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## THE POSITION OF THE HUMAN RACE IN THE DIVINE ECONOMY.

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“God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all.”—ROM. xi. 32.

*God hath concluded them all*,—that is, both Jews and Gentiles,—*in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all*. The truth here asserted, the Apostle re-affirms in his Epistle to the Galatians, iii. 22. His language there is, “The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”

From a comparison of these two passages, it is evident:

(1.) That the expression in the Epistle to the Galatians,—“*the Scripture* hath concluded all under sin,”—simply means, that the Scriptures declare the fact, that *God* hath so concluded all.

(2.) That the expression “in unbelief,” as it occurs in the text, is synonymous with “under sin,”—the word “unbelief” being so used, since unbelief is the most prominent development of the sinfulness of our race.

(3.) The language used in the Epistle to the Galatians, explains or renders definite the particular form or manifestation of “mercy” referred to in the text—“that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe.”

(4.) When the text declares that God designed to “have mercy upon *all*,” the corresponding expression in the Epistle to the Galatians teaches, that the word “all” in this connexion is not to be taken in its universal, unlimited signification, but is restricted to all “them that believe.”

The doctrine, therefore, of the Apostle, in these passages of Scripture, is, that—

GOD HATH CONCLUDED ALL UNDER SIN, THAT HE MIGHT MANIFEST HIS MERCY, IN THE SALVATION, THROUGH CHRIST, OF THEM THAT BELIEVE.

We may be enabled to apprehend more distinctly, and fully, this important truth, by considering, in order—

1st, The fact, that all men are under sin.

2dly, That they are so by the permissive will of God.

3dly, The end which God accomplishes, and which we may therefore say, He designed to accomplish, by this permission.

I. And first, as to the fact, that *all men are under sin*.

David, in the 14th, and again in the 53d Psalm, declares in language, which is again repeated by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans,—as if to multiply the testimony of inspiration to the

fact,—“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.” Rom. iii. 10–12. Paul elsewhere expresses this same truth, in connexion with a declaration as to the origin and consequences of this, our deplorable condition. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Rom. v. 12.

What a commentary on these and similar declarations of Scripture, does the history of our race present! We see sin manifested, not as a peculiarity of particular individuals, or classes, or nations, or races; nor confined to particular times and eras,—*all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,—there is no man that liveth and sinneth not.

And this evil thing affects, not only all human actions, and words, and thoughts, but our very nature is corrupt,—the fruit is not good, because the tree is not good,—the waters are foul, because the fountain is impure,—we are “conceived in sin”—we are “brought forth in iniquity,”—we are “by nature, the children of wrath.” We see the wages of sin—the penalty of a want of conformity to God’s law,—reigning “even over those who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.” Rom. v. 14. The newly-born infant, scarce conscious of its being, is yet the subject of suffering and of death; and is marked thereby, no less distinctly than was guilty Cain, as obnoxious

to God's all-comprehending and uncompromising law.

This universal and entire sinfulness of our race—a fact, in itself, so abasing and so alarming—does not when announced make upon us its due impression ; partly, because of the effect of sin upon ourselves, deadening our moral sensibilities ; and partly, because all around us are, like ourselves, involved in the guilty degradation. Not only does sin blind us, or at least render us indifferent to its own appalling enormity, but besides, all intelligent creatures with whom we are sensibly acquainted, are our fellow-sinners.

But consider, for a moment, what sin is ; and consider, too, that notwithstanding the many millions of the human race, sin is, doubtless, still a comparatively rare thing among God's intelligent creatures ; and we will see reason for dread wonder, that the Omnipotent and Holy One, should allow such wretches as we are, to defile his creation.

For, what is sin ? It is the violation of the law of God ; a law, to which we are, by the very fact of our existence, bound to render supreme obedience ; a law, too, which, even whilst we transgress it, we cannot but acknowledge is only “ holy, and just, and good.” Sin is therefore nothing less than unprovoked rebellion against our Maker,—it is nothing other than enmity against our God. This is the fearful thing of which we all are guilty.

And then, too, we stand almost alone in our iniquity. Sin, we have reason to believe, is a comparatively rare thing, and a sinner is the exception

among the subjects of God's wide dominion. Think of those myriad worlds, and systems of worlds, with which He, who is "Almighty in working," has (we may almost say) filled immensity—in comparison with which the trifling earth we tread is but as the small dust of the balance—an atom floating in the sunbeam. Think of these countless worlds, all peopled as they doubtless are with countless generations of intelligent and responsible creatures,—think of the vast gap in the scale of intelligence, between our finite minds and God the Infinite—a gap filled in with rank above rank, in long succession, of angelic beings,—thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers;—and of all these innumerable hosts—innumerable not merely as to individuals, but as to species or kinds of individual being—there are not, we have reason to believe, such moral monsters as sinners found, except on earth where we abide, and in hell. Men and devils damned, alone of all creation, have dared to lift the arm of rebellion against the Lord of Hosts. Other orders of intelligent creatures are, doubtless, rejoicing in the holy exercises of their unfallen faculties—loving with supreme affection, serving with untiring zeal, glorifying with unmingled devotion, their great, adorable Creator—as burning seraphs before the throne, or winged cherubs on swift flight to do His will—ministering spirits, ever hearkening to the voice of His word. Children of men, and demons of the pit, alone of all God's hosts, shun their Creator's blessed presence, despise His holy



law, dishonour His hallowed name, and would rob Him of His glory.

Suppose that man had never fallen, and that our race were still rejoicing in the full glory of our first estate; and suppose that among the many millions of the happy, holy, inhabitants of earth, some one or two sinners should appear—rebels against God, “rejoicing in iniquity,” “loving darkness rather than the light”—such wretches would not present to our eyes a sight more strange and monstrous, than our race now presents to the holy intelligences above us, and to Jehovah, our sovereign God.

Such, my friends, is our lamentable condition—“under sin”—at “enmity against God”—“children of wrath.”

II. But further, not only are all men thus under sin, but *they are so by the permissive will of God*. This is the second point proposed for our consideration.

“God hath concluded,” is the declaration of the text, “all in unbelief,” or “under sin.” This language does not merely teach that since men have, in fact, become sinners, God now regards them as such,—it expresses the higher truth, that our race have fallen into this state of sin, by His permissive will. “*God hath concluded* all in unbelief.”

The word “concluded,” here, has evidently not its now common and ordinary signification of *finished*, *completed*, but its original and proper etymological signification as given in the margin, *shut up together*. The form of expression represents us, as,



by the permission of God, shut up together under sin,—like prisoners, shut up together in a prison ; or like the occupants of a besieged city, shut up together by the power of the enemy. So has God seen fit to give up our race to the power of sin.

That we are thus under sin by His permissive will, is evident :

1st. From the very fact itself, that we are now under sin. For this important fact in the history of mankind, must have occurred either *by* the permissive will of God, or *in opposition to* His will, or (the only remaining supposition) He had no will in regard to the occurrence.

Now, we say that neither this event, nor any event, small or great, has ever occurred, *in opposition to* the will of the Sovereign Ruler of the universe. “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure,” saith the Lord. Yea, Jehovah, the only God, ever “doeth His will among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of earth.” No creature, nor combination of creatures, can stay His almighty arm.

Nor, further, can it be true, that God, our Maker, *had no will* in reference to the obedience or fall of man, and the consequent holiness or sinfulness of our race. The God of the Bible is not—as some of the heathen imagine of their deities—indifferent to the condition of the creatures He has brought into being. He is not only the Creator, but the Controller and Governor of the universe, having his own wise and mighty purposes, which He is ever accomplishing. “His throne is in the

heavens, and He maketh this earth His footstool, and His kingdom ruleth over all." The very hairs of our head are numbered by Him—yea "not a sparrow falleth to the ground without our Father"—and dare we imagine, that He was or is indifferent as that which affects the destiny of a whole race of His immortal creatures?

Since, then, the fall of man, and the consequent sinfulness of our race, could not have occurred in opposition to the Divine will,—since it is an event, in regard to which He would not have been indifferent, we say, that the very existence of the fact, is an incontestible proof that it occurred by His permissive will.

But, 2dly, This is further confirmed by the express declarations of Scripture. "He worketh *all things*," says the Apostle, "all things after the counsel of His own will." Eph. i. 11. And lest any should suppose that sinful events were beyond or without His providential control, His own voice is heard declaring "I form the light, and create darkness,—I make peace, and create evil; I, the Lord, do all these things." Isa. xlv. 7. With even more distinctness, if possible, the Spirit, by Solomon, declares, "the Lord hath made all things for Himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." Prov. xvi. 4. In harmony with these and similar passages of Scripture, is the declaration of the text, "God hath concluded all in unbelief."

In regard to the proposition here maintained, that men are under sin by the permissive will of God, it may be appropriate to remark, that it does

not mean, that God *compelled* our first parents to eat the forbidden fruit, or now *compels* any of our race to sin; neither does it mean that God at all interfered with the wills of our first parents, or now interferes with our wills, so as to dispose us to sin *voluntarily* against Him. There is no such agency on the part of God, in the occurrence of sin, as to make Him, in any sense, the author of our iniquity.

But it means, and simply means, that God, by wise and holy determination, permitted, and still permits man, in the exercise of his freedom of will, to sin. Sin, on the part of man, is voluntary, self-moved,—it has its source in himself, and God sees fit to withhold restraining grace. The Creator “made man upright,” and man, not God, “has sought out wicked inventions.”

This view of sin, as to the manner of its occurrence, may be apprehended more distinctly by considering the language of Jehovah on one occasion, in regard to the rebellious Israelites—“Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone.” *Let him alone.* It is not necessary to the occurrence of sin, that God should interfere by any direct agency,—it is enough that He *lets man alone*, and the unrestrained human heart spontaneously manifests iniquity.

III. We come, then, to the third point proposed for our consideration, namely, *the end which God accomplishes, and which we may therefore say, He designed to accomplish, by the permission of sin.*

When we consider, on the one hand, the infinite Holiness and Benevolence of God; and on the

other, the turpitude of sin, and the incalculable misery which it has brought upon our race, the inquiry presents itself,—Why was sin permitted ?

The propriety of our asking this question, and endeavouring to know the answer, depends entirely upon the spirit which dictates the inquiry. If we ask this, from any feeling of doubt or mistrust as to the infinite holiness and goodness of God,—if we ask it from a wish to know the reasons of His dealings with us, that we may sit in judgment on them, and decide whether they be sufficient,—if we ask, from a want of confidence in the Ruler of the universe, which will not be satisfied until we understand and approve of the motives of His conduct ; if such be our spirit, we do in asking but sin most heinously against our Maker. To the caviller God giveth not account of any of his matters. To a spirit of presumptuous inquiry, His reply is only the withering rebuke, “ Who art thou, O ! man, that repliest unto God ? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, ‘ Why hast thou made me thus ?’ Has not the potter power over the same clay to make one vessel unto honour, and another to dishonour ? ”

But if, on the other hand, we approach this subject in humble faith, fully assured that whether we can always see it or not, God is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works,—if we come, believing that whatever darkness and clouds are round about Him, righteousness and judgment are still the habitation of His throne,—if we come to

this subject, prepared to trust God in regard to whatever of Himself He has not yet revealed, or we cannot yet understand, and only desire to know and understand so far as He has seen fit to reveal Himself; and are moved to this, too, not by mere carnal curiosity, but that we may be led thereby to love and adore Him the more,—if we humbly seek an answer to the question proposed in such a spirit, we are in so doing not only innocently engaged, but are fulfilling a solemn and responsible duty,—a duty imposed upon us by every intellectual and moral faculty He has given us, and by every revelation He has made of Himself, in His works and in His word. The highest and most appropriate exercise of our powers is in seeking after, and attaining unto, more distinct and enlarged views of the being, and attributes, and works, and word of the great God that made us. “This is eternal life”—the very *life* of an immortal spirit—“*to know Thee*, the only true and living God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,” says Jeremiah, “let not the mighty man glory in his might—let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me: saith the Lord.”

Wilful ignorance, or indifference, in regard to what God *has* revealed of Himself, is no less criminal than is presumptuous inquiry, into those secret things which it is not yet given us to know.

We may, therefore—if our spirit be one of hum-



ble docility and faith—if our desire be to “increase in the knowledge of God,” that our love for Him, and adoration, may thereby be increased,—we may, or rather we *should*, in such a frame, and with such motives, seek to know what God has revealed in regard to the end He would accomplish, by the permission of the fall and sinfulness of our race.

As preparatory to an answer of this inquiry, we remark, that God was *under no obligation to prevent sin*. The Creator was not *bound in justice* to restrain His responsible creatures from sinning against Himself, and exposing themselves to an adequate punishment. Having created them holy, and having given them a law which was holy, just, and good, it was their duty to obey. And when, self-moved, they would violate that law, and bring upon themselves its penalty, His relation to them imposed on Him no obligation to compel their obedience. To deny this, is simply to deny God’s right of moral government over His intelligent creatures. It would be an absurdity to give commands, with promises and threatenings annexed, if the law-giver were himself obliged to accomplish the performance of all that was required. We repeat, therefore, that God was *under no obligation*—He was not *bound in justice* to prevent sin.

This truth, whilst of course, it does not answer the question under consideration, is of importance in this connection, as preparing the mind to receive the answer.

To return to the particular inquiry proposed—though God had, as we have seen, the right, in

justice, to permit, yet what are we to regard as His design in permitting, the sin of the human race?

To obtain an intelligent answer to this question, we should first ask the more general question—what is the design or ultimate end of all God's works of creation and providence?

By our very idea of God, as the self-existent, the Infinite, the Eternal, as well as by the teachings of Scripture, we are led to the conclusion that the main design, the ultimate end, the final cause of His creative and providential acts, all and singular, has not reference to anything in the creature, but to Himself, the Creator. Not only is it true that, "by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers," not only *by* Him but "*for* Him, were they all created." Col. i. 16. Or as it is declared in the song of the heavenly host—"Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." Rev. iv. 11. God is not only the source, and the means, but the *end* of all His works. "Of Him, and through Him, and *to* Him," says St. Paul, "are all things, to whom be glory for ever." Rom. xi. 36.

And when we further ask, what end in *reference to Himself*, God would accomplish, by His various works and dispensations, we unhesitatingly answer, the promotion of His own glory. "All Thy works shall, and do praise Thee, O Lord." Ps. cxlv. 10. *The glory of God*, is the great end of all His works of creation and providence.



But what is precisely meant, when it is said, that all God's works are designed to promote His glory? Is it meant that these things, or anything, either did or could, add to the essential glory of the Most High? Can it mean that the greatness or the excellence of the Deity, is thereby enhanced? No, God was no less the infinitely glorious God, before ever time was,—before the foundation of the earth or heavens were laid—before aught of the vast universe had existence—when, as yet, the Godhead dwells alone, rejoicing in the ineffable bliss of their own divine communion. Just as the sun, which courses in such majesty the heavens, would be the self-same glorious object, though no eye had been created to behold its splendour—so, God would have been the self-same glorious God, though no “morning star” had been brought into being, to sing His praises—though no one of the “sons of God” had ever been created, to glorify Him, with shouts of joy.

When, therefore, it is said, that the works of creation and providence were all designed to promote *the glory* of God, reference is had, not to His essential or intrinsic glory, but to His declarative, or manifested glory. His works and dispensations were not designed to add to, but to manifest, the already existing, infinite excellence and majesty of His adorable being, and attributes.

When in eternity God dwelt alone, in infinite wisdom and love, He determined to make a manifestation of Himself—to show forth His glory. And how would He effect this purpose? By bring-

ing into being, creatures endowed with faculties whereby they might, in some measure, apprehend His glory; and then making to them revelations and exhibitions of His being, and character, and attributes;—such exhibitions and revelations as would afford them some true knowledge of Himself, and lead them, in the fullness of gratitude and of joy, to love and serve, and glorify Him for ever. *The glory of God, as it consists in the manifestation of Himself*, is the great design, the ultimate end, the final cause of all His creative acts and providential dispensations. His works and words and ways are all but different exhibitions of some one or other of the glorious attributes of His character—different manifestations of His being, or wisdom, or power, or holiness, or justice, or goodness, or truth. They are designed to lead His intelligent creatures who behold them, to a clearer and more comprehensive view of Himself and His adorable perfections, to the end, that they may be filled thereby, with ever new and constantly increasing, joy and love, and adoration. It is in this light that we should ever view the wonders of His works—it is with this key alone that we may endeavour to unlock the mysteries of His providence.

When we come then to the particular question under consideration—the design of God in the permission of the sinfulness of man, we are to look for the solution, in the reply to the more easily answered question,—the manifestation of what attribute of God is peculiar to His dispensations towards the human race? What phase of His all glorious per-

fection, is here most fully, and yet, elsewhere not at all (we have reason to believe,) displayed?

We answer from the whole history of those dealings, as well as from the declaration of such scriptures, as the text—His MERCY; and by this we distinctly mean, *His favour toward the guilty—His love toward sinners.* Other divine attributes are of course exhibited, and that most gloriously, in God's dispensations toward our race, but they appear as incidental to the manifestation of His *mercy*. This darling attribute is here *peculiarly* displayed. He “concluded all in unbelief that He might have *mercy* upon all.” He permitted man to fall, but He has manifested the wonders of His love toward the fallen. He did not restrain our race from sin, as, we should bear in mind He was under no obligation to do, but when we had become thus “dead in trespasses and sins,” “by nature, children of wrath,” because He was “rich in *mercy*, for His great love wherewith He loved us,” He quickens us from our death of sin, into newness of spiritual life; and all this, to the end, as we are told by inspiration, “that in the ages to come, *He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace* in His kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus.” Eph. ii. 1—7.

Until the fall of man, there doubtless, had never been a manifestation of the divine attribute of mercy. We have no reason to believe that His creatures as yet knew, that “the Lord was gracious, and full of compassion,” even for the guilty. Angels had sinned and without mercy they were visited with wrath and destruction. It was not until

man, too, had fallen, that this previously unseen attribute was destroyed. And then, how gloriously—not merely mercy, but mercy truly Godlike—not simply grace, but “riches of grace unsearchable,”—not only love, but infinite “love, the length and breadth and depth and height of which, passeth knowledge,”—a love which not only delivers from a merited punishment, but raises up to glory—a strange affection, which has vile sinners for its objects, and not only snatches them from out the very jaws of death and hell eternal, but washes them from all defilement, and making them partakers of the divine nature,”—exalts them to high seats “in heavenly places” with incarnate Deity. Yes, here was exhibited, a new, a most glorious, and yet probably a previously unimagined attribute of Jehovah’s character.

“ Never did angels taste, above,  
Redeeming grace and dying love.”

Other divine attributes had long previously been manifested, and had excited the adoration of the unfallen heavenly host. They had seen the heavens declaring the glory of their Maker, and the firmament showing forth His handiwork. The existing universe was to them a record of their Creator’s wisdom, power and skill, and they had been taught thereby, the anthem of Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, to Him who had created all things, and for whose pleasure they are and were created.

And again, in all the faculties of their being,

and in the abundant provision made for their right exercise, affording an existence of uninterrupted and unmingled happiness, the angelic hosts had a constant manifestation, or rather, an experience of Jehovah's goodness—His benevolence—that attribute which moves Him to promote the happiness of his creatures. They had tasted and seen that "the Lord was good.

And further, in the holy character of all their joys, in the very constitution of their natures, and in that law of their Creator, to which they all were subject, they had full exhibition of God's attribute of holiness, and they ceased not, day nor night, to shout one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is our Lord God Almighty."

And once more, when rebellion had entered the ranks of the heavenly host, and Satan seduced many to foul revolt against the majesty of heaven, and Jehovah, in just judgment, cast the rebels from his presence down to hell—reserved there in chains and darkness unto the judgment of the great day, the unfallen angels saw an exhibition of God's attribute of justice, and of his truth immutable, and they doubtless sung, as John in vision heard them sing, when the vials of wrath were poured out, upon the finally impenitent of men, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, because thou hast thus judged, for they are worthy—even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."

Before the fall of man, therefore, the intelligent creation had seen full manifestations of God's being, and wisdom, and power, and goodness, and holiness,

and justice and truth. But as yet, they had not seen an exhibition of God's grace and mercy. They had known, indeed, His love, but not His love toward sinners. When, therefore, in the garden, our first parents plucked and ate the fruit forbidden, what strange surprise must have filled the angelic host, at God's delay to thrust down sinful man to an abode with guilty devils in the pit! With what wonder would they hear their holy Sovereign, as he drove the sinning pair forth from the garden, announce to them the promise, that the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head! And when our fallen parents, ventured from time to time, to draw nigh to God in worship, and the heavenly host beheld that they were not repulsed—when they saw them bringing offerings to the Lord, to which He “had respect,” how would their hearts begin to throb with a new joy, as they beheld in this the glimmerings of a manifestation of a new and glorious—a previously unseen attribute of their adorable Jehovah! And when righteous Abel was stricken, first of human kind, by the hand of death, and his disembodied spirit recreated in God's image, appeared among the unfallen worshippers of the upper sanctuary, cleansed from all the defilement of his sins, spotless as the holy host around him, rejoicing with them in the pure and perfect joys of their heavenly dwelling-place, with what a thrill of gladness would they welcome him to their blessed communion, and with what swelling bursts of a new praise would they adore the wonderful love of their divine Creator! With what ready zeal would



they now go forth on the strange mission of ministering to sinful, vile children of the dust, yet still, by wondrous love of God, the heirs of heaven and glory! How cheerfully, and with swift wing, would they fly at God's command, to take charge of the chosen ones, to bear them up in their angelic hands, to guard with tender care, the pathway of their earthly pilgrimage, to be with them and sustain them in the hour of death, and after death, to receive them into fond embrace, and convey them to the blessed everlasting mansions! And with what interest would the angels watch all the operations of this gracious love of God—how would they study its successive developments and “desire to look into” the mysteries of the wondrous plan, in which they knew, though as yet they knew not how, “mercy and truth did meet together—righteousness and peace did kiss each other!” And when, in the fullness of time, they beheld Him, whom they had ever worshipped as their God and Creator—co-equal with the Father, and the very “brightness of His glory”—leaving His high seat upon the throne, veiling, as it were, His majesty divine, descending to earth, and taking upon Himself the humble nature of humanity, and that too, in its humblest form—a feeble babe, in Bethlehem's stable manger—when they beheld the amazing sight of Deity incarnate, and saw that in *that* humiliation, the mercy and the justice, the grace and yet the holiness of God, were all to be harmoniously and most gloriously displayed—overwhelmed with wonder no longer, merely at the love of God.



but at the infinitude of that love, and at the infinite wisdom displayed in the plan for a sinner's salvation—from heaven to earth, and back again to heaven, with joyful lips they shout, "Glory to God in the Highest, peace on earth, good will toward men—glory to God in the Highest!" And when the dispensations of this wondrous plan of grace shall have been completed, when the chosen of the Lord shall all have been ingathered, and ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousand of thousands, redeemed from among the children of men shall appear in the presence of God's heavenly glory, with their robes of white, and their harps of gold, and their palms of victory, and their crowns of everlasting life—when Jesus shall present before the throne, His blood-bought church complete, then shall all heaven's hosts unite, around the throne, in new strains of loftiest adoration—then shall the apocalyptic ascription of highest glory to Jehovah be fulfilled: "I, John, heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; salvation and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God; and again they said Alleluia; and the four and twenty elders and four beasts fell down and worshipped God, that sat on the throne, saying, Amen, Alleluia; and a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants: and I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, let us be glad and rejoice, and

give honour to Him, *for the marriage of the Lamb is come.*" Rev. xix. 1—7.

In view of these results, which God accomplishes for His glory, can we doubt as to the main design, the ultimate end, the final cause of His dispensations towards the human race, including, as these dispensations do, the permission of our sin.

In conclusion, it remains but to ask, what effect should be produced in us by the important truths we have been considering. We answer :

*First.* This subject should produce in us as it did in the Apostle, (as seen from the context,) more profound views of *the absolute sovereignty of God*. He is Himself, the source, the means, and the end of all His works. He is "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last"—ever accomplishing His own wise and holy purposes among "the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of earth." The highest and holiest of His creatures have neither merit nor power before Him. All are less than vanity, and as nothing, before God. "For who hath first given to Him, that it should be recompensed to him again? For of Him, and to Him, and through Him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever." Rom. xi. 35, 36.

*Secondly.* These truths should lead us as they did the Apostle, (as seen from the context,) to adore *the infinite wisdom and knowledge of God*, as displayed in His dealings with our race. We should be ready to exclaim with Paul, "Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." All comprehending knowledge, which em-

braced the countless thousands of our race, which took in all the necessities and circumstances of their being, which surveyed all the means requisite to the accomplishment of the divine purpose, and all the results of those means from the beginning to the end. Infinite wisdom, too, in selecting and adapting the means to the object in view, in the ordering of every part, as well as the whole of the entire scheme of human destiny, so that our highest happiness, and the glory of our Creator, may thereby ever be abundantly promoted. We see displayed herein not merely Almighty power triumphing over sin, and death, and hell, but wisdom infinite,

“ Building on sin’s demolished throne,  
A temple to God’s praise.

From broken, scattered fragments, gathered out of the very ruins of the fall, Jehovah has reared a monument, which everlastingly shall stand to the praise of His glorious grace, and throughout all coming ages, shall display “to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God.” Eph. iii. 10.

*Thirdly.* The truths we have been considering should fill our hearts with grateful love to the Father of mercies and the God of all grace. What reason have we for thankfulness, in being permitted to experience that “the Lord is gracious and full of compassion!” For bear in mind, that every blessing we enjoy, every good thing that cometh down to us from the Father of Lights, all the unsearch-

able riches of Christ, are blessings undeserved, gifts to which we not only have no claim, but the very reverse of which is our desert. God was under no obligation to provide a ransom for us, and in Him manifest to us His unbounded love. The hopeless state of devils in the pit, may teach us that all the favours, we sinners of mankind enjoy, are the gifts of God's rich, free, sovereign, and distinguishing grace.

And how should we feel His claims upon our gratitude and love rise to a still greater height, when we consider, that not only are we made the direct objects of the Divine mercy, but He has made us the honoured instruments of for ever showing forth "the exceeding riches of His grace," to all the intelligent creation. Not only are Christians now "the lights of this world"—they are henceforth evermore to be, as it were, among the very lights of heaven. Not only are they now epistles of God's grace, "known and read of men"—angelic eyes shall ever gaze upon them with interest and delight, and behold in their exaltation, the infinite wisdom and power, the holiness and justice, the goodness and truth, and the wonderfully merciful love of God.

And lastly, these truths should lead each one, personally, *to seek with all earnestness and diligence, to have these blessed purposes of mercy fulfilled in his own experience.* We have seen the great end which God would accomplish in all His dealings with our race, we are able to understand why He has brought us into being and ordered, as he

has, all His dispensations towards us, to manifest His mercy in bestowing upon us everlasting happiness and glory. We have clearly set before us, therefore, what the Lord would have us to do—accept, at once, this “great salvation,” so dearly purchased, so freely offered; receive, with our whole heart, the Lord Jesus, as our Saviour and our King, and enjoy in Him, now and for evermore, Jehovah’s gracious and unbounded favour.

We may, indeed, refuse these precious mercies. We may, notwithstanding all, “neglect this great salvation.” And what then? Shall we thereby rob God of his glory? No—God will glorify Himself, not only in them that are saved, but also in them that perish. If we refuse to glorify Him in our salvation, He will glorify Himself in our destruction. If we refuse to be the monuments of His mercy in the realms of heavenly light, we shall then become the monuments of His Almighty wrath in the pit of darkness, and with devils damned, through all eternity, display the holy justice of our Sovereign God. “Seek ye the Lord, then, whilst He may be found—call ye upon Him whilst He is near.” “Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good—that blessed are they who put their trust in Him.”