, and heaven also is first a character, for only thus can it be a place where one can be eternally happy. Heaven must first get into us, before we could ever experience anything but intolerable suffering in the place which is heaven. It would be the torments of hell aggravated beyond all power to imagine, to be compelled to associate with the myriads whose perfect joy and eternal delight will be the doing of the will of God which you must forever hate. The awful fact is, there can be no place in the universe which could possibly be heaven to those who have within their breasts the character that makes hell what it is. The salvation of men is from God. The damnation of men is from themselves, and it is in spite of all He can do to save them from it (Isaiah 5:4-6); for when their characters become finally fixed in having their own way, God Himself cannot change them. This is sin, and these are its inescapable results. What shall God do with it? By its very nature sin can never tolerate the will either of God or of those who love and do it, and so God, because He is love, cannot tolerate sin!

It is in the very nature of things, therefore, that He should express His intolerance of sin with such unmistakable meaning and clearness, that no moral being will ever have the slightest possible excuse for opposing His will. Indeed, He must do so, if His love for the sinless is to remain active on their behalf. This brings our thinking to the next phase of the problem of justice.

2. The Enforcement of Justice

Since it is the nature of God's love for the sinless to maintain the enforcement of His loving will on their behalf, this can be done only by perpetual conquest over the will of sinful man, as that which sets His will aside, for only thus can there be conquest over sin. In the first place, therefore, we

must understand the principles on which justice must be enforced.

God must take some attitude toward sin. The enforcement of justice demands this, for in the nature of things He cannot escape some attitude, carried through to its logical end by the necessary action. Even if He ignored sin, that would be an attitude. So what does reason lead us to expect that His attitude would be? What action will maintain the conquest of sin?

There are but four ultimate attitudes toward sin that are conceivable: either that of ignorance, or of indifference, or of consent, or of condemnation. God's attitude must therefore be one of these four. Can God be ignorant of the presence of sin in His universe? That is impossible for an omniscient God, for otherwise He would be incompetent to preside over His own government, and the enforcement of His will over sin would therefore be impossible. So that attitude is out, and three are left.

Again, can God be indifferent to sin? If so, He would be indifferent to the welfare of those who depend on Him to maintain it for them, and so would be unfit to administer His government. That attitude is therefore out.

Once more, can God consent to sin? If He could, and should, He would then become partaker with the sinner in the unspeakable crime of destroying the welfare of dependent beings. His character of holiness would then be gone, and His government with it, and the universe would become an eternal moral wreck. So that is impossible.

There is nothing left, therefore, but the attitude of condemnation. God must condemn sin! That necessity is lifted straight up from the nature of things. Reason demands it, for no rational being can suggest any other conceivable attitude. Can you suggest one?

If you cannot, and if we are compelled to admit that there is nothing God can do with sin but to condemn it, then in what way will He condemn sin?

It is axiomatic that there are but two ways in which sin can be condemned. Either by precept, before it occurs—"Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not" (Exodus 20:3-17); or by penalty, after it occurs—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). And if the precept fails, as it has failed with every one who has ever sinned—and that takes in the race of Adam (Romans 3:23), there is nothing but penalty left! Can any rational being get away from that conclusion? Can you? Is there any other conceivable thing that can be done with sin?

You may be saying, Yes; you have left out one thing God can do with sin. He can forgive it. But can He? Think a minute. And first note that we are not talking about God's attitude toward the sinner, but toward sin. We are not discussing, at least, not just yet, what God may find a way to do for the sinner, but what He is compelled to do with sin. Note that carefully, and then we can think clearly.

43. How Can God Forgive Sin?

How Can God Forgive Sin? Can God, then, forgive sin? If He can, He must, of course, do it outright, for nothing else could be forgiveness. But isn't this Priestley's plausible philosophy thrusting itself upon us again? This is precisely what he argues that God does with our sin. But does He? In the nature of things, outright forgiveness of sin is eternally impossible with God. For in doing that He would have to annul the penalty, and if He should do that, He would cease to condemn sin, and if that was done, He would consent to it! Or turn it around the other way. If God cannot consent to sin, He must condemn it. If He condemns committed sin, the only way He can do it is by penalty. If He pronounces a penalty on sin He must execute it. For a penalty merely threatened, but not executed, is not penalty at all; it is warning only. It cannot possibly become penalty unless it is executed. If forgiveness sets aside the penalty, sin is not condemned, and it therefore receives consent. And if it is executed, forgiveness is forever too late. If this is not obvious, nothing can be. But go a little deeper into these axioms of government, and see what would happen if God should forgive sin.

First, He would take away the execution of the penalty, which means that He would be taking away the penalty itself.

Then to set aside the execution of the penalty would be to abolish the law of which it is the sanction. For the moment the penalty is removed from a law, it ceases to be a law, and becomes mere exhortation or advice. Take away the penalty from the law against stealing, and thieves would have our valuables before tomorrow morning. And to abolish the law of God's moral government would be to abolish His will, and thus both His holiness and His love, and what a wreck the universe would then be! How can men arrive at such conclusions as Priestley arrived at? But to put it in still another light. The moment sin occurs, two moral forces are set in opposition to each other: the will of God, and the will of the creature; or God's law and sin.

One of these forces must conquer. If God's law does not conquer sin, then sin will conquer His law. There would then be at least a part of the universe which he could not control. And if His absolute sovereignty could not be maintained everywhere, He could not insure a condition of welfare and happiness anywhere.

Therefore God must not let sin conquer His will, and so there is no alternative but for His will to conquer sin. For that which would trample God's will under foot, must itself be put under foot. That which would condemn His law, must itself be condemned. That which would put Him off the throne, must itself be dethroned.

Then can God forgive sin? Not until He ceases to condemn it and begins to consent to it, and He will never do that until He ceases to love!

It is no wonder, then, that Socrates cried out in despair: "Plato! Plato! It may be that Deity can forgive sins, but I do not see how!" This is the problem with which the greatest minds this world ever saw have wrestled, and not one of them ever came nearer to its solution than Socrates did. If

there is any power in the mind of any man to overthrow these conclusions, the way is wide open for some one to come forward and undertake it. But it will never be done, for they are lifted straight up from the Word of God, and they are axioms to the mind of man. When love deals with sin, it will not be forgiven, it will be condemned by the execution of the penalty (Romans 8:3, R.V.).

44. How Leniency Invites Sin

How Leniency Invites Sin

There is an illustration of these self-evident truths in a story told of Prince Eugene. During the wars conducted by him and the Duke of Marlborough, they had a discussion one day as to the punishment of men guilty of outrages in the way of marauding.

Prince Eugene said: "I always hang every such offender." A soldier had been brought in who was guilty of marauding, and the Duke said: "If you hang men for such offences, you will hang half the army." The Prince said: "Now, Duke, safety requires such lawlessness to be punished. You have not been accustomed to execute these men, and I have been. Now search the records, and if it is not found that you have executed far more men than I have, I will let this man go free." The records were searched, and it was found that at least five times more men had been executed by the more lenient general than by the more severe one. In other words, exactly in proportion as the Duke of Marlborough had swung away from condemnation toward forgiveness, in just that proportion had he swung toward consent to crime, and the inevitable result followed in the multiplying of offenders. But there is another side to this problem. If God condemns sin on the basis of love to the sinless, how can the sinful ever be brought within the reach of His love? If God cannot escape condemning sin, and if sinners are condemned by the execution of the penalty, they are thus put beyond the reach of His love. How, then, can salvation from that penalty ever become possible? We must pursue our thinking further before we can come upon the clue.

We think next of the penalty by which justice must be enforced.

Sin's penalty must of course include its own inescapable effects on the sinner.

Independence of God, producing complete separation from Him in thought, purposes, interests—in everything, indeed, and putting Him completely out of the heart, is the separation of the whole being from life, for life is possible only in total moral union with and dependence upon Him. It is therefore the condition of spiritual death, and this is the realm where the will of self is supreme.

Death is therefore not separation from existence, but separation from life. An amputated arm dies because it is separated from the source of physical life, not blotted out of existence. It is in a condition of corruption and physical disintegration, but the substance composing the arm persists, and will continue to do so. And so with the soul separated from God. Such a condition is the complete absence of the life-in-God which might have been, and the death-in-self of a soul perverted from what it was intended by God to be. And this is precisely the meaning in Scripture of "destroy" as applied to those who die in sin. It never means annihilation; it always means perversion from God's original intention.

If one goes out into eternity in his sins, he goes into the "second death," which is the inevitable effect, and now the eternal doom, upon those separated from life-in-God. "The soul that sinneth, it

shall die”(Ezekiel 18:4). And death requires a cemetery. Consignment to the cemetery, therefore, must also be included in the effects of sin that inhere in the penalty. And the cemetery is hell, which is the inescapable lot of those who pass out of this life in a state of spiritual death. But this is not all. The penalty on sin must also include a just recompense for its ill-deserts.

Recall that since sin is the reaction of hatred toward the will of God over the life, the sinner who passes from this earth in his sins will inevitably remain fixed in a state of anarchy forever. And this is the spirit which would destroy, if it were possible, the government of God and all it stands for.

45. Anarchists Have No Right to Liberty

Anarchists Have No Right to Liberty In the governments of men, the anarchist has no right to the liberties and blessings of the government he seeks to destroy. The one thing he deserves is separation from its privileges and its people. And this is deportation from among the law-abiding citizens of the government which he hates, and is the only punishment that in justice will meet the situation. No right thinking person will disagree with that.

Deportation from among heaven's law-abiding citizens, or rather, refusal of entrance among them, is therefore the just desert of every moral anarchist under God's government. There is no escape from that conclusion. But the deportation of anarchists requires a guard-house. And again we are compelled to acknowledge that it was the only thing God could do when He prepared hell as the eternal prison of all who go out of this life forever fixed in the choice of their own wills.

Once more, therefore, we find that reason cannot escape from the testimony of Scripture. "She that liveth in pleasure (in pleasing herself) is dead while she liveth" (1 Timothy 5:6). "These shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46), and punishment and prison belong together.

Hell is an unspeakable reality! And yet there are always those who refuse to believe in the justice of hell. It is only those, however, in whose hearts there is the spirit of criminals against God's government. And it is a matter of common observation that no criminal is fit to judge of the justice of the law he has broken, for he is always prejudiced in his own favor. Self is above every other consideration in any man's rebellion against the law of God, and so he can make no just estimate on how he should be treated. God alone can do that, for "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25). He can do nothing else!

Almost every one in prison blames everything and everybody else but himself for his plight, for he is incapable of a just estimate on his own conduct. But God's judgment on sin is that the unrepentant sinner's doom in hell is certain, and reason confirms it, because of the two-fold demand of the natural results and the moral ill-deserts of sin.

Justice must condemn committed sin by the execution of the full penalty. There can be no escape. For then only will be destroyed the possibility that sin will rule over God, and then only can be established the eternal certainty that God will rule over sin, and be Sovereign over His own universe forever. But how can the penalty on sin be executed, and the sinner rescued from that penalty at the same time? How can God carry out His love measure for the sinner and meet the demands of mercy, without setting aside His love measure for the sinless, and thus failing to meet the demands of justice? That brings on the next phase of the problem of salvation.

46. The Nature of Mercy

The Nature of Mercy

Chapter VI Our thinking thus far has brought us to the inescapable conclusion that it is God's love acting as justice which demands the execution of the penalty on sin. Also that it is that same love acting as mercy which equally demands the rescue of the sinner from that penalty. And so our thought is faced with the problem of the salvation of those already condemned, and who therefore have nothing ahead of them but the execution of the penalty. When we try to think our way back, therefore, to that place where the work of such a salvation must begin, we are again compelled to commence with—"In the beginning, God" (Genesis 1:1). Just as the protection of the sinless from the peril of sin must begin with and be accomplished by God, so also with the salvation of the sinful from the penalty on sin.

Then as we ask where, in the Being of God, the movement for such a salvation must begin, it is obvious that it must originate in His holy love, that final active moral attribute which expresses all His relations with the moral beings in His universe. For out of this grows His attitude of love as justice on behalf of the sinless, and also His attitude of love as mercy toward the sinful. As our thought penetrates sufficiently into the depths of the moral situation created by sin so that its unspeakable crime begins to dawn upon us, we become humiliated, shocked, overwhelmed, at last fairly dazed beyond all power of expression, to find that sin—our sin, was of such a nature as to threaten to wrench God's love in twain, and literally break His heart! For its tendency was to set His justice and His mercy each to demanding of the other what neither could give, thus threatening an antinomy that would have reached to the very depths of the divine Being, and which, if the problem of sin could not be met in a way to satisfy both justice and mercy, must tear His love asunder. For justice, demanding that sin's penalty be executed, and mercy equally demanding that it be set aside, could neither one abate its demands one iota. For then love in one direction or the other would have been denied expression, and an omnipotent God thwarted, and such a thing could never be.

What a situation! When the arrow of sin sped out into the everywhere from the heart of man, it did not stop until it had reached to the very heart of God, threatening to set up such a perfect antagonism between the demands of His love for the sinless, and the demands of that same love for the sinful, that the final success of sin must have meant a brokenhearted God forever, with the perfect and unhindered flow of His love rendered eternally impossible.

47. God Must Be Saved from Man's Sin

God Must Be Saved from Man's Sin 1. In the first place, therefore, salvation must begin in the Being of God.

If there had been no sin, there could have threatened no antagonistic demand as between justice and mercy. But the moment sin entered, inharmony was thrust in between these central demands of God's love in a way that required reconciliation between them, else it would be impossible to maintain His love in its integrity.

If the law is broken, not only must the law breaker die or justice will die, but he must also be saved from death or mercy will die. What can love do in such a situation? How can justice and mercy ever act in unhindered harmony in a case like this? How can the apparently inescapable antagonism be so completely removed as to permit them to act in unison?

First, therefore, God's love must be saved from the effects of our sin.

There must be a reconciliation between justice and mercy. The antagonism which sin would force between them must be made eternally impossible. The antinomy which would wrench God's love in two must be forever deflected. God's love must be established in perfect freedom to act on behalf of both the sinless and the sinful. Mercy and truth must meet together, and righteousness and peace must kiss each other. For if these things are not done, the integrity of God's love will be destroyed in the eyes of His own universe.

God Himself must therefore be saved from such an effect in Himself of the sinner's sin, because it is only thus that He can save the sinner from his own sin. And so salvation is first of all a problem between God and Himself, before the problem between God and man can be solved. God must find a way to continue harmony in His own Being and remain eternally reconciled within Himself, before He can reconcile to Himself a sinful race. Thus only can mercy be set free to act on behalf of the sinful.

He had given to Himself the race of man that He might lavish His love upon them. The race had been overwhelmed by an enemy, stolen away from Him, and carried beyond the reach of His love. He must therefore be saved from the heartbreak that threatens, if this situation is not ended, that the way may be opened for man to be brought back within the reach of His love.

It is as though a father's breaking heart cried out for some one to step in and save him from the excruciating grief of seeing a loved but erring son lost to him forever, unless a way could be found to bring the son back to where his father-love could reach and save him.

Just so God's heart cries out for one who can interpose to bring man back to Himself. His love needs to be saved from the threatened loss of those His mercy cries out to rescue from the banishment His own justice must visit upon them for their sins. God's love must therefore be saved from the effects of our sin. But in the second place, God's holiness must also be put right before His universe.

He is confronted not only with heart-wrench, if sin succeeds, but also with dishonor. His holy will has been set aside, flouted, trampled on. Man has denied the righteousness of God's will by proclaiming to the universe that he prefers his own. He said by that act: My will alone is right. God's holiness must be saved from this contempt and dishonor which man's sin has heaped upon it.

Justice must therefore act, or else the integrity of God's holiness also will be destroyed in the sight of His own universe. For justice and judgment are the foundation of His throne (Psalms 89:14, R.V.), and His throne is upheld by mercy (Proverbs 20:28).

48. Will God's Throne Fall?

Will God's Throne Fall? The conclusion is inescapable. If God's justice, which man's sin has trampled under foot, is not saved from the possibility of such dishonor and forever established in the place of honor, the foundation of His throne will thus be removed. And yet if mercy, which man in no wise deserves, is not exercised to the full, His throne will fall for want of support, His sovereignty will end, and everything of moral value will be forever lost. But justice will fail, if mercy abates the action of it one iota. And yet mercy will fail also, if its action is limited by justice to the slightest degree. Of what use is a law which cannot be enforced by the execution of the penalty on the guilty; and yet where is mercy, if it does not prevent that enforcement? If God pardons the sinner, what becomes of justice? And if He does not, what becomes of mercy?

How can God be sovereign in His own universe if He does not fulfil the obligations of a sovereign and enforce His laws; and yet again, how can He be sovereign if He cannot exercise a sovereign's prerogative of mercy and set that enforcement aside? If He ceases to exercise either justice or mercy, how can He maintain His throne and government, and continue to be sovereign? The honor of a government lies in punishing the lawbreaker. And yet the glory of a government lies in forgiving the lawbreaker. Can there be some way found by which both the honor and the glory of God's government may be forever established?

Only one answer to such questions can be given. Salvation must first establish God's sovereignty, which sin has defied, in such a way that He can execute the penalty on sin, for that is His obligation as Sovereign; and at the same time His sovereignty must also be established in such a way that He can righteously exercise His sovereign prerogative of forgiveness toward the sinner.

Salvation must therefore begin in the very Being of God. Both He and His government must be saved from the effects of man's sin. His holiness and His love, His justice and His mercy, must forever stand unaffected by what man's sin has thrust into the moral universe.

2. In the second place, salvation must be made available to the whole race of man. This must include full provision for the complete and eternal rescue of all who are willing to be rescued, and this rescue must be so wrought out that it will in no wise put a sanction on sin. This will mean that the sinless must be protected and the sinful rescued, in the same act, from the effects of sin.

Out of such stern necessities grows the unshakable conclusion that when the Bible says that God is the uncompromising foe of sin, it says in so many words that He is love. And if one should say that He would ever forgive sin in any way that would in the least minimize or excuse it, in so many words he will have said that God is not love. He must prevent sin from doing what its very nature compels it to do to its victims, and through them to those it seeks to make its victims. If He should not do this, the sinless could not trust Him, and if even their confidence was impossible, where would the sinner come in? "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4:18).

49. Sin's Penalty Cannot Be Remitted

Sin's Penalty Cannot Be Remitted

There can be no escape from the penalty on sin, therefore, for if that penalty is tampered with, the welfare of all moral beings is tampered with, and God will never permit such a thing. The problem is thus well before us. If God insures the welfare of the sinless by executing the penalty on sin which He cannot forgive, how can He possibly secure the welfare of the sinner? There must be a way to save the sinless from the peril of sin, and yet save the sinner from the penalty on sin. So justice must act without hindrance on behalf of the sinless, and mercy must remain unhindered as it acts on behalf of the sinful. But suppose no such way can be found. Suppose that either justice or mercy would have to be set aside. Which one would it have to be?

Mercy would be the one to go! For justice always executes the penalty for the sake of public welfare, while mercy's demand is for the sake of private welfare. And it is a governmental axiom that if public welfare cannot be maintained and private welfare secured at the same time, private welfare must be sacrificed for the public good.

Especially is this so when the public welfare is threatened by those who deliberately exalt their private preferences above the public good. The law-abiding have the inherent right to their own well-being, but sinners against that well-being have forfeited all right to their own, and if it is ever secured to them, it must be by outright gift; they have no right to it whatever. And yet there are those who tell us that the very opposite is the truth! They turn God into a sort of blessed Nobody, a mere kind-hearted and exceedingly indulgent Grandfather, who will let justice go, if He cannot maintain it and save the sinner at the same time. But we cannot so divide the Being of God as to accept His mercy while we reject His justice, for that would be repudiating both His love and our own reasons.

Think a moment. If justice is set aside, mercy goes with it. For if there is no justice to execute a penalty, there would be no need of mercy to set it aside. Take justice away, therefore, and no place for mercy can be found, God's love is gone, and all rational thinking is at an end. But there can be no choice between justice and mercy. Neither can be set aside. God's holiness, His love, His moral government, and the welfare of the whole moral creation depends on finding a way by which the penalty on sin can be executed and set aside at the same time.

Justice must execute the full penalty on sin, and mercy must give full and hearty co-operation. And mercy must set the penalty completely aside from the sinner, and justice must as freely and heartily co-operate. If justice refuses pardon, mercy must consent; and if mercy grants pardon, justice must consent.

50. A Problem only God Can Solve

A Problem only God Can Solve This is a problem fit for a God of infinite wisdom! Is it possible that any solution can be found? Certainly not by the wisdom either of man or of angel. No creature can ever cope with the situation that sin thrust into the moral universe, nor find any way out of these inescapable necessities.

We have thus arrived at the place where man's wisdom ends, and his philosophy stands dumb and helpless. Our lesser minds cannot answer the question that baffled Socrates and all the rest among the greatest minds this world ever saw. This is the problem, therefore, on which we must have a direct and supernatural revelation from God, if He has any to give. Is there such a revelation? If not, then all our reasoned conclusions are vain, and we are overwhelmed with black despair. For though we see with Socrates the inescapable necessity for sin to be forgiven, we also with him cry out that we cannot see how it can be made possible. But if there is such a revelation, then we are eager to know if our philosophy is seen in its light to be worthless or even error, or whether it is found so to fit into the principles given by the revelation, that we can come to rest in the knowledge that reason and revelation form a harmony that can never be overthrown.

It was anticipated early in the first chapter (page 17) that God might be expected to give us a revelation at just this point. And it is the good news of the Gospel that He has given us just such a direct revelation as our helplessness before this problem calls for. And when we begin to grasp its principles, we find it to be the one great centralizing and unifying truth in which all that relates to salvation finds its perfect setting, and all reasonable moral philosophy its meaning. The just forgiveness of sin was the problem God faced when He cried out for some one who could so interpose, so go between Him and the sinning race, that His mercy would have full freedom to set the penalty aside and forgive. And it was also a cry for some one through whom His love for the sinless might be forever established before them, by full freedom to execute the penalty on sin. So when there seemed to be none to respond to the call of His love, His own arm brought salvation unto him (Isaiah 59:16)—the salvation of His love from the defeat that otherwise either justice or mercy must have suffered. For He Himself, when no one else in all the universe could be found, took the place that no other being could possibly have taken, and wrought out a salvation that is so running over with divine wisdom and power, holiness and love, that we shall never exhaust its meaning through the ages of the ages. But what is the nature of this salvation He wrought out both for Himself and for sinning man? On what principle was this problem which no man could solve worked out? On the simple and easily understood principle of substitution.

Unphilosophic rationalism calls the doctrine of substitution a theory. The Bible everywhere sets it forth as a fact. If it is a fact, it has gone beyond the realm of theory. Let the sheer logic of the principle itself speak its word of wisdom to your mind.

It was on the principle of substitution that the penalty on sin was both executed and set aside at the same time, and in the same act. No other way is conceivable. In the nature of things, no other solution of the problem of salvation is possible. By this method alone can justice, through a

substitute, execute the penalty on sin with unhindered freedom, while mercy not only consents but gladly co-operates. And only by this same method can mercy, through the same substitute, avert the penalty with unhindered freedom from the sinner, while justice gladly consents and co-operates. Justice and mercy, through a substitute, are thus united in eternal fellowship in solving the problem of sin. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalms 85:10). The method of substitution thus becomes the perfect solution of the entire problem of salvation. There is no phase of the problem that it does not completely and eternally meet. By it God is able, first of all, to continue to be reconciled within Himself, because the threatened antagonism between His justice and His mercy is thus forever rendered impossible; while at the same time the demands of His love for both the sinless and the sinful are fully and eternally satisfied.

He is thereby able to save His government from threatened rupture and destruction, for His absolute sovereignty throughout the moral universe is thus so completely established that He can forever maintain both the honor and the glory of His sovereignty by executing the full penalty on law-breaking, and yet be righteous in forgiving fully and forever the penitent law-breaker.

Salvation is also brought by this method to the whole moral creation, except those who have gone, or will yet go, forever beyond it by refusing it. For He is able not only to put the sinless eternally beyond the reach of sin's destructive power, but also to separate the sinner from his sin—not as a poetic fancy, but as a living and eternal fact so real, that He can and does utterly cancel and nullify the effects of sin in the sinner's deepest being.

It is no wonder, therefore, that from the slain animals of Genesis with whose skins God clothed Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21) to the song of Moses and the slain Lamb of God, which is sung in heaven, the Bible is one continuous unfolding of the principle of substitution.

Reason can find no other way of salvation, and the Bible proclaims no other way. And for any man to refuse to admit the principle of substitution into the solution of the problem of salvation, is to confess that he is either an inexcusably careless or shallow thinker, or else that he is so saturated with the lying philosophy of Satan that he is incapable of taking in the divine philosophy, which we have found forever rests on axiomatic, self-evident, eternal truth, which grows out of the very nature of Him who is truth.

51. No Salvation without Substitution

No Salvation without Substitution

There must be substitution, or there can be no salvation! Any man who rejects the doctrine of salvation through substitution says good-bye to his reason, shuts his eyes to self-evident truth, and puts salvation beneath his feet! The authority for that statement? It does not lie in the blind dogmatism of speculative philosophy, nor in the rationalizing of human scholarship, but in that divine philosophy and infinite wisdom which come into the inquiring and honest heart over the pathway of intuitive, axiomatic, self-evidencing truth, that pathway being opened by humble faith alone. And let it be said with all possible emphasis that if we have missed our way in our thinking, and have arrived at unsound or misleading conclusions—that is, if substitution is not the method of salvation, then it ought easily to be possible for some one to set before us a method of salvation so absolutely axiomatic and overwhelmingly self-evidencing as to prove the doctrine of substitution to be wholly unreasonable, and therefore false and impossible, and thus push it forever beyond further serious human consideration. If you who are reading these lines refuse this doctrine, it should be because you have a more perfect doctrine to present, backed both by Scripture and reason, and the way is wide open and the call loud for you to present it. But the doctrine of substitution is so utterly self-evident to all who are first willing to believe it, that they rest upon it with the utmost confidence of which they are capable, in the certainty that no one will ever be able to set before the world a doctrine that can take its place. For there is no need of God, angels or men that it does not meet, and no problem of complete and eternal salvation which it does not solve. If salvation is not by substitution, there is no such thing as salvation.

God's mercy thus forever stands on the impregnable rock of His inflexible justice. It is first mentioned in Scripture in that connection, and can never be separated from it, for their union is in Christ as the mercy of God incarnate, because in Him is His justice incarnate. When God came down to save Lot and his loved ones from the doom of Sodom, it was because "the Lord, being merciful unto him," anticipated the day when His mercy would be personified in His Son. And so as Lot was saved for the Son's sake, so Zoar was saved for Lot's sake (Genesis 19:16-22), and substitution is thus written into the very heart of God's mercy.

Again, when Moses came down from Sinai with the tables of the Law and found Israel worshipping a calf of gold, he broke the tables in wrath against their sin. Then at God's word he made other tables on which the Law was rewritten by the divine finger, as God proclaimed Himself: "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty" (Exodus 34:6-7). Thus does God base His mercy on the full execution of His justice, the principle of substitution necessarily lying in the background.

Then when the coming of the Substitute at last throws mercy's door wide open to all, we hear no more: "Not clearing the guilty," but: "Not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Corinthians 5:19). And so with David we can sing: "I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever" (Psalms 52:8).

God looks on man in mercy, with the emphasis on the infinite freeness of His own love, with man's deep need in the foreview, stressing free and full deliverance from their misery in sin to all who are willing to have it. For He is "gracious and full of compassion; slow to anger and of great mercy" (Psalms 145:8). What a God we have!

52. The Nature of Substitution

The Nature of Substitution

Chapter VII

Having found that logic and reason are in perfect harmony with the Scripture teaching that salvation from sin can be accomplished through substitution alone, we are not therefore to conclude that there are no further problems connected with our rescue from the ruin wrought by Adam's sin and our own. No matter how completely valid the principle of substitution is as a program of salvation, of what use is the principle, if no one can be found who can qualify to act as an acceptable substitute? The very validity of the principle, and its adequacy to solve every problem connected with salvation, only mock our yearning hearts and intensify our agony in sin, if substitution is but a possibility that no one can fulfil. We must therefore seek to understand the problem God faced as He moved forward to provide an acceptable substitute. As we start out to find the answer to this problem, does logic leave us? Are we now in a realm where reason goes blind? If one presents himself with a claim that he is able to qualify as a substitute, is he to be accepted on his own representations, without our being able to find the principles on which an acceptable substitute can qualify? And if we accept any substitute God provides, must it be on faith only? Must we forfeit the concurrence of reason, or will it turn out that logic and reason are here also in perfect harmony with our faith?

There is at least one basic principle that can be conceived of which is axiomatic, and therefore on which both faith and reason can agree. It is the principle that the work of an acceptable substitute can be valid only as it brings no injury, even to the slightest possible degree, either to any principle of absolute righteousness and equity, or to any person in the universe, as he does his work of substitution. To permit any injury in any direction in providing salvation from the ruin caused by sin, is forever unthinkable of a God of infinite righteousness and holiness. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25). And can He do right if He permits one injury in curing another? The logic of the answer is inescapable. As thought proceeds, then, from this starting point, there are conceivable at least six qualifications which, if they can be met perfectly by any one in the universe, will open the way for a perfect work of substitution to be wrought out, because it will be accomplished in such a manner that no injury could possibly accrue in any direction at any time.

53. Who Can Qualify as a Substitute?

Who Can Qualify as a Substitute?

If there is anyone, therefore, who can qualify under these six requirements, a work of substitution can be done which will perfectly satisfy both God's demands for absolute righteousness, and man's need of free and superabundant mercy. But if a substitute, in attempting to do his work, should deviate even at one point, to the slightest degree, from absolute perfection in that work, he would fail altogether. This should be obvious, and will be when the sheer logic of these demands is seen. The first thing to consider is the qualifications demanded in a substitute. What must he be and be able to do in order to qualify? The first requirement is that a substitute, to be acceptable, must honor and obey the law which those for whom he substitutes are dishonoring and disobeying, as highly as though it had never been broken, so that justice will not be injured. The second requirement is that, even though he gives perfect obedience to the Law that is being broken, he must yet suffer its full penalty as though he had been the supreme criminal against it, so that mercy will not be injured. The third requirement is that he must do his work as a substitute voluntarily and without the slightest pressure from without, so that he himself will not be injured. The fourth requirement is that he must have the absolute and inherent right thus to dispose of himself, so that no one else will be injured. The fifth requirement is that he must be able fully to represent and answer for both God and man in his work as a substitute, so that neither party to the transaction will be injured. The sixth requirement is that his work as a substitute must be of such intrinsic moral worth as forever to satisfy the utmost demands of perfect righteousness and holiness, so that the principles of equity will not be injured.

These requirements appear to cover everything that the nature of things can demand of a substitute. For if they are fully met, absolute right is accorded to God in all the infinite perfections of His Being, including the fundamental passive and active attributes of holiness and love, and also to the sinless, as well as to the sinner and his substitute, the only other moral beings involved in the transaction. Nothing more than this seems thinkable. For if absolute right is done by God, His whole moral creation, and man's substitute, nothing more can be required. The question now confronts us: Is there any one in the universe who can perfectly meet such requirements? If there is, not only can the problem of salvation be solved for eternity, but also every moral question that could ever arise, at any time, under any possible circumstances, has received its full and final answer. What a source of eternal satisfaction both to God, angels and man, if any one can qualify! When God, at the behest of His love, looked out with yearning heart upon the race of men and saw their backs turned upon Him and their hearts full of hateful rebellion against that love, His heart longed for some one to go out and bring them back to His love. So He cried out: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

Certainly no creature, not even a sinless angel, could answer that call, for none could meet such demands as those required of a qualified substitute. This will become obvious as the thought proceeds.

54. God's Own Son Offers Himself

God's Own Son Offers Himself

Then comes One who, from all eternity, has been in the bosom of the Father's love, and says: "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Psalms 40:7-8). And as a preparation for the doing of that will, He says: "A body hast thou prepared for me" (Hebrews 10:5). He comes, therefore, clothed in humility as a man, to do the work of a substitute. Does He qualify? As to the first requirement, the testimony concerning Him is that He not only honors the Law as highly as though it had never been broken, He magnifies the Law and makes it honorable (Isaiah 42:21), by putting it, by His perfect obedience, into a place of honor far higher than it otherwise could ever have had, even by the perfect obedience of the whole race, and so justice is not injured, and He qualifies under this requirement. His attitude toward the law or will of His Father comes out at the very beginning of His public ministry, when He teaches His disciples to pray: "Hallowed be thy name," thus ascribing holiness to the character of God. He puts the honor of God and of His will first in the pattern petition He gives His disciples, for He Himself always put it first in His own life. The holiness of God's character and the righteousness of His will are above all else to Him. For everything that relates to salvation rests on God's holiness expressed in His will, the magnifying and honoring of which comes through the perfect obedience of His Son. This is why He could hurl at His traducers such a challenge as no other man ever dared put into words: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8:46), and why no man has ever been able to take it up. Only one who could hurl such a challenge and find no one to answer, as this Man did, could ever qualify under this demand as an acceptable substitute for sinners against God's holy Law. In meeting the second requirement, He suffers the death penalty of the very law to which He gives perfect obedience. Such a death as He died can be accounted for in no way, unless it be on the ground that it was in the place of others beside Himself to whom it was due. For His death was unique. No other death like it has ever occurred or ever can. Consider the reasons why.

Sin and suffering go together. No sin, no suffering. Yet here is One who is "sinless and undefiled" (Hebrews 7:26), suffering such inconceivable agony that He is called: "A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3), and whose weight of suffering was so heavy that it was followed by extravasation of the heart, or physical heart rupture. Such suffering and agony of a perfectly sinless One can be accounted for in no way, unless it was in substitution for others to whom it was due.

55. Tasting Death for Every Man

Tasting Death for Every Man

Also separation from God and sin go together. No sin, no separation from God. Yet here is the sinless One crying out in unspeakable agony: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34). Such a separation between God and the sinless Son of His love can never be accounted for, unless He actually did, in that awful hour of darkness, “taste death (separation from God) for every man” (Hebrews 2:9), as would be the case with one whose death was that of a substitute.

Mercy, therefore, not only was not injured, but it was wholly satisfied. For now the cry of mercy for the right to act righteously in forgiveness is fully answered and the way flung open to all who will receive it, for it has full access to the sinner on the basis of satisfied justice. The physical death of Christ, therefore, and the shedding of His blood, were after all but the visible signs and the outward symbol of that deeper death which He tasted in His holy Person for the race in the ruin of sin, and the physical heartbreak was but the shadow of a far more real heart-rupture which threatened to wrench the very Being of God when sin entered the universe, and which, in the cross, came to its utmost uncovering before an amazed and sin-scarred creation. The blood of Christ saves because the death behind it answers for all sin. The cross of Christ redeems because there is gathered into it that spiritually vital transaction on behalf of the sinner which opens the way before him to be separated from his sin. The death of Christ reconciles man to God because by it God-in-Christ thereby remains reconciled within Himself, through that substitutionary sacrifice which made forever impossible any antagonism between justice and mercy in forgiving the sinful. The death of Christ was a death behind the crucifixion of His physical body on the tree, and so it was more than a tragedy, it was a transaction by the Triune Godhead. It was such a transaction that the cross did the very thing His crucifiers tried to prevent. For they tried by the cross to be forever rid of His condemning life and teachings. But by that very death they both justified and climaxed His condemnation of them which His life and teachings had brought to such a fulness of revealing light. At this point we must check ourselves on the use of words as we speak of Christ's death. He was not punished in the sinner's stead. Punishment means personal demerit, and He had none. But chastisement may fall on the innocent for the benefit of the guilty. And so with divine accuracy the Word of God tells us that it was Christ's chastisement, not punishment, which wrought out our peace (Isaiah 53:5). If the penalty falls on the sinner, it is punishment; but on the Substitute it is chastisement. It must be noted also that Christ did not become sin for us, but that He was “made (to be) sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21), for the holy Christ could only be made to stand for sin in our place, He could not become sin. This principle of substitution is of such wide application that the activities of life could not go on for a single day without its use. In law it is the “power of attorney.” In government it is the principle of “representation.” And it is at the very heart of business and family life. It is a principle that is not only in perfect harmony with law, but it inheres in the very nature of law. It operates daily in the realm of crime, for every time an innocent man steps up and voluntarily pays the fine of another who is guilty of law breaking, he is thus

bearing the penalty of another man's sin in his stead and as his substitute. And law, because of its very nature, is able to provide for, admit, and be fully satisfied with substitution. The only substitution the law cannot permit is that which would destroy the substitute.

56. Forgiveness without Substitution Impossible

Forgiveness without Substitution Impossible

Moreover, forgiveness apart from substitution is wholly impossible. In every act of forgiveness, the one who is sinned against becomes the substitute for the one he forgives, as he voluntarily accepts, unrecompensed, the consequences of the guilty one's sin, that he may be relieved of those consequences. It is impossible, for example, to forgive a debt except by substitution. For if a man cancels a debt he loses the amount, and thus bears in his person, as the debtor's substitute, the consequences of the forgiveness he grants. In the same way, if he forgives an injury, he consents to endure it without reparation or complaint, that the one who injured him may be free from the penalty he has the right to exact. Forgiveness is wholly out of the question except on the basis of substitution. This means, if it means anything at all, that the innocent suffer for the guilty every time sin is forgiven. It means that a forgiveness in which the innocent do not suffer for the guilty is wholly impossible. And it means that it is morally right for the innocent to suffer for the guilty, if they do so voluntarily, else there could never have been forgiveness in the past, nor could forgiveness ever be possible in the future. And so, since "sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4), and thus a blow of destruction aimed at the Lawgiver, it must, in the nature of things, fall on God, either in the loss of those He gave to Himself as the objects of His love, or in their salvation to His love by accepting their penalty in their stead. In meeting the third requirement of a substitute, Christ lays His life down voluntarily, and so He Himself is not injured. For He says: "I lay my life down that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it again" (John 10:18). Not the slightest pressure or compulsion is brought to bear on Him, so the voluntariness of His death is perfect. The urge behind the act is wholly from the depths of His own heart of love. This disposes of the claim that Christ was a martyr to a cause. No martyr ever lays his life down; it is taken from him. Moreover, if there ever is a time when a martyr experiences the exquisite joy of the most intimate possible fellowship with God, it is in the hour of his martyrdom. But with Christ there was the unspeakable pain of the averted face of His Father and the separation of denied fellowship. That is never the lot of a martyr.

Neither is Christ here merely a Teacher setting an example to those He would teach. For then His life, which was from its beginning on earth wholly sacrificial in both motive and expression, was all the example His teaching needed, and He could have gone right on into heaven from the Mount of Transfiguration. There is infinitely more than any such things as these in His death.

57. The Cross a Divine Transaction

The Cross a Divine Transaction

There is a divine transaction being deliberately carried through by the Triune God. When Christ says that He has the authority to lay His life down and to take it again, and that in doing so He is acting on a commandment He has received from His Father to which He is voluntarily obedient, it indicates, if such language means what it says, that there is here a divine free will at work, wholly apart from anything His crucifiers knew. He submitted Himself to their will, and yet His death was independent of their will. For when, with a loud cry, He yielded up—sent away—His spirit, He was sovereignly dismissing Himself from His body. Indeed, could He have died at the hand of man—a sinless divine Being upon whom death could have no claim—if He had not done this?

He died, therefore, not primarily because His life was taken from Him by man, but because He deliberately became “obedient unto death” (Php 2:8). Not, obedient to his Father until death, nor obedient even though He died for it, but obedient to death itself. Death commanded, and by a deliberate choice of His free will He obeyed.

Yet this was not suicide, but the very opposite. For when one suicides, he thrusts himself unbidden into the presence of God, having no right to take his life because he cannot bring it back again. But Christ yields His life by the action of His own will, not only because He can take it again, but because in taking it up out of the grave, He is thus forging the last link in the chain by which He will forever bind him who has the power of death, on behalf of every one who is willing to receive life at His hands. If anything completely voluntary ever happened on this earth, it was the death of Christ. So he qualifies at this point, for He Himself is not injured.

Coming to the fourth requirement of a substitute, Christ has the inherent right thus to dispose of Himself, provided He is Creator and not creature. No creature, not even the highest and greatest of the sinless angels, has any right over his own life. It belongs to, and is therefore wholly at the disposal of, the Creator. No creature could qualify under this requirement, for none has the right to lay his life down.

Moreover, if God should grant any sinless creature that right, and he should lay his life down for us by the permission of God, here then would be God giving a creature instead of Himself, and this would wholly remove Him, and therefore His love, from the transaction. For love is self-giving, it is not the giving of someone else. God could never show His love without giving Himself.

Indeed, if God should permit a creature to die for sinners, He would thereby be laying the most perfect plan to rob Himself of the sinner’s love. For when a sacrifice is made on our behalf, our love goes out to the one making the sacrifice, not to someone else. And so if He who died on the cross was a creature, His death could never draw our love out toward the Creator.

If Christ, therefore, is not actually God Himself, manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16), He was but a creature, and as such, wholly unable to qualify at this point.

Moreover, if this was the case, then reason must put God under eternal indictment for sanctioning such suffering and sacrifice for nothing, for it would then have to be declared that all hope of salvation is blotted out for the whole race forever. The logic of all the facts, however, compels the conclusion that Christ does perfectly qualify under this requirement, for only as Creator can He dispose of His life as this Man disposed of His, because then alone would there be no injury to any one else. And certainly, if Christ was not God, then God Himself must be indicted again for the injury He does the whole race in raising confidence in that which does not exist, and building false hopes that can never be fulfilled.

58. Only God Can Act as Substitute

Only God Can Act as Substitute This requirement of a substitute thus demands the deity of Jesus Christ. Otherwise a holy and righteous God, whose acts must eternally be the expression of that which ought to be, could never have permitted the tragedy of the cross—and tragedy it would indeed be—much less proclaimed it as the only way of salvation. Rob Christ of His deity, and you do the same thing with God. In meeting the fifth requirement, Christ is fully able to answer for and represent both God and man, if He is both God and man. That Christ actually is both God and Man is shown by His ability to render wholly acceptable service to God as, on the one hand, He represents Him in maintaining His Law to the last jot and tittle in qualifying before Him on behalf of the sinless; and on the other hand, as He represents man in receiving the penalty of the Law on behalf of the sinful, For no one ought to answer for man's sins but man; and no one can answer for them but God. So if Christ is to be identified with God so vitally that He will demand that God's Law shall be maintained to the limit and man's sin judged and condemned, He must be God; and if He is also to be identified with man so vitally that He can let the Law say to Him all it has to say to the sinning race, and thus fully answer for sin on man's behalf, He must be Man.

Reason therefore demands the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. God must be His Father, else He cannot be God, just as a woman must be His mother, else He cannot be Man. Indeed, if He was not virgin born, the records prove that He was nothing other than a Jewish bastard, born out of wedlock, and stained forever with the shame of His mother's unchastity. But logic and honesty agree with Scripture that He was the virgin born Son of God. So when the Bible calls Him the Son of God and the only Begotten of the Father, and calls Him also the Son of Man and the Seed of the woman, we are compelled to believe it because there is nothing else on which either reason or faith can lay hold. When one is said to be begotten by another, that is nothing else but sonship and fatherhood. So Christ is the only Begotten of the Father by generation and birth, and He could thus be nothing other than the Son of God. Then as the son of Mary He is the "Seed of the woman," a fact unique in all racial history, for no other person ever born on this earth was anything but the seed of the man. This phrase describing Christ's birth is wholly meaningless unless He was virgin born. So also the words: "The Son of man."

59. Denial of Virgin Birth Irrational

Denial of Virgin Birth Irrational

Those who deny Christ's virgin birth do not see the dilemma into which they bring themselves. Christ must either have been sinless and virgin born, or else He was neither, judged by words that came from His own mouth. For He said: "None is good (sinless) save one, that is, God" (Luke 18:19). If He was sinless, therefore, He had to be the virgin born Son of God. And if He was not virgin born, He could not have been sinless, for He was only a man with Adam's sinful nature. So until some one can lay one sin, error, or even fault to His charge and make men believe it, the only alternative is to believe that He was virgin born, as God's Word says.

Herein lies the philosophy of the incarnation. This is why the Mighty God tabernacled in the flesh. This is why the Son of God could give His life a ransom for many. For without the virgin birth He never could have answered either to God or for man in meeting the sin of the ruined race of Adam.

Indeed, without a virgin birth, Christ could not have met even one of the requirements of a substitute. But if, by a virgin birth, He is both God and Man, He meets every one of them. For thus and thus alone neither party to the redemptive transaction can possibly suffer injury.

Coming now to the sixth requirement of a substitute, Christ's work as Substitute was of such intrinsic moral worth as to present to God a value sufficient to cover the moral needs, not only of His own holy Law in bringing it up out of dishonor, but also of the whole sinful world, and even of a thousand worlds like ours, if that were necessary, since it was "God the mighty Maker, in man the creature's stead."

Here once more reason demands the deity of the substitute, and Scripture declares it. That is what gave His work its worth, for otherwise it would have been worthless. And such worth did His work have that no injury could ever come to the eternal principles of equity and righteousness inherent in God's holiness. The suffering of Christ was no quid pro quo transaction. It was the perfect satisfaction given to the justice of God by the infinite merit of the holiness of the selfsame God, who Himself became the Substitute to meet on man's behalf His own just requirements.

It was no third party coming in between God and the sinner and changing His wrath to love. It was God Himself expressing His love, at infinite cost to Himself, in a way that gave full satisfaction both to the justice and the mercy which must be demanded by a holy and loving God. To say, therefore, that Christ endured on the cross just so much suffering for so much sin is but to lower the very righteousness such a view is meant to uphold. It was the holy merit of Deity, which is infinite, by which Christ became "a propitiation, not for our sins (the saved) only, but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2), that now "whosoever will (though it be the whole world) may come." It was not the quantity of His suffering but the nature and character of the suffering One whose measureless love the suffering uncovered—not what He suffered but who He was—that met this demand of a substitute.

Here is One, therefore, who meets every requirement reason demands of a substitute, according to the Record whose truthfulness remains unshaken after age-long attacks of ancient and modern unbelievers, and lo, He is God Himself.

None other could meet these demands, and so, for His love's sake, God freely gave His Son, and the Son freely laid down His life. "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor (none to interpose), therefore his arm brought salvation unto him, and his righteousness, it sustained him" (Isaiah 59:16). And so in the salvation which came thus to Him, the way was opened to the salvation He so freely offers all men.

Thus as the Son comes forth from the unseen and ineffable glory through the gateway of the virgin birth to tabernacle in a stainless humanity, He becomes both the first and the only One ever born to die. All others are born to live. And so it is not strange, as we watch the mighty and majestic movement of His life as He comes to fulfill His mission among men, that we are forced to feel, at every step of the way, that the one supreme goal toward which He ever moves is His death on the cross. For in no other way can the thwarted purpose of God for man be released, and the enemy of that purpose be forever defeated.

60. Was Christ's Life Substitutionary?

Was Christ's Life Substitutionary? At this point it must be noted that there is a conception which makes Christ's life as well as His death substitutionary. The theory is that His perfect life, lived in substitution for our sinful lives, earned for us the reward of eternal life. But Scripture seems clearly to teach that His work of substitution was wholly confined to what He did on the cross, and that His life before men was to set forth His perfect fitness to act as an acceptable Substitute, thus providing such a basis for perfect faith in His work as would make doubt of its sufficiency forever impossible. For in neither Old Testament ceremonial pictures nor in New Testament doctrine does the idea of a substitutionary life seem to be indicated. The first picture of substitution is in the clothing of Adam and Eve. So by the law of the first occurrence of a given doctrine, this should give us a clue to the whole doctrine. In this picture it was clearly the blood, and therefore the death of the animals only, that furnished the skins which made possible the typical clothing of the sinning Pair. This clothing of them by God is the type of the God-given righteousness in Christ, by which alone we can stand in His presence unashamed and unafraid. The lives of these animals do not enter into this picture at all, but their death, by which alone they furnished the covering. So also did Christ accomplish the whole work of substitution by His death on the cross, with His life filling a different role in the transaction of salvation. This same thing was true in the sacrifice of the lamb by Abel. The life of the lamb had no substitutionary value before God, for it was clearly the death alone which made Abel's offering acceptable. The same was true of the Passover lamb, from its first sacrifice in Egypt on. And while the life and character of the lamb enter into the picture here, it was wholly on the ground that it must first qualify as a type to picture the life and character of Christ, the coming Lamb of God, before it could be accepted to act as a typical substitute. It must be without blemish up to the very moment of sacrifice, or it could not qualify to be acceptable as a type of Christ. In other words, through its whole life it is watched for any defeat or flaw that would prevent its acceptance as a picture of Christ's life, before its work as a substitute could even begin. Only thus could it come to pass that "when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13).

These types and all others relating to substitution seem to have but one voice for us. The Son of God, though of course eternally qualified in Himself to be our Substitute, was yet not historically and objectively qualified in the eyes of the universe until, having stood up under every phase of the test under which man went down, He was thus shown before every intelligence, under the inflexible scrutiny of the holy eye of God, to be wholly without blemish, and therefore fully qualified, as the spotless Lamb of God, to do His work on the cross as our Substitute. The testing of Christ's life was of course not an attempt to break Him down, but rather a proof to the whole universe that He could not be broken down, as man was, thus settling every question that doubt could ever raise, and establishing our confidence forever in the superabounding sufficiency of His work for us. So it seems obvious that while He was engaged in the process of showing historically that He was qualified to be an acceptable Substitute, He could hardly have been doing the work of the Substitute before this proof was completed with His arrival in perfect fitness at the cross.

Scripture clearly bases everything Christ did to accomplish our complete salvation, including the gift of eternal life, on the shedding of His blood alone. For it is His own resurrection life that He gives us—nay, rather, that He actually is in Himself in us, which is our eternal life, and the shedding of His blood had to precede His resurrection. So He does not earn eternal life for us by a substitutionary life, but presents it to us on the basis of His substitutionary death (Romans 6:23).

61. Crucifixion and Resurrection Belong Together

Crucifixion and Resurrection Belong Together This brings before us the other side of that great truth which, in type, in symbol and in doctrine, runs through Scripture from end to end. Without this other half of this great two-fold truth, Christ's death would have been in vain, and our faith would be vain.

It was because Christ met fully and forever every demand which infinite holiness could possibly require of a substitute, that God raised Him from the dead. The resurrection is God's sign, seal and signet, certifying to the whole moral universe that both the character and the work of His Son were wholly without flaw, and were therefore eternally sufficient for all who trusted in that work for them.

There is deep meaning in a wonderful statement in Christ's upper room message to His disciples that some people miss. He is speaking of the coming of the Holy Spirit and of His work among men. He says that the Spirit will convince the world "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). After saying that the one and only sin of which the Spirit will convince men is that of not believing on Him, he says that the Spirit will also convince them of righteousness, "because," says He, "I go to my Father."

Some so completely miss the real meaning in those words that they misquote Christ's next statement and say: "of judgment to come." But after the cross it is judgment past, "because the prince of this world hath been judged." For Satan was judged and sentenced by the cross, the selfish principle which made him what he is and men what they are, being thereby forever condemned and cast out by the exaltation of the sacrificial principle on the cross, as the infinite and majestic glory of that principle was there fully displayed before the universe. When Satan through men put Christ to death, the cross became the throne of glory from which the sacrificial principle shall forever reign over the eternal ages. The resurrection then follows, and thus becomes God's reversal of the world's judgment of His Son. The last view the world ever had of Christ, He was hanging on a malefactor's cross, the butt of sneers, contempt and ridicule, a condemned fraud, impostor and blasphemer of God. The world told God their estimate of His Son by hanging Him to a gibbet, thereby saying: That's what we think of Him! "Away with such a fellow from the earth! for it is not fit that he should live" (Acts 22:22), as the Jews said of Paul. And when they laid Him in the tomb, the world never saw Him again. But His own saw Him, and had many "infallible proofs" that He was alive.

Thus did God speak and give the world His estimate of the One men had murdered. He said to His Son: "Come forth," as He "loosed the pangs of death; because it was not possible that He should be held by it" (Acts 2:24). But why could not death hold Him? Because death had no claim on Him, for He was righteous. He purposely went into that dread realm "that through death He might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). He brought the devil's power of death to naught, therefore, when He deliberately took His own human body from that realm and repossessed it with a life which death can nevermore touch. Thus He "brought

immortality to light” (2 Timothy 1:10); for immortality relates wholly to the body, never to the soul, for every soul as created by God is endowed with endless being.

Having “abolished death,” therefore, in the resurrection of His Son, God thus vindicates all Christ’s claims for Himself, establishing forever the perfect righteousness of Him whom the world had banished as a blasphemer. The Holy Spirit thus convinces the world of His righteousness through the fact that He was raised from the dead and taken to the Father (John 16:10). That is the eternally established evidence of Christ’s righteousness.

62. We Were Executed in Christ on Calvary

We Were Executed in Christ on Calvary This fact also means to us who are “in Christ” that our judgment has already taken place in Him on the cross, and so death has now no claim on us, any more than on Him. So we rest without fear on the good news concerning “the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand” (Ephesians 1:19-20). We therefore look forward with eager longing to the moment when we shall be changed at His coming, and this mortal shall put on immortality. No wonder, then, that Paul cried out: “If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17). Apart from the resurrection we would have to conclude that Christ was sinful like all other men, since death held Him in its power. And so we would have no proof that He was the Son of God, the Saviour of men, the King of kings and the Judge of all, and our hope of salvation would be forever blotted out. In Christ’s sufferings and death the work of our salvation was “finished” and forever sufficient. But without the resurrection, to say nothing of its other values, man would not only have been without God’s confirming credential of its sufficiency and acceptance with Him, but the evidence would even have been against it, and man’s faith would have had no sure foundation on which to rest. But thank God, the Holy Spirit was sent to convince us of righteousness—His righteousness, in that He was raised from the grave and exalted to the Father’s right hand, where He sits in a resurrected and immortal human body, henceforth expecting until His foes, including the last enemy, death, shall be under His footstool. But the resurrection is not only evidential to us, but it may and should become experiential within us. There is that within it which caused Paul to cry out with eager yearning: “That I might know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death” (Php 3:10).

What he meant may be gathered from a notable fact in the New Testament. There seems to be little if any doctrinal mention of the cross apart from the resurrection, and this is most significant. Paul tells the Romans that “like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4), and such a life is one in which is being literally experienced, from moment to moment, the very power of His resurrection life. And the pathway to that experience is utter willingness to be made conformable in our daily life to His death—to die daily, that we may constantly live in the power of His resurrection. For if a grain of wheat dies, it escapes that tragic loneliness in which it would abide alone, and enters a resurrection activity in which it brings forth much fruit (John 12:24).

Resurrection ground is always fruit-bearing ground. If there had been no grave in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea, there could have been no resurrection there. And unless we actually enter, in our personal experience, into Christ’s death to the Adam humanity, the new man cannot be released into the power of His resurrection and the bearing of much fruit. The death and resurrection of Christ are therefore as inseparable experientially as they are doctrinally. For “He died for all that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again” (2 Corinthians 5:15), the crucified life thus opening the way to resurrection

fruitage.

Christ is thus a two-fold Saviour, having provided for us a two-fold salvation to meet our two-fold need. By His death for us He freed us forever from the guilt of our sins, and His risen life within us makes literal and real in our experience, while we walk by faith, such a release from the power of the nature of sin, that fruitful service in resurrection power is the habitual course of our lives.

63. The Nature of Grace

The Nature of Grace

Chapter VIII

We now have before us an outline of the outstanding facts about what sin is and does. We have seen the inescapable reaction of a holy God toward sin, and the threatened heart-rupture in His love for both the sinless and the sinful. We have seen the necessity in such a Being as reason demands God should be, that both justice and mercy shall find a way to act both in full freedom and in mutual harmony in the presence of sin. And we have seen that God has provided Himself a living Way on the principle of substitution, in that He Himself did the work of a Substitute in the Person of His own Son.

Now we are to learn that this union of justice and mercy through the death of God in His Son on the cross, is His love becoming grace, and grace making available a salvation from sin that never otherwise could have been possible. It is this harmonious union of justice and mercy, acting together to save those who deserve the very opposite, that constitutes grace. In order, however, to come into any adequate appreciation of such a salvation, we need to look more deeply into the "pit from which we were digged." A medical remedy that saves from otherwise inevitable death, is esteemed far above one that merely hastens relief from an ailment that would have passed away anyway with a little more time. So we must first take our stand before the cross and see for ourselves the full and final uncovering of sin, that we may grasp, as far as our sin-marred capacities will permit, what that awful thing really is that God-in-Christ died to save us from. Only thus can we get any clear vision of the meaning of grace. As we stand before the cross, we are first of all face to face with the central and most tremendous reality in the Being of an infinite God. That cross penetrates to the innermost heart of Deity, and radiates to the outermost circumference of His illimitable love. A by-gone eternity knew no other future than the cross, and a coming eternity shall know no other past. All the converging rays of previous history, and all the diverging rays of subsequent history, focus on the cross. It enshrines the one eternal and unfathomable moral fact for which all time was projected and all history made. It stands at the moral center of the universe. As we approach the cross, therefore, it must be with bared heads and unsandalled feet, for we are in the presence chamber of the awful yet glorious majesty of a holy God; we are gazing on the infinite suffering of a broken-hearted Deity; we are confronted by the most unspeakable tragedy the eternities will ever behold. We are watching the creature murder his Creator!

64. How the Cross Uncovers Sin

How the Cross Uncovers Sin

Here is therefore the complete and eternal uncovering of sin. Here we behold the limitless lengths and the damnable depths to which it will go. Here we look upon the final fruitage of that choice which shuts God out of the heart He made for the sake of His own unmeasured love. For when the Son of God yielded Himself to the will of sinful men and let them do to Him whatsoever their hearts desired, they there told forth to an amazed and outraged universe that, under sin, the finished product of man's power is the infinite God hanging on a Roman gibbet; the utmost limit of man's wisdom is the Saviour of sinners driven out of the world He came to save; the final accomplishment of man's religion is a murdered Messiah stretched between heaven and earth. What an unspeakable crime!

Man had been led to adopt that satanic philosophy of life that the place of perfect welfare and happiness is in the realm where the creature's own will is supreme, with the Creator's will rejected and cast off. The Son of God, to remedy this condition, in due time leaves the bosom of the Father, the infinite peace and purity of heaven, the worship and adoration of angels, and, laying aside a glory inconceivable to man in sin, comes down into this scene of darkness and discord, of selfishness and strife, of ruin and rottenness, and with a compassion of which only God is capable, seeks to show mankind that the only sphere of perfect happiness and welfare is in the will of God. But though He stands and knocks at His own door, He finds it barred in His face, for "His own received Him not." And then, although He is in His own world, He wanders, an unknown outcast, for "the world knew Him not" (John 1:10-11). He gathers about Him a little handful of men to be His disciples and companions, yet in the hour of His supreme darkness, even they betrayed, denied and deserted Him, for "they all forsook Him and fled" (Mark 14:50). As He seeks to show men that their attitude toward Him has no influence on His love for them, it only serves to widen the moral chasm, thus uncovering more fully the nature of sin. For the more He goes about doing them good, the more they seek to do Him harm; the more blessings He pours upon their lives, the more curses they have for His; the more love He lavishes upon them, the more He wins their sullen hatred. In return for the crown of loving kindness and tender mercies He seeks to put upon their brows, He receives a crown of thorns for His own; for the robe of God's righteousness with which He seeks to cover the shame of their own unrighteousness, He receives a robe of mockery and scorn for Himself; for the gift of eternal life He comes to bestow on them, He receives the most shameful death known to man. His compassion wins nothing but cruelty, His kindness nothing but outrage, and His measureless love nothing but murder.

Those He came to save stand before His cross, and with unspeakable insult, jeer Him in His imagined helplessness, mock Him in His frightful suffering, and make fun of Him in His immeasurable agony. While earth trembles and shudders under the weight of crucified Deity, and the sun hides his face from the awful scene, men gloat over the sight as with the glee of demons, defy Him with the ultimatum of their sin—"We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14),

and then hurl Him from His own world through the gates of death. They rise up against Him and “kill the Lord of glory,” and thus dethrone God and enthrone man.

He came to destroy the power of sin over man, and men rose up and destroyed Him. He came among them as the Prince of Peace, and they made war on Him until they had driven Him to apparent defeat, with a spear thrust in His side as their parting salute, as they left Him dead on the field of action. He had come to bring them forth from their graves in sin, and they defied Him in their sin and hid Him away in a grave. His whole life had been one continual love story from the heart of God, but it ends amid the outrageous hatred of men and the hellish laughter of demons.

65. The Insult Supreme

The Insult Supreme This certainly must be sin's complete uncovering. There surely can be nothing beyond this that it can move men to do. But wait! The hidden source of such unspeakable outrage is yet to be uncovered in the most unblushing effrontery of which men blinded in sin are capable. Before we have time to turn away from the cross, behold, men come and stand in the presence of that scene, and with inconceivable insult, seek to make it minister to their pride! They welcome the word that Christ died for men, but they wholly ignore the fact that He died by the hand of men. They stand in the presence of that supreme crime and say: Behold man's native greatness and innate nobility. His ethical dignity and moral capacity are so great that the "moral influence" of that sacrifice will win them back from their "mistakes" into the highway of moral goodness and heavenly achievement. Man is morally and spiritually capable, but ignorant and wrongly influenced; it only needs the influence of this Man through such a self-sacrificing deed as this to win men everywhere to walk "in His steps."

Sons of a ruined race, haven't men sinned enough when they have mauled and murdered the Son of God! Must they stand before that ultimate uncovering of sin and pile such insult mountain high upon such injury! Must they actually force their own unspeakable crime of murder to bring forth for them the sorry and sickening compliments of self-gratulation, in their shameless and insufferable pride! When God points to the death of Christ, He confronts us with the cross by which men slew Him and says: Behold the unshakable proof that the choice of the creature's will, instead of the Creator's, has made man so sodden in sin that he drives from his presence infinite purity, holiness and love, even though he has to become the murderer of God to do it! And you who read these lines, if you are living in the choice of your own will instead of God's, are standing at this moment with that crowd of murderers. For they put Him as far out of His universe as they could get Him, and you are doing the same thing in keeping Him out of your heart. This is not said to deny that there is greatness in man, but to magnify the greatness of his sin. Man's capability must be great to have the capacity to sin against God. But what have we in greatness, much or little, that we have not received from the very God against whom it is pitted? It is the monstrous climax of man's God-given greatness, given over to sin, that causes him to stand before that cross and assume a pose of commendable nobility by actually seeking to explain away his sin and diminish his guilt, thus degrading his greatness to its lowest limit.

66. Brazen Impudence of Salvation by Character

Brazen Impudence of “Salvation by Character”

Think of the exhibit man makes of his sin as he stands before the cross and proclaims to all, that the only verdict he could find in his heart for the one Man who alone of all men ever did God’s will on this earth, was a brutal hanging on a Roman gibbet, the most disgraceful death man’s sin has ever been able to devise! And then think of the insult that is wholly beyond words to describe, when men, with brazen impudence, expect God to accept their own “good” deeds with approval, which they hold out to Him in hands stained with the blood of His Son! The Law was given to shut men’s mouths (Romans 3:19), not to give them aught in themselves to commend. Then comes the cross, standing at the focal point of time and eternity, and shows that every being in the race is by sin a born murderer, needing only the occasion and sufficient provocation to make him an actual murderer. Where then is man’s native nobility and greatness, except buried under a world of unspeakable sin and shame! The Law says: “Thou shalt not covet” (Exodus 20:17). That commandment is not the weak summary of the other nine, but the burning climax of the whole ten. It is the one commandment which, if kept perfectly, will issue in the flawless keeping of the whole Law, but which, if broken, will be the breaking in spirit of all the other commandments. And yet it is the commandment of which men say, more than of any other of the ten, Not guilty! How little do men know what sin is! To covet is to desire to possess or control, for one’s own purposes and without his consent, property that belongs wholly to another. Can you say, Not guilty, to that? Whose property are you? The sole property of Him who created you, and then when by personal sin you had sold His property to the devil for nothing, bought you back to the possibility of rescue from such a fate, by that very cross before which you stand. Do you ever have any desire to possess or control the property which, by this two-fold right, belongs to Him? Who does not have that desire? Not a soul on earth! Can you now say, Not guilty? Or put it as Paul translates it into its inner principle when he quotes it: “Thou shalt not desire” (Romans 7:7, marg.). Who can keep that? Can you? We are all animated bundles of insistent desires which we can no more escape than we can escape ourselves, and yet God says: “Thou shalt not desire”! What can He mean?

Emphasize the first word and the meaning will be clear. He does not say: “Thou shalt have no desires,” for that would be impossible even to Him, but “Thou shalt not desire,” or, no desires of our own for ourselves, but His desires only for us, experienced only under His perfect control. No desires whatever apart from His for us. Do you keep that commandment? Of course not!

67. Every One a Murderer by Nature

Every One a Murderer by Nature

We are still standing before that cross. What do you see? Murder! Murder under a hypocritical religious pretext, which makes it all the worse. Murder filling the heart of man and reaching its utmost uncovering, as the climax of outrageous intolerance hurls man's verdict at his Creator and Lover: "Away with Him! Crucify Him!"

Whence such unspeakable treatment of the sinless One? The answer is at hand. "When desire hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15, literal translation).

Murder! Murder incipient in the heart of every human being! Murder for the One who crosses desires with us in the control of His own property. For every one of us has stood with the rabble and cried: "Crucify Him!" And then to think that any one could have the insolent effrontery to stand before that scene and dare to speak of man's native nobility and of a spark of the divine nature in every one by birth!

There certainly can be no question about man's greatness when he can be such a great sinner that he requires such a great Saviour to bring him such a great salvation! But the true standard by which to measure it lies in the greatness of his ruin and of God's redemption, not in anything within the breast of man that lies untouched by sin. Though the ruins of the temple may be beautiful, it is a ruin still.

There are always those who shrink from the doctrine of the cross on the plea that it is hideous and revolting. They say they have no use for any doctrine of the shambles and the slaughter house; a gospel of gore is too shocking to the sensibilities of refined people!!

Shocking? Hideous? Revolting? Those words are far too mild. Nothing can ever be so nauseating as the cross, for no such reeking filth as sin is shown by that cross to be, has ever polluted the moral atmosphere or offended the spiritual vision throughout the universe.

Those who have been granted as much of a vision of sin as they could stand, have seen that those sickening streams that flowed from the bleeding wounds of the Son of God were after all a vision of aesthetic beauty, when seen by the side of the foul and rotten heart of man which caused them to flow. When our eyes are opened to see these things as they are, the cross does indeed become hideous, shocking, brutal, not because of the vision of the blood-stained Victim hanging there, but because of the loathsome sight of the sin-stained and murderous heart of man which is uncovered there. There never again can be a sight so hideous, because it is the sin of man that makes it so. Only those can revolt at the death scenes of the Son of God who have not revolted at the sin stains of the sons of men.

What shall we say, then, that God must do with a thing like that? Can He palliate it? Can He play with it or pass it over lightly? Can He let it continue to pollute the moral atmosphere of His

universe? Can He let it plunder Him of those on whom He has set His love?

None but those so blinded by the pride which shuts the eyes to the crime of the cross, can fail to see why God cannot tolerate sin! And none but those whose eyes are shut to the vision of sin when seen in the light of that cross, can possibly imagine that an impenitent sinner can ever enter heaven!

68. How the Cross Uncovers God's Love

How the Cross Uncovers God's Love But if the cross perfectly uncovers the hate of man for God as it shows up his heart of sin, it also uncovers as perfectly the love of God for man, as it flows forth from His life of holiness. God so loved that He gave His only begotten Son—freely, gladly, joyously gave Him into all these foreknown experiences of infinite suffering; the Son so sharing the Father's love for man that with joy He eagerly endured the cross, that He might thereby uncover the infinite lengths to which God's love will go on behalf of those He loves. And so—amazing beyond words!—the cross by which man told out how much he loves sin and hates God, is made to be the very means by which God tells out how much He hates sin and loves man! This is love! Nothing less is. The only love that is native to man has to be drawn out by the attractions of its object. But God loves man though there is nothing in him to attract and everything to repel; when there is no reason why He should want man's fellowship, and every reason why He should want him banished forever from His presence. God alone has the kind of love which goes out toward the utterly unlovely and unloveable, for it proceeds by a mighty power and from a fathomless well resident in Himself. Only such love can be commended, so "God commends his love in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). None but God can love like that! The coming in of sin, therefore, instead of thwarting God's love, furnished the perfect occasion for revealing, to its complete uncovering, that sacrificial self-giving, to those wholly unworthy of it, which has been from all eternity the potential attitude of His holy life toward all moral beings. Just as poverty furnishes opportunity for pity, misfortune for kindness, and suffering for compassion, so does man's sin furnish God the supreme opportunity for the utmost expression of His holy love. No mother can show her heart to the full except in the presence of such need in her children as calls forth her sacrificial suffering to the full. And so God is able to reveal the infinite depths of His love, when man's descent into the bottomless abyss of sin opens the way for His descent into that abyss of sacrificial suffering which He endured in Christ on the cross, that He might bring man up and out. Nothing but such love could ever have sent God into conditions so revolting to infinite purity. The suffering of the cross was not primarily physical, nor mental, for it was the infinite anguish which wrenched the love of God to its very center. If a sword pierced the heart of Christ's mother, nothing less could come to the heart of His Father. The whole Trinity made a sacrifice together; they did not merely accept it. The cross therefore becomes the eternal presence-chamber of infinite love and perfect holiness, and the central truth in the biography of God. It is God speaking in a language men can never fail to understand. When He says in words that He is love, men can fail to grasp it. But when He says it in that supreme and all-inclusive act of the cross, it becomes too unmistakably plain to miss it. In the cross His love becomes so utterly simple that a child can receive it, and yet it remains so immeasurably profound that neither angels nor men can ever scale its height, sound its depth, nor measure its length and breadth. The cross is the climax of all moral truth, the culmination of all philosophy, the consummation of all wisdom.

69. The Nature of Grace

The Nature of Grace

Man's sin brings out both a quality and a depth in God's love that never otherwise had been seen, and never could have been known apart from the cross of Christ. Justice and mercy constitute love. But justice and mercy, set against each other by sin, and then forever united through the sacrificial suffering in Christ's work of substitution on the cross—this is grace.

Before Christ's death, God's Law, which is His love working out in the form of government, had been vindicated and established only in justice in judging Satan and his angels to their doom. But in the cross, where justice and mercy came into an eternal union in the righteous salvation of sinners from their execution, His Law became forever established in grace. Holiness goes into action against sin by judgment. Love goes into action for the sinner through that same judgment; and when this judgment is accepted in the Person of the Judge Himself, this is grace.

Grace is therefore forgiveness of sin without condoning or consenting to it, for it is forgiven because it has been already judged and the penalty executed. To have forgiven sin without the execution of the penalty would have justified and legitimized it. Satan and men would then have been right, and God forever wrong. But Christ's cross vindicated God's holiness and enthroned grace. For grace is not sympathy and pity winning lenience for the sinner, but love acting in holiness through judgment and condemning sin.

Sin cannot escape judgment. For if we do not acknowledge that God has judged and condemned us for our sin, we will rise up and condemn Him, and summon Him to explain Himself before the bar of our own conscience. Where there is sin there must be condemnation, if not by God, then by ourselves. And our salvation from that condemnation, not because we have been excused from it, but because it has been endured for us by the Judge Himself—that is grace. The cross was man's last act in his attempt to enthrone sin. It was God's last act in His glorious enthronement of His love. So the sin that thought to be enthroned by the cross is by it forever dethroned, with grace now on the throne, to reign in absolute righteousness for all eternity.

Grace means favor, but to a certain class of moral beings only. Favor is of various kinds, according as it is shown to various classes. Favor to the suffering is compassion; to the poor it is pity; to the unfortunate it is kindness; to the obstinate it is patience. But favor to those who deserve nothing but the limit of disfavor, that is grace. For it is not simply favor to the undeserving, it is far more; it is favor to the ill-deserving. It is salvation to those who deserve damnation. It is God lavishing everything on the sinner, when there is no obligation to give him anything but the just deserts of his sin.

70. Grace and Obligation Exclude Each Other

Grace and Obligation Exclude Each Other

Grace can never enter where obligation to show favor is present. God was under obligation to banish man forever from His presence, after he became a spiritual corpse. But He found a way to postpone that obligation, voluntarily assuming the obligation instead, all in pure grace, to bring man back out of sin into His love. So He starts after man as soon as sin enters, calling after him in love: "Where art thou?" (Genesis 3:9). And finding and confronting the sinning pair with their sin, He first, in grace, announces the way of salvation from their sin, and then in justice, He pronounces the penalty from which He has already promised the salvation.

Then continuing still in grace as the ultimate motive, He nevertheless assumes obligations as He puts Himself under oaths, and covenants, and promises, all across the 4,000 years of Old Testament history. But how did men receive it? They outraged conscience, quenched the light of nature, despised God's covenants, contemned His oaths, forfeited His promises, trampled His Law under foot, cast out and killed the messengers He sent them, until at last it had been shown that man's defiant rebellion against God was the supreme fact of all human history. And yet God did not cut the race off. Men were still on terms with Him. His obligation to banish them was still held in abeyance, for there was one more thing He would do. So He gathers all His oaths, covenants and promises together and personifies them in His Son. Then He sends Him to man, thus so completely fulfilling His assumed obligations that there was nothing left that He could do. But man's answer was to turn the Son into a "Man of sorrows" by such outrageous treatment and contemptuous rejection as could never again be equaled through all eternity. Every step He took was on an errand of mercy, yet He had murderers constantly hounding His footsteps. Every word He spoke told of measureless love, yet they were received with utmost contempt. Every deed He wrought was one of infinite tenderness, yet all was received with hellish cruelty. For pity He received scorn; for blessing, curses; for love, hatred; until at last they rose up and forfeited every claim they could ever, have on God through covenants, oaths and promises, by hangings His Gift for their fulfillment on a tree!

God had now completely fulfilled all His covenants and oaths to the race, and this was what it had come to! He had offered His infinite love to men in His incarnate Son, and they had cried: "Away with him! Crucify him!" He had exhausted all to get men to return to Him, and they had taken sides with the devil against Him! And now, when He had so completely fulfilled all His obligations assumed in grace that there was nothing left to fulfil and it had all been outrageously despised and He Himself insulted to the last possible degree, what more claim could man have on Him? When men scorn and reject all He offers them, what more can He do? He certainly can do nothing more when He has done all, and men have refused and rejected it in an act that can never be undone!

Yet if there is nothing more He can do, His obligation to banish the race from Him forever must come into action, and He has failed in His purpose to bring men back to His love. For if man refuses God's offered Way to heaven, there is nothing left open to him but the way to hell. And

how can there still be any hope for moral beings who, by the answer of murder to the offer of God, must have forever closed the door of hope?

71. Man's Weapon against God Goes Astray

Man's Weapon against God Goes Astray But there is something more God can do! For the very cross by which the race forfeited every claim on God for the fulfillment of His promises and oaths, is the same cross through which He can now open wide the door of salvation in unhindered grace, all man's claims on Him being forever at an end. "For by grace ye are saved, through faith, and that (even the faith) not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). Both the salvation and the faith to receive it are God's outright gift, and all on the simple condition of consent toward Him.

Whatever God does for sinners from the cross forward, therefore, is not because of any promises or covenants apart from Christ, "For how many soever be the promises of God, in him (Christ) is the yea; wherefore through him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us" (2 Corinthians 1:20, R.V.). Everything, therefore, that has come to all men since the cross, has come by grace through Christ, because every claim God ever gave man on Himself is forever forfeited. With what divine irony does God use man's very weapon by which he sought to be forever rid of Him, to open his way to receive forgiveness and love and forever live with Him. It is the irony supreme that the cross by which Satan used both Jews and Gentiles to cast Christ out of the world, is the very cross by which He casts Satan out forever (John 12:31). The cross did not procure grace, for grace flowed from it as through an open door. Procured grace is a contradiction in terms. Anything done to procure salvation is the very thing that makes it impossible. We can never make a bargain with God to give us salvation if we do the best we can to live as we should. How could God permit a thing like that when salvation is a gift? God does not give salvation to us even though we do not deserve it, and then take it away from us because we do not deserve it! A Christian can never be made nor unmade by anything he does. It all depends on what God has already done in grace on the cross, and so on our simple acceptance of it as an outright gift. We cannot be saved by grace and at the same time pay our way to heaven by living up to a certain standard, for that puts God under obligation to keep us saved, and all obligation from God to man is at a full end. There is no barter and exchange in salvation. Forgiveness of sins is not for sale! Grace can never go into debt!

If we could do anything toward God to make Him either willing or able to save us, He would have to approve of it. What He approves of must have merit for its intended purpose. If He approves of anything any man can do as a condition of or a means to eternal salvation, it will be because it has merit for that purpose. But merit deserves reward. So reward ought to be given, else an injustice is done. But "ought" is the word of obligation, so it pushes grace out, and therefore salvation goes out with it.

72. Salvation Cannot Be Forfeited

Salvation Cannot Be Forfeited

Adam ruined the race spiritually, for “in Adam all died” spiritually. And yet, since grace now reigns, it is because we were ruined by the first Adam that it is now possible to be rescued by the Last Adam. For since ruin came through no fault of our own, rescue can now come through no merit of our own. Therefore since our ruin by Adam was so complete that we can do nothing to undo it, our rescue by Christ must be so complete that we can do nothing to forfeit it, else merit comes into the transaction and grace is banished.

It was not what we did to ourselves, but what we received from Adam, that wholly ruined us. So it cannot be what we do for ourselves, but what we receive from Christ, that fully rescues us, else His promise of rescue is worthless. For then the grace of Christ which rescues would be less powerful to save than was the sin of Adam which ruined, and that would put God’s power to save in such a light that no one could trust Him. For it was only a man who ruined us; shall we then admit that an omnipotent God cannot completely rescue us from that ruin, unless we do something to help Him complete the rescue? Does He have less power to rescue than Adam had to ruin?

Paul tells us that the “free gift” that rescues us is not to be measured by the magnitude of “the offence” that ruined (Romans 5:15), for its magnitude is “much more” abundant, and that would be untrue if the rescue was not as totally wrought by God as the ruin was by Adam. To get the meaning of grace more into the clear, there are two forces competing for the souls of men—death and life. Death has so completely won its onslaught on man that the whole race has been born dead.

Now Life, which is not merely a force, but a Person, and that Person the Creator Himself in His Son (1 John 5:11-12; Colossians 3:4), confronts death and him who has the power of death, and offers life from the dead to all who will take it as a gift. The question therefore is, Can Life do at least as much to rescue men as death has done to slay them? Is the destructive power of Adam, a mere man, greater than the recovering power of the Creator Himself? Shall the God who first created man and breathed into him the “breath of lives,” both of body, soul and spirit, be unequal to the work of bringing him back from death to life?

Death can be ended only by life taking possession and driving it out, as light drives out darkness. Is the Creator who gave man life by an outright creation in the first place unable, through possessing us by Him who is Life itself, to dispossess death by accomplishing in us a new creation? Who could trust Him if He could not do at least this much? But we can trust Him, for He does offer us just such a life, telling us that it is eternal life, and therefore “incorruptible” by sin and death (1 Peter 1:23), and that we therefore can “never perish” (John 10:28).

Put in that light, reason answers that though the power of death brought in by Adam was sufficient to end life for all who are in him, the power of the life brought in by Christ must be “much more”

abundantly sufficient to give a life that cannot be ended, to all who are in Him. Otherwise grace would not be able to reign, for it would have to yield the throne to death and destruction, since it would be dispossessed by death, as being more powerful.

73. Substitution in Picture

Substitution in Picture

It is upon this doctrine of grace that Satan tries to throw his greatest darkness and confusion (2 Corinthians 4:4), and one difficulty lies in its uniqueness, for it is hard to illustrate; and yet there are some illustrations that are windows to the light. One of them is in an incident told years ago by Dr. Henry C. Mabie. An acquaintance had a fine young son who, on one occasion, disobeyed his father, and then made it worse by trying to cover it up with a lie. Asking the boy what he thought should be done about it, he said: "You should whip me." The father started to do so, but his heart led him to change the procedure. Removing his own coat, he told his boy to give him the whipping in his stead. The boy struck his father a blow or two, then overwhelmed with grief, fled to his room, and was soon found kneeling and sobbing out his cry for God's forgiveness. His father's stripes on his behalf had broken his heart. This is grace. The boy's sin was not forgiven, but condemned and judged, for it could not be consented to, and the penalty executed, in effect, on the father for the sake of the boy. Thus it became possible for the sinner to be forgiven. Indeed, it would have been unjust not to do so, for forgiveness was now righteously his due. Thus it is that "by his stripes (who died for us) we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5), and all without a cause in us.

Christ was "hated without a cause" (John 15:25), either in what He was or what He did, until that hatred at last had Him hanging on a cross. And just as really He saves us "without a cause" (Romans 3:24), either in what we are or what we do. For "freely" in that verse is "dorean" in Greek, which means "without a cause in us." So if we were required to do the slightest thing either to be saved or kept, there would be a cause in us, grace would no longer be possible, and salvation out of the question. The gift of eternal life is so completely a gift that there can be no cause in us, for it is all in Him. And this is grace!

74. The Nature of Salvation

The Nature of Salvation

Chapter IX

We have now seen how God has met and solved the problem of sin, and something of His provision for our complete and eternal salvation from its guilt, its power, and at last from its presence forever. It remains now to learn a few things on the meaning and receiving of such a salvation.

There is nothing difficult or complicated about it, for it is simplicity itself. It differs in no way from receiving a present and saying, Thank you, for it is a gift from God (Romans 6:23); just that and nothing else. But Satan's greatest activity with the unsaved is put forth at this very point. This is why their minds are in so much confusion and blindness, both on how to be saved, and how one may know when he is saved (2 Corinthians 4:4). And so the way must be made so plain and simple that none can miss finding it.

One great reason why the lost are not eagerly seeking for some one to tell them how to be saved, is because they do not see their need of salvation. Satan suggests that they can get by with God without the need of anything more than a sincere desire to do right, and a proper regret when they fall into an "error" now and again.

Because sin is self-conceit "in person," the lost are only too eager to believe this lie of their enemy, and many thus go out deceived into eternal night. Since they can think of numerous sins they would scorn to do, and since they believe they are in real earnest in intending to do right by those about them, with a "mistake" only now and then which they regret, they are sure that a God of love is too good to send such well-intentioned people as they are to an eternal hell. Sin cannot be such a monstrous wrong as to call for any such treatment from a merciful God. He will surely overlook it and take His weak and erring "children" to heaven. And yet in spite of all such "whistling in the dark" to muster up courage to meet the future, the instinctive consciousness of sin is race-wide, and the universal knowledge that we have known better than we have done persists in speaking to every unsaved heart in a voice that cannot be stilled.

We know we have done wrong, and done it purposely. We may laugh off as we will the story of the forbidden fruit plucked in Eden, but we all know that we ourselves have plucked forbidden fruit, and we can't laugh that off.

75. A Dread Foreboding of Eternity

A Dread Foreboding of Eternity

We may try to imagine as we will that our sins that we now regret are simply so much “water under the bridge,” and that since we cannot now correct them, they will be overlooked; but that does not change the terrific fact that what we have done we can never undo. Every deed, word, thought, desire, impulse has been written into the enduring memory of our very souls, and our whole record, with nothing missing, will with infallible accuracy face and condemn us at the Judgment, if we go out in our sins, and no man can escape this dread foreboding.

Then to make it worse, we find ourselves to be helpless slaves to sin. Many times, and with the imagined aid of many good resolutions and sincere determination, we have tried to quit sinning, only to find ourselves soon fallen by the wayside, with our good resolutions all lying in the “discard.” And even if we actually could undo the past and live a really better life, it would still be we who were doing it, and the resulting self-satisfaction would be the more terrible sin of pride, for we would simply have transformed ourselves from publicans into pharisees.

Then to confirm all these stern realities to us beyond escape, we are compelled to admit that every religion in this world is founded and maintained on the universal consciousness of sin, and on the inescapable cry of every heart for deliverance from its power and consequences by some power outside ourselves. And to make the dread of the future more compelling, we see that as God operates in nature all about us, full penalty is inevitable for all who break her laws, for nature knows no such thing as forgiveness. The penalty is executed without respect of person on every one who sins against her, and none can deliver from the penalty, for substitution here is impossible.

We see also, in the light of nature’s laws, that we can do nothing to save ourselves from sin. For two hundred years scientists defended the doctrine of spontaneous generation in nature. But at last all possibility of such a thing was scientifically disproved, and instead it was established that life can come only from pre-existent life.

Yet this same doctrine still persists in the spiritual realm, but without all reason. Men are still determined to believe that by striving after high ideals and noble aspirations, we can finally bring ourselves out of the realm of death into that of spiritual life. But neither is spiritual life spontaneously generated. This life also must come from pre-existent life, for it can never be generated by any effort of man. So in this realm also we are faced with the scientific truth that spiritual life can come into being only as it is generated, begotten, by pre-existent spiritual life, and God is the only possessor of that life. We are therefore shut up to Him, if we are ever to come out of death into life.

All this can mean but one thing, and that is that we do need salvation, and that it must come to us from outside ourselves, if we are ever to have it. So we must squarely face the question as to what God’s Word says about the provision He has made for us.

76. We Need a Two-Fold Salvation

We Need a Two-Fold Salvation

We recall first that we were born into the world with a nature that is nothing but sin, and again that we have an inescapable record of sins committed by that nature that are constantly piling up against us. It is easy to see, therefore, that our need is two-fold. We need to be saved from the penalty due our own personal sins, and for this to be effective and permanent, we must be delivered from the power and finally from the presence of the nature of sin. So it is great good news to any one who knows his need of rescue, that God has provided for us a two-fold salvation that perfectly meets our need at every point. It can be seen running like a golden thread all through the Old Testament. In the pictures set forth in history, type and ceremony, Egypt is a type of the world, Pharaoh a type of Satan, the prince of this world (John 12:31; John 16:11), Israel a type of the people of God saved out of the world, and their deliverance from Egypt under Moses a type of our deliverance by Christ from sin, Satan and the world.

There was first the shedding of a lamb's blood, and its application as a shield from death to every Hebrew home and family. Then there was the eating of the flesh of the lamb for the needed strength to escape from Egypt. So they were saved by blood and by power, as they followed Moses and left Egypt behind them forever.

There were also two crossings, which God intended should be close enough together to typify the two-fold nature of the one great transaction of salvation, just as by Christ we are delivered out of bondage to death, and also from needless spiritual helplessness. The crossing of the Red Sea cut Israel off from their helplessness in Egypt, and that of Jordan (Joshua 3:17) from the fruitlessness of the Wilderness. It was only because the people believed the faithless spies instead of God that these crossings were so far apart. But they show plainly the two-fold provision of God in our salvation.

Then after Israel had been separated to God from Egypt and become a nation, among the ceremonies which pictured our two-fold salvation were the five great Offerings set forth in Leviticus, which enfold this truth in their names and set it forth in their performance. In the Burnt Offering, the Meat or Meal Offering, the Peace Offering, Christ as the spotless Lamb is presented to God for His approval and acceptance as a Substitute. Then in the Sin and Trespass Offerings He is the two-fold Saviour from "sin" and "sins," and is given to us as our Substitute, with the Peace Offering midway between God and man.

Then in the New Testament the same thing is found. Paul sets forth in the first eight chapters of Romans the whole doctrine of salvation, unfolding from the first into the fifth chapter our salvation from "sins," and the word for it is "justification." Then to the end of the eighth chapter we find the doctrine of salvation from "sin," and the word for this is "sanctification." This is the major passage in the New Testament on this subject, and the two-fold nature of God's provision for our two-fold need is very marked.

We find it also in various phrases and words that are paired with each other. We read of “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” and “the peace of God that passeth understanding;” of “the riches of his grace, the forgiveness of sins,” and “the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might (dynamite) by his Spirit in the inner man;” and of the “well of water, springing up into everlasting life,” and “rivers of living water” which are to flow from our “inmost being” in spiritual service. Indeed, we have been singing all our lives:

“Let the water and the blood From Thy riven side which flowed, Be of sin the double cure;
Save from wrath, and make me pure.”

77. Christ's Two-Fold Provision on Calvary

Christ's Two-Fold Provision on Calvary

Then when we look more deeply into the words used to describe Christ's sufferings and death, we discover evidence of this same two-fold provision for our need. It appears in a striking distinction that is made between His sufferings for our sins, and His death to sin. We read: "Christ suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust" (1 Peter 3:18); "He was delivered for our offences"(Romans 4:25); "He gave himself for our sins" (Galatians 1:4); "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins"(Ephesians 1:7), all of these and other passages connecting Christ's sufferings with our sins. But on His relation to sin we read: "For the death that he died, he died unto sin (the Adam humanity) once" (Romans 6:10, R.V.); also, "Behold the lamb of God who taketh (beareth) away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The first Adam and his race were executed and buried in Christ, as He bore the nature received from Adam forever from God's sight into the tomb, and took all who would ever belong to Him, by the power of His new life in them through His resurrection, out of Adam's humanity potentially for their victorious living here, and actually in their resurrection when He comes to complete their salvation in the gift of their new and spiritual bodies. So we read: "Our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that we should be no longer enslaved to sin" (Romans 6:6); "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3); "I have been crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20) to be my constant victory over Old Adam; and so we are to "walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the desire of the flesh (Old Adam). For the flesh lusteth (desireth) against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary (antagonistic) the one to the other; so that ye may not (need not) do the things that ye (otherwise) would" (Galatians 5:16-17); therefore "reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but to be living unto God" (Romans 6:11). In a diving bell the passengers sit on a seat around the inside rim of the bell, with their feet well above the water. The water comes up a certain distance on the inside, striving to fill the entire space. But the air stops it before it can reach the passengers, and holds it there. So Old Adam and the Holy Spirit contend for control over the members of Christ's Body in their inner life. But as long as Christ controls by the fulness of the Spirit, Old Adam cannot possibly do what he otherwise would, for his action is nullified by the Spirit. Satan cannot stumble us, therefore, while we "walk in the Spirit," for he cannot even get a hearing except when his ally within us is given place.

What a salvation this! What complete provision against the world, the flesh and the devil! And it is all ours the moment we receive Christ. For though it is a two-fold work of grace, it is not therefore a first and second work of grace; though it is a two-fold blessing, it is not a first and second blessing. There are not two salvations, a partial and a full salvation; it is all ours the moment we are born again. But it would be impossible for any one to experience everything that enters into his salvation the moment he is saved, for he is a "babe in Christ," and therefore needs to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). It must be the "sincere milk of the Word" before it can be the "strong meat of the Word."

78. No Excuse for Spiritual Infancy

No Excuse for Spiritual Infancy But with too many of God's children there is little or no growth out of spiritual babyhood, for lack of the proper knowledge of what their salvation includes. While they are fully and forever saved from the guilt of all their "sins" the moment they believe on Christ, yet they are not told that they may be just as fully kept safe from the power of "sin," if they will commit the nature of Old Adam to His constant victory over it within them, as they depend on Him moment by moment as fully as they depended on Him in the one act of faith to save them from their "sins." When a "babe in Christ" enters deliberately into that attitude of utter and continual dependence on Him, his spiritual growth begins, never to be interrupted, except as his failure to walk in the Spirit retards it. This is how it is that some new converts will in a few months show a knowledge of God's Word and a degree of spiritual power far beyond that of many who have been saved for long years. Their crossing out of Egypt into Canaan was almost in a single experience, while others are still in the wilderness in a state of unfruitfulness. They committed themselves to Christ in accepting the forgiveness of their "sins," and they also committed themselves to Him to accept His life in and service through them; and they continue to maintain that attitude of yieldedness toward Him moment by moment, thus being kept from the power of "sin."

It is possible now to go a little further into detail as to the perfection of God's two-fold provision for our salvation. On God's side of the transaction, there are several words used to describe Christ's work on the cross, no one of which seems to underlie all the rest of them. Substitution is perhaps the one word that comes nearest to doing that, as it seems more nearly to comprehend all the others.

God's word of honor insures the protection of all who depend on Him for their welfare and happiness, His execution of the death penalty on all who sin against that welfare being His fulfillment of that word. The whole race of Adam coming under the penalty, God in one act saves both His word of honor and all sinners against it who will accept that word, by substituting Himself, through His own Son, in the place of the sinning race, and accepting their penalty for them. The relation thus created between God and man is one in which an atonement is now made for the whole world, that "whosoever will" may be saved from execution by simply accepting this work for him, which is freely offered to all men without exception. This means that from God's side, redemption has been fully accomplished for the whole world, with nothing lacking between Him and any individual sinner but simply to receive this redemption as a gift, upon which it becomes to him his personal salvation. The world is a forgiven world, so far as God is concerned, with God waiting for every sinner as an individual to accept at His hand the full pardon of all his sins. The only sin God cannot forgive is the final refusal of that pardon. And so the cross brings about complete reconciliation, in that two beings who have been opposed are now brought into harmony. Atonement is universal; reconciliation is personal. One removes God's displeasure, the other accomplishes harmony in the sinner's heart. By atonement all are free to be saved; by reconciliation every sinner who accepts Christ is saved. God never ceased to love the sinner, though He was compelled to oppose his sin. But now by Christ's work the sinner needs simply to

cease being opposed to Him by accepting the gift of reconciliation at His hand. This is now possible because the cross fully released God from the restraint man's sin had put upon Him, and opened His way to show that unmerited favor which is grace. Christ thus became a "propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

God is therefore now so propitious toward the world that there is nothing for any sinner in it to do, nor for him to persuade God to do. Eternal salvation is so perfectly complete and fully ready for delivery to any one who will take it, that only those who refuse to take it will fail of and forfeit God's propitious attitude toward them, and thus miss salvation altogether. But when one turns toward God in the attitude of acceptance, a propitious God does a work in his heart that turns him from enemy to friend, and the already provided redemption becomes his personal salvation.

79. Man's Side of Salvation

Man's Side of Salvation

Then on man's side of the transaction there are still other words that define what is included in salvation. One word that seems to compass within itself at least an outline of all that salvation means is the new birth. This word does not have any mystical, figurative or accommodated meaning. It means just what it says—a birth, as real in the spiritual realm as our physical birth was in the natural (John 3:3-8).

There is everywhere among the lost an inveterate determination to believe that man not only can but must do something to make it possible for God to save. Either the sinner must himself bring about an improvement in his life, or he must help or at least permit God to bring it about, for otherwise salvation would be impossible. To tell the average sinner that as we were born into this world, we are past all possibility of even the least moral improvement, would amaze him out of measure. But Paul, who in the book of Romans unfolds the doctrine of salvation, first indicts Gentiles, then Jews, and then includes the whole world in the indictment, so that every mouth may be stopped, and then brings in every individual man guilty and in helpless corruption before God. In Romans 5:8; Romans 5:10; Romans 5:15; Romans 5:17; Romans 5:20, he shows that as individuals we are sinners and condemned, enemies and alienated, dead and ruined, slaves and helpless, and outlaws and speechless. Where is the hope of improvement with those in such a condition? There is none! They are forever beyond the reach of it. Nor can we find the least hint in Scripture that God ever improves anything He has made. For everything was perfect to begin with, and so improvement is impossible. And yet with the human race we find man everything else but perfect. But in spite of that, to be told that even the noble, the virtuous, the followers of high ideals, are spiritually dead and morally ruined, and that moral and spiritual improvement is impossible even in the best of them, and that the only progress they can make is progress in corruption—the average unsaved person would be scandalized out of measure by such a statement.

Nevertheless God is not running a repair shop for mending wrecked and ruined humanity! What man mars He never mends! We are forever forgetting that He is a Creator, and that He works only in that realm. So instead of mending a wrecked humanity, He heads it for the "discard," and in all who are willing He brings into being within them a nature that is as completely a new spiritual creation in Him, as we were all new natural creations when we were born on this earth. "For if any man be in Christ, there is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17, lit. trans.). For by God's exceeding great and precious promises we become in the new birth actual "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4); for being "born, not of blood (natural birth), nor of the will of the flesh (self-effort), nor of the will of man (any human program), but of God" (John 1:13); and "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible" (1 Peter 1:23), we are, in that new nature, beyond the need of improvement, for that "new creation" by which we have become "partakers of the divine nature" is beyond the corruption of sin.

80. The New Birth Is a Real Birth

The New Birth Is a Real Birth This is what Christ was talking about when He told Nicodemus that he could not see the kingdom of God unless he was “born from above” (John 3:3). And it is what the New Testament means when it refers to the new birth in seven different words that use the language of biology for the coming of a new being.

Gennaō means to beget; anagennaō to beget again; paliggenesia a new birth; anakainosis a renewal, from anakainao, to make new; apokneo to bring forth or produce; ktizo to create, and suzooipoieo to make alive.

Salvation is therefore no revamping of the nature Adam gave us, no moral or spiritual straightening up within, but the coming into our personality of an actual new nature that no man ever had by his first birth—a new creation in actual fact, for it is a birth from above.

It is thus by this new life that spiritual death is driven out, just as light drives darkness out. For our life is a Person, and that Person no other than Christ Himself. For “God has given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life” (1 John 5:11-12). The moment we receive life, therefore, in receiving Christ, we are justified before God for all eternity, which means that we are fully acquitted, pardoned, delivered from the guilt of all our sins forever. This is wholly on the basis that Christ’s work on Calvary is a finished work, for the whole world, forever. For under the law of Moses no one could be justified from all things, but only from past sins. For the Law could only give a righteousness of works, and works cannot possibly reach into the future, for they cannot be done in the future, but can reach only up to the present moment. But since the whole question of sin has been forever settled for the whole world by Christ’s work on the cross, now “by him all that believe are justified (the moment they believe) from all things” (Acts 13:39), which was impossible under the Law. So justification is forever complete for every receiver of Christ, and he can never come into a second jeopardy for sins from which he has been justified once and for all. There are no degrees in justification, and acquittal from all possible charges against us can never be reversed (see Romans 8:31-33). But this is not all. God has still further provided for us so that we need no longer live in known sin. This has been mentioned, but a word further is needed. The new life that comes into us in our new birth is actually Christ Himself within us from that moment on, by the indwelling Holy Spirit, and He is there to live our life in us and do our service through us, as we live in the constant consent of faith toward Him. And this is what the Scripture calls sanctification. The Old Adam is still in us, however, for John tells us (1 John 1:8) that “if we say we have no sin (nature), we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” But Christ in us as our life is our constant safeguard against its activities, as we consent toward Him moment by moment. Sinless perfection is also impossible on earth, for John says this also (1 John 1:10); yet perfection in our attitude of constant consent toward Him is gloriously possible, and while we are in that attitude we can live without known sin. But this is far from sinless perfection. In the Old Testament ceremonies there was provision for “sins of ignorance,” and even though Paul said: “I know nothing against myself,” he at once added, “yet am I not thereby justified” (1 Corinthians

4:4).

81. Christ's Two-Fold Ministry in Heaven

Christ's Two-Fold Ministry in Heaven

Facing this need of utter dependence on Him, how glorious it is that in addition to His work for us on the cross, and in us by the Holy Spirit, Christ is also doing a two-fold work at the Father's right hand that fully covers our need Godward, while we are still possessed of a sinful nature and surrounded by the enemy's enticements to go on sinning. In the last pages (page 128f) of Chapter VII we saw God raising Christ from the dead and taking Him to heaven in proof that He was righteous, as He claimed to be. We can now see that phase of His exaltation to God's right hand, whereby He stands before the throne as our justification, while at the same time He works in us through the Holy Spirit for our sanctification. This is all based on His shed blood in substitution for us on the cross, of which the Old Testament types are rich in wonderful meaning. In the types, the blood of the slain animal was taken by the high priest once a year into the holy of holies, and sprinkled on the mercy seat before God, that thus it might avail for God's people until He should come who was the Lamb of God.

Then when He came and shed His blood, the indications seem clear that upon His resurrection He ascended at once to present His sacrifice before the throne for our acceptance, before He had been touched by man, and then returned to commission and instruct His disciples until the time when He ascended to send forth the Holy Spirit and begin His ministry for us in heaven (John 20:17; Luke 24:39; Hebrews 7:25). The Holy Spirit, then, when He came, bore witness that Christ's sacrifice was accepted, and availed for all who would receive salvation as an outright gift (Acts 5:32), while Christ, in the glory, carries on His ministry for us on the basis of His shed blood. And what a marvelous ministry it is!

82. Christ's Intercession for Us

Christ's Intercession for Us

He is first our Intercessor, which means that He is praying for us without ceasing. Because of this we can join Paul in saying: "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:18).

After Christ's upper room message to His disciples just before His crucifixion, He projected Himself beyond the cross in what He said in John 17, and up to the Father's right hand, as He foretokened in that wonderful prayer, what His High Priestly ministry for us would be. When one has read and re-read that prayer until its meaning burns within the heart, he can then recall that it is impossible that the prayers of Christ should go unanswered. For His praying is perfect, since it is always according to the Father's will, and its full answer is therefore absolutely certain. As Intercessor, Christ prays both for our keeping in view of our total helplessness against Old Adam, and also for our fitting for His fellowship and service throughout eternity. So it is not surprising that the Holy Spirit asks us through Paul: "Who is he that condemneth? Is it Christ who died, yea rather, who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us?" (Romans 8:34). How could the Christ who constantly prays for us, and whose prayers are always answered, ever condemn us?

Then we turn again to Hebrews 7:25, and read: "He is able to save them to the full end (margin; Greek, *panteles*, which means perfect duration, or forever), who come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession." What a safeguard against our weak and fluctuating faith toward the God of our salvation!

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God" (1 John 3:2), and sonship is eternal. It is impossible even for God to remove from a child the human nature of his earthly father. Much more is it impossible to remove the divine nature from one who has been born of God. So one who is born from above does not keep his life till he reaches heaven, his life keeps him all the way to heaven (John 10:28), for his life is eternal, and it is in a Person (1 John 5:11-12; Colossians 3:4). How can Christ's prayers for His own fail, in view of such facts?

83. Christ Our Advocate

Christ Our Advocate But not only are we helpless, but there may come times when we are tripped into actual sin. Christ is therefore our Advocate, having gone into heaven “now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:24).

John writes to God’s children that we “sin not.” But knowing Satan’s subtlety and our helplessness, he tells us that “if any (saved) man sin, we have an advocate with the Father (not with the Judge), Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). In this work Christ does not continue to atone for sins, for that work He finished on the cross. Instead He meets every accusation of Satan, who accuses us before God day and night (Revelation 12:10), by His presence before God in His death-scarred body, which shows that He has already suffered the full penalty in our stead for every sin we fall into.

“Five bleeding wounds He bears, Received on Calvary:

They pour effectual prayers, They strongly plead for me:

‘Forgive him, oh, forgive,’ they cry;

‘Nor let that ransomed sinner die.’” No accusation against any child of God can ever pass that nail-scarred and spear-marked body! What a salvation! No wonder Paul cried out in ecstasy: “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:15), nor that Peter saw abundant reason for the saved to “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8), for ours is a salvation so perfect that no power in the universe can ever touch it. As our Advocate, Christ says everything for us before God, and nothing against us, just as an attorney on earth does for his client. For while everything is against us in ourselves, yet He has taken it upon Himself and answered perfectly for it all, and so, “if God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31). And as our Intercessor, none of us will ever know until we reach heaven what terrible dangers and overwhelming trials His prayers for us have delivered us from. It is because of these prayers that nothing comes into our lives through the aperture of God’s permission except what He can use to make us more like Him. And that is why the Holy Spirit moves Paul to write to us: “In everything give thanks” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Is such a salvation worth having? If you are not saved, does the desire rise up within your heart to be lifted out of your slavery to sin and your dread of eternity, into a rest, joy and peace so perfect that no power in the universe can ever disturb it? Then you are ready to learn how to receive Him who is Himself our eternal life. The instructions on how to be saved are very simple and very short. Indeed they are so easy that many miss the way because they think it is too simple to accomplish the result. Naaman nearly missed the cure of his leprosy because the prescription was so simple to carry out that he wanted a harder thing to do (2 Kings 5:11-14). But it is impossible to make a hard thing out of accepting a gift!

God’s Word to us on how to be saved is—“Believe;” just that and nothing else. Almost one hundred times in the Gospel of John, to say nothing of the rest of the New Testament, this word occurs in connection with receiving salvation. The first three Gospels end with Israel rejecting Christ and the

world not knowing Him. Then comes the fourth Gospel in which John begins by saying that as many as received Him, “to them gave he the power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12). And he ends his Gospel by saying: “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30-31).

John is also the one to tell us that the only sin of which the Holy Spirit ever convicts the sinner is that of not believing. (See John 16:9). Indeed, no one but the Holy Spirit ever could convince anyone that failure to believe is a sin.

Recall also the story of the frightened jailer in Philippi, after an earthquake had released all his prisoners (Acts 16:25-34). He came in trembling before Paul and Silas and cried out: “What must I do to be saved?” And Paul answered simply: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

84. Salvation Good News, not Good Advice

Salvation Good News, not Good Advice The question may now be forcing itself upon you, Why should salvation depend on believing only; why is there nothing else to do?

Because salvation is not good advice to be followed, but simply good news to be believed. For just as there is nothing else we can do with good news but to believe and act upon it, so, also, there is nothing we can possibly do with the Gospel but to believe it and show it by acting on the good news it brings. “Be” and “lifan” are the two old Anglo-Saxon words that make up the word “believe.” And the meaning is “to live in accordance with.” That is, to act by receiving the gift that is offered. That the Gospel is good news—just that and nothing else, comes out in the fact that good news used to be “good spell” in old Anglo-Saxon, which was finally shortened into “gospel.” So every time “gospel” is found in the New Testament it is “good news.”

Now how does one act toward good news? If he believes it, he acts according to its terms. If you received the good news from a wholly reliable source that a great sum of money had been deposited to your account in a certain bank, and that it would become your personal possession the moment you accepted it, you would let no time be lost before you gladly accepted the gift, and you would show you had accepted it by beginning at once to make use of it. But suppose you refused the gift. There could be but two reasons for such a refusal. It would have to be because you either did not believe the gift was actually yours without all condition but that of acceptance, or else that you had something in your heart against the giver, and would therefore receive no gift from him under any consideration whatever. In either case you would be guilty of the insult supreme! For you would be saying that the giver was either a liar, or that he was dishonorable, and that you therefore refused to commit yourself to him. That is, you would not believe in him, and so would not obey the good news.

Paul mourned in his letter to the Romans that not all had “obeyed the gospel” (Romans 10:16). By that he meant that, by refusal to act on the good news, they were offering God the supreme insult. That attitude makes salvation impossible. It is such a barrier between God and the soul that He can go no farther until it is removed. We know that between us humans, our attitude toward another is determined by what we do with his word. And the attitude of unbelief in God’s Word is a barrier of such wilfully blind, unreasoning, insulting prejudice, that He is rendered utterly helpless to do a thing for the one who holds it, as long as it continues. This is reason enough why the one condition for receiving the gift of eternal life is simply to believe.

It is also reason enough why God is forced to announce that at the last He will be compelled, “in flaming fire,” to take “vengeance on them that obey not the gospel (refuse to act on the good news) of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:8). There is nothing else for Him to do.

85. How to Believe and Be Saved

How to Believe and Be Saved

You may be saying, however: "I do believe! I know God cannot lie, and I have nothing in my heart against Him. Sincerely and honestly I believe all He says." Are you sure? Have you actually taken God's gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23) by having committed yourself in person to Him who alone is eternal life? And do you know that within you there is now an altogether different nature which is an actual "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17-18), because the "old things" of self, Satan and the world have passed away, and "all things have become new"?

Too many give mental assent to what is said about God and Christ, and then think they believe and are therefore saved. But faith in God is dependence on Him in Person, and so is not an attitude of the mind simply, but especially of the heart, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (that is, unto salvation. Romans 10:10).

Go back to what John says: "To as many as received him,... to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). To believe on Him is therefore simply to receive Him, just as one would receive a visitor. Or again: "Behold I stand at the door and knock" (Revelation 3:20). And you open the door of your heart and let Him in, just as you would invite in a caller. Have you thus received Him? Have you let Him in? He says He will come in and sup, that is, fellowship, with you. Are you having daily fellowship with Him in Person?

You may ask how one may know when He has come in. Simply by accepting it as a settled fact that when you invited Him in, He came in, just as He said He would. You know it wholly because He said so, not by any feelings of any kind whatever. Our feelings are in our nervous systems, and the evidence of salvation is in what God says, not in our nervous systems. Faith is resting on the bare Word of God without further evidence. Feelings may come and go as they will, but that has nothing to do with the foundation of our faith, which is what God says, and nothing else. "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9). This is why it is "of faith, that it might be by grace" (Romans 4:16), which makes it an outright gift to us in person, without a cause in us.

Just such a definite, personal, first-hand contact with God is vital to the one who would be saved. Otherwise Satan can deceive him into depending on his sincerity, his willingness to be saved, his word to some friend that he does now accept Christ, his friend's word to him that he is now saved, or any of the other substitutes for dependence on Christ in Person. If some one decides to depend on you to do a certain thing for him, you need his word for it to you in person. So does Christ need your word to Him, and then He can act. So do not stop short of personal contact with God in prayer, and never let any human being pronounce you to be saved. At least, never depend on any person's word, for it is the Holy Spirit alone who bears witness with our spirit that we are a child of God, and He always does it through the Word alone, for that is the only thing that can be accepted without question.

86. The Most Outrageous Sin of All

The Most Outrageous Sin of All And if you fail to believe and be saved, you are thereby turning the supreme sacrifice and unspeakable suffering of God-in-Christ into an eternal waste, at least as far as your personal salvation is concerned, and nothing can be a more outrageous sin!

God so loved you as to go through the infinite pain of giving up His Son to take your place by His death, that the way might be opened to bring you within the reach of His love. If you refuse His love, He will go through eternity with nothing in you to show for His suffering, with His sacrifice forever useless, as far as your salvation is concerned. To strike a man for no cause is an insult. To strike one who is showing a kindness is an outrage. For a man to strike his father is infamous. But to strike to the heart by the murder of His Son, the God who sent that Son to show His love, and then, when His love turns that murder into an atonement for the murderer's sin, and yet the murderer still refuses the love and turns the infinite suffering, at least that for himself, into a useless waste—where can language be found to describe a sin like that! And yet just that is the sin of the one who refuses God's gift of eternal life in Christ.

Henry Clay, of whom all Kentuckians are justly proud, once had a debt at a bank which he was wholly unable to meet, and so he saw nothing but judgment impending. On the day it was due, and with nothing to pay it with, he went into the bank and said to the cashier: "I came to see you about my obligation at this bank." The cashier said: "Mr. Clay, you have no obligation at this bank."

Thinking he had been misunderstood, Mr. Clay said again: "I refer to the note I owe this bank." Again the cashier said: "You do not owe this bank one cent."

"How am I to understand you?" asked Mr. Clay.

"A few friends of yours," said the cashier, "knowing of the note and of your inability to meet it, made up the amount among themselves and came and paid it."

Tears welled up in Mr. Clay's eyes, and he left the bank unable to say another word.

Note the underlying principles behind this incident. First, there is a law that says to debtors to banks, for the sake of the depositors who have committed to them their financial welfare: "Pay up, or judgment."

Next, Mr. Clay was helpless to pay up, and so he faced judgment. Then his friends, by voluntarily suffering personal loss, had become his substitutes and met his obligation for him.

Then Mr. Clay, when told the good news, believed it, and accepted what his friends had done for him. He did nothing financial to merit this gift of money, yet in simply accepting what his friends had done in his name, he was fully justified before the banking laws in the names of his friends, and acquitted of all obligation. His conscience toward the bank was now clear, and the law could never touch him for that debt.

Just so the whole race had an obligation before God. But through bankruptcy, payment was forever impossible. God had said: "Pay up, or judgment," so judgment hung over the race. Then because there was no one else who could qualify to pay the debt, God Himself, in His Son, met that obligation for the whole race at Calvary.

Man did nothing to meet it, for he had nothing to pay. So God did it all, and the transaction is forever closed for the whole race. Man has now simply to receive what God has done, just as Mr. Clay received what his friends had done. If we accept it by receiving Christ, God accepts us. If we reject it by refusing Christ, God will be compelled to reject us. Not because we have broken the Commandment, even all ten of them, but because we have refused to accept what He has done for us. Can you turn down a salvation like that? Can you refuse a pardon which has already been provided for you, and is being offered on the simple condition of acceptance. Can you turn Christ's sufferings for you into a useless and eternal waste? THE END

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net