

WHAT IS MAN?

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?"-- Psa. 8:4.

What is man? is an important question in view of his possible destiny; and the question in its widest scope refers to his past, his present and his possible future state. What, then, we may inquire, was he? what is he? and what is he to be in the future?

As to what he was originally we have no knowledge whatever, and can gain no information, save from the sacred writings of God's inspired prophets and witnesses. Some would-be philosophers, who have more faith in their own surmises than in the inspired records, tell us that originally man was much inferior to his present state, and that from a very low beginning he has been gradually progressing toward a state of perfection. Progression, or evolution, is the term which describes the theory, though none of its advocates will attempt to define either the beginning or the ultimate terminus of such progression.

But, discarding the vain philosophies of mere human reasoning, let us inquire of the divine oracles, the only reliable testimony. [R1266 : page 1] The Bible tells us that man is of the earth, earthy; that out of the ground he was taken; that God formed him of the dust of the ground and then breathed or infused into him the breath of life--i.e., instituted the breathing process--and that thus man became a living soul or being. And not only so, but unlike all the other living souls of the earth which God had created, this soul was in the image of his Maker. Now an image of any thing is a representation or copy of it, though of inferior substance. So man was an earthy or clay copy of his heavenly, spiritual Maker--a copy of God! yes, a manifestation of God in flesh. Truly, then, he must have been a noble creature. And what shall we say of the implied reflection against the Creator in the claim of some, that man was originally far inferior even to his present state of degradation? for however high or low was his condition, the fact clearly stated is that he was an "image," a copy, of God. "O," say they, "but the statement reads, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness' (Gen. 1:26), and the process of making him was only begun in Eden and it still continues, and must, until he has reached the image of God. Thus far he is "a cake only half baked."

But let such observe the reading of the *following verse*, also *verse 31*, which show that God not only purposed the work and proposed it to his Son, his agent in the creation of all things (John 1:3; Col. 1:16), and that he not only began the work, but that he also completed it:--"So God created man [past tense] in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." (Compare Gen. 1:27, 31; 5:1; 9:6; Eccl. 7:29; 1 Cor. 11:7; Jas. 3:9.) And this creature which God "had made," completed, and declared to be a copy, an image of himself, a manifestation of himself in flesh, he was also pleased to own as his son (Luke 3:38), and as Paul says--"If a son, then an heir;" for God brings no son into existence for whom he has not made ample provision. And as a son he had the rich token of his Father's loving providence in the vast domain of earth which he was to subdue and take possession of as his posterity would increase and require it; and all its products--animal, vegetable and mineral--were subject to his control and use:--"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat."--Gen. 1:28, 29.

And not only did God thus give to Adam the whole earth as an inheritance for himself and his posterity, telling them to appropriate it and cultivate it as their increasing necessities should

require, but he had already prepared a choice portion of it as a fit home for the perfect pair, and a sample of what the whole domain of earth would become under the process of industrious cultivation with his added blessing.--"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.... And the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it."--Gen. 2:8, 15.

How like a wise and loving father! How bountiful the provision, yet how wisely bestowed!--not in a way to cultivate indolence and undue dependence upon paternal care, but in a way to stimulate industry and thrift and to cultivate a spirit of appreciation and thankfulness for the blessings and advantages received. When we thus view the newly created man in the light in which the Bible presents him, as a son and an heir of God, beloved and owned of God and so richly blessed with such lavish tokens of the divine favor, we must conclude that he was indeed a creditable "image" of God, and one that God was not ashamed to own--a perfect creature, therefore, filled with grace and crowned with glory, as the Scriptures declare.--Psa. 8:5-8.

Would a man take pleasure in sending out a blurred and defaced painting, and widely announce it as an image of himself? or would he take delight in owning and blessing a simple or an idiotic son? No; such a painting would be a disgrace to the original, and such a son a reproach to a parent.

But let us consider further this copy of God; for even defaced as it now is, and therefore no longer owned of God, some traces of the original likeness still remain, and to view the original, we have only to supply in imagination the shortcomings of our various powers from the standard of an ideal perfection suggested in the Scriptures. The physical nature of man may, or may not, constitute a part of the likeness of God. Of this we cannot judge, since "it does not yet appear" what a spirit body is, excepting negatively, that it is not flesh and blood, though it is a reality, a glorious body--"There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body." (1 Cor. 15:44.) But the intellectual and moral qualities in man are the exact counterparts of God's own intellectual and moral qualities. Man has perception, imagination, the power of original suggestion, memory, reason, judgment and will, corresponding to these various intellectual qualities in God. He has also the Godlike moral quality of conscience, which enables him to discern the right and the wrong, to distinguish one from the other and to estimate them properly. As originally created, all of these powers worked together perfectly and harmoniously, all being subject to that supreme mental faculty, the will, which, being free to act independently, though aided by the suggestions of all the other mental and moral faculties, determines the course and constitutes the character of the man.

This Godlike endowment of a free will constituted the crowning glory of God's human creature. Had he been left without this one, though possessed of all the other noble faculties, he would have been a mere machine, without character, either meritorious or blameworthy. So, then, the perfect man was this free moral and intellectual creature, with a perfect physical organism, giving full and free exercise to, and in no way interfering with, his noble powers; with surroundings which continually stimulated and rewarded their cultivation and use; and with the promise of lasting continuance of these favors on condition of the right course of his will--his choice of righteousness as manifested in the expressed will of God. To prove his worthiness of lasting life, a test of character must of necessity be applied. The first test was a very simple one, merely the prohibition of the fruit of a single tree in the midst of the garden of Eden. But under this first simple test, though knowing the Creator's will and perfectly able to obey it, he willed to do wrong, to disobey God, and hence brought upon himself the just penalty, death.

But, says the objector, does not the fact that Adam fell under the very first test prove that he was not perfect, and, therefore, could not stand? By no means; it simply proves that his will was not fixed, was not settled in its determination to do right, to do the will of God, as it might

and should have been. Being perfect, in the image of God, and free to act out his own will, he had power to obey or disobey, and in his choice of the course of disobedience he was therefore culpable. He alone was responsible, and God was in no sense responsible. God had richly endowed him with every blessing, both personal and in his surroundings, had forewarned him of the sure rewards of righteousness and sin, and in his command of obedience to him as to a wise and loving Father, he had provided his wisdom and care as their protection and safeguard in lieu of their inexperience. And the testing of their obedience was his righteous act to prove their worthiness or unworthiness of eternal life. Consequently, the responsibility was all on man's part, and when he sinned God was just in condemning him to death.

It is plain, therefore, that the salvation which God has provided is purely an act of his free grace--an act to which he was in no sense obligated, and to which he was impelled only by his abounding love: "For God so loved the world [even while [R1266 : page 2] we were yet sinners] that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."--[John 3:16; Rom. 5:8](#).

Thus we see from the Bible testimony that man was originally perfect, an image or copy of God in flesh. Of the fall from that original perfection and the results to the entire race of Adam, we also have the clear testimony of the Scriptures, showing just how it came about--that it was a wilful transgression of known righteous law, in the face of a distinct warning of the penalty of such a course. It was a sin on man's part only, and from which God is fully exonerated in that man was left under no necessity of want and with full instruction as to the right course and as to the results of a wrong course of action. The only cause of man's fall, then, which is traceable to the Creator, lies in the fact that he created him in his own image-- with a free will of his own. But this endowment, we see, was the crowning act of God's favor to man, and man's choicest blessing. And so it was the lack of appreciation, and an abuse of God's abounding favor and goodness, and not any lack on God's part, which led to the fall.

As a consequence of that fall from original perfection and favor on the part [R1267 : page 2] of the head and representative of the race, another law of our being, designed for our highest good--the law of heredity-- has brought upon all Adam's posterity its entailment of imperfection and proneness to evil. And thus all the race is in the same wretched plight. An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit, nor a bitter fountain send forth sweet waters. The present state, therefore, of the entire race is a degenerating and dying one.

But what of the future condition of man? The future condition, as implied in the penalty, would have been everlasting extinction of being, had not the mercy, wisdom and love of God provided another opportunity for the race, in which the bitter experience gained during the six thousand years of the reign of sin and death will furnish a valuable lesson, which experience will prove that obedience to God is the only right and safe course for any of his creatures. This second trial of the race, under conditions which were impossible in the first trial, we thus see is another favor of God, and a favor, too, which could never be claimed on the score of justice. Though man was justly condemned as unworthy of life, God saw in his inexperience and youth an extenuating circumstance, though not a release from moral obligation; and, therefore, coupled with the enunciation of the penalty, came the merciful promise of final deliverance from it. The sacrifice of our Lord, the man Christ Jesus, as the *ransom* for all, to satisfy the claims of justice against all, makes manifest both to angels and to men that this salvation, this recovery out of sin and its penalty, death, could not be hoped for on the score of justice, but only on the score of pity and love. The atoning sacrifice for sins was demanded by justice and was furnished by Jehovah, that he might be just, and yet the justifier of men already justly condemned to death.--[Rom. 3:26](#).

This favor of a new trial for the condemned race was provided by God in the gift of his Son, our Lord Jesus, who left his former glory and took our human nature, and then, as a man, freely gave himself as our ransom or corresponding price. Wherefore, says the Apostle, God has now highly exalted him, even to the divine nature, that he might have power to justify or restore the redeemed race to the perfection and glory and dominion of earth lost in Eden; for the Son of man came to seek and to recover that which was lost.--Luke 19:10.

In looking back, therefore, to the original condition of man and the dominion given him in Eden, we see to what the human race is to be restored in the times of restitution promised by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:19-21. See also Gen. 1:26-28; Psa. 8:4-8.) He is to be restored to his original perfection and to the lordship of the whole earth. (See MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. I., Chap. XIV.)

Ah, says one, "I do not see much glory or honor in being made lords over sheep and oxen and fishes and creeping things." Well, my friend, that is only because your ideas of honor and dominion are borrowed from the selfish emulations that prevail among the ruling classes of the present time. See how the kings and lords of the past have loved to flaunt their authority and presumed superiority before the world; how they loved to live in palaces, to array themselves in the finest fabrics and to glut their appetites with the choicest viands of earth's good things, selfishly disregarding the woes of the masses, whose want of the common necessities of life supplied that abundant fulness and whose ignorance crouched in humility before their assumed greatness. If such gratification of the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life and the meanness of selfish love of display be your ideas of glory and honor (and such are the ideas of the sinful world), then no wonder if you see no special honor and glory in man's future dominion over the cattle and beasts and fish and fowl.

But take the standpoint of truth and soberness and of a sound mind, and the glory and dignity of the future lord of earth will be very apparent. He will not need to tax his fellow men to gain for himself the luxuries of ease and elegance, and then seek selfishly to enjoy them in the midst of the poverty and distress of his impoverished fellow men; for all men will be lords and kings, enjoying the same wealth and ease and elegance. His glory of person will not, as now, be dependent on gold and gems and costly array, but will have for its foundation the dignity and true beauty of character. Gems of intellectual beauty will sparkle in the eyes; the chisel of thought and the mallet of experience will fashion the features to forms of beauty such as art has never yet dreamed of; and the mantle of an established character of purity and righteousness and true holiness will clothe it more gloriously and royally than purple and scarlet and fine linen. One will have nothing to boast of over his fellow-men, for all will be alike glorious when all have been restored.

Nor will he need to set up a puppet show of his greatness before the lower creatures, to awe his subjects into submission to his authority; for naturally and without compulsion the beasts and cattle and fish and fowl will be his willing servants, and all the stores and forces of nature--the winds and waves, the light and heat, the electric currents, the minerals and gases and liquids, and vegetation in all its varied forms--will freely minister to his comfort and blessing. With what easy grace may the commands of such a lord be expressed, and with what delight will his blessings be enjoyed; and how far superior will they be to the plumed and titled mimic lords of to-day, who tremble on their thrones and whose very existence is continually haunted by visions of angry mobs, court intrigues and assassination plots.

Thus we see the grandeur of man as originally created in God's image and can appreciate the significance of God's statement, that he was crowned with dignity and honor as the lord and master of earth, with dominion over the beasts of the field, the fowl of the heavens and the fishes of the sea, in likeness of his Creator, the Lord and Ruler over all things. We have seen,

too, how all this arrangement was interrupted by sin. But while God permitted this interruption, he has not permitted, nor does he purpose to permit, a failure of his plans. All his purposes shall be accomplished ([Isa. 55:11](#)), because they were all devised in full view of all the circumstances which would attend them--in view of man's free agency, in view of his temptation and fall into sin and of its death penalty, and in view, also, of the possibility of his recovery from that condition through the sacrifice and mediation of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world;" and therefore he says, "I change not." ([Acts 15:18](#); [Mal. 3:6](#))

God's original purpose, therefore, has not been changed by reason of Adam's failure, and even its interruption by his non-appreciation and abuse of his free agency, in full view of which the plan was formed, shall in the end be overruled for good, the painful experience under the reign of sin and death acquainting him more thoroughly with the wisdom and righteousness of God, and at the same time exhibiting the exceeding sinfulness of sin to the other intelligent creatures. But after the long interruption of seven thousand years the regeneration of the race and their dominion of the whole earth will be an accomplished fact.

But six thousand years have passed already; and is there any indication that the dominion is soon to be restored? O yes: the same inquiry was raised eighteen hundred years ago, and Paul showed that even then there was a sure indication of it. He said, quoting the Psalmist ([Psa. 8:4-8](#)), "Thou madest man a little lower than the angels, thou crownedst him with glory and honor and didst set him over the works of thy hands. Thou has put all things in subjection under his feet. But now [since the fall and forfeiture of the estate, though God purposes to restore mankind to the lost estate] we do not yet see all things [restored again] subjected to him. But"--what do we see? Is there yet any evidence of the long promised restitution? O yes, says Paul--"we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels [a man] for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor [the glory and honor of perfect humanity, in whom inhered all the rights and privileges of a perfect man, and therefore a fit sacrifice --a corresponding price for the man Adam], that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man. For it became him [Jehovah] for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons [the human race] unto glory [the glory of the restored perfection and dominion], to make the Captain of their salvation [the glorified divine Christ] perfect [as a divine being--the divine Prophet, Priest and King] through suffering" [through his suffering in the flesh, even unto death].--[Heb. 2:6-10](#).

This indication of the promised and coming restitution, Paul pointed out to the Church in his day, but now in the close of the Gospel age we see still further indications. We not only recognize, as the early Church did, that the Redeemer has come and has paid our ransom price, and that he has been exalted to power for the accomplishment of the great restitution work, but we see further that the time is close at hand for the establishment of his Kingdom and the beginning of his glorious reign; that the body of Christ, which is to share that reign and work with him, is now almost complete; and that we are now living in the day of Jehovah's preparation for the Millennial reign of Christ, [\[R1268 : page 2\]](#) by means of which the restoration of all the willing and obedient sons of Adam shall be accomplished.

Praise the Lord! we see the beginning of the consummation of the great divine plan of the ages. Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or what are the sons of the fallen man that thou visitest them with thy salvation? Creatures of the dust, indeed, whose breath is in their nostrils! Aye! but more! they are creatures stamped with thine own glorious image, though sadly marred, and they ere long may reflect again thy perfect likeness. "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

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