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DO AFFLICTIONS

COME FROM GOD ?

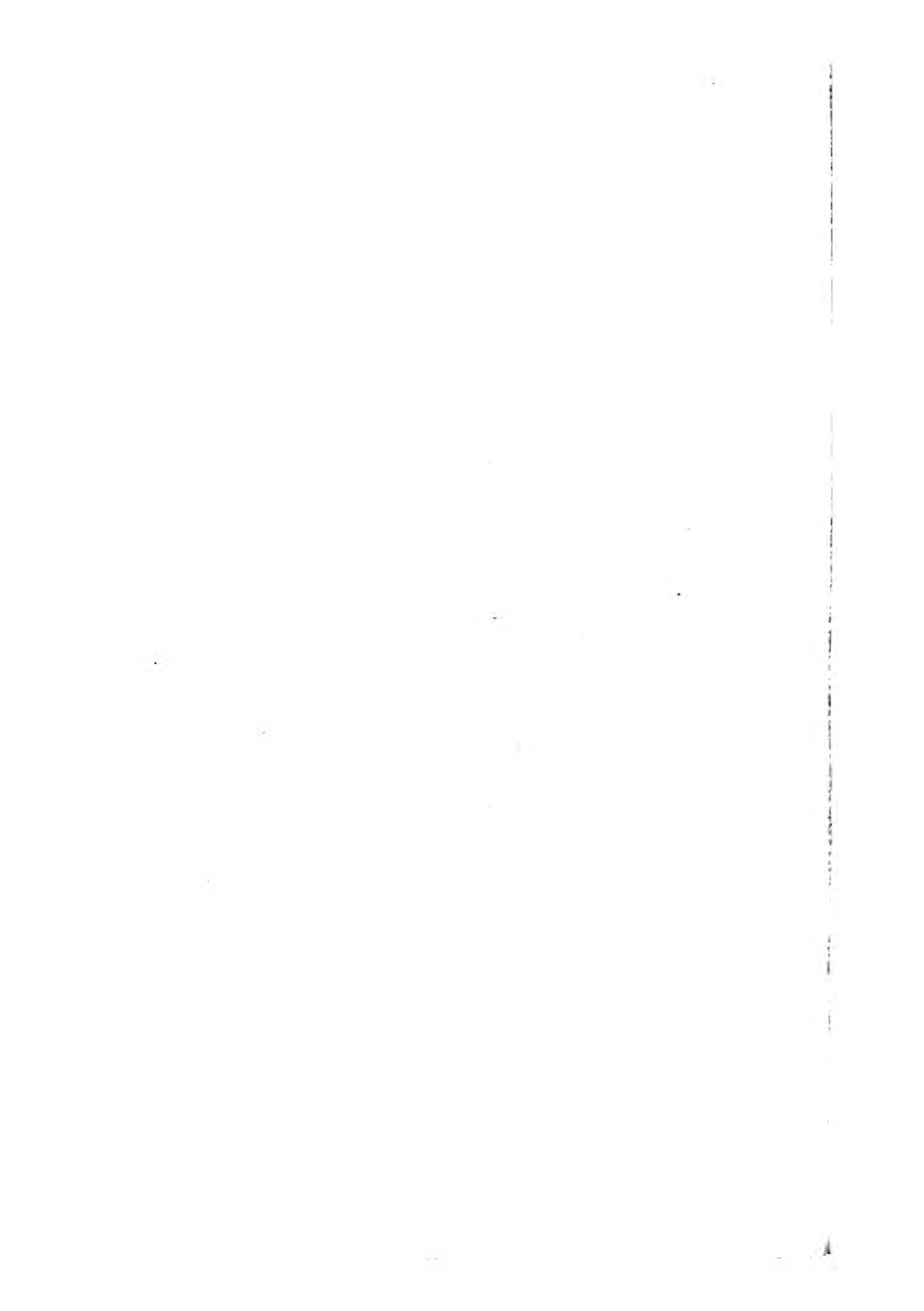
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BY

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SECOND EDITION

(REVISED AND LARGELY ALTERED)

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1911



PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THIS new edition is largely altered from the former, both in substance and form. It is less discursive, more concentrated, and better fitted to attain the end in view. What is that end? It is to ascertain, if possible, what the Scriptures really teach, concerning the origin, nature and results of human Afflictions in all their different forms. This is a matter of great and universal interest, regarding which the opinions of men are very varied and confused ; and if clearness of apprehension could only be attained, it would surely prove an immense comfort and blessing to mankind. In pursuit of the truth about afflictions, it is not our purpose to appeal largely to human literature of any sort whatever, but chiefly to the sacred Scriptures, believing that from them—when patiently studied and honestly interpreted—we shall receive the truest and most reliable response attainable.

We hope that the critics may be willing to regard this second edition as practically *a new book*, and deal with it accordingly. And if its contents are

vi PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

really in harmony with Divine Revelation, we pray that God may be pleased to bless it to the mental enlightenment and spiritual uplifting of many truth-seeking souls.

September 8, 1911.

PREFACE

IN our book entitled *The Visible God*, published by Hodder & Stoughton in 1892, is the following passage :—

‘The afflictions of humanity are manifold and universal. Every part of the physical system is liable to pain and weakness, and no human being is entirely exempt from suffering. It would not be easy to catalogue all the ills to which flesh is heir, for—as one of Job’s friends most truly declared—‘Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.’ But common though affliction is, being universally experienced, yet its origin and issues are not clearly understood by many, and therefore views and feelings are entertained regarding them, which are both mistaken and injurious.

The afflictions of the race do not come from God. He did not make man to be the subject of sorrow and suffering, disease and death. All these grim realities are out of harmony with His original purpose. Laws were ordained to work out health and happiness, and not disease and misery. And yet, there is much of both in the world. In what have they their origin? As daily endured they are largely the results of ignorance, and frequently the immediate and direct effects of folly and wrong-doing. But when we trace all human sufferings and sorrows back to their beginning, we find them to be the results of Sin—the issues of Moral Evil. Where it is unknown, they are never experienced. There are no hospitals in the heavens, nor any pains and afflictions suffered by the angels. Sin in humanity is the fruitful cause of every woe—the dark fountain from which all the streams of misery flow. It has filled the whole

world with lamentations and tears. When brought under the power of any affliction, whatever it may be, let us never permit ourselves to think unkindly of God, nor charge Him foolishly.

From the time we wrote these words, we have hoped to be able to issue a brief Treatise on the subject of Afflictions; but the writing of other books, and long-continued illness, prevented. In the autumn of 1909 we began to carry our purpose into fulfilment, and were enabled to arrange with the publisher for the issue of the work early in the new year. But again, physical disability intervened, and prevented its publication until now.

It is generally believed by Christian people, and also by many others who are either consciously or unconsciously influenced by their opinions, that all afflictions, of every kind and degree, come from God. It would be easy to support this assertion, by any number of quotations from all sorts of literature; and because accidents, distresses, and painful experiences are not only numerous, but also often very terrible in their nature, many discourses have been delivered, and treatises written, on the problem of pain and the mystery of suffering. And thousands of pious souls in trouble have sometimes had their faith confounded, and hard thoughts of God engendered in their

bosoms—thoughts which were not only unjust to Him, but which also lay as a heavy incubus on their own souls.

Our purpose in writing the following pages was not to counteract, by reasonings and appeals to common sense, the widespread and deeply rooted notion that afflictions are all sent by God. Our special appeal was to be made to the sacred Scriptures, which (in spite of the so-called higher critics) we still unhesitatingly regard as the veritable Word of Him who is the God of Truth. Mere passing references to its teachings in relation to the various points to be considered, might probably have been sufficient for all earnest students of revealed truth to whom the Bible is a familiar book; but as multitudes of professing Christians cannot fairly be regarded as belonging to that category, *we have quoted the passages in full* which prove and illustrate the truths we have advanced. We therefore beg the reader not to pass over anything in the following pages as a matter of small consequence; but to believe our assurance that the book is an organic unity and that every part of it is closely related to the whole.

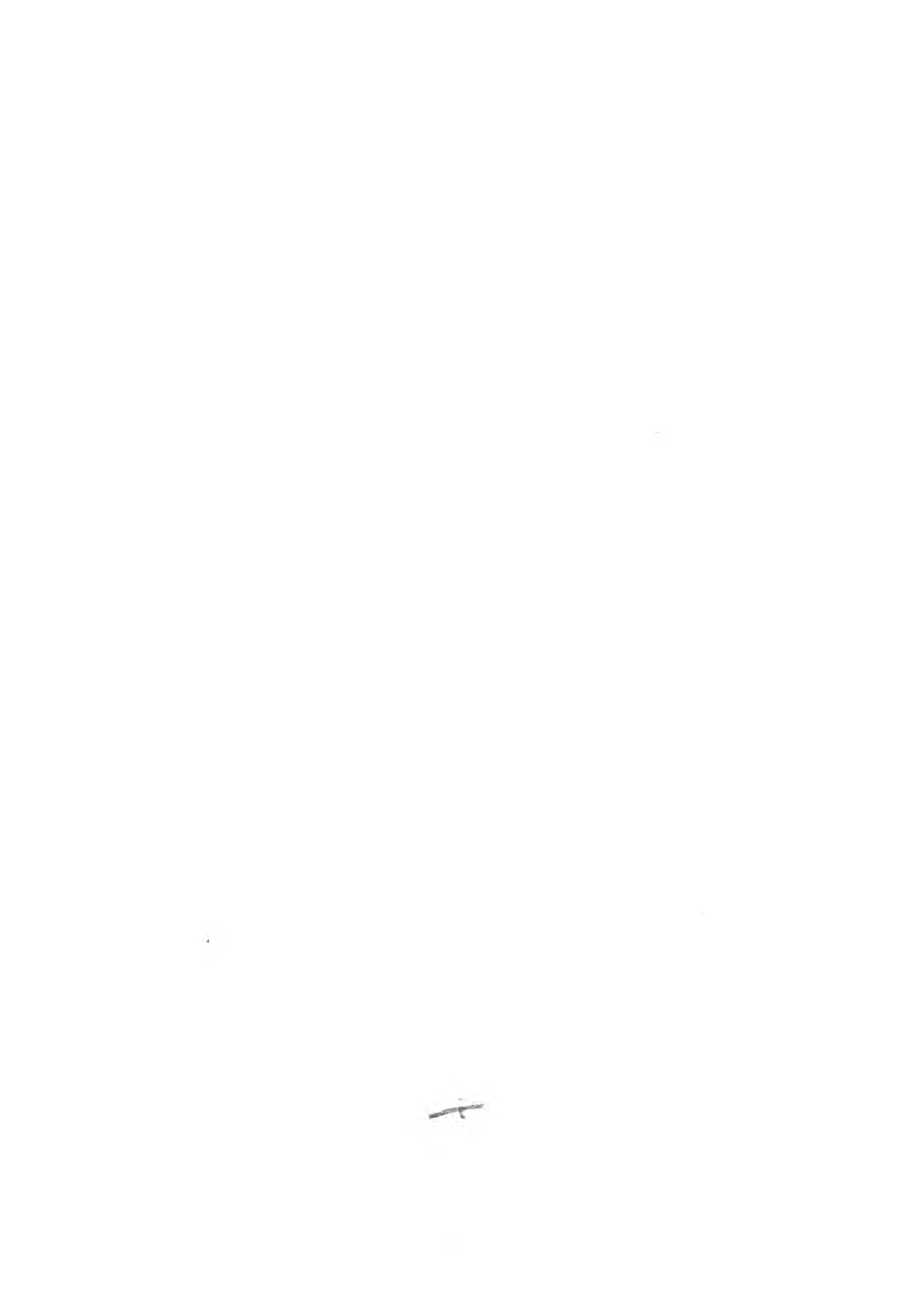
We have briefly dealt with the great facts of Bible story preceding the entrance of Sin and Affliction into human history, and also with the chief Redemptive events occasioned by their coming; but afflictions of all kinds and God's treatment of

them are the special themes of the book. We have written it very simply for the sake of general readers, but its subject-matter opens up the meanings and mysteries of some of the deep things of God—things which are not generally understood by Christian people. We trust that its readers, may realize much of the enlightenment and comfort which it is intended to impart ; and may God be graciously pleased to prosper it to the fulfilment of these great ends !

October, 1910.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. THE SOURCES OF AFFLICTIONS	I
2. SIN AND AFFLICTIONS	12
3. THE SINS AND AFFLICTIONS OF ISRAEL	19
4. THE REIGN OF LAW	31
5. THE DEVIL AND AFFLICTIONS	39
6. GOD AND THE AFFLICTED	52
7. JESUS CHRIST AND AFFLICTIONS	57
8. THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND AFFLICTIONS	94
9. CHRISTIANS AND AFFLICTIONS	102
10. CHRISTIANS AND SINNING	107
11. AFFLICTIONS FINALLY REMOVED	123



FIRST CHAPTER

THE SOURCES OF AFFLICTION

A MAGNIFICENT and far-reaching declaration was made by the late Lord Kelvin, who was one of our ablest scientists in recent times :—

‘I have always felt that the hypothesis of Natural Selection, does not contain the true theory of Evolution—if evolution there has been in Biology. I feel profoundly convinced that the argument of Design has been greatly too much lost sight of in recent biological speculations. Overpoweringly strong proofs of intelligent and benevolent design lie around us, and if ever perplexities—whether metaphysical or scientific—turn us away from them for a time, they come back upon us with irresistible force ; showing us, through Nature, the influence of a Free Will, and teaching us that all living things depend on one everlasting Creator and Ruler.’

While frankly recognizing the universal manifestation of intelligent design in Nature, and also regarding God as the great Designer, it is evident that Lord Kelvin neither accepted Natural Selection as the true theory of evolution, nor evolution itself as a settled doctrine of fact. And surely his caution was wise, for that doctrine has never been established

2 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

on a solid basis of indisputable proof. Even Huxley and Spencer freely acknowledged that the secret of evolution, as a process, has yet to be discovered. It is to this hour an unproven hypothesis—an interesting speculation, and nothing more ; but the Bible doctrine of Creation still stands where it did, and is worthy of universal acceptance. Once and again, when Jesus was here, He referred to ‘ *the creation which God created* ’ (Mark x. 6 ; xiii. 19), and His words were not the utterance of a mere belief, but of that which He knew to be true. Jesus never said concerning Himself, ‘ I believe ’ ; but this was His oft-repeated declaration, ‘ The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me ’ (John xiv. 24). We are therefore on safe ground when we freely accept, and fully trust, the Gospel of the Divine Son of God.

THE CREATION OF MAN

When the Lord God created the first of our race, the one thing that He made was his *nature*,—and why?—because it was the only thing that could be *made*. Moral character cannot be created. On no finite being in the universe has it ever been divinely bestowed. Man’s nature was the work of the visible God (Col. i. 15, 16), but his character, when formed and developed, must be his own work. Now, by what means was character to be formed by the primal man ? Only by the exercise of the

varied powers of his nature, bestowed upon him by his Maker. What, then, was his nature? It was not a simple organization, like that of a bird or beast; but manifold and complex—being ‘fearfully and wonderfully made.’ It had a body, with many senses and extraordinary energies; a soul, with lofty intellectual faculties, deep moral sensibilities, and a regal will; and a spirit, capable of enjoying immediate fellowship with its visible Creator, and also of being consciously uplifted into communion with the invisible God.

THE HUMAN WILL

The will of man is the greatest power in his nature. It is the master faculty of the soul—the determining, ruling, and guiding force both in his life and conduct. Like the helm in a vessel, which takes it in any direction and to any port that the captain may choose, the will impels a man in any moral direction he may covet, and to any moral goal he may desire to reach. It is true that longings and motives lie behind the will, and are able to exercise a strong impelling force upon it; but the will itself is still the superior power, and can either yield or repel as it pleases. Think of it *in relation to character*. That relation is intimate and vital. A man’s character is not only his chief possession, but his only possession—the one thing that is really his own; and his will, by its action, determines what

4 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

his character shall be. If he exercises it rightly it will make him a good man, and if he exercises it wrongly it will make him a bad man. In his moral character he is certain to be, just what his will makes him. Whatever else any man may have, such as material riches, social position or worldly fame, it merely belongs to him and only for a time ; but his character is his very own and shall be his for ever. He had no character when he was born. It is formed and developed by the exercise of will, which makes him the man he is while he lives in this world, and is the only thing which he can take with him out of time into eternity. He is the maker of his own destiny, and by his character shall that destiny be determined. Let us also recognize this fact, that *will implies moral liberty*. If it were not free to do either right or wrong it would not be will at all. But the Creator Himself freely elected to make it free. Therein lay the dignity and danger of man, and the greatness of his responsibility. But before it could do anything in the formation and culture of character it required to be exercised in the moral sphere. In other words, *it had to make a choice between things which were morally different*. Therefore the Creator took the man and the woman to 'the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil,' and said unto them :—

'Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not

eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof dying thou shalt die' (Gen. ii. 16, 17).

It is more than likely that these words are only the essence of what their Creator said to them, and that He proceeded to give them full instructions as to what they meant and implied. Even in the days of His flesh, His words and works were much more numerous than the records of the gospels show (John xx. 30, 31). This procedure on the part of the Lord God *was a necessity*. An untested will could never have become the basis of moral character at all; therefore in divinest wisdom and love the test had to be provided. It was simple and easy, and yet quite sufficient to effect the sublime end divinely contemplated. It had in view the highest well-being of those whom He had made. They had set before them

A Glorious Opportunity of Choice.

Their Creator clearly enjoined obedience to His command 'not to eat of the tree'; and also warned them of the terrible consequences which would surely follow disobedience. Had they exercised their wills aright, by obeying the Divine commandment, most blissful results would have followed. Their flesh and blood *bodies* would have been gradually evolved into a spiritual and immortal condition, and thereby attained to physical equality with the angels. Their *minds* would have been

6 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

progressively enlightened in the knowledge of their Maker, and through Him in the knowledge of the Godhead—in their knowledge also of themselves, and of the purpose of their existence ; and finally, in the knowledge of the great material universe of which they were inhabitants. Their *hearts* would have been continually enlarged, and filled with the Divine love,—a love which they would have reciprocated with ever-increasing fulness eternally. And ceasing to be merely innocent, their *spirits* would have become truly holy, as they received more and more of the Divine Spirit, and were ‘ filled unto all the fulness of God.’ And thus, as partakers of the Divine nature, character and blessedness, they would have been developed in godliness and God-likeness for evermore.

A SUBTLE DECEPTION

The tree of opportunity and testing soon became a tree of temptation, under the unholy spell of the great Deceiver. He questioned the sincerity and truthfulness of their Lord’s injunction, by saying : ‘ *Ye shall not surely die.*’ He then held out a great hope before them, if only they would eat of the fruit of the tree : ‘ *Ye shall be as gods.*’ When thus they were led into the presence of temptation, they yielded to its power. It is very wonderful that they should have done so ; for they had abundant strength with which to resist the entice-

ment, and the strongest possible motives to energize their wills,—the glory of their Creator, their own personal and immediate good, and their future blessedness. And yet, they intelligently and deliberately did what they had been commanded not to do. To call this conduct a mere ‘peccadillo,’ as some persons have flippantly done, is utterly to misapprehend the terrible nature of the act, and greatly to dishonour both God and man. Was the prohibition given by their Creator only a trifling matter? and His warning merely a jest? that the voluntary violation of the one, and a practical disregard of the other, should thus be spoken of. The tempted ones knew that the words of their Creator were Divine, and that obedience on their part was neither difficult nor irksome. They had simply to abstain from appropriating the fruit of one tree, while all the other trees in Eden were free for their daily use and enjoyment. And yet, with a light heart apparently, they followed the suggestion of a suspicious stranger, who had dared to dispute the counsel of their Lord. This surely was not a mere ‘peccadillo’ to be only slightly reprimanded and then forgotten by both their Creator and themselves. It carried a great and manifold curse in its bosom—a curse which fell not only upon themselves, but also upon all their posterity; upon the lower creatures likewise, and even upon Nature itself;

8 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

for are we not told that the earth is under a 'curse' through their sin, and that 'the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now' (Rom. viii. 22).

Of course, the Higher Critics and 'the men of modern mind' will laugh at this simple re-statement of the old story of Eden—a story which, to them, is not history any longer, but only myth or poetry or legend. Whatever it may be, it is a much more likely and reliable account of the Fall of man than anything that they have been able to put in its place. They have hitherto failed to come to a mutual agreement concerning the matter, and the most of their conjectures are not only utterly unconvincing but also absurd. One of them says :—

"Suffering did not enter into the world, nor did the tragedy of death cast its dark shadow on humanity, as the result of 'man's first disobedience and the fruit of that forbidden tree,' partaken in an idyllic Eden in the morning of time. These are fairy tales, and they have faded "into the light of common day.' What are we to make of a New Testament which is said to be the last word of knowledge on the tremendous questions of life and destiny, and which yet lends its sanction to these fables of the morning?"

And yet, after all, we greatly prefer the 'sanction' of the New Testament, and the old story of Eden, to these dogmatic assertions of this man of "modern mind." We therefore still believe that the Bible account is both historical and true ; and also find ourselves in very excellent company in doing so. We shall name only two persons as samples of the

great multitude of good and wise men who have accepted it. What did Paul say? 'Death reigned from Adam unto Moses, even over them that had not sinned *after the likeness of Adam's transgression*' (Rom. v. 12). And the late Alexander McLaren, D.D., in his admirable exposition of Genesis (p. 10), says: 'Man had an Eden, and lost it. *I take the Fall to be an historical fact.*' It will require a vast number more of critical and sceptical assaults than it has yet received, before the Book of Beginnings is discredited in the estimation of the most learned, wisest, and godliest of men; for, as another has said: "There never was a time when the absolute and Divine accuracy of Scripture, from beginning to end, was more firmly grasped and tenaciously held by those who know it best; and never a time since Science began to be looked to as an authority and instructor of men, when there was less scientific basis for the prevalent questioning of the statements of the Bible." No doubt, there are a few trifling inaccuracies to be found in its pages, all of which might easily have occurred during redactions, copyings and translations in the course of ages; but these no more affect the credibility and value of the Bible, than the spots on the sun's disc obscure the splendour of its shining. Many scientists and philosophers can tell us next to nothing concerning the great realities about which we require most of all to know; for 'lo, they have rejected the Word of the

10 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

Lord ; and what wisdom is in them ' (Jer. viii. 9). As for the dogmatic assertions of the Higher Critics, they are mostly superficial speculations only ; which the wisest critics are rapidly disproving, and which the faithful exponents of the grand old Book shall yet fully expose and condemn. And of this we have been fully assured by Christ Himself that, the Word of the Lord shall endure for ever.

Now, in bringing this first chapter to a close, let us understand,—

1. That *sin had its absolute origin in the soul of Satan*. Jesus made that certain by His great declaration concerning him : ' He was a murderer from the beginning and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him : when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of lying ' (John viii. 44). And John declared : ' He that doeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning ' (1 John iii. 8).

2. Sin was the first of the devil's works effected in our humanity, through the subtle power of temptation ; and from it, as their cause, there have issued all the afflictions and tribulations, the sorrows and sufferings, the madneses and miseries of our race, which have largely made the history of this fallen world a dreary record of lamentation and woe.

3. All the *issues* of sin, as well as sin itself, are ' the works of the devil ' ; inasmuch as they would never have visited our race had it not fallen ; and also

THE SOURCES OF AFFLICTION II

because, when the latter is finally and fully taken away, the former shall also be destroyed. This, as we shall see, is the teaching of the sacred Scriptures.

But while they show the activity of evil they also reveal the activity of good,—

‘ For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men ; instructing us to the intent that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world ; looking for the blessed hope, and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works ’ (Titus ii. 11-14).

SECOND CHAPTER

SIN AND AFFLICTIONS

WHAT is sin? Scripture answers: 'Every one that doeth sin, doeth also lawlessness; and *sin is lawlessness*' (I John iii. 4). It was manifested, as we have seen, at the beginning of human history, by the wilful violation of the Creator's injunctions on the part of His moral and responsible creatures, and also by the practical deification of their own wills and desires. What a tremendous offence this was against the Lord God, and through Him against the Godhead! *Sin is also rebellion*. The Lord said, 'Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt *not* eat of it'; and yet, they *did* eat of it. This was nothing less than a contemning of the Divine authority and rule, and a lifting up of the human and created will against the perfect and unchanging will of God. *Sin is also selfishness*. 'When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and was desirable to make one wise; she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave

also unto her husband, and he did eat' (Gen. iii. 6). They had become 'lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God' and pleased themselves, at the expense of dishonouring and displeasing Him. *Sin is moral madness.* They imagined that the partaking of the forbidden fruit would bring to them good, pleasure, and wisdom; but, behold! it resulted in 'evil,' sorrow, and foolishness. It destroyed their spiritual life, perverted their wills, reduced their God-consciousness into an evil conscience, hardened their hearts, beclouded their minds, corrupted the very blood of their life, and utterly destroyed the incipient glory with which their bodies had begun to be clothed; for no sooner had they consummated their sin than the glory vanished, and 'they *knew* that they were naked.' The degrading and destructive power of moral evil is very terrible.

As another has truly said:—

"Sin is no mere spattering of the outer nature from the mud of the natural world—it is something living, organic, internal; something that has its clutch and grip upon the inmost structures of the moral nature; something that pollutes and defiles, first, the moral will, and from the will affects the intellect, and from the intellect works out its spell and sorcery, if possible, into the whole fibrous structure of the internal and external, of the whole moral and natural man.' . . . 'Go back into the past: you cannot find any literature so ancient, but it gives expression to the wail of tortured humanity under the influence of sin; you cannot find any real tragedy, but that it admits sin,—any genuine poetry, but that admits sin,—any satisfying philosophy, but that admits sin,—any true and righteous

14 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

code of jurisprudence, but that admits sin. The acknowledgment of sin is found, wherever there is religion ; and religion in some form is found wherever there are human hearts."

But shortly after the great Eclipse of God's purpose for humanity, the Creator—the Lord God—spoke as a Redeemer in Eden itself, and said to the tempter and destroyer : ' I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel ' (Gen. iii. 15). And thus was the redemption of our race, and the salvation of sinners, promised by the Lord Himself almost immediately after the Fall.

THE NATURE OF AFFLICTIONS

All natural ills are the issues of moral evil, sin being the cause of them all. And because the whole human system has thereby been corrupted and deteriorated, affliction and disorder, weakness and pain are incident to every part of it. From the crown of the head to the soles of the feet, there is no soundness in it ; and the trials which come to it are of numerous kinds and degrees—physical and mental, social and spiritual. Every sense and faculty is liable to disorder and disease. Hence the endless variety of human troubles and distresses. And in themselves *they are wholly evil*, there is no moral good in them. Let that fact be firmly rooted in the mind, and never allowed to undergo modification. Afflictions are sometimes spoken of as blessings, because

they are supposed to deepen and purify, develop and ennoble character. But this is altogether a mistake. In themselves they have no power to effect any such result. If they had, they would effect it invariably, and benefit every sufferer. Sin itself is an evil, and all its effects are evil likewise. The former cannot be sanctified, and must be destroyed ; but, thank God ! the latter may all be changed into good. They require, however, to be operated upon by *extraneous* agencies and influences, if they are thus to be changed. For instance, under skilful medical treatment afflictions may be either alleviated or removed ; and when health and strength are restored, these may be more carefully preserved by the healed one in days to come than in those that are past. Or when reason and conscience are stirred into activity, they may impel the sufferer to moral and social reformation in future conduct and life. And if Divine grace should be permitted to act in the soul of the afflicted one, then spiritual Regeneration, as well as moral Reformation, may be the grand result. In this way, afflictions, though evils in their own nature, may become the occasions of good, when afflicted ones are impelled to thoughtfulness and penitence, faith and prayer, to the acceptance also of the help of the Divine Healer, and to the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost ; but *if left to themselves, they never become the cause of any moral benefit whatsoever.*

16 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

MANKIND A FAMILY RACE

If the primal Pair had maintained and manifested loyalty to their Creator, they would not only have reaped the blissful results of obedience themselves, but all their posterity likewise would have inherited those results, and enjoyed the manifold and abundant blessings which would have fallen to their lot. But, on the contrary, having passed through rebellion and transgression into an experience of 'evil'—an experience which deepened and darkened and grew increasingly distressful as the years rolled by—their sinful fall from the spiritual plane of being into the animal plane also entailed a degraded experience in all their offspring to the end of time. A family race must necessarily share the results of heredity whether good or bad. And in this there is no real injustice either inflicted by God or experienced by men; for good and evil were equally possible to a free moral choice. But at this point we must carefully distinguish. *The children did not inherit either sin or guilt*, for these are purely personal possessions; what they did inherit were *sinfulness and corruption*, out of which every kind of ill might possibly issue. Sinfulness may easily impel to the doing of numerous sins, and these, in turn, may bring trials and tribulations, sorrows and sicknesses, pains and weaknesses, and ultimately decay and death to every member of

the race. Sin is universal, afflictions are universal, and death is universal, for 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' 'By sin came death' and also every evil thing which leads to dissolution and the grave—weakness and pain, sorrow and suffering, disease and decay. Where sin is unknown these have no existence. No angel in all the heavens has ever said 'I am sick,' for health is always the companion of holiness. Sick-beds are numerous, hospitals are numerous, funerals daily wend their sad and pathetic way to the village graveyard or the city cemetery, and 'mourners go about the streets.' Out of the moral and material degradation which the blighting and destructive power of Moral Evil brought into the human system, manifold distresses necessarily arose. These were the natural issues of sin, and not arbitrary penalties imposed by the Almighty. As time went on, when moral wrongdoings were multiplied and the physical blood was deteriorated and defiled, life was shortened and afflictions became more and more numerous, more varied in their nature, and more fatal in their effects. Even in these modern days of advanced civilization, progress in science and a wonderful development in medical knowledge and skill, such terribly destructive diseases as consumption and cancer, fevers and paralysis, still abound, and epidemics and plagues are not infrequent in various parts of the earth. The whole world, in measure, is a hospital, and

18 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD?

mankind in every country are, to a large extent, sufferers from sicknesses and manifold tribulations. In our own country, if the hydra-headed evil of the Drink Traffic could be severely limited or destroyed, and slum property annihilated, in which numerous moral depravities and bodily diseases are freely generated and multiplied, there is no doubt whatever that the sicknesses and afflictions of the community would be greatly lessened and modified. But so long as dukes and lords, clergymen, and multitudes of respectable people are shareholders in breweries, and owners of tumble-down properties, there is but little hope that our country will be regenerated and delivered from the numerous evils by which she is sorely distressed.

“Man’s inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn.”

THIRD CHAPTER

THE SINS AND AFFLICTIONS OF ISRAEL

A BRAHAM and his posterity were a chosen race—a Theocracy. They are often spoken of as such in the good old Book :—

‘ Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God : he hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth ’ (Deut. vii. 6).

He dealt with them as with no other nation in the world :—

‘ He showed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel ; he hath not dealt so with any nation ’ (Ps. cxlvii. 20).

The Lord God declared unto Abraham the great tribulations which would certainly befall his posterity in the coming time :—

‘ Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them ; and they shall afflict them four hundred years : and also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge, and afterward they shall come out with great substance . . . and in the fourth generation they shall come hither again, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full ’ (Gen. xv. 13–15).

20 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

He also said unto Moses, when He '*appeared*' to him at the Burning Bush :—

' I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; and (Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God) I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters ; for I know their sorrows, and I am come down to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians . . . and I will put forth my hand, and will smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof ' (Ex. iii. 7, 8, 20).

The rule of the Lord God over Israel, especially in the earlier period of its history, was—

GOVERNMENT BY MIRACLE

This is a great fact, which ought to be clearly apprehended and kept in remembrance, when we study the wonderful dealings of the Divine Man with the elect nation. While all the other nations of the world were under the Reign of Law, Israel was governed by the Lord God through the medium of miracle. All His dealings with it were miraculous. He taught, guided, and blessed it directly for great purposes,—not only for its own enlightenment and education, moral culture and religious well-being ; but also for the uplifting and salvation of mankind. As the Lord said to Abram, ' In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed ' (Gen. xii. 3). It was for the fulfilment of this sublime end that his posterity were delivered from the bondage of Egypt, and immediately

SINS AND AFFLICTIONS OF ISRAEL 21

cared for by the visible God through all their wilderness wanderings.

It was by miracle that He delivered them from the hand of Pharaoh and from the terrible bondage under which they had groaned (Deut. iv. 34).

It was by miracle that He led them through the Red Sea as on dry land (Ex. xiv. 21, 22).

It was by miracle that He guided and protected them through all their circuitous leadings until they reached the goodly land promised to their fathers (Ex. xl. 36-38).

It was by miracle that He provided bread to eat, and supplied water to drink, along the whole course of their desert journeyings (Ex. xvi. 13-15, xvii. 3-6).

It was by miracle that He preserved their clothing during the long period of forty years (Deut. xxix. 5).

It was by miracle that the Lord instructed Israel, through Moses, to whom He gave the Moral Law in writing, and the Ceremonial Law by word of mouth.

From the time that Moses first *saw* Him in Person at the Burning Bush, the Lord frequently '*appeared*' unto him and '*spake unto him face to face as a man speaketh with his friend*,' (Ex. xxxiii. 11). And *thus it was* that He communed with him on *Sinai*, as the language of the Bible narrative plainly shows :—

'The Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first ; and I will write upon the tables

22 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

the words that were on the first tables, which thou brakest. And be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and *present thyself there to me* on the top of the Mount.' 'And the Lord descended in the cloud, and *stood with him there*' (Ex. xxxiv. 1, 2, 5). 'And it came to pass at the end of forty days and forty nights, that the Lord *gave me* the two tables of stone—even the tables of the covenant' (Deut. ix. 11).

These are definite declarations, regarding which no intelligent reader need make any mistake. Moses did not lay down the tables of stone on the top of the Mount, to be found by an invisible God ; he there '*gave*' them to the *visible* God, who at the end of forty days '*gave*' them back again. It was a personal transaction on both sides, and the stones received by the Lord and restored to Moses were given from hand to hand. Take special note of these facts.

In an Essay on *The Purposes of the Incarnation*, in a book entitled *The Fundamentals*, an able London preacher says :—

'*What conception 'of God had the race, before Christ came ?* Taking the Hebrew thought of God, let me put the whole truth, as I see it, into one comprehensive statement. Prior to the Incarnation, there had been a growing intellectual apprehension of truth concerning God. It is impossible to study the Old Testament without seeing that there gradually broke through the mists a clearer light concerning God' (italics ours).

In this strangely misty and unenlightening passage, the increased knowledge of God is all traced to the breaking forth of clearer light through the

mists. What mists? and whence was the ever-increasing light which broke through them? It seems to us that 'the Hebrew thought of God' came through Moses, and to Moses himself from the visible God—first at the 'Bush,' then frequently through all the forty years of the wilderness journey, and specially on the summit of Sinai, where his immediate fellowship with Him was of long duration. And afterwards, as the prophets came from time to time, *with new revelations*, they were always able to say, 'Thus saith the Lord.' Or if they came with fresh *interpretations* of truths previously *revealed*, it was because these were inspired by the Holy Spirit—the great Interpreter. 'No prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost' (2 Pet. i. 21). It was thus that 'the Hebrew thought of God' was increased and developed, and not by the breakings forth of mystical light out of mists and mystery.

DISEASES PREVENTED

It was by miracle that the Lord *prevented diseases* from attacking the people in the wilderness :—

'If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his eyes, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon thee, which I have put upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee' (Ex. xv. 26). 'I will take sickness away from the midst of thee' (Ex. xxiii. 25). v

24 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

DISEASES THREATENED

While it is true that sin is the cause of all afflictions, and that all afflictions are the natural results of sin, it is also true that God is greater than all such results, and is able either to inflict or prevent them as He pleases. He did both in His special dealings with Israel. The sovereignty of God is indisputable.

And it was also by miracle that He threatened to lay diseases upon them, if they disobeyed His commandments and violated His laws :—

‘ If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name **THE LORD THY GOD** ; then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed ; even great plagues, and of long continuance ; and sore sicknesses of long continuance ’ (Deut. xxviii. 58, 59).

SEVERE PUNISHMENTS

In spite of this terrible warning, many persons fell into grievous sins, and were punished severely—such severity being necessary to check evils which would have spread very rapidly among such an ignorant and undisciplined multitude. It was for the good of Israel itself, and also for the well-being of the whole human race, that the Divine judgments were severe. Take the case of Miriam as an example :—

† ‘ Aaron looked upon Miriam, and behold she was leprous, And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas ! my lord, I beseech thee.

SINS AND AFFLICTIONS OF ISRAEL 25

lay not this sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead. . . . And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee. And the Lord said unto Moses . . . Let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again. And Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days, and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again' (Num. xii. 10-15).

Again, 'The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. . . . So they gat up on every side. . . . And the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah'—250 men (Num. xvi. 24-32,)

And not individuals only, but also the whole congregation, at times, grievously sinned against the Lord, and were punished accordingly. For instance, when they made and worshipped a Golden Calf, and acted shamelessly in the sight of their enemies, what do we read? (Ex. xxxii. 26-29). On another occasion, 'The people spake against God and against Moses: Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness? And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died' (Num. xxi. 5, 6).

When the twelve chosen men returned from viewing a part of 'the goodly Land,' and ten of their number gave an evil report concerning what they had seen—and when the whole congregation definitely refused to go up to conquer and possess their Divinely-promised Inheritance—what happened?

26 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

‘The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? . . . Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord . . . ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I lifted up my hand that I would make you dwell therein. . . . But your little ones will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have rejected’ (Num. xiv. 26-31).

This was a tremendous punishment which the whole nation, with only a few exceptions, had to endure. The ten faithless and cowardly spies ‘died by a plague before the Lord.’ And concerning all the people who were over twenty years of age, the awful decree went forth: ‘*As for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness.*’ Was this judgment too severe? Consider the nature of the sin of which they had been guilty. They had been utterly disloyal to the Lord God of their fathers—He who had delivered them from the bondage of Egypt; entered into covenant with them at Sinai; miraculously protected, preserved and guided them through all their journeyings in the great and terrible desert; brought them at length to the border of the promised land; pledged Himself to give them victory over all their enemies, and a restful and enduring inheritance in the land ‘flowing with milk and honey.’ It was a great national iniquity for which the entire congregation was rightly punished. And yet, mercy was hidden in the heart of that terrible judgment, for during the forty years in the wilderness in which the elder generation died, the younger

generation were Divinely instructed, disciplined, and prepared for entrance into the Promised Land. And, under the immediate tuition and direction of the Lord Himself, Moses, in all likelihood, wrote the Pentateuch for the instruction and guidance of all future generations of Israel and mankind. If the Law, spoken by the Lord on Sinai, was put into writing by Moses, at the Lord's command, and laid up in the Ark of the testimony, what more natural and likely, than that the book of Genesis and the remainder of the Pentateuch, should thus have come into existence during these forty years? Moses did not know the facts recorded in Genesis, but the Lord knew them; and did not Jesus say when He was here; 'If ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me' (John v. 46). This was not an opinion which He uttered, but a fact which He knew.

Even Moses himself was Divinely punished, because of his special sin. The Lord said unto him, at the close of the wilderness journey:—

'Get ye up unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: and *die in the mount* whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; . . . *because ye trespassed against me* in the midst of the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah of Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not, in the midst of the children of Israel (Deut. xxxii. 49-51).

Finally, it was by miracle that the Lord led

28 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

His people through the great river of Jordan into the Promised Land (Josh. iii. 17). And after the conquest of the Canaanitish tribes, when the time came that Joshua should die, this was the testimony which that faithful servant gave to them :—

‘ Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth ; and ye know in all your hearts that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you ; all are come to pass unto you, not one thing hath failed thereof ’ (Josh. xxiii. 14).

And even in Canaan, the Lord still continued to bestow upon them the discipline of chastening for their sins as He had done in the wilderness. Both individual and national wrongdoings were punished by miracle.

After such a long-continued course of miraculous experience, it is not much to be wondered at that the people entertained the conviction *that all afflictions of every kind came from God*. This, indeed, was their settled belief as a nation ; and it found frequent expression in their sacred writings :—

Make us glad according to the days wherein *thou* hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil ’ (Ps. xc. 15). ‘ Come, and let us return unto the Lord : for *he* hath torn, and he will heal us ; he hath *smitten*, and he will bind us up ’ (Hosea vi. 1). ‘ Shall there be evil in the city, and the *Lord* hath not done it ? ’ (Amos iii. 6).

We have thus dealt fully and in detail with *Government by Miracle*, that thereby we may be able to apprehend God’s dealings with Israel and the human race under *the Reign of Law*, and unveil

SINS AND AFFLICTIONS OF ISRAEL 29

the mistake which is generally made when men regard afflictions as coming from Him.

As time went on Government by Miracle almost wholly ceased, and under Divine instruction and guidance Psalmists and Prophets came to recognize that all afflictions were caused by sin, both individual and hereditary—the following passages being very striking testimonies to the truth of this fact :—

‘Fools, because of their transgressions and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat ; and they draw near unto the gates of death’ (Ps. cvii. 17, 18). ‘His own iniquities shall take the wicked, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sin, (Prov. v. 22). ‘Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins ?’ (Lam. iii. 39). ‘Our fathers have sinned and are not, and we have borne their iniquities’ (Lam. v. 7). ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’ (Ezek. xviii. 2).

In these and similar verses, sin and its issues are very definitely linked together as cause and effects. Think first of the wrongdoing of the individual. According to its measure, it brought weakness and pain, afflictions and miseries, all of which are spoken of here as ‘punishment.’ It resulted from the breaking of natural and moral laws, and was in no sense arbitrary in its nature. ‘Fools, because of their transgressions are afflicted,’ and all their afflictions were the natural outcome of their sins. Hereditary evils, in like manner, were also created by violations

30 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

of law. These might be either consciously or unconsciously committed, but that made no difference in the result ; for sins of ignorance are punished by Nature, just as surely and severely as sins of knowledge. Former generations had been guilty of wrongdoings, and as a natural consequence taints and tendencies were transmitted to their posterity which impelled them to exclaim, ' Our fathers have sinned and are not, and we have borne their iniquities.' It was in the latter part of Old Testament history that the Reign of Law came to be clearly recognized, and the results of transgressions duly chronicled.

FOURTH CHAPTER

THE REIGN OF LAW

NO nation in the world now is a Theocracy, neither is any governed by Miracle. We have no reason to suppose that afflictions now are miraculously either imposed or prevented. All human beings are under the reign of law—the good as well as the bad, and Christians as much as worldlings. In relation to this, ‘God is no respecter of persons.’ That is true; but it is also true that in response to the prayer of faith, God is both able and willing to send answers which, at times, seem to be miraculous. To this we shall refer in a later chapter. Meanwhile, in the sphere of ordinary existence, the reign of law is universal and constant. What are the natural and moral laws under which we live and act? They are not entities in themselves, but embodiments and expressions of the Divine will, and are therefore ordained by God. Hence they are active and invariable, universal and unchanging in operation; and, like Him who made them, are ‘the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.’

If man had remained in a sinless condition and in harmony with all the laws of the moral and material universe, they would have operated on him and in him for his highest well-being, comfort and happiness ; but when, through sinning, he became negative to their influences, then they played adversely upon his entire being, and through the corruption of his nature made him liable to many disorders and distresses. Nature too was blighted and injured by his wrongdoing, and ever since the ' curse ' fell upon her, her winds and waters, her frequent changes of temperature in the different seasons of the year and all the insect-tainted products of her soil, tend to bring him under the power of discomforts, weaknesses and afflictions manifold. The physically strong can bear with impunity the adverse influences of changing climates, various atmospheres and frequent alternations of heat and cold ; but the weak and sensitive shrink and shiver, feel very uncomfortable and sometimes prematurely die. The laws of nature in themselves, are all pure and good, and constantly minister to human health and happiness ; but if they have to meet in their way with impure and evil influences both outside and inside the human body, they may operate very injuriously and help to produce afflictions, diseases and death. So long as a fruit tree is healthy and growing, Nature's laws will develop it into beauty and fruitfulness ; but let its life be severely or fatally injured, then

those same laws will hasten its decay and rapidly take it down into death and rottenness. And thus it is also with human beings. Natural laws operate upon individuals either healthfully or injuriously, according to their physical condition. If that condition is good, they will help to build up the body into health, strength and stature ; but if it should be weak and weakening and its vitality undermined by disease, they are likely to hasten the process of its decay and dissolution. All natural law is fixed in its nature, invariable in action, and certain in result. The more it is studied and understood, appreciated and practically co-operated with, the greater is the likelihood that physical fitness and mental tranquillity shall be enjoyed.

Let all afflictions be regarded as natural effects resulting from natural causes ; and when the causes are investigated and discovered, they will invariably be found in violated laws which either the sufferers themselves or others have broken.

Many cases of affliction are referred to in the New Testament, but none of them are attributed to God :—

‘ Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick of a fever ’ (Mark i. 30). ‘ A certain centurion’s servant, who was dear unto him, was sick and at the point of death ’ (Luke vii. 2). ‘ There was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum ’ (John iv. 46). ‘ Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany ’ (John xi. 1). ‘ And it came to pass in those days that Dorcas fell sick and died ’ (Acts ix. 37). ‘ Epa-phroditus longed after you all, and was sore troubled, because

34 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

ye had heard that he was sick ; for indeed he was sick nigh unto death ' (Phil. ii. 26). ' Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick ' (2 Tim. iv. 20).

We have in these passages an entirely different conception of affliction from what we found in the Old Testament Scriptures. They do not speak of sickness as having come from God, and all the sufferers referred to received needed human help just as other people did. They were all under the reign of law.

Accidents also of all sorts are forms of affliction, and none of *them* either are laid to the charge of God in the New Testament. Consider what Jesus said, about the fall of the Tower of Siloam :—

' All those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them, think ye that they were sinners above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem ? I tell you, nay ' (Luke xiii. 4).

When fierce tempests rage, either on land or sea ; or tremendous thunderstorms burst upon different parts of the country ; or mines are suddenly set on fire and explosions follow ; or vessels collide at sea ; or one railway train crashes into another ; or mighty earthquakes and fearful floods occur—as recently at Messina and Paris, by which many lives were lost—it would be well if everybody remembered the declaration of Jesus concerning the Tower, and be less hasty in their judgment regarding what they imagine are the direct and immediate doings of God in relation to sin. If God chooses to send

national tribulation for national sins, He is free to do so ; but when men are so foolhardy and imprudent as to erect houses on sandy foundations, or on the slopes of volcanic hills, or on sites where earthquakes in past times have wrought havoc and devastation—then surely, they have only themselves to blame, if destruction and ruin overtake their houses and families. To blame God for these happenings is a huge mistake of which no man ought to be guilty. Under the reign of law, awful events are continually taking place ; but the laws are not to blame for them, nor the Maker of the laws either, but only the ignorant mistakes or wilful sins which men have committed.

— Sometime ago, we read a sermon by an able and well-known preacher which contained this passage :

“ Life is full of painful and almost heart-breaking experiences. There is scarcely need to remind you of them. There is, for instance, the problem of *human suffering*. We sometimes ask in something approaching bewilderment why God permits such pain and suffering as we are often called upon to witness. It is true that we can see that suffering tends to enrich and deepen character. We are often privileged to behold its blessed results in a new tenderness, a larger sympathy, a purified nature. But these things alleviate the problem, they do not remove it. Much of the pain and suffering of the world seems wanton and purposeless, and many a man regarding it has been driven wellnigh mad and has been tempted like Job's wife to renounce God and die. Then there are the tragic *wrongs and disappointments of life*. This is not a world where justice is done. It is all very well for those of us whose lot is cast in pleasant places to speak about it as the “ best possible of worlds.”

36 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

But view it from the standpoint of the dweller in the slum, of the child who never gets his chance, and it is not a good world, it is not a just world, it is not even a decent world. If we have to judge God by what we see here and now, His ways are *not* equal. Justice and judgment are *not* the habitation of His throne. The righteous is often seen begging bread while the wicked flourish like the green bay-tree. And what about the seeming *waste of life* ? What about the lives that are cut off in the very dawn of their promise ? I think of one I knew myself, a fellow of Cambridge yonder, one of the most brilliant men of his time, destined, as all his friends believed, to great and conspicuous service, cut off at 32. What are you to make of a case like that ? To dower a man with great capacities ! To allow these capacities to be developed and trained, and then to cut him down just when he was about to become useful ! It is as if a precious stone were polished to the last pitch of perfection and then instead of being set to flash and blaze in a king's crown were thrown into the rubbish heap. My brethren, these things are perplexing and maddening enough. They make one wonder sometimes whether there is a God at all, or if there is, we are inclined to think with Heine, that He is a great Aristophanes."

And in another discourse, by the same evangelical preacher, were the following words :—

"I know that there are certain tragic happenings in life that almost silence the song on the lips of the cheeriest and the bravest. It takes all the faith a man is capable of, to put the trumpet to his lips in face of appalling calamity like that which took place at the Hulton pit the other day. We torture ourselves trying to discover the reason for these staggering catastrophes. Why, we ask, if there be a good God, should so many hundreds of people be involved in so sore, and, as we think, undeserved sorrow ? Why should crimes, such as the atrocity of the Congo, be permitted in a world in which goodness is supposed to rule ? Questions like these inevitably challenge us, and they are hard—they are more—they are impossible to answer."

These two quotations could easily be supplemented by many more from modern religious writ-

ings, all breathing the same spirit of mental perplexity and moral bewilderment. These feelings are very commonly experienced, and not infrequently expressed, whenever severe afflictions or startling accidents are either endured or contemplated. Is it possible that they can be created by a correct and scriptural view of God's dealings with humanity? Or are they grounded on a serious misapprehension of His doings, which is at once a grave injustice done to Him and often a grievous distress to sensitive men and women. If 'tragic happenings' are traced, either to the direct doings of God, or to His non-intervention in relation to them, then assuredly it is wholly impossible to account for them. But if traced, as they ought to be, to human wrongdoings and the violations of Divine laws, it is then possible to do so. Let every 'tragic' event be traced to its cause, and invariably it will be found either in a definite sin, or in some ignorant mistake, by which natural law has been broken. If sin had not come into the world, no tragedies would ever have occurred; and even natural convulsions, if they had happened, would have been foreknown and provided against by pure and sensitive human instincts, even as they are in large measure by animals in their wild state. If God were now and always to prevent 'calamities,' 'catastrophes,' and 'atrocities,' where would be either the moral liberty of man or the reign of Divine

38 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD?

law? If such intervention had been a settled purpose on His part, then surely He would have prevented the fall in the beginning, which was the fontal source of all the miseries of humanity.

There is a free moral intelligence, and God will never withdraw the liberty He has bestowed upon him. Should he commit sin, he is certain to suffer for it; and the suffering shall be the natural result of the sin—the legitimate effect of a specific cause. To lay affections at the feet of God, and regard Him as responsible for them all, is to ignore the whole realm of established law, and the operations of natural causes.

FIFTH CHAPTER

THE DEVIL AND AFFLICTIONS

AND now that the real source of afflictions, as plainly revealed in the New Testament, may be clearly apprehended by the reader and deeply impressed on his mind and heart, we shall bring together *the chief Scriptures which directly and definitely declare the fact, that they all come from the devil.*

‘ Jesus of Nazareth, whom God anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power ; who went about doing good, and *healing all that were oppressed of the devil* ; for God was with him ’ (Acts x. 38). ‘ Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same ; that through death he might bring to nought *him that had the power of death, that is the devil* ’ (Heb. ii. 14). ‘ He that doeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. *To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil* ’ (1 John iii. 8). ‘ Behold, *the devil* is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried ; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life ’ (Rev. ii. 10).

There is no vagueness or indefiniteness in these wonderful declarations ; they are all as luminous as

40 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD?

sunshine, and their meanings unmistakable. And so far as we know, there are no other New Testament Scriptures which in any degree modify their teachings. They tell us plainly, that all afflictions are the doings of the devil, and that death also is his work. As natural ills are the outcome of moral evil, and as sin had its origin in the Wicked One, therefore (when specifically dealt with in the New Testament) all forms of affliction are rightly traced back to their primary source in Satan. 'Sin is of the devil,' and all distresses and troubles are issues of sin.

Can any intelligent Christian read and ponder these passages, and still continue to cling to the imagination that all afflictions come from God? They surely cannot come from Him and from the devil at one and the same time, and be also simultaneously both good and bad in their nature and influence? Take note of this fact, that while 'Jesus healed all that were oppressed of the devil, *God was with him.*' 'The Father,' He said, '*doeth his works.*' *Was God, then, the destroyer of the afflictions which He Himself had sent as blessings?* Let this question be fully faced and thoughtfully pondered, and the reader will clearly apprehend how impossible it is rightly to regard all afflictions as coming from God. We can easily suppose that many persons who have firmly held the old notion that God sent them—in spite of the numerous per-

plexities which it suggests—may be ready to exclaim: ‘I would rather receive afflictions from God than from the devil.’ Very likely. But truth and fact are not determined by personal preferences, but by the teachings of the Divine Word. What saith the Scriptures? ought to be the question of every Christian when facing the problems of moral and spiritual life. And if any one should still cling to the idea that afflictions are sent by God, let him act consistently, and believe that they *all* come from Him—the greatest as well as the least. Terrible things are constantly happening, which even the boldest believers would surely hesitate to attribute to God. In such cases they may modify their belief, and say that, ‘He permits them.’ But is that true? We must answer both Yes and No. It is true that all His children, being under the universal reign of law, are left to its influence and action in afflictions; He does not intervene, and in this way permits them. But in the sense of sanctioning them, and thereby making them His own doings, He does not permit them. Afflictions are sometimes startlingly sudden and severe, and not infrequently end in death; and the trials, sorrows and burdens which at times they bring into family life are most distressing. And then, accidents of a fearful sort also happen. For instance, as we recently read, a little girl tried to run across the road from her own home, and was killed by a motor-car. Her mother,

42 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

looking out of the window, saw the accident, and nearly lost her sanity in consequence ; while the father, who was weak in health, shortly after died because of the shock he had received. We reverently inquire, Did God permit all these happenings ? Were they His doings ? From the daily Press of the last few months, we could easily gather many instances of an equally appalling nature ; but we forbear in mercy to our readers. If all afflictions come from God, the *worst* cases must be included in the list ; and even to think of their being permitted by Him, in the way of *sanctioning* them, is surely to do God a great injustice, and unnecessarily to perplex and burden thousands of weak human sufferers. If God did not sanction the coming of moral evil into the world, what reason is there for believing that He sanctions natural ills which are its legitimate issues ? Both the cause and its effects are out of harmony with the Divine will and purpose.

Just after writing the foregoing sentences, we read in a London weekly the following statement made by a country squire to a curate : “ You believe in, and proclaim, a merciful and tender God. If there is a God, He has not dealt tenderly with me. Every hope I ever had has been quenched. My afflicted daughter is the last tie that binds me to life, and that will soon be snapped. How can you, or any man, expect me to worship a God who has treated me so ? ” Every preacher of the Gospel

has to meet cases of this kind, and if he himself thinks that all afflictions come from God, what can he possibly say in reply? There are multitudes of anguished sufferers in great affliction and pain, or under sore bereavement, who if told that these were the manifestations of Divine wisdom and love would be perplexed and depressed beyond measure, and might even be in danger of losing faith in God altogether. In these circumstances, faith has often been confounded even when it has not been destroyed. Again we affirm that all afflictions in themselves are evils, and evils only; therefore, everybody acts wisely who seeks to get rid of them as quickly as possible. At the same time all of them can be sanctified and changed into blessings, by the grace of God; for 'we know that to them that love God all things work together for good.'

There is a dark side to human life, and frequently, in personal experience, it is dark indeed; and there is also a bright side to all who recognize it, and are willing to live and act under its influence. Let them be contrasted.

Think first of the former. The devil and all his angels are active enemies of mankind—deceivers and destroyers of our race. Demoniical and human temptations often lead to sinful falls and manifold miseries; sins and afflictions are causes and effects; accidents and calamities are results of the violation of natural laws, consciously or unconsciously com-

44 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

mitted ; trials and tribulations come to every person in measure, because all men are more or less foolish and sinful ; and weakness, decay and death come sooner or later to every human being. All these are emphatically ' the works of the devil,' the doings of ' the prince of darkness '—the supreme ' ruler of the darkness of this world.' He is spoken of in Rev. xx. 2, as ' the dragon, that old serpent, who is the Devil and Satan.'

Think also of the gloriously bright side of our earthly life, when ' the truth as it is in Jesus ' is known and truly believed. The Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, with all their holy and blissful ministries ; the unspeakable gift of eternal life, proffered by God to our fallen race ; the universal redemption of humanity, and the personal salvation of sinners, wrought out and effected by the sacrifice and gospel of Christ ; the enlightening, comforting and sanctifying work of the Divine Spirit, by His indwelling power in the believer ; the general and special doings of Providence, the ministry of angels ; the communion of saints ; and finally the loving-kindness and tender mercy with which all our days are crowned, and the cup of our life filled to the overflow. All these are the works of God, whose wisdom is infinite, whose love is perfect, and who is ' the giver of every good and perfect gift ' : and when they are inwrought into Christian character and outwrought into Christian life, they make their recipients

blessed in themselves and useful to others, more and more truly Christian and increasingly Christ-like. All such saved and sanctified souls may triumphantly and adoringly exclaim :—

' Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits ; who forgiveth all thine iniquities ; *who healeth all thy diseases* ; who redeemeth thy life from destruction ; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies ; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed ' (Ps. ciii. 2-5). ' Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ . . . which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved ; in whom ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession unto the praise of his glory ' (Eph. i. 3, 7, 14).

The precious promises of God, which are all ' Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus,' enable them also to ' rejoice in hope ' and be ' patient in tribulation.'

' God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble ' (Ps. xlv. 1). ' We know that to them that love God, all things works together for good ' . . . ' If God be for us, who is against us ' ? . . . ' Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? ' . . . ' I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord ' (Rom. viii, 28, 31, 35, 38, 39).

Let us look at the dark and bright sides of life, at points where they are brought into close proximity. Go to any of our large city Hospitals, and specially to the Hospitals for Incurables, and there you will see many persons, of both sexes and of

46 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

different ages, suffering from accidents and diseases of many kinds, and all of them more or less painful. Some one has called the huge buildings 'Palaces of Pain,' and palaces they may be ; but the endless variety of afflictions endured by their inmates is simply awful to think of. And no wonder, for all of them are the issues of sin and 'the works of the devil.' And yet, even there, thank God ! the sufferers themselves may meanwhile be believers in Jesus as their Saviour, lovers of God as their Father, recipients of the Holy Ghost as their Guide and Comforter, and enabled daily to rejoice in the blessings and hopes of the 'glorious gospel' and in the sure anticipation of a blissful immortality.

This is the heavenly brightness which irradiates the Palaces of Pain, and transforms them into Palaces of Pleasures—into the spiritual atmosphere of which the pure and fragrant airs of heaven freely blow.

The children's wards ought always to be seen by visitors. They are generally the brightest and most beautiful in the hospitals. There, they will see sights and hear varied sounds which are fitted to make them both weep and laugh. Some of the dear little sufferers may be very ill, and their thin and pale faces drawn and pinched with pain. Others, with wistful and pathetic eyes, seem to be looking out with wonderment on a world and an existence which have brought to them so much of

suffering and sorrow. And others still have faces radiant with smiles and ready for laughter, whose pains have been removed, whom the doctors have assured that they will soon be well again, and to whom their kind nurses have told some simple stories which either delight or amuse. And at times, when either nurses or friends bring them to Jesus, the children's lover, saviour and friend, their receptive souls find it easy to believe in Him and respond also with a ready love, which will fill them with lively satisfaction and real joy. Surely, the dark and bright sides of life are there brought into immediate contact.

In answer to an inquirer, the Rev. Prof. David Smith recently said in the *British Weekly* :—

“ I share your horror at the world's load of suffering, especially the cry of the children ; but it does not shake my faith in God's goodness. For it is inflicted not by the will of God, but in its despite by the sin of man ; and the thought of it commends to me the Gospel's testimony that God is at war with sin, and will never rest till He has driven it from the earth.”

∴ We were greatly gratified by such a definite corroboration of our own views, from the pen of a highly gifted and scholarly Christian teacher. It would be a good thing for both the Church and the world, if his scriptural and most reasonable opinions on this matter as stated above were universally believed and propagated.

And what about Death ? Is not this dark and

48 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

grim reality also a result of sin and a work of the devil ? What saith the Scriptures ? Their testimony concerning these things is plain and conclusive.

‘ Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin ; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned ’ (Rom. v. 12). ‘ Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself (Jesus) in like manner partook of the same ; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is the devil ’ (Heb. ii. 14). ‘ As sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord ’ (Rom. v. 21). ‘ The last enemy to be abolished is death ’ (1 Cor. xv. 26).

But ‘ enemy ’ though it be, Divine grace, in a genuine believer, can change it into a friend. What did Jesus say ? ‘ Whosoever believeth in me *shall never die* ’ (John xi. 26). Death to the body of a Christian is only a falling asleep for a season ; and to his higher nature, a passing into ‘ the very far better ’ to be at home with the Lord.

‘ O death, where is thy victory ? O death, where is thy sting ? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law ; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ ’ (1 Cor. xv. 55-57).

But the dark and bright sides of life came into closest contact and clearest manifestation in the earthly life of Jesus. Let the reader give special attention to the testimony of the sacred Scriptures concerning this crucial point.

1. *The Dark Side*

He was ' forty days tempted of the devil ' (Luke iv. 2). ' He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ; and we hid as it were our faces from him : he was despised, and we esteemed him not ' (Isa. liii. 3). ' Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses ' (Matt. viii. 17). ' The Pharisees said : He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils ' (Matt ix. 34). ' He hath a devil and is mad, why hear ye him ' (John x. 20). ' And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them : Behold we go up to Jerusalem ; and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and scribes, and they shall condemn him unto death. And shall deliver him up to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge and to crucify ' (Matt. xxx. 17-19). ' My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death ' (Matt. xxvi. 38). ' They cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified ' . . . ' The soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered around him the whole band ; and they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had plaited a crown of thorns they put it on his head, and a reed in his right hand ; and they bowed the knee before him and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews ! And they spit upon him, and took the reed and smote him on the head. And after they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him and put his own raiment on him and led him away to crucify him ' (Matt xxvii. 23, 27-31). And on the cross He exclaimed, ' My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ' And ' when he had cried again with a loud voice, he yielded up the ghost ' (Matt. xxvii. 50).

2. *The Bright Side*

' Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man ' (Luke ii. 52). ' Being baptized and praying, the heaven was opened ; and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said : Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased ' (Luke iii. 21, 22). ' Jesus taketh Peter, James and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart and was transfigured before them ; his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light . . . and behold a bright cloud over-

50 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

shadowed them : and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; hear ye him ' (Matt xvii. 1, 2, 5). ' There appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him ' (Luke xxii.43). ' When he had offered up prayers, and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death ; and was heard in that he feared ' (Heb. v. 7). ' To whom he showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs ; being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God . . . And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld he was taken up ; and a cloud received him out of their sight ' (Acts i. 3, 9).

In relation to men in sin, Jesus was ' the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ' ; but in relation to God, His Father, He was emphatically the man of joy. Even in the Upper Room, and within a few hours of Gethsemane, Calvary and the Sepulchre, He was able to say to His disciples : ' These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full ' (John xv. 11). And there was no wonder that His joy was great and constant, for He was able to give this testimony concerning Himself : ' I do always those things which please my Father ' (John. viii. 29).

The bright side of His life was very bright ; for twice over His Father declared, in an audible voice, His unique Sonship ; bestowed upon Him, without measure, the varied gifts of the Holy Ghost, especially the gift of *Power* for service ; showed unto Him all things which the Father Himself was doing (John v. 20) ; glorified Him on the mount of trans-

figuration ; answered all His prayers (John xi. 41-42), even that offered in Gethsemane ; and received His 'spirit' when His body died on the Cross.

'And what was His Resurrection but Divine energy asserting the victory over death and the grave, and crowning our flesh with the power of an endless life ? Our poor humanity which was crucified, dead and buried, came forth from the sepulchre, God-like and glorious with immortal youth.' The dark side of His life and experience had now been left behind for ever, and the bright side, which can never be dimmed, shall be glorious and blessed for evermore.

And all true believers in Christ may triumphantly say concerning themselves :—

'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace' . . . 'God, who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. . . . That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in kindness towards us, through Jesus Christ' (Eph. i. 7 ; ii. 4-7).

The dark side of life is produced by Evil, and the bright side by Good ; but in the purpose of God the latter will overcome the former, and transmute all its darkness into light. Christians at one time were darkness, but are now light in the Lord ; let them walk as children of light.

SIXTH CHAPTER

GOD AND THE AFFLICTED

WHAT is the attitude of God towards the suffering? It is one of Pity, Compassion, and Helpfulness.

‘ Like as a father *pitieth* his children, so the Lord *pitieth* them that fear him ’ (Ps. ciii. 13). ‘ For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie : so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them : in his love and in his pity he redeemed them ; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old ’ (Isa: lxiii. 8, 9). ‘ The Lord is *full of pity* and merciful ’ (Jas. v. 11).

‘ The Lord is gracious and *full of compassion* ’ (Ps. cxi. 4). ‘ His *compassions* fail not ’ ; ‘ yet will he have *compassion*, according to the multitude of His mercies ’ (Lam. iii. 22, 32).

‘ God is our refuge and strength, a very present *help* in trouble ’ (Ps. xlvi. 1). ‘ The Lord preserveth the simple ; I was brought low and he *saved* me ’ (Ps. cxvi. 6).

When thus we think of God the Father, our thoughts are quickly swallowed up and lost. He seems to be too far away in His infinite hiddenness to enable us to realize His pity, compassion, and helpfulness. As Job truly said : ‘ God is great

and we know Him not.' *But the Son, through all the ages, has been the Revealer of God.* It was He who was the 'Image of the invisible God; the First-born of all creation'—the visible God, the Divine Man, the 'I Am,' the Jehovah of the Old Testament dispensation. And when, in the fulness of time, He came as the Incarnate one, what did John the Baptist say? 'No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten son, who is in the bosom of the Father, *he hath declared him*' (John. i. 18). Yes, and as the Revealer of God, He 'declared' Him from the beginning of time. And Jesus said 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father' (John xiv. 9). Those who beheld Him face to face, *saw God*; and through His pity, compassion, and helpfulness, they recognized and experienced the pity, compassion, and helpfulness of the Invisible One. And was not Christ's pity great and practical? It brought Him down from the Father's bosom to this sin-cursed earth, and carried Him from the manger in the stable along a pathway of sorrow and suffering to Gethsemane, Calvary, and the Sepulchre. His compassion was deep, tender, and active; and His helpfulness constant and beneficent. In *Come Ye Apart*, under the text Matt. iv. 23, J. R. Miller, D.D., truly says:—

'The most casual glance over the gospel story shows that Jesus Himself was deeply moved by the people's sufferings, and was continually putting forth His power to heal them.

54 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

Nearly all His great works were miracles of healing. Then it should be remembered that the whole system of institutions for the relief of suffering and for the care of sufferers—hospitals, asylums for all classes of unfortunate people, and homes for the orphaned, and the aged, and the insane—is the fruit of Christianity. Wherever angels of mercy go among the sick, the wounded, the suffering, ministering in any way to their comfort, there Jesus goes about with sympathy and healing.'

This also is true, that however long afflictions may last in the experience of individual Christians, they are still of comparatively short duration, as the following delightful Scriptures fully assure us :—

'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward' (Rom. viii. 18). 'Our light affliction, *which is for the moment*, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal' (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18).

These are the best sort of texts to repeat to sufferers, especially when they have borne afflictions for years or are incurable. Some time ago we repeated them to a Christian lady, who has lain helplessly on her back for thirty-three years, and the joyful smile which immediately irradiated her face, showed how greatly they cheered her mind and strengthened her heart. Under the influence of the enlightening and comforting Spirit, such blissful assurances quicken faith, brighten hope, instil cour-

age, inspire joy, and breathe into the very centre of the soul patience and peace.

God is the great Comforter, and He expects that all His children who are, in measure, partakers of His Spirit shall imitate His example according to their opportunity and ability :—

‘ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and *God of all comfort* ; who *comforteth us in all our affliction*, that we *may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction*, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God ’ (2 Cor. i. 3, 4).

All truly wise, kindly and experienced Christians try to be comforters of others in seasons of sorrow, suffering and bereavement, and in circumstances of trial and perplexity : and ‘ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy ’ (Matt. v. 7).

And, meanwhile, it is also the privilege of the afflicted themselves to call upon God in the time of trial, with the full assurance of faith that He will hear and answer according to the wisdom of His will—and all that will is love.

‘ When worn with pain, disease and grief,
This feeble body see ;
Grant patience, rest, and kind relief ;
Good Lord, remember me.’

‘ Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you.’ ‘ Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all.’ These are great and precious promises, and in His

56 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

own time and way the faithful Promiser will give them a full and everlasting fulfilment. He never breaks His word. 'Trust and be not afraid,' for as another has said: 'There must be Mercy where there is so much Sorrow.'

Jesus Himself was emphatically the Man of Prayer—He who came forth from God—who was the Son of God 'manifested in flesh'—who has returned to God: He prayed, and taught His disciples to pray, saying unto them, 'Ask and it shall be given you,' for 'every one that asketh receiveth'; and 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him?' There is probably nothing about which Christians generally may more easily become sceptical, than the reality and efficacy of prayer. Let all doubting ones remember that Jesus prayed, and that He was able to say to His Father, 'I know that thou hearest me always.' Let us imitate His example, and accept His assurances; and we too may be able to say to the Father what Jesus said, 'I know that thou hearest me always.' '*Then also shall the prayer of faith save the sick, and God shall raise him up.*'

SEVENTH CHAPTER

JESUS CHRIST AND AFFLICTIONS

I. *The Person of the Christ*

WE must begin with this supremely important matter, for until we know Who and What He was and is, we shall not be able to estimate correctly what He has said and done.

In the far-back eternity, His nature was as purely Divine as that of the other Persons of the Godhead. But before Creation—for creative and mediatorial purposes—He became ‘*the Image of the invisible God, and the Firstborn of all Creation*’ (Col. i. 15). As such, He was the visible God; and that which gave Him visibility was *His human form*. In that original and perfect form, He frequently ‘appeared’ to the patriarchs and saints of the early ages; and its substantial reality was manifested at Mamre, where He partook of the food which Abraham and Sarah had provided. But in that ideal and *spiritual* humanity, He could neither suffer nor die, and therefore *could not Redeem*. This is a great fact, which

58 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

ought to be clearly understood and constantly remembered. The final result of sin was death : and no one could become the Redeemer of our race and the Saviour of sinners, but a Divine and sinless Being who was willing to die for humanity. Angels are sinless, but the death of an angel, even though he might have been the greatest of all, could not have been either a Propitiation or an Atonement. But it was the Creator, who became Redeemer and Saviour—He '*whose goings forth* had been from of old, even from ancient days' (Micah v. 2). He was both Divine and Holy, and died our death. It was a flesh and blood humanity which sinned, and *only a flesh and blood humanity could suffer and die for sinners*. Hence the necessity of the Incarnation.

WHAT WAS THE INCARNATION ?

There is a great variety of opinion about this in the writings of our ablest Commentators and Theologians—a variety which proves to demonstration, that they had not attained to any clear apprehension or settled conviction as to what it really was. It was not the coming down of the purely Divine Son of God into a perfect humanity, as is generally supposed ; but the descent of the Divine Man (' the form of God ') into a humanity of ' flesh and blood.' ' The second Man is of heaven ' (1 Cor. xv. 47) ; and as ' the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself, in like manner,

partook of the same' (Heb. ii. 14), Take the following samples of the numerous definitions of the Kenosis which have been given. Some writers have maintained that it consisted in the laying aside of His '*Divine attributes*'—in whole or in part. In *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ* (p. 309), Principal Forsyth says: "*An attribute cannot be laid down, for it is the Being Himself in a certain angle and relation*"; and with this verdict we agree. A great authority contended that, '*His glories and prerogatives*' were what He divested Himself of (Lightfoot). One declares that it was '*His metaphysical omnipotence*' which he sacrificed (Edwards); another, that it was '*the Mode of Divine existence*' which He changed (Westcott); another, that it was '*His status*' which He renounced (Bruce); and another still, that it was '*His Style as a God*' which He put away from Him (Forsyth). We could add more, but these may suffice. Now all these definitions are different one from another, and do not mean the same thing. Is it wonderful that earnest students of Scripture, who have read and considered them, should come to the conclusion that a clear knowledge of the nature of the Pre-incarnate Christ is impossible, and that such an insoluble problem had best be left alone. The general view of His Pre-incarnate condition, even among our ablest Theologians, is nothing less than an incomprehensible and bewildering mystery.

60 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD?

Now, what is the Christ-revealed declaration of Paul in relation to this great matter? His words are these:—

‘Who, being originally in the form of God, counted it not a thing to be grasped to be on an equality with God; but emptied (or divested) himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men’ (Phil. ii. 6, 7).

In his Commentary on the *Apostles’ Creed*, Dean Jackson says (Bk 8. capp. 7 ff.):—

“The true meaning of *form* in the expression, *form of God*; is confirmed by its recurrence in the corresponding phrase, *form of a servant*. It is universally admitted that the two phrases are directly antithetical, and that *form* must therefore have the same sense in both.”

This witness is true; both forms mean the same thing, and each refers to a visible object—the body of ‘the Man.’ The Son of God divested Himself of the one ‘form,’ that He might invest Himself with the other.

‘THE FORM OF GOD’—(ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ).

What form was that? Our Apostle did not need to go to the writings of Plato, or to Greek philosophy, or to Alexandrian idealism, to learn the meaning of ‘*form*.’ He found it in the old Book itself, with whose contents he was very familiar; and where it was recorded by the great Jewish Lawgiver, while yet Israel sojourned in the wilderness. These are the wonderful passages to which we refer:—

JESUS CHRIST AND AFFLICTIONS 61

'Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: and *they saw the God of Israel*; and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the very heaven for clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand; and *they beheld God*, and did eat and drink' (Ex. xxiv. 9-11). Also, 'The Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the Tent of Meeting; and they three came out. And the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud *and stood at the door of the tent*, and called Aaron and Miriam to draw nearer, and they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make myself known unto him in a vision. I will speak with him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so; he is faithful in all mine house: *with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly*, and not in dark speeches, **and the form of the Lord shall he behold**: wherefore then were ye not afraid, to speak against my servant' (Num. xii. 1-8).

Now, the Divine Person who came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the door of the Tent 'appeared' to men and women both before and after this occasion, and spake with them 'face to face as a man with his friend.' They beheld His 'form,' and it never was seen to be anything else than *human*. Abraham, Hagar, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Manoah, Ezekiel, and probably many more, thus saw Him.

It is possible that some may say that He was an angel and not a man. But that is a mistake. He was never called '*an*' angel, and as '*The Angel of God*' or '*Messenger of the covenant*' He was none other than the Lord God Himself (Gen. xxii. 11-16; xxxi. 11-13; xlviii. 3, 16). He always appeared as '*a Man*'—the Divine Man.

62 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

The Divine Humanity of the Pre-incarnate Christ is clearly a doctrine of Divine Revelation ; and when it comes to be understood and believed by Christian people, Theology will be greatly simplified, and every religious theory which denies and dishonours the Godhead of the only Son of God shall be regarded with abhorrence and spurned from their presence as an utterly perverted and pestilential thing. 'The New Theology,' which is now being preached by many, has no Pre-incarnate *Personal* Christ at all, but only an 'Idea of the Divine Mind,' or 'An Aspect of God.' Its gospel is not that of Him who said, 'Before Abraham was born *I Am*' ; and the Saviour it offers to sinners is not He who is 'able to save to the uttermost,' but only a human Jesus, whose teachings and example we are to follow and thereby save ourselves. It is woful to think, that such a poor evangel should be believed and propagated by anybody : and when preachers of the true gospel are willing to make room for its activity and baleful issues, they are surely manifesting a charity towards it which is nothing less than disloyalty to both Christ and His gospel. It has been developed in the soil of superficial philosophies and irreverent speculations, and is destined to be thrown at last on the dunghill of the universe, there to rot and perish with all other false and evil things.

Not one of the definitions we have quoted is synony-

mous with 'form.' Test them. '*Divine attributes*' cannot be a 'form,' for they are *invisible* while it is an object which has been frequently and familiarly *seen*. '*Glories and Prerogatives*' are *many in number*, while 'form' is only *one thing*. '*Metaphysical Omnipotence*' (whatever that may be) can only be an attribute, and therefore *invisible*. '*A mode of Divine Existence*' is simply *a condition*, and not a 'form.' '*Status*' describes a social *position*, not a 'form.' And '*Style*' depicts *manner of life and action*, but not 'form.' 'Form' is *just form, and nothing else*; and the word is both simple and easily understood. Numbers xii. 8 makes its meaning perfectly plain—'the *form* of the Lord shall he *behold*.' It was that of which the visible God divested Himself, when He became Incarnate. If it was possible for the Saviour to rise up out of His flesh and blood humanity into that which is spiritual at the resurrection; surely, it was equally possible that He could descend from His original spiritual humanity into that of flesh and blood when He became incarnate. We are not told in Scripture *how* the act, or the process, was accomplished, and therefore it is a great mystery as Paul recognized, '*Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh*' (1 Tim. iii. 16). But the fact is plainly stated, that 'the form of God' was laid aside, that He might put on 'the form of a servant.'

64 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

‘ THE FORM OF A SERVANT ’—(μορφῆν δούλου)

And what was that ? It was not the form of a “ perfect man,” as an ancient creed declares, and as multitudes of professors and preachers still believe and teach ; but *a body of flesh and blood* in which He could suffer and die, and by the death of which our fallen and ruined race could be redeemed. What do the Scriptures tell us ?—

‘ When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son ; born of a woman, born under the law ; *that he might redeem them that were under the law*, that we might receive the adoption of sons ’ (Gal. iv. 4, 5). ‘ God sending his own Son *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, and as *an offering for sin condemned sin in the flesh* ’ (Rom. viii. 3). ‘ Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself, in like manner, *partook of the same* ; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death ’ (Heb. ii. 14). ‘ We behold him who hath been made for a little while lower than the angels, even Jesus, *because of the suffering of death.*’ . . . ‘ For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things ; in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation *perfect through sufferings* ’ (Heb. ii. 9, 10).

Yes, ‘ *He was made perfect through sufferings* ’—*not through Incarnation.* An almost universal belief among evangelical Christians is, that the Son of God in His nature became “ Perfect Man ” when He was ‘ born of a woman ’ ; but there is no such statement or implication in the New Testament. The statement there is that He became ‘ *flesh and blood,*’ and these are not perfect humanity but only its initial stage and imperfect condition. Therefore,

'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.'
Says one:—

'It sounds strange. It seems at first sight a kind of contradiction to say that our Lord was 'made perfect through sufferings.' He was perfect from the first, and all through to the last, without a flaw or the faintest shadow of a single stain.'

So wrote an able author recently deceased. He was a godly and reverent thinker, and yet he ventured to give *a direct contradiction* to a very important Scripture declaration. It was an easy way to get rid of a difficult text. But the text remains, and is true. Let it be understood, however, that it refers only to Christ's *nature* of flesh and blood—and *that* nature, surely, was made perfect through sufferings. Think of it. His blood was shed on the Cross, and His physical being spiritualized by the Divine Spirit dwelling within Him; and now, in His highly exalted and glorified condition, He is no longer 'flesh and blood' but 'the Spiritual Man,' and therefore the 'Perfect Man'—God's Ideal.

At the close of *The Communion Service* in *The Prayer Book*, we read:—

'The *natural* Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ are in Heaven, and not here; it being against the truth of Christ's *natural* Body to be at one time in more places than one.'

This declaration is entirely contrary to Scripture, as can be easily shown:—

66 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

‘ Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now, we know him *so* no more ’ (2 Cor. v. 16). ‘ Our citizenship is in heaven ; from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ : who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be *conformed to the body of his glory* ’ (Phil. iii. 20, 21).

That body is not ‘ natural,’ but ‘ spiritual.’ When the Anglican Church obtains her desirable liberty from State control, this statement (and many others), in the Prayer Book must be altered as soon as possible and brought into harmony with New Testament teaching. And then the Ritualist ‘ priest,’ who delights to celebrate ‘ Mass,’ may come to know that the Body of our Lord in heaven is not flesh and blood, as he supposes ; but a *Spiritual Body*, such as He had in Old Testament times. The clear apprehension of this fact will show the utter absurdity of the opinion, that Bread and Wine can be changed into the veritable body and blood of Christ, when He has not a blood-filled Body at all. Our own bodies must be changed ‘ from the *natural* into the *spiritual*,’ that they may be ‘ *conformed to the Body of his glory* ’ (1 Cor. xv. 44-46 and Phil. iii. 20, 21).

Do not let the reader suppose that this section on the Person of the Christ is merely a metaphysical discussion of theological subtleties ; on the contrary, it is a clear and definite statement of the teachings of Scripture, on the most vital and important facts and doctrines with which they deal—facts and doctrines

which lie at the very core of Christianity, and determine its practical worth to men. And unless we have a clear conception of the nature of Christ, we shall not know what value to give to His teachings concerning sin and afflictions and many other things.

That He might work out Redemption for our fallen race and make Salvation possible to every sinner, He became '*flesh and blood*'; and as such He was the God-appointed and anointed '*Servant*,—the Servant of God for humanity's sake, and the Servant of man for God's sake. Thoughtfully read and ponder the following Scriptures:—

'Behold my *servant* whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth' (Isa. xlii. 1). 'By his knowledge shall my righteous *servant* justify many, and *he shall bear their iniquities*' (Isa. liii. 11). 'The God of our fathers hath glorified his *servant* Jesus' (Acts iii. 13). And 'Unto you first, God having raised up his *servant* sent him to bless you' (Acts iii. 26). 'That signs and wonders may be done, through the name of thy holy *servant* Jesus' (Acts iv. 30).

We learn from these passages that the service rendered by the Incarnate One was the work of Redemption which He finished on the Cross, and for which He was 'crowned with glory and honour' above the heaven of heavens, at the right hand of the Father.

2. *The Baptism of Jesus*

This was a great event in the life of our Lord. It marked the close of His private existence in Naza-

68 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

reth, and inaugurated the beginning of His public ministry for the salvation of mankind. Take special note of the wonderful happenings at the Jordan :—

‘ It came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him ; and a voice came out of heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased ’ (Luke iii. 21, 22).

It was there and then that He was fully and permanently assured of His *unique Sonship*, by the direct and immediate testimony of the Father. And it was then also, and while He prayed, that He received the enduement of the Holy Ghost. ‘ God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost, and with power ’ (Acts x. 38). ‘ Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee ’ (Luke iv. 14). The Spirit was not given by measure unto Him (John iii. 34), and *from that time He was full of the Spirit, as the Spirit of Power*—power to resist temptation ; power to preach the glorious gospel ; power to work miracles, especially miracles of healing ; power to endure fierce opposition and persistent persecution ; power to give Himself to die on the cruel Cross, as the Sacrifice of life and love, for the sins of humanity ; and power to conquer death and the grave, by rising from the sepulchre to die no more for ever. ‘ Who was declared to be the Son of God *in power*, according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead ’ (Rom. i. 4).

3. *The Programme of His Ministry*

It was in the synagogue of Nazareth that that programme was declared—a programme by which a glorious ancient Prophecy would be transformed into a still more glorious History. Let its items be carefully noted :—

‘ He came to Nazareth where he had been brought up, and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him a roll of the prophet Isaiah. He opened it, and found the place where it was written : The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, wherefore he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and *recovering of sight to the blind* ; to set at *liberty* those that are *bruised*, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down : and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears ’ (Luke iv. 16-21).

And during the course of His ministry He added :—

‘ As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up ; that whosoever believeth in him may have eternal life ’ (John iii. 14, 15). ‘ The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many ’ (Matt. xx. 28). ‘ Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. This commandment received I from My Father ’ (John x. 17, 18). ‘ And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples apart, and said unto them : ‘ Behold, we go up to Jerusalem ; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes : and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify ; and the third day he shall rise again ’ (Matt. xx. 17-19). ‘ I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am straitened until it be

70 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

accomplished' (Luke xii. 50). On the cross He exclaimed, 'It is finished: and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost' (John xix. 30).

It was a magnificent programme which He thus unfolded, and not any part of it remained unfulfilled when He left the earth and ascended into glory.

And now, let us carefully consider—

4. *His Teaching regarding Affliction*

We joyfully unite with Nicodemus in saying to our Lord, 'We know that thou art a teacher come from God.' And Jesus said concerning Himself, 'As my Father hath taught me, I speak these things' (John viii. 28). And because He spoke the words of God, therefore He was able to say: 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away' (Matt. xxiv. 35). Jesus was 'the wisdom of God,' and therefore the wisest Teacher of our race. It must surely, therefore, be the wisest thing we can do, to sit at the feet of the wisest and learn of Him. He can solve all the problems of our life as no one else can do, if only we truly receive His teachings and keep His commandments,—for it is through obedience, more than by reading or thinking, that we can be made wise. Jesus said, 'If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from

myself' (John vii. 16, 17). 'Never man spake like this man.' All His words were divinest wisdom, aflame with purest love. His teachings were necessarily true, because He was Himself 'The Truth'; and also because they were not merely His own, but also His that sent Him,—the very coinage of the Divine mind and heart.

Now, what did Jesus say concerning *the origin of Affliction*? If we can come clearly to understand what *He* taught regarding it, that will settle the question in our estimation absolutely and for ever. Jehovah-Jesus who was and is 'The Truth,' spoke only that which is true. From all eternity He was the Divine Son of the Divine Father; from before Creation, He became 'the Image of the invisible God'; and in the early ages of human history, He frequently appeared to men and women as that visible 'Image' and always in the form of 'Man.' When, therefore, as the Incarnate one, He traced afflictions to their source, we rejoicingly believe His words to be true.

'He was teaching in one of the synagogues, on the Sabbath day. And behold, a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years! She was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up. And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. He laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue, being moved with indignation because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the multitude—There are six days in which men ought to work: in them, therefore, come and be healed, but not on the Sabbath. The

72 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

Lord answered him, and said : Ye hypocrites, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead him away to watering ? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, *whom Satan had bound lo ! these eighteen years*, to have been loosed from this bond on the day of the Sabbath ? And as he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame ; and the multitude rejoiced, for all the glorious things that were done by him ' (Luke xiii. 10-17).

During her long season of tribulation, it is more than likely that the poor sufferer had attributed her affliction to God—as her people had been wont to do for ages. But the words of the great miracle-worker no doubt enlightened her mind concerning the matter, and led her to trace her trouble to its right source—even to Satan. And her affliction was not peculiar in this respect, for every affliction is a result of sin, and sin was originated by and in the Wicked One.

' *Whom Satan hath bound.*' How ought we to interpret this great declaration of our Lord ? Did He mean that the long-continued affliction of the poor sufferer had been directly and personally imposed by the great enemy of God and man ? There is no necessity to come to such a conclusion. Although her affliction was a work of the devil, we are not shut up to the idea that it was *immediately inflicted* by him. The Scriptures give no ground for the supposition, that every human sufferer is dealt with as Job was. He was a special case, and was specially tested for a special end

(Job. i. 6-12). It was not so with the woman in Capernaum. She was an ordinary sufferer, like multitudes of others in every age and country.

Neither is it necessary to suppose that her affliction had been brought on by any special sin of her own. There is no hint to that effect, in the words of Jesus. He spoke of 'Satan,' but not of sin. She was probably a good woman—a devout frequenter of the synagogue, and not only a daughter of Abraham but also a reconciled daughter of God.

On the other hand, multitudes of human beings are sufferers because they have personally and grievously sinned. Their own wrongdoings have brought them into trouble. Did not Jesus say to the man whom He healed of a long-standing illness at the pool of Bethesda, when He afterwards met him in the Temple: 'Behold thou art made whole; *sin no more*, lest a worse thing befall thee' (John v. 14). To every wilful sinner the Scripture says: 'Be sure your sin will find thee out.'

This also is true, that while all afflictions are strictly hereditary in their nature, yet even those which may be regarded as peculiarly and specially so, are not always fairly chargeable to the generation or generations immediately preceding. Jesus said concerning the blind man in Jerusalem: 'Neither did this man sin *nor his parents*' (John ix. 3). These words should teach us caution. There ought to be no readiness to trace the afflictions of children back

74 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD?

to their parents, lest ignorant mistakes may be made and grave injustice done. But while the Saviour set free from blame both the blind man himself and his parents ; yet, the blindness itself remained and was a great evil. It was one of the works of the devil, which the Son of God came to destroy. And He did destroy it by a miraculous opening of the eyes of him who had been born blind—not only the eyes of the body but also the eyes of his soul, by which he became a true believer in Jesus as his Saviour and a worshipper of God. Humanity being a fallen race, it universally sins and universally suffers ; but individuals do not suffer in the same manner nor in the same degree, and the innocent often suffer for the guilty.

5. *The Work of His Ministry*

This was a great work—the greatest and grandest ever done on the face of the earth. He was specially equipped for the doing of it, by receiving the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of Power, at His baptism ; and it was by the daily embracing of opportunities and the constant fulfilment of His Father's Will that it was accomplished.

1. *It was a Work of Healing.*—He usually began His saving work in the individual with the Body. Human beings, generally, are much more conscious of physical ailments than of mental perplexities

and moral troubles. Multitudes came to Christ with the former, but very few comparatively with the latter. In ardent stomach-loyalty, they wished to make Him a bread king : ' Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you : for him hath God the Father sealed ' (John vi. 26, 27). This must have been a great trial to our Lord, and yet He seldom complained about the lowness of their desires and never refused to act as the Great Physician.

' Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the good tidings of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease, and all manner of sickness among the people. The report of him went forth into all Syria ; and they brought unto him all that were sick, holden with divers diseases and torments ; demoniacs, epileptic, and palsied ; and he healed them all ' (Matt. iv. 23, 24). ' There came unto him great multitudes, having with them the lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and they cast them at his feet ; and he healed them all : insomuch that the multitude wondered when they saw the dumb speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing : and they glorified the God of Israel ' (Matt. xv. 30. 31).

In the earlier part of His ministry, chiefly in Galilee, His daily life was strewn with miracles and mercies, which filled multitudes of hearts and homes with great rejoicings. And, surely, the entire Christian Church may also greatly rejoice

76 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

over such an abundant manifestation of healing power and beneficent well-doing. How gloriously true it was, that 'He went about doing good.' Verily, He was the Great Physician !

2. *It was a Work of Exorcism.*—Demoniacal possession has been known in many ages and countries, but it was very common in Palestine in the days of our Lord. Fallen angels are disembodied spirits, and they crave for embodiment in human beings—not more for the injury of their victims than for their own relief. What did Jesus say ?

'When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man; he walketh through dry places *seeking rest*; and finding none he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first' (Luke xi. 24, 26). 'The devil having now *put into the heart* of Judas, Simon's son, to betray him.' . . . 'Then after the sop Satan *entered into him*' (John xiii. 2, 27),—first *temptation* by suggestion, and then personal *possession*.

These are awful passages, and they certainly teach, in the very clearest and most definite manner, the reality of demoniacal possession. Thank God! those which follow show with equal clearness the exorcising power of Christ.

'At even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were sick, and them that were *possessed*

with demons. . . . And he healed many that were sick with divers diseases, and *cast out many demons*; and he suffered not the demons to speak, *because they knew him*' (Mark i. 32-34). 'In the synagogue of Capernaum there was a man who had *a spirit of an unclean demon*; and he cried out with a loud voice, Ah! what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? *I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God*. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.' . . . And 'all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. And *demons also* came out from many, crying out, and saying, *Thou art the Son of God*. And, rebuking them, he suffered them not to speak, because they knew that he was *the Christ*' (Luke iv. 33-35, 40, 41).

No possible form of bodily disease or mental trouble could have given to sufferers the knowledge which they had of the nature and character of Christ—a knowledge which they freely expressed long before Peter made his great confession, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God' (Matt. xvi. 16).

An extraordinary and most mischievous book was recently published, entitled *Jesus or Christ*. It was reviewed by the Rev. Prof. Denny, D.D., in the *British Weekly* of Thursday, November 18, 1909: and in his severe, but most just, criticism, the following passage occurs concerning one of the papers:—

"The impression which pages of this painful and sorry stuff leaves on the mind is, that a man, who has very little use for Jesus, may take himself very seriously indeed."

In the concluding Essay of the volume, the

78 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

Rev. R. Roberts writes as follows regarding Jesus and Exorcism :—

“ Possession by evil spirits was a form of belief natural to the culture-level at which the Jews of Jesus’ day stood. They believed that these evil spirits entered into the human organism, and that their presence was the cause of physical and mental derangements. Jesus seems to have shared these opinions. Even more embarrassing to the modern mind is His apparent acquiescence in the popular belief, that they could be expelled by Exorcism ; and that He Himself practised the art so effectually, that it has maintained its place in the Christian Church to this day ’ (p. 275). . . . ‘ Why did Jesus permit people to believe that evil spirits were the cause of disease, and that He could and did exorcise them ? It is certain that He was mistaken, alike in His diagnosis and in His remedy, and the mistake becomes tragical when we remember that His example has been made to justify some of the most atrocious cruelties in history. If He did not know that possession of evil spirits, as understood by His countrymen, was an error, then His knowledge was at fault. If He did know, and also knew the use that would be made of His example for more than a thousand years after His death ; then, His acquiescence shows a moral limitation more embarrassing than the intellectual one ” (p. 279).

When first we read these appalling sentences, they brought a wintry cold into our heart and awakened mingled feelings of awe and fear, shame and profoundest pity. We marvelled that any human being could have dared to accuse Jesus of such mental and moral limitations—an intellectual limitation, which implied crass ignorance on the one hand, and a moral limitation, which might easily have involved deliberate deception, on the other. Our critic, who is conscious of being a man of culture

and possessed of 'the modern mind' (whatever that may be), has risen far above such limitations, and therefore feels that he has a right to speak, in terms of indignation, of the faulty opinions and doings of Jesus. He himself does not believe in evil spirits, and in their power to possess human beings, as the ignorant Jewish people did, whose opinions Jesus seems to have 'shared.' He believes that Jesus acquiesced in the popular belief that they could be expelled by 'exorcism'; and also that He 'practised the art' of casting them out.

Now, let this be clearly understood—Jesus had no 'opinions,' but *knew* the truth of that which He taught. Neither did He practise the 'art' of exorcism, but manifested the power and loving-kindness of God in this beneficent way for human well-being. The casting out of demons was a work of divinest mercy and well-doing. And Jesus was no more responsible for the 'atrocious cruelties' which men perpetrated in His name in after ages, than He is now for the half-baked, superficial, and illogical opinions of the Rev. R. Roberts. What sort of gospel can this most irreverent Rev. preach to the people who may listen to him, when he has no Christ to commend to them as a sinless Saviour, but only the example of a human Jesus who was not only an ignorant man but also something of a mere Pretender? Did not Jesus challenge His worst enemies

80 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

to 'convict him of sin' ? and did He not also say, 'If I speak the truth, why do ye not believe me ?' Under the guise of criticism, some of the contributors to the volume, *Jesus or Christ*, are unable to hide their strong antipathy both to Himself and His gospel. Of all such He might truly say : 'This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips ; but their heart is far from me, and in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men' (Matt. xv. 8, 9). And did He not say : 'The Father hath given all judgment unto the Son, that all men may honour the Son *even as they honour the Father*. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who sent him' (John v. 23)—words which condemn all those who deny the Godhood of Jesus. 'Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father' (1. John ii. 22).

3. *It was a Work of Restoring Life to the Dead.*—In John i. 4, we are told concerning the 'Word (Logos) of God,' that 'in Him was life.' And Jesus Himself said, 'As the Father raiseth the dead, and quickeneth them : even so the Son also quickeneth whom he will.' . . . 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live' (John v. 21, 25).

Three instances are recorded in which the phy-

sically dead heard the voice of the Son of God in the days of His flesh and returned to the land of the living. The records are profoundly interesting, and ought to be read and pondered with thankfulness and joy. They present the Divinely-human power of Jesus in a most striking and attractive light. To listen to His 'Talitha Cumi'; and 'young man, arise'; and 'Lazarus, come forth'—spoken with so much calmness and commanding energy, and followed by such extraordinary and immediate results—is surely enough to impel every truly humble and reverent soul to exclaim, 'I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' 'My Lord and My God.'

1. 'There came a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue; he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him to come into his house; for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a-dying. While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. But Jesus hearing it, answered him, Fear not; only believe, and she shall be made whole. Entering the house and taking her by the hand, he said, Maiden, arise. Her spirit returned, and she rose up immediately; and he commanded that something be given her to eat' (Luke viii. 41, 42, 49-55).

2. 'When Jesus drew near to the gates of the city (of Nain), behold, there was carried out one that was dead, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow—and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came nigh and touched the bier: and the bearers stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak; and he gave him to his mother. And fear took

82 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

hold on all ; and they glorified God, saying, A great prophet has arisen among us, and God hath visited his people ' (Luke vii. 12-16).

3. ' Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha.' . . . ' Jesus said unto his disciples, Lazarus is dead. . . . Mary therefore, when she came where Jesus was and saw him, fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came with her, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled, and said, Where have you laid him ? They say unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Coming to the tomb, Jesus said, Take away the stone. : . . And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him and let him go ' (John xi).

These were great miracles—the greatest of all which Jesus wrought ; and there is a remarkable gradation in their greatness. The daughter of Jairus had only recently died, when He recalled her to life again. The young man of Nain was being carried to the place of graves, when Jesus met the funeral, raised him to life, and presented him to his mother, and, as some one has truly said : " He walked home from his own funeral." With an unspeakable joy in their hearts he and his mother returned to their abode, which, no doubt, to both of them was henceforth a little heaven below and a place of sweet preparation for the heavenly home on high. And Lazarus had lain in the grave four days already. It was because Jesus Himself, the Incarnate One, was God's greatest Miracle, that He

was able to work miracles. It was surely natural, that a supernatural being should do supernatural deeds. His miracles were not only great mercies in themselves, but they heralded the approach of the greatest of all mercies—the gospel of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, Ascension, and Glorification of the Son of God and Son of Man. Rationalists and infidels of all sorts try to minimise, or even deny, the significance of Christ's miracles; and yet if Christ had wrought no miracles, they would have been the foremost in declaring that He ought to have wrought them, if He wished to show that He was Divine—if Divine He was. How true it is, that 'the mind of the flesh is enmity against God' (Rom. viii. 7).

4. *It was a Work of Dying for Sinners.*—Jesus came to die. This was the great purpose of His Incarnation. 'He was made for a little while lower than the angels, *for the suffering of death*'—why? Because His death was absolutely necessary for the Redemption of mankind. Why was it necessary? Because death was the penal result of sin, and only a divinely-human and sinless being could die such a death as would atone for sin and sinners, and prove His victory over death and the grave, by rising from the dead to die no more for ever. Man cannot save himself, neither can any human being redeem his brother nor give unto God a

84 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

ransom for him. Only a Divine and holy being could die for others, and thus become their Saviour. Now, what was His own testimony concerning this, and the declarations of His disciples after Pentecost ?

‘ I came that they might have life, and may have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd ; *the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep.*’ . . . ‘ God commended his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, *Christ died for us* ’ (Rom. v. 7, 8). ‘ Him who knew no sin ’ *God made to be sin on our behalf* ; that we might become the righteousness of God in him ’ (2 Cor. v. 21). ‘ When he had offered *one sacrifice for sins for ever*, sat down on the right hand of God ’ (Heb. x. 12).

The sufferings and death of Christ on the cross were the results of the hatred and cruelty of ungodly men and the wickedness of evil spirits, and were therefore the works of the devil. But He was there, not merely as a Victim under compulsion, but also as the Redeemer of humanity and the Saviour of sinners under the constraining and impelling power of a voluntary love. And in order that His redemptive works might be perfect, He had to endure an agony of sorrow which only God could inflict. It was He who sent Him to die a vicarious death for sinners, as Jesus Himself declared ; and it was He also who by the withdrawal of the light of His countenance, impelled the dying Saviour to exclaim : ‘ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ’ The hiding of His face of love

caused the greatest and worst of all Christ's sufferings, for then it was that He touched the bottom of His miseries and the uttermost of His woes. The ancient and wonderful prophecy was then duly and fully fulfilled: 'It pleased the Lord to bruise him and to put Him to grief' (Isa. liii. 10). Why should this have 'pleased' the Father? For two reasons. First, because the bruising inflicted had, as its sublime object and result, the Redemption of humanity; and second, because the Son was joyfully willing to be bruised, 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life for the sheep.' Now, but for the fall of man and the sinfulness of humanity, the Father would never have needed to bruise the Son nor put Him to grief; hence, even this infliction laid upon Him by God was necessitated by the work of the devil. It is well to recognize this startling fact, and also, that the purpose for which the Father bruised the Son was, that thereby 'He might destroy the works of the devil.' It pleased the Father thus to act, '*when he made his soul an offering for sin.*' Man was not able to pay the sin-penalty of death and yet continue to live; therefore he needed a sinless Saviour who could voluntarily die on his behalf, and yet continue to be. And this was just what Jesus did, 'Who died for our sins according to the scriptures, and rose again for our justification.'

86 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

“ If Christ died the death in which sin had involved us, and if in His death He took the responsibility of our sins upon Himself ; no word is equal to this, which falls short of what is meant by calling Him our *Substitute*.”

So writes Dr. Denney in *The Death of Christ* (p. 103). And still further (on pp. 124-5), he says :—

‘ It is the commonest of all objections to the propitiatory doctrine of the death of Christ, that it is inconsistent with the love of God : and not only amateur, but professional theologians of all grades, have rejected St. Paul’s doctrine of propitiation as inconsistent with Jesus’ teaching on the love of the Father. But if a mind like St Paul teaches both things—if he makes the death of Christ in its propitiatory character the supreme demonstration of the Father’s love—is there not an immense probability that there is misunderstanding somewhere ? It may be a modern, it is certainly not a Pauline idea, that a death for sins, with a view to their forgiveness, is inconsistent with God’s love.’

What does Paul say ? ‘ *God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us* ’ (Rom. v. 8). And John declares with still greater emphasis, ‘ *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation of our sins* ’ (John iv. 10). ‘ *Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood, to Him be the glory and dominion, for ever and ever, Amen* ’ (Rev. i. 5, 6).

Whatever others may believe concerning the great sacrifice of the Cross, we cannot think of it as anything less than a Propitiation and an Atonement.

These great doctrines contain heights and depths of truth which we can neither scale nor fathom, but we accept the declarations of Scripture concerning them in their simplest and most natural meanings. This, we believe, is the path of wisdom and safety; and also with another that, "To insist upon the exhaustive explanation of such spiritual mysteries, is one of the most deceitful impulses of intellectual vanity."

What do the Scriptures say?

'I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received (from Christ, Gal. i. 11, 12), how that *Christ died for our sins* according to the scriptures' (1 Cor. xv. 3). 'He is the propitiation *for our sins*; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world' (1 John ii. 2). 'And they, sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, *and didst purchase unto God with thy blood* men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests' (Rev. v. 9, 10).

This is the constant and consistent teaching of Divine Revelation; and if the language does not mean a Substitutionary Atonement, then we must frankly confess that we do not know what it means. But this simple and natural conclusion seems to meet all the requirements of the case; and, therefore, we very joyfully accept it as the truth of God regarding the death of Jesus. "The Church of God is built upon redemption,—on pardon and peace that have been won through death. . . . It is that

88 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

fact that has made the Cross the universal symbol of the gospel.”

THE PURPOSE OF HIS MINISTRY

‘ He that doeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. *To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil* ’ (1 John iii. 8).

This ‘ end ’ was the purpose of His Incarnation. It was a magnificent purpose, and was twofold in its object—to take away *the effects of sin* during His ministry, and *sin itself* on the Cross. During the three years of His public labours, He healed all manner of sickness and disease, cast out demons, and raised the dead. He also enlightened the minds of the ignorant, purified, softened, and comforted the hearts of the penitent, and bestowed spiritual life on the spiritually dead. It was thus that He destroyed the works of the wicked one, and put in their places the blissful works of God. And then on the Cross, He was able to exclaim, in a loud voice, which thrilled throughout the listening universe : ‘ *It is finished.* ’ He had taken *sin* away by His atoning Sacrifice. Scripture is clear about this :—

‘ Him who knew no sin, he made *to be sin on our behalf* ; that we might become the righteousness of God in him ’ 2 Cor. v. 21). ‘ Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness ; by whose stripes ye were healed ’ (1 Pet. ii. 24). ‘ Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God ’ (1 Pet.

JESUS CHRIST AND AFFLICTIONS 89

iii. 18). 'Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin' (1 John iii. 5).

In carrying out to its fulfillment this sublime purpose of destroying the works of the devil, Jesus Himself became a great sufferer. It is written that '*Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases.*' How did He do this? Not by becoming infirm and diseased in His own person, but through the power of sympathy, and healing helpfulness. He appropriated the weaknesses and sicknesses of others, and then cast them away from Him, as Paul shook off the viper from his hand. But though we do not read that He suffered ordinary sicknesses in His flesh, yet we are told that He suffered greatly in every part of His nature—body and soul and spirit. Think, for instance, of His sorrow and suffering in *Gethsemane*. In that awful night in which He was betrayed, He said to His disciples, as He entered the garden, 'My *soul* is exceeding sorrowful *even unto death.*' The crushing agony which there oppressed Him, arose chiefly out of mental anguish; and while it filled Him *with the fear of imminent death* (not the death of the cross), and impelled Him to pray with 'strong cryings and tears,' it caused Him also to perspire great drops of blood. 'Let *this* cup pass from me' (the cup of anguish He was then drinking); and His prayer was answered (Luke xxii. 43, and Heb. v. 7). The key to the solution of that profound sorrow

90 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

may probably be found in that mysterious agency to which He afterwards referred when He said to the chief priests and elders, and also to the hosts of hell who accompanied them, '*This is your hour and the power of darkness*' (Luke xxi. 53). Think also of all the sufferings He endured after He became a prisoner—binding and leading, desertion and mockery, smiting and scourging, slapping and spitting ; after which He was crowned with thorns, and burdened with part of the Cross, for a time, on the way to Calvary. Think, finally, of the endurance of all the torments of crucifixion, culminating in the woeful cry of a realized God-forsakenness, which He uttered as from the depths of hell. What an awful tragedy ! And yet, because its issues were destined to be unspeakably and eternally glorious, it was not a tragedy only, but the sublimest manifestation of the redemptive love of God, by which Jesus '*tasted death for every man.*' Surely, the ancient prophecy was fully fulfilled in Him :—

' He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows ; he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed ' (Isa. liii. 4, 5). ' And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it ; and he gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is my body. And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it ; for this is my blood of the covenant, *which is shed for many unto remission of sins* ' (Matt. xxvi. 26-28). ' Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures ' (1 Cor. xv. 3).

CHRIST IN HADES

With an unprejudiced mind, let the reader consider the remarkable scriptures which follow:—

‘Christ suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit: *in which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison*—who aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah’ (1 Pet. iii. 18, 19). ‘For unto this end was the gospel preached *even to the dead*, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but *live according to God in the spirit*’ (iv. 6).

In pursuit of the great purpose of His redemptive ministry, He went down into the ‘prison’ of Hades ‘to destroy the works of the devil.’ How? No miracles of healing were needed there, because they were disembodied spirits to whom He ministered; therefore, He only required to preach the Good News of universal Redemption—for mental enlightenment and spiritual quickening, that ‘they might live according to God in the spirit.’ And when spiritual truth is preached to spirits, it may be more readily apprehended and received than in the days of their flesh.

When our Lord was about to finish His incarnate work upon the earth, He said to His disciples, ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation.’ And when He ended His work in the Intermediate State, He gave the same commission, we doubt not, to all believers there. And why? Because ‘*God so loved the*

92 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life ' ; because that '*Christ died, not for our sins only but for the whole world*' ; and because He said to His followers, ' Go and preach my gospel to *every creature*.' The universality of the Divine love, the all-embracing scope of the Saviour's sacrifice on Calvary, and the sublime commission to proclaim the word of salvation to all men—these must certainly ensure this result, that no human being shall appear at the judgment seat of Christ ignorant of His gospel. This is our ' Larger Hope,' in which we greatly rejoice.

Said Jesus, ' If any man serve me, let him follow me ; and where I am, there shall also my servant be ; and if any man serve me, him will my Father honour ' (John xii. 26). Those who followed Him on earth to serve and suffer, may also have passed as He did, from the paradise to the prison of the Intermediate State, there also to serve and suffer ; and many others in every succeeding age may have followed their example, and will continue to do so, right on to the end of time. In thus regarding the matter, a great vista is opened up before us, in which we may reasonably expect that great and glorious results will happen. We cannot forget the declaration of our Lord, ' And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself ' (John xii. 32).

In a brief sketch of the late Rev. James Chalmers, the martyred missionary of New Guinea (by Clara Benham), it is stated that "again and again his letters latterly showed that his thoughts frequently turned to the future world."

"There will be much visiting in Heaven (Paradise), and much work. I guess I shall have good mission work to do—great and brave work for Christ. He will have to find it, for I can be nothing else than a missionary."

In the light of what we have just said about the work of Christ in Hades, this is a very remarkable presentiment of the great-hearted and consecrated servant of the Lord—a presentiment which, in all likelihood, was soon realized. Myriads of the natives of New Guinea have passed into the Intermediate State, and probably, even now, he may be declaring unto them, in their own language, the wonderful works of God.

'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil'; and if that purpose was to be fully fulfilled, the gospel of salvation must necessarily be preached to all human beings either on earth or in Hades. Only thus can He become 'the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe.'

EIGHTH CHAPTER

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND AFFLICTIONS

WE now turn from Christ's ministry to that of the apostles, and shall notice at the outset the *Commissions* which He gave to them. These were three in number, and all of them important. Their importance was graduated, for the second was greater than the first, and the third the greatest of all.

The first was given to *the Twelve* in Galilee :—

' He called unto him his twelve disciples, and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out ; and to heal all manner of disease, and all manner of sickness. As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons : freely ye have received, freely give ' (Matt. x. 1, 7, 8). ' And the apostles, when they returned, declared unto him what things they had done ' (Luke ix. 10).

The second was given to *the Seventy*, also in Galilee.

' After these things the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent two and two before his face, into every city and place whither he was about to come.' ' And after a time, the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in thy name ' (Luke x. 1, 17).

CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND AFFLICTIONS 95

The third was given to *Apostles and Disciples*, in Jerusalem, after His resurrection.

' Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day ; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you ; but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high ' (Luke xxiv. 46-49). ' Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you ; and ye shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth ' (Acts i. 8). ' There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit ' (1 Cor. xii. 4).

Various gifts of the Holy Ghost were given to the apostles, of which we may mention the chief. When Jesus preached by the power of the Spirit, they listened to the truth which He spake, and receiving it into the mind, the memory, and the heart, they also received progressively the gift of the Spirit as *the Spirit of knowledge and wisdom*. And when He appeared in their midst in the evening of the resurrection day, and their faith in Him was finally settled and established ; He breathed on them and said, ' Receive ye the Holy Ghost,' ' *Peace be unto you.*' Then was fulfilled the ancient prophecy and promise, ' Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee : because he trusteth in thee ' (Isa. xxvi. 3). After thus receiving the Spirit, as the Spirit of Peace ; Jesus said unto them, ' Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with *Power* from on high.' The gifts already

96 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

bestowed were for individual spiritual well-being, but this was chiefly for Christian service. That endowment was bestowed upon them, on the great day of Pentecost.

‘ When the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound, as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire ; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit ’ (Acts ii. 1-4).

What did this gift of *Power* enable them to do ? It enabled them to face the world and all its gigantic evils, with an earnest determination to overthrow them. We read that when Paul and Silas came to Thessalonica the citizens exclaimed : ‘ These men that have turned the world upside down are come hither also ’ (Acts xvii. 6). This was a splendid testimony to the fervour of their earnestness, and also to the spiritual power which they exercised. To turn the world upside down was a magnificent work to do, for, as some one has said, ‘ the wrong side was up.’ And after Pentecost, and the reception of the gift of Power, the apostles realized their need of another gift, to enable them to preach the Gospel with boldness in the face of opposing rulers and hostile crowds. This was their prayer :—

‘ And now, Lord, look upon thy friends : and grant unto thy servants *to speak thy word with all boldness*, while thou stretchest forth thy hand to heal ; and that signs and wonders may be done, through the name of thy holy servant

CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND AFFLICTIONS 97

Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together ; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and *spake the word of God with boldness* ' (Acts iv. 29-31).

The apostles and disciples who had recently acted like a flock of timid sheep, now became braver than lions—yea, brave as the holy angels of God. Possessing these two notable gifts of *Power* and *Boldness*, they were not only able to preach the Gospel with tremendous courage and steady persistency, but were also able to do many miraculous works in the name of Jesus.

The risen Christ said concerning the disciples after Pentecost :—

' These signs shall follow them that believe ; in My name shall they cast out demons ; they shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take up serpents ; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them ; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover ' Mark xvi. 17, 18.

Now, what did the apostles really do after Pentecost ?

1. They healed the Sick and Disabled.

' Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer . . . and a certain man that was lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the door of the temple, which is called Beautiful. . . . They said unto him, Look on us. And Peter said, Silver and gold have I none ; but what I have that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk. . . . And leaping up, he stood, and began to walk ; and entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God ' (Acts iii. 1, 2, 6-8). ' By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people.'

98 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

. . . 'Insomuch that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that as Peter came by, at the least his shadow might overshadow some of them. And there came also together the multitude from the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing sick folk, and them that were vexed with unclean spirits: *and they were healed every one*' (Acts v. 12, 15, 16).

2. Many demons also were cast out of those who were possessed. Take the following instances :—

'It came to pass, as we were going to the place of prayer, that a certain maid having a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. The same followed after Paul and us, and cried out, saying, These men are servants of the most high God, who proclaim unto you the way of salvation ; and this she did for many days. But Paul, being sore troubled, turned and said *to the spirit*, I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her ; and it came out that very hour' (Acts xvi. 16-18). 'God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: insomuch that unto the sick were carried away from his body handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and *the evil spirits were cast out.*' (Acts xix. 11, 12).

3. Individuals who had died were recalled to life.

'There was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha (Dorcas): this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick and died: . . . And Peter, having been sent for, went to the dead, and said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up . . . and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive' (Acts ix. 36, 37, 40, 41). 'A young man fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down and fell on him: and they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted' (Acts xx. 9, 10, 12).

There were many miracles wrought in and by the Christian Church, after the days of the Apostles,

CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND AFFLICTIONS 99

as Church history abundantly testifies. Why have they not been continued until now? We have been told in reply that the 'age of miracles is past'; but no New Testament has ever told us so. There is no hint in the threefold commission, which the Lord gave to the disciples, that miracles were to be wrought only for a brief period. We know how great is the power that even spurious miracles have exercised over the minds and hearts of multitudes of people, especially when they have been proclaimed to be miracles of healing. If real miracles were still accomplished by the Christian Church, such as were wrought by the Apostles, how beneficent her work would be, and how convincing to the world that her mission was God-ordained and that Christ's Gospel is true. In the natural sphere of life, all men are under the reign of natural law; but in the spiritual and Christian sphere, the prayers of His children are still great forces in the moral government of God; and as Jesus has assured us, 'All things are possible with Him.' 'Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find.' Jesus Himself as the man of prayer is our great Exemplar. *Are miracles impossible now?* Would it not be well for both the Church and the world if the age of miracles could be restored? Let all the churches unite in making the resolve and the endeavour. Let them subordinate all the mere ecclesiasticisms which divide, alienate, and embitter; loosen themselves from all connections

100 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

with the world and the State, which tend to produce enslavement and corruption ; renew their vows of allegiance and loyalty to Christ, *as the Head of His Church* ; unitedly pray, with a strong and persistent faith, for a great outpouring of the Holy Ghost, *as the Spirit of Power* ; and when they have experienced a new Pentecost, who can tell but that the age of miracles might be revived, and that once more it may be declared concerning the preachers of the Good News, 'These are the men who are turning the world upside down.' And this too may be realized in the future as in the past :—

'Is any among you sick ? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, having anointed (massaged) him with oil in the name of the Lord ; and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up ; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess therefore your *sins* one to another, and *pray* one for another, *that ye may be healed*' (Jas. v. 14-16).

Faith-healing, so-called (which is really Divine healing in response to the prayer of faith), is not the uncommon thing which many persons have supposed and represented it to be. Faithful preachers and pastors, and godly men and women, who visit the sick and pray for them, have often seen such wonderful healings and recoveries as have filled them with astonishment and joy, and also impelled the saved ones and their relatives to praise the great Hearer of prayer with grateful hearts and songs of rejoicing. It would be a blessing for all the churches, if both

CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND AFFLICTIONS 101

their pastors and members were worthy of being called 'Faith Healers'—those who seek to obtain the recovery of the afflicted by offering on their behalf the fervent prayers of a true Faith. 'All things are possible to him that believeth.'

NINTH CHAPTER

CHRISTIANS AND AFFLICTIONS

IN this chapter we shall briefly refer to three things :—

1. What Christians believe concerning afflictions.
2. What they say regarding them.
3. How they act in relation to them.

1. The Opinion held regarding them

It is generally believed that all afflictions come from God, and that He sends them in wisdom and love for the well-being of the sufferers. This is the idea of affliction as accepted and taught by all the churches of Christendom. We believe that it is wholly mistaken, and has no place in the teachings of the New Testament. To make this clear and plain is the purpose of this chapter. When Scriptures are quoted in support of the common belief, they are usually taken from the Old Testament, where, as we have seen, afflictions are mostly and rightly attributed to God, because they were miraculously inflicted by Him upon His elect people. There are

also one or two frequently quoted from the New Testament, which at first sight might seem to favour the same belief :—

‘ My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art *reproved* of him ; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth ’ (Heb. xii. 5, 6). ‘ As many as I love, I *reprove* and chasten ’ (Rev. iii. 19).

Now, it is not to be denied that God could still chasten His children, if He chose, by laying upon them bodily afflictions ; but it is remarkable that in the verses just quoted there is no reference to these. The word used in both passages is ‘ *reproved*, ’ which describes a mental and moral discipline, and not a physical infliction. In ancient times, when human nature was less nervous and sensitive than now, fathers had great faith in the use of Solomon’s ‘ rod ’ ; but now the wisest of them substitute reasoning and reproof for bodily violence, and find that the chastening is more effective—and is not the Divine Father wiser than all ? It is through His Word and by His Spirit that He chiefly re-proves and rebukes, chastens and disciplines His children. But if Christians really believe that afflictions come from God, and are sent in wisdom and love, for their present good and everlasting well-being, then surely, they ought to *welcome their coming, gratefully thank Him for sending them, and leave them alone to work out their natural effects ;*

104 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

that thereby the discipline Divinely intended may be blissfully realized. This certainly is the logic of common sense—that God ought to have His own way with the afflicted, that His wise and loving purposes may be accomplished. But, instead of doing all this, think of the words they frequently utter, and the conduct they generally pursue.

2. Their Speech about Afflictions

They naturally pity themselves when ill, and expect others to condole with them ; and all their loving relatives and friends make haste to do so. This is what the latter may say : ‘ How sorry we are that you are thus laid aside, and have to endure so much pain and weakness. We will pray for you, that God may comfort you in your present tribulation ; and may also be graciously pleased to restore you speedily to health and strength.’ Now, all such condolences and prayers are entirely inconsistent with the belief, that afflictions come from God and are sent in wisdom and love to work out great moral and spiritual results. No sooner are the afflictions sent than they pray for their removal, and at the same time use every means in their power to effect that desirable issue.

3. Their Doings in Afflictions

When afflictions fall, either on themselves or on others who may be dear to them, they send imme-

diately for a doctor—for what purpose?—*to undo God's work*. This may not be consciously realized, and yet, it is true. Consider their opinion or belief and then their words and conduct, and you cannot fail to discover a great contrast between them. How illogical is the language used, and how utterly inconsistent is the course of action followed!

THE DOCTOR AND HIS PATIENT

When the doctor comes, what does he do? He carefully diagnoses the case, tries to trace the effect to its cause, and then provides a medicine which he hopes may effect a remedy. This is skill and common sense, practically and scientifically applied. When medical men hear of afflictions being sent by God, they must surely wonder and feel inclined to be agnostics concerning the matter. And their scepticism would be reasonable! They can trace afflictions to their natural and sufficient causes, and have no occasion to think of Divine intervention. They do not see any evidences of that.

As for the doctors themselves, they are men, as a class, for whom we entertain the highest esteem and veneration. No doubt there may be some of their number who are callous, selfish, and unsympathetic persons; but the great majority are kind, unselfish, and full of sympathy—men who put conscience and heart into their daily work, and who, by their beneficent kindness to the poor, are worthy of all

106 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD?

admiration and gratitude. And not a few of them who are lovers and followers of the Saviour, not only heal the bodies of their patients, but also help to save and sanctify their souls. By wise and kindly suggestions, comforting words, and earnest prayers, they are indeed and of a truth veritable successors of the apostles and worthy followers and imitators of the Great Physician Himself.

TENTH CHAPTER

CHRISTIANS AND SINNING

WE have clearly recognized that the cause of all afflictions is Sin. We have also seen that Christ, as Redeemer and Saviour, is the destroyer of sin, both in itself and in its effects. When sinners draw near to God, through Christ, penitently confessing their sins, and believingly asking forgiveness, the prayer is immediately answered for the Saviour's sake. When their guilt is pardoned, the dominion of sin is also broken ; and the purification of their nature and character is henceforth progressively accomplished, by the indwelling power of the Holy Ghost freely granted unto them, in answer to believing prayer. While this great internal work of sanctification is being developed, they are Divinely expected and commanded *to cease from sinning*. This is a great matter, which is not well or generally understood ; and unless the teaching of Scripture concerning it is clearly apprehended and believed, confusion of thought and

108 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

perplexity of feeling are certain to be the results. Now, what does Paul say to believers in Christ?—let his words be seriously considered.

‘ Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! We who *died to sin*, how shall we any longer live therein? ’ ‘ Reckon ye yourselves to be *dead unto sin*, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.’ ‘ *Sin shall not have dominion over you*: for ye are not under law, but under grace.’ ‘ But now being made *free from sin*, and become servants to God; ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life ’ (Rom. vi. 1, 2, 11, 22).

The teaching of these very important Scriptures ought neither to be misunderstood nor doubted. They are as simple as they could be made, and there are many others equally plain and definite. What then do they mean? Clearness of thought and simplicity of expression are very necessary at this point. Understand, then, that they do not refer to *Sinfulness*, which will cling to all human beings to the end of their mortal life. Neither do they refer to *Sins of Ignorance*, which may also be committed till the end of their mortal days. Neither do they refer to *Sins of Short-comings*, in the form of omissions. These, for a time, may be unconsciously committed; and then, by and by, be done consciously and become sins of commission. In the former case, they might be rightly classed with *sins of ignorance*; but in the latter they must be recognized as ‘ *Trespases* ’; and the law which determines this is, ‘ He that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not; to him it is sin ’ (Jas. iv. 17). *Sins of ‘ Trespases ’*

are real 'sins,' because they are *voluntary* in their nature, though sometimes impulsively committed; and they always degrade and humiliate those who do them. But because they may easily arise out of *sinfulness*, especially when excited by *temptations*, the Lord graciously embodied this petition, in the prayer which He taught His disciples: 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we also have forgiven those who have trespassed against us' (Matt. vi. 12). Our fellow-creatures are not always trespassing against us, neither are we always trespassing against God; for trespasses are voluntary transgressions, and we are not conscious of continual wilful sinning. From time to time, we have read able sermons about sinning and sins, which seemed to us to be wholly mistaken and unscriptural. The fearful self-complainings of *saintly* men and women about the 'sins' of which they supposed themselves to be guilty, we could not but regard as morbid in a high degree and altogether out of harmony with the teachings of the sacred Word. To be conscious of sinfulness is not necessarily to be guilty of sins; and to be tempted to sin is not sinning. Was not our Saviour tempted in all things even as we are, yet without sin? And certain it is, that no such doleful and depressing bemoanings are recorded as having been uttered by any of the apostles or saints of the New Testament. The seventh chapter of Romans was Paul's experience while yet he

110 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

was ' *in the flesh* ' (v. 8), and not after his conversion. It was not under the Gospel but under the Law, that he realized the terrible experiences he described—experiences which impelled him to exclaim, ' O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death ? ' And then, having thanked God for his deliverance, he triumphantly declared : ' There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus ' (Rom. viii. 1). And he counselled all true believers in Christ to ' rejoice evermore ' (2 Thess. v. 16) ; and to ' Rejoice in the Lord *alway* ' (Phil. iv. 4). Instead of Christians continuing to be ' miserable sinners,' they ought to be rejoicing saints ; and the promise of God is this : ' My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness ' (2 Cor. xii. 9). It is a poor compliment to this mighty and all-sufficient grace, that even under its influence we must still continue to sin.

The most definite passage in the New Testament about sins is 1 John i. 8–10, and chap. ii. 1, 2. What do these verses teach us ?—

1. That we are *sinful*, and *may* sin.
2. If we truly *confess* our sins, God will *forgive* them ; and *cleanse* us from all *unrighteousness*.
3. He enjoins upon us, ' *That ye may not sin.* '
4. But if we *should* sin, which is *possible*, we need not sink into despair ; for ' *if* any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ

the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins.'

Then, finally, there are *Sins of Wickedness*, which are not mere 'trespasses'; but are both more heinous in their nature and more terrible in their effects. They are done intentionally, and with the full consent of the will—sins against which conscience loudly protests, and which God Himself sternly condemns:—

'When I say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his righteousness, and *commit iniquity*, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered; but in his iniquity that he hath committed, therein shall he die' (Ezek. xxxiii. 13). 'As touching those who were once enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost (Christians), and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then *fell away*, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame' (Heb. vi. 4-6)

The *falling away* here referred to is not mere backsliding, but a persistent process of backsliding, which may ultimately lead to *apostasy*; and every sin of 'wickedness' tends towards this awful result. So long as a sinning Christian is only a backslider, it is possible for him to repent of his wickedness and return, in faith, to a forgiving God through Christ; but apostasy destroys the very ability to repent, and makes the return to God '*impossible*.'

'For if we sin *wilfully* (and persistently), after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth

112 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

no more a sacrifice for sins ; but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries ' (Heb. x. 26, 27).

Such is the teaching of these fearful passages, and it ought to be accepted by every Christian just as it stands. If any one should remind himself, or others, of the words of Jesus—' My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me ; and I give unto them eternal life ; *and they shall never perish*, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand ' (John x. 28),—let him also remember the equally solemn declaration : ' *If any man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered ;* and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned ' (John xv. 6). These statements are not contradictory. It is true, that no man (and no devil) can pluck even the weakest Christian out of the Saviour's hand ; but it is equally true, that if any saved sinner fails to abide in Christ, by losing his faith and falling into apostasy, he shall thereby lose himself. This is a terrible possibility : ' My righteous one shall live by faith ; and if he shrink back, my soul hath no pleasure in him.' But the same writer who warned the Hebrew believers against apostasy, added these words : ' But we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition, but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul ' (Heb. x. 38, 39). Let not the reader think at this point either of Calvinism,

or of Arminianism, or of any other ism whatsoever ; but take the teaching of God's Word just as it is presented. It tells us in the very plainest and most explicit manner, that *apostasy* on the part of a Christian is *possible* ; and therefore we should see to it, that it shall never be realized in our personal experience. Beware of backsliding ! for it is conscious backsliding which leads to apostasy.

We never find any of the apostles, after the day of Pentecost, confessing sins of wickedness. There is no such thing in the New Testament. Paul says, ' When we were *in the flesh*, the sinful *passions* which were through the law, wrought in our members to bring forth *fruit unto death* ; but *now*, we have been discharged from the law, *having died to that wherein we were holden* ; so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter ' (Rom. vii. 5, 6). He was no longer in the flesh, but in the spirit ; and his relation to sinning was entirely changed. What is his further testimony concerning himself :—

' Herein do I also exercise myself, to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men alway ' (Acts xxiv. 16).

Astonishing words ! Yes, and also glorious. If this was the earnest resolve and constant endeavour of the apostle, was it possible for him, at the same time, to commit " manifold sins and wickedness " ? It was morally impossible ; and if they

114 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

were not committed, then assuredly they could not be truly confessed. *And Paul never made such a confession.* We shall search in vain for any such thing in any of his writings. Now, every Christian can and ought to make the same resolve as he did ; and then he will have no occasion to confess sins of 'wickedness.' There is no piety or virtue in acknowledging sins, of which we have no consciousness. It can neither honour God, nor advantage the confessor, to acknowledge an enslavement from which the grace of God was meant to deliver him. 'Reckon ye also yourselves to be *dead unto sin*, but *alive unto God* in Christ Jesus.' This *reckoning* is not to be a mere make-believe in the Christian life, while the Christian meanwhile goes on sinning ; it is to be a genuine and blissful reality in his daily life and experience. Referring to speech, *James* says, '*In many things we all stumble*' (iii. 2) ; and preachers and writers have drawn from these words the conclusion—that Christians in this world cannot cease from sinning. But this is a mistaken deduction, for we read in the subsequent context : 'Out of the same mouth cometh blessing and cursing. *My brethren, these things ought not so to be.* Doth the fountain send forth from the same opening, sweet water and bitter ? ' (iii. 10, 11). Search your New Testament through and through, and you will fail to find any room left for conscious sinning. It is a sin to sin, and therefore

ought not to be committed ; and this is the promise, ' Sin shall not have dominion over you : for ye are not under the law, but under grace ' (Rom. vi. 14).

Neither did Paul ever suggest to those to whom he sent his Epistles, that they should make such a confession. It was thus that he wrote to the Christians in Rome : ' Beloved of God ' and ' called to be saints '—' Our old man was crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be done away ; *that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin.*' . . . ' Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound ? God forbid ! ' (Rom. i. 7 ; vi. 6, 1). To those in Corinth, he wrote : ' Awake up righteously, *and sin not*' (1 Cor. xv. 34). ' Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness in the fear of God*' (2 Cor. vii. 1). To the members of the Church at Philippi : ' This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment ; so that ye may approve the things that are excellent ; that ye may be sincere *and void of offence*, unto the day of Christ ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God ' (Phil. i. 9-11). To those at Thessalonica : ' The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we also do toward you ; to the end he may stablish your hearts *unblameable in holiness* before our God and Father,

116 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints ' (1 Thess. iii, 12, 13). ' The God of peace himself, *sanctify you wholly* ; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, *without blame* at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ ' (v. 23). And what does John say ?—' These things write I unto you, *that ye may not sin* ' (1 John ii. 1). ' Whosoever is born of God *doth not commit sin*, for his seed remaineth in him ; and *he cannot sin*, because he is born of God ' (iii. 9). The ' cannot ' in this last verse is moral, not absolute. Take an illustration. A faithful abstainer from alcohol *cannot* go into a public-house to take drink ; because he hates the drink itself, and loathes the traffic which dispenses it. ' We know that whosoever is born of God *sinneth not* ; but he that is begotten of God *keepeth himself*, and the wicked one toucheth him not ' (v. 18). It is abundantly manifest from these scriptures, that God does not expect His children to go on sinning and repenting, sinning and repenting—intelligently doing all their days those things which are known to be wrong. ' We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein ? ' (Rom. vi. 2). Even in Old Testament times spiritually-minded saints realized that they ought to cease from sinning : ' Blessed are the upright in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, that seek him with the whole heart. Yea, *they do no unrighteousness* ; they walk in his ways.'

'Thy word have I laid up in mine heart, *that I may not sin against thee*' (Ps. cxix. 1-3, 11). But let this also be said, no backslider need despair. Even if he has fallen greatly into *wickedness*, let him truly repent and weep bitterly, as did Peter; and then offer such a prayer, as that of the Royal transgressor in the 51st Psalm—a psalm which out-breathes the spirit of contrition and sorrow, trust and longing. And while he thus prays, he need not hesitate to make the same great requests which David presented unto the Lord: 'Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a stedfast spirit within me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit' (Ps li. 9, 10, 12).

What a mighty uplift the churches would receive, if the real teachings of the New Testament about sin and sinning were rightly apprehended by their members. They would have a far loftier conception of holiness on the one hand, and a far greater dread of sin on the other; and worldlings would stand in awe of the separateness of Christians from themselves, and also of the manifest purity and sanctity of their daily lives.

Meanwhile, let all earnest-souled followers of the Saviour daily offer this prayer, "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day *without sin*." Let them offer it in the full assurance of faith, that God is both willing

118 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

and able to answer it—to-day, and to-morrow, and every day, all the days of their life ; thereby making it wholly unnecessary to acknowledge and confess “ manifold sins and wickedness ” before His mercy-seat at almost every public service. Christians should always be guided by the teachings of God’s Word and not by any man-made book however good it may be.

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

The Roman Catholic priesthood regard themselves as successors of the apostles, and claim to have authority and *power to forgive sins against God* ; and others, who also call themselves ‘ priests ’ (though there is no class-priesthood in the New Testament dispensation), come perilously near the same position, when they address the following words to the sick and dying :—

‘ Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his Church *to absolve all sinners* who truly repent and believe in Him ; of His great mercy, forgive thee thine offences : and by His authority committed to me, *I absolve thee from all thy sins* ; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.’

The following scriptures are supposed to be the basis of this tremendous claim :—

‘ I say unto thee, that thou art Peter ; and upon this rock I will build *my church*, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven ’ (Matt. xvi.

18, 19). 'If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses, or three, every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto *the church*; and if he refuse to hear *the church* also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the Publican. Verily, I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and what things soever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven' (Matt. xviii. 15-19). 'They rose up that very hour, and returned to Jerusalem; and found the eleven gathered together, *and them that were with them*' (Luke xxiv. 33). 'He breathed on them, and said: Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained' (John xx. 22, 23).

To whom were these wonderful words addressed? They were first spoken to *Peter only*; then to 'the *disciples*'; and finally, to *the eleven apostles and to them that were with them*. And they all received the same authority, to 'bind and loose,' 'retain and forgive.' In short, the charge was not given to any class of persons, such as the apostles only; it was given to them, and also to *the disciples that were with them*—all of them being representatives of the Church as a whole. *And what were the sins, which the Church might either 'forgive or retain'?* They were not sins against God at all, for God is neither mentioned nor referred to in any one of the verses quoted. Let that fact be carefully noticed. *They were sins against the Church itself*—sins of the brethren against the Brotherhood. Notice how frequently and definitely the '*Church*' is spoken of.

There is not an instance recorded in the New Testament, in which sins against God were thus dealt with ; but there are instances, in which sins against the *Church* were 'retained' and 'forgiven'—notable examples of which you may find in 1 Cor. v. 1-13 and 2 Cor. ii. 6-8. If the apostles and disciples had regarded their Lord's commission as an injunction *to forgive sins against God*, they would certainly have looked upon it as *the greatest and most important of all His charges* ; and certainly, also, they would have filled their ministry *with fulfilments of His command*. But what is the fact ? There is not a single case given—and why ? because there was none to give. The claim of the would-be priests to be successors of the apostles, and authorized by Christ Himself to forgive sins against God, is a huge mistake, if not something worse—a mistake grounded on a superficial and perverse reading of Scripture, and probably also on a presumptuous eagerness to rule over the souls and consciences of men. And as another has truly said : " Whosoever desires to exercise priestly authority over men and women, or to hold them in subjection to himself, or to his Church, is a usurper, and a stumbling-block in the way of their progress." '*Who can forgive sins but God only ?*' Alas ! for the deluded multitudes, who are willing to receive the assurance of pardon from men, instead of asking it directly from God Himself. Why should they act so foolishly when

the Divine Father is immediately accessible, through Christ, and who, as the God of Love, delighteth in mercy, and is ever ready to pardon? 'Thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee' (Ps. lxxxvi. 5). 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us; and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins' (1 John iv. 9, 10). 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and *just* (because Jesus died for us) to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' . . . 'The blood of Jesus Christ his (God's) Son, cleanseth us from all sin' (1 John i. 7, 9). The testimony of the Scriptures regarding this great matter is clear and abundant:—

'I acknowledged my sin unto *thee*, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and *thou* forgavest the iniquity of my sin' (Ps. xxxii. 5). 'As far as the east is from the west, so far hath *he* removed our transgressions from us' (Ps. ciii. 12). 'Who is a God like unto thee, that *pardoneth iniquity* and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy' (Mic. vii. 18). 'Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins' (Acts xiii. 38). '*The Beloved*: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of *his* grace' (Eph. i. 7).

Christians are exhorted to confess their faults *one to another* (Jas. v. 16); but there is no hint that they should confess to any special class of persons—such as 'priests'; and to depart from

122 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD?

the plain injunctions of the Word of God, is most certainly to run into intellectual error and spiritual danger. Even compromises in relation to this matter are dangerous, especially if 'faults' are regarded as synonymous with '*sins*.'

Oh, the blessedness of the man who knows that his guilt is forgiven! Such an assurance fills his conscience with peace, and his heart with heavenly hope. He can now anticipate a progressive life of Christian holiness and usefulness, for 'the path of the righteous is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day' (Prov. iv. 18). He loses all dark forebodings of death, judgment, and eternity, and finds in a sweet and satisfying experience the truth of the promise, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is a rock of ages' (Isa. xxvi. 3, 4).

ELEVENTH CHAPTER

THE REMOVAL OF AFFLICTIONS

IN beginning this section we will refer, in few words, to the late Mrs. Eddy's book on *Science and Health*, because of its claim that Christian Science, when rightly applied, can take away, and keep away, all diseases—a claim which is conceded by many deluded persons.

And first, a word about the book itself. It is very distasteful to us, from many points of view. Its literary style is crude and slovenly; and its matter is largely made up of frequent repetitions and dogmatic assertions, without proof, which soon tire and irritate the intelligent reader. And its substance is worse than its form; for, while professing to honour the Scriptures as the Word of God, it deals with them in an utterly reckless and reprehensible manner—taking from, and adding to, their sacred contents without any hesitation. To prove the truth of this very serious charge, let us put together, for comparison, the statements of Mrs. Eddy

124 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

and the declarations of the New Testament regarding two of the most important doctrines of the Gospel—The Sacrifice of Christ, and The Coming of the Holy Spirit.

1. *Mrs. Eddy*: “ One sacrifice, however great, is insufficient to pay the debt of sin. The atonement requires constant self-immolation on the sinner’s part ” (p. 23). “ The material blood of Jesus was no more efficacious to cleanse from sin when it was shed upon the accursed tree, than when it was flowing in his veins as he went daily about His Father’s business ” (p. 25).

The insufficiency of Christ’s propitiatory and atoning Sacrifice is a direct and awful contradiction of the teachings of Scripture ; and no amount of immolation on the sinner’s part, can either add to the perfectness of the Sacrifice on the Cross, or do anything whatever towards paying the debt of sin.

Jesus Christ: ‘ Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again.’ . . . ‘ *This commandment received I from my Father* ’ (John x. 17, 18). The author of the Hebrews says: ‘ Once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin *by the sacrifice of himself* ’ (Heb. ix. 26). ‘ We have been sanctified *through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.* ’ . . . ‘ When he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God ’ (x. 10, 12). *John*: ‘ The blood of Jesus his Son, cleanseth us from all sin ’ (1 John i. 7). ‘ Unto him that loveth us, and *washed us from our sins by his blood* ’ (Rev. i. 5).

2. *Mrs. Eddy*: “ In the words of St. John, ‘ He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.’ ” “ This Comforter I understand to be Divine

AFFLICTIONS FINALLY REMOVED 125

Science" (p. 55). "Our Master said: 'The Comforter shall teach you all things.' The Science of Christianity is the Comforter which leadeth into all truth. The Sermon on the Mount is the essence of this Science, and the eternal life, not the death of Jesus, is its outcome" (p. 271).

Jesus Christ: 'When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for *he shall not speak from himself*; but what things soever *he shall hear*, these shall he speak; and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you' (John xvi. 13, 14).

In the teaching of Christ, the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person—a Person who would 'speak' and 'declare,' 'guide' and 'glorify': whilst with Mrs. Eddy, it is only a thing ('Truth'), of which the Sermon on the Mount is the essence. That any sane man, who is more or less familiar with the teachings of the New Testament, can believe her unscriptural falsities is simply amazing.

But it is the teaching of *Science and Health* concerning *Afflictions* to which we wish specially to refer. It tells us that these are mere imaginations, which only require to be denied in order to get rid of them. A determined will can dissipate them all, and effectually prevent their recurrence. Now, it is no doubt true, that there is much more power in mind and will to affect the body advantageously than has generally been believed. Mrs. Eddy was clever enough to lay hold of that fact, but her teaching regarding it is monstrously exaggerated, and is therefore both untrue and misleading. No

126 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD?

amount of concentrated thought or determination of will can either keep afflictions wholly at bay, or prevent their painful operations when they have attacked the body. The disciples of 'Christian Science' cannot truthfully deny these facts.

Mrs. Eddy: 'You say that indigestion, fatigue, sleeplessness, cause distressed stomachs and aching heads. Then you consult your brain, in order to remember what has hurt you, when your remedy lies in forgetting the whole thing, for matter has no sensation of its own, and the human mind is all that can produce pain' (p. 165). 'When we wake to the Truth of being, all disease, pain, weakness, weariness, sorrow, sin, death, will be unknown and the mortal dream will for ever cease' (p. 219). 'Man is never sick: for mind is not sick, and matter cannot be. A false belief is both the tempter and the tempted, the sin and the sinner, the disease and its cure' (p. 393). 'To the Christian Science-Healer, sickness is a dream from which the patient needs to be awakened. Disease should not appear real to the physician, since it is demonstrable that the way to cure the patient is to make disease unreal to him. To do this, the physician must understand the unreality of disease in Science' (p. 417).

These extraordinary passages may be taken as samples of the entire contents of the book, and surely they cannot be accepted as the rational utterances of a wise and thoughtful teacher.

We may here quote an amazing story of the marvellous cure of a consumptive lady which Mrs. Eddy herself effected:—

'A woman whom I cured of consumption, always breathed with great difficulty when the wind was from the east. I sat silently by her side a few moments. Her breath came gently. The inspirations were deep and natural. I

AFFLICTIONS FINALLY REMOVED 127

then requested her to look at the weather-vane. She looked and saw that it pointed due east. The wind had not changed, but her thought of it had, and so her difficulty in breathing had gone. The wind had not produced the difficulty. My metaphysical treatment changed the action of her belief on the lungs, and she never suffered again from east winds, but was restored to health ' (pp. 184, 185).

The book abounds in such wild imaginations as these. There is no wonder that its author believed that all diseases are easily curable by the change of ideas and beliefs concerning them, and by the exercise of will—when she could with perfect calmness state such a case as this and expect it to be accepted by sober-minded people. Her ' metaphysical treatment ' could have been nothing short of miraculous, if it produced the speedy and extraordinary results which are detailed in this story ; but, no doubt, both the disease and its cure were only fancies of " the mortal mind."

AN ANCIENT PROPHECY CONCERNING AFFLICTIONS

The whole of the thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah is a charming description of a glorious future—a future in which it will be all translated into fact and history.

Part of it runs thus :—

' He shall come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.'

It was partially fulfilled, at the first coming of

128 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

Christ. In His three years of public ministry (as we have already seen) He went about doing good—teaching the laws and principles of the Kingdom of God, healing the sick, casting out demons, raising the dead, pardoning the guilty, comforting the sorrowful, scattering mercies and blessings all along the pathway of His life like precious pearls, and crowning it at last upon the Cross with the voluntary Sacrifice of Himself for our redemption, which was the greatest mercy and blessing of all. But the grand prediction of the prophet shall be still more fully fulfilled ‘when Christ shall come *the second time*, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation’ (Heb. ix. 28).

In the light of New Testament history, we can see that all the Old Testament prophecies concerning the *first* Advent were fully fulfilled ; and it is equally certain, we doubt not, that all those regarding the *second* Advent, shall also be fully and minutely fulfilled : but rightly to interpret them beforehand, may be wholly beyond our power.

THE PROMISE OF HIS SECOND COMING

The Scriptures are very numerous which refer to this, and need not all be quoted ; but a selection may be given, just to show that the promise is clear and definite :—

‘ Christ the first-fruits, then they that are Christ’s at his coming ’ (1 Cor. xv. 23). ‘ What is our hope, or joy, or

crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye before our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming' (1 Thess. ii. 19). 'To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints' (iii. 13). 'Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord; and stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand' (2 Thess. v. 7, 8). 'And now, little children, abide in him, that we may have boldness and not be ashamed before him at his coming' (1 John ii. 28).

Yes, 'Christ shall surely appear the second time, without a sin-offering unto salvation.' As Dr. Campbell Morgan has most truly said:—

"There is no escape, other than by casuistry, from the simple meaning of those words. The first idea conveyed by them is that of an actual personal advent of Jesus yet to be. To spiritualize a statement like this, and to attempt to make application in any other way than the way in which a little child would understand, is to be driven, one is almost inclined to say, to dishonesty with the simplicity of the scriptural declaration. . . . The fact of His actual coming is *beyond question*."

With this declaration we fully agree, therefore we are 'looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a people for his own possession' (Titus ii. 13, 14). It is the belief of many Christians that the Gospel will not only be preached throughout the whole world, but also that the whole world shall be saved thereby. What Jesus said to His apostles on the Mount of Olives, shortly before His death, was this: 'This

130 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD?

gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole inhabited earth, *for a testimony unto all the nations*; and then shall the end (of this Gentile age) come' (Matt. xxiv. 14). Yes, '*for a testimony*'; but there is no promise in this of a *universal salvation* by the gospel. And did not Jesus also say: 'When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find *the faith* on the earth?' (Luke xviii. 8). With multitudes of other Christians, we greatly rejoiced in *The World Missionary Conference*, held in Edinburgh in June, 1910. The perfect unity, fraternal sympathy, and holy enthusiasm, which were so freely and fully manifested in its large assemblies, were of blessed omen for the time to come. But when, at its last meeting, the conviction was expressed that—

"If the Christian Church were possessed, mastered, and dominated by the Faith which it professed, *it could easily evangelize the world*," . . . for "it was certain that its spiritual resources were more than sufficient for the accomplishment of the work, if it would avail itself of them."

We felt inclined to exclaim when we read those words: Great is your faith! Let us recognize facts. It is now the twentieth century of the Christian era, and not much more than one-third of the human race have been Christianized. And who will venture to say that all who profess themselves to be Christians are Christians indeed? In the whole world it is computed there are about 1,300,000,000 with no Christian provision made for

their religious needs. Then think of the condition of our churches in the England of to-day. Is not the Anglican Church being steadily permeated by a disloyal and childish Ritualism, which will shortly make it an easy prey for the corrupt and superstitious Church of Rome? And are not an increasing number of Free Churches receiving into their pulpits and pews the dry rot of a soulless and Christ-dishonouring Unitarianism, and the corroding and destructive power of a New Theology—which utterly misinterprets the Bible representation of the Person of the Christ, and the gospel of the Cross and Sepulchre? And are not many persons falling away from attendance at religious services, and the incomes of our Missionary Societies steadily declining? These facts do not make a good basis for the contemplated effort to evangelize and Christianize the world. And yet, the effort ought to be made, whatever success it may have. All Protestant and Evangelical Churches require to obtain a Pentecost, and be cleansed in heart and girded with power, before they can wisely begin such an enterprise; but even if they had the opportunity of doing their utmost for many years to come, the world, we fear, may still be a long way from being converted and saved, or even evangelized.

HIS ACTUAL COMING

At what exact period the great prediction of the

132 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

Second Advent shall be fulfilled, we are unable to say; and therefore dare not dogmatize. Many interpreters of prophecy have become prophets themselves, and their predictions have not always been inspired. And alas! their 'dates' and 'periods' being often falsified, have turned away many from the study of prophecy itself, and thereby greatly impoverished the Church of Christ.

Instead of giving any opinion of our own, at this point, in relation to this important matter, we prefer giving the Word of God alone. Our appeal is to the Scriptures throughout, for we lay comparatively little stress on our own thinkings concerning the coming time, but regard the declarations of Divine Revelation as faithful and true and, therefore, wholly reliable. 'We have the sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well to take heed as unto a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawn' (2 Pet. i. 19).

'A Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord' (Isa. lix. 20). And Paul interprets that great prediction thus: '*There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer*; and he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob, when I shall take away their sins' (Rom. xi. 26, 27). 'Arise and shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee' (Isa. lx. 1). 'Thus saith the Lord: *I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem*; and Jerusalem shall be called The city of truth, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, The holy mountain' (Zech. viii. 3). 'Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The

AFFLICTIONS FINALLY REMOVED 133

Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy, the King of Israel, even the Lord *is in the midst of thee* ; thou shalt not fear any more ' (Zeph. iii. 14, 15).

From all these beautiful Scriptures we may surely learn that the Second Coming of our Lord shall be personal, visible, and pre-millennial ; and as we still further pursue the matter, these great facts will continue to come into ever-clearer luminosity.

A few years ago, when we visited Jerusalem, we went to the wailing-place of the Jews, where we saw and heard many of the sons and daughters of Abraham lamenting at the disentombed foundation of the Temple. It was a pitiful spectacle. The portions of Scripture which many of them silently read, and others spoke aloud, were the following :—

' O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever ? Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture ? Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old ; which thou hast redeemed, to be the tribe of thine inheritance ; and mount Zion wherein thou hast dwelt. Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations, even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary ' (Ps. lxxiv. 1-3). ' Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever ; behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burnt up with fire : and all our pleasant things are laid waste. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Lord ? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore ? ' (Isa. lxiv. 9-12).

But the bitterest of all their weepings shall take place when their Lord comes :—

134 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

‘ I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication ; and they shall look unto me whom they have pierced : *and they shall mourn for him*, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day there shall be *a great mourning in Jerusalem*. Also, in that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness.’ They shall inquire, ‘ What are these wounds in thine hands ? ’ and he shall answer : ‘ Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends ’ (Zech. xii. 10 ; xiii. 1-6).

‘ Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.’ Hastening into His adorable presence in penitence and faith, in which there shall not remain the shadow of a doubt as to who He is, He will graciously pardon and bless them all. And then, what will happen ? Each of them will be impelled to exclaim :—

‘ I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God ; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness ; as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels ’ (Isa. lxi. 10). And, ‘ In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not ; O Zion, let not thy hands be slack. *The Lord thy God is in the midst of thee*, a mighty one who will save ; he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing ’ (Zeph. iii. 10, 11).

Through the medium of Telegraphs and Marconigrams and other instrumentalities, the glorious news will speedily pass from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth ; enkindling a large faith and a deep joy in the bosom of every godly Jew, and stirring within

AFFLICTIONS FINALLY REMOVED 135

him an ardent longing to go, without delay, to the land of his fathers. At the same time, a Divine commission will be given to a great maritime nation to go to the help of the Jewish people :—

‘ Ho, to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia : that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, saying, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth, to a people terrible from their beginning onward ; . . . and bring them ‘ to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts—the mount Zion ’ (Isa. xviii. 1, 2, 7). ‘ Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first ; to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee ’ (Isa. xl. 9). ‘ Thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his companions ; and I will put them with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick . . . And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, whither they be gone ; and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land : and *I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel ;* and one king shall be king to them all : and *they shall be no more two nations,* neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all ’ (Ezek. xxxvii. 19–22). ‘ And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord ; for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest, saith the Lord (Jer. xxxi. 34). ‘ Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever ’ (Isa. lx. 21). ‘ Behold, I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people : and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying ’ (Isa. lxxv. 19). ‘ As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you ; *and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem* ’ (Isa. lxvi. 13). ‘ *Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken,* neither shall thy *land* any more be termed Desolate ; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah : for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons

136 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

marry thee : and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee' (Isa. lxii. 4, 5). ' The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing : the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon ; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God ' (Isa. xxxv. 1, 2).

And how shall the Afflicted fare in that great millennium age ?

Christ's ministry to the sick and suffering ' in the days of his flesh,' was a wonderful manifestation of human sympathy, Divine beneficence and power ; and when He comes again, a similar manifestation on a far larger and wider scale may be witnessed. It is in connection with this Second Coming that the glorious prophecies of Isaiah and Zechariah shall be accomplished.

' The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped ; Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing ' (Isa. xxxv. 5, 6). ' Thus saith the Lord of hosts : There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof ' (Zech. viii. 4, 5). ' There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days ; for the child shall die an hundred years old, but the sinner, being an hundred years old, shall be accursed ' (Isa. lxv. 20).

The coming time shall be one of great glory and blissful experience—a golden age. But sinfulness and death shall still continue, and therefore it is

possible that afflictions may also continue—in measure. And yet, from the greatly lengthened period of mortal life, we may fairly conclude that they will be much fewer in number and less virulent in their nature and effects than we now know them to be. The devil also shall be shut up during that period of comparative blessedness (Rev. xx. 1-3), so that temptations and miseries shall be only rarely experienced upon the earth—if experienced at all. It will be the Sabbath of the world. And during that long period of peace, the saved children of Abraham shall go back, in large numbers, to the peoples amongst whom they formerly sojourned, and make known to them, with mighty effects, the glorious Gospel of Christ. What do we read?—

‘ Their seed shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples ; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed.’ ‘ Ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord : men shall call you the Ministers of our God ’ (Isa. lxi. 6, 9). ‘ Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem ’ (Isa. ii. 3). ‘ And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel ; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing : fear not, but let your hands be strong ’ (Zech. viii. 13). ‘ In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all the languages of the nations, shall even take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you ’ (v. 23). ‘ And many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people ; and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee ’ (Zech. ii. 11). ‘ The Lord said unto me, Thou art my son ; . . . Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance

138 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession' (Ps. ii. 7, 8). 'The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea' (Hab. ii. 14). 'And the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one' (Zech. xiv. 9).

THE MILLENNIAL AGE

What a magnificent period of time that crowning age of the world shall be!—a period of which many God-inspired prophets have spoken and poets sung, and in the believing anticipation of which lovers of Jesus have rejoiced through all the Christian ages—a period when health and strength shall permeate the body, and sanity rule the mind, and purity reign in the heart, and the Holy Ghost, dwelling in the spirit, shall spiritualize all its operations and outgoings and make it holy—a period of peace in the home, amity in society, unity in the churches, or Church, and harmony among all the nations of the wide, wide world—a period in which the devouring sword shall be broken and buried, and the cruel whip of the slave-driver laid aside, and the power of tyrants broken, and the horrible prisons of despotism emptied and closed—a period when the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man shall be everywhere recognized and realized, and the earth roll round one universal hallelujah of praise unto the Creator of the world, the Redeemer of our race, and the Saviour of sinners—a period when the will of God shall be done

upon the earth as it is in heaven, and when the blessedness of heaven, to a large extent, shall be experienced by all dwellers upon earth. ' I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth ' (Rev. xix. 6).

THE FIRST RESURRECTION

In the days of His flesh our Lord said to His apostles: ' Verily I say unto you, That ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel ' (Matt. xix. 28). The fulfilment of this great promise implies that the first resurrection has already taken place.

' He shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be marvelled at in all them that believed ' (2 Thess. i. 10). ' They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years, but the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. *This is the first resurrection.* Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years ' (Rev. xx. 5, 6). The first resurrection shall take place at the commencement of the millennium, and the general resurrection at its close.

THE GENERAL RESURRECTION AND DAY OF JUDGMENT

What did Jesus Himself declare?—

' The hour cometh in which all that are in the tombs shall

140 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD?

hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth ; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done ill unto the resurrection of judgment ' (John v. 28, 29). ' He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him ; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day ' (John xii. 48).

The standard of judgment for all men shall be the gospel of Christ, because all human beings shall have heard, either on earth or in Hades, the truth as it is in Jesus.

THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH

The prophet Isaiah wrote of these in the long, long ago—many centuries before the Christian era ; and his words are very wonderful : ' Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth : and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind ' (Isa. lxv. 17). And ' as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, saith the Lord ; so shall your seed and your name remain ' (Isa. lxvi. 22). And John, in his Apocalyptic vision, beheld them both in existence : ' I saw a new heaven and a new earth : for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away ' (Rev. xxi. 1). The ' heaven ' here spoken of is not the starry heaven, but the *atmospheric* heaven of the earth ; and the ' earth ' itself is not its substance of rock and soil, but its superficial condition and appearance in its present corrupted state. The

AFFLICTIONS FINALLY REMOVED 141

newness of each is not an absolutely fresh creation, as it was in the beginning ; but rather a Renewal and a Restoration, such as passes upon a human being when he becomes ' *a new creation* ' in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. v. 17). The great transformation is to be effected by fire—not such material fire as we burn in our houses, by which everything would be destroyed, but the fire-breath of God—the breath of the Eternal Love. That breath, we believe, is the atmosphere of all the heavens, and one day it will burst through from above into the earth's atmosphere, and cause that firmamental heaven to pass away ' with a great noise ' ; and also consume all the impurities of the earth itself, and *everything which is not in harmony with its own pure nature*. And meanwhile, it will not destroy the soil of the ground, nor blight the products of its fertility, nor scorch the numerous and varied lovelinesses which grow upon its bosom. It was not the Earth *as a world* which was cursed by man's fall, but only the fertile soil beneath his feet : ' Cursed is the *ground* for thy sake ' (Gen. iii. 17).

THE HOLY CITY

We read concerning Abraham, that ' he looked for a city whose architect and builder is God ' ; and also of Isaac and Jacob that ' they desired a better country, that is, an heavenly ; wherefore God was not ashamed to be called their God, and he hath

142 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

prepared for them a city' (Heb. xi. 10, 16). That 'heavenly' city shall be called the New Jerusalem, and John was privileged to see it in his great Patmos vision. It is now being built by God and His Christ in the heavenly places, and shall one day descend near to the earth. 'I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God; made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.' Did not Jesus say to His disciples:—

'In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also' (John xiv. 2, 3). And John says, 'I heard a great voice out of the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them; and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them and be their God' (Rev. xxi. 2, 3).

This city shall be glorious, far beyond all our anticipations or imaginings, although John has described it in a very graphic manner. The foundations of its wall shall be twelve in number, and on them shall be engraven the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Its wall shall be jasper, and its twelve gates twelve pearls—every separate gate one pearl: and the street of the city shall be pure gold, as it were transparent glass. There shall be no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. 'The city shall have no need of the sun, or of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb

is the light thereof.' And who shall be the happy dwellers in that wonderful city?—

' There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie ; but they only *who are written in the Lamb's book of life* ' (Rev. xxi. 27).

THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE

When the Incarnate Son of God was about to begin His earthly ministry at the Jordan, John the Baptist said to his disciples as he saw Jesus coming to him :—

' *Behold the Lamb of God*, who taketh away the sin of the world ' (John i. 29). Peter wrote : ' Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with precious blood, *as of a lamb without blemish*—even the blood of Christ ' (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). And John said : ' Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us ; and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' ' God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son ; he that hath the Son hath the life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life ' (1 John iv. 10 ; v. 11, 12).

Through the exercise of faith, the Christian became the recipient of the life which Jesus came to give (John x. 10) ; and that life, being the very life of God, is eternal both in quality and in duration. Speaking for himself and for all believers, Paul said : ' Christ is our life.' The Lamb of God is the Father's well-beloved Son. It was He who was slain in the Divine purpose, ' before the foundation of the world ' (1 Pet. i. 20) ; it was He who was led ' as a lamb to the slaughter ' (Isa. liii. 7), when He was taken to Calvary to die our death ;

144 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

and it was He who rose from the dead for our justification, and has ever since been the Lord and Giver of Life to all who put their trust in Him as their Saviour. 'He knoweth them that trust in Him,' and because their names are written on His Roll of the living ones He shall give them welcome into the Holy City. Blessed are they, and they only, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of Life. 'He that believeth on the Son of God hath the life ;' and the record of that true and holy life is laid up in Christian character, of which the Divinely-Human Judge will approve ; and shall also be manifested in its outshining glory.

ALL AFFLICTIONS FINALLY REMOVED

In the days of His flesh, as we have seen, Jesus acted as the Great Physician, and made His ministry, in large part, one of Healing. When He comes again to inaugurate the Millennial Age of a thousand years, He will heal and comfort more freely and widely than before. And then, at the end of time, *He will finally take away Sin and all its results ;* and open the gates of the glorious City of God to the holy and the glorified :—

'God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes ; and death shall be no more ; neither shall there be any mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more : the first things are passed away' . . . 'and there shall be no *curse* any more' (Rev. xxi. 4, xxii. 3).

"No sorrow and no sighing,
O world of peace undying !

AFFLICTIONS FINALLY REMOVED 145

There shall true life begin ;
No curse, no pain, no sin,
Above, around, within ;
We shall be changed."

' *Curse* ' is a very strong word—what does it express and imply ? It refers to a great moral evil which is nothing but evil, and that continually. Sin is that evil in humanity—an evil which originally resulted from lawlessness and rebellion, disobedience and self-love. It was the primal curse, and had no good in it. The word ' curse ' also implies that all the effects of sin are curses. Some of these effects are mentioned here—' mourning,' ' crying,' ' pain ' and ' death.' And many more are spoken of in the Scriptures. Indeed, they are too numerous to be catalogued here. Every form of affliction and disease, sorrow and suffering, trial and tribulation is included, and everything else which is the direct fruit of sin. Now, none of these curses were laid upon the human race by the Almighty. Sin—the causal curse—did not come from Him, neither were any of its baleful issues ordained or imposed by His decree. Curses do not come from God, but are the natural results of moral wrongdoing and the veritable ' works of the devil.' It is gloriously true that the only-begotten Son of God atoned for man's sin by the sacrifice of Himself on the cross, and also destroyed such other works of the wicked one as came in His way by His miraculous power ; and it is also true, that God by His grace, in answer to

146 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD ?

prayer, is constantly alleviating and removing the curses of natural ills, and sanctifying those who have endured them. But at the end of time, and in the experience of all His loving children who are to become dwellers in the Holy City, both sin and all its effects must be utterly and eternally destroyed. And why ? because they are all curses, and He has determined that ' there shall be *no curse any more.*'

These final declarations of the Scriptures concerning moral evil and natural ills, and the conclusions we have drawn from them, ought surely, to go a long way towards the establishment of our contention that *Afflictions do not come from God*, but are all the results of sin and the works of the devil.

What an incubus will be lifted from the minds of Christian people when they accept these truths, and are able clearly to apprehend that all the blessings of life come from God and all its curses from sin and Satan ; and also when they learn, that God by His munificent grace can turn every evil into good—with the exception of sin. To all such He will become the Infinite attraction, when thus they are delivered from all perplexity and fear in relation to His providential dealings with them.

There shall be no curse any more. What a blissful assurance is this ! In all those who have been saved and sanctified, sin shall then be utterly and everlastingly annihilated and all its effects removed for ever. Perfect health of body,

perfect sanity of mind, perfect purity of heart, perfect holiness of spirit, and perfect concord and harmony of social condition, shall be their constant and unending portion. It would be well if all the Christian sick and suffering in their own homes, and in hospitals, and most of all in the hospitals for incurables, would often try to imagine themselves as dwellers in that Holy City; that the frequent contemplation of its perfect sinlessness and painlessness, purity and peace, beauty and joy, might help them, in measure, to endure, with hopeful patience, the weaknesses and pains of their present state. And let all those also who have been burdened by deformities from their birth, or who have suffered accidents, or maimings, in the course of their life, comfort their hearts with the vision and the assurance of perfect and perpetual wholeness, in the great hereafter. Nothing shall either hurt or destroy in the lovely and blissful City of God, or in any of the heavens of the glorious future.

HEAVEN AND THE HEAVENS

The Scriptures say a good deal about Heaven, but they also frequently refer to *Heavens*; and these references seem to imply that they are not only numerous, but also that they rise from lower to higher in an ever-ascending series. Was not our Apostle permitted and privileged to sojourn for a

148 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD?

season in the *Third* Heaven? 'I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago . . . such a one caught up even to the third heaven' (2 Cor. xii. 2). And when the Lord Himself ascended, He passed through all the heavens, till He reached the throne above the heaven of heavens, where He is now seated at the right hand of the Father. 'He that descended is the same also that ascended far *above all the heavens*, that he might fill all things' (Eph. iv. 10). Now, if the saved and sanctified ones who dwell in the Holy City should by and by ascend into Heaven, their life of ascension through all the eternal future may take them from heaven to heaven for evermore—not by miracle, but by law, according to their mental and spiritual development. And as they themselves are progressively spiritualized, the heavens to which they attain may be found more and more ethereal and beautiful eternally. Their progress shall be constant and everlasting; and yet, though always coming nearer and nearer to the inaccessible glory in which God dwells they shall never come near—and why? Because they are only finite beings, whilst He is the infinite and invisible One. While radiantly shining with their own personal glory, they shall also reflect the glory of God as manifested in and through the glorified Christ; and thus they shall be clothed with Divinest splendour, and manifest the very beauty of God—a beauty which shall be everlastingly developed

into a more perfect loveliness, as their mental, moral and spiritual character is changed into the image of the glorified Lord and outshines in visible glory like His own. Did not Jesus say to His disciples concerning their future condition: 'Then shall the righteous shine forth *as the sun* in the Kingdom of their Father' (Matt. xiii. 14). And then, to crown and perfect their blessedness, they shall realize, by experience, union with God, fellowship with God, and oneness with God, as they become increasingly Godlike and find the heaven of their hearts in Him. 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty' (Ps. xci. 1). 'God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in Him' (1 John iv. 16).

OUR PRESENT PLACE AND CONDITION

Returning from this lofty flight of thoughtful imagining to our present place and state, we may well be filled with profoundest amazement and thankfulness, that such an unspeakably glorious future should be possible to every believer of the Gospel of Christ. But so it surely is! And the way to its personal realization has been clearly apprehended and beautifully expressed in these charming verses:—

"There is a way for man to rise
To that sublime abode:—

150 DO AFFLICTIONS COME FROM GOD?

An offering and a sacrifice,
A Holy Spirit's energies,
An Advocate with God :—

These, these prepare us for the sight
Of Holiness above :
The sons of ignorance and night
May dwell in the Eternal Light
Through the Eternal Love !”

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