

**THE MYSTERY OF GOD.
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My husband I completed this book shortly before his death in 1967. We knew its publication and circulation would fulfil his dearest wish.

I want to thank all kind friends who have lovingly helped towards its readiness for publication, and especially my daughter Faith for preparing the typescript. I know my husband's dedication would be: -
TO MY STUDENTS, and may I add, TO HIS MANY FRIENDS

Yours in the Lord

Phyllis H. Parker.

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FOREWORD.

It has been a pleasure to peruse the manuscript of this book and its contents have afforded much interest and profit. In reading its pages I have caught again the intonation of the author's voice, as though a tape recorder were expressing the words rather than the eyes scanning them.

"C.L."—as we called him—was a choice soul, and was the possessor of a clear intellect. His penetrating thoughts flashed with lightning speed from an agile brain. Those students who were privileged to sit before him in the College lecture room will never forget his dynamic presentation of the truth.

To know him was to love him. His earnestness in proclaiming the glories of God's Word was not the zeal of an austere man, concerned mainly about ecclesiastical dignity, but rather that of a vehement soul pouring forth the sacred truth. Far from being a cloistered monk, C.L. was a volcano, pouring out streams of molten lava.

His keen sense of buoyant humour freed him from sanctimoniousness without destroying his earnestness. He laughed, not so much at things merely funny, but at things that were great and ennobling, so profound that puny man shrank to insignificance and God became all glorious in His eternal resplendency.

This Volume is a little study from the pen of one who has now run his course; one who, being dead, yet speaketh. It could be said that his spoken words were even richer and greater than his written words, because of the Spirit's unction that always seemed to rest upon him. Since it is not possible to enjoy his oral utterances any more, we shall greatly prize the rich pages of meditation he has left us as a spiritual legacy.

To all who read these pages may we suggest that they be perused slowly and prayerfully, so that devotional rumination upon the themes expounded may produce the rich instruction and edification intended.

It is a source of satisfaction that one with such a love of God's Word, and accompanying gift of expounding it, has left us this precious deposit of truth to enrich still further the spiritual heritage his spoken words bequeathed. HOWARD CARTER, Kenley, Surrey.

PREFACE.

The only really important question in life is "What is the character of God?" Upon the answer to this question rests the whole meaning of the Creation. Why did He create at all? What have I to expect in the future? How will He treat me if I ever see Him? What am I to make of that part of the world in which I live, or of what I may know of the wider world outside? How account for evil, sorrow, suffering; above all, death?

Some have thought to evade the poignancy of these questions by denying the existence of God. Let one such thinker, qualified in every way to speak for his brethren, tell us what he makes of Life: "That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving, that his origin, growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and beliefs are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms, that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought or feeling can preserve an individual beyond the grave, that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, the inspiration, the noon-day brightness of human genius are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole Temple of Man's Achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the débris of a Universe in ruins: all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand! Only within the scaffolding of these Truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built".

This is a quotation from Bertrand Russell's book "A Freeman's Worship"! So far is atheism from providing an escape from the perplexities and problems of Religion! "Unyielding Despair" is sour food for the soul: to be but part of an accident, which is bound to end fatally, kills hope, and makes effort meaningless!

Yet if a man would turn to some religion which may seem to offer an escape from such futility, to which shall he go with any real hope? Will his heart warm itself at the fierce frown of a Buddhists' Temple God? Shall he delight himself in the unmeaning and fruitless round of Brahmin transmigrations till at long last he may sink into impersonal nothingness? Shall he spend his days and nights in turning the unanswering Prayer Wheel, or cower in fear before the menace of a cruel spirit world, or give his money to extricate his unfortunate relations a little sooner from the fires of Purgatory in the hope that his children will do the same for him? It is a fearful thing to find oneself overtaken by some evil from which there is no escape, and to realise one's helplessness in the face of an unsympathetic and powerless world and feel the true agony of loneliness and despair.

If this booklet can bring one such to the true delight of the Gospel of the Love of God its author will be more than repaid.

INTRODUCTION.

This booklet seeks not so much to argue or enter into controversy, as to expound the Truth as it is in Jesus. Truth has an enormous vitality in itself. Once seen it can never be forgotten. It may be hated, but not confuted. It is hopeless, for example, to struggle against the ten times tables! Every ray of truth carries with it a real illumination, which satisfies both heart and mind, so that we exclaim involuntarily "I was blind, but now I see". The full assurance of understanding is the magnificent goal which God has set before all who give themselves to the study of His Word. (Col. 2:2).

We are exhorted to "buy the Truth and sell it not". Yes, it is expensive; it may cost a man his life or his livelihood, his relations or his business, his career or his pleasures; and the temptation to sell it for the same price when once purchased will come in times of strain or stress. That is why men's accounts of Christianity vary so much. One man has only felt able to afford a little bit of the Truth; another will go further, and a third beggar himself completely! It is, for instance, cheaper to be a minister in a respected church organisation than to be a member of a despised sect. The Army bonnet cost a great deal more fifty years ago than it does today!

So the seeker after Truth, since he must begin somewhere, often finds himself so entangled in some traditional view of Christianity that it is next to impossible to go forward till he has extricated himself from ideas accepted without question, but also without sufficient reason. The author well remembers how in his early Christian life he found himself so confused by the different doctrines presented to him by Christians, who were obviously good, that he hardly knew what to believe. It was at this juncture that he read Psalm 1, and found there the way for his steps. God has never advised us to listen to what men have to say, but rather to dwell by the River of Living Water provided in His Word. Here He can speak to us: when we read the Gospels we find Him repeating to us the very words which He spake to His disciples. It is strange how far away from His words and interests is much that we find in current Christian doctrine and practice!

The aim, then, of this booklet is to direct the reader's mind back to the Bible, and then leave him to discover for himself from constant study of it, whether these things be so or not. To many Christianity seems very complex and difficult, and even self-contradictory. But suppose that actually it is very simple, and all hangs upon the single Truth, that God is Love!

PART I. THE MORAL BASIS OF THE CREATION.

CHAPTER ONE. THE MYSTERY OF GOD.

"Known unto God are all His works from the beginning", but only made known to His creatures as He chooses to reveal them (Eph. 3 v.3): as Isaiah said "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour". The word 'mystery' in the Scriptures has no thought in it of anything mysterious, uncanny, vague. On the contrary it was used to describe the inner religious teachings which the various pagan sects divulged to those of their members who desired to go on to perfection. The modern parallel would be the inner teaching of, for example, the Freemasons, or the spiritists. There is an inner as well as an outer circle of Christianity; all Christians are born again, but not all grow up into full stature. Some spend their lives drinking the milk of babyhood, others feast on the solid food of manhood.

From the opening pages of Scripture the Lord began to reveal Himself and as chapter was added to chapter, and later on book to book, so the revelation steadily grew for those who valued it. There was, however, a world of difference between the writer of Psalm 119 and the King of Judah who, like a modernist, cut the words of Jeremiah to pieces and burnt them. There were also passages of Scripture in the Old Testament which were sealed up and not intended to be understood till many years had passed (1 Peter 1:12; Daniel 12 v.9). Then for a long period from Malachi to Christ God kept silent concerning Himself, and Judaism willingly drifted into darker and darker ignorance and perplexity. She had her Scriptures, but her teachers had taken away the key to them (Luke 11 v.52), and the words of Isaiah 29 vv. 10-12 came to pass. The Book, which was meant to enlighten, instead misled and baffled. Yet even in those days there were those, like Simeon and Anna, who had a glimmer of light. How remarkable it is, though, that John Baptist for all his knowledge of the Scriptures and his divine mission, yet when he actually saw and heard the Son of God—doubted! (Matthew 11:2,3).

There was, however, breaking in upon the world a revelation of God so astounding as to be at first unintelligible even to those who like Nicodemus knew the Scriptures best. The Son of God Himself was to enter this earth and reveal to men the Father God with whom He had lived from eternity. So intimate was this revelation of the heart and mind of God, that even to believe it changed a man's whole outlook and nature, and made earth, his former habitat, a mere place of pilgrimage, and lifted him up from earth to Heaven as one superior even to angels, and worthy to be called the Brother of God's Son, Jesus Christ. (John 20:17).

Moses and the Prophets were faithful in all God's House as servants, and John Baptist came at the end of a long line of those to whom Jehovah spoke; but from Moses to John many prophets and kings "desired to see those things which ye see and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear and have not heard them". For there is a limit to the intimacy between master and servant, and they had but a partial knowledge of their Lord (Genesis 22:5).

But to His Brethren Christ has made known all that He Himself knew, and sent the Holy Spirit to make known all that He should hear hereafter. (Revelation 1:1): (John 16:12-13). For he that is least in the Royal Family is greater than the greatest of servants (Matthew 11:11; Hebrews 3:5-6). There will of course be many further revelations of the will of God, as the Ages of the Ages are unveiled; but never again will the Almighty speak so revealingly, so amazingly, as He did from the Cross of Calvary. There, and only there, those who believe are led further and further away from Man's idea of God, till it is as if a revolution had taken place in their hearts, and replaced the darkness of fallen nature with the Light of Life.

CHAPTER TWO. THE PLAN OF THE AGES.

The phrase in Ephesians 3:11 "the eternal purpose"—which would be more correctly translated 'the plan of the Ages'—and that other phrase, so frequently occurring, "for ever and ever"—which should be translated 'unto the Ages of the Ages'—combine to give us our first intimation that the Creation was not just like a clock which would continue ticking obediently when once it was wound up, but was rather the beginning of a vast series of events, which would continue unfolding "for ever and ever". The word 'Age' really means a portion of

time during which God is accomplishing some purpose. When that purpose is brought to its completion, then the age changes, and the Almighty begins another purpose, which in its turn is accomplished, and gives way to yet another Age.

To men living on this earth time is measured by minutes, hours, days, years. To the Eternal these puny measurements do not count; a thousand years is no more to Him than a day (2 Peter 3:8). Living far above all Heavens the mere lapse of Time is immaterial: it is His purposes only which count: and He has divided time up into Ages, or Ages of Ages; that is, a succession of His Plans, which follow each other in orderly fashion, having as an end—but there is to be no end! The Creation once begun will proceed into perfections hidden in God, without end! Eternal life is a conception beyond our grasping, an unspeakable gift!

It follows therefore that before "The Beginning of the Creation" all the processes of History were envisaged; the whole vast plan was conceived: the difficulties were faced; and the success assured. It often escapes our notice that only as we read the last two chapters of the Bible do we see the Beginning of the Real Plan. Up to then all has been preparation, mysterious, disappointing, heartrending, maybe; but then, and only then, as we gaze up on the beauties of the New Earth and the New Kingdom, and are entranced by the glory of the New Heaven, and shudder at the eternal smoke of Hell: then and only then will the Love and the Wisdom and the Power of the Almighty break upon our enraptured souls and inspire the songs of the Redeemed.

God has, however, behind this succession of Ages in the history of His dealings with mankind one single overmastering purpose, to prove to men that there is no possible way whereby they can be happy except by a determination to love God and each other. In every age God has allowed a different method of government, only to show that selfishness, and so disobedience, has brought each successive attempt to chaos and misery. In the first pre-Adamic Ages Lucifer sought his own glory and pleasure, and brought both angels and men to ruin by so doing. The sin of Adam and Eve in disobeying God and seeking their own pleasure and advancement ended in the violence of Noah's earth where everyone fought to have his own way. The silence of God after the tremendous lesson of the Flood yet ended in the defiance and misery of the great Eastern Empires from Nimrod to Pharaoh, in which the luxury of the Rulers meant the wretchedness of the ruled. The setting up of an ideal kingdom in Palestine with wise laws and true worship ended with the apostasy of the favoured Jews into ways worse than those of the surrounding heathen (2 Chronicles 36). The entry into the world of the Son of God with His revelation of perfect Love, Wisdom and Power has failed, and will increasingly fail, to tame the savagery of disobedient men. And finally even the return of Christ with all power and wisdom to set up His ideal Kingdom in Palestine and rule the earth for a thousand years with a rod of iron, will not be able to do more than keep in check through fear the selfish desires of men, which upon the temporary release of Satan from prison will spring up into a final repetition of age-long violence. (Revelation 20:7-10). Thus will the Lord have proved beyond question that there is no possible way of governing wicked men so that happiness shall reign. Sin, or selfishness, will always and everywhere bring misery. Only the final and eternal incapacitation of the wicked will enable the righteous to enjoy the happiness intended for them by God.

CHAPTER THREE. THE LAW OF LIFE.

The one ineradicable desire of men, placed there by God, is the desire to be happy. Happiness is the final good, the one justification for the Creation. It is then of vital importance to understand how it can be obtained and retained. The answer is that it is the result of loving and being loved by God, and loving and being loved by one's neighbour. In other words, there is a Law of Life, just as there are laws of mathematics, or agriculture, or cookery; and the only way to produce the desired result is to use the proper means. Happiness does not come accidentally, nor by a lucky combination of circumstances, nor by a change of location, nor even by a determination to achieve it in the wrong way. It is just as much a scientific product as is a machine or a good pudding: there is one way to achieve it, and a thousand ways to spoil it!

Everyone desires to be happy, and God desires everybody to be happy. Why then do the Ages of History tell an unrelieved story of unhappiness? The answer is simple: it is because, while everyone desires to be happy, we have all followed each other like a flock of sheep in using the wrong means to achieve this end. Happiness never comes as the result of seeking one's own pleasure, but only as a result of seeking the happiness of others. God has so arranged society that each individual ought to seek the happiness of others in the knowledge that they are all seeking his happiness. His security lies, not in his own unaided efforts, as at present, but in the desire of all around to see that he is happy. The only cement of society is mutual love. Without this it rapidly dissolves into a number of antagonistic fragments, each striving for its own satisfaction at the expense of its neighbours (cf Isaiah 32:17, 18).

The final ground of all real happiness, however, does not rest simply on the love of others for oneself; but in the settled conviction that God is love. As an historical fact it has been very difficult for man to believe this. One has only to look at the images of gods in heathen temples, e.g. in India or China, or read the stories of the gods in heathen books; nay, one need not go as far away as that, one has only to study the beliefs about God held in the various Christian sects to realise that in actual fact men have found it impossible to believe that God is even just, let alone loving, but have readily accepted the Satanic suggestion that He is cruel and not to be trusted! Christians have been able to believe that God will send an unbaptised baby, whose only misfortune has been to be born, to everlasting punishment; that God has elected men to eternal life or eternal damnation

without any reference to the condition of their souls; that God is perfectly content to let men suffer from the most fearful diseases without any desire to deliver them, in spite of the words and acts of His Son and His Apostles; or that God has condemned the whole human race for what one man, of whom the vast majority has never even heard, did! Many, many Christians would feel that it was right to say that God created the world for His own glory and pleasure! But to believe that God is love, and thus absolutely unselfish, that He has never done anything to please Himself, is fond of us personally, and longs to make us full of joy and happiness and peace, if we will only hand our lives over to Him—no, that we cannot believe. Yet this warm-hearted unselfishness, which Christ displayed upon earth, is the 'Glory of God' of which we have all come short (Romans 3:23). Men feel sure that to become a Christian means spoiling one's life, cutting oneself off from everything worth having, and playing the fool. It is this willingness to doubt God and to dread Him which has clouded the minds of men, and set them looking for life in places where it cannot be found. Out of this fatal misconception of the nature of God has sprung most of the dreadful misery which has dogged the steps of the human family.

We come then finally to the two basic principles of the happy life. We are to love The Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and our neighbour as ourself. Here is the simple and only recipe for cosmic success. Do this and live: disregard it and die. History from Eden to today is one long outstanding commentary upon the impossibility of finding happiness in any other way. As it was in the days of Noah so it is today, the earth is filled with violence, and happiness is a dream which mocks the endeavours of men to realise it. Today, more than ever, the whole world is full of fear and anxiety and hatred. We are indeed face to face with that destruction of the earth by its own inhabitants which God has foretold (Revelation 11:18). In the pregnant words of a great statesman—"We must either learn to live together or we must die together".

CHAPTER FOUR. SIN.

God then is Love, and has created a world for those who love. It is easy to imagine what vast possibilities of happiness lay in such a Creation: but we do not need imagination to bring before us the equally vast possibilities of unhappiness which lay in God's scheme. History and personal experience tell us the same tale of man's inhumanity to man, and the consequent groaning of the whole Creation. We are not, however, always ready to put the blame where it lies, nor to acknowledge the simplicity of the cure.

In one word the whole trouble lies in the selfishness of men and angels. We are perfectly free to love; every baby does it! But we are equally free to hate; every grown up has done that. There is nothing mysterious about the problem or its solution. If we love God and each other our troubles will disappear. A world that will work well with lovers in it, will fail miserably when it is peopled by haters.

God, who knew this only too well, has therefore laid down a law: "the soul that sinneth it shall die". Sin is every desire of a selfish man, who is determined to seek his own happiness at any cost to others. In the end the selfish man is not contented unless he can push his way to the top, and history is largely the record of men who climbed up on the corpses of their rivals. From Nimrod and Pharaoh to Napoleon and Hitler the same old tale is told and the final chapter of our age will record the rise and fall of the Arch-Tyrant of all, Anti-Christ.

God then laid down the moral law, not because He was a tyrant demanding obedience, but because He is a lover longing for our happiness. He hates sin, not because it annoys Him, but because it destroys us! If you will examine, for example, the Ten Commandments, you will find that men were saying them long before God wrote them! It was Abel who exclaimed with his last breath to Cain "Thou shalt do no murder": it was the first husband whose wife betrayed him who cried "thou shalt not commit adultery"!

In other words, our desire for happiness inevitably leads us to forbid the actions which obviously threaten it. Morality is not an end in itself, but the means to the supreme end of life, happiness. The great condemnation of sin is, not that it breaks a law but that it destroys peace of mind and security. The moral law is the custodian of our happiness, and consequently since God seeks our happiness He stands firmly behind the Law which alone can procure it. Neither God nor man has any particular liking for Law as an end in itself. That sort of attitude produces the self-righteous Pharisee who delights in laying burdens upon men's backs instead of sharing them!

God also knew, what on the whole men deny, that it makes all the difference to a man's life what he thinks about God. The man who thinks there is no God is faced with the 'unyielding despair' of Bertrand Russell, the philosopher: the man who is a practising Buddhist or Hindu or Roman Catholic is afraid of Death or Purgatory: the man who believes in a spirit world is afraid of life, and spends his days trying to placate his unseen enemies. It is only the man who believes that God is Love who can face life with peace, and death with joy! The fool says that it doesn't matter what a man's religion is; one is as good as another. The man who uses his eyes sees that it makes all the difference what a man believes about God, and can contrast the cruelty of Islam, the licentiousness of Hinduism, or the vileness of spiritism with the peace, joy and cleanness of Biblical Christianity.

The first four commandments of the Bible will spring to the lips of the man who studies the 'gods' of the heathen from Moloch and Baal to Venus and Astarte, from the idols of China to those of Africa. For wherever men have made images of God they have poured into them all the cruelty and lust of Satan and his angels. For it is Satan who is the God of this world, and has inspired the multitudinous religions of this world. It is Jesus of Nazareth, dying on the Cross and raised from the dead, who is the Light of this world. All other 'gods' are children of darkness, and lead their dupes into darkness, and fall into the torment of Hades together.

The heinousness of Sin, therefore, lies not simply in a single wrong action, but in its inevitable consequences. We recognise this readily when we are dealing with leprosy, or foot and mouth disease, or fowl pest. We dread them, not simply for themselves, but because of their contagious properties. We see, not one sick animal or bird, but a whole country infected; not just one spot but a whole body rotted. Cain's murder filled the whole earth with violence; Ananias and Sapphira brought suspicion into the whole Early Church; one theft in the office brings all the staff under suspicion; one burglary puts a lock on every door, and apprehension in every heart.

CHAPTER FIVE. FREE WILL.

We have seen, then, that it is the misuse of our free will which has caused all the trouble in the world. It turned Lucifer into Satan, the 'harmless' painter of Austria into the Tyrant of Europe. Yet without a will of our own we cease to be capable of all that we know as humanity. The problem therefore that lay before the Almighty was how to secure that a free will should always will lovingly, even though it was possible for it to do the opposite. In other words, how to bring a free will to a voluntary fixation of purpose, so that it would never turn to evil. Evil does not exist as a separate entity; it was not created by God, but is simply the result of an attitude of our own mind. When the mind changes that attitude to one of love, evil disappears. Selfishness is, and always was, a permanent possibility of the mind, but need never have been an actuality of history at all. It is impossible to avoid temptation, not even desirable, for it is by continuous rejection of its lies that the will achieves final and unchangeable hatred of evil, and love of good.

Every argument of logic is against sin; it is obviously better to have everyone as one's friend rather than one's enemy! It is madness to provoke an Almighty God by shaking one's puny fist at Him, when one might have Him for a loving Father and Helper! There is indeed something within one, which tells the sinner to hide his sin. Only the hardened criminal boasts of it. The first sin is always concealed if possible, or excused. God has not created us so that it is sin which brings happiness. To take an extreme illustration, it is not the underworld which is the happy world! Sin may give momentary satisfaction, but in the end so hardens the heart that it becomes incapable of happiness and peace of mind.

In this matter of sin, therefore, God has made it plain that He has to deal with a flock of silly sheep, who follow one another over the same precipice, and come to the same awful end. Everyone who leaves God becomes a fool, walking in the ignorance of darkness, and not realising the end of his steps. Adam had no idea that his 'one little sin' would in a few hundreds of years lead to a world of universal violence. The man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath day in the wilderness did not foresee a Jerusalem which would have its weekly rest undermined by hordes of Tyrian traders (Nehemiah 13:15-22). The selfishness of one always awakens the latent selfishness of others, till the struggle for life is universal and hard. The so-called Christian countries of Europe did not realise that their forsaking of the ways of Jesus would bring upon them the dread of the hydrogen bomb and an unimaginable future.

Because we all go astray like fools it has not been enough for God to put into the world a Book which speaks as to wise men. That Book too often lies unopened, despised, derided, contradicted. We are shown in the parable of the Prodigal Son, God's second arrow, shot into the ears of fools, the arrow of hard experience. If God has allowed the sad ages of history to pursue their unhappy course, it is not because He is unmindful of earth's sorrows. Nay, in all our afflictions He is afflicted. It is because it was only the disillusionment of life in the far country, which brought the fool to his senses, and so back to his father. God has treated this earth as a prodigal son, that the miseries of a sinful life might drive it to its knees in repentance and faith.

There is, however, a third arrow which may succeed when both the others have failed. At Calvary God has shown to mankind the depths of His love. Love will often succeed where truth and commonsense fail, and God's last effort has been to draw with the cords of a man, and that man His own Son, of whom His enemies said during His lifetime 'Behold, the world is gone after Him'. There is nothing so strong as the fixation of an eternal love. Many a man has been changed by the love of a woman; the love of God is yet more powerful and lasting.

CHAPTER SIX. CALVARY.

There flow from the Cross of Calvary two broad streams of Truth which together can wash the soul of man and change his whole outlook upon the Creation. The first of these streams can be called 'The Majesty of the Law'; the second 'The Love of God'.

1. The Majesty of the Law.

In all human society Law is given a high place. Even the most primitive tribes have their social and moral customs which are strictly observed. It has been found by experience that social life must be regulated by

social laws. Nowhere is murder a duty, nor theft encouraged. The reason is of course that where there is no law there is no security, and when there is no security there is no happiness. Everywhere therefore Law is honoured as the basis of a settled social life, and everywhere the law-breaker is punished, that law-breaking and its consequent inconveniences may be abolished. It is the policeman, not the burglar, who enables us to sleep in our beds at night! Wherever Law is despised, and justice flouted, there is cruelty and sorrow and apprehension.

Yet, when we come into contact with God, it is His Law that offends us! Rather do we expect a God of Love to be lenient and accommodating. God could not be so cruel as to send the sinner to Hell, we say. Yet, if the earthly judge refused to send the burglar to prison because he 'loved' him, there would soon be an outcry! We expect the earthly judge to be exact in his duties, and to put the happiness of society, with which he has been entrusted, first: but when the Lord God says "The wages of sin is death" and "the soul that sinneth it shall die" we are offended at His severity, and feel sure that He doesn't mean it. Ecclesiastes 8:11 puts our attitude exactly, "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil". Paul clinches the whole matter in Romans 2:1-10. God's long-suffering is meant to lead us to repentance, but, as in Pharaoh's case, we take advantage of it and imagine that God does not mean what He says. The few times when judgment has immediately fallen, as with Adam, or Achan, or Ananias are forgotten in the ocean of God's forbearance. Yet God means exactly what He says, and in the last judgment all the world will be found to be guilty before God. It is easy to imagine how hopeless we should feel if we knew that God did not really mind sin, and did not intend ever to put an end to it. The worst nightmares of unbelieving but far-seeing scientists would be upon us!

It is good if here we emphasise again the reason for the Majesty which surrounds the Law. It is because the Law of Love is the custodian of the world's happiness. It is the one and only possible way whereby we can live together in happiness. It is because the law-breaker threatens the peace of society that the judge puts him where he can do so no longer! Christ came into this world "to magnify the Law and make it honourable" (Isaiah 42:21). "Think not", he said, "that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5:17-18). Jesus defined Love as law-keeping (John 14:21), and sent out His Apostles to teach their converts "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you". No unbeliever is justified by the Law, for all have broken it; but when the two believers Ananias and Sapphira broke the Law without repentance, they died. If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins; but Achan and his family hid theirs overnight, and perished.

The final honouring of the Law came when the Son of God, the Creator of all men, acknowledged its claims upon His creatures, and died in their stead, that all men and angels should for ever know that "the soul that sinneth it shall die". Calvary took away from all men any hope they might have of breaking the Law with impunity. Not until the majesty of the Law had been upheld and its just claims satisfied could even God Himself save a single sinner. Law broken without retribution means Law despised, and society in chaos. Law despised means that happiness has flown out of the window, never to return. By His death on the Cross Christ established the Law (Romans 3.31) in its great simplicity—"the soul that sinneth it shall die".

In God's sight obedience to His commandments stands before everything else. Obedience is sometimes easy, sometimes hard, but it is always essential. His only Son, who had obeyed in Heaven where it was easy, came down to earth and learned how hard obedience can be by the things that He suffered (Hebrews 5:8), and came to the place when even in the deepest anguish He could say "I delight to do Thy will, O my God". God does not ask success, no man can command that, but He does demand obedience, for that is in the power of us all.

God therefore has taken His Son and nailed Him to the Law's Gibbet that all men may know for ever that the Law is supreme, and kills all who flout it. Broken Law means dead sinner. If we live after the flesh we shall die (Romans 8:13).

2. The Love of God.

Love is a word which has been so debased that it can mean anything, from an adulterer's lust to the indulgence of a lazy parent. Its root meaning, however, is a desire for a person's companionship for their sake; a desire to make someone else happy in the true sense, if possible by being present with them, but if necessary by sacrificing oneself for them. When applied to God it is not sufficient to say that He is loving, but that He is Love: i.e. that loving interest in others is His whole nature, and that all His actions and emotions spring from this one source, the desire for the happiness of others. If He is angry, for example, it is because others are being ill-treated, not Himself.

This point needs pressing to its logical end, since nearly all Christian Theology has quietly taken it for granted that He is selfish. For instance, the Authorised Version mistranslation of Revelation 4:11 "Thou has created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created" is usually taken for the purest orthodoxy. Whereas, if it were true, we should have a selfish personage at the head of the Creation; yet it has seemed obvious to men that, as all powerful men put themselves first, an Omnipotent God will naturally do the same!

The correct translation is of course that given in the Revised Version—"For Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed and were created". The phrase 'the Divine Right of Kings' has enshrined this dangerous lie, and given a twist to Christian thinking from which it rarely escapes. The glorious truth is that God is perfectly unselfish, and has never done anything to please Himself; and that His Son, the image of His Father, "pleased not Himself" (Romans 15:3). This is the glory of God of which we men have come short. We could not, of course, be magnificent nor powerful nor wise like God, but we could be loving, as every mother knows!

This is the second and greater River of Life that flows from Calvary. We see that the Lord God is personally fond of us all, that He is completely absorbed in His Creation, and follows even the fifth sparrow with His eye. His delights have always been with the Sons of Men (Proverbs 8:31), and from them He deigns to form a company to be known as His Son's Bride, a figure which describes the greatest possible intimacy and satisfaction.

Righteousness and Justice are necessary plants in the World's Garden, but they cannot bear its choicest fruits. It is only the Tree of Perfect Love that can fully satisfy, and more than satisfy. The revelation of the Love of God for us leads us into such heights of thought and feeling as seem almost inconceivable, as we realise that God desires, not just to save us from destruction, but to lead us to the glory of a Heavenly Throne (Luke 22:29-30; Revelation 3:21). David said that it was God's gentleness that had made him great (Psalm 18:35). The last attribute that the world ascribes to God is gentleness, for their God is Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4), and He is cruel and fierce. Actually, however, God is meek and lowly and understanding and forgiving, and longs to give us rest to our souls (Matthew 11:29). We can put our whole confidence in Him, for if He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, we can be sure that there is no good thing that He will not give with Him. We find ourselves in the position of beggar boys, who have been adopted by a King and put into training for high office in his kingdom. Daniel, the prisoner of war; Joseph the slave, had similar experiences of life, and shall God be less magnanimous and surprising than Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh? God's ambitions for those who love Him are limitless, and only as the Ages of Eternity roll on shall we learn the full story—nay, the tale will never be finished, but will go on unfolding and unfolding!

These two streams of Truth must then flow together in our souls. God's Love does not mean that we can break His Law with impunity, nor does His Law leave us in a hopeless place of guilt. God's love paid the price of our sin, but not in order that we might continue in sin, but instead that, being set free from sin and its penalty, we might never sin again, but live a righteous life. God's Law and its essential Majesty keep us from making the deadly mistake of thinking that He is too kind to punish sin. On the contrary it is His Love, which laid down the Law of Love, without which happiness would be unattainable. As Psalm 85:10 points out, "Mercy and Truth are met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other". The fear of God's justice is tempered by the realisation of His Love. His Love is safeguarded from the danger of abuse by the terror of His Justice (2 Corinthians 5:11). At Calvary both Love and Justice meet, and together produce a heart set against sin, and ravished with Love and Gratitude. Here, and here alone, is the foundation of Eternal Bliss. The mind is satisfied, the will is fixed, and the heart is filled with joy and peace.

CHAPTER SEVEN. HELL

We have seen that the Law is the custodian of social happiness, and that, where it is broken, happiness disappears and apprehension takes its place. We have also seen that God delays the punishment of sin in order to give an opportunity for repentance. But what is to be done with the finally unrepentant, with those who love evil and all the pleasures of sin, and care nothing for the happiness of others, but even enjoy the discomfiture of the innocent?

In our own country the habitual criminal has forced the Law to invent a sentence called Preventive Detention. This is a sentence, not so much for any specific act, but upon a criminal mind which has convinced the judge the sinner intends to continue in his course of crime, so that there is no real hope of him changing his way of life. In other words the Free Will which comes to a fixation of criminal purpose brings the Law to a corresponding fixation of righteous purpose. Eternal sin is so utterly dangerous to the happiness of society that it cannot possibly be endured. It is in the power of the sinner to wreck, and to keep wrecked, the whole plan of the Creation, and to bring about upon the universe eternal misery instead of eternal happiness. It therefore becomes the duty of God to safeguard the success of His plan and the prosperity of the righteous, and leaves Him with no alternative but to prevent the sinful will from having any opportunity of putting its desires into action. This He will do by destroying the body of the sinner, and thus keeping his soul in solitary confinement. It is impossible to prevent him wanting to do evil: only the sinner himself could do that: but he can be prevented from doing what he wants. And this the Lord God will do out of Love for the righteous. When once our wills have finally chosen love or selfishness, the Lord will be brought to His final judgment of us, and we shall pass either into His Kingdom or into His prison. The happiness of God's people will depend upon the security of God's jail! We are shown in Scripture (Revelation 20:7-10) that when Satan, after spending a thousand years in God's prison, is again released for a short time, it is not long before he has undermined the peace of the Millennium, and brought about the last catastrophe which God will allow to plague the earth.

People often speak of Hell as if it were too cruel to be true. The truth is the exact opposite, that it is our one hope of unbroken happiness. It is not Hell that is cruel, but its prisoners, who are determined to gain their own desires at the expense of others, unless they are prevented. Were the wicked to be allowed eternal liberty then we would have nothing to expect but an eternal continuation of the griefs and sorrows which this earth has known for so many thousands of years. What relief did the deaths of Mussolini and Hitler bring to millions of souls, and what apprehension is in the world today at the lives of those who still threaten us with modern war! So long as the wicked are at liberty the souls of men are in constant anxiety, such as now pervades the earth. The Lord has allowed sinners such apparent liberty to wreck this earth and satisfy their own evil desires in order that all may be fully satisfied that Hell is not only justified but is their only hope of security. There will never be any desire that Hell might be emptied of its prisoners, but only an eternal thankfulness that at last peace and happiness will reign undisturbed.

It may be helpful here to point out that God is in no way responsible for Hell, any more than the earthly judge is to blame for the wretchedness of prison life. So far as He is concerned it would never have existed at all. It is not even sin that is to blame for it, but only defiant unrepentant sin which cannot give happiness even to its owners, but only hardness of heart and bitterness of mind! The sinner can bring himself to such a state of mind that even in heaven he would be miserable, so that God can do nothing to help him even if He would, but can only prevent him spoiling the happiness of others. It should also be understood that Hell is not a place where Satan and his angels and demons can torture people to their hearts' content. Satan is not the King of Hell but is its victim. The torture of Hell will arise from its inmates' eternal inability to satisfy their evil desires. The absence of opportunity to repeat the evil acts of their life will be their torment, and the eternal despair of wicked desires which will never again be gratified. Perhaps we may see in a paralytic stroke the best illustration of death and Hell. The victim is left conscious, and also realising that no one can help him, so that never again will he be able to do what he has done in the past. The future stretches before him as a ghastly inactivity filled with torturing memories and well-founded despair.

There are those who speak as if the Lord God could send souls to Hell for eternity because of what Adam did, or because the minister failed to arrive in time, or because they were not in the number of the elect. The very simple truth is that God would be profoundly wicked if He sent anyone to eternal punishment except for one single crime, eternal sin. Eternal punishment, awful as it is, is the only answer to eternal refusal to repent. For the alternative, to give the sinner eternal liberty to go on wrecking the universe, is even more awful. God is Love and is not willing that any should perish, and finds no pleasure in the death of the sinner. Indeed He has at His own expense made such a provision that no one need ever perish. But he is bound by His Love for others to safeguard them eternally against the malignity of those who love evil and hate good.

Finally in Matthew 11:20-24 Our Lord reveals that at that last and awful judgment day He will take into account not only what a man actually did, but what he would have done under better circumstances: and in John 15:22-25 He shows the nature of the final and unforgivable sin. It is only those who when they see God and His works hate Him, who are beyond hope of redemption. So long as repentance is possible hope is possible. It is only Eternal Sin which baffles even the Almighty, and seals the sinner's irrevocable sentence:— Too Dangerous to Live!

There remains but one question which always arises whenever the terrible fact of Hell is preached. It is this: if it be true that God cannot bring the wicked to repentance why does He not annihilate them? The answer to this inevitable question is two-fold. Firstly, if annihilation were the worst that the sinner had to fear then there would be many who would be tempted to pay this small price for their sinful pleasures: whereas the awfulness of Eternal Punishment has frightened many from their life of sin, and brought them to repentance and Eternal Life, as they considered whither their feet were leading them. In the second place we are told that the smoke of Hell will always be visible in the New Creation, and there are those who are "scarcely saved" (1 Peter 4:18) and only kept from slipping into sin again by the eternal reminder of its wages! So the sight of the prison walls has deterred many from a life of crime, as they are constantly reminded of the price to be paid by a law-breaker (Isaiah 34:10; Revelation 14:9-11; 21:8).

PART II. THE HISTORICAL OUTWORKING OF THE PLAN OF THE AGES.

CHAPTER ONE. THE PRE-CREATION COUNCIL.

Perhaps the most dangerous and yet most common misconception about God is that His Almighty Power and Godhead put Him above any moral restraint, and that because He is God He can "please Himself" and "do what He likes with His own". But this is the description not of the Christian God, but of a Tyrant, who by virtue of his power rides roughshod over his subjects, and deals with them according to his own interests. But the amazing thing about God is that the exact opposite of this is true of Him, and that the only things He likes to do are loving things for the good of others, even at His own expense! Because He is righteous He must treat all with absolute impartiality and justice, for as Jehoshaphat said, "There is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts" (2 Chronicles 19:7). God Himself is by His own nature bound by the Law of Righteousness, which He has laid down for others, for example in the Ten Commandments; and this Law His Son made honourable at the expense of His own life (Isaiah 42:21).

But further, if it be true that the Law of Justice binds God in all His actions, what are we to say when we consider the effect upon Him of His heart of Love? God is not merely loving, but Love (1 John 4:8)! That means that all His actions and emotions spring from a single-minded desire for the companionship and happiness of others. Justice only goes one mile, Love gladly trudges two or ten! There is a limit to the demands of Justice: an eye for an eye, duty squarely faced. There is no limit to the demands of Love upon its owner: duty is left standing, and grace goes bounding on! There is no power in the world for dictating a man's actions like the power of Love. Love does not stop when Justice has been satisfied. The first thought of duty kills Love, which only begins to live its life when duty is left behind, and loving-kindness takes its place. It is the difference between a housekeeper and a wife! Marriage has failed when husband and wife only "do their duty".

And so it was with the Almighty. Creation sprang, not out of duty, nor out of power, nor even out of wisdom, but out of Love. God created, not because of anything that He could get out of it, not as an interesting experiment, but solely from a desire to put into it all that He had, even His Life, if thereby He could see an eternal Kingdom of happy beings where before there were only the empty spaces of infinity! The Authorised Version mistranslation of Revelation 4:11 "for Thy pleasure they are and were created", corrected in the Revised Version to "because of Thy will they exist and were created", sprang out of the old hateful misconception of a King as a Being whose subjects had no rights and owed Him everything, while He had no duties to them but put Himself first.

Our Lord corrected this devilish idea in Luke 22:24, "and there was strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And He said unto them 'The Kings of the Nations exercise Lordship over them; and they that exercise authority over them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you let him be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am amongst you as he that serveth'." And in Luke 12:37 Our Lord shows that this situation will be eternal, "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you that He shall gird Himself and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them". With such words the Lord painted the picture of a true king as one who puts the happiness of His creatures before His own, like the shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep.

The Almighty does of course guard His own position and glory, but purely for the sake of His subjects. As an officer responsible for the happiness of the world, He insists upon due respect and obedience: for where the Law is despised peace and security take flight. But as an individual He washed men's feet, was born in a stable, had nowhere to lay His head, and will again gird Himself and serve us at His Heavenly Table!

CHAPTER TWO. THE HOLINESS OF GOD.

We are therefore told in many places of the decision to which the Trinity came before the creation was begun (John 1:1-13; 17:5 and 24; Romans 16:25, 26; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:4; 3:5, 9-11; 2 Timothy 1:9,10; Titus 1:2; 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8 & 17:8). The whole plan of the Ages was discussed, the cost of the enterprise understood, the dangers and difficulties foreseen, the steps to be taken to counter them laid down, and the final victory assured. The possibility of sin was recognised and its costly overcoming provided for: the sorrows and griefs of God, angels, men and creatures were not forgotten, but it was recognised that the joys of Eternity were well worth the sufferings of a few years, if this was the price that must be paid (2 Corinthians 4:17,18; Romans 8:18).

At this point it may be helpful to consider the crisis that arrives in the life of all Sons of God, when after their salvation they realise for the first time that they are "saved to serve". It may come as a call to the Mission Field, to the Ministry, to the Open Air Service, the Sunday School class, the life of prayer, the unwelcome yoke: but however it comes it revolutionises the whole outlook. Here is a call, to be accepted or rejected, to lose one's life, one's career, one's aims for the sake of others; here is the first realisation that we are saved not to please ourselves but to take our place in the Family Business! Here is the danger-point in the Christian life, and very often the challenge is quietly evaded. Nothing is said, but the decision is made not to put oneself out, but rather to take all one can for oneself. This is the hour of holiness or sanctification, the day when God puts the facts before us and calls for a decision (John 17:17-19). Holiness or sanctification, both translations of the same word, do not only, or even primarily, mean purity. Our Lord needed sanctification (John 10:36; John 17:19), but He never needed purity, for He was always perfectly pure. Holiness, or sanctification, carry the meaning of consecration or setting apart for service, like the bells on the horses, or the pots in Jerusalem. (Zechariah 14:20,21). They were set apart for God's purposes, and should only be used for that! Holiness as a Christian term means the devotion of a lover to those he loves. It is a denial of personal aims or ambitions, and absorption in ministering to others.

So our Lord came down to earth, not like the Angels of Genesis 6 because He wanted something for Himself, but wholly for our sakes and to do His Father's will. It was equally for our sakes that He went back to Heaven (John 16:7) to send the Holy Spirit to take His place, and to act as our High Priest, and not at all to escape from a dangerous battlefield!

This exact crisis entered into the hearts of the Trinity, when the Father proposed "The Plan of the Ages" (Ephesians 3:11 Greek). Here Father, Son and Spirit had before them a project which, if proceeded with, would revolutionise their lives, bringing hard work, eternal responsibility, sorrow upon sorrow, hatred, suffering and betrayal, even death into their experience, which had hitherto known nothing but the joy of each other's company. The Father was proposing that all three should lay themselves upon the altar of self-sacrifice, and that too for thousands of years, simply in order that countless numbers of beings, who were not even in existence, and never need be, should spend the Ages of Eternity in bliss, which they would never miss, if they were never created! We know the answer they all gave, as they donned the uniform of sacred duty. We gaze upon the Throne under which (Ezekiel 1) and above which (Isaiah 6:1-3), the Almighty placed the Cherubim and Seraphim with their ceaseless call for consecration, those living creatures, which in Heaven represented the four-fold creation of earth, so utterly dependent upon the love, patience and self-sacrifice of their Creators: and hear God's appeal to ourselves, "Be ye Holy for I am Holy".

As our study proceeds we shall find ourselves from time to time face to face with the very simple fact, that the Universe will never prosper until all within it who are free are as determined to make a success of it as are the Trinity. The Holiness of God is not sufficient by itself to bring success: He needs all His creatures to be holy too, to have that consecration to the demands of Love, without which no man will be able to look at God, but will cower away at the realisation of his own selfishness. The usual thought, even amongst Christians, is that, if only God would take us all to Heaven all would be well. Whereas the fact is that it was in Heaven that sin and unhappiness and selfishness began and set the Angels at that mortal conflict with each other, which has lasted to this day! (2 Chronicles 18:20; Daniel 10:13; Ephesians 6:10-12; Revelation 12:7-9). If Angels fight in Heaven so could men! Sin is not the result of surroundings, but the shaper of them. The simple fact is that the root of all unhappiness, whether in Heaven or on earth, is selfishness, the desire to have something for oneself. Men hate God because He insists upon practical unselfishness (Luke 10:37). Yet happiness can only come when all selfishness is ended, either by repentance or the eternal prevention of Hell. In other words, God is Love, and He created a world for lovers, and it cannot work successfully in any other way.

CHAPTER THREE. THE CENTRAL CHRIST.

There is, however, a sense in which Jesus, the Son of God, took the central place in this Pre-Creation Council, since everything depended upon His consent. The plan of the Father was glorious but fragile, for one sinner could bring it to ruin—indeed this is precisely what was done by Lucifer—and, unless there had been a way out of this difficulty, God could never have embarked upon the scheme at all. For, as Our Lord was to say later on to all who thought of beginning a new venture, "Sit down first and count the cost". And the cost of the Creation was to be the shameful death of One who should restore the Mystery of the Law of Love, broken by the disobedience of His Creatures, and should have laid upon His own back the sin of all and the punishment of all.

To this fearful adventure the Heavenly Father was calling His Beloved Son. If He were willing to be crucified, then the dead should live eternally, and, as it were, owe all to Him, and be in a special way His own spoil, wrested from the Enemy, and from among them should come His own personal possession, His blood-bought Bride (Revelation 19:7). We are shown a human parallel to this primeval scene in that betwixt Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah in Genesis 22. The actual description is bald in the extreme; but as we clothe the skeleton we can see some of its poignancy. How difficult for Abraham to disclose his purpose to Isaac, how deep the shock to Isaac at its first impact, how difficult for him to accept the dread challenge! "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me" must have been the cry of Jesus and Isaac alike; and the common experience of anguish and yet pride in the possession of such a son made Abraham "The Friend of God" in a unique degree. Men are accustomed to think of the Almighty as if He was happily living in serene contentment and pleasure in all the delights of Heaven, unmoved by, and scarcely aware of, the sufferings and joys of His unhappy earth. But that is because we read the Bible with unseeing eyes and shut hearts. "Now will I cry like a travailing woman, I will cry, yea roar". "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together". "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" and a thousand similar passages tell a different tale, of a God of quick and deep feelings, wholly absorbed in the condition of His Creation, partaker of their joys and sorrows, delighted at their triumphs, cast down when they fall, disgusted at their animality and cruelty, but putting away Noah, Daniel and Job in the innermost recesses of His heart.

As, therefore, the Lord before the Creation lifted the Cross upon His shoulder, and carried it until the day on which it carried Him, so did Father and Spirit consecrate themselves wholly to this high adventure, and join Him in a holy fellowship cemented by a common suffering, and a common determination, and a common expectation of a common reward, a Creation happy and eternal. For from the moment that the final decision was taken in that Pre-Creation Council, the Trinity was completely devoted to the happiness of their creatures and gave up for ever their Pre-Creation Life, never to return to it, but instead entered upon an unending sequence of "Ages", (cf. 1 Timothy 1:17 Greek; Romans 16:25-27 Greek) each with its own interests, its tasks, its joys, its developments, its difficulties and sorrows. To join in this wonderful adventure is the privilege of all who shall sit with God upon a Throne.

CHAPTER FOUR. THE PRE-ADAMIC AGES.

When we open the book of Genesis we are met in the second verse with a ruined, frozen earth without life or inhabitant or light, and later on with a fallen Angel, Satan, in the lower Heaven with access to the earth. No explanation is given in Genesis of how this condition of things came to pass, but the picture is painted in broad outline in Job 38:4-15; Isaiah 14:12-15; Jeremiah 4:23-26; Ezekiel 28:13-19; Luke 10:18; Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 1:16 and Revelation 12:7-9. From these passages the following facts emerge:

1. The Creation of the Heavens.

The Heavens were created before the earth, not for God, who is far above all Heavens, but for the Angels (Ephesians 4:10). Of the surpassing beauty of the Heavens we get a glimpse in Ezekiel 28 and Revelation 21. The Angels too were beautiful. Also they were mortal Beings capable of wisdom or folly. There also seems to have been a period of unspecified duration in which the Angels were instructed by their Creator, for wisdom must be learnt. The result of this was that Lucifer surpassed all in wisdom and brightness and glory, being next to the Throne of God. These all lived together with God in love and enjoyment. Is it fanciful to suppose that as their education proceeded they were made aware that God was educating them for a high purpose which was not yet visible, even as today God is training His Royal Family of Kings and Priests to take charge of a New Heaven and a New Earth which have not yet been created? In any case the vast scope of the Heavens with its enormous, and maybe expanding, number of Heavenly bodies, must have aroused curiosity in their minds, and the realisation that Lucifer occupied a position of the closest proximity to the Son of God, being the anointed Cherub that covereth.

2. The Creation of the Earth.

The time came, however, when God took His second step, and before the astonished and delighted gaze of the Angelic Host created the Earth! They shouted for joy, we are told (Job 38:7), when they saw before their eyes their life's work, for which they had been brought into being. Everything had been carefully prepared by God, and they found themselves divided into different ranks, Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, Powers (Ephesians 1:21) with Lucifer at their head.

Of this Pre-Adamic world there is no written history, but buried in the earth are the relics of a creation of surpassing beauty. There must have been at that time a sub-tropical climate over the whole earth; for mammoths, which can only live where there is green food in tropical abundance, eating as they do half a ton per day per mammoth, flourished by the thousand in what is now Siberia! Yet they were frozen so suddenly that the food they were eating at the time has remained fresh in their mouths and stomachs until today, and their flesh when dug up is also as fresh as it was on the day of their sudden death thousands of years ago! Coalfields also, which are the product of similarly luxuriant vegetation, have but lately been found under the ice of the Polar regions! The remains of human beings also have been found buried in the Pre-Adamic earth at various places!

3. The Fall of Lucifer and Decay of the Earth.

How long this Creation continued in its perfection we do not know and cannot even guess, though many have put forward such guesses as if they were scientific facts. We do, however, know from Isaiah 14:12 and Ezekiel 28:11-19 that it was pride in his success and ability in his position as Governor that turned Lucifer, the bringer of Light, into Satan the lying slanderer, maybe millions of years after he was created; and finally, again perhaps after Ages of Time, brought the earth to the ruin described in Genesis 1:2 and Jeremiah 4:23-26. We may well remember that Noah's Flood was preceded by the production of giants, that is, outsize men, fierce and cruel, by the angels of Satan (Genesis 6:4). This forced the Almighty to wipe out the whole race of earth-dwellers, except Noah, who believed in God, and his family. So, since it seems impossible to imagine God as the Creator of the fierce creatures of the Pre-Adamic world, the pterodactyls, brontosauri, dinosaurs, etc. whose remains lie buried in the earth, we may well believe that they too were the loathsome work of Satan and his fellow angels, who despised, then, as later, the creation of God, and set about providing something stronger, fiercer, more like themselves; for by this time the war between Michael's angels and Satan's had already begun (Revelation 12:7-10; cf. Daniel 10:13). Already Satan had conceived that relentless antagonism to the Son, the angels and the people of God, that is to end in his final captivity in Hell (Revelation 20:1-10).

4. The Destruction of the Earth.

In Job 38:12-15 is a description of the sudden catastrophic calamity which overtook the first earth, and sank it with all its inhabitants, human and animal, beneath the dark and frozen waters of Genesis 1:2 (without form and void, i.e. "an empty wreck"). And in Ezekiel 28:12-18 we see the first of a long line of Satanic empires which, passing later through Egypt, Babylon, Rome, India, China etc. will find its final goal in the world empire of Anti-Christ, described in Revelation Chapters 13, 17 and 18. Wherever love is found men live together as in Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32-37. Selfishness has an equally inevitable finale, such as is found in Genesis 6:11-13 or Revelation 13. Men must either form a loving society or else fall under the domination of "wild beasts" (Daniel 7:1-7) like Sennacherib and Ghenghis Khan, or Napoleon and Hitler.

As these words are being written mankind is face to face with the most fearful threat to its happiness that it has ever known. It used to be only those who were dubbed 'hysterical hot-Gospellers' who talked about the destruction of the world. Now every level-headed politician and 'intellectual giant' is threatening us with it and devoting his efforts to averting it! It is a solemn thought that every soul is moving inevitably towards perfect

goodness or absolute selfishness: the soul's journey may include some sudden twists and turns, but will finally fix its compass Due North or Due South, to love or selfishness, to glad obedience to God or hatred of His ways. Ideas of world domination or even space dominion are already in men's minds and on their tongues, as were similar thoughts behind "the tower whose top may reach unto Heaven" of Genesis 11:4. The last "Wild Beast" of all is about to emerge upon the stage of history, and seek to gather all nations under his despotic rule, even fighting against the "Prince of Princes," only to be "broken without hand" (Daniel 8:25).

We know not how long it was from the first sin of Lucifer until God was compelled to end the sufferings of a defiant race. But in Ezekiel 28:12-19 we are shown the final state of iniquity, profanity and violence which forced His hand "to shake the wicked out of the earth" (Job 38:13). There must have been more than one Age between the creation of the earth and the destruction portrayed in Genesis 1:2. The long-suffering of God waits far beyond the limits of human patience (1 Peter 3:20; Romans 9:22). All we know for certain is that failure, utter and complete and instantaneous, fell upon this original plan of the Almighty, and left nothing but a waste of dark waters, and a company of devilish angels under the malignant wing of the great Betrayer of his God and Creator and Friend. How long these dark waters remained frozen and desolate we know not; of the thoughts of Michael and Gabriel as they gazed upon the colossal tragedy we know nothing. It was the beginning of the "Mystery of God", not to be unveiled until the Light of the World brought with Him from Heaven the secrets of His Father's heart. (Romans 16:25-27).

But, if there was as yet no answer to these great problems, certain facts stood out clearly enough:-

(a) That the success of God's great Creation did not depend solely upon God. When He had done all things well, it was still in the power of His creatures to wreck their own happiness. In other words the problem of the will was exposed in all its nakedness. Not even the Almighty could secure the happiness of those who were determined to live at enmity with Him and each other, and break the laws of life laid down by the Creator of life.

(b) That wisdom and power were not by themselves able to guarantee success. Lucifer was perfect in wisdom and full of power, but through pride and selfishness corrupted that wisdom and misused that power to serve his own ends, as did Solomon in his latter days.

(c) That in the end selfishness always leads to violence, and so to fear and misery.

These three lessons, so clearly shown in Ezekiel 28, have been taught and retaught as the ages of history have unfolded themselves. Selfishness always ends in violence, which no amount of intellectual ability can evade, and happiness is only possible for those who live together in love.

CHAPTER FIVE. FROM ADAM TO ABRAHAM.

We know not how long it was that darkness and chaos held sway over the earth; but, however long or short it was, there came a moment when the Spirit of God began again to move upon the wreck, and day by day Light and Life and Order came into Being, until it became clear that the Almighty meant to make a new beginning, which He Himself would superintend instead of leaving it to Angels as before.

And so evening by evening the Son of God descended from Heaven to earth and held sweet converse with Adam and Eve in the Garden He had prepared for them; for His delights were with the children of men (Proverbs 8:31). We see a lovely picture of this intercourse in Genesis 2:18-25. Man is a gregarious creature and needs company: but amongst all the animals which God brought before Adam, not one was found sufficient to meet his need: a week, a month, a year exhausted their possibilities of companionship, and left Adam more and more acutely aware of his isolation! It was to such a hungry soul that God brought Eve, and Adam found the satisfying answer to his complaint! Now, nought remained but to taste the possibilities of this new world with their Creator at hand to answer their queries and direct their steps.

It must have looked to the Angels as if the stage was set for unlimited success, now that God Himself was in the midst of His Creation. Surely no harm could come to Adam and Eve in such circumstances, even if Satan was still alive and malignant! It may have seemed a mistake to have left him and his fellow angels in possession of the first heaven, and so able to visit the earth, lest the desire to regain his lost territory should enter his heart. Better surely to have incapacitated him and his hosts from doing any more damage, and to have given to Adam and Eve a fair chance of enjoying their lovely earth without interruption! Such doubts must have seemed justified, when Satan actually did enter Eden, and succeeded a second time in apparently wrecking the plan of God! Once again it looked as if evil had triumphed, and found the Almighty powerless to defend His own Creation, or bring His own designs to a successful conclusion.

So the mystery deepened and deepened, as murder ceased to be a crime (Genesis 4:8) and became an exploit (Genesis 4:23, 24) and wicked angels took on human bodies and produced cruel giants, and so the whole earth was, in spite of the divine warning, again filled with violence (Genesis 6:1-13), in which peace and happiness were impossible; until once again God was forced to drown the works of His own hands, rather than allow such misery to continue! Out of all the inhabitants of the earth only a single family could be saved to re-people a ruined world! (Genesis 7).

Yet as the years slipped by, and men again grew in number, it became apparent that not even the stupendous tragedy of Noah's Flood was enough to change their hearts and guarantee success. In the person of Ham sin stepped out of the Ark, as well as his father's virtue: the old story began to be repeated as Nimrod raised his cruel empire, and men banded themselves together to defy the Creator, and live their own ungodly lives as seemed best to themselves. So the end of the Noahic Age saw the scattering of humanity by God into small companies by the confusion of tongues, because it was too dangerous to leave them together. Already the nightmare of an earth united under a single despot was beginning to appear, a nightmare which is today the fascinating dream of the communist, and will become for a short moment the actual achievement of Anti-Christ. Yet the "confusion of Tongues" of Genesis 11:7-9 has postponed for many years this final tragedy, and made the last mass-rebellion of mankind against its Creator more difficult of realisation. Tyrants have found their way challenged by other tyrants, and nation has risen against nation, as portrayed by the wild beasts of Daniel, and thus have delayed the ambition of Satan to steal God's earth and sit upon His Throne, if only for a moment, amidst the acclamations of his people.

Note A. The Historicity of Noah's Flood.

For some years the wilful and determined denial of unbelieving scientists, and, following their lead, the foolish humour of a generation or two, made light of Noah's Ark, and declared that there was no trace of such a flood ever having happened. But now the tables are turned upon the scoffers, not by theologians but by the same unbelieving scientists, unwillingly brought face to face with unquestionable facts!

1. In different parts of Mesopotamia Professor Langdon of Oxford and Sir Leonard Woolley dug down to reach 8-11 feet of water-laid clay. To quote the latter's words "The flood which deposited it must have been of a magnitude unparalleled in local history. That it was so is further proved by the fact that the clay bank marks a definite break in the continuity of the local culture. A whole civilisation, which existed before it, is lacking above it, and seems to have been submerged by the waters. When we made these observations two months ago we were loath to believe that we had obtained confirmation of the deluge of Genesis, but there is no doubt of it now". It is strange that a scientist should be 'loath to believe' any fact! The sad truth is that the evolutionary theory is the unproved child of atheism, believed against the evidence because of a hatred for the truth, and a refusal to bow down before a living God.

2. All over the earth are caves on the tops of mountains over 1000 feet high which are filled with the bones of men and animals which entered them in a mad rush from engulfing waters, and were dashed together in inextricable confusion.

3. A whole Creation of palaeolithic men and animals all over the earth was wiped out, and succeeded by one which was completely different.

4. Huge boulders are found, which have been carried hundreds of miles from the place where they originated, as only vast masses of water could have accomplished.

5. There are also hills, e.g. in Norway, of fresh and sea water shells, mixed up together and yet unbroken. Only water could have raised them so gently for so many miles.

6. In Europe, the American continent, Africa, India, China and even Australia there are enormous tracts of gravel and mud, such as only a tremendous flood could have carried and deposited, the one above the other.

The whole subject can be studied in Sir Henry Howarth's book "The Mammoth and the Glacial Nightmare" (he was himself an unbeliever in the Bible); or in "The New Biblical Guide" Vol. 1 by Rev. J. Urquhart.

CHAPTER SIX. THE LESSONS OF THE AGES FROM ADAM TO ABRAHAM.

Whatever lessons we can learn in the Bible from the Pre-Adamic Ages of the earth had to be learned afresh by Adam and his progeny, for no account of the ruined past was available to them. But history repeated itself, and the sin of Cain spread such violence through the earth that once again the Lord sent a flood, which swept away a whole civilisation. Yet even after such a tremendous lesson and the kindly promises and warnings of God to Noah and his family, a corrupt society again rose up. Men preferred their own handiwork to the loving provision of the Almighty, and simple country life degenerated into the dangerous pleasures of city life, which proved so alluring that not even the memories of the flood were sufficient to deter men from their selfishness and cruelty. They built the Tower of Babel to reach unto Heaven and so save themselves from another flood, and God was obliged (by the confusion of tongues) to separate them into mutually hostile camps lest together they should exceed in evil. Thus it again became apparent that men could turn a Paradise into a nightmare of fear and cruelty, if they so desired, and that free will had its dangers!

It was, however, in this gross darkness that God lit a small candle which, though dim at first, was to blaze into the full glory of Calvary. Thus began at God's behest a system of sacrifice for sin (Genesis 4:4-7 and 8:20). True that at first it was only the blood of an animal that was shed, but it spoke eloquently of the fact that sin's wages are death! It was the acceptance or rejection of this vital truth that separated Cain from Abel, and has since, wherever it has been preached, divided the human race into the saved and the lost. Satan will not work except for his wages, the death of those for whom he works; it is only God who delights to give

freely. Neither God nor man liked the endless slaughtering of beasts, which was of course costly. But with the passage of years men's hearts grew so hard that they imagined that the Lord God enjoyed seeing the blood of bulls and goats (Isaiah 1:10-15), and failed altogether to understand that the necessity laid upon the sinner publicly to slay an animal was meant to be, and to the soft-hearted actually was, a great deterrent.

So far astray, however, did their cruel and wicked hearts lead them, that both Gentiles (2 Kings 3.27) and even Judah in the end (Jeremiah 17:2; 19:5; 32:35) resorted to human sacrifice to please God! It is a fearful truth that false religion is more cruel than atheism; for at the head of atheism is man, but religions are inspired by Satan, who does not hesitate to teach that God is cruel and even savage, for he himself delights to watch the agonies of humanity. Yet in all this the Majesty of the Law of Love was made apparent, "The soul that sinneth it shall die", and the connection between sin and death was emphasised.

It was also made plain that sin not only destroyed our neighbour's happiness but also our own! For by slaying Abel, Cain raised up the antagonism of all around, who felt unsafe so long as he was alive. It was actually God who had to protect him from his neighbours (Genesis 4:15). Thus began, and developed into full growth after Babel, that system of mutual fear and antagonism, which has ever since dominated society, and threatens today to put an end to human existence.

It also became clear that even the most dramatic and fearful punishment was not sufficient to keep men from sin. The second flood exhausted the possibilities of that sort of intervention on the part of God, and left a big question-mark in the world. Could anything be done by the Lord sufficient to overcome the attractions of selfishness? There arose, however, two other small lights in the world at this time in spite of the surrounding gloom. If the serpent of Genesis 3 had wrought such havoc, it should not last for ever. The seed of the woman should trample the serpent to death, though not without suffering to Himself. And to Enoch was given the wonderful hope that the God who had been, as it were, chased out of the Garden, should one day return to it, and have the delight of fellowship with His Creatures after He had finally destroyed the wicked (Jude v.14 and 15).

CHAPTER SEVENTH. PATRIARCHAL AGE: ABRAHAM TO JOSEPH. THE SEED PLOT OF THE AGES OF THE AGES.

The confusion of tongues marked the end of God's endeavour to deal with mankind as a whole, and for many years it seemed as if He had given up all hope of the earth, and had left men to go their own way and sink into greater and yet greater darkness. It was, however, at this benighted moment that He lit another small candle, which was to grow and grow in intensity, until at last it will burst out into the full blaze of the Millennium, and finally of the Eternal Kingdom of the last two chapters of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

In the history of Abraham, the Friend of God (Isaiah 41:8) were events which foreshadowed the grand moments in the life of His Divine Friend. In the first place, even if Melchizedek did not realise it, his offering of Bread and Wine to Abraham spoke to the Lord in Heaven of the day when He too would make His offering of Bread and Wine in the Upper Room to His Father to atone for the sins of the world, and to be the Food of the Royal Family.

Again, the miraculous birth of Isaac from the dead womb of Sarah foreshadowed the equally miraculous birth of Jesus from the virgin womb of Mary: and from that same womb of Sarah there issued, also miraculously, after many years, the two men who were respectively to be the Rulers of the New Heaven and the New Earth, Jesus the Son of David, and Israel the Son of Isaac, born by the will of God from the barren womb of Rebekah, Sarah's daughter-in-law, in answer to the prayer of faith.

Then yet again some years later when Abraham lifted up the cruel knife to slay Isaac his beloved son, whatever meaning the trial had for those two, it spoke to God the Father and His Beloved Son of the fearful day when for the redemption of the world He would actually watch His Beloved Son suffer and die upon the cruel cross amid the jeers of the wicked.

Finally the history of Joseph's journey via the cruel pit to the government of Egypt in spite of his brethren's contempt, must have comforted our Lord on His journey from Heaven via Nazareth, the contempt of His brethren, the Cross and Hades, to the Government of the Universe on His Father's Throne.

On the other side of the picture Abraham's unfortunate marriage to Keturah, Isaac's disobedient determination to bless Esau, and Jacob's dreadful deception of his father, all spoke of the great difficulties, disappointments and follies, which would mar the history both of Israel and the Church of God, despite their divine origin. Even the wonderful story of Joseph and his family at the head of the government of Egypt, which ended with the degradation and enslavement of Israel, till again all hope seemed to be lost, and another of God's plans to have come to disaster, was a foreshadowing of the unhappy history of the Christian Church, marred by internal strife and hatred and unbelief.

Yet out of it all from Enoch to Joseph can be discerned a line of spiritual giants, who in the midst of evil surroundings maintained their faith in a Living God, and saw His works, and were in later years to be part of the Foundation of His Eternal Kingdom.

CHAPTER EIGHT. THE JEWISH AGE: FROM MOSES TO CAIAPHAS.

Of all the Ages which we have to consider, the Jewish Age seems to have been the most disappointing. It began with the most extraordinary exhibition through Moses and Joshua of the Love and Power and Purpose of God yet given to man. The miracles in Egypt itself, the deliverance from Pharaoh at the Red Sea, the continuous display of God's presence and power in the wilderness were enough to convince everyone that they had no reason to fear the future with such a Friend in Heaven! And yet it needed but a few months in the wilderness, and a few years in Palestine after Joshua's death, to reveal the obstinate unbelief and love of evil in their hearts.

As the years passed by there is an unrelieved story of backsliding, with the exception of a few short periods of time under Samuel, David, Elijah, Elisha, etc., and in the case of the Ten Tribes of downright idolatry and wickedness and rejection of Jehovah to whom they owed everything! Even the restoration of the Jews under Ezra and Nehemiah did nothing to change their minds: and in a few years we find them, after many vicissitudes, under Roman Rule in Palestine, with only the outward show of a corrupt Temple clique to remind them of Jehovah.

Finally the real state of their hearts was irrevocably shown by their execution of God Himself as a criminal upon the Cross of Calvary! This was followed by their scattering all over the earth after the capture of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple by the Romans, and the occupation of the Promised Land for many centuries by their unbelieving enemies. Yet throughout this Jewish Age the Lord God was picking out His Jewels, such as the seven thousand in Israel in Elijah's time (1 Kings 19:18) or those who remained faithful in the evil days of Malachi; "And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my Jewels" (Malachi 3:17).

This story, however, of almost unrelieved gloom and sin and unbelief has within the last few years been lit up by the partial return of the Jewish Nation to a portion of their home in Palestine, albeit in unbelief and without access to the Temple site! They will therefore be obliged to wait until they are allowed by the King of the North to rebuild their Temple upon its own site, only to find themselves tricked, and at the last moment expelled, and Anti-Christ the protégé of Satan installed and worshipped in their Temple in place of Jesus, the Son of God! (Revelation Ch. 13).

At the same time it is made clear in the Old Testament and corroborated in the New Testament, that in the Millennium the restored and resurrected Jewish Nation will be resettled in a divinely restored Jerusalem, and a new Palestine, to rule over such as are left of the Gentile Nations after the Great Tribulation, and the destruction of Anti-Christ and his kingdom. (Ezekiel 36-38); (Zechariah 14; Revelation 20:1-3).

CHAPTER NINE. THE CHRISTIAN AGE: FROM CHRIST TO ANTI-CHRIST.

In the beginning of the present Age in which we are living the whole scene was changed, and there was an astounding revelation of the most important of all the plans of God in the whole course of His creative activity. Hitherto it had looked as if He were mainly interested in this earth: but in this Age He is seen to have transferred His attention from earth to Heaven. There had been passages in the Old Testament from time to time which revealed the activities of Angels in the affairs of men (Daniel 10), but the hopes of men had been confined to their future upon this earth or the earth to come. In the New Testament, however, it is made plain that God is now concerned not merely with the future of His earth, but also with that of the Heavens, where the two angelic companies are still struggling with each other to dispute the Government of the earth (Daniel 8:9-12, 23-25; 10:13, 18-21; Job 1 and 2; Revelation 12:3-4).

It is revealed that God has decided to bring forth an entirely new Creation in the Heavens, that had never been thought of before, even His Own Royal Family, the Sons of God and Brethren of Christ, who should take the place originally given to Lucifer and his angels, and guarantee the eternal peace and happiness of the New Earth and Heavens (Revelation 21:1). Out of this majestic company was to come also a Bride for Christ Himself, formed out of those whose love for Him was unalloyed.

The faithful Jew had a promise of earthly blessing from God cf. Revelation 21. The faithful Christian, on the other hand, is taught to expect great trials to his faith upon this earth, even to martyrdom (John 21:15-19). There is a tendency to be too satisfied with the word 'salvation' as a full, or even the main, description of the Christian blessing, and to speak too little of the new Birth into the Royal Family of God. It is the intention of God, having at the end of this Age cast Satan and his angels into Hades, to choose out of His Own Royal Family those who shall succeed where Angels failed. But such lofty positions can only safely be given where it has obviously been deserved in the eyes of all onlookers. It has therefore been laid down by the Lord God that His Family shall in this life prove their merit and ability and trustworthiness in the eyes of all beholders, so that there shall be no thoughts of favouritism, no question of unworthiness, and no fear of another débâcle. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of Life".

Here then is the explanation of the otherwise inexplicable trials that beset the Christian pathway. The Royal Family can only hold its position when in the eyes of all beholders it forces their confidence and

admiration. This is especially true of Angelic Beholders. They too have fought Satan and his angels (Daniel 10:13, 20, 21), but they have come down from the presence of God in the third Heaven to fight those who have already been cast down into the first! They have never known the severity of the conflict which Christians have with Satan, who have never seen the Almighty, as the Angels have, but only heard of Him in His Word! It is because of their triumph that the Royal Family shall be deemed fit to govern the universe and even Angels (1 Corinthians 6:2, 3). It is therefore possible for a member of the Royal Family to be disinherited and be "saved, yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:10-15 and Matthew 25:14-30). But it is also possible for him to "sit with Me in My Throne" (Revelation 3:21).

CHAPTER TEN. THE MILLENNIUM OR THOUSAND YEARS.

The Christian Age, then, ends with a profound change both in Heaven and on earth. Satan and his angels will be cast down out of the first Heaven into Hades, a place of temporary confinement, there to remain in the helpless torment of lonely and complete inaction till the end of the Millennium, after which they will be set free again for a short moment to test the obedience of the Gentiles to their Jewish masters. In the third Heaven the Lord Jesus and His Brethren, the latter in different ranks according to the faithfulness of their lives on the earth, will be set to rule over the universe, some over ten cities, some over five, and a third company cast out of Heaven into outer darkness owing to their refusal to take part in their Master's work during their earthly lives, (cf. Matthew 25:24-30; Luke 19:13-26; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; Revelation 19).

Upon the earth there will be tremendous physical changes in Palestine, and the whole Jewish people will come to a resurrection, and live in a new and splendid Palestine for the period of the Millennium, ruling over the Gentiles and being in charge of the Temple of God, which will be magnificently rebuilt in the new Jerusalem (Ezekiel 36-48; Zechariah 12-14).

The Millennium, however, will come to an end, when Satan will be allowed to come to the earth again and persuade some of the Gentiles to revolt against the Jews. God, however, will bring to nought this last effort of Satan and will destroy this earth and the Heavens, which have been the scene of so much evil, so that the awful past shall not again come into mind (Ezekiel 38, 39; Revelation 20:11; 21:1).

CHAPTER ELEVEN. THE LAST JUDGMENT AND NEW CREATION.

The final scene of these preliminary Ages now opens before us, for here will take place the Judgment of the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15), that awful Bar of Eternal Destiny at which the Father Himself will preside. At this judgment are arraigned:

1. Those who have never heard the Gospel nor had any knowledge or understanding of God: these will be judged according to their works, whether good or bad.
2. Those who have determinedly and finally rejected the loving sacrifice of God's Beloved Son; these will inevitably be eternally, though reluctantly, committed by God to the everlasting punishment of being cut off for ever in darkness and isolation from God and each other, without hope or relief. The smoke of their judgment will be an eternal warning to any who in future Ages may be tempted to follow their bad example.

After this, we read in 1 Corinthians 15:24, "cometh the end when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father". It is here that the oft-repeated phrase "The Ages of the Ages" begins to have a fuller meaning. Life, though perfect, will not be stagnant. There is no way of imagining what may be in the heart of an everlasting God! The only guide we have, and it is sufficient, is the fact that God is Love, and love is a desire for the society and happiness of others. We can only wait in humility and expectation for the Almighty Lover to put before His loving Creation fresh plans for the happiness of other creations beyond our imagination.

NOTE:

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