

IS GOD THE AUTHOR OF SIN? SUPPOSED AFFIRMATIVE.

"I make peace and create evil: I Jehovah do all these things." – Isa. 45:7. "Shall there be evil in a city and Jehovah hath not done it?" – Amos 3:6.

NEGATIVE.

"A good tree *cannot bring forth evil fruit*...by their fruits ye shall know them." – Matt. 7:18,20.

"Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee....*Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.*" – Psa. 5:4,5.

"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold [countenance] evil, and canst not look upon iniquity." – Hab. 1:13.

"Every *good* and every *perfect* gift is from above." "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is led astray of his own desires and enticed." – James 1:13,14,17.

"All *unrighteousness* is sin" and "he that committeth sin is of the devil." – 1 John 5:17 and 3:8.

"What shall we say then? *Is there unrighteousness* with God? God forbid" that we should reach such a false conclusion. – Rom. 9:14.

"Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is *perfect*; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and *without iniquity*, just and right is he." – Deut. 32:3,4.

"There is *no iniquity* with the Lord our God." – 2 Chron. 19:7.

"Hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: Far be it from God that he should do wickedness and from the Almighty that he should commit iniquity. ...God will not do wickedly." – Job 34:10,12.

"The Lord is upright; He is *my* Rock; there is *no* unrighteousness in Him." – Psa. 92:15.

"Let God be *true* [though it make] every man a liar." – Rom. 3:4.

The editor of another journal lately started in the interest of the no-ransom theory, had not noticed the first two texts quoted above until recently, when he concluded he had struck a rich vein of *new light*, and hastily without mature reflection, he has jumped to the conclusion that he has found the key to the divine plan, which he in substance explains thus: – God is the author of all sin and evil. Having caused the evil he *must rectify it*. To fail to do this would make God and his government criminally guilty. Since he caused the sin and the pain, trouble and death, he must and will fully banish these when he has fulfilled his purpose with them.

To this one-sided reasoning we object. But some one inquires, do you not also teach in the pamphlet "Food," that God was the *author of sin*? By no means, we answer: it teaches the very reverse. We agree with all the texts above quoted, all of which when understood, harmoniously declare that just and right is he, hating evil and condemning sin in every form. We claim and teach that every *good* cometh from God as the good fountain, and that evil on the contrary comes from sources and fountains in opposition [R871 : page 3] to God and his goodness. In "Food for Thinking Christians" we show to the contrary, that God's wisdom and power enabled him to foresee the course of all his creatures, and that from the first he designed or *purposed to PERMIT evil* to have sway for a time, because he saw how he could ultimately overrule it, and how the *permission* of it would but prove to his creatures the wisdom of his arrangements, and give

them a beneficial lesson experimentally, on the advantage of good and the disadvantage of evil. This is totally different from the theory above mentioned, which places upon God the responsibility and criminality of being the creator or author of evil: it is the very reverse.

God is indeed the author or creator of all things, of things that *are* evil and sinful, as well as of those that are perfect and upright; but the error is in assuming that *God made them evil, imperfect or sinful* in any sense or degree. "God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was *very good*." Absolutely perfect himself, he could not create anything morally imperfect, corrupt, sinful. Wherever such imperfection is found it is the result of violation of God's wise and perfect arrangements and consequently is a degradation of his creation.

Are there fallen angels? They are those who "*kept not* their first estate" of perfection in which God created them, but who violated his rules and brought themselves into the evil condition. Is the human race in an evil condition? Whose fault is the evil? Can it be charged to the fountain of every good? Shall the fountain of life and blessing be charged with being a fountain of bitterness, of evil, sin and death? Was our Lord Jesus mistaken, when he declared that a pure fountain could not send forth bitter waters, and that a good tree could not bear evil fruit?

Those disposed to thus malign and asperse the character of the great Jehovah had best go slower. They had best do a little thinking, and not try to build a theory with such miserable wood, hay and stubble. Are they prepared to entirely reject the Bible testimony upon the subject, except the two texts first quoted above? Or have they studied out a way to twist and wrest the many other statements of Scripture into apparent harmony with their theory and with their misinterpretation of these two texts?

How plainly it is stated of man, as of angels, that God's "work is *perfect*," that he created man in his own image. A *likeness* of the perfect God, only of earthly nature. – Gen. 1:27.

These whom we criticize claim that Gen. 1:26, "Let us make man in our own image," implies that God intended *eventually* to bring man to a "very good," a perfect condition, by a process of evolution or development, but that he *began by making him* EVIL, in order that man might develop into a *good* being, a likeness of his Creator. But how blinded by theory – can they not see, that the next verse (v. 27) declares that God not only purposed beforehand to make man a likeness of himself in clay, but that he accomplished that purpose in full, in Adam's creation: "*So God created man in his image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*"

David understood it thus and refers to man as created perfect, and crowned with honor and dominion of earth, a likeness of the divine honor and rulership of the universe, and declares, "Thou *hast* made him a little lower than the angels." – Psa. 8:5.

If then, man's first estate, like that of the angels, was not evil, but perfect, very good, an image of God, did man like the angels leave his first estate, or did God cast him from it? We answer, man like the angels sinned wilfully against light and knowledge (Gen. 2:16,17) and thus came under the proper righteous punishment which God had designated and foretold as the wages of sin. We are distinctly told that Adam was not *deceived* in his trial, hence he incurred the penalty willingly and knowingly, with full ability to have resisted it. (1 Tim. 2:14.) And the prophet plainly tells that "God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions." Man was as much the *author of the evil* which came upon him, as were the angels which kept not their first estate of purity, perfection and harmony with God, the authors of the evils which resulted to them.

Paul's testimony, that sin and death and all the train of evil came *by one man's disobedience*, is certainly a positive denial that God is the author of it. – Rom. 5:12,17-19.

We have now established the fact that God is good and not evil, the author and creator of good and not of evil. We have cleared his

character of such a foul stigma. If he were the author and instigator, and designer and cause of all evil, *or of any* of it, he would certainly be the chief of sinners, insomuch as his superior wisdom and power are greater than those of all others. And the fact that God was not the author and cause of sin, disproves the *theory* built upon that claim, which is that God *must* bring mankind to a higher and happier and more perfect condition than he has yet attained, *because* of having *caused* him to suffer, he must in justice compensate him therefor, by giving him corresponding blessings. This theory, which makes man's future to depend upon God's debt to man because of past *injustice* in creating evil and placing man under it for six thousand years, is wholly set aside by the proofs we have given, that God was not the author of sin and evil, but the author of every good and perfect gift and naught else. We have shown that man was justly condemned and hence the author of his own evil [trouble] and that he is wholly dependent upon the loving mercy of God for future life. And we have heretofore shown that God has manifested his love and mercy in and through Christ – in the *ransom* – thus provided as a free favor to all.

How then shall we understand the two texts which *say* that God is the creator of evil? Shall we reject them because at a casual glance they do not fit? Nay, let us rather examine them, assured that God's book like himself is good, and not contradictory and inharmonious. If the harmony does not appear on the surface, careful study and examination will always discover it. The explanation of these two texts is very simple indeed. The word rendered "*evil*" in these texts might have been translated *adversity, trouble, affliction, or calamity*. In fact the same Hebrew word is twenty-one times thus translated in our common version of the Old Testament. Thus understood, these two texts inform us that whatever calamity, adversity, affliction, or trouble, there may be, none of it is outside of God's knowledge and control. These could not happen without his concurrence or permission, as all power and authority is of him. And what saint can not and has not drawn consolation from this fact (the divine control of every trouble or evil), as he believed the promise that all things, even the calamities and

troubles of life, would work together for *good* to those that love God and are called according to his purpose – the high calling.

However, "*evil*" is not an improper translation here, for our English word "*evil*," like the word "*ra*," here used in the Hebrew, has a wide range of meaning, and may be used to signify either *trouble* or *wickedness*, according to the connections, the context deciding which thought should attach to the word.

Webster's definition of evil is, **I.** "Anything that directly or remotely causes suffering of any kind." **II.** "Disposition to do wrong, corruption of heart, wickedness, depravity."

Now we ask, would any pass over the first and primary meaning of the word evil, and apply the second definition of it, in these texts under consideration, unless their judgment were rendered unsound by reason of a false theory which they desire to prop up? Such must be our conclusion if we examine the context. Isaiah 45:1-7 is speaking of the evil which came upon Babylon at the hand of Cyrus, who was *God's messenger* (verse 13) to punish Babylon and restore Israel. Amos 3:1-8, is referring to trouble, evil, calamity, about to come upon Israel as a punishment for their iniquities (verse 2.) The mind that could construe either of these expressions to mean, that God by these proclaimed himself to be the author of *sin*, the Creator of disposition to do wrong, the cause of wickedness, depravity and corruption of heart, (Webster's definition of moral evil) has serious cause for examination of either his mental or moral balance. Yet the journal which advances this idea as *new light*, represents itself as the exponent of the very spirit of the Word of God. If the bare suggestion that they had followed the maxim, "Let us do evil that good may follow" was resented by the Apostles as slander, (Rom. 3:8.) what shall we say of such an imputation against the Almighty?

But then, considering it proven beyond question that God is not the author of *moral evil, i.e., sin*, what shall we say: – **IS GOD**

RESPONSIBLE FOR EVIL IN THE SENSE OF CALAMITY AND TROUBLE?

We answer both yes and no. Yes, [R871 : page 4] in the sense that the particular forms of trouble and suffering come by his permission and arrangement as the proper penalty of violating his wise and just laws. No, in the sense that man is the author of his own sufferings and trouble, by his violation of laws which were wise and good. And indeed it is a fact recognized very generally, that sin – disobedience to God – would bring its own penalty naturally, even if God had not marked out its kind. Thus for instance, violation of the laws of health hasten disease and death, while the violation of conscience and morals, brings its line of rewards in unhappiness, entanglements, and remorse. On the whole it is a principle fixed as the law of gravitation that "*Sin* when it is finished bringeth forth death."

Hence we say that the evil and trouble which God has *permitted* upon man are but a just and reasonable result or outworking of man's own wilfully chosen course, which would have been far worse, had not God from time to time headed it off, as in the case of the antideluvians [R872 : page 4] and the Sodomites, whom God blotted out, to prevent the spread of their corruption, as well as to be an "*example*" to those who should afterward think to run riot in ungodliness, that God still oversees mankind and their affairs, and will restrain them within certain bounds even now. In evil, as trouble and sorrow, as well as in moral evil or wickedness, everything in Scripture declares that "God created man *upright*, but he sought out many inventions" contrary to the divine command, and defiled himself, and brought trouble and sorrow, direct or indirect, upon himself. Hence man, not God, is responsible for evil in the sense of calamity or trouble.

All evil is punitory, *i.e.*, evil [trouble, calamity, etc.] is always a *punishment* for something. Had all things continued as they were created, perfect and upright, there would have been no evil [trouble, calamity, etc.] nor any occasion for it. In fact there could have been no such thing; for it is, always has been, and always shall be contrary to

justice and right, and hence contrary to the will of God, to inflict pain, trouble or distress upon the *guiltless*. Hence whatever evil [calamity, trouble] exists in the world, exists as a punishment, as a result of *wilful*, moral evil *i.e.*, sin on man's part; it is the fault of the race which is being punished.

All evil [trouble, etc.] is reformatory so far as the race is concerned, but *not always reformatory* so far as individuals are concerned, though this last is claimed by many. God is the great Physician and Surgeon; the race with its many members is the patient sick and diseased, and dying. Every time the good physician touches the sores the patient has increased pain; yet it is needful to the reformation and recovery of the diseased parts. So evil [trouble] forms a necessary part of man's experience *as a result* of his moral obliquity and fallen state, and also as an attendant circumstance to his recovery from that state. But there are times when the wise surgeon will find a member *incurable*, and for the sake of its polluting influence upon other members, it must be entirely "cut off." In such a case the cut off member is not healed, because that is impossible, though the other members are protected from poisonous influences thereby. So it is in God's government, not a member of the race shall be "cut off" whom it is *possible to recover*; but not one member which divine wisdom finds it *impossible* to renew (Heb. 6:4-8) shall be permitted to remain and to spread its baneful poisonous influence to others. – Matt. 25:41,46. To this intent an abundant provision for the healing as well as the testing of each, either in this age or the age to come, is arranged for. Every member shall come under the care and skill of the great Physician, but when that treatment is ended and shall have proved which members of the race prefer evil to good, which it is "*impossible* to renew," then, such shall be cut off for the general good. And the case once decided will need no further testing or trying. God is too wise to attempt that which he himself has declared is "impossible." Of this class Satan is thus far the most notable example; all the manifestations of God's goodness and of the terrible consequences of sin for more than six thousand years have only increased his wilfulness and hardness of

heart. Those of men similarly affected by knowledge and experience are reckoned his messengers and co-workers and share with him the final destruction – to them the second death. – Matt. 25:41. Thus we see that evil [trouble] though never *good*, under divine supervision may be *punitive*, *corrective* and *protective* – a punishment for sin, a correction or remedy in bringing from sin to righteousness, and a protection to the race in that it destroys any of its members who will not yield to righteousness.

Aside from the advantage to the race of such protective measures, it is better for the individual willful sinner, that he should be cut off from life, than that he should forever be under the natural consequences of his determined evil course.

God can not be held *responsible* for evil, then, even in the sense of trouble or distress, for his part was right. He created good things and good laws governing them. And though all power is of God and all is subject to his wise control, the fact that his power and laws fall as distress and trouble upon his creatures is not the fault of the laws, or misuse of the power, but entirely the fault of the transgressor. And as we have shown, though the trouble which God permits or causes to result from wrong doing seems an *evil* or undesirable thing to the sinner, yet it *really* is good, as seen from God's standpoint. In creating [*preparing*] or arranging that trouble and distress should follow wrong doing, God did only that which was right. That which was *right*, to men seems evil, yet whatever way he may regard it the *cause* of it was in his own willful sin.

THE PLACE OF THE CROSS IN THE SUBJUGATION OF EVIL.

While considering thus, how evil [trouble] comes as a consequence of moral evil or sin, and is *used* of God in dealing with the sinner, let us not lose sight of the fact that evil of itself is not *corrective*, but destructive only. Contrary to the opinions of some in this matter are the facts of history; for though reforms have occasionally sprung up, the general tendency of any corrupting

influence is from bad to worse. It is only to the extent that God interposes and applies the "salt," that the masses are preserved from more and more rapid putrefaction. In the age prior to the deluge when God let men try their own skill, and what they could and would do for themselves undirected and measurably unaided, the result was not corrective. The corruption increased and resulted in destruction, for the imaginations of man were *only evil* and that continually, swallowing up and almost wholly obliterating the divine image except in one family, that of Noah.

Thus God's work and wisdom is made manifest in *overruling* the destructiveness of evil, and so arranging that to those who will accept of his favor it shall be corrective and not destructive, and prove to be a blessing in the end through God's merciful and wise overruling. And those who would have his favor, learn to accept it in the way his wisdom offers it. He offers *favor* and release from evil to all, through the cross.

It was with full knowledge of the dreadful effects to result from giving mankind *freedom of choice* of good and evil, that God created man thus. He saw how things would *appear* from time to time to necessitate a disobedience of his laws, and that lacking the knowledge which comes from *experience*, man would sooner or later choose to disobey, if he had the liberty. God decided nevertheless to give man the liberty, and let him bring upon himself the consequences of disobedience – death, with all its incidental train of sorrow and trouble. In wisdom he foresaw he could be *just*, and yet recover the man out of death even after he had been condemned, by giving a ransom – a corresponding price, for the willful sinner. And in wisdom he further determined to let the test be wholly upon *one representative* man, through whose disobedience the experience of evil would come to the race, while only the *one man* should thus be the *willful* sinner, and thus *one* ransom-sacrifice be sufficient to justify all and release all from the condemnation of sin, death.

Nor could it be said that God had dealt unjustly with Adam's children, or that *he inflicted* evil [trouble, death, etc.] upon them, for God dealt only with the one man. He created only the one, tried only the one, and condemned only the one to death. Adam and his sons have spread the race and spread the evil. "The fathers have eaten the sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." The groaning creation has propagated its evils as well as itself.

But here God's plan steps forward in due time, and his wisdom and love begin to appear as we get glimpses of his plan. The *ransom* given in the person of Jesus, the willing sacrifice, is made to redound to His higher exaltation *far above angels*, (Heb. 1:4; Phil. 2:9) to a glory and an honor far superior even to the excellent glory he had with the Father before the world was. God's arrangement to have the *one* representative not only was the grandest economy, in that but one sacrifice for sin was needed to redeem – to be a *corresponding* price, but it became also the means for the exalting of *one* "far above" all others of his creatures, justly to be *head over all* that in all things he might have the pre-eminence who was the beginning of the creation of God – Christ Jesus our Lord.

Had there been many *tried*, there would have been many guilty and as many would have been condemned. Justice in payment of the *ransom* for all, must then have demanded as many sacrifices for sin as there were sinners, and as a consequence it would have been but just to reward *alike*, all who would thus engage, and there would then have been no one "far above all" others, no one with a great pre-eminence.

And yet the wisdom of God is further seen, when we consider, that though it is his plan to bring a number, a "little flock," to the divine nature and joint heirship with the highly exalted Redeemer, he manifested his favor and wisdom by selecting these from among the redeemed race, in another way, which would serve a double purpose. First, the selected ones are from among those who already recognize the first begotten as their Redeemer and Master, and being exalted

through his favor they recognize him as head and Lord, even while highly exalted to joint-heirship with him. Secondly, God's arrangement permitted the testing and sacrifices of these, to be among the sinners whom afterward they should share in blessing, and in the midst of the evil from which by and by they should be God's agencies to deliver the groaning creation; and meanwhile they would be "lights," "examples" and "witnesses" to those yet in chains of darkness, among whom as "salt" they have a preservative influence.

THE CREATURE WAS MADE SUBJECT TO FRAILTY IN HOPE. ROM. 8:20-23.

The Apostle while speaking of the hopes of these joint-heirs of the only begotten, **[R873 : page 4]** and telling us that the earnest hope of the world centers in their manifestation, clothed with power as the sons of God, (verse 19) branches off to give us a word regarding the permission of evil. He says: "Creation was made to submit to [its present state of lifeless inability or impotency] frailty, not willingly, but by reason of him [Adam] who [as their representative] subjected it" [to this lifeless or impotent condition]. This is a statement of the facts of the case: Man is in a hopeless state of inability to recover himself from the bondage of corruption (death); not that he would not, after seeing the results, desire to abandon the state of sin and death; but having been brought by Adam under the penalty, man can not escape from it and is obliged to wait for God's help. This statement (v. 20) is thrown in as a parenthesis and the Apostle's argument continues between verses 19 and 21 thus: –

"For the eager outlook of creation is ardently awaiting the revealing of the sons of God [the little flock, the elect]; in hope that even creation itself shall be freed from the bondage of corruption [death] into the glorious freedom [from death, corruption] of the children of God."

God *permitted* mankind to be thus subjected through one man's disobedience, because he had planned the redemption of all from it.

The hopes of the world, that *somehow* there would be a future life, were always vague, but their hopes will be much more than realized in the abundant offer and opportunities of *attaining life*, which will be brought within their reach when the manifestation of God's Kingdom takes place.

What shall we say then to these things? These features of God's plan demonstrate that God is not the author of sin, imperfection and wickedness, but a fountain of holiness and life, from which spring joy and blessing. They demonstrate that calamity, trouble, etc., are the proper, just and natural *results of sin* to which all the violators of God's laws are subject, and which he has been graciously tempering and overruling for the instruction of the wayward and sinful, and for the discipline of his chosen, – the saints. They demonstrate that evil in no sense cures itself, and prove [R873 : page 5] the cross of Christ to be the only remedy provided; and an all sufficient one which lays hold upon every one that was lost in Adam, granting every needful assistance to *enable* them to come to fullest freedom from death – to a complete restitution to their former estate represented in God's perfect creation, Adam, the divine likeness in earthly nature – "very good."

In conclusion, we suggest another reading of the text placed at the head of this chapter.

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