

THE SCOPE OF THE ANGELS' SONG

"Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!" – Luke 2:14.

THE song which the angels sang at the birth of the Savior has been seized upon and misapplied by some who do not see the Plan of God for the salvation of the world. Becoming discouraged by the seemingly poor prospect for the world's conversion, these have put forth a version of this passage more in harmony with their own doubts and misconceptions. To these the prayer which our Master taught His disciples to pray, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in Heaven," has lost its meaning; for they see no hope of its fulfilment except in a very limited sense. Hence they prefer to translate the latter part of the verse, "And on earth peace, among men of good will." Were this the proper rendering, our hopes for the ultimate good of all, as far as this passage is concerned, would surely suffer eclipse; for very few thus far in the history of the race have been "men of good will," men who unselfishly endeavored to any appreciable degree to bring about the good of their fellows.

But we do not believe this to be the thought of the original. It is not in harmony with what we have clearly seen to be the Plan of God for mankind. Such a translation eliminates the thought of God's eventual good will toward all the world, and greatly minimizes the scope of this glorious song. It implies merely that men who have a feeling of good will are or will be at peace among themselves. How utterly barren of hope for all men would such an expression be! And how little the song of the angels would mean if this were its burden!

On the contrary, this song was a prophecy of God's purpose to bring about through the newly born Child the abrogation of the curse and the establishment of peace and sinlessness among

mankind, in which God and man would become at-one. It was an expression of *God's* good will, His good purpose, to bring man back to the image and likeness of Himself, in which Adam was created. When this shall have been accomplished, then peace will dwell in all the earth; for the causes of inharmony will have been eliminated.

The world of mankind came under the curse, or sentence, of death because of the sin in Eden – because our first parents disobeyed God's righteous command. All humanity, therefore, are members of an accursed race – under penal servitude, which ends in the tomb. The race has been learning the lesson of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and its terrible effects. But God has promised to take away the curse and to bring a permanent blessing in its place. This will mean a return to His favor, to full harmony with Himself.

PROGRESSION OF GOD'S GREAT PLAN

We speak of this song as a prophecy because the peace has not yet come, nor the good will, in the sense that God's face is as yet turned toward man. It is a declaration of what God purposes to do. He has not good will toward the present sinful, rebellious attitude of the race. He has never good will toward sin. We are not to understand that God was expressing His good will toward man when He pronounced the sentence of death upon him. God's curse indicated His ill-will toward man – in other words, His displeasure because of man's sin. He wished man to suffer ill as a just punishment for his wilful disobedience. God cut him off from fellowship with Himself. He was not bound in justice to do anything more for the race. But in His infinite mercy He provided a deliverance for mankind. He foreknew man's fall, and planned His redemption from before the foundation of the world.

Through all the ages since the fall of Adam God's Plan has been slowly, steadily progressing. While men have been learning in pain and tears and trouble the nature and results of sin, God has been selecting His saintly ones, His Elect – first, the Elect who are

to be the earthly princes in His Kingdom of Blessing; lastly, the Elect who are to reign over all as kings and priests of God on the highest plane of existence. The chief of all the Elect is His well-beloved Son, the Savior of the world, whose birth the angels proclaimed to the shepherds watching on the plains of Judea, nearly nineteen centuries ago. (Isaiah 42:1.) When all the elect ones are chosen and prepared, then the blessing of the world at large will be inaugurated. "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God [the Church]. For the creation was made subject to frailty, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God." – Romans 8:19-21. [R5576 : page 343]

The coming of the Son of God to earth was only preliminary to His offering of Himself as a Ransom for the forfeited life of Adam, the father of the race, in whom all his posterity fell. But even when our Lord had died as man's Ransom-price, God's favor did not come to the world. Jesus was next raised from the dead a glorious, Divine being. Then He ascended up on High, and appeared in the presence of God for those who were to be of the spiritual Elect. Thus the last became first in God's Plan. The merit of Jesus' death was utilized first on behalf of these. It has not yet been applied for any others. The Church of Christ now have this promised peace and good will. It is granted only to those who have come into vital relationship with God through Christ – the fully consecrated ones.

The Scriptures show that after these are all selected, prepared and glorified, the next step will be the application to all men of the merit which has been imputed to these Elect, and through whom it is to go to the Worthies of old and to the entire world of mankind. This spiritual class have been chosen to be members of the Body of Christ, joint-associates with Him in the Messianic Kingdom. All of these who prove entirely faithful are to attain this exalted position.

As soon as all the spiritual class have been glorified, the sins of all the world, those living and the dead as well, will be legally canceled by the application of the virtue, the merit, of the sacrificial death of Jesus. Then they will be freed from the condemnation of the sentence of death. The death penalty will be lifted. They will be turned over to The Christ, Head and Body, the Great Mediator. The curse will be removed.

The great work of the Millennial Age will then begin. It will be a work of gradual uplift during the entire thousand years of the Reign of The Christ. The dead will be gradually awakened and brought to a clear knowledge of the salvation of God in Christ. All will then have the opportunity of coming into the blessed condition of peace and good will proclaimed by the angels. By degrees they will be brought, if they will, to where they will be ready to be received by the Father, to be introduced to Him. This will be the blessed experience of all who will be obedient to the rules and requirements of the Kingdom. If they prove unwilling and disobedient, after being brought to a clear understanding, they will be "cut off," destroyed, as not worthy of further effort on God's part for their reclamation.

CHRIST'S DEATH A BLESSING TO THE UNIVERSE

We understand that the sacrifice of the Son of God will be a blessing also to the inhabitants of worlds not yet peopled, who will not have had any personal experience with sin. God apparently purposes that after mankind have been restored, and all the incorrigible destroyed, He will allow no further infringement of the Divine Law. Indeed, we can see that if at the beginning of his deflection Satan had known the results of his own course, he would probably not have taken the step which he did. We are not to think of Satan as being foolish by nature. He was a glorious being, Lucifer, "the son of the morning." If Father Adam and Mother Eve had foreseen the results of *their* disobedience, they would not have

taken such a course; for to have done so with foreknowledge would have meant that they were very unwise, foolish, of unsound minds, whereas they were created perfect, in the image of their Creator.

We believe that if the angels who kept not their first estate had known the end from the beginning – if they could have looked down the ages and seen the direful consequences of their course of sin and disobedience – they would have been appalled, and would have taken no such disastrous step. The fact that they have gotten into sin, and have developed such sinful tendencies, proclivities and preferences, is no proof that this would have been their course if they had known as much in advance as they now know. It is our hope that some of these may yet be reclaimed, if they are properly repentant, in their great Judgment Day, now at hand.

God seeketh such to worship Him as worship Him in spirit and in truth. Our thought is that all these worlds surrounding us are designed to be homes to many intelligent beings yet to be created. We believe that it is God's delight to give joy and blessing to many creatures, on various planes of existence. And God is making of this experience of mankind with sin a valuable lesson, a lesson that will be beneficial, not only to themselves, but to all the worlds that will ever be populated. These might be instructed and informed in advance of their developing any sinful tendencies just what the nature and tendency of sin is. They will probably be told the story of the tendency of sin – what it did for the people of earth, what it cost to redeem and restore them. They will be told, probably, that sin degrades mind, body and morals; that its influence is only deteriorating; that once deteriorated, one learns to prefer sin, notwithstanding all the misery and degradation it brings; and that God will never grant everlasting life to any except as they gladly co-operate to that end – that He will never influence any against their own will.

It would seem, then, that the great work accomplished at Calvary will have an influence as wide as the Universe. And this thought might be applied to the [R5577 : page 343] first part of the song of the angels, "Glory to God in the Highest!" God will be glorified by all the angels, by every rank of spirit beings. He will be glorified by His exalted Church, then of the Divine nature; by restored humanity, by all the intelligent creatures on every plane, in every Age! Yea, more and more glorious will be His honor as the years of eternity roll on, and as other peoples of other planets are brought into being and brought to know Him and to share His wonderful bounties and blessings, and to learn the blessedness of loving and serving Him.

"MY PRESENCE SHALL GO WITH THEE"

Almighty God, the Lord of Heaven and Earth,
O, Thou, the Source and Centre of each sphere,
The Lord of Being, throned afar, whose hand
Upholds the weight of worlds, yet, wondrous thought! –
Nor day nor night too occupied to note
E'en when a sparrow falls to earth, whose eyes
A watch-care keep o'er every child of Thine;

Whose guardian angels daily shape the course
Of those who love Thee more than life itself;
Whose chastening rod doth guide them in the way
That leads to endless life! How sweet to feel
Thy presence ever near, to know that Thou
Dost never sleep nor slumber while Thy child
In time of need doth cry for help from Thee!

O, Thou, in Whom no shade of turning lies,
Thou changeless and unvariable One!
Though *all* unfaithful prove; yea, though the earth

And heavens depart, by faith we clasp Thy hand,
We calmly rest our weary hearts on Thee,
Assured that Thou wilt *ne'er forsake*, that we
Shall be *forever precious in Thy sight!*

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G. W. SEIBERT.

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