

SIN



WHAT IT IS AND HOW IT CAME

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“**Fools**”, says the Proverb, “**make a mock at sin**” (Proverbs 14. 9). The same designation is scripturally applied to any who in their heart say, “**There is no God**” (Psalm 14. 1). The unbeliever, who denies the existence of God and consequently any moral responsibility to a Creator, will be the more ready to dismiss the subject of this booklet as being trivial or outmoded than one who, in spite of present day tendencies, retains his religious convictions.

It is undoubtedly the rejection of the Bible as the Word of God which has led to the modern irreligious outlook and the landslide in morals: both of which Christ foretold would characterise the days immediately prior to his return to earth (Luke 17. 26-30). The almost universal acceptance of the theory of man's evolution from lower forms of life has for the great majority of people swept away the Bible teaching concerning man as a creature fallen from divine favour and in need of God's forgiveness and mercy if he is not to perish eternally.

But before our readers brush this subject unceremoniously on one side as being unimportant, let them consider well the seriousness of a denial of Bible teaching.

It has been well said, ‘The fall of man is the very foundation of revealed religion’. If this be taken away, the Christian system is subverted, nor will it deserve so honourable an appellation as that of “**a cunningly devised fable**”. If the Genesis account of creation and the subsequent fall of man-the entrance of sin into the world-is rejected, we must of necessity reject Christ as a Saviour. It is not possible to reject the writings of Moses and at the same time believe in

the redemptive work of Christ. If the record of Genesis is no more than a myth or fable, as many modern religious leaders assert; if it is mere folk-lore without historical accuracy; if there were no **“first Adam”**, and the record of his Fall and consequent punishment by death is not true; then there could logically be no **“last Adam”** (1 Corinthians 15.45), and Christ's mission to **“take away the sin of the world”** (John 1. 29) **“by the sacrifice of himself”** (Hebrews 9. 26) is meaningless. If it is untrue that **“by one man's (Adam's) disobedience many were made sinners”**, what confidence can we place in the promise that **“by the obedience of one (Jesus Christ) shall many be made righteous”** (Romans 5. 19)?

HUMAN EXPERIENCE

But what is sin-and whence did it come? Its existence is almost as old as the human race itself. Whether or not we use the actual word **“sin”** the fact is that man's history is besmirched by the outcome of his lusts, passions, cruelties and vice. Man's inhumanity to man has become proverbial. The continued experience of sin and man's proneness to evil are the antithesis of any theory of evolution from lower forms of life, which pictures man on an ever ascending scale to greater and better things. Whereas much lesser forms of life can, and do, live in harmony and self-help, the history of man demonstrates that he cannot. The innate evils of his nature always predominate over his circumstances. His most advanced skills are debased to the lowest levels until civilisation today stands on the brink of self-destruction, the culmination of nearly six thousand years of misrule arising from the dictates of the human heart.

Men and women suffer in a way of which the animal world is incapable: from the dictates of their own conscience, a feeling of remorse for wrong-doing. The philosopher will acknowledge man's 'eternal feeling of guilt and remorse', but he cannot account for it by philosophy. The commencement of this moral taint finds its only reasonable explanation in the Bible's account of the creation of our first parents with a capability of knowing good from evil, and their subsequent fall by disobedience to divine law-which is SIN. Whereas man of himself cannot give

a true explanation of the origin of sin, the Bible record is completely adequate to account for the obviously degenerate condition of the human race: **“As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”** (Romans 5. 12).

DIVINE REVELATION

God, through His prophet, challenges human ignorance as to both the origin and the destiny of mankind:

“Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen; let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come” (Isaiah 41. 21, 22).

Man's inability to know anything of his origin, or the reason for his present moral and physical condition, is matched only by his incapability of knowing the future. Such knowledge can come only by the divine revelation of the One who has declared `the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure' (Isaiah 46. 10). It is that counsel which we must learn and follow wherever it leads, or we shall learn nothing. By the illumination of the past, we shall see where we are now how far we have traversed from the beginning; and by the light shed on the future we shall see how near we are to the end.

Beyond the statement that **“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”** (Genesis 1. 1) the Bible does not set out to teach us of the origin of such primary things as space, time or matter. It commences with an account of God's creation of conditions on this globe capable of sustaining life, followed by an account of the creation of the plant and animal kingdoms, of which man was the crowning glory. The Genesis account is better appreciated when the state of world opinion at the time of its writing is borne in mind. By then mankind had fallen into the grossest forms of idolatry and superstition, which had arisen

from a falling away from truths once commonly known (Romans 1: 19-25). Yet Moses records the origin of all created things, the origin of the sexes, and the true explanation of sin and all physical and moral evil, in simple language which a child can understand. When literally received and understood this provides the key to an understanding of concepts which have been inexplicable to mere human thought in every age. At the same time, the opening chapters of the Bible reveal the germ of the only hope of salvation for man, which salvation is the theme of the whole of the scriptures.

The more closely the record is examined and compared with the theories of both ancient and modern philosophers, the more firmly are its veracity and authenticity established as being a Divine revelation. Without the Bible mankind would be in complete darkness, knowing nothing either of his origin or his destiny. If its record of the past is rejected, logically we must also abandon its hope for the future: its sublime teaching that

“the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6.23)

is reduced to meaningless jargon, and must for ever stand as a pious fraud, without foundation in fact and without hope of realisation in the future. Such must be the consequence of a rejection of the Bible account of the entrance of sin and death into the world.

THE FIRST TRANSGRESSION

In accepting the Bible record, we are not asked to believe the lurid nonsense of ancient mythology, but are presented with a perfectly reasonable account agreeable to the needs of the first human pair. Archaeology has confirmed that the cradle of civilisation was in Mesopotamia, wherein the Bible locates the Garden of Eden: a location within a temperate and fertile zone, admirably suited to man's needs. The first man and woman were provided with all that was necessary for the continuance of life. God created Adam and Eve **“very good”** (Genesis 1. 31) and placed them in ideal surroundings for their well-being and happiness. They were not, however, automatons; they possessed free will

which they could exercise in a choice of occupations, without experiencing sorrow, pain or fatigue:

“And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil . . . And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Genesis 2. 8-15).

But those happy conditions, in which man held direct communion with his Maker, did not continue. Disobedience to a simple command of God brought sin into being. A single restraint was placed upon their free will:

“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2. 16,17).

Accepting the reasoning of the serpent (which was nothing more than an animal created with reasoning powers above the rest of the animal creation) that they would not die if they transgressed, but would become as gods to know good and evil (Genesis 3. 1-5), Adam and Eve succumbed to temptation; they allowed their natural desires to override the express command of the Almighty:

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Genesis 3. 6). They thus gave way to **“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”**, which John says are **“not of the Father, but of the world”** (1 John 2. 16); they SINNED, and so brought upon themselves the effect of sin, which is death.

Sin brought a consciousness of shame and fear: **“the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked . . . And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And Adam said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked”**(Genesis 3. 7-10).

Previously, with eyes which were `closed' to the effect of sin, they knew neither shame nor fear; SIN brought a consciousness of both. Unbelief of God's Word had led to the act of transgression; and disobedience, in turn, had led to an awareness of moral defilement and debasement of nature, which has persisted throughout all generations. The animals have no such consciousness, because they were not created with the same moral attributes, and have therefore never sinned, although included in the curse pronounced in the beginning because of Adam's sin.

THE CONSEQUENCES

In harmony with the majesty, justice and righteousness of God, the sentence which had been threatened was carried into effect. Thus commenced the operation of what Paul describes as **“the law of sin and death”** (Romans 8. 2) From the day of transgression Adam and Eve commenced to die-a process which has gone on inexorably in all of their descendants:

“As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5. 12).

All mankind has become guilty of sin, which has defiled man's whole being both morally and physically and the inevitable end of which is death. The Lord Jesus described the depravity of human nature:

“from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All

these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7. 21-23).

The process is simply described by James: **“Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust (desire) and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death”**(James 1.14, 15). -.

The transgression of Adam and Eve profoundly affected the whole of God's creation and set the whole course of human history. All mankind having descended from this first human pair all have inherited their defiled condition. The apostle Paul summed up the situation very plainly when he wrote:

“We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Romans 3. 9-12). or again, **“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”** (Romans 3.23).

Sin is a falling short of the Divine standard, whether or not that standard is known. It is a denial of the declared purpose of God to fill the earth with His glory. The essence of that purpose lies in the complete subjection of the creature to the creator, and it is this subjection which mankind from Adam onwards has failed to accept. Because God's purpose has been denied, the whole of creation has fallen under a curse which has resulted in great suffering and death (Genesis 3. 17-19). Instead of there being harmony between God and man enmity has developed:

“The carnal mind (our natural way of thinking) **is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”** (Romans 8. 7). John expressed the same truth when he wrote, **“All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world”** (1

John 2. 16).

This is the general condition of the world, but God calls those who would please Him to separate themselves from it:

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2. 15).

In writing to the Christians at Rome Paul described them as having been **“made free from sin”**, and become **“servants of righteousness”** or **“servants to God”** (Romans 6. 22). Yet such are never free from the inherent tendency to disobey God which has been man's experience ever since the garden of Eden. There is a **“law of sin in our members”** which has to be resisted. The result is the conflict graphically described by Paul, a conflict from which he found he was never free:

“For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me”. In desperation he exclaimed **“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”** (Romans 7. 18-24). Why does he describe this body, this flesh in which **“dwelleth no good thing”**, as **“the body of this death”**? Because, as he wrote in another place, **“the wages of sin is death”**.

SIN AND DEATH

God had told Adam that death would be the inevitable consequence of sin. The serpent had reasoned that God would not be true to His Word. To the woman it had said,

“Ye shall not surely die; For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3. 4, 5).

Human speculation has always sought to assure man that death, in fact, is only 'transition', and that life continues in some other sphere after death. To say this is only to perpetuate the very same deception which brought sin and death into the world. Adam and Eve cast doubt upon the authority and truthfulness of God's Word. Believing the lie of the serpent, and that God either could not, or would not, carry out His declared intention of punishing sin by death, they gratified their own desires contrary to the divine will. The suggestion of the serpent implied that God was withholding certain benefits from them; and when finally confronted with the evidence of sin, Adam sought to excuse it by blaming Eve:

“The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat” (Genesis 3. 12).

It is only when the enormity of sin is comprehended that the justice of the Almighty in carrying out His decree, together with His beneficence in offering a way of escape from its consequences, can be truly appreciated. It was such an appreciation which led the Apostle Paul to write:

“For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ” (Romans 5.17).

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6. 23).

All Bible teaching concerning death confirms its reality as a punishment for sin-that at death all consciousness ceases. To say otherwise is to align oneself with the serpent, and charge God falsely. Death is as real as the effects of the sentence passed upon our first parents:

“Unto Adam (God) said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the

herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3. 17-19).

Every thorn and thistle is a witness to the unalterable truth of that divine pronouncement. Man's unending fight against the curse upon the ground cannot be evaded. Progress in one direction frequently brings disaster in another:

“All the labour of man is for his mouth . . .” (Ecclesiastes 6. 7), says Solomon; and man follows his daily toil until the time comes for the effect of sin to take its toll, and he is removed from the scene to return to the ground from whence he was taken (Genesis 2. 7).

“Unto the woman (God) said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Genesis 3.16).

Though relieved by the joy of motherhood, woman's conception has, throughout the ages, been one of the world's greatest sources of sorrow.

Nothing which mankind can do can alter the results of the divine decree, every word of which is confirmed by the experiences of each human pair. By his own folly in refusing the counsel of God, man has wandered out of the way of understanding, and has only added to his misery by following without restraint the innate lusts and passions of his own defiled nature.

Throughout his history he has followed the unbridled thoughts of his own mind-the mind of the flesh-so that- the Apostle John's words are as true today as when they were first penned:

“The whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5. 19).

GOD'S REMEDY

But could it be thought that present conditions are the final arrangement of the Almighty's creation? Indeed, No! God has revealed through the pages of the Bible a purpose which will ultimately fill the earth with His glory (Numbers 14. 21) - a state in which sin will be eradicated, and the whole of creation will render to the Almighty both the praise and pleasure for which all things were created (Psalm 148; Revelation 4. 11).

A vital step in the fulfilment of this purpose will be the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to establish upon earth the Kingdom of God, in which God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6. 10). For such a plan to be accomplished, it will mean removing power from the hands of present rulers, ending man's rule according to the dictates of sinful flesh, and transferring world government to the One who

“ . . . shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked” (Isaiah 11. 3, 4).

The contrast between that reign of righteousness according to the will of God and present conditions is vividly described by the Psalmist:

“In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth . . . He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper . . . He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight . . . His name shall endure for ever; His name shall be continued as long as the sun and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed” (Psalm 72. 7-17).

The curse placed upon the ground because of man's disobedience in the beginning will be removed : **“There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall**

shake like Lebanon” (Psalm 72.16). “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed . . .” (Amos 9. 13). The curse under which mankind now labours will be removed:

“There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed . . . They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock; and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 65. 20-25).

The final consummation is given in the pronouncement in the Book of Revelation:

“There shall be no more curse;” And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 22. 3; 21. 4).

This is no mere Utopian dream, without any possibility of realisation. This is the declared purpose of Almighty God. Death came on account of sin; sorrow and pain and every misery of man followed in its train. For those things to **“be no more”** must mean that sin will be removed from the earth, and deathlessness prevail. To that end God has graciously invited the reader. This is the One Hope of the Gospel, which those who manifest the necessary faith and render the required obedience will share: a hope made sure in the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world.