

ALL THINGS ARE OF GOD.

The adversary seems continually on the alert to invent some new error or else to revive and revamp some old one, to deceive God's children. And God permits all this, as he has told us, that those being gathered as wheat into his barn may thereby be thoroughly threshed and winnowed or separated from the chaff. God sends, or permits the ambitious ones to bring upon themselves, strong delusions that all who take pleasure in the error may have plenty of it to enjoy and to deceive themselves with, that all such may be condemned, separated from the simple, trusting, humble, non-ambitious, faithful ones whom he is about to glorify in his Millennial Kingdom.

One of the latest phases of error is that which ascribes all sin and crime and wickedness to God; which declares that God inspires every wicked thought, word and deed, and that men in his hands are only tools; that absolutely all things are of God. But while God permits wilful men to fall into such erroneous views and to prosper in spreading them, he does, on the other hand, guide the meek in judgment and teach them his way, and he raises up a standard for them by which they are enabled to see the truth and to distinguish it from error. And though, in this "evil day," a thousand shall *fall* under those errors, they shall not overthrow the meek ones whom the Lord is pledged to guide and to keep from falling. He will give his messengers a charge concerning them, and in their hands shall they bear up the feet of the body of Christ, lest they should stumble over that stumbling-stone which stumbled all but a small remnant of the fleshly house of Israel, and which is now to stumble all but a small remnant of the nominal spiritual house. (Psa. 91:10-12; Isa. 8:14.) He has given to us a charge or message for the feet upon this subject, a message of truth which will bear them up – the complete and glorious

harmony of the divine plan of the ages. "They," the feet class, "shall never fall;" though they stumble, they shall not be utterly cast down. – Psa. 37:24.

Below we quote the pith of this error and will examine those scriptures which it claims as proof-texts. It reads as follows: –

'All things are of God.' (2 Cor. 5:18.) When you think of it seriously it seems that Paul was rather unguarded and careless in his language; it would seem as though he ought to have modified and limited his statement somewhat; say, for instance, all *good* things are of God. But no, the apostle makes the sweeping, unqualified statement – 'All things are of (literally, *out of*) God;' and so important did he consider this truth that he repeats it no less than *seven* distinct times. See Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; 11:12; 2 Cor. 5:18; Eph. 1:11; 4:6; Heb. 2:10.

Now was the apostle careless and a little too bold in these utterances, or did he mean just what he said, and are they true absolutely? I say unhesitatingly, *Yes*, to the latter questions. The more we learn of God's works and ways the more we shall understand that, in a sense, absolutely *all things* are of God, or, as some put it, God is in everything. This is the doctrine of God's universal, all-pervading, ever constant Providence. 'His tender mercies are over all his works.' 'He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.'

"This doctrine of God's Providence is a most positive and important one; there is no doctrine of Scripture that is more plainly supported, by the most emphatic statements, repeated over and over again, as referred to above; and no Christian would think of doubting it, were it not for the fact that its full acceptance leads to some very startling and, to some, even shocking conclusions. 'What!' they say, 'all things are of God? absolutely *all* things? the bad things as well as the good? all the *crime*, and *sin*, and *wickedness*? surely it is blasphemous to

say that such things are "of God." Paul never could have meant that we should take him absolutely; we must use our own judgment and reason in such matters, and correct these sweeping statements, for it *cannot* mean that absolutely *all* things are of God.' And yet that is the way the apostle puts it, over and over again. Was he ignorant and careless? NO, HE WAS NEITHER; he was *right*, and the Scriptures and experience and observation fully bear him out in his statements, as *strange* and *startling* as they may seem."

"Startling!" "Shocking!" We should say it would be strange, shocking and startling to find out that God has been the real devil for the past six thousand years. What sane man would not be startled, could it be proved that God has been exerting his power in some men to inspire them to "sin, wickedness and crime" – to robbery, murder, arson, licentiousness, intemperance, profanity, devilishness – and at the same time inspiring other men to write and say that he hates such things, that he is holy and separate from sin and cannot look upon it with any degree of allowance. Meanwhile God has been blaming all the sin upon men and upon Satan, and not only threatening men with punishment, but actually inflicting pain, sickness and death upon them and telling them that they are blame-worthy sinners, when, if this theory be true, God is not merely the only sinner in the case, the *cause* of "all sin and wickedness and crime," but also a most consummate liar and hypocrite, and unjust to the last degree, in blaming his own work upon his helpless tools.

"Blasphemous?" We should say so indeed! If those who said of our Lord Jesus that his works were done by the power of Beelzebub were blasphemers, as he declares, these who unblushingly ascribe to Jehovah himself all the "sin and crime and wickedness" of earth, it seems to us, are blasphemers a hundred-fold more. No wonder the writer of this bold blasphemy thought that some would be startled by such a charge. In our

judgment, the man or woman who is not startled – nay, more, whose heart does not burn with righteous indignation at such a blasphemous suggestion – is seriously lacking in either mental or spiritual balance, or both. If, then, any saint feels startled by the bare suggestion of such a doctrine, let him glorify God on this behalf and rejoice that he has some spiritual instinct on the subject.

BUT WHAT CAN BE THE OBJECT?

What inspires such thoughts of God's character? What false theory is it that hesitates not, even to malign the character of the Almighty, and which assumes to prove its blasphemies by a distortion of the divine Word? What theory can require such support to make it appear reasonable?

The object is manifestly two-fold: **(1)** To uphold the theory that man never was perfect, that he never fell from perfection and righteousness into sin, and hence did not need a ransom-price for his release from what he did not fall into; and also **(2)** to prove that all men will be everlastingly saved (not saved from a fall or from anything else that they had anything to do with, but saved in the sense of being *evolved up to perfection*) – a salvation, not from the wages of their sin, but a salvation in the sense of release from the wickedness, crime and sin of which God is the author and instigator, and under which he is now keeping and has for six thousand years kept them. This theory in substance implies that all men will be saved on the score of justice, when God shall cease from causing them to sin and shall favor righteousness.

To sustain this false theory, which the Bible everywhere both directly and inferentially contradicts, is the object of the writer whose words we have quoted above: and because of lack of Scripture to support that which he and others have

determined *must be so*, he is willing thus to malign and blaspheme the character of our God to accomplish it. He reasons it out about as follows: If I can prove that God admits to being the real instigator of all sin and wickedness and crime – that *absolutely all* things are of God, evil as well as good, wickedness as well as righteousness – then I have proved that man is not really the sinner; and if man is not really the sinner but merely the agent or tool of God, both in good and in evil, why should he need a *ransom*, or be charged with, or punished for, anything? – if *all* things are of God? The same line of reasoning, carried further, leads to the inference that when God tires of prompting to sin and wickedness and crime, he will stop it and begin to prompt only to righteousness; and when he does that *all* men will be righteous, as now, under his control, all are more or less disposed to sin and wickedness [R1269 : page 3] and crime. If thus all the crime and sin and wickedness be of God the problem of doing without a *ransom* is solved.

GOD'S WORD REPUDIATES THE THEORY.

But the Scriptures say, "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (James 1:13). "Woe unto them that call evil good [who say that the evil of man is obedience to God's working in him], and [call] good evil [imputing evil to God who is only good]; that put darkness for light and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight." – Isa. 5:20,21.

Let us now examine the scriptures which are claimed to support the above theory. Does the expression *all things* mean absolutely all things, as the above writer assumes and insists, or was the Apostle doing what is common to all writers and speakers, leaving something to the general intelligence of his

readers in relation to God's character, and also leaving something to be understood from the context as to what is meant by the expression, *all things*? Paul wrote only to those "that do know their God," who know that "every *good* and *perfect* gift cometh down from our Father, with whom there is *no variableness* [from this rule of sending only good and what will work for good – never sending or causing wickedness, etc.], neither shadow of turning" from that course. And besides, we shall see that every one of these texts quoted had *particular things* in view, when they stated that all things are of God; and that those particular things were good things, and not sinful things.

First let us show, by quoting from the same Apostle, that, not using words carelessly or unguardedly, but in the usual manner, common to himself and to all writers, he used the same words *all things* in a way that the most stupid and the most obstinate must acknowledge was not an *absolute* sense. The following instances are only a few of the many which we might quote, but they will be sufficient to keep the "feet" from stumbling into the idea that Paul's expression, "All things are of God," must be understood as giving sanction to this blasphemy, which charges God with all the wickedness, crime and sin in the world.

"*All things* are lawful unto me." (1 Cor. 6:12.) Shall we here say *absolutely* all things were lawful to Paul? Does he mean that it would have been lawful for him to murder, to commit perjury, to lie, to steal and to blaspheme? Does he mean that *absolutely all* things were lawful to him? Assuredly not: this would be the doctrine of the Jesuits, which led them, in the dark ages, into every conceivable form of evil, under the plea that the end in view would justify the means used – any means that would bring it to pass. Some so misconstrued the Apostle's words at the time, declaring that evil might be done if good would follow. The Apostle resented such a false application of his words, and charges those who said so with slandering or blaspheming him.

Very vehemently he protests that their condemnation was just who slanderously reported that he taught, "Let us do evil that good may result." – Rom. 3:8.

Who shall suppose that this Apostle, who so strenuously resented the thought that he would do evil that good might result, would himself blaspheme the Creator by teaching that he was the direct and inspiring cause of all evil – of all sin, crime and wickedness? If their *condemnation* would be just for thus blasphemously assailing Paul's character, how *just* would be the condemnation of those who so charge Jehovah our God, we leave for God to determine. We are not incapable of deciding that this is a heinous crime and blasphemy, but we are incapable of judging what weakness of reasoning powers lies behind such blasphemies, and hence what degree of punishment our all-wise and just Creator will pay in due time.

Take another illustration of the Apostle's use of the expression "all things:" "He [Jehovah] hath put *all things* under his [Christ's] feet." (1 Cor. 15:27.) It does not mean that our Lord Jesus stands with his feet upon *all things* – earth, sea, angels and men. It does mean that all things are made *subject* to him, or put under his control, under his power or authority. Yet even in this sense *absolutely* all things are not understood, for, as the Apostle suggests, an exception to the all things is left for *inference* to the intelligent mind, and not stated. He says, "It is *manifest* that He [Jehovah] is *excepted*, who did put all things under him" [Christ]. And to the same class of minds that could appreciate such an exception to the expression "all things," it is also manifest that in the statement "All things are of God," an exception of sin, crime and wickedness is to be understood, as being [R1269 : page 4] the very opposite of God's character. If it is impossible for God to lie, shall we say that if he *compels men* to lie for him, he is yet clear from the guilt?

Take two other illustrations together: "**All things** are for your sakes," and "**All things** are by Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:15; 1 Cor. 8:6.) Shall we say that the Apostle meant that all murders and robberies and storms, all perjury and lying and every form and act of sin, are for our sakes? and that they all come by or through the Lord Jesus? What nonsense!

Take another illustration: Charity hopeth **all things**, believeth **all things**, etc. (1 Cor. 13:7.) Shall we say **absolutely all things**? Does Love hope and believe that your neighbor or yourself will be drowned or burned or mangled or murdered, or does it believe all the nonsense that somebody says? Surely again the **connections** show what the expression signifies. We are to believe charitably all that we can believe relative to the honesty of our fellow-creatures, and charitably to hope all that we can in their favor so far as we are ignorant of the matter in question.

Take another illustration: "One believeth that he may eat **all things**." (Rom. 14:2.) Shall we suppose that some in the Apostle's day believed in eating **absolutely all things**? – all the cattle and horses and men and houses and trees and mountains? – **absolutely all things**? Or shall we use a grain of sense and read the connection and find out that the Apostle was speaking by way of contrast of some whom he calls weak brethren, who would eat nothing but vegetables ["herbs"], while others had no such conscientious scruples and, as we would say, "ate any thing and every thing."

With these illustrations of Paul's general use of the expression, "all things" (occurring over eighty times in his epistles), which show that it is not used in the absolute sense, let us proceed to examine the texts to which we are cited as proofs that God is the author and inspirer of all wickedness, sin, crime, etc., remembering this fact and expecting to find in the context that which will indicate **which** things are all of God, and never

forgetting that it is *manifest* that sin, wickedness and crime are never to be understood as included among the all things that are of God.

THE PROOF-TEXTS EXAMINED.

Let us now examine the texts which are offered as proofs of this theory.

"*All things* are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." – 2 Cor. 5:18.

Surely nothing in the context affords ground for the supposition that the Apostle would charge God with all the wickedness and sin of the world. On the contrary, he is showing our new standing in Christ, who "died for all" (verse 14), but would have us note that while the work of redemption was done by our Lord Jesus, it was all planned by the Father himself. *All* the features of our redemption are of God who *himself* reconciled us to himself *by* Christ Jesus.

"To us there is but one God, the Father, OF WHOM are *all things*, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, BY WHOM are *all things*, and we by him." (1 Cor. 8:6.) This is a repetition of the same thought as that foregoing.

"For as the woman is [*ek*, out] of the man, even so is the man also by [through] the woman; but *all things* [*ek*, out] of God." – 1 Cor. 11:12.

This is a further showing (see verse 3) of the relationship existing between the church and Christ Jesus, her Lord, and the Heavenly Father, from whom proceedeth *every good and perfect gift*. – James 1:17.

"In regard to an administration of the fulness of the appointed times, to re-unite *all things* under one head, even under

the Anointed One; – the things in the heavens and the things in the earth – under him." – Eph. 1:10. – *Diaglott translation*.

This verse points out that though sin has been a rebellion against God, the great Emperor, in which some of his creatures voluntarily and others involuntarily came under the dominion and bondage of sin and death, it is not God's purpose to allow his empire to remain thus shattered forever. On the contrary, he is providing for the recovery to full harmony of whosoever will, and for the destruction of whosoever will not obey his representative – the Anointed – unto whom already, since his resurrection and high exaltation to the divine nature, all power in heaven and on earth is given (Matt. 28:18; Phil. 2:9), and under whom eventually all things shall be subdued, that a state of peace, harmony and bliss may everlastingly prevail.

"By whom *also we* obtained an inheritance, having been previously marked out according to a design of him who is operating *all things* agreeably to the counsel of his own will." – Eph. 1:11. – *Diaglott translation*. [R1270 : page 4]

This verse shows that the Church is not included among the *all things* of the preceding verse; for it declares that "*also we*" are already re-united to God, in Christ, in advance of the general re-uniting and subduing of the Millennium. And this plan of first selecting us, the Church, is only a part of the one great plan which he is working out, which he assures us will finally bring order and harmony. All these good things are of God and work out his will. The wrath of man he will not permit to interfere with his plan. – Psa. 76:10.

"For it was becoming in him for the sake of whom [are] the *all things*, and through means of whom [are] the *all things*, when many sons to glory he would lead, that the Princely Leader of their salvation he should through suffering make complete." – Heb. 2:10. – *Rotherham's translation*.

Nothing could be farther from the sense of this passage than to suppose that the Apostle meant "*all the sin and crime and wickedness*" of the world are for the sake of God and through the means of God. The thought, on the contrary, is that all things as they shall ultimately be re-united under Christ in God are to be so for God's sake, because such has been his purpose, his pleasure; and that all will be thus brought to perfection and harmony by his means – his plan and his power carrying that plan to completeness through Christ Jesus, our Lord. Having such a plan, a part of which was the high exaltation of the Church to the divine nature, it was proper that he should thoroughly *test* the obedience of all so exalted. Even our Lord Jesus, always loyal and faithful, should be no less an *overcomer* and no less proved than the sons of glory of whom he is the Princely Leader. Wherefore God's arrangement included him also (as well as the many being brought to glory under his leadership), that all who would attain to the grand perfection of the divine nature must be proved worthy through their endurance of suffering and resistance of sin.

"For of him, and through him, and unto him, are *all things.*" – Rom. 11:36.

A glance at the preceding verses will show that the Apostle is not teaching that all sin, wickedness and crime are of and through and unto the Lord; but, on the contrary, he refers to certain *blessings* and favors which are yet to come upon Israel. (Verses 25-27.) Though they sinned and with wicked hands slew the Lord of life and glory, and brought upon themselves God's "wrath" and "indignation," which were manifest in their national rejection, trouble and overthrow, yet, after all, God has a way for bringing a blessing upon them as well as upon all others of mankind through Christ and his glorified Church (verses 30,31), who, during the Millennium, will extend mercy and full salvation to all, opening the blind eyes and unstopping the deaf ears. Such a view of God's wisdom and goodness leads the Apostle to the

exclamation of verses 33 to 36, which concludes with the assertion that this plan is not of human device, nor even by human assistance; for no man would have dreamed of such a wonderful blending of justice and mercy. But all was planned of God and is by him being carried out through Christ, and shall, when completed, be to his praise, to whom belongs the glory.

If, then, we see that the above passages do not teach what the writings we criticize would misrepresent them as teaching, we are bound to conclude that such teaching is by no means the spirit of God's Word; but on the contrary that it is of some other spirit. Whatever the motive and aim of the human instrument, it is evident that only the spirit of gross error could instigate so blasphemous a misrepresentation of God's character and of his Word.

GOD'S SUPERVISION OF ALL THINGS.

That the eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good, is unquestionable. "The word of God is a discernor of [even] the thoughts and intents of the heart: neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Prov. 15:3; Heb. 4:12,13.) That God could interfere with and stop all forms of evil is a manifest truth. That he has not yet interfered to stop evil is a clearly recognized fact. That the time will come when all evil shall be fully restrained is his distinct promise. Hence it is as proper to say that God *permits* sin, wickedness and crime as it would be false and slanderous to say that he causes or instigates such things.

"Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of the Lord; for God tempteth no man....Every man is tempted when he is led astray of his own desires [for wealth, power, revenge, etc.] and enticed....***Do not err***, my beloved brethren. Every ***good*** and every ***perfect*** gift is from above, and cometh down from the

Father of lights, with whom there is no change or the least variation....For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness [right will or mind] of God." – James 1:13-20.

Nevertheless, God has repeatedly shown us how even the wrath of man has been made use of by him to accomplish his *good* purposes. The declaration of the prophet (Psa. 76:9,10), which assures us that in the great time of trouble, when the Lord shall arise to judgment and to save all the meek of the earth, he will cause the wrath of man to praise him and the remainder which would not praise him shall be restrained, is only the expression, we may believe, of what has been the principle of God's dealing throughout all the past, since sin, wickedness and crime began. The truth is, that so far from creating sin or inciting to wickedness and crimes, God's actions, where he has interfered at all, have been toward the restraint of sin. The deluge was for the restraint of sin; the destruction of Sodom was for the same purpose; the destruction of Korah and his band was to the same end; the destruction of the Canaanites was for the same purpose; the captivities, famines, etc., permitted to come upon Israel were designed to have the same effect.

And in almost every instance the cause is stated. At the time of the deluge the whole world, except Noah and his family, had become corrupt, and their thoughts were evil continually. Of Sodom it is declared that the sin thereof was great, and God "took them away as he saw good." (Ezek. 16:50.) His way was *good* for two reasons: first, in that it made an *example* of them for the restraint of those who should afterward live ungodly (contrary to God's will – in sin – Jude 7; 2 Pet. 2:6); and secondly, because God's "*due time*" for bringing them to a knowledge of his gracious provision for them and for all under the New Covenant (sealed, or made of force, by the precious blood of Christ) had not yet come. Besides, in his due time, during the Millennium, they shall be awakened, when they and all shall be under the

restraints of Christ's Kingdom, and have a full opportunity for attaining life everlasting. See Ezek. 16:48-50,53-55,60-63.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CANAANITES.

In connection with the destruction of the Canaanitish nations (the Amorites, Hittites, Jebusites, etc.), we are told that the Lord would not bring Israel into their land, but left his people in Egypt (where they got valuable lessons in humility), because the iniquity of the Canaanites was *not yet come to the full.* (Gen. 15:16.) Each nation, seemingly, was permitted to go only so far in sin and there was stopped. And the stopping of sin furnished repeated illustrations, types, suggestions, outline hints, of God's general plan for the final destruction of evil and the permanent establishment of righteousness in the world. Thus the due time for Israel's release from the bondage of Egypt (which fitly typified the bondage of Sin) was also the due time for a chastisement of Egypt, and the Lord made use of the opportunity to show his *power* both for the deliverance of his covenant people and for the overcoming of all opposition. Hence he "*raised up*" to the throne of Egypt that member of the royal family who was most bold and defiant, and who would resist God's plan the most and the longest, in order to make of him and his army a *type* of Satan and his evil servants ever seeking to enslave and hold in bondage God's covenant people. The deliverance of the one class by God's power and the overthrow of the other class were not only in harmony with principles of righteousness then, but they were also exemplifications of a fuller work of division and separation to be made in God's due time between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. – Mal. 3:18.

So, too, the entrance of Canaan by Israel and the overthrow of the Canaanites, whose iniquity was come to the full, was not only a righteous act, but it was also a *type* of how, when the real land of promise (the Millennial age) is reached, all the old sinful

ways and institutions must be eradicated; and it is also a *type* of the Christian of to-day, of how when he by faith leaves the world, Egypt, and by faith enters into the possession of God's promises, he must wage a war of extermination against the sinful propensities of the old disposition, which have entrenched themselves in the recesses and fastnesses of his fallen nature.

When thinking of God's relationship to sin, in *permitting* it for a time, we [R1270 : page 5] should remember that the heart of fallen man is prone to sin – malice, envy, pride, strife, hatred, lasciviousness – and that these are ever ready to take advantage of any opportunity. That God has *permitted opportunities* for evil would, therefore, be all that could be truthfully said of God's dealings – not that he inspires sinful thoughts and desires and deeds. Let us glance at some illustrations cited as proof that God inspires sin, wickedness and crime. [R1271 : page 5]

JOSEPH'S EXPERIENCES.

Joseph's brethren sold him into slavery, and when they afterward found him the lord of all Egypt they feared greatly the punishment of their crime. But to quiet their fears Joseph said, "Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for *God did send me* before you to preserve life." (Gen. 45:5.) But, we answer, no ground is found here for charging the crime of Joseph's brethren upon the Almighty. Stephen, filled with the holy spirit, declared (Acts 7:9) that their course was not inspired by God, but by *their own envy*; which fully agrees with James 1:13,16. Shall we then say that Joseph made a mistake in the statement he made? No; both Joseph's and Stephen's statements are correct. Joseph's brethren were full of envy and they premeditated his murder, but God caused *fear* to operate upon the mind of one of them, through whose suggestion the envious brethren took a different course of action and sold Joseph for a slave. Thus God's part in no sense altered the moral

responsibilities of Joseph's brethren; nor did it inspire an evil thought. It merely *turned the evil thought* into another channel (to sell instead of to murder him), which would not conflict with God's plan in reference to Joseph, his servant. It is merely an illustration of God's power to *overrule* without interfering with the moral character of man. So, too, with all the other affairs of Joseph. Because Joseph was taken from prison to Pharaoh's throne, it is not to be argued that God was the inspiring cause of the crime of Potiphar's wife, on account of which Joseph was sent to prison. On the contrary, God could have brought Joseph to the throne of Egypt in a hundred different ways wholly aside from Potiphar's wife and Joseph's envious brethren. The way adopted was the *natural course of events* which God overruled and turned; so that without interfering with the wills of any, his will for *good* was carried out.

Thus it is that God causes the *wrath of man* (the dispositions of the sinful fallen race, not dispositions which he inspires and forces upon men) to praise him, while the remainder which would interfere with his plans he will restrain. When, in the future, it shall be made clearly manifest to all that the efforts of evil men against God and against his children were all overruled and used of God for some testing or other expedient blessing toward those who love and serve him, then the present wrath of men will begin to praise the Lord by showing his wisdom and goodness.

JOB'S TRIAL AND INTEGRITY.

It is claimed, too, that Job's case is another proof that God is the author of sin, wickedness and crime. We fail to see any foundation for the slander there, either. The account given in the first and second chapters of the book of Job, which represents Jehovah and Satan communing together, relative to Job, we regard as a dressing of facts in figurative language for the purpose of giving certain lessons with clearness. God would teach us that

we are not to attribute our calamities to him, to evil or viciousness on his part; that they are merely permitted to come upon us for our testing, and ultimately for the good of all whose faithfulness and integrity toward him are proved thereby. How much Satan has to do with calamities of the present time (the storms, earthquakes, etc.), aside from his general precipitation of all these upon man through his leading of mother Eve into sin, is not clearly shown in the Scriptures.* But though it is intimated that he has much to do with all of man's calamities, both indirectly and directly, this lesson furnished in Job's case shows that in the case of God's people at least Satan's power is limited. He cannot destroy them at his will; he cannot touch them with adversity except as their God will *permit*. And we have the blessed assurance that he will permit only such calamities as will serve to develop us, and to test our trust and obedience.

*For this reason we cannot give to [Heb. 2:14](#) the full force implied in our common version. Had Satan the *power of death* fully in his control, we may be sure that the saints of God would have perished from the earth long ago. However great a power he may exercise over the *world*, we know that his power does not extend to the *Church*. ([John 7:30](#); [13:1](#); [Phil. 1:25](#); [Matt. 10:27-31](#).) In this instance it seems evident that the word translated *power* would have been better translated *dominion*. Satan's dominion is the dominion of death – *i.e.*, death is the sure result to all who serve and obey him.

As Job said ([Job 2:10](#)), so may all of God's people say under affliction: Shall we receive blessings of the Lord's hand and by his providence and refuse chastisements and painful experiences if he sees best to permit them? Shall we not rather trust the Lord and patiently accept whatever experiences may come to us, knowing that he could interfere and protect us, and that whatever he *permits* must be intended for our good if we are exercised rightly under it?

Another text misused to prove that God is the instigator of all things, good and bad, including sin, crime and wickedness, is found in Amos 3:6, which reads: –

**"SHALL THERE BE EVIL IN A CITY AND GOD HATH
NOT DONE IT?"**

(Literally – Shall there be calamity in a city and the Lord have naught to do with it?) Another similar text quoted in evidence is Isa. 45:7. "I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all these things."

To comprehend these two texts, two things must be borne in mind, (1) the proper significance of the word "evil," and (2) the special covenant relationship between God and Israel.

First, the primary signification of the word "evil" is, "Anything that directly or remotely causes suffering." Its synonyms are injury, mischief, harm, calamity. – **Webster**. "Moral badness" is a secondary definition of the word "evil," by the same authority on language.

This secondary meaning grows out of the first as a matter of course: all badness is evil, whether it implies moral perception and accountability or not. The decay or badness at the heart of an apple is evil, just as truly as the decay of morals at the heart of a man. The one is a physical evil implying no moral quality or responsibility; the other is a moral evil and implies moral responsibility.

Why any one from a **good** motive should pass by the evident sense of the word "evil" in these texts of Scripture, and attempt to prove that the Almighty inspires all the **sin, crime and wickedness** of every city and time, is difficult to conjecture. In this text the word "**evil**" stands in opposition to the word "**peace**," and hence carries the thought of trouble, war or

some similar evil opposed to peace. If moral badness were meant, the contrasting word would be righteousness or goodness.

Second, in considering that these words of the Lord relate specially to Israel, his typical and covenant people, we have a clear light thrown upon them. As God now has a special interest in and care over all his people, Spiritual Israel, bound to him by the ties of the New Covenant, so he had a special care over Israel as a nation under the conditions of their Law Covenant. Under the New Covenant each individual son of God is a subject of special supervision and chastisement and correction, while under their Law Covenant Israel as a nation was corrected and chastised.

A reference to the terms of the covenant between God and the nation of Israel will show this. The Lord's declaration or promise to them was that, if they as a nation would observe the laws which he gave them, he would bless them with peace, prosperity and plenty, and would be with them, their God, a shield and defender from all evils, wars, pestilences, famines, etc. But if they should neglect God's statutes, and should become idolaters and promoters of evil like the nations about them, God declared, as a part of his covenant with them, that they should be afflicted with sicknesses, famines and pestilences, and be delivered into the hand of their enemies. See the particular description of the blessings promised and the evils threatened in Lev. 26:3-25; Deut. 11:13-28; 28:1-8,15-23,36-49,58-61.

Although the Lord had so particularly warned Israel what to expect, they seem to have gotten the idea that their blessings and calamities were matters of chance and circumstance, as with the godless nations about them; and in the above text (Amos 3:6) God points out to them that their calamities could not come without his knowledge, nor without his permission, according to his covenant with them. This is clear also from the context (verses 1-

3): "Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel – against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known [recognized, covenanted with] of all the families of the earth: *therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.*"

Instead, therefore, of this passage teaching that Jehovah is the great sinner, the inspirer of "all wickedness, crime and sin" in every city, it teaches the very reverse of this – that the evils mentioned were calamities which God would bring or permit to come upon Israel because of *their* iniquities.

The lesson of Isa. 45:7 is similar. The Lord, having chastened Israel by seventy years captivity in Babylon, points out that the circumstances leading to their return to their own land are no less remarkable, none the less of him and by him, because accomplished through Cyrus, the heathen warrior. The spirit of war, the lust for power and gold which holds sway among men and nations, are not inspired of God; but when the time for Israel's deliverance came, God permitted the hosts of the Medes and Persians to come against Babylon and prospered the way of the noble, benevolent [R1272 : page 5] Cyrus to the seat of power at the proper time to permit him to decree the restoration of Israel to their own land at the termination of the predicted seventy years of its desolation.

In this case as in the others no room is found for charging the Almighty with sin, crime and wickedness. He in no degree interfered with the moral sense of Cyrus or of Israel, but, as always, merely took advantage of the aims and desires of carnal men and overruled their courses (not their motives) to the accomplishment of his plans to bless and heal his people, whom he had previously, according to his covenant, permitted Babylon to conquer and captivate.

In conclusion, we assert on the foregoing evidence that God's Word conscientiously interpreted is a full vindication of the divine character; that even the texts cited to sustain the blasphemy clearly and emphatically contradict it. And we warn all to beware of theories – their own or other men's – which make necessary a defamation of the divine character for their support; that charge God with being the instigator and author of "all the sin and wickedness and crime" of the world, in order to prove that he *must* by and by retract and work righteousness in all, and preserve all everlastingly. Let God be *true* though it make every man a liar. [R1272 : page 5]

GOD THE OMNIPOTENT.

A certain class of thinkers, neglecting to use reason within the bounds of God's revelation, entangle themselves in their own unsound reasonings.

They ask: (1) Is not God all-wise? Certainly, we answer. (2) Is he not all-powerful? Assuredly, we reply. Well, then, say they, if he be all-wise and all-powerful, can any thing occur in the world contrary to his will or contrary to his power? Must we not settle down to the conviction, held these long centuries back by people called Fatalists, that whatever happens, from a mosquito bite to an epidemic plague of death, or from a snowflake's fall to an earthquake or a tornado, is of God, and that all nature is fulfilling his will? Must we not surmise, too, that all the thoughts and deeds of men, both good and bad, are inspired of God? And if these arguments be admitted, are not all mankind like so much clay in God's hands, which he can and does fashion one way for good or the other way for evil? And if so, are not all our efforts for good or for evil futile? Since God is all powerful, who can resist his will for good or for ill? Is it not, therefore, the only wise course to stop all effort for good or evil, and merely follow the good or bad impulses which arise within us?

We answer that all such reasoning is nonsensical – the vain imaginations of a foolish head and heart. It is simply reasoning around in a circle, without God and his revelation of his will and plan. Such reasoning merely lands where it started – with the proposition, Whatever is, is, because it is and must be so.

While it is true that God has all power, and that none can resist his will or battle with the Almighty, yet it is also true that he is not now exercising this power in every matter, nor compelling his will to be done in all things. To take such a view as the one we are criticizing was bad enough in the darkness of the remote past for those to whom God had offered no revelation concerning his will and plan, and his attitude toward sin and righteousness; but such a leaning to pure conjecture, and totally ignoring God's own statement of his exercise of his power, is inexcusable among Christians of to-day.

God assures us that sin is a rebellion against him and his just provisions for our good; that though he has the power to destroy the sinners, he has a more gracious plan with reference to them through Christ; that though he could have made them otherwise, he preferred to make all animals, from the worm, the ant and the gnat, up to man, the highest of the animal creation, of such organisms that each **[R1272 : page 6]** should have a *will* of his own – the power of mind to hope and to fear, to love and to hate, to obey and to disobey. He tells us his plans as they relate to man made in his own image. He shows us that he purposed a test for man in Eden, that even though from the first he knew what the result would be, yet he wished man to learn the lesson, that the only path to happiness is the one of obedience to God and righteousness and love. In permitting sin and its consequences, pain and death, for a time, God is subordinating his love of righteousness, his good pleasure, for our experience and instruction in the principles of righteousness which underlie his government.

During the present time, that we may see how the course of sin would result, the Lord ignores very much that is unholy, hateful and abominable in his sight and does not swiftly mete out the deserved punishments. But he declares that "He will not always chide [reprove], neither will he keep [back, restrain] his anger forever." (Psa. 103:9.) Though it may at present appear as though the Lord is slack in the fulfilment of his promises, both in regard to well-doers and to evil-doers, it would be a mistake to suppose thus. The Lord is not slack, as men count slackness, says the Apostle (2 Pet. 3:9), but is plenteous in mercy, not desiring that any should perish, but that all should turn unto him and live. Nevertheless, every good deed shall in due time be remembered and rewarded, and every malicious deed likewise: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." God is merely biding his time, letting his will and word and character be misunderstood by some and misrepresented by others, letting men have an experience with doing their own wills and trying their own plans and theories, that thus the *lesson* of sin and its tendencies and results may be clearly seen and appreciated by both angels and men. Then the Lord will arise and through his Anointed Son will display his power and make known his will. He will proceed to lay righteousness to the line and justice to the plummet and will sweep away every refuge of lies. (Isa. 28:17.) His *will* then shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven. (Matt. 6:10.) A knowledge of righteousness and an experience with righteousness shall be forced upon men through Christ's Millennial reign; all shall come to a knowledge of the truth; all shall see the effects of righteousness and love and peace, and the will and law of God, clearly contrasted with their own former experiences under sin and selfishness.

God's object in all this – in thus permitting man now to try rebellion and selfishness, and under the Millennial reign of Christ forcing all to have an experience with the different results when his will is done – is to select from among his creatures such as,

after full knowledge of evil and of good, love the good, the right, the pure, the holy, and abhor the evil.

He seeketh such to worship him; for they can and will worship him in spirit and in truth. After they are fully proved to be such, it is his good pleasure that they shall live forever, and he promises them everlasting life and communion with himself. All others he will cut off from life in the second death, because he has no pleasure in them that love evil: "Evil doers shall be cut off, but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth; for yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place and it shall not be: But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." – Psa. 37:9-11.

Thus we see the fallacy of the circle-reasoning of those who would judge of the Lord merely by their own weaknesses and not by his Word. How grand the view which the Scriptures present – that God and his will and all his works are wholly on the side of purity and justice and truth, and that he is in no sense practicing or endorsing sin, or causing others to practice it, or in the slightest degree favoring it; but on the contrary, while reproofing it and explaining its tendency and results, he merely restrains his indignation and justice and permits man to work out his wilful, sinful plans, and to learn from experience the lesson that sin is ever an evil and is to be shunned.

GOD'S STATEMENT OF HIS WILL AND GOOD PLEASURE.

As in the October TOWER we noted the Lord's own testimony concerning the class whom he specially loves, so let us now permit his Word to tell us *what things* he takes pleasure in and brings to pass.

God has *pleasure* in uprightness. – 1 Chron. 29:17.

He has *pleasure* in the prosperity of his servants. – Psa. 35:27.

He taketh *pleasure* in his people who reverence him. – Psa. 147:11; 149:4.

It is his *good pleasure* to give the kingdom to his little flock. – Luke 12:32.

He called them to this kingdom honor according to the *good pleasure* of his will. – Eph. 1:5.

It is his *good pleasure* to work in those who are fully consecrated to him, to guide them both in willing and in doing his will. – Phil. 2:13. [R1273 : page 6]

In such as he counts worthy he will fulfil all the *good pleasure* of his goodness. – 2 Thes. 1:11.

The words, deeds and character of our Lord Jesus illustrated to us what pleases God. In him he was well *pleased*. – Matt. 3:17.

He was an example for all who would *please* God. – 1 Thes. 4:1.

The testimony to those who have loved and served him in righteousness and truth is, that they *pleased* God. – Heb. 11:5.

God is *pleased* with all the painful though joyous sacrifices which his "little flock" makes in his service, following in the footsteps of their Redeemer and Lord. With such sacrifices God is *well pleased*. – Heb. 13:12-16.

Of his own *will* begat he us by the Word of truth. – James 1:18.

Our Master declares that whosoever shall do the *will* of the Father is his brother. – Mark 3:35.

And this is the *will* of God, even our sanctification. – 1 Thes. 5:14-23.

Through the fall, we have lost our keen appreciation of God's will, and hence are exhorted to study to prove what is that good, acceptable, perfect *will of God*. – Rom. 12:2.

This is needful if we would stand complete in the *will of God*. – Col. 4:12.

That we might be willing, if the *will of God* be so, to suffer for righteousness sake. – 1 Pet. 3:17.

It is also the *will of God* that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. – 1 Pet. 2:15.

This to the intent that we should not live henceforth according to the desires of men, but to the *will of God*. – 1 Pet. 4:2.

Because he (and only he) that doeth the *will of God* abideth forever. – 1 John 2:17.

Wherefore let them that suffer according to the *will of God* [for righteousness sake] commit the keeping of their souls in well-doing unto him, as unto a faithful Creator. – 1 Pet. 4:19.

And ye have need of patience [during this period in which God permits sin and opposition to his will to flourish], that after ye have done the *will of God*, ye might receive the promise. – Heb. 10:36.

That we may have confidence in him, and respect and trust him, he hath made known to us the mystery of *his will* [plan] concerning his good pleasure which he purposed in himself – that in his due, full time he will subdue all things by and under Christ; that evil and sin are permitted to oppose his will only for a little

season; that shortly the lessons because of which evil is now permitted to triumph will be finished; and that throughout all the ages to come, righteousness, his will, shall be done. – Eph. 1:9,10; 2:7.

This mystery of *God's will*, though still hidden from the world, was to be fully appreciated by his saints during this evil day and was to be the ground for their faith and patience and endurance. They were to wait for the Lord from heaven and to expect deliverance from evil both for themselves and the world through him who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from the evil of this present period, according to the will of God our Father. – Gal. 1:4.

Not only were the saints to have this knowledge of the coming triumph of God and righteousness, but they were to confess to the Lord in prayer their appreciation of the fact that present evil is not of his will, nor of his government, and their faith to the contrary that all holy desires will be fulfilled when his kingdom has come and when *his will* is done on earth as it is now done in heaven. – Matt. 6:10.

GOD'S PLEASURE TOWARD THE WORLD.

God, our Savior, *desires* all men to be saved and to come to an accurate knowledge of the [this] truth. – 1 Tim. 2:4. – *Diaglott.*

His good desires and plan, however, are all centred in Christ; hence he has appointed no other name by which we must be saved, and no other condition than faith in his blood (in his ransom-sacrifice) and obedience to his precepts of righteousness – love. No man can come unto the Father except by him. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that not the Son of God hath not life. – John 14:6; 1 John 5:12; John 3:36; 5:24.

To this end, the sympathetic love of God toward all his fallen, disobedient creatures was manifested in the gift of his Son to be our redemption price – even while we were yet sinners.

For the same reason, as a part of the same will of God concerning men, he hath appointed to establish his kingdom on earth, and that his King and representative shall reign to bless men, to bring them to a knowledge of his goodness, his perfection, his hatred of sin and his desire toward all that they might be saved from death and come fully back into harmony with him, and of his provision through Christ for them all to do so. – 1 Tim. 2:3-6.

Yet God is not pleased to accept men without testing and proving them as to whether, after full knowledge, ability and choice, they will sincerely love the right and hate the wrong. Therefore he has been pleased to appoint a day [the Millennial Day] in the which he will **judge** the world in [try and prove men with reference to] righteousness. The Judge of all is to be Christ – Jesus and his Church; and the work shall be so thoroughly done that no lover of righteousness shall be sentenced to the second death, and no lover of evil shall escape that sentence. – Acts 3:23.

This trial-test of all, after full knowledge of good and evil, is because our God hates sin and every evil way. He is not a God that has pleasure in wickedness. – Psa. 5:4.

"Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should turn from his ways and live?" "I have **no pleasure** in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn and live ye." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked **turn from his way** and live." – Ezek. 18:23,32; 33:11.
