

## Chapter 1

### A Revelation of Love

There is no sublimity of feeling or eloquence of language that can adorn the cross of Christ, the symbol of God's love. For the cross is the ultimate expression of the divine attributes of the Most High - His love, His wisdom, and His power. No greater understanding of His character and purposes has been given to His created beings.

The redemption of man is a process. It consists of a series of events, all necessary for the complete restoration of man to his original holy condition. It is a chain let down from an infinite height to reach a tremendous depth, for the purpose of receiving undeserving creatures. It is a plan so comprehensive in meaning that only God could originate it, and yet it is so simple in operation that the dying thief could make full use of its provisions.

If in eternity this subject is to be the "science and the song" of the redeemed, if it is to be continually fresh and new as our eyes are opened and our intellects expand, then why should we not begin that study here upon earth? "Why should man not study the theme of redemption? It is the greatest subject that can engage the human mind" - Signs of the Times, Dec. 30, 1889.\*

\*Unless otherwise indicated, the quotations used in this book are from the pen of Ellen G. White.

In this first chapter we are dealing with the objective idea of redemption and its purpose. We approach it in the same way that we view the Grand Canyon or the starry heavens. We try to grasp the wonder and the grandeur of the plan as a whole. The plan of redemption for man preceded the creation of the world. The concept of redemption existed in the mind of the Supreme Being before the objects to be benefited were even created. It was the only provision that an omniscient, merciful Creator could make for creatures with free will who might disobey His law. In fact, the entire plan of salvation, in all its great scope and involvement, is an expansion of the primary endowment of free choice.

When God allowed created beings to have the power of self-decision, the gift involved serious implications that only His wisdom could appreciate or measure. Free choice implied the possibility of both man's fall and his redemption. But God, being all-wise, foresaw and

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made allowance, not for sin, but for its possibility, before He created this earth.

It is apparent that man should possess free will in order for the Creator to have the intelligent and willing obedience of His creatures, as well as their spontaneous worship. A loving God could not tolerate a constrained obedience or a compelled adoration. "He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service." - Patriarchs and Prophets, page 34.

Upon free will was built all of Gods relations with His reasoning creatures. Although this power of choice was to cost heaven a third of the angelic host and billions of lost human beings, as well as the agony of the Godhead, it was the basic condition upon which the Eternal One began His benevolent operations. How carelessly we handle this most princely treasure of free decision, hardly appreciating its infinite price!

Let us recognize, when we make a decision involving right and wrong, that we exercise the costliest gift that can be granted to intelligent minds by an omniscient Creator. Moreover, the power of choice introduces the problem of persuading the mind to establish a decision without exterior compulsion. The answer to this problem became the masterpiece of infinite reasoning, applied to the greatest question of the universe.

This plan was designed not simply to rescue man from his dilemma, although to us that is the essential result. In its larger intention it displays before the universe the attributes of God - His love, mercy, power, and wisdom. The plan of salvation sets forth these qualities to a degree never before appreciated by the created inhabitants of the universe.

Through eternity the theme of Christ's life upon this earth will remain fresh and vital, a subject growing ever more wondrous in its mystery. Angels will sing and poets write, philosophers reason and historians recite, about the life of Jesus Christ, as long as giant suns shall glow in the dome of heaven. Never will that story lose its fascination, for in it is enfolded the everlasting glory of God.

"The work of our Redeemer on the earth is and ever will be a subject that will put to the stretch our highest imagination. Man may tax every mental power in the endeavor to fathom this mystery, but his mind will become faint and weary. The most diligent searcher will see before him a boundless, shoreless sea." - Christ's Object Lessons, pages 128, 129.

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### The Origin of Sin

While we are considering the gift of free will, we should also study some of the basic facts concerning the origin of evil.

The Creator knew in advance that evil would come into the universe. Being omniscient, God was cognizant of the fact that Lucifer would cherish a rebel mind, and also that our first parents would transgress the divine commands.

“From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man.” - *The Desire of Ages*, page 22. Here arises a question that should be answered as far as it can be by human comprehension. If God, being all-wise, knew that the adversary would sin, why did He create Lucifer? Since the Almighty created this being, is not God the author of sin? If this thought has come to you, remember it is sponsored by the philosopher of evil in an effort to confuse the human mind. However, this suggestion has been anticipated and answered. Note these words: “In the judgment of the universe, God will stand clear of blame for the existence or continuance of evil. It will be demonstrated that the divine decrees are not accessory to sin.” - *Ibid.*, p. 58.

While we may not question the purposes of the Creator, yet He allows us to use the gift of reason we possess to find a logical explanation. The Almighty desires us to be convinced of the justice of His ways. He invites us to “reason together,” concerning all the principles of His kingdom.

Let us go back in time to the origin of evil. Sin is no sudden episode in the universe, although it has demonstrated its effect upon man for some six thousand years. How long it took to develop in heaven we can only surmise, but it was of slow and subtle growth. “In great mercy, according to His divine character, God bore long with Lucifer.” - *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 39.

And indeed, sin at first was no rebellion; it was merely a dim and undefined idea, the beginning of which was shrouded in mystery even to Lucifer. The all-wise God alone could foresee and comprehend the quality of sin and its results. It was much later, when Satan came to Eve and Adam, that he baited the hook of temptation with the hint of delectable superwisdom, “Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” Genesis 3:5.

If God had refused to create Lucifer because of the results that would follow, He would thus have admitted that free will could not be tested. Even though none but the Trinity would have known of this

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decision, yet a just God was bound in His own mind to allow the test to come, so that the universe could exercise the power of decision between good and evil.

We say reverently that God is responsible to Himself for His decisions even as we are to ourselves. According to His word He has chosen to be bound by the principles He has established as the foundation of His throne.

When God gave His creatures the power of choice as a principle of His government, He, of necessity, ceased to guarantee the immediate future; otherwise it could not be free will. While He knew in advance the result of Lucifer's sin - the fall of a third of the angels, the transgression of Adam and Eve, the blight upon the entire human race - yet He upheld the principle, knowing it was to cost Him and His Son the agony of Calvary. At so great a price did the human race receive the ability to choose good or evil.

Can you imagine the impartiality of God in trusting to Lucifer the high office of chief angel, knowing that later heaven would be rent apart by his disaffection? It is the peculiar quality of the Creator, that while He knows in advance the fate of individuals or nations, yet in every minute detail He can be totally impartial in His love and treatment of them. This is impossible in man, whose finite nature sways his actions.

In considering the origin of sin, we must not imagine that Lucifer was set apart to be the instigator of this strange rebellion. It was no inborn urge that caused his heart to renounce its allegiance to God. God did not create imperfection, for we are told that Lucifer was "perfect" from the day he was created, until iniquity was found in him. Ezekiel 28:15.

It was the perversion of a normal enjoyment of beauty that first turned Lucifer's thoughts inward toward himself. There is no sin in being beautiful or in enjoying beauty, for we read that God created Eve "full of beauty" and with "surpassing loveliness." See Patriarchs and Prophets, pages 45, 54. Lucifer was created beautiful, but his mind became enamored not only of his person but of his position, for "he had been the highest of all created beings, and had been foremost in revealing God's purposes to the universe." - *The Desire of Ages*, page 758.

Self-esteem developed insidiously. It was self-contamination of pure, perfectly created material. It is evident that any angel in heaven might have been self-tempted, but only one at first harbored this

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indulgence. In fact, by analogy to human experience, we could expect that the greatest self-temptation would appear in the mind of the being who stood at the head of all God's creation, who received obedience from countless throngs of angels, and before whom the lesser orders must have paid respect and acknowledged his position.

After the admiration of his own beauty came pride and incorrigible rebellion. Satan was not ordained to do evil, and at first he could have been forgiven and restored to his place in heaven. God in infinite love and wisdom made every effort "to convince him of his error."

Logically we may say that if sin could appear in one perfect being, it could happen to any dweller in the universe who possessed the gift of choice. It is startling to realize that every created inhabitant of the heavens and the earth who has been given this power of choice, has had the capability of becoming a devil, by turning his thoughts inward upon himself. It could have been some other Adam and Eve that fell, some other bright world could have been darkened by the stain of disobedience.

The time is coming when the character of every created being in the universe will have been formed and tested. The curse of sin, as sinister as the evil one himself, will perish forever with the disobedient. It cannot rise up the second time to dismay the universe, because the obedient have eternally rejected it.

As for us now, we stand in the shadow of our fallen nature, reaching upward to the light, waiting for the day when we shall be released from that carnal nature that enfolds us. But we gain confidence in the assurance that God has guaranteed the ultimate future, that His willingness to suffer the brief torture of sin was predicated upon His own confidence that right will triumph.