

Why I Believe in Universal Reconciliation

Like so many other thinking people, I have been greatly concerned over the state of affairs in this world of ours. In spite of the fact that Christianity has spread over a great part of the earth, that buildings of all kinds have been erected for the specific purpose of proclaiming a message purporting to have Divine *authority*, and to be backed by Divine *power*, we are faced today with a world of blood and tears. There must be something wrong, and if we are to know how things are to be righted we must take a retrospective view, and find out just where the failure has been.

IS GOD OMNIPOTENT?

If we have an omnipotent God, as most of those who proclaim the gospel declare, then we must commence our investigation with Him.

"In the beginning *God* created the heavens and the earth," Genesis 1:1 states. Can we begin here? I do not know of any other starting point. Evolution has nothing to offer here; it deals only with processes and effects. We must have a *cause*, and I submit that the Scriptures are the only source of information on this point.

I am writing this to those who believe that the Scriptures are inspired, that God is their Author, and that they were written for our instruction (2 Tim.3:16); but simply believing this is not enough. The apostle Paul says: "Endeavor to present yourself to God, qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly partitioning the word of truth"

(2 Tim.2:15). Where have we failed to correctly partition the Word? I suggest, at the outset of our investigation, that we must find out what God says about Himself. Did God create *everything*, or did He create the good things, and someone else the evil things?

Please ponder this; a mistake *here* is fatal. Is it not true that two Gods have been set up in Christendom, one responsible for good, and the other for evil: a God of love, creating a perfect world, and yet Satan creating evil, and nullifying God's effort to make and keep His creatures happy?

But can we produce a single text to show that Satan ever created anything? No! Satan is a creature, part of God's creation, and wholly incapable of being the first cause of anything in the universe. Listen to the voice of the Prophet: "To whom, then, will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal, said the Holy One?" (Isa.40:25), "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance" (Isa.40:12).

Had Satan any part in this? Not the least little bit. There is *one* God, and that God has revealed Himself in "a Son" (Heb.1:2). The Word made flesh (John 1:14), fully declared Him (John 1:18), and this is the declaration: "Who is the image of the invisible God, Firstborn of every creature, for in Him is all created, that in the heavens and that on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or sovereignties, or authorities, all is created through Him and for Him, and He is before all, and all has its cohesion in Him" (Col.1:16,17). Satan is a part of creation included here, and as such was created *through* Him, and *for* Him.

Now, what was God's purpose in revealing Himself in a Son, Who was to taste death for every man (Heb.2:10)? Was it the last despairing effort of a frustrated God, to save

some of His creatures from ruin? How earnestly preachers proclaim that God has put forth His greatest effort, emptying Heaven of the darling of His bosom, in an endeavor to save some, and that now salvation depends on, (1) the faithfulness of the preacher, and (2) the faith of the hearer, those failing to respond being doomed to destruction, or endless torment, according to the tenets of the particular sect. But what do the Scriptures say? Colossians 1:18-20 tells us that He is the "Firstborn from among the dead, that in all He may be becoming first, for in Him the entire complement delights to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all to Him, (making peace through the blood of His cross), through Him, whether those on the earth or those in the heavens."

This Scripture plainly teaches that God created all for a purpose, and that Christ is reconciling all, both celestial and terrestrial. If God is omnipotent and desires to save all, then all must be saved. It is simply foolish to argue otherwise, for nothing can withstand Omnipotence. If God's *best* was not sufficient, that is proof positive that His power is limited.

Sin was introduced in Adam, and in Adam *all* are dying. There are no exceptions to this rule; *all sin*, all die, in Adam (Rom.5:12-14). Why? "For God locks all up together in stubbornness, that He may be merciful to all" (Rom.11:32). All must be included in Adam's ruin, to participate in God's remedy, for "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor.15:22). "God is the Saviour of all mankind, especially of believers" (1 Tim.4:10). "God wills that all mankind be saved, and come into a realization of the truth" (1 Tim.2:4). Christ Jesus, gave Himself a ransom for *all* (1 Tim.2:5). Now, if God *wills all* to be saved, if God is the Saviour of all, if God is going to be merciful to all, who are we to dispute Him?

Read carefully 1 Corinthians 15:20-28: "Yet now Christ

has been roused from among the dead, the Firstfruit of those who are reposing. For since, in fact, through a man came death, through a Man, also, comes the resurrection of the dead. For even as, in Adam, *all* are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall *all* be vivified. *Yet each in his own class:* the Firstfruit, Christ; thereupon those who are Christ's in His presence; thereafter the consummation, whenever He may be giving up the kingdom to His God and Father, whenever He should be nullifying *all* sovereignty, and *all* authority and power. For He must be reigning until He should be placing all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy is being abolished: death. For He subjects *all* under His feet Now whenever all may be subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also shall be subjected to Him, Who subjects all to Him, that God may be *All in all*."

How can this scripture be reconciled with the doctrine of endless sin, endless suffering, and endless death, instead of ultimate reconciliation? Read again what the Scriptures say: "Wherefore, also, God highly exalts Him, and graces Him with the name that is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should be bowing, celestial and terrestrial and subterranean, and every tongue should be acclaiming Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God, the Father" (Phil.2:9-11).

Dead people, or people suffering in the lake of fire, could not possibly join in anything that would redound to the glory of God; all that could be looked for would be silence, or weeping and wailing. Tears have been the experience of all who have inherited Adam's portion on earth, but when Christ has finalized His work, and concluded His mission, God will brush away all tears (Rev.21:4).

IS GOD OMNISCIENT?

God is not only omnipotent, but also omniscient. He is not only all-powerful, but also all-wise. He declares the

end from the beginning. He is the A and the Z, the Origin and the Consummation (Rev.21:6). He never experiments; He *knows*. Do you believe this? If you do, then please be honest and face the facts.

We are placed where we are by God Himself. Ponder these very explicit Scriptures: "For you are observing your calling, brethren, that there are not many wise according to the flesh; not many powerful, not many noble, but the stupidity of the world God *chooses*, that He may be disgracing the wise, and the weakness of the world God *chooses*, that He may be disgracing the strong" (1 Cor.1: 26,27). "According as He chooses us in Him before the disruption of the world" (Eph.1:4). "Being designated beforehand according to the purpose of the One Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:11). "Whom He foreknew, He designates beforehand also, to be conformed to the image of His Son. . . . Now whom He designates beforehand, these He calls also, and whom He calls, these He justifies also; now whom He justifies, these He glorifies also" (Rom.8:28-30). "Peter . . . to the *chosen* expatriates of the dispersion—according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Peter 1:1,2).

These Scriptures prove conclusively (and many more could be quoted) that God *chooses* all the saved ones, who receive eonian life. Now I want to draw your attention to what God says about His *choice* of those who are not in this category.

"For, not as yet being born, nor putting into practice anything good or bad, that the purpose of God may be remaining as a *choice*, not out of acts, but of Him Who is calling, it was declared to her that 'The greater shall be slaving for the inferior,' according as it is written, 'Jacob I love, yet Esau I hate'" (Rom.9:11-13). "For to Moses He is saying, 'I shall be merciful to whomever I may be merciful, and I shall be pitying whomever I may be pitying.' Con-

sequently, then, it is not of him who is *willing*, nor of him who is *racing*, but of God, the Merciful. For the scripture is saying to Pharaoh that 'For this selfsame thing I rouse you up, so that I should be displaying in you My power, and so that My name should be published in the entire earth.' Consequently, then, to whom He will, He is merciful, yet Whom He will, He is hardening" (Rom.9:17,18). "Or has not the potter the right over the clay, *out of the same kneading* to make one vessel, indeed, for honor, yet one for dishonor?" (Rom.9:21-22).

These Scriptures make it clear that God has appointed vessels of indignation to fulfil His will, and that these are just as necessary as the vessels of mercy. God will punish all lawless acts, and manifest His hatred of sin in the punishing of wrongdoers. But He will do so for a definite purpose. And, when His judgment has been accomplished, He will eliminate all things that do not conform to His righteousness.

We cannot know good apart from evil; we must have the contrast, and it is essential for each one to know evil, sorrow, and hate, in the measure that God's wisdom dictates, in order that we might also know good, joy, and love, their opposites. In His own time, God will reconcile the universe to Himself. He will right every wrong, and make everything declare His glory.

Some talk of a "second chance"; however, we would declare that there is neither a first nor a second chance. There are no chances with God; He *chooses*, He *calls*, He *justifies*, He *glorifies* (Rom.8:30).

God has a goal. He intends to become All in all His creatures (1 Cor.15:28). He will accomplish this by way of reconciling His *enemies* through the blood of Christ's cross (Col.1:20; Romans 5:18; 1 Cor.15:22; 1 Timothy 2:4; 4:10). Very little is said to us about God's goal until Paul completes the orbit of God's Word with his later revelations. Once we revel in this, we will never go back to previ-

ous revelation on this theme. Most men are shortsighted; they see a part of the way, but do not see the end. They confuse the going with the goal.

Judgment is God's strange work. He uses it on the way; but men make it the end. God does not reach His goal within the compass of His disciplinary measures. These only prepare His creatures for it. Men usually view the goal in the darkness of the pathway. They go back to passages which deal with judgment, and allow them to throw their dark shadows across the consummation. We should believe that God will *justify* all mankind, and view the previous judgments in the light of this final achievement. Men bring up passages which tell of death, to darken God's declaration that it will be abolished. We should *believe* that God will make death inoperative at the last, and view the previous passages in this glorious light. Men turn to texts which prove that unbelievers will be lost or destroyed, and with these passages, dim the great declaration that God wills the salvation of all. We should not make such antecedent revelation, supersede the later and higher revelation. Rather, we are to believe both, for salvation and reconciliation follow estrangement, and these alone accord with God's final goal.

How perverse and blind we have been! When God says *all*, we have said *some*. Faith has almost fled from the earth. Let us allow the light of the latest scriptural revelation to illumine the earlier, partial unfolding; and let us not use the earlier to eclipse the latest, the highest, and the only complete unveiling of God's mind and heart.

In conclusion, three alternatives are submitted, one of which must be accepted. They should be weighed carefully, and their implications considered. May truth be so valued a prize that tradition will not influence the deliberation:

(1) Has the creature thwarted the Creator in His plans? Have we no alternative but to face up to the fact that a dis-

appointed God, after pre-eonian planning, must acknowledge His creation is a faulty one, in that His creatures have failed to recognize Him according as He is? After the immeasurable travail of Himself even as His dear Son, is He to be satisfied even though His plan has not brought forth the desired results?

(2) Did He intend and desire that the vast majority of His creatures should never see Him with clear vision, and give Him a responsive affection?

(3) Is our God a victorious God Who will be abundantly satisfied with the success of His plan, in its minutest detail, because He has at *all* times been operating the universe after the counsel of His will, and His word has not returned unto Him void, but has prospered in the thing whereto He sent it? For only thus is God indeed: *all wisdom, love, and power—victorious and satisfied.*

Does it make any difference which version of the Bible we read? Surely they all say the same? Why, then, do so many religious denominations have their own version, which they claim to be an accurate version?

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