The Preservation of Identity in the Resurrection

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An Address by

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36th Thousand.

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The Importance of the Formation of a Right Character

An Address delivered in many of the towns of Great Britain and Ireland

By

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"But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be, but [a] bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body."—1 Cor. 15: 35-38.

WHEN we read these words with unprejudiced minds, we see that the Bible agrees with Science in asserting that the body, which becomes disintegrated at death, will not be resurrected. The Scriptures nowhere teach the resurrection of the body; this passage distinctly denies it:—"Thou fool . . *thou sowest not that body which shall be.*"

The question is often asked: If the body will not be resurrected, how will the identity be preserved in the resurrection? Must not some part of the old individual be preserved during the interval? What is this seed or bare grain, which, the Apostle says, is sown at death, and will be given a body as it pleases God? Is it not an immaterial something, whatever we may call it, whether soul or spirit, which God preserves and to which he gives a new body in the resurrection? We reply: The soul is the whole sentient being. When the soul or being dies, it goes out of existence. God preserves the memory and character of the individual, not as an immaterial something, but merely as a remembrance. In the resurrection he will impart this memory and character to a new body, and thus the identity will be preserved.

Many profess that they cannot understand how a man's mental and moral characteristics can be preserved unless during the interval between death and the resurrection they have been embodied in some material or spiritual substance. Now this is really the old difficulty which led

to the conception of the natural immortality of the soul, and the theory of the disembodied spirits of the dead. We admit that the subject is difficult for our finite minds to grasp. We cannot understand it completely. By and by, when that which is perfect is come, and when we know even as we are known, doubtless we shall be able to comprehend it clearly. We can, however, understand it to some extent.

The Phonograph Illustration.

The illustration which I have found most satisfactory to myself, and also to others to whom I have suggested it, is that of the phonograph. It is hinted at by the late Charles T. Russell in his fifth volume of "Studies in the Scriptures" (last two paragraphs of chapter 13):—"But does doubt cry out: 'How could God in resurrection reproduce the millions of earth completely so that each will know himself and profit by the memory of present life experience?' We answer that in the phonograph cylinder even man is able to preserve his own words and reproduce them; much more is our Creator able to reproduce for the entire race such brain organism as will perfectly reproduce every sentiment, thought, and experience. David seems to refer to the power of God in a manner that might be applicable either prophetically to the resurrection, or reflectively to the first birth. He says:—

"'I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. My substance [organism] was not hid from thee when I was made in secret, curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance being yet imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written which in continuance [gradually] were fashioned when as yet there was none of them'—Psa. 139: 14-16."

To follow out the illustration of the phonograph in

detail, we see that the cylinder or blank record represents our whole physical organism, particularly the brain.

The motive power of the phonograph is the spring mechanism, which, therefore, represents our spirit or power of life. It is only when there is life in the machine that the record is made, just as it is only during life that we can write our character on our organism.

The voice spoken into the instrument represents our thoughts, words and actions, and the vibrations of the needle represent the various chemical and other changes, which are necessary for the production of the impressions on our organism.

After the record is finished, it is found to consist of a more or less continuous series of minute wave-like impressions on the surface of the cylinder. These correspond to impressions on our organism, particularly on our brain, caused by our thoughts, words, and deeds. While the record proper is the series of wave-like impressions, yet the whole cylinder is also called a record. So is it with us. Our whole being is the soul, yet the soul proper, the essential part of us, is our character.

When we replace the record in the phonograph and make the necessary changes, and give life to the instrument by winding up the spring mechanism and setting it in motion, the speech or song is reproduced with exactness, the same words, the same tone, the same inflections, etc., everything identical with what had been spoken or sung into it.

Suppose the record is now destroyed, no man has power to produce one similar in all respects; but though man has not this power, the Almighty has it. It is possible for God to note and remember the marks on the original cylinder so accurately, that years or even centuries after it has been destroyed he could inscribe them on a new cylinder. He could reproduce the length, breadth, depth, and shape of the lines, and their relationship one to

another so exactly, that when set going in the phonograph all who heard it would say, "Why, that is the original record!"

That is what God is going to do with every individual both of the Church and of the world. Each person is writing his own character on his organism, particularly on his brain. Every time he thinks, and especially every time he speaks or acts, he is making an impression on his organism. A thought makes a faint impression, a word makes a deeper impression, and an action makes a still deeper impression, because "actions speak louder than words." These all go to the making of character. When a thought is often repeated it is more likely to show itself by word or action, and the more often thoughts, words or actions are repeated, the deeper become the resultant lines of character on our organism, particularly on our brain. By and by these impressions become so deep that we call them *habits.*

Habits make Character.

A man's character may be defined as the sum total of his habits. When habits are formed the impressions are made not only on the brain, but frequently also on the whole organism. They are shown more or less on his face, in his gait, in the tone of his voice, and in the shake of his hand. When we are introduced to anyone, we form more or less consciously a rough estimate of his character. If he has a frank honest expression in his eyes and in his whole face and manner, if he has a cheerful ring in his voice, if he gives a warm shake of the hand, we feel sure that we have met someone whom we can trust. On the other hand, if his eyes are mean and shifty, his smile cynical, his gait sneaking, and his hand-shake unresponsive, we have the feeling that we should have as little as possible to do with that man. It is not necessary to enter further into details. Sufficient has been said to remind us that

a man's character is frequently revealed to some extent at least, by his general appearance.

But these outward marks, while they are mainly the evidences of corresponding changes in the brain, are, to some extent at least, results of heredity and environment, and are not always a safe index of what is going on within. Hence we cannot always judge a man's character by his appearance; but God looks not so much at the outward appearance as at the mind and heart, the mental and moral characteristics, evidenced by changes in the brain. He takes note of these changes, and as the Prophet Malachi poetically puts it, he writes them all down on his "book of remembrance"; that is to say, he stores them up in his memory. Then when the time comes for the awakening of the dead, no matter how long the interval may have been, even though it may have extended to many centuries, he will reproduce or stamp these characteristics on a new body, just as he might have reproduced the wave-like impressions of a broken record on a new cylinder. Possibly God could have done this at the first without our requiring to form our own character, but he prefers to deal with us as free and intelligent moral agents.

Thus the identity of every individual in the world will be preserved in the resurrection. Each will remember his past life, just as he now remembers it, and his habits, good and bad, will be the same. Every sentiment, thought, and experience will be perfectly reproduced. Thus he will recognise himself. His friends also will recognise him, not so much by his outward appearance as by his habits. You remember how our Lord's followers failed to recognise him after his resurrection till he revealed himself by one or other of his habits. Mary mistook him for a gardener till he said tenderly in the manner so familiar to her, "Mary!" Then, at once recognising him, she turned herself and said, "Master!" The two disciples who walked with him to Emmaus that same day, though their

hearts burned within them while he talked with them by the way, failed to recognise him by his appearance and voice, but when, later, "he took bread and blessed it, and brake and gave to them," they immediately recognised him, and then he "vanished out of their sight."

It has been objected that it is degrading God to state that he will store up in his memory any evil deeds. Surely there is some misconception here! Does the objector think that God would become contaminated in any way? The remembrance of the evil does not contaminate God. We know that it does not, because God is holy and cannot be tempted of evil. God is Judge, and it would be impossible for him to judge unless he knew good and evil, and could remember the character of both the righteous and the unrighteous. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12 : 14).

Derivation of the Word "Character."

The word "character," viewed derivatively, is very appropriate. It is a Greek word meaning, according to Liddell and Scott (1) An instrument for marking or graving; also of a person, the engraver. (2) Commonly, a mark engraved or impressed on coins, seals, etc.; also, *the mark or token impressed (as it were) on a person or thing, by which it is known from others*; a distinctive mark, character.

Marks on the Brain.

The brain is composed of two great hemispheres of *white matter* connected with each other at the base and covered over with a thin layer of *grey matter*. As the surface of the brain is thrown into lobes and convolutions by deep and shallow *sulci* (fissures), the resulting area of grey matter on the surface of the brain is very extensive. When extremely thin sections of this grey matter are examined

under a powerful microscope, innumerable minute bodies, called neurons or nerve-cells, are found crowded together. They are connected by delicate nerve-filaments with one another and with all the various regions of the body, and it is these nerve filaments which compose the white matter of the brain. The neurons are supposed by physiologists to govern our thoughts, words, and actions, and to be the store-house of our memory. Possibly, therefore, the neurons, or, rather, the changes that take place in them, correspond to the wave-like impressions on the surface of the phonograph cylinder.

If that be so, what the Lord will do in the resurrection will be to reproduce a similar set of neurons in the brain of the new body, and the result will be that the old habits of thought, word, and action will be restored.

"To Every Seed His Own Body."

Our God is infinitely loving and wise. "His tender mercies are over all his works." He will grant to every one the right and proper desire of his heart. I hope you are of the wheat class, that your affections are set on things above and not on the things of the earth; for if so, you will receive a heavenly or spiritual body in the resurrection, like that of the last Adam, your great forerunner and heavenly Lord. But there are grains "of some other" kind. These also will get their proper desire. There are many who talk about heaven, say they hope to go to heaven, but their heart is not there. Their affections are not spiritual, but earthly. Such persons will be more than satisfied with Paradise restored. It will far exceed the fondest desires of their heart or their wildest dreams of fancy. A dear sister in the Truth, while shopping one day, overheard part of a conversation between a clergyman and a lady who were standing beside her at the same counter. It appeared that the lady had been very ill, and the clergyman was sympathising with

ber. In the course of the conversation the lady said :— "Yes, indeed, I was dangerously ill; it is only by the mercy of God that I'm not in heaven to-day." Evidently she did not desire to go to heaven. Her affections were centred on earthly things.

Those who have earthly, fleshly desires will, if obedient to the great Mediator, be resurrected to the likeness of the first Adam, perfect human beings with full dominion over a perfect earth. When they are awakened from the grave or death-state, their bodies will be stamped with exactly the same character as they possessed at the time of their death; for the eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the good and the evil, and he is taking note of the character of everyone, both of the Church and of the world. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6 : 7). Thus the identity of each will be preserved in the resurrection, and everyone will be held responsible for the deeds done in the body. "And so It has been written, The First Adam became a living soul; the Last Adam a life-giving Spirit. The Spiritual, however, was not the first, but the animal [or natural]; afterwards the Spiritual. The first man was from the ground, earthy [of earthly origin]; the second man is from heaven [of heavenly or spiritual origin]. Of what kind the earthy one, such also the earthy ones; and of what kind the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones; and even as WE bore the likeness of the earthy one, WE *shall* also bear the likeness of the heavenly one. And I say this, brethren, because flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; nor shall corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor. 15 : 45-50, Diaglott). We who are no longer in the flesh but in the spirit, because the spirit of God dwells in us, will receive spiritual or heavenly bodies in the resurrection. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2 : 14). His mind is not spiritual but earthly; therefore in the resurrection

he will receive an earthy body like that of the first Adam. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit, is spirit" (John 3 : 6).

In the case of the Church, it is the heart's intentions, and the efforts put forth as the outcome of these intentions, which represent the character of the *new creature*. The imperfections of thought, word and deed, which are not wilful, but are the result of our organism rendered imperfect through the Fall, are covered by the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. In the resurrection, therefore, the changes in the neurons due to the imperfections of the flesh, will not be reproduced, but those which are the results of the heart's intentions will be stamped on the perfect spiritual body which the Lord will create. In this way the identity of the New Creature will be preserved, but not the identity of the old human nature. It is as if a trained vocalist were to sing into a phonograph which has been fitted with a faulty cylinder. The resulting record would be discordant. But God could destroy the faulty cylinder, make a new one of different material and finer quality, and reproduce upon it the wave-like impressions caused by the singer's voice, and ignore the others due to the imperfections of the cylinder. The result would be a perfect record which would give forth the beautiful melody exactly as it had been sung into the phonograph.

In the case of the world, however, the various changes in the neurons will be reproduced in the human or natural body, which will be created exactly as they were in the old organism. The result will be an exact reproduction of the character of the individual as it was at the time of his death. Little children who have died before they have had time to form character will have no bad habits to unlearn in the resurrection. This will be to some extent to their advantage, but on the other hand this advantage will be counterbalanced by their lack of the lessons gained

by a previous experience of evil. They will require to gain their experience during the Millennium.

The Importance of Character.

We see, then, the great importance of forming the right kind of character now. That is the only thing we now have which will be restored to us in the resurrection. When we get this thought, we can realise the worthlessness and transitoriness of all else. Our attention will not be so much on what we shall eat and drink, what clothes we shall wear, how much money we can make, what remedies we should use for our various bodily ailments, etc. While these things are necessary in order that we may preserve our health and strength and do more efficient service for the Lord, the truth, and the brethren, the essential thing is the formation of the Christ-like character. Our time energies, etc., therefore, should be first and foremost in this direction, for it was for this purpose that God predestinated the bride of Christ, that the various members should be in the image of Christ.

That is why Jesus said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." That is why the Apostle wrote: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." All the things which the world considers so wonderful and desirable are loss and dross to us that we may win Christ, be made partakers of his sufferings and conformable to his death, and so share in his resurrection. Are our domestic or business affairs filling our mind? Are we worrying over our balance-sheet? If so, let us realise that these and all other earthly things are but secondary. Let us do our duty with regard to these, but let them not fill our mind and heart. Rather let us say with the Apostle "This one thing I do . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Difference Between a Phonograph and a Man.

Thus the phonograph serves as a good illustration of the method by which God will preserve the identity of each individual in the resurrection. Yet there is a considerable and important difference between a phonograph and a man. The one is merely a mechanical device; the other is a living soul, a sentient being.

(1) The phonograph is altogether the creature of its environment. It has no conscience or moral sense, that is to say, no faculty of discerning right and wrong; and it has no volition. If a person sings into it, it cannot say to itself: "I do not like that song. I do not approve of that sentiment." It cannot rise up and go out in search of more congenial society. In a word, it cannot voluntarily change its environment, and it *must* record everything that is spoken or sung into it, so long as its cylinder is moving.

Though, like the phonograph, a man is influenced by his environment, he can change it, more or less, as he desires. As a rule, he can choose better or worse companions, better or worse books, better or worse modes of life, etc. There is a great deal of truth in the old saying: "Birds of a feather flock together." If you are godly-minded, the worldly-minded will not desire your company, nor you theirs. If you persist in associating with worldly people when you can dissociate yourself from them, you will be more or less contaminated; some of their worldly sentiments will be received by you; for, as the Apostle says: "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:35). Suppose you are a member of one of the denominations of Christendom, and you have come to realise that you are associating with worldly people, you should dissociate yourself from them. The Lord exhorts us: "Come out from among them. Be ye clean that bear the vessels

[teachings] of the Lord" (2 Cor. 6:17; Isa. 52:11). The Apostle also urges us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. Is this a contradiction? No. The Apostle is addressing those who are endeavouring to be like Christ, and exhorting them to meet often one with another, in order to provoke one another to love and to good works, and *that* the more they see the day approach, the day of the Lord,—the day of vengeance upon Christendom, and the day of the Church's deliverance. If we follow the Apostle's advice, we shall find that the resulting influence upon our minds and hearts will be good.

We cannot, however, altogether avoid contact with the evil that is in the world, and it is not meant by God that we should. Our forefathers, many of them godly men, perceiving the teaching of the Scriptures that the Church is not of the world but separate from it, shut themselves up in monasteries, but it was in vain. They could not avoid the evil that was in the world, and it was not God's purpose that his children should withdraw from the world in this fashion. The evil which we cannot avoid we must resist, in the sense that we must not be influenced by it to do or think evil. On the contrary, we must overcome evil with good for it is to the overcomers that Jesus has promised a share with him on his throne, even as he also overcame evil with good and sat down with his Father on his throne. This means that the evil influences from without should be used as opportunities for enabling us by the grace of God to form good habits of thought, word and deed, habits of faith, patience, meekness, and love. Suppose you had nothing to test your patience, how could you develop this strong quality. We learn obedience through the things which we suffer, just as did our great Forerunner.

Thus, while the phonograph, so long as its cylinder is moving, must record all the sounds which come to it from without, we, on the contrary, record on our organisms our

own thoughts, words and deeds, and not those of others unless we choose to make them our own. God is leaving each of us to the freedom of our will, while at the same time he is seeing to it that all things are working together for good to those who love him, who are the called according to his purpose.

Thus one great difference between a phonograph and a human being is that the latter is possessed of a conscience, the ability to discern what is right and what is wrong, and he has freedom of will to choose between the two, to accept or reject as he desires.

(2) The other great difference between a phonograph and a human being, is that the machine cannot voluntarily obliterate or deepen the marks on its records once they are made. Men, on the contrary, can do this to a greater or less extent. In order to understand this, let us consider what is a living soul.

A Living Soul.

The word of God says: "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2 : 7). When man was formed of the dust of the ground, the elements of the earth, he had all the potentialities of hearing, speech, thought, and action, but, without the power of life, none of these could be put into force. Then God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,—the spirit or power of life. Then, and not till then, man became a living soul. Thus we see that the soul is not the body, nor is it the spirit of life, but it is the whole sentient being, the being which is endowed with sense-perception.

The dominant part of the soul is the will, the thinking part of a man. This is the *ego*, the real person, for in a sense the body is merely the instrument of the will. Yet there can be no will without a body. A man whose brain

has been injured cannot tell after his recovery what occurred during the interval of his unconsciousness. This is surely a positive proof that his mind is not independent of his organism.

I have already mentioned that the grey matter of the brain is the organ of volition and intelligence. It may be mapped out into three areas :—

(1) An area in the frontal region concerned in cognition and volition.

(2) a motor or ideo-motor area in the middle above the ears, and

(3) a sensory area behind.

This distinction, however, is not absolute.

The neurons or nerve-cells in these areas are arranged in groups. For instance, the nerve-cells which control the *right* side of the body are situated on the *left* side of the brain ; the leg area being in the grey matter at the summit of the brain ; the arm area lower down on the same (left) side of the brain ; and the neck and face area, including also speech, still lower down. What applies to mankind, applies also, though in a lesser degree, to all mammals. They also have a brain composed of grey and white matter, with neurons and nerve-filaments. They also respond to stimuli, are conscious, and can reason to some extent. The arguments usually put forward in support of the unscriptural doctrine commonly held regarding the nature of the soul and its supposed inherent immortality, would apply also to the lower animals.

Professor Ferrier demonstrated the various areas by exposing the brain of a monkey and experimenting with the poles of a battery. (The brain is insensitive to pain.) After some practice he was able, by touching the various points of the motor area in turn, to cause the monkey to perform various actions, such as extending its arm, seizing an apple, conveying it to its mouth, and biting it. From these experiments valuable knowledge has been gained,

enabling surgeons to localise the area of the brain affected in many cases of tumour, etc., in human beings.

The filaments which connect the nerve-cells, with each other and with the various portions of the body, form, when gathered into fine or thick cords, the various nerves. These are classified as sensory nerves, motor nerves, etc. The sensory nerves convey impressions from the eye, ear, mouth, skin, and other parts to the respective cells in the sensory area, and thence the impressions are conveyed by connecting filaments first to the higher intellectual centres, and thence, as a rule, to the nerve-cells in the motor area. These in turn originate impulses which are transmitted along the motor nerves to the corresponding muscles of the jaw, larynx, arm, leg, or other parts.

For instance, someone in front of you raised a stick. The impression strikes your eyes and immediately an impulse is transmitted to the visual centres at the back of your brain, and you see what is happening. The message is then conveyed to your intellectual centres, and you appreciate the fact that the man is attempting to strike you. Immediately the intellectual centres are thrown into a great commotion. They flash a message along to both your arm centres, and these in turn transmit impulses to the muscles of your arms, with the result that your left arm is raised to protect yourself, and your right attempts to seize your opponent's arm or the stick. At the same time, a message is flashed along to your speech centre and it in turn transmits impulses to the muscles of your throat and mouth, with the result that you call out "Stop." A complicated process, and yet it is all done in a second! Truly we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

How Habits are Formed.

At first the interval between the perception of some particular sensation and the action which results, is of an appreciable duration, but the more frequently the same

thoughts, words and actions follow upon the perception of a certain sensation or set of sensations, the shorter becomes the interval, until finally it is quite inappreciable. No conscious effort of the will is now required. The action has become more or less automatic. A habit has been acquired.

How can we explain this? It may be that, just as the electric current flows much more readily through a thick wire than through a thin one, so the filaments which connect certain sensory cells with certain intellectual and motor cells may, from frequent use, become thicker and more active, and the cells themselves also may become more efficient, with the result that a conscious effort is no longer required.

Physical Habits.

Let me illustrate this by showing how a physical habit is formed. When a person begins to learn how to ride a bicycle, he is told that whenever the machine becomes inclined to one side, he should at once turn the front wheel to the same side in order to save himself from falling. Yet no sooner is he mounted on the bicycle and left to his own resources than he finds himself sprawling on the ground. Why is this? His sensory cells warned him correctly when the bicycle became inclined to the side, but at this stage of his training, he requires to make a distinct conscious effort in order to pass the message on to the motor cells which govern the arm muscles. Before he has even thought of turning the front wheel to the side, he is on the ground.

After he has had a few falls, however, the painful experience teaches him to think more quickly and more definitely, and the next time he mounts the bicycle, when he feels it becoming inclined to one side, he at once turns the front wheel to the same side. But he has not yet learnt how far to turn it, and as a result he overdoes it,

and down he comes again. Should he persevere, he will find that with further practice, extending over several days perhaps, he will be able to ride the bicycle, though he will take the breadth of the road while doing so. But before he has gone far, his nerve-cells will become fatigued, and again he will fall. With some more patience and perseverance he will find by and by to his joy that he can ride for miles with only an occasional wobble.

When he becomes an expert rider, how different is the action! How gracefully he glides along! With what perfect equilibrium! How accurately he chooses his path among the stones and between the ruts! And yet he scarcely requires to think of what he is doing! He engages in an animated conversation with his neighbour, or he admires the surrounding scenery, without so much as a wobble. Why is this? It is because those sensory and motor centres which have to do with the keeping of his equilibrium on a bicycle are so efficient and so well connected with each other by active intercommunicating filaments that the effort of the will is no longer or scarcely at all necessary. The action has become automatic. A habit has been acquired. That is how habits are formed.

The illustration which I have given demonstrates the method of acquirement of physical habits; but the process necessary to the formation of mental and moral habits, which are so much more important because they constitute the character and therefore the most important part of the identity of the individual, are essentially similar in kind. Surely, then, if a man, in his efforts to master the art of cycling, is willing to face the smiles and gibes of friends and strangers, and to submit to the pain and ignominy occasioned by frequent falls, if he can persevere in spite of these and all other forms of discouragement, until he has crowned his efforts with success, how much greater reason have WE for laying aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, so that

we may run with patience (patient endurance) the race that is set before us. In this endeavour we shall be greatly helped by reflecting on the faith of the ancient worthies and by looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and, as a result, is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12 : 1, 2).

Mental and Moral Habits.

The more often certain thoughts, words, and actions follow upon certain sensations or sets of sensations, the more easily are they evoked. At first a conscious effort is necessary, but with long practice they become more or less automatic. A mental or moral habit, good or bad, has been acquired. For instance, having consulted the word of counsel which our Heavenly Father has granted us, and having found there the proverb that a soft answer turneth away wrath, and the injunction that we should bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us, suppose we resolve that by the grace of God we shall endeavour to follow the good advice thus given us. It will not be long before our resolution will be put to the test. Possibly on the same day some one will curse us, not as a rule in the sense of uttering an oath against us, but he will attempt, wittingly or unwittingly, to injure our good name. At once we feel annoyed and excited, and before we have had time to think, we give a sharp answer in return. Then what a feeling of shame comes over us. We recognise that we have returned evil for evil, and confessing our sin to our Heavenly Father, we pray for his forgiveness through the merit of our dear Lord's death on our behalf, and we beseech him for continued favour in our further endeavours after righteousness. Realising that our fall was due to the fact that our brain has been

all along more accustomed to obey evil thoughts than good thoughts, and that we were thinking more of self than of God, we make an endeavour to "bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" and think only of such things as are true, honourable, just, pure, loving, and of good report (2 Cor. 10 : 5; Phil. 4 : 8), and to turn to the Lord for grace and strength in every time of need.

Should we persevere in spite of several failures, we shall find by and by that we shall be able to suffer insults patiently, and to return good for evil. At first we shall do it awkwardly, so that sometimes we shall wonder whether it would not have been better simply to have taken no notice of the one who is using us despitefully; but if we continue to practice, we shall find that it will become easier and easier to be meek, gentle, and kind to others, until at length we shall acquire the habit of loving-kindness, and then without much, if any, conscious effort, we shall bless them that curse us and do good to them that hate us.

One thing which will help us greatly in our efforts to love our enemies is the knowledge that God is the great First Cause, and that our enemies, the secondary causes, could not say or do anything against us without his permission. Everything that God does is for a wise and loving purpose. Therefore, when God permits anyone to insult us or injure our good name, it must be for our good. What good, you ask, could such an action do to us? The good it does is that it enables us to mortify the deeds of the flesh, to sacrifice self, and to develop faith, meekness, self-control, patience, peace, and love.

The old will will demand justice, but the new mind will keep the body under, and love will eventually triumph. Instead of harming us, those who speak or do evil against us are conferring a benefit upon us. The promise of joint-heirship with Christ is to those who not only believe on

Christ, but also suffer for his sake, and who overcome evil with good. How can we be overcomers if our Heavenly Father does not permit us to be tempted? Let us, therefore, dear brethren, "glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5: 3-5).

This does not mean that we should put others to the test in order that they may be benefited spiritually. Did not our Lord say: "It must needs be that offences [causes of stumbling] come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh"? Let us, therefore, beware lest we should put a stumbling-block before one of Christ's little ones. It were better that a millstone were hanged about our neck, and that we were drowned in the depth of the sea (Matt. 18: 6, 7).

It is always easier to acquire bad habits than good habits. Bad habits are more pleasing to the flesh; they have their basis in selfishness. Good habits, on the other hand, have their basis in love for God and righteousness, and require self-renunciation. Another reason why it is easier to form bad habits is that our organisms are all imperfect through the Fall. It is impossible to make a perfect record on an imperfect cylinder, and similarly, it is impossible to form a perfect character on an imperfect organism. "There is none righteous, no, not one."

The only human beings who have possessed perfect organisms were Adam and Jesus. Adam disobeyed God. When he perceived that the one whom he loved so much had taken the forbidden fruit, he resolved to die with her and partook of it also. He should have had more faith in and love for God. Thus he evidenced not only want of faith, but also self-will or self-love. His record became faulty. The character-tones which proceeded from it were harsh and discordant, and as all God's works are

perfect, God was obliged by his love, no less than by his justice, to destroy Adam, and to condemn the whole race, imperfect through heredity, to the same fate.

Jesus, on the other hand, obeyed God in every respect. He evidenced faith, meekness, kindness, long-suffering, patience, and love. The resulting record gave a beautiful harmony, and demonstrated that he was entitled to eternal life. His continual delight was to do his Father's will, In obedience to this will he humbled himself to death, even the death of the cross, wherefore he hath been highly exalted and given a name above every name. "Oh how sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear!" He is "the chiefest among ten thousand," "the altogether lovely one."

How different it is with us. When as little children we began to think, speak, and act, we demonstrated the truth of the saying, "The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge." Many of the notes which we produced from the beginning were grating, harsh, and discordant, such as the notes of pride, impatience, anger, spite, envy. You have all seen little children, when their toys are taken from them, cry with anger and perhaps endeavour to strike you. These various traits became accentuated as we grew older, with the result that when we reached years of discretion we found that the lines of our character were already deeply impressed on our organism. We had acquired many evil habits. Now we find it extremely difficult, in some cases impossible, to eradicate these lines. There is a hint here to parents. Fathers and mothers can do much by judicious training, keeping in check the natural bad qualities possessed by their children, and fostering the good qualities. On the other hand, each child has its own natural disposition and its own will, so that however judicious the training, parents are frequently disappointed with the result.

There are two antagonistic spirits underlying every

thought, word, and action, the one evil, and the other holy. If our thoughts, words, and actions are the result of an evil spirit or mind, an evil disposition, the resulting notes are harsh and discordant; but if they spring from a holy spirit or mind, the spirit of truth and love, the resulting notes are sweet and harmonious. These two spirits are like the positive and negative poles of a magnet. They are antagonistic the one to the other. The evil spirit is the spirit of Satan, the spirit of pride, unbelief, selfishness, anger, envy, strife, backbiting, and slander. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of God and of Christ, the spirit of humility, faith, love, self-control, patience, generosity, peace, kindness, and self-sacrifice. The only ones who can receive the Holy Spirit are the followers of Christ. By it they gradually obliterate the lines of pride, and slowly, painfully substitute the lines of humility. For the lines of unbelief they substitute the lines of faith; for the lines of impatience, the lines of patience; for the lines of covetousness, the lines of generosity, etc.

We must remember, however, that though God expects progress, he does not expect perfection in the flesh. It is in Christ the Beloved that we are accepted. If it had been possible for anyone to be perfect in the flesh, Jesus would not have died for us.

When we have formed the right lines of character, so far as is possible, on our organism, God will give us in the resurrection, as has been already explained, a new body of the divine nature with the lines of character of the New Creature impressed upon it, but without any of the imperfections which are due to the Fall. Thus our identity as New Creatures will be preserved. We shall know ourselves, and we shall know one another. May we all be faithful to our vow of consecration, so that we may receive the honour of bearing the image of our heavenly Lord, and sitting with him on his throne to the glory of God the Father! Amen.

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