

# THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

(History of The Origin of All Things - Vol 2 - Appendix VI)

There is in every man a desire to possess wisdom. It is implanted in his nature as an aspiration, leading him toward good and to advance, to progress, in knowledge. But by the want of a proper education of this part of man's nature, it often happens that he is led astray by the very faculty that should lead him to good. This propensity of man to depart from good has been thought to depend on the wiles of an enemy, a being that delights in man's misery and takes pleasure in leading him into sin which is ignorant error and into sin which is active. Passive sin is error of omission; active sin is error of commission. This difference is great before God. Man suffers evil without being contaminated by it, but if he takes pleasure in sin or error he becomes a castaway, one departed from God's grace and love, from His harmony and blessings.

There is a sin unto death, an unpardonable sin, spoken of by Paul and by other New Testament writers, from which a man shall not be redeemed by God's mercy. He must suffer the consequences, which is death to the soul so far as the soul can die. It is the withdrawal of God's favor and love, the absence of God's spirit from the man that makes him feel all this death in the soul and makes him suffer the torments of the damned, or condemned, for these words are synonymous. Shall man escape from this condemnation by which he is commanded to depart from the presence of God, from Christ His Son, from all that is good and pure and praiseworthy in other beings like himself? Shall he fall then to rise no more? Shall he suffer eternal, everlasting, unendurable, unendured punishment? (Yes, unendured; for what is eternal has not been endured). No; such a punishment does not become God to inflict, nor is man capable of enduring it. For though the essence of man's nature is immortal and unchangeable, the very unchangeable and immortal nature prevents the possibility of its being condemned to eternal sameness.

All else changes but the soul of man and the attributes of God. God himself is unchangeable, and man was made in His likeness. But, you say, man changes from day to day and we see him all around us presenting various phases of character at various times. Yes, he presents different phases as do the heavenly bodies called moons or planets, but they are still of the same nature or essence, and even if their form were changed instead of a change of phase, still their essence would remain unchanged. Man, then, is in his essence unchangeable, and this results from his being an emanation from the Deity. Whatever is an emanation from God is necessarily unchangeable, as you will find fully proved in the *History of the Origin of All Things*.

Let us return to the unpardonable sin, upon which so much has been said and written, which theologians have speculated about until they have been lost in the labyrinths of their own arguments and have finally allowed to stand as an opprobrium upon their science and pretensions of being able by reason to find out God or His unknown things. The unpardonable sin is the *sin against knowledge*. All other sins are forgiven to men except this blasphemy against the Holy Ghost or God's spirit. Holy Ghost is an obsolete word that conveys now a different meaning in our language from the one it had and conveyed when the Bible was translated in the time of King James I of England. The sin

against knowledge is the unpardonable sin that shall not be forgiven unto men either in this world or in the world to come. How, then, shall men be rid of its consequences? They must suffer them. They must fall from grace and be in the power of the will of an enemy of God, otherwise called Satan the adversary. But this enemy is their own free-will which, having led them to sin against knowledge for its gratification, becomes the accuser of their brethren, that is, the Devil.

Now it is not generally known that the words standing in the English version of the Bible, Satan and Devil, are only two Greek words or rather parts of Greek words translated. But so it is, and by diligent search such commentators as Clarke and Scott and all the most misleading ones will be found to admit it. Such is the explanation of those words when translated enemy or accuser, as they should be rendered. Yes, the enemy of man is his free-will, and his will also accuses the brethren of crimes and sin that they never committed, for he is a liar and was so from the beginning. So you see, My friends, I do not want you to disbelieve the Bible but to understand it. And how can you ever understand it but by the light of God's wisdom? For now you see through a glass darkly (by reason) but by God's help you shall see plainly as if face to face with a friend.

How are you to obtain God's help? For all are willing to be helped, but few are willing to help. Yet until you are willing to help you cannot be helped. What, you say, shall we first help when we want it? Yes, if you ever get help it will be by helping. First, God will not assist those who do not help themselves. Second, He will not assist those who will only be helped in their own way. Third, He will not be used as a servant and made to help a man as if the man employed Him. In none of these ways can you get help. You must kneel to God in your hearts. The position of your body is unimportant, but the heart must be humble and bowed down into the dust of the earth before God. It must be willing to say: Not my will, but Thine, O God, be done! Nor is the lip declaration of this phrase enough--you must say it with the heart.

How will you do this? you ask. By bowing humbly to God in your private hours; by beseeching Him to help you bow down; by asking Him daily, hourly, instantly, and always to help you to do His will, to help you to be passive before Him, and to bring your will into submission perfectly to His. When you can receive His commands as law, when you can do all and everything He requires, then you will be reconciled to God, in harmony with Him, and free from all sin. But the unpardonable sin of disobeying *His known law*, His understood command, must be atoned for. He will not pardon you; He will only accept atonement. The atonement He asks is a sacrifice of your will. By that sacrifice you will have atoned for the sin, and being by such sacrifice brought again into union and communion with Him you are again in a state where you are happy, but where you may fall again and remain fallen until you have passed from this life, or state, to the spirit-world, from which no traveler returns to wander again in the body of earth.

The unpardonable sin then meets no mercy in the life to come. It still separates the man from his Creator, who indeed loves him as before, but the man is not sensible of the love and it is to him as if it were not. How shall the man get rid of the sin there? There is no repentance beyond the grave, says the Bible, and as the tree falls so it lies, says the inspired penman. I will explain this to you also, for it is a novel doctrine to some of you, that all shall be saved and that yet some sins shall not be pardoned.

In the life to come man will still be free to do good but not to sin--free to grow better but restrained from evil courses. There higher and purer spirits will constantly persuade and entreat him to progress towards God. There God will make the beams of His love felt as soon as man is willing to feel them, and all that man can do is to submit to the will of God as he is called on to do here. There the task is more arduous because the state is a more inactive one as regards works, acting upon others, and being acted upon by others. The last shall be first and the first last. And yet at last all shall be first, and at first all shall be last.

There is in this sentence a hidden meaning. It is a puzzling text when not understood; an instructive one when explained.

*The first shall be last and the last shall be first.* The last shall be first, and first shall be last. This is all the words convey to human reason. If you read the context you find it does not appear to connect itself with this expression. It is a discourse on the vanity of human effort, on the futile nature of all reasonable exertions to overcome evil with good resolutions unless supported by God or His influence, which is the same thing as Himself because it is a part of Him. What, then, shall we understand to be meant by this reiterated assurance that the repetition means something, for Jesus was not wasteful of words. He did not multiply them for no purpose. On the contrary, all He said was so pregnant with meaning that each sentence may be amplified into a book, and though His sayings were many His recorded ones are few. The last shall be first with God, is the proper reading, (as I gave it in Volume One, Part I) and the first last with men. But even this does not make its meaning plain to you. Then I will endeavor to lighten your darkness, and to expose your ignorance to yourselves.

The first shall be last with men. The first of God's believers shall hold a low rank with God's creatures in the body. The first shall be last with men, for men will despise their simplicity. Men will hoot at the claims of believers in God's revelation. They will say: Thou fool, thou art mad! Give up your vain teachings, your pretended inspiration, your ineffable presumption! Let our authorized and paid ministers or our chosen deacons or our inspired preachers or our certificate-bearing graduates--let them tell you what to do, what to believe, what this passage declares or that text means! You have no skill, no learning, no experience in teaching; how can you presume to put forth your sacrilegious hand to stay the shaking ark of God's testimony?

I shall not now declare by a sign that this medium is inspired. I would do it if it would not add to your guilt without effecting your reformation, for as I told you, the known commands of God must be obeyed or you commit an unpardonable sin. In order to save you from this sin, to enable you to take time to listen, to weigh, and to consider by the internal light and sense I have placed within each of you, I refrain in mercy from giving you a sign. Some of you think you would believe if you had some outward proof that I write this sermon instead of its being drawn from the intellect of the holy medium. Some believe I write it but that I do not know much, if any, more than you do. You think that you must try Me by the laws of logic and square Me by the rules of reason. By them I am content to abide in your hearts, but you also think that you should resist conviction as long as you can, and show how powerful your mind is by combating the arguments and

finding fault with the explanations contained in My sermons. This I object to. Not that it disturbs My equanimity but because it leaves you floundering in uncertainty.

Reason or argument never completely settles a metaphysical question. "He who is convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." There must be faith, a willingness to hear the truth, and a desire to receive it as truth, or no progress can be made. I might preach hourly to you, and yet the wisdom of God Himself could not and would not affect your free-will. You have the power to be first or last with Him or men. Would you stand well with both? Would you serve God and the world? You cannot do it now any more than men could eighteen hundred years ago. You cannot serve two masters. You must give up one. Reason tells you to give up the world; pride tells you not to. Reason says God's rewards are more bountiful, more glorious, more secure than those of men; pride says: What will the world say? They will say he is deluded! What a pity so sensible a man should be so carried away! And after all, too, they will say he had no evidence! The dead were not raised, the sick were not healed, the lame did not walk, the blind did not see! How shall I believe, you ask, if God will not give me a sign? How shall I excuse myself to my friends, to my acquaintances, to the world? I must have a sign!

What sign, O son of Earth, shall I give? I teach heavenly things and ye do not turn a listening mind. You hear with the outward sense, but you do not open the inward. If you would open the inward by joining with your hearts and minds in the prayers My holy medium recorded for you, then I can affect you with a sign. Then I can give you the sign of the Son of man coming in clouds of glory.

Like the shining of the lightning from the east unto the west will be the rapidity with which I will pervade your heart with My presence. I will give you peace which the world cannot take away, neither can it give--peace which God delights to perceive in a man's heart, and of which nothing but man's free-will can deprive him. But there is your great adversary, called in the English translation Satan, ever ready to impel you to reject Me after I have entered into your heart and conferred upon you this blessed peace. You will say you cannot control your nature, for God made it good and He himself pronounced it so. But He gave you free-will, which is your distinguishing character and element. What you choose to do you will do. If you choose God, well--if Baal or the world, well. But always remember you have the choice, and that God does not leave it to Me to choose for you but *for you to choose for yourself*.

Here you are, calling yourselves spiritual believers and asking for a sign; if I had promised a sign your numbers would be greatly swelled. And yet a greater sign than any before given is here, for here is a medium who has no possible object of his own to serve, departing from all his connections and his church, at a trial to his own feelings so great as scarcely to be conceived by one who has not been led through it--I say, here is My servant giving to you what I have given him. Is it not a greater sign than to hear the alphabet called and a few sentences tediously spelled out letter by letter? It is not a greater sign to hear heavenly truth than to hear sounds mysteriously made? It is not better to have writing given in this way than to see it performed with a scrawling hand in the will of questioners?

What question can you ask that is so important as that ancient one: What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Or: What shall I do to be saved? It was this last question that Paul's and Silas' jailer asked when he saw the sign of their authority. But would you ask this question in answer to My shaking your house, or throwing open the doors? No; I tell you that if the wonderful works were done in your presence that were done in Galilee eighteen hundred years ago you would still say: Let us see more done! Let us bring more friends to witness them! Let us continue to pursue our way and do you go on your way making signs, convincing people that there is a mysterious agency present and persuading crowds to collect to gratify a vain curiosity. But, My friends, I am not desirous to persuade you to hear wonders but to do good; to save yourselves from ignorance, fear, and torturing doubt. I am desirous of persuading you to save yourselves from sin, from long ages of trial and atonement in a life to come, and from unhappiness or unsatisfied yearnings of heart here.

To do this it is necessary that you submit to be taught by God, and He now opens for you the door of reconciliation and instruction through this holy medium who, having submitted his will to Mine, is rewarded by being used contrary to his expectation. He is called upon to do just what he most dreaded when I first proposed it to him. Yet for all that My yoke is easy and My burden light, and he is satisfied and would not by any means exchange positions with any other man. For the reward of: Well done, good and faithful servant! shall be his, as he has been told. He has been told also that he shall have greater work to do, as a greater reward, but he is no longer discouraged by being told of the work I have in store for him. He is now obedient and passive. I can manage him freely and he resists Me not. When you are willing to be so ruled, you shall also have My government; could you be persuaded to permit Me to so rule you, you too would with joy say: Not my feet only, but my whole body! for the feet must first be washed and then all may be supposed clean, because that is all that is visible. But the true purification is inward and must be by the regeneration of the heart.

The truth of the matter is that you are too outward, and that you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven until you are more spiritually-minded. It is very pleasing for you to look back and see that you have got rid of the fetters of traditionary horror--that you no longer fear hell, but that is not all, by any means, that I want done. I do not want merely an absence of evil to exist in man, but I want a positive good. Good works I shall expect from you, but the first thing I call on you for is your heart. Unless you give Me your heart, you cannot do Me any good nor advance your own salvation from error and ignorance.

*Let us pray*

Almighty and most-merciful Father, I who am Thy attendant spirit, beloved by Thee and striving to do Thy will, because I know that Thy will is perfect and that I am not perfect; because I am thy son, I desire to be like Thee and to be merciful and loving to those whom Thou hast placed in My charge, O God, be Thou particularly manifest in their hearts of this sinful people who have the desire to know Thee but will not know Thee; who love to hear of Thy ways but do them not. May it please Thee to touch them with Thy grace; convince their reason and lead their inclination powerfully into subjection to Thee. For they will, O Lord God, that Thou shouldst take the government upon Thy shoulders and that Thou shouldst be the leader and general in every contest with their

will. But Thou, O God, knowest their infirmity and that they are dead to Thee until Thy grace shall shine forth in them and bring forth fruits proper for their state. May it please Thee then to be their teacher and guide, to lead them to living fountains, after which they shall thirst no more. The life to come, O God, let them provide for here by living so as not to die to Thy presence within them and so as to advance rapidly in the life to come.

O God, Thou are the Giver of every good gift! Give unto us, who seek Thy glory and act in Thy name, Thy assistance and favor so that we may persevere and accomplish a good work; so that in days to come, we, with Thee may be a bulwark against the progress of error in Thy children and against the growth of children without faith. O God, help us all to pray acceptably to Thee without wrath or contention or divided minds, so that we may love Thee for Thy glory and glorify Thee by our love and be noted as Thy people amongst a people wholly devoted to Thy honor, praise, and love.

O God, Thou knowest that I love Thee and delight to serve Thee and that My works do praise Thee even as Thy works do praise Thee. May it please Thee now to confirm and strengthen in the hearts of these would-be servants of Thine every good resolution, every holy aspiration, every lovely impulse. May it please Thee by Thy power to establish their faith and by Thy love establish them in grace and knowledge and love of Thee. O God, let them not be dismayed by the world's powers, or deterred from seeking to have more of Thy holy communion by tears or prayers of unknowing relatives or friends. Establish them, O God, on Thy holy mountain of Jerusalem, the city of David, the city or dwelling-place of peace. And may it please Thee so to show forth in them the light of Thy counsel and help that they may turn many others to righteousness and be strengthening pillars in Thy true church. Amen.

Brethren, I have prayed for you this prayer that you might have light and life. If you, O people, could join Me in making it, as My holy medium joins Me, you could advance yourselves as he, by joining in it, has advanced himself. Be faithful and remember that each man must do his own work. No man or spirit, however high, can save a brother or a son, however low. *Each man must work out his own salvation.* When man does undertake with earnest desire to do his own work of salvation or uniting himself with God, he cannot fail. For God only asks you to be willing to let Him help and He will help; if God be on your side you need not fear man or spirit, for nothing then can separate you from the love of God. Not height nor depth, not mountains nor valleys or worldly elevation or depression can separate the believer from his Teacher or the son of God from his Father.

May the Grace of God be in you and remain with you now and evermore, is My sincere prayer and desire to God, to whom is all glory, honor, thanksgiving and praise, now and forever, beyond the world's end.

Amen.