

PEOPLE'S PULPIT...



Sermon by CHARLES T. RUSSELL, Pastor Brooklyn Tabernacle.

ALL IN ADAM Even so ALL IN CHRIST

Text:—"Since by man came death, by man also comes the resurrection of the dead; for as all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's during his presence" (I Corinthians xv, 21, 23, R. V.).

July 24.—Once we considered most unkind, unjust, the Bible declaration that our Creator condemned all of Adam's race with him on account of Adam's "Original Sin." But now, in the light of the clearer unfolding of God's Word, we are privileged to see differently. Now we perceive, not only that God did no injustice to Adam's children, but, contrarily, that in this very particular, he did them a kindness—that it was in the interest of humanity in general. We are aware that this statement appears paradoxical to those who have not yet gotten the proper focus upon the Divine Plan. The key which unlocks the difficulty is the proper appreciation of the penalty imposed upon Adam and his race.

The erroneous, unscriptural view of this penalty which came down to us from the "dark ages" teaches that God damned father Adam, mother Eve, and every child born to them to an eternity of torture at the hands of devils. It is this unscriptural and irrational view of the wage of Original Sin which caused all our difficulty. Indeed, it is safe to say that no other false doctrine held by God's people ever drove away from God, from the Bible and from the fellowship of the Church so many intelligent minds. Thousands of bright, honest minds, after seeing this teaching of the Christian creeds forsworn in the dark ages, have quietly withdrawn from them in heart, if not outwardly, saying to themselves, Evidently my reasoning faculties are of a different kind from those of many others prominent in the Church: Without disputing the point, I simply conclude that I must think for myself and that, in so doing, I am forced out of sympathy with the majority of fellow-Christians on this basic doctrine.

Where Lies the Difficulty?

The difficulty is that while the majority of Christian people heartily repudiate these misrepresentations of God and his Word, nevertheless the subject is not clear to them and they fear that to repudiate this doctrine would be to repudiate the Bible and to become open infidels. And just here is their mistake. The majority of them are not Bible students. Even amongst ministers of the Gospel comparatively few have any degree of knowledge of God's Word. They know what they think about the Bible; what they believe that it teaches; what they have been told that it teaches; what the catechisms say it teaches; but they have never made critical investigations of the Bible themselves to ascertain its teachings. It is a part of our endeavor to arouse Christian people everywhere to search and study the Scriptures and to assist them with Bible study helps, Bible keys, etc. And, thank God, there are thousands in Spiritual Israel who are not bowing their knees to Baal, but who are anxious to know, to rightly understand, the Word of God. Classes in Bible study are springing up all over the world. "I have recently adopted the name of 'International Bible Students Association.' God is blessing them, not only with the opening of their own eyes, and more widely, but also in using them to bring others "out of darkness into his marvelous light" (I Peter II, 9).

The Scriptures speak of a "famine, not for bread nor for water, but for hearing of the Word of the Lord." This famine is upon us now. Not only are Christian people hungry and thirsty for the bread of life and the water of life, but many of the worldly are feeling a longing for something better than the things which they have. We do not know that all Church members, nor all of any one Church membership, are thus hungering and thirsting for Truth. But we do know that everywhere in all the various Churches of all denominations there is a hungry class which cannot be satisfied in dishonestly misrepresenting itself as in harmony with the creeds. These bewildered sheep are, of late years, finding the green pastures and still waters of Divine Truth and grace—near to them—in the Word of God—hidden under the rubbish of ignorance and superstition, mistranslation and misinterpretation.

But as for the masses of all denominations: Alas, they are falling into unbelief! The popular form of infidelity known as Higher Criticism has already swallowed up more than one-half of the ministry and of the most intelligent part of the laity. The only hope for any of these is in leaving the chaff and husks of medieval misinterpretations of God's Word and in finding its true meaning, in which is refreshment, strength and new life.

"The Wages of Sin is Death."
However we read our Bibles in the past we read into them from the creeds of a darker time the mischievous error that when the Bible declares a death penalty for sin it really means the reverse of this life—eternal life in eternal torture. Who had the right to twist the inspired words in such a devilish fashion? Who had the right to add to the Word of God and to make void his true teaching in this manner? Hear the words of the Apostle, "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus

Christ our Lord" (Romans vi, 23). What statement could be more simple? The wicked will not be granted life at all, either in pleasure or in pain. They are under sentence of death—destruction. Eternal life is a gift. And it will be given only to those to whom it will be a blessing—to those who will accept it through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Let us turn to Genesis and note the statements made to our first parents respecting sin and its penalty. Let us note that, without the twistings of theology, we should have no difficulty in understanding the Divine sentence, as our first parents evidently had no difficulty. The sentence upon Father Adam for disobedience was, "Dying thou shalt die"; "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return"; "Cursed is the ground for thy sake"; "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee until thou return unto the ground from which thou wast taken" (Genesis III, 2, 3, 16-19, 24).

Thus we see that the penalty for sin upon Adam and his race was that they should return to the dust. As we read again, "Thou earnest man to destruction" (Psalm xc, 3). And this penalty is sufficiently awful when we think of what it means to die, to lose mental, moral and physical perfection and gradually go into the tomb—into the Bible hell (*sheol*, throughout the Old Testament). And this *sheol*, the grave, the tomb, to which the Bible says all go, good and bad, rich and poor, holy and unholy, was the only hell known amongst any of the people of God for the more than four thousand years, represented by the teachings of the Old Testament. Then came the New Testament times and the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles to the same effect. In the New Testament the Greek word *hadēs*, representing the tomb, the death state, takes the place of the Old Testament *sheol* in every passage translated from the Old Testament into the New Testament.

It was nearly three hundred years after Jesus and the Apostles, after the writing of the New Testament, before the doctrine of Purgatory was invented. And for this reason neither the word Purgatory nor the Purgatory thought is expressed in the Scriptures. But Bibles were few, and the people could not have read them even if they had possessed them; hence for long centuries the teachings of the clergy were accepted without Bible proofs, and the doctrine of Purgatory spread all over Christendom. All of our forefathers believed in it. It became the teaching of Christians everywhere that the mere handful of saints, instead of dying when they seemed to die, went to heaven and that the great mass of humanity, instead of dying when they seemed to die, went in some mysterious manner to a mysterious place called Purgatory, of which nobody knew anything except what they were taught. The teaching is that practically all of humanity go to Purgatory there to be roasted and otherwise tortured for centuries—ultimately to gain release from the torture, when fitted for heaven. Upon this doctrine it turns sprang the doctrine of paying "masses for the dead," who were believed not to be dead but intensely alive. The fear of Purgatory drew the people very close to the priests as the supposed counselors of the Almighty and the mass money drew the priests very close to the people. They were all honestly intentioned, but all deceived by the great deceiver—Satan.

A Bad Matter Made Worse.
By and by a priest, a Catholic theologian and teacher in one of our colleges, by name Martin Luther, accidentally ran across a copy of the New Testament in the Latin language. Being an educated man he was able to read it; for there was not one copy in the German language anywhere. Luther tells us of his perplexity in not finding Purgatory in the New Testament. He tried to interest the Pope in Bible study, but failed, and instead was branded a heretic. He protested, and others protested; hence came the name Protestants.

These Protestants were undoubtedly as sincere before their protest as they were afterward; hence their protest was against the very doctrines which once they had proclaimed as the Truth. Their minds were full of the thought that a dead person is not dead but more alive than before he died, and that some of these at death went to heaven while the great majority went to Purgatory. They did not see the teaching of the Bible, that "the wages of sin is death"—that all go into death, good and bad, and that this death state is the *sheol* and *hadēs* of the Bible. Instead of getting this true light upon God's Word, they went from darkness into greater darkness on this point. Here we wish to emphasize the thought that all these noble men, Catholics and Protestants, in their day, like all true people today, held a measure of Truth in combination with errors. It is the measure of Truth possessed and enjoyed that has given any power and force to our various Christian systems, and that, to

some extent, has neutralized the effect of our errors.

Starting from their misunderstanding of Bible teachings respecting the wages of sin, Brother Luther and his noble companions battled bravely for many truths, but made one great blunder. When they concluded that Purgatory was contrary to the Scriptures and threw it away, not seeing the Bible hell, the tomb, they adopted another hell and thereby went from bad to worse on this subject. They said, The heathen and the masses of the civilized are surely not saints—surely they do not follow in the footsteps of Jesus—surely, therefore, they cannot be of his spiritual flock. Concluding that these could not be taken to heaven, they said, We must take them out of Purgatory anyway, wherever we put them, because we have found out that there is no such place as Purgatory.

After Conferences, seriously disliking to make out God's character worse than they formerly supposed, they said under their breaths, We must take them out of Purgatory and quickly put them into a hell of eternal torture and say as little about the matter as possible. They were greatly relieved when long-headed Brother John Calvin explained to them about the mere handful going to heaven and the great mass going to eternal torture. He explained that God had fore-ordained and predestinated these awful results—that he might show his wisdom and his power. As to a

"Love divine, all love excelling," Brother Calvin seems never to have thought of that. Brother Wesley and others since, though less logical and theological, did stand up for and declare the Love of God, even though rather absurdly they claimed that he was neither wise enough nor powerful enough to do more than rescue a mere handful of Adam's race from the eternal torture to which they thought God damned them all because of the disobedience in Eden.

"All in Adam—All in Christ."
In the light of our better Bibles and Bible Study Helps and minds freed from the ignorance and superstitions of the past we may understand the Apostle's words and find in them, not only justice and love, but harmony and beauty. Instead of all mankind going to eternal torment for Adam's sin, all go into the Bible hell, the grave, on account of his sin—and all of the mental, moral and physical blemishes of our race are a part of this heredity.

There would have been no hope of a future life, good or bad, had not God in his mercy provided the Savior—the "Life-Giver," as the Syriac renders the word. In God's due time he set before his Son the opportunity of becoming man's Redeemer. The Logos was made flesh (John I, 14) and obediently gave himself in death—"tasted death for every man." As by one man's disobedience the sentence of death passed upon all of the race, even so by the obedience of the man Christ Jesus unto death justification to life passed for all of that race. Now we see the wise reason for permitting the sentence to pass through one man's disobedience to all of his posterity. It was in order that one sacrifice for sin might make possible the reconciliation of the entire race.

Now read our text and drink in its depths and beauty and force. The resurrection of mankind from the sin and death and tomb condition to the full perfection and lounge of God from which the race fell is the salvation which God has provided for all. Whoever will fall to attain the full recovery from sin and death conditions will have himself to blame because of rejection of the glorious arrangements which God made in and through Christ.

"The First Resurrection."
God divides the salvation of mankind into two parts—the Church to spirit nature and the world to perfected human nature. The first he is accomplishing during this Gospel Age; the second he will accomplish through Christ and the Church during Messiah's reign of a thousand years.

The Church, the "little flock" of saints, called, tried, tested, in the narrow way during this Age, are to constitute the "First Resurrection" class and to become "the Bride of Christ," "the Church of the First-Born." These are to be associated with the great Redeemer in his future work. These shall be like him, changed from earthly to heavenly nature and made sharers of his glory, honor and immortality. The Kingdom of God under the whole heavens will be inaugurated after the glorification of the Church and then will begin the blessing, the salvation, the uplifting, the resurrecting, of mankind in general—from sin and death conditions—not to spiritual conditions, but to perfect earthly conditions.

All the willing and obedient shall be blessed by the great Life-Giver who eighteen centuries ago died, the Just for the unjust, and who, during the period since, has been selecting the Bride class. With his Bride he will reign to bless the world, to make the whole earth beautiful. As it is written, "I will make the place of my feet glorious." The whole earth will then be as the Garden of Eden and the restored race like our perfect first parents. But as for the intelligent wicked, we read, "All the wicked will be destroyed" (Psalm cxlv, 20). He will not preserve them in torture or otherwise. They will die the Second Death. But none will die the Second Death for Adam's transgression. Christ died for that transgression and will release Adam and all his race therefrom, even while he will hold them responsible for every wilful transgression and give stripes or punishments therefor to teach them to love righteousness and to hate iniquity (Acts II, 19-23).

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