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BE NOT WISE ABOVE WHAT IS WRITTEN.

Marshall County, Ala., July 30, 1886.

ELDER C. T. RUSSELL, DEAR BRO.: Enclosed find money for which please send me by mail the "Millennial Dawn."

From reading the "Food" about a year ago, I was led to see the truth on the "Plan of the Ages," and now I do not stop at your liberal salvation, but can see the salvation of "*all*" clearly taught in God's Word. And I'm trying to preach it with all the strength the Lord gives me. Yours in his love,

J. B. SHERRELL.

In reply: –

Beware dear brother lest you fall into a common error of swinging from one extreme to another – from believing in the everlasting torture of nearly all, to believing in the everlasting salvation of all.

You put quotation marks about the "*all*" to indicate that you refer to Scripture texts which mention the salvation of all, as the basis of your hopes. Let me remind you that in these columns, also in the pamphlet "Food" and in the "Millennial Dawn," which we have mailed to you, all the Scripture texts which refer to the salvation of *all*, are recognized and given weight and place harmonious with the remainder of the Bible – a thing which you cannot do, with your present views expressed above.

We teach, as you know, a full and complete salvation for *all* mankind, from the guilt, condemnation and penalty of the *first trial* in Eden, and from all the contingent wrong doings and weaknesses, physical, moral and mental, which flow to us as the children of Adam and heirs of his weaknesses. This is the "common

salvation" secured for *every man* by him who gave his life a ransom for *all*; and all must have the full benefit of that salvation "in due time" – in the next age, if not in this.

Is this not a salvation of *all* from sin and death? Does not the Bible in all its passages which refer to salvation of "*all*" indicate that it is the salvation from *Adamic death and condemnation*? Does a single passage refer directly or indirectly to the everlasting salvation of any, who, when saved from the Adamic death and given the privilege of life again by the Redeemer and Restorer, shall *then* reject it and sin wilfully? In other words, Is there an everlasting salvation mentioned for that part of the "*all*" saved from the first condemnation in Eden, who after being tried in the second trial are found unworthy of life and worthy of the second death? (Matt. 25:41,46; Rev. 20:9,15; 21:27; 22:14,15,19.)

There is no intimation that God will ever compel any one to accept of the gift of life everlasting. It is quite sufficient that he provides through Christ an opportunity for every man to come to a *knowledge* of the truth, and to an *ability* to live in harmony with the Law of life. The matter is put as an *invitation* in the present age, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." So of the next age it is written, "The spirit and the bride say Come!...And whosoever WILL, *let him* take the water of life freely."

The parable which speaks of *compelling* some to come in, refers to the present age, and not to the next. The Scribes and Pharisees were by their profession, education, etc., the ones originally invited to the Gospel feast, but they heeded not the announcement, "The **[R891 : page 2]** Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The messenger then went into the streets and lanes and by-ways of that people [city] and selected a goodly number, but not sufficient to fill the number which God had designed should constitute the Temple class, in which the world at large should be blessed and have access to him. So then the call to this feast was sent out into the "highways" – outside the city [or Jewish

people] to all nations and will gather enough to complete the designed number. It here reads "*compel* them to come in," but the translation would be better *constrain* as the Revised Version renders it.

Let us beware how we permit reasoning to go beyond the facts set before us in the Scriptures. We might indeed reason, that when all come to a full knowledge of the truth, with full ability to obey and enjoy the favor of life everlasting, that they would be very foolish to do anything else. And yet we should take God's foreknowledge and its revelation as much superior to our reasoning as in other things we have proved it to be. He not only tells us of the grand provision of the future age, when whoever will may have life freely, but he tells us also that some will not accept life on the conditions he offers. God as clearly pictures to us the book of life wherein are written the names of those found *worthy* of life, as he on the contrary symbolizes the second death as a lake of fire, destroying those found unworthy in that trial.

The fact that a being could have full knowledge and ability, and yet wilfully choose evil, presuming on the love of God to avert its consequences, is clearly proved by one case concerning which we have positive information. For over six thousand years Satan has had good and evil and their results before him, and yet he is an open and wilful adversary of righteousness. God who can read the future as we do the past, informs us that the further unfoldings of his plan in the Millennial age will make no different impression upon him, but that when loosed or permitted to manifest his will in the end of that age, Satan will rejoice in iniquity as before; and God calls all his children thus to witness to his righteousness in the destruction of Satan and all his messengers [co-workers in evil] in the second death. – Matt. 25:41.

Ask yourself, what object there could have been in the permission of evil in the world, or what object there could be in appointing a day [age] of resurrection from the great sentence, and penalty, or of the future trial, – if there will be no *trial* as to the willingness of the creature, but merely a trial of the ability of the Creator

to *force* obedience. Surely the ability of the Creator is not in question that it need be tried, hence if trial there is to be, as the Scriptures assert, it must be man's willingness that is to be tested.

Had God intended to force obedience and life upon man against his will, he might as well have done so at first, and avoided the first as well as the second trial, and the first as well as the second death. Nay, would it not have been better to have *forced* the obedience at first, than to have allowed all the anguish, pain and evil which have been, if God must in the end *force* every creature. But no, God seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth. He does not desire forced obedience and forced love. Those who need force after they have had *full* opportunity to know and do God's will, will only receive the force of destruction, being unworthy to enjoy the favor of their Creator. Liberty to choose, or free moral agency, is above all other characteristics the liberty and likeness of God in his creature. To destroy it would reduce man to a mere machine. God seeketh not such worship, and hence it is written: "The Lord preserveth all them that love him, but all the wicked will he destroy." (Psa. 145:20; 37:18-20.)

The redemption and second trial are granted as a favor, to prove who are *wilfully* wicked.

Re-examine, dear brother, and do not allow your fallible reason to lead you outside the Divine plan of the ages. Be guided by God's expressed plan. Reason finds full satisfaction in God's plan only. Those who claim a universal, everlasting salvation, are by the same line of false reasoning invariably led to deny the ransom.

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