

HOW ARE THE MIGHTY FALLEN!

WE clip the following, from the *New York Times*. It is no doubt a faithful report of recent utterances of Dr. Lyman Abbott in the famous Plymouth Church pulpit. How sad to see that a man once so able a defender of the Scriptures and so well informed respecting them is now so blinded as to make the serious misstatements shown below. We discuss the subject because these are *general* errors into which Christendom as a whole is rushing, blindly following such leaders. We quote: –

"Traditional theology supposed that God made man perfect; but what is meant by perfect, traditional theology does not disclose. The idea of man being created perfect has been carried to such an extent that I know of an instance in which a Methodist minister in Connecticut stated to his congregation that so great was Adam's perfection that he had a knowledge of the telegraph.

"Adam, although perfect from the point of view of traditional theology, fell when he was tempted with an apple, a temptation which even a schoolboy is able to resist.

"Evolution takes a very different view of man and holds that he is the result of a slower process in which his lower physical and his lower moral attributes and conditions have been lifted up to their present higher conditions.

"The doctrine of the fall of man from a state of perfection is not to be found in the Bible outside of the third chapter of Genesis. Christ never refers to Adam's fall. John, Peter, Matthew, Jude and the others never do. St. Paul does so only once, and then mentions it incidentally to illustrate only.

"It is generally asserted and believed that sin came through Adam. It is as universal as humanity, and, therefore, grace came.

"I am not a believer in the perfect man of traditional theology. I am a believer in evolution, and I tell you frankly, that I do not believe in the third chapter of Genesis. I consider it to be a legend of the early writers, which some early poet took up, like the Arthurian legends were taken up, and worked into it a sort of spiritual life, and that as such it has come down to us.

"When Paul came to portray the drama of sin, he had nothing to say about Adam on original sin."

The Lord truly declared through the Prophet (Isa. 29:14), "The wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." The most ignorant member of Mr. Abbott's congregation would not probably have blundered into so foolish and untruthful a statement respecting the teachings of the Scriptures.

Let us search the Scriptures. Let us see whether or not our Lord, Peter, Matthew, John, Jude and Paul knew nothing and wrote nothing concerning the fall of Adam, and "never refer" to it, except St. Paul "only once," and then to "illustrate only."

Mr. Abbott says, "*only once*," as though he thought that his audience ought to forgive St. Paul for lying just once, as he did it "to illustrate only." But if St. Paul's plain teachings belied the facts just once, for illustration or other purpose, it would be sufficient to shake and break all confidence **[R1793 : page 84]** in him as one of those twelve Apostles inspired and infallibly guided in all of their doctrinal utterances by the Holy Spirit, so that we might be sure that in building upon their testimony, we were building upon the *foundations* of faith which God himself had established. – See Rev. 21:14; Matt. 18:18; Eph. 2:19-22.

OUR LORD AND HIS HOLY PROPHETS AND APOSTLES DID PREACH THE FALL.

First of all we remark that the doctrine of the fall of man in Adam did not require statement, as if it were a new doctrine; for the Jews already believed it, having been instructed therein by Moses and the prophets, whose writings were read "in the synagogues every sabbath day." (Acts 15:21; 13:27.) The fact that our Lord endorsed the teachings of Moses without exception, and declared that not one jot or tittle of the Law could pass away unfulfilled, was quite sufficient endorsement by him of all that Moses wrote in the third chapter of Genesis, as well as in all the other chapters of the Pentateuch. The doctrine that Adam had sinned and fallen from divine favor and that all mankind as his offspring shared naturally in Adam's curse, and, as a result, had all been "born in sin and shapen in iniquity" was the very essence of Jewish belief upon and into which [R1794 : page 84] were fitted the various typical sacrifices for sins, atonements and washings from uncleanness.

The Prophet David acknowledges the perfection in which man was created, saying, "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor; thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands." (Psa. 8:4-6.) He acknowledges also the fall, saying, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psa. 51:5.) Having the same view of the fall, Job asks, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" – Job 14:4.

Solomon the wise declares, "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man *upright*; but they have sought out many inventions." – Eccles. 7:29.

All the promises of a new heavens and earth, – of a time when the wilderness shall blossom as the rose and the knowledge of God fill the earth, and his favor be offered through Christ to all who will go up on the highway of holiness, are but so many promises of Eden and Paradise to be *restored*, and were so understood by the Jews, and so spoken of

by our Lord and the apostles, and so symbolically pictured in Revelation. – Rev. 2:7.

Our Lord distinctly declares that he came "to seek and to recover that which *was lost*." Thus he teaches man's original harmony with God and his loss of life and of God's fellowship; and that his own mission was to restore the original conditions. He declares also that he came to give his life a *ransom [lutron anti* – a price in offset] for all. This is another declaration of man's original perfection, and of his fall into sin and its penalty, death, and of his need of a ransom therefrom. Because if man's life were not under divine sentence, it could not be ransomed or bought back; and if under divine sentence, the implication is that at some time in the past man had been tried; and if tried, that trial implies a condition fit for trial, – a condition of capability for obedience, – the very perfection and trial and fall recounted in Genesis.

The Apostle Peter teaches the fall when he says, "Ye were *redeemed*...with the precious blood of Christ." He taught the same thing in unmistakable language when, in his discourse at Pentecost, he spoke of the "times of *restitution*." Restitution means to put back as before. If there had been no fall from perfection, and if Peter and the people who heard him had not so believed, he would not have mentioned *restitution* (Acts 3:19-21) as a part of the gospel hope which he was commissioned by the holy spirit to preach. We may be sure that if under the inspiration of the holy spirit the Apostle Peter had the Evolution view of Dr. Abbott, Prof. Drummond, *et al.* (that man was created about on a par with the monkey), he never would have mentioned *restitution* as a glorious hope to be anticipated as part of the Millennial blessing. Would Dr. Abbott preach *restitution*? Did he ever preach from these words of Peter as a text? We presume not. It would fit very poorly with his theory; for if the past six thousand years have been spent in *lifting* man up from an ape-like condition to intelligence, *restitution* would mean the undoing of it all, and a return to ape-like-ness; – and not to the God-like-ness in which the Scriptures declare that man was created, from which he fell, to which he has been

redeemed, and to which, if he *will*, he is to be restored. And yet, astounding fact! the Apostle Peter declares not only that he believes in restitution, but that God has spoken of it; not only once, but "by the mouth of *all his holy* prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:19-21.) No wonder, then, in view of so general instruction by God for so long, that the people knew of the fall so thoroughly that it was unnecessary for our Lord or the apostles to make it a special subject of discourse, although all of their utterances were in harmony with it and implied it.

Dr. Abbott is willing to concede that the inspired Apostle Paul mentions the fall "only once," and he seems willing to forgive that once because it was "to illustrate only." If Dr. Abbott would not use bald untruths to illustrate his discourses, why offer such an excuse for St. Paul?

But if mention of the fall be an error, Dr. Abbott will have to forgive St. Paul more than once. If mistaken at all on this point, St. Paul, as well as the others, was *much mistaken*; for, as we will show, he mentioned the matter several times. Note the following instances and ask yourself whether it was natural or mental blindness (Isa. 29:11,14) that hindered Dr. Abbott from seeing any but one of these. We wonder which one of the many he saw: –

"Through the offense of one many be dead." – Rom. 5:15.

"Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was [first] in the transgression." – 1 Tim. 2:14.

"The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety." – 2 Cor. 11:3. **[R1794 : page 85]**

"By one man sin entered into the world, and death by [as a result of] sin, and so death passed upon all." – Rom. 5:12; 1 John 2:2.

"By one that sinned." – Rom. 5:16.

"As all in Adam die." – 1 Cor. 15:22.

"By one man's offense death reigned by one." – Rom. 5:17.

"By the offense of one judgment came upon all." – Rom. 5:18.

"By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." – Rom. 5:19.

St. Paul referred to the fall every time he mentioned *justification*, or the ransom-sacrifice by which we are reckonedly justified; as, for instance, when he said, "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received [first of all], how that Christ died for OUR SINS, according to the Scriptures." – 1 Cor. 15:3; Jude 3.

With the testimony of St. Paul, of St. Peter, of our Lord Jesus and of "all the holy prophets since the world began,"* corroborating the account of Genesis 3, we advise Doctor Abbott, and all who have determined to reject God's revelation on the subject and to adopt instead human speculation and philosophy and "science falsely so-called," that they would better cut loose from the Bible entirely. Their claim of allegiance is injurious to the Book and to the Lord's cause in general, and is very discreditable to themselves, their honesty, etc., leading them to make such untruthful statements as the one we quote at the head of this article.

But so far from falling from the esteem of men, Dr. Abbott is being lionized by the ministers and school-men of *all* denominations. Amongst the speakers at a banquet of the "Methodist Social Union" on Feb. 1, at the St. Denis Hotel, New York City, Dr. Abbott's name was first in the announcement. This only indicates how general among the worldly-wise is the falling from grace now in progress – denying the fall of man and consequently the *redemption* from the fall by the precious blood of Christ. But we are assured that some things highly esteemed among men are an abomination unto the Lord; and surely this is one of them. – Luke 16:15; Heb. 10:29.

We are here reminded of our Lord's words, – "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find *the faith* on the earth?" (Luke 18:8.) Evidently not to any great extent. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." – Psa. 91.

"In God I have found a retreat,
Where I can securely abide;
No refuge no rest so complete,
And here I intend to reside.

"A thousand may fall at my side,
Ten thousand at my right hand;
Above me his wings are spread wide,
Beneath them in safety I stand."

"His truth is my buckler and shield;
His love he hath set upon me;
His name in my heart he hath sealed;"
E'en now his salvation I see."
