

CHRISTIAN COMMON SENSE.

"Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is....Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them; for ye were formerly darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light (for the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." – Eph. 5:17,6-10.

COMMON SENSE is the homely designation of a mental product which ought to be, and is, very generally appreciated among men. It simply signifies good mental perception. It is valuable to the man in business, to the woman in the home, to the farmer, the mechanic, the lawyer, the doctor, the teacher, the pupil – to all men and all women in every station in life.

Common sense takes cognizance of facts, conditions and circumstances, notes general principles, conceives ideas of utility and propriety, notes the worthy objects of aspiration and ambition, and shapes its course of action accordingly. It is a common name for Wisdom; but as to whether it is truly wise depends, not alone upon a good balancing of the mental faculties, but even more upon the right condition of the heart.

There is, however, what the Bible terms worldly wisdom (1 Cor. 3:19), which is simply foolishness with God; for it wilfully closes its eyes to the broadest principles of righteousness and truth whose effects reach on into eternity, and with childish indifference to futurity, and even to the highest present interests, operates only for the fleeting present gratification, regardless alike of the interests of others and the highest interests of self.

It is not this "foolish," worldly common sense, however, [R1777 : page 53] that we wish to consider, but Christian common sense – that kind of common sense, which, under the searchlight of God's Word, has discovered its human weakness and imperfection and has come to God for "the spirit of a sound mind," assured by the promise of his Word – "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." – 2 Tim. 1:7; James 1:5.

Christian common sense, then, is good mental perception under the control of a heart in harmony with truth and righteousness, which notes the principles and precepts of the divine law and purpose, accepts God's wisdom as to utility and propriety, and from this high standpoint judges of truth and righteousness, and acts accordingly. If a particular course of action be proposed, Christian common sense perceives its merits or demerits according to the principles and teachings of God's Word; and so, likewise, if a doctrine be announced as divine truth, Christian common sense applies to it the tests of the inspired law and testimony and decides upon its truth or falsity accordingly.

It is the exercise of this faculty that the Apostle, in the above text, is urging upon the Church for her protection against errors of doctrine and of conduct; for all through the age they were to beset her path, and she must wisely discriminate between the false and the true, the bad and the good. Nor does he in any way indicate that such discrimination may be exercised by the Church representatively in the person of a single individual, or of a number of individuals in the capacity of councils, synods, conferences, etc. This has been the mistake – the worldly wisdom – of the great nominal Church, Papal and Protestant. But *individually*, every man in Christ is expected to have and to use *his own* Christian common sense, and for its right use he is accountable directly to God. – See 1 Thes. 5:21; Gal. 6:4.

"Wherefore," Christian brethren, "be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." We have before us the open book of the divine revelation, and never in the Church's history has God left his people without teachers – helps, index-fingers to point his flock to the principles and precepts of his Word, and to help them to compare scripture with scripture. But side by side with the true teachers there have always been the false; and side by side with the truth they place the error; and it is your individual Christian common sense that must decide the matter for yourself – "prove all things and hold fast that which is good." "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself, and not in another." And thus himself rejoicing in the truth, he may become an aid to others to bring them to the same conviction and rejoicing. Indeed, as we have seen, it is the mission of all in Christ thus to build one another up in the most holy faith and character.

"GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION."

And now for some proving – some exercise of Christian common sense upon a proposition which is publicly presented for the acceptance of Christian people. It is the preposterous and blasphemous assumption that all of the sin and iniquity of the whole world is directly chargeable to God, and not to men. Upon this hypothesis is built up "another gospel (which is not another)" – a theory of salvation on the score of *justice* (?), to take the place of the gospel of God's *grace* which we have received, which is on the principle of love and mercy, as taught by all the holy apostles and prophets. The line of reasoning, briefly stated, is that God is the author and instigator of all things, evil as well as good, sinful as well as righteous; – that he alone is responsible for all the sin and iniquity that is in the world, and for all the misery incident to and resulting upon mankind. They thus delude themselves, contrary to all Christian common sense and Scripture teaching, for a purpose: that they may introduce their own theory of salvation. For instance, they say, God having *caused* all the sin will be bound in simple justice to abolish it eventually; and when

God wills that men shall not sin, then, say they, there will be an end to sin. Thus God is made out to be the only sinner, the *wilful* sinner, and man is represented as his tool [R1777 : page 54] or puppet – now influenced toward and compelled to do sin, and by and by to be influenced toward and compelled to do righteousness.

Of course this theory has no use for a ransom. It puts the precious blood of Christ, which the Bible declares was shed for the remission of sins, at a large discount – it is "a common thing," of no more value than that of any other man. Indeed, in this view the ransom doctrine would be a stupendous fraud on God's part; for why punish men for sin which He had compelled, or why accept a ransom for his own sin. Rather, these claim, God will be bound in justice to change his course and release mankind, both from sin and from degradation and the death to which it has subjected them.

The proposition seems so preposterous and blasphemous to Christian common sense, that a refutation would appear quite unnecessary were it not for the fact that the suggestions are so artfully covered with disquisitions on the wonderful love and providence of God, that some are caught by the bait and held in the snare, – because they fail to use their Christian common sense.

The scripture upon the wresting of which this "new gospel" is built is part of 2 Cor. 5:18 – "And all things are of God." Upon this the following daring exegesis was offered some time ago by one A. P. Adams, and is still urged upon Christians as "New Light."

"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; 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, *strange* and *startling* as they may seem."

Now, let Christian common sense get to work on this proposition. Its very first appearance, as the writer himself suggests, is startling – unpleasantly so, even shocking; and this first premonition of evil bids us beware and carefully prove what is the testimony of the inspired Word upon the subject. We find this expression, "all things," over eighty times in the Apostle Paul's epistles; and if it must be taken in an absolute, unqualified sense in the above instance, it would be equally necessary to so consider it in every other case, which course

would lead us to some very strange and indeed absurd conclusions. For instance, the following –

2 Cor. 4:15 – "**All things are for your sakes.**" What? "absolutely all things" – all the bad things and all the good things, all the wickedness and crime and sin and misery and degradation, and all the wealth and wisdom and honor of this world? This would be all things absolutely and without qualification – a manifest absurdity. The Apostle's reference is to the fact that all the arrangements of the divine plan and their harmonious operation through Christ are working together for our sakes – that the abundant grace of God bestowed upon us through Christ Jesus, might, through the thanksgiving of many [of the world to be blessed by our exaltation], redound to the glory of God.

1 Cor. 8:6 – "But to us there is one God, the Father, *of* whom are all things,...and one Lord, Jesus Christ, *by* whom are all things." The statement here is as sweeping in one case as in the other. If "**absolutely** all things" – good, bad and indifferent – are "*of* God" (inspired or instigated by him), then it is just as true that "**absolutely** all things" (all the wicked and all the good things) are "*by* (performed by) Jesus Christ." Can Christian common sense accept that?

1 Cor. 13:7 – "Charity believeth **all things**, hopeth **all things**." – "**Absolutely** all things?" Does charity love or believe all falsehood, hypocrisy and deceit? and does she hope for more and more untruth and every deceivableness of unrighteousness? And is this the nature of that attribute which the Scriptures accredit to God, saying, "God is love?"

1 Cor. 6:12 – "All things are lawful unto me." What! **[R1778 : page 54]** "absolutely all things?" Is it lawful for me to cheat, to steal, to bear false witness, to kill, or to do evil that good might come? The Apostle Paul (Rom. 3:8) resents this latter charge brought against him, and calls it slander. Evidently he did not consider that "absolutely all things" were lawful unto him; nor did he suppose that any sane man

would so interpret him. The matter under consideration was that of the brethren in Christ going to law with one another. This the Apostle Paul is opposing, not however on the ground that it is *unlawful* to do so, but that it is *inexpedient*, in that its tendency is to bring the cause of Christ into disrepute. "All things [that is, all the advantages of civil law, said he], are *lawful* unto me [I have as **[R1778 : page 55]** much right to its protection, etc., as any other man], but all things are *not expedient* [for the cause of Christ and for my personal influence as a representative of that cause]." "Why," then, he inquired, "do ye not rather take wrong ...and suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" etc. The Apostle presupposed some common sense on the part of his readers; as, for instance, in 1 Cor. 15:27 – "He [Jehovah] hath put *all things* under his [Christ's] feet." The statement is obviously not literal, but symbolic of the subjection of all authority and power to Christ. Common sense sees this; and another thing the Apostle Paul indicates which common sense ought to see is that his sweeping assertion that Jehovah hath put *all things* under Christ, is to be understood with that degree of allowance which would exclude Jehovah himself, who did put all things under him. This he says is "manifest:" it is manifest to that Christian common sense, which, instructed of God in the principles and purposes of his plan, recognizes Jehovah as God over all.

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 connections 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 anything and everything."

This same common sense, with even a very slight acquaintance with the principles and teachings of God's Word and with only a small

measure of his spirit, should be able to see the blasphemy of this teaching and the absurdity of its application to the above scriptures. The Apostle James (1:13) says, "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." And Isaiah (5:20,21) adds, "Woe unto them that call evil good [as they do who say that the evil in man is the working of God in him], and good evil [imputing evil to God whose "work is perfect" – 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!" It is indeed a serious thing to wrest the Scriptures. The Apostle Peter indicates that many who do so, do it to their own destruction. – 2 Pet. 3:16.

But it is specially affirmed of 2 Cor. 5:18, that there at least the term "***all things***" is absolute and unqualified, – "And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation."

Surely nothing in the context affords ground for the supposition that the Apostle would charge God with 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 planned by the Father himself. ***All*** the features of our redemption are ***of God himself***, who reconciled us to himself ***by*** Christ Jesus. Christian common sense can see clearly enough that the various features of our salvation are the ***all things*** of which the Apostle writes: "All [***these***] things are of God." The statement of 1 Cor. 8:6, – "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" – is a repetition of the same thought.

The significance of 1 Cor. 11:12 – "For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman, but all things are of God"

– is that neither is independent of the other, but both are dependent upon God, the Creator of both. – Verse 11.

Eph. 1:9,10 – "God hath purposed in himself that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one [under one head] all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." This is parallel to the statement of 1 Cor. 15:27 – "all things" in both cases signifying the whole intelligent creation, human and spiritual. Nor should this be understood to mean *absolutely all* men and all angels, for the Lord through the pen of the same writer has elsewhere shown us that only *all* who submit themselves to Christ *willingly*, and in harmony with the New Covenant, will be granted any place under Christ in the great eternity before us. All others, as unworthy, will be cut off from life in the Second Death. (Acts 3:23.) It is for this very reason that "the judgment of the great day" – the Millennial day – has been arranged, – to judge who are worthy and who unworthy of eternal life under Christ. Hence here the sense is, "that he might gather together all things [worthy] under Christ."

The "*all things*" of the succeeding verse signifies, all the conditions and circumstances of the present and past, which, under God's overruling providence, are made to work together for the final accomplishment of the divine purpose. He is "*operating* all things according to the counsel of his own will." Even the wrath of men and devils while not in any sense *of* God shall thus be *operated* or controlled by God's providence and made to praise him; and the remainder, which would in any way thwart his ultimate purposes, he will restrain. – Psa. 76:10.

Heb. 2:10 (*Rotherham translation*) – "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 sufferings make complete." 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 [R1778 : page 56] 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 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.

Rom. 11:36 – "For of him, and through him, and to him, are *all things*." A glance at the preceding verses shows that the Apostle is not teaching that all sin, wickedness and crime are of and through and to 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 mankind, through Christ and his Church glorified (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 33-36 which conclude 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

this was planned of God, and is by him being carried out through Christ, and shall, when completed, be to his praise.

The above passages, then, do not teach what the writings we criticise claim, but are in perfect harmony with every principle of truth and righteousness expressed in God's 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 undoubtedly true; but that he has not yet so interfered is manifest; and 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, creates, instigates or is in any sense the author of such things. **[R1779 : page 56]**

"Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God tempteth no man....Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own desires [for wealth, power, revenge, etc.] and enticed....***Do not err***, my beloved brethren. Every ***good*** gift 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." (Jas. 1:13-20.) Nevertheless, God has repeatedly shown us how even the wrath of man has been overruled 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, we may believe, the expression 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 crime, God's actions, where he has interfered at all, have been toward the restraint of sin. The deluge was for the restraint of sin; so also the destruction of Sodom, the destruction of Korah and his band, the destruction of the Canaanites; and 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 (Jude 7; 2 Pet. 2:6); and second, 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 learned 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, and 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 [R1779 : page 57] 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 those who desire to make a covenant with God. 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 earth – during the Millennial age) is reached, all the old sinful ways and institutions must be eradicated; and these things are typical also of the case of the Christ of to-day, – of how, when he by faith leaves the world, Egypt, and enters into possession of God's promises, he must wage a war of extermination against the old sinful propensities of his fallen nature.

When thinking of God's course in permitting sin for a time, we should remember that the heart of fallen man is prone to sin – malice, envy, pride, strife, hatred, lasciviousness, and that the sinful propensities are ever ready to take advantage of any opportunity. That God has *permitted opportunities* for evil is, therefore, true; but that he *inspires* sinful thoughts, desires and deeds is utterly false.

Let us glance at some illustrations cited as proof that God inspires sinful deeds.

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 men.

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 criminal charge 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 even the *wrath of man* (the disposition of the sinful fallen race) to praise him, while the remainder which would interfere with his plans he restrains. 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, but equally without foundation, that Job's case is another proof that God is the author of "all sin, wickedness and crime." The account given in the first and second chapters of the Book of Job, which represents Jehovah and Satan communing together relative to Job should be regarded 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, the lesson furnished in Job's case shows that, in **[R1779 : page 58]** 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 *permits*. 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.

As Job said (chap. 2:10), so may all of God's people say under affliction: Shall we receive blessings of the Lord's hand 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 [R1780 : page 58] to us, knowing that he could interfere and protect us, and that whatever he permits must be for our good if we are rightly exercised under it? – Heb. 12:5-11.

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

This text is also misused to prove that God is the instigator of all things, good and bad, including "sin, crime and wickedness." It is found in Amos 3:6.

A literal rendering of it reads, 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 of Israel to God.

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

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 does imply moral responsibility.

How any one could from a *good* motive 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 it is difficult to conjecture. It looks like a deliberate wresting of scripture to support a blasphemous theory.

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. This is a rule of language.

Second, when we consider that these words of Jehovah relate specially to Israel, his typical and covenant people, we have a clear light thrown upon them. As God has a special interest in and care over all his Spiritual Israel, bound to him by the ties of the New Covenant, so he had a special care over Fleshly Israel as a nation, under the conditions of their Law Covenant, while that covenant was in force and before they as a people were cast off from his favor. Under the New Covenant each *individual* son of God is a subject of special supervision, 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 be their God, and their shield and defender from all evils, wars, pestilences, famines, etc., and would bless them with peace, prosperity and plenty. 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.

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, according to his covenant with them, their calamities could not come without his knowledge, nor without his permission. 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 permit or bring 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 and the lust for power and gold which hold 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 more noble and benevolent 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. **[R1780 : page 59]**

In this case, as in 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.

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, and that without a ransom. Let God be *true* though it make every man a liar.

GOD THE OMNIPOTENT.

As surely as all men are fallen and imperfect, so surely their reasoning faculties are unsound, except as guided by the Lord's Word – "the spirit of a sound mind." But a certain class of thinkers, neglecting to use reason inside 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, (3) 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 for many centuries past by people called *Fatalists*, that whatever happens, from a mosquito bite to an epidemic, 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 Jehovah'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 for evil, and merely follow the good or bad impulses which arise within us?

We answer that this is simply reasoning in a circle and without reference to God's revelation of his character and plan. 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 Jehovah had offered no revelation concerning his will and plan, and his attitude toward sin and righteousness; but such a leaning to pure conjecture, totally ignoring Jehovah's own statement of his exercise of his power, is inexcusable among Christians to-day.

While it is true that Jehovah has all power, and that none can resist his will, yet it is also true that he is not now exercising his power in every matter, nor compelling his will to be done in all things.

Jehovah assures us that sin is rebellion against him and his just provision for our good; that though he has the power to destroy the sinners, he has a more gracious plan with reference to them, to be accomplished through Christ; and that though he could have made men otherwise, he preferred to give them the noble quality of intelligent beings, namely, *free moral agency*, or the power of *choice* between sin and righteousness.

This quality of free moral agency thus inherent in the race must of necessity be brought to the test of choice, by the presentation of the alternatives of obedience or disobedience to the Lord; and for a wise purpose this test came first to our first progenitor, in whom we all were; and when he fell into sin and incurred its condemnation, St. Paul tells us that the sentence of death passed upon us all; for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." (Rom. 5:12; Job 14:4.) Thus the whole human creation was made subject to frailty (to the inherent taint of sin and its condemnation to death), not willingly (for both the **[R1781 : page 59]** taint of sin and the condemnation passed

upon them all before they were born), but by reason of him (Jehovah) who (by permitting the temptation and the fall in the beginning) hath subjected the same *in* hope (not *hope* on God's part, for he has knowledge, – but in subjecting man to frailty God, in his arrangements, gave man a basis for hope for a future deliverance from bondage to sin and death), that, as *by the one* man condemnation passed upon all men unto death, so also the free gift of pardon and life *by one*, Jesus Christ, might abound unto all (who would accept it in faith and obedience) and thus the whole creation (all the willing and obedient) shall (through Christ) be delivered from the bondage of corruption (death), into the glorious liberty of the children of God (freedom from sin and death).

In permitting sin and its consequences for a time, God has subordinated his love of righteousness, his good pleasure, temporarily for man's 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 much that is 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 [hold 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, in regard to both well-doers and evil-doers, such is not the case. 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 punished: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." **[R1781 : page 60]**

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 both by angels and by men. Then the Lord will arise and through his Anointed Son will display his power and make known his will. He will lay righteousness to the line and justice to the plummet and will sweep away every refuge of lies. (Isa. 28:17.) His *will* shall then be done on earth as it is done in heaven. (Matt. 6:10.) A knowledge of and experience with righteousness will be forced upon men by Christ's Millennial reign; all shall come to a knowledge of the truth; all shall see the effects of righteousness clearly contrasted with their former experiences under sin and selfishness.*

*See "The King's Highway" – last issue.

God has an object in thus permitting man to try rebellion and selfishness, and afterward under the Millennial reign of Christ forcing all to have an experience with the different results, when his will is done on earth as it is done in heaven. It is to select from among his creatures those who, after receiving full knowledge of righteousness, will love the good, the right, the pure, the holy, and abhor the sinful. God seeketh such to worship him; for they can and will worship him in spirit and in truth. After they have been fully proven, 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 the Lord merely by their own weaknesses and not by his Word. How grand the view which the Scriptures present – that Jehovah and his will and all his works are wholly on the side of purity,

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 that, on the contrary, while reproofing it and explaining its tendency and results, he for a time restrains his indignation and justice and permits men to work out their wilful, sinful plans, and to learn, if they will, from *experience* the lesson that sin is ever an evil, and to be shunned.

GOD'S STATEMENT OF HIS WILL AND GOOD PLEASURE.

Let us now permit God's Word to tell us the things which he brings to pass, and in which he takes pleasure.

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

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

He takes *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.

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.

Christ 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 the "little flock" make 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. – Jas. 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. 4:3; 5:14-23.

Through the fall, we have lost appreciation of God's will, and hence are exhorted to study to prove what is that good, acceptable and 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 according 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 Jehovah 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 has made known to us the mystery of *his will* (plan) concerning his good pleasure which he purposed in [R1781 : page 61] 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 learned; 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, 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.

Not only were the saints to have this knowledge of the coming triumph of Jehovah 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. No man can come unto the Father except by him. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. – John 14:6.

To this end, the sympathetic love of Jehovah toward all his fallen, disobedient creatures was manifested in the [R1782 : page 61] 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 Jehovah concerning men, he has arranged 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.

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 righteousness. The Judge of all is to be the 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.

The distinction of the incorrigible after the final test will be in demonstration of God's unceasing hatred of sin. 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 way 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.

Having thus illustrated the use of Christian common sense in proving what the will of the Lord is as expressed in his Word, let us again commend to all the exhortation of the Apostle quoted above – "Wherefore be ye not unwise; ...let no man deceive you;...walk as children of light," etc. And remember always that "the fruit of the spirit [of God] is in all goodness and righteousness and truth," and let no cunning sophistry of the evil one persuade us to ignore our Christian common sense in the study of the divine Word; for as the Apostle tells us (1 Tim. 4:1), "The spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils:" let us not be of them to fall with them. Remembering also (1 John 3:8) that "he that committeth sin is of the devil," what shall we say of that doctrine which ascribes to Jehovah the authorship of "all the sin, crime and wickedness" in the world? Surely this doctrine is not of him, nor does it find shadow of support in his holy Word.

"As for God, *his way is perfect*: the Word of the Lord is tried; he is a buckler to all those that trust in him." "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.*" – Psa. 18:30; Deut. 32:4.
