

The Garden of Eden

An Examination of the Story of Adam and Eve

Albert O. Hudson

Preface

Albert Owen Hudson, of Milborne Port England, was a faithful Christian, Bible Student and Scholar of the twentieth century and the author of many books. He was born in 1899 and died in 2000 at 101 years of age. In his early years he worked as an Electrical Engineer for Standard Telephones. His aptitude for detail served him well in research Biblical details. He had access to the British Museum to reference ancient records in support of this and other studies.

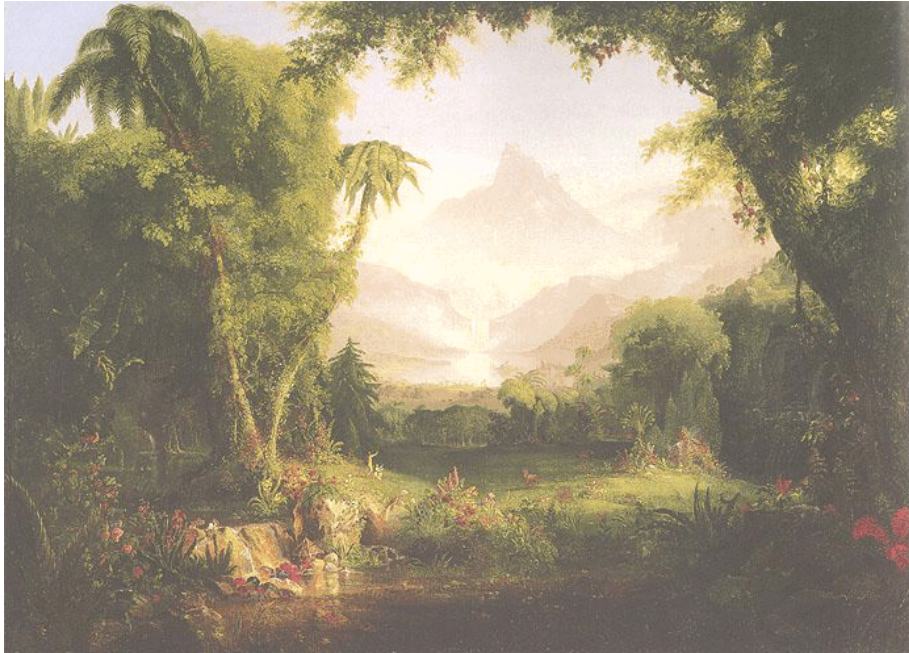
The Bible Fellowship Union began publishing a journal in 1924 "*The Bible Students Monthly*". In 1935 the name was changed to "*The Bible Study Monthly*". The journal was headed by Albert O. Hudson since its inception, and included many of his articles. He had a scholarly approach to Bible study particularly Old Testament history and prophecy concerning God's Kingdom and the practical out-working of God's purpose. In 1942 Albert Hudson wrote a series of articles entitled "*Jacob's Trouble*" that appeared as a booklet later that year. There have been two editions and a reprint resulting in many thousands of copies being dispatched across the world. In 1989 he also published "*Bible Students in Britain — The Story of a Hundred Years*".

He had an exceptional memory but also a very methodical filing system to store the fruit of his extensive reading, research and studies. His knowledge of history and the ancient world was outstanding. He loved the study of the Scriptures and sought to clarify doctrinal aspects of the faith. He had a wonderful gift with words, particularly the written word. His treatises contained much valuable information and wisdom.

The following exposition comprised a series of articles in his journal from 1959-1960 and were transcribed with the permission of The Bible Fellowship Union.

The Garden of Eden

Albert O. Hudson, 1899-2000



1. Did it really happen

Strange, shadowy scene, when the world was young. So little said about it; so vague the picture which can be visualised, for none of the trappings and interests of present-day living existed then. Nothing had been discovered; nothing had been made. A man and a woman, newly awakened to the consciousness of their surroundings, intelligent, impressionable, capable, but with everything yet to learn and everything yet to do. That is the Bible picture of the coming of human beings to the earth, and the question so often posed to-day is – did it really happen like that? Are all earth's millions really descended from one original pair, endowed with procreative powers for such purpose? And did that first human pair commit some great sin against God, a sin so fundamental that its effects remain with humanity these many thousands of years later and on account of which the misery of man is great upon him?

These are not idle questions; the validity of the doctrine of the Fall in Christian theology is important. It is put before us in the Book of Genesis as the explanation of the presence of sin and evil in the world. Nowhere in later pages of the Bible is that explanation contradicted; in several places it is confirmed. Belief in the literal accuracy of the story is waning fast to-day, even amongst Christians, for two principal reasons; one, that it seems incompatible with current claims of scientific research; two, that it involves accepting the dogma that all men are fallen sinners who cannot redeem themselves but need the redemptive power of a Saviour. The pride of man in his own achievements debars many from rejecting the first and accepting the second.

The alternative to belief in the story is the adoption of the evolutionary hypothesis, that man is steadily making his way onward and upward in every sense, without the help of God. The theory of human evolution has not held sway for very long – not much more than a hundred years out of all the long millenniums of human history – and already it is beginning to be recited less glibly by many of its most ardent supporters. The state of the world at the moment does not tend to bear out the fond expectations of last century's evolutionists. One thing is plain; if the evolution of man is a fact, then the Genesis story of man's creation is a fable, for that story teaches the direct creation of man, as a new species of creature, by the Most High, and his immediate endowment with qualities which

no other creature possessed. It claims that at the time of his creation man was perfect, sinless, and undying, and only afterwards, consequent upon his rebellion against God, did he become sinful, imperfect, and subject to death. The rest of the Bible makes clear that without the introduction of a Saviour sent from God, and man's acceptance of that Saviour, there is no possible release from this hopeless condition. Hence the two theses stand in irrevocable opposition; there can be no reconciliation between the story of Genesis and the theory of evolution.

It is easier now than it was fifty years ago to bring independent supporting testimony to the reasonableness and credibility of the Genesis story – so much more has been discovered concerning the early history of man and so much more is known of the biological aspect of the case that many old-time objections have been robbed of much of their force. Supporters of evolutionism used to point to the then currently accepted belief that polytheism – the worship of many gods – was the original faith of mankind long before monotheism – the worship of one God – had dawned in the world. They claimed then that the idea of one God was in itself an example of evolution of the human mind. Now it is an established fact that the earliest people history reveals were monotheists. Polytheism came into the world as a degeneration of originally purer and loftier forms of worship. This is in accord with the story of man's fall in Genesis but in conflict with the idea of progressive development inherent in Evolution.

Quite apart from the eternal question of the “missing link” which has obstinately remained missing for more than a century of diligent search, it is an obvious fact that the comparative scarcity of human beings in early historical times denotes a fairly recent date for the appearance of the first men. The present two and a quarter thousand millions of earth's population covers most of the land surface of the planet save the Antarctic regions, but less than three centuries ago world population was only five hundred millions, and it is reliably estimated by Prof. Julian Huxley that in the First Century of this era, at the time of Christ, the number did not exceed one hundred millions. There are some parts of the earth's surface, such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Polynesia, which were only reached by man at various times during the Christian Era; through all the years of Old Testament history they continued virgin territory. There is evidence that China, South-Eastern Asia and parts of India were not settled until between two and three thousand years BC. More and more, as the gaps in human knowledge are filled in, does the story of man's occupation of the earth take the pattern rather speculatively drawn by H. G. Wells in his “Outline of History” forty years ago, an outward migration in all directions from a common centre in southwestern Asia, the lands of the Bible. Wells was an agnostic and no believer in the Bible story, but his shrewd appraisal of the facts toward which the research of his time was tending has been justified by the clearer knowledge of to-day. And the effect of all this is to render it perfectly logical to consider the possibility of a very small beginning of the human race in or about the “Fertile Crescent” of western Asia, – the ancient lands of Sumeria and Canaan – at a time which may not have been more than eight or ten thousand years ago, and perhaps was appreciably less.

The old-time question so beloved of those who would show the Genesis story incredible, “where did Cain get his wife?” with its mock pious horror at the inescapable answer “he married his sister” is not heard so much nowadays. Here again modern knowledge has cast much-needed light upon the problem of consanguinity and shown that a prohibition which exists today in civilised countries, on account of the tremendous degeneration of human physique and the existence of so many undesirable characteristics in the physical and mental constitutions of men and women, would have no validity at a time when the original God-given physical and mental perfection – “in the image and likeness of God” – had hardly begun to be sapped by the destructive effects of sin.

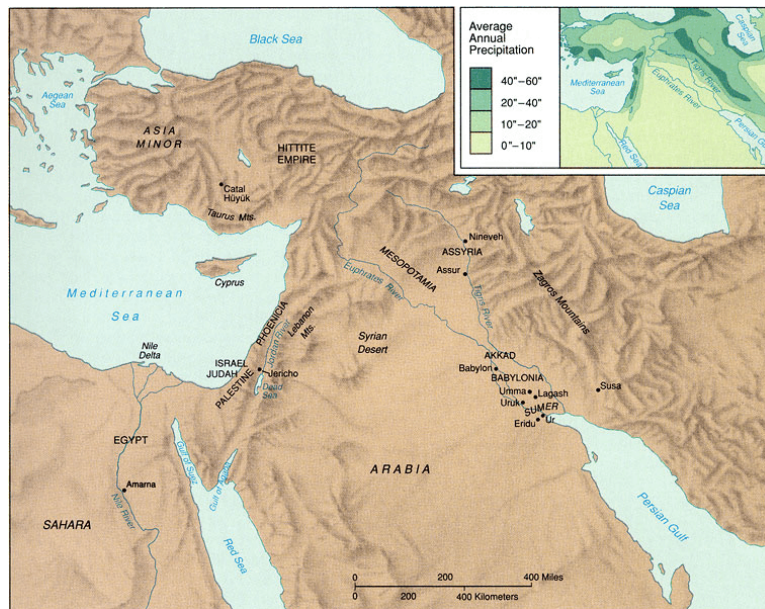
The simple directness of the story is probably its best recommendation. Granted that it was the Divine intention, in creating this planet and making it the scene of teeming vegetable and animal life, that it should eventually be the home of a race of intelligent beings knowing and acknowledging their Creator and Lord, what need was there to start with more than one pair? The Divine method has ever been to sow seed and let it develop and bring forth fruit a thousandfold. Modern astronomical

discovery has shown that, contrary to nineteenth century thought, there are tens of thousands of planets similar in general characteristics to the earth, scattered through the galactic heavens. Is it not possible that all these are destined yet to be the abode of living creatures likewise knowing and praising God, perhaps when the lessons of sin and evil have been well learned on the stage of this earth? May it not be that the same creative power which mysteriously and quite inexplicably produced the first recognisable living animals, the trilobites, in the warm Cambrian seas of the Palaeozoic Age, something like five hundred million years ago, and then, aeons later, suddenly produced the first reptiles, and later still the first mammals, could just as suddenly in the close of the sixth day of creation, when the Garden was ready, have produced the first man? The history of the differentiation of species into their varieties through geological time is marked at certain points by the emergence of definitely new forms of life which cannot easily be connected with pre-existing forms of life. Even from the scientific point of view, therefore, the sudden appearance of one man, a new kind of creature, on the earthly scene is not without its precedents in earthly history.

From the doctrinal point of view it is essential that humanity began with one man and all are sprung from him. The efficacy of the death of Christ, one just man dying for the many unjust men, (1 Pet. 3:18) is related to the fact that one man sinned and involved the many in his sin (Rom. 5:12 and 19). There is no avoiding this issue and the fact that we may not fully understand the philosophy behind it does not mitigate its force. The Apostolic writings insist that the scheme of Atonement is built upon the fact that all men were involved in the sin of their one common ancestor and the effects of that sin have poisoned the world from that day to this.

As a final consideration it must be borne in mind that the story of the Garden of Eden was prepared and preserved under the supervision and care of the Holy Spirit to be a source of instruction to all generations concerning the entry of sin into the world, the effect that entry has had on all men, and an explanation of the fact of sin in us and around us in our own time. That clearly is so that men should be able to appreciate both the necessity of redemption and the nature of the things from which redemption is necessary. That being so, it follows that a definite understanding of the facts of the story and a true appraisal of its literal or metaphorical content is very necessary to an intelligent grasp of the Christian faith. It is to that end that the chapters which follow are written, that this ancient story which lies at the root of our faith may give its testimony to the verity of "those things which are surely believed amongst us".





2. God Planted a Garden

The story of man's creation includes a description of the place where it happened. The narrative is tantalisingly brief; it informs us that *"the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed"* (ch. 2:8) and adds a few geographical indications which have exercised the ingenuity of many commentators of many generations. Endeavours to identify these place names with districts now existing have been made; China, India, and territories westward all the way to Armenia, Mesopotamia and the lost continent of Atlantis have had their advocates, but none really fit the requirements. At the same time it is evident that the unknown writer was at pains to define the location of the Garden for the benefit at least of his contemporaries if not of future readers. And it is hardly conceivable that the Holy Spirit would have preserved such a description if it had no basis in reality or nothing to teach those who read it so many millennia later. No Scripture narrative is without meaning or preserved without reason. The fact that the majority of students have failed to make much of this narrative is no proof of its unreliability. A great many of the statements of Strabo, the Greek geographer of the time of Christ, were dismissed as fanciful nonsense by educated men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but when the wilds of Africa and Asia had been explored by Europeans much of that which had been thus dismissed was found to be perfectly accurate. Strabo himself repudiated with scorn certain findings of still more ancient geographers and they too have since been proved right.

It is possible to make something of the narrative. The older students assumed that Genesis was first produced in written form by Moses under inspiration of God and that he described the Garden as it existed in his own day and – more improbably – as it has continued ever since. On this basis the earth was scoured for physical features and place names to fit the description and it has to be admitted that there really are none such. But nowadays it is known that Moses was not the original writer of these chapters; he copied and translated from earlier originals, and the work of recent years in the understanding of ancient Eastern languages has now made it possible to look at these chapters from a new angle and form a tolerably clear picture of when, where and in what language they were written. That in turn casts an entirely new light on this description of the Garden.

The Eden story was probably written in the Semitic land of Mari on the upper Euphrates somewhere about twenty-five centuries before Christ. It is only within the past thirty years that the remains of this Mari civilisation have been extensively explored by archaeologists. The people of Mari wandered down the Euphrates from their ancestral home in North Syria, occupying the Sumerian lands bordering the Euphrates and Tigris, and eventually obtained the ascendancy. These people were

the sons of Shem mentioned in Gen. 10:21-31 and of them was descended Abraham who lived some six hundred years later in Ur of the Chaldees four hundred miles to the south of Mari. The scribe who wrote the story possessed a good knowledge of the geography of the Sumerian lands of his own time, and the relation of those lands to the Garden of Eden of older time; he was well informed in the details of the Creation story and well able to place his knowledge before his immediate readers. If we put ourselves mentally in the position of a God-fearing citizen of Mari reading this account in about the year 2500 BC, we shall understand the story better.

The place names given in the narrative are mainly those current in Sumeria at that time. There are five districts, Eden, Havilah, Ethiopia, Assyria, and Nod, and four rivers, Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel, and Euphrates. Any reasonably well-educated person having this account before him at the time – or at any time up to the days of Abraham – would be at no loss to determine exactly the places in question; thanks to the research of the last fifty years in Bible lands we need have no greater difficulty to-day.

“And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden” (ch. 2:8). “Eden” is the Hebrew transliteration of the Sumerian word *“Idinu”* – “The Plain” – the proper name which they had given to the low flat country at the head of the Persian Gulf. “Eastward” is the Hebrew *“qedem”* meaning that which is before or in front, either in respect of position or time. When used in respect of position, since the Hebrews viewed themselves as facing the east, “east” is the natural meaning, and the word is so translated about 25 times in the O.T.; when used in respect of time it denotes that which is past, first or ancient, and is rendered by *“ancient”* or by equivalent words about 31 times in the O.T. The early translators, thinking of the Garden in terms of position and knowing nothing about Eden anyway, took the word as defining “position” and adopted “east” as the probable meaning. In fact, the unknown scribe intended something quite different. He meant the “ancient Eden” as distinct from the then modern existing “Eden” or “The Plain” known to his readers. In other words, the Garden had been located in a part of Eden or “The Plain” which no longer existed; as the upshot will show, since the days of Adam and Eve it had been submerged by the waters of the Gulf.

On this basis the puzzle of the four rivers which “went out of Eden” to water the Garden begins to make sense, and some confirmation is afforded the persistent Babylonian tradition that the events of man’s creation and fall took place in the land known to the Sumerians as Tilmun (now the Bahrein Islands, three hundred miles down the Persian Gulf). We have therefore to read Gen. 2:8 *“And the Lord God planted a garden in the ancient Eden”* as contrasted with the modern Eden with which the readers were fully acquainted. Because that ancient land with its rivers had become submerged by the waters of the Gulf during the intervening centuries the historian proceeded to describe it in terms of those rivers as they existed in his own day.

The physical appearance of Mesopotamia is always changing. At the present time the two great rivers, Tigris and Euphrates, join forces a hundred miles from the sea and complete their course as a united stream, the Shatt-el-Arab. Halfway along this united stream the waters of the Kherkhah and Karun come down from the Persian mountains and discharge their joint load into the Shatt-el-Arab through wide marshes; on the other side the Wady al Batin, a deep gorge which once brought a mighty river down from Central Arabia, now contributes a minor flow. The land is flat and marshy, built up by sediment carried down by these rivers, and is constantly encroaching on the sea and pushing the shore line farther south – at the present time at the rate of one mile every seventy years. Ur of the Chaldees is to-day more than a hundred miles from the sea; in Abraham’s day it was on the coast, and the four rivers entered the Gulf through separate outlets. These same four rivers are those whose ancient courses the old-time chronicler sets out to describe.

“A river went out of Eden to water the Garden; and from thence it was parted and became unto four heads” (ch. 2:10). The word for “Parted” means to be separated or dispersed; that for “heads” is *“rosh”* meaning the beginning, the first, the originating or controlling power. Four tributary watercourses converged in Eden, the Plain, to form a river which watered and fertilised the Garden. It follows that the Garden was situated somewhere below the confluence of the four streams, between their junction and the sea.

“The name of the first is Pison; that is it which surrounds the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold: and the gold of that land is good; there is bdellium and the onyx stone” (ch. 2:11-12). Pison as a name has dropped out of history; Havilah lingered in Old Testament times. There were two lands of Havilah, one in Central Arabia settled by Semitic peoples the descendants of Joktan (see Gen. 10:19 and 25:18), the other the Sumerian Havilah settled by the sons of Cush (see Gen. 10:7). The latter is the one intended here; the minerals mentioned make it possible to identify the district. The Sumerians obtained their gold, some from Oman six hundred miles to the south, the greater part from the mountains east of the Tigris in what is now Iran (Persia) only two hundred miles away. In the same mountains they mined the semi-precious blue-green stone (of which many specimens are in museums to-day), which they called *samtu*, the Hebrews *Shoham*, translated “onyx stone” in the O.T., and known to-day as lapis lazuli. The Kherkhah river, rising far inside Iran, traversed this region in wide curves; in its lower reaches, and around its outlet to the sea, the Sumerians gathered pearls, (the bdellium of this verse) as pearl divers do in the same area to-day. The pearls, the lapis lazuli and the gold fix the modern Kerkhah as the ancient Pison.

“The name of the second river is Gihon; the same is it that compasseth (surrounds) the whole land of Ethiopia” (Cush) (ch. 2:13). Ethiopia came to the A.V. from the Greek Septuagint as the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Cush. The African country of Ethiopia was known as Cush in ancient times and is so referred to in the O.T. from Isaiah’s period onward. This was not the Cush of Genesis; here is the story of a great migration. Cushites were the descendants of Cush the son of Ham (Gen. 10:6) and were therefore a Sumerian people. They originated on the Euphrates and history finds them being forced down the west side of the Persian Gulf by the pressure of Semitic tribes (sons of Shem) descending the Euphrates from the north. As the Semitic Arabs filled the Arabian peninsula the Cushites moved along its south coast, the Hadramhaut, crossed the Red Sea near Aden and by the time of Israel’s Exodus from Egypt were colonising eastern Africa, whence the application of the name Cush (Ethiopia) to the African land still bearing that name. This migration had hardly begun when Genesis 2 was being written and the land of Cush was then confined to the district west of the Euphrates and southward toward Arabia. The Gihon was the modern Wady-al-Batin, watering the whole of Northern Arabia. In ancient times this was a fertile land and the Wady-al-Batin a major river; through the ages that whole part of the earth’s surface is being slowly elevated and with the rising land level the river has shrunk to a winter torrent only and the land has become desert.

“The name of the third river is Hiddekel; that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria” (ch. 2:14). Hiddekel is the river known since ancient times as Tigris. The original Akkadian (Semitic) name was Diglat. According to Prof. A. H. Sayce, the addition of the Akkadian prefix “*Hid*” for river, so forming Hid-Diglat (Hiddekel) betrayed the scribe’s infamiliarity with Akkadian grammar, indicating that he was probably a native Sumerian. The reference to the river going “toward the east of Assyria” is subject to the same consideration as vs. 8, “eastward in Eden”, but in this case the close affinity between this statement and those governing the other two rivers, each defining a political division of the Sumerian world, probably justifies taking this to mean “before in place” where the other meant “before in time”. From the point of view of a writer living in Mari on the Euphrates, it would be correct to speak of the Tigris as being “before” or “in front of” Assyria which lay almost due east of Mari.

“And the fourth river is Euphrates” (ch. 2:14). The style in which the fourth river is introduced, with no further description, shows that it was perfectly well known to the intended readers. It was in fact their own national river, running through the centre of their land. It is still known by its original name – *Purat* in Sumerian, *Ufratu* the Persian equivalent, of which Euphrates is the Greek and therefore the English equivalent. This is the “Great River” of the Bible and perhaps the most famous river of all history.

So the students of that day, reading the story of creation, learned that the rivers of their own land had in the days of Eden joined together to form one main watercourse which traversed the Garden before reaching the sea, thus implying that the area now covered by the Persian Gulf was dry land, a

great valley through which the main river made its way to an outlet somewhere in the present Indian Ocean. Geology shows that at some indeterminate time in the past this was in fact the case, that both the Gulf and part of the Indian Ocean were dry land, that the River Indus from India met the Euphrates and they emptied their joint waters into an ocean somewhere in the distant south. That unknown scribe of Mari anticipated the findings of modern geology by more than four thousand years.

An up-to-date illustration might be interesting. It is known to-day that at one time the North Sea was dry land, connecting Britain with the Continent. The Rhine from Germany and the Schelde from Belgium combined to flow together northward through what is now the North Sea, being joined on the way by the Thames and the Humber, eventually falling into the Arctic Ocean. Suppose a writer in mediaeval England, knowing of this and wishing to describe an incident of those ancient days, were to write a description of the land as it then existed. He might very fittingly have used almost identical words to those in Genesis. He could have said, (remembering that the present flat country of the Netherlands now borders those lost lands under the North Sea) *“There was a fertile land in the ancient Netherlands, and a river went out of the Netherlands to water that country, and had four tributaries. The name of the first is the Rhine, which traverses the land of Germany, where there are mountains and forests. The name of the second is Schelde which winds through Belgium. The name of the third is Humber, which is northward in the Midlands; and the fourth river is the Thames.”* Anyone reading that statement would easily discern where the lost land was supposed to be, and the casual mention of the Thames would make it pretty plain that the writer was himself a Londoner or at least resident in the Thames Valley or Southern England, or writing from the standpoint of such an one.

The writer of Genesis 2 intended his readers to understand that the lost Garden was situated somewhere under the shallow waters of the Persian Gulf. A more fitting place for man’s introduction to the earth could hardly have been selected. This spacious valley, three hundred miles wide at its greatest width by six hundred long, with the great river meandering through its centre, ran roughly north-west to south-east. A glance at a map shows that it was almost entirely surrounded by the mountains of Persia and the high table-land of Central Arabia, a wonderfully sheltered stretch of parkland in a region where summer would be virtually perpetual. The soil, composed of fertile silt brought down by the river, and therefore rich in everything that makes for plant growth, must have supported a profusion of tree and plant life. Here, if anywhere, is the place where the first few generations of men, sprung from Adam and Eve, could have made progress in knowledge of the earth’s resources untrammelled by the necessity of labouring in the sweat of their brows. The great valley, extending from the Indian Ocean to the Armenian mountains, could have supported many millions of human beings before need existed to penetrate the encircling highlands and find living space in the wider world beyond. By then they would have been more prepared for the task of subduing the earth and making it fruitful (Gen. 1:28) than were those two who entered that wider world prematurely because of their sin.

3. The Creation of Man

A green, sunlit glade, alive with the hum of insects and the song of birds; a grassy bank, across which lay the still form of a man, magnificent in physique and perfect in proportion, a form which a moment ago had not been there – the busy insects ceased their hum, the song of the birds fell away into silence, the earth waited...

A light wind, sweeping over the tree-tops and down into the glade, ruffling the tall grass and setting the leaves nodding, bathing that motionless form in a soft caress ... the body quivering, closed eyelids flickering open to reveal expressionless eyes slowly taking on a look of deepening wonder and enquiry. Limbs quietly stretching and flexing; the man sitting up and looking around him...



The creation of Adam must have been something like that. An almost instantaneous gathering together of earthly substances and their constitution into a human body by Divine power is quite easy to understand when in the stories of the Gospels we find that same Divine power doing precisely the same thing by creating wine where before there had been only water and replacing the already decaying flesh of Lazarus four days dead in new and healthy flesh. We in this generation are so accustomed to popular descriptions of the creation of new elements or the transmuting of one element into another by nuclear processes that we have far less excuse than had our fathers for questioning the credibility of this story.

The earth had been in existence a long time when God made man. God had worked through the ages making preparations for this climax to his terrestrial creative activity. Adam opened his eyes to a world of luxuriant life, both animal and vegetable. There were already many living creatures, pursuing their multifarious activities, showing him by force of example what sentient life could mean and could offer. But the earth had not always been thus. In the dim past it had been a place silent and dark, where stark, sterile mountains thrust their savage peaks from a universal sea devoid of any kind of life. That was no home for man. Then the sea and the land divided; in the sea there appeared living things, lowly things, seaweeds and rock-scum, and corals and sponges neither plant nor animal but partaking of the qualities of both; to the land there came mosses and ferns, scorpions, beetles, grubs and creeping things; this too was no home for man. The slow ages passed and the misty hothouse atmosphere gave place to arid heat and a desert landscape, over which prowled grotesque giant reptiles, and raging seas tenanted by terrifying marine monsters; here again there was no home for man. But now the outworking Plan of God was taking great strides toward fulfilment. The hot, harsh conditions of the Mesozoic Era gave place to the soft rains and pure air of the Cainozoic; the enormous reptiles and sea creatures disappeared and in their place came the animals and birds we know today. Something quite new was seen on earth, a flower. Soon there were myriads of flowers, and with the flowers came bees and butterflies, noble trees like the oak and the beech and the elm, fruit trees like the apple and the pear and the orange, flowering grasses and aromatic herbs, and finally grain, wheat and barley and maize. Then God saw that the earth was ready for man's home and He came down to earth to create man.

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image." (Gen, 1:26-27).

This is the general description of the appearance of man upon earth. Chapter 2 has the particular, the detailed story associating the actual act of creation with the garden in which it took place. In that chapter stress is laid upon man's bodily frame being of the dust of the ground; in this the emphasis is upon the fact that he is made in the image of God. "Let US make"... "in OUR image". To whom was God speaking and in what sense was man made in "OUR" image?

The modern critic is not slow to seize on this use of the plural and to suggest that this indicates the source of the story in polytheistic Babylonian mythology; Moses altered the plurality of gods all through the account to make the story fit Hebrew belief in one God but accidentally omitted this one! Says one of the critics *"the plural unconsciously escaped the narrator's pen"*. What the critics do not notice or at any rate do not mention is that nowhere in Babylonian mythology is man said to have been made in the image of God, so that the foundation of their premise is altogether swept away. The serious student, believing this story to be from God, must look farther below the surface than the critics have ever done to find the meaning of this declaration.

Jewish commentators have usually suggested that God is here depicted talking to the angels. The interest of the angelic world in the Divine creative work is hinted at in Job 38:7 where, speaking of God fashioning the earth, we are told *"the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy"*. Says the Talmud *"The Holy One, blessed be He, does nothing without consulting the family which is above"*. Despite all this, however, there is no indication in the Bible that the angels

had any share in the work of creating man, whereas Genesis explicitly states “Let US make man”. It may be nearer the truth to think of the Father and the Son working together, for one thing upon which the New Testament is definite is the fact that the Son is the executive agent of the Father in things pertaining to man just as He is the way by which the Father is manifested to man. *“All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made”* (John 1:3). *“By him were all things created ... in heaven ... in earth”* (Col. 1:16). *“... God, who created all things by Jesus Christ”* (Eph. 1:9). At the same time it has to be recognised that the Genesis story depicts God as a unity, one who is conducting every step in creation by himself, until He comes to the final act, the creation of man, and then for the first time admits the joint work of another; “Let *us*...”. Since the Son admittedly was the active agent in all the preceding creative works as well as in that of man the use of the plural in this verse alone would still seem to provoke enquiry.

Jewish scholars of an older time, such as Maimonides (1131-1201) suggest, in effect, that God took counsel with the earth, the earth supplying the body and God supplying the soul, so that the expression “in our likeness” was to be referred both to God and to the earth. This is worthy of thought before passing over. The angels were made in the likeness of God but, being spiritual, have nothing of the likeness of earthly or material things. The lower animal creation which preceded Adam had the likeness of earth but nothing in them of the spiritual. Man alone has that which makes him a citizen of both worlds; he is of the earth, earthy, but God has implanted in his nature the capacity for spiritual intercourse with the higher world, the ability to worship and have communion and fellowship with God. It can quite reasonably be imagined that God, in a metaphorical kind of way, could say to the earth “Let *us* make *man*”.

The expression, “in our image, after our likeness” has to be taken very literally for both words definitely indicate true resemblance. We do not have to confine the meaning to physical likeness; the whole man, moral, mental and physical, is included. So far as the moral aspect of man’s nature is concerned, the implication is easy to accept; man is made in the moral likeness of God, having the same power of discernment between right and wrong, the same appreciation of moral values. Of all terrestrial living creatures, man alone possesses this moral sense and alone can be considered accountable for the morality of his actions. From that aspect one passes to the mental powers of man; here again there is a difference from the brute creation, in that men possess powers of reflection and deduction, and can reason of things unknown on the basis of things known. These faculties make possible increase of knowledge, discovery and invention, achievements which lie forever outside the powers of any other sentient creature. In this also, man is in the likeness of God, although his mental powers lie on an immeasurably lower level. Nevertheless they are at least such as to enable God to invite man *“Come, and let us reason together, saith the Lord”* (Isa. 1:18). It is in connection with the idea of physical likeness that the difficulty arises; it is so evident that the body of man is devised and constructed to fit him for life on this earth and would be totally out of place in, and unfitted for life on, any other plane of being. Perhaps, after all, the “us” does refer to the co-operation of heaven and earth in the production of man, and the best understanding of this passage be found in thinking of man as possessing the mental and moral image of God enshrined in the likeness of an earthly creature. That there are essential differences between earthly and heavenly bodies is evident from the words of Paul in I Cor. 15 when he makes clear that there is one glory of the terrestrial and another of the celestial, that *“as we have borne the image of the earthly so also we shall bear the image of the heavenly”*; yet James tells us that man is made in the similitude of God (Jas. 3:9). But James is talking of human emotions, not of physical appearance, and it may well be that the human emotions of love, joy, zeal, loyalty, gratitude and so on are all counterparts of qualities finding far richer expression in the celestial world and in this sense also man is made in the image and likeness of God.

How did God create and vivify the first man? Did He take some pre-existing animal body and adapt it to his purpose, so that what started life as one of the lower creatures found itself exalted to a thinking, reasoning being? Did He allow the various species of anthropoid (man-like) apes to evolve, generation after generation, until one day He looked down and saw one specimen almost man-like in

appearance and took that one and in-breathed his Spirit to make it a man? These and other hypotheses have been proposed but none involve any less simple and straightforward an exercise of creative power than that forthshown in the words in Gen. 2:7 *“And 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”*. There is every indication here that God constructed something new from entirely primitive and original material. He took “dust of the ground” where “dust” is *aphar*, the fine ingredients of the soil, and “ground” is *adamah*, the surface of the land in general, and He formed (*yatsar* – moulded or shaped, as a potter does clay) man from the variety of ingredients in the ground itself. How literally exact is that description is demonstrated by the fact that a human body contains at least forty-one of the ninety or so elements found in Nature. A scientist could take from the shelves of his laboratory so much carbon, so much calcium, so much sulphur, and similarly with the remaining elements, and produce some nine or ten stone weight of material which would be an exact replica of the substance which makes up a human body; but he would finish with a heap of greyish powder and in no way could he fashion it into a human being. God caused to be gathered together in one place the right quantities of those forty-one elements, brought them into chemical combination the one with the other so that they formed a complex system of carbo-hydrates, proteins and the like, caused that combination to develop into a collection of living cells, tiny pinpoints of life too small to be seen with the naked eye but present in such myriad quantities that together in all their variety of shape and purpose they took on the outward appearance of a man, and inwardly became the organs and arteries and muscular system of a man – the man Adam. It may have been – must have been – the work of a moment of time from the gathering together of a hundredweight or so of particles from the surrounding earth to their metamorphosis into a symmetric and perfect human body lying there in the sunlight; and then God inbreathed into that inanimate frame the breath of life and man awoke to consciousness, a living soul.

This expression is not to be understood as implying that God implanted an immortal soul into the body of flesh, as though to tenant it until death, then to fly away as though set free. That idea, born of the rather confused theology of the Middle Ages, is a travesty of the truth. The teaching of Genesis is that the union of the Divine Spirit of life with the material body constitutes a living soul. *“Man became a living soul”*. The separation of material body and spirit of life (which returns to God who gave it – Eccl. 12:7) at death connotes the cessation of that “living soul”; the continuance of life of the individual is only by virtue of Divine power re-implanting that spirit of life in a new body of God’s own creating, a “resurrection body”. That is why the Christian faith is firmly rooted in the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. There can be no future life without a resurrection from the dead, and because the old body at death has returned to the dust, its component items then to re-appear in a hundred different forms by virtue of the processes of Nature, the resurrection body is not the one that dies but an entirely new body. *“Thou sowest not that body that shall be”* (1 Cor. 15:37).

Once that point is clearly appreciated, it is easier to understand that man in his perfect state, as was Adam at his creation, is intended by God for everlasting life upon the earth. Leaving aside for the moment any consideration of the Divine Plan as regards those from among mankind who attain to joint heirship and eternal association with Christ in his glory and in the celestial world, it has to be remembered that God, who *“formed not the earth in vain, he formed it to be inhabited”* (Isa. 45:18) has quite evidently created these material spheres which form his physical creation for the purpose of sustaining life which shall be to his glory. The mediaeval idea that all material things are inherently corrupt and must pass away in a final holocaust of fire is now very generally repudiated. When God looked upon all that He had made, He pronounced it “very good” (Gen. 1:31). A reasoned view of the Divine purpose therefore must envisage the continuance upon earth to all eternity of sinless, undying human beings living their lives to the glory of God in this environment just as the multitudes of the saints in heaven will live their lives in that environment. The whole tenor of Scripture is to this effect; the inspired writers concur in visualising an ultimate state of felicity on this earth when *“there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor sighing, neither shall there be any more pain”* because *“the dwelling-place of God is with men”*. (Rev. 21:3-4).

Now that implies that Adam, created perfect and sinless, was also capable of living that undying life upon earth had he remained in harmony with the laws of righteousness. Sin, and sin alone, is the cause of death so far as humanity is concerned. Without sin there can be no death. Hence the Apostle Paul states categorically *“by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”* (Rom. 5:12). It follows therefore that the creation of Adam was the first movement in a chain of cause and effect which had as its ultimate object the peopling of this planet with an adequate and appropriate population of supremely happy undying creatures fulfilling a defined place in Divine creation and living always to the glory of God. The interposition of sin has delayed but not frustrated that object; sin will be overcome and eliminated and the original purpose achieved.

So Adam, the first human living soul, opened his five senses to the reception of impressions from the external world around him, and the history of mankind on earth had begun.

4. Servant of the Soil

“And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.” (Gen. 2:15).

Here is the first record of any kind of human activity in the whole history of mankind. Before his companion had been given to him, while as yet the first man was alone in the earth, he received a commission and a sphere of responsibility, a duty toward God which became an obligation devolving upon him. He was not left to choose his own way of life; not given freedom to please himself as to how he would spend his time. The world had been created by God and was God's world. The man had been created by God and was God's man. The man was placed in the world and found it an environment which suited his needs in every particular. Man and the earth were perfectly attuned and fitted to each other, and man was capable of maintaining this tune and fitness indefinitely provided he observed the laws which had been Divinely framed to assure the everlasting continuance of both man and the earth. In the upshot man violated those laws and in consequence the entire creation fell into disorder. Men have even yet not learned that order will not be restored until once again all mankind willingly and voluntarily maintain inviolate those laws of God and re-establish the three-fold harmony and unity between God, his earth and his men which alone will ensure orderly continuance of that which his hands have made. We do not yet see that happy state; it can only come about in Christ, and *“we see not yet all things put under him”* (Heb. 2:8). We do see Jesus, in the glory and power of the Father, working toward that desirable end, which will surely come. In the meantime we can only look back to Eden as a model in miniature of the blessed state which is yet to be.

It will not do therefore to think of Adam as called to live his life in a kind of eternal playtime with nothing more vital to do than satisfy the natural feelings of hunger from the wild-growing trees around him. There is no place for idleness in Divine creation. Every living creature has its function and its duty to perform, a place which it must occupy and an obligation it must discharge, if creation is to continue, and man is no exception to that rule. And so the very first injunction laid upon man, the very first purpose to which his dawning intelligence was directed, is here expressed in the word “service”. Man was put into the garden to serve. The very first verbs expressive of human activity to be found in the history of man are the two in this verse, “to dress” and “to keep”. The first is *“abad”*, meaning to plant and dress, as in vineyards (see Deut. 28:39) derived from the basic word *“abd”* which signifies to do work, service, labour, especially as in the tilling of the soil, and from which the Hebrew word for servant is derived. The second is *“shamar”*, to observe or fulfil an obligation as in the keeping of a covenant or commandment. The whole expression “to dress it and to keep it” therefore combines the two principles; man is a servant of God in the care of the earth and his labour on the soil is an obligation which he is bound to discharge. Right at the outset man was made responsible to God for the proper care and development and use of the earth, his home. Men to-day either do not know that or they do not believe it; they are despoiling and destroying the earth with

their foul inventions, their unprincipled wastage of the earth's resources, their senseless warfare on the lower creatures, resulting in upsetting the balance of Nature with their insecticides and pest control and mass breeding and mass production methods, continually making worse what they have already made bad. All the time the Devil looks on and continues to assure them that they shall not surely die and the signs of death are gathering and thickening fast. All this is the result of that first departure from the Divine ordinance and way of life which constituted the first man's refusal to fit into the place for which God had created him.

But there, in Adam's day, there was no sign of that. Adam must have taken up his duties with gratitude and happiness as his developing intelligence and perceptive faculties began to show him just what life could mean. The idea of companionship would almost certainly not have crossed his mind in those early days; there was so much to see and do, so many new objects at which to wonder, so many things of interest to explore. The time must have passed very quickly, and the bare idea of even questioning the things God told him could not have entered his mind. We have to remember that Adam of necessity started with a mind as blank as that of a newborn baby and must have assimilated ideas and discovered things in the same fashion as does a baby – largely by investigation and experiment – without the advantage of others of his own kind to teach him.

How did the first man commune, or communicate, with God? How did he receive the messages and instructions which according to Gen. 2 and 3 he undoubtedly did receive? Was there an audible voice on the air, sounding in his ears, in which case he must have been created with the gift of language already bestowed in order to understand the words? Was there a visible appearance, a "theophany" to use the theological term, an appearing in fleshly form of the agent of God to convey the message from on high, in much the same way as the Lord appeared to Abraham or to Moses, or the angel Gabriel to Daniel or to Mary? Or was it the impression of the Divine word upon Adam's mind in such fashion that his brain could understand although no sound vibrated the air and no sight appeared against the background of the landscape? We do not know; we only know that in some fashion Adam did receive the word from God and understood its meaning.

So his first activity apparently was to set about tilling the ground. Not in the sweat of his brow as after the Fall, but tilling the ground nevertheless. We may assume that Adam, awaking to consciousness, found food and drink for his immediate needs already awaiting him in his surroundings; it seems however that the continuance of the supply was going to depend upon his own efforts. It was in that early day that the fundamental law was laid down *"If a man will not work neither shall he eat"*.

It is a remarkable fact that the most detailed of the Babylonian traditions of the creation of man, known as the Sumerian Epic of Paradise (discovered in 1912 and fully deciphered in 1932) depicts the first man as being a gardener and occupied with the duties of a husbandman. The scene is the land of Tilmun, the Babylonian Eden, where, according to the record, *"the wild beasts were tame and gentle. They lived in peace with the cattle . . . the sun shone in heaven and rejoiced, the moon in her sanctuary, and from the mouth of the earth came flowing the sweet water of the river abundantly. The ground produced rich crops and Tilmun became the centre of the world upon which the sun shone always."* Later on the sole man inhabiting the garden is shown tending, plucking and eating the fruits of various plants and trees. Some recollection of the truth must have descended through the generations in Babylonian tradition, having its origin in the actual happenings of Eden recorded by the Holy Spirit in the second chapter of Genesis, and although such traditions may not be regarded in anything like the light in which we regard Genesis, the corroborative testimony they offer is of some value.

At some time during those early days, whilst as yet Adam was still alone, there came to him the first expression of God's moral law. The question of just what is meant in the story by the two mystic trees, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, is best left for consideration in conjunction with the account of the Temptation and the Fall, later on in the narrative. Suffice at the moment to note that in addition to these two trees there was also *"every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food"* (Gen. 2:9) and that it was of these latter trees that Adam was told he could

freely eat (vs. 16). The tree of knowledge was forbidden and no injunction whatever was given concerning the tree of life.

How would Adam understand the statement *“In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die?”* He himself had but recently been awakened to life; he knew nothing of death so far as human beings were concerned for he had never seen another human being and it might well be at this stage of his development the possibility of there ever being any other human beings like himself had never crossed his mind. The animals he knew, and he might by now have seen death in the lower creation and so been able to understand what it was so far as its outward manifestation was concerned. In any case he could only have visualised death as a cessation of his conscious life given him by God. Death was the withdrawal of that life, and that is how Adam must have understood the pronounced consequence of partaking of the fruit of the forbidden tree. That is rather important in considering the nature of the Biblical doctrine of death as the wages of sin.

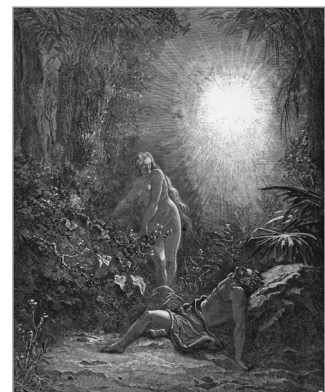
The only other incident before the coming of Eve that is recorded is the naming of the animals. Although the remark attributed to God in vs. 18 *“It is not good that the man should be alone”* comes before the naming of the animals, in vs. 19-20 the sense of the passage demands that the naming came first and the writer preceded that account with vs. 18 to heighten the contrast – among the animals there was not one suitable to be his companion. This naming of the animals must have been a lengthy process; as Adam explored his home and observed the wealth of animal and bird life and insect life with which it was furnished, he would note the distinctions of types and species and invent characteristic names for them – in his mind probably, for with no one to speak to it is possible that he had not yet mastered the art of spoken words. Only after he had observed the duality of Nature, the companionship of animals and their production of offspring, would he begin to realise that he himself, perfect and well provided for as he was, lacked one thing which the animals around him enjoyed, the society of one of his own kind. From that moment he must have been conscious of a feeling he had never known before, a feeling of something lacking.

With that realisation the first phase of Adam’s experience came to an end. Until then he had been a single unit, living entirely to himself, taking advantage of the earth’s resources and, we can have no doubt, becoming more and more accustomed to, and interested in, the tilling of the soil for the production of daily food. But all that he did was for himself; the idea of sharing, of extending his interest to another and putting forth effort on behalf of another, had never occurred to him. Now that he had seen for himself the male creature going forth to forage food for the benefit of the female, lying in the cave or nest caring for her young, a totally new set of ideas must have begun to work in his mind. In a dim, dark sort of way he began to realise something of the truth behind the much later words of St. Paul *“none of us liveth to himself”*. Perhaps then, for the first time, some embryo realisation that he had been brought into existence for a purpose began to enter his mind, that life was not intended merely for eating and sleeping and rejoicing in the sunshine. His eager mind must have often posed the unspoken query *“What?”* as his eyes fell first upon one new sight and then upon another. Now, perhaps for the first time, his mind registered a different kind of query, *“Why?”*.

And at that moment God moved toward the next stage in his unfolding purpose – the bringing into being a second creation, a companion for man, of the man, to be with the man, and with the man to exercise those powers bestowed by God which would eventually lead to the consummation of all his intentions with regard to his material creation.

5. The Coming of Eve

The coming into existence of the first woman is more difficult to comprehend than any other part of the Eden story. The first man was made of the dust of the ground; God breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living being. That is easy to visualise. With Eve it was different.



About the only clear and easily understood element in the story is that she was made of Adam's own flesh – *"bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh"* *"she was taken out of man"*. Those were Adam's own words, and however the process of Eve's creation be viewed the conclusions reached may not do violence to the principle underlying those words. Adam's body was constructed from the elements of the earth around him and infused with the spirit of life by God; Eve's body came from Adam and it is not said, as it is said of Adam, that God breathed into Eve's inanimate form the breath of life and awakened her to conscious existence in the manner that Adam was awakened.

It was after the animals had been named and Adam began to perceive the processes of Nature at work in the lower creation that God expressed what were probably Adam's own feelings by the declaration *"It is not good that the man should be alone"* (ch. 2. vs. 18). Adam himself was by now probably feeling need of a companion, one with whom he could share his thoughts and his experiences. To what extent he may have visualised the possibility of a society of creatures like himself, living and working together in harmony, engaging together in the pursuit of objects of common interest, it is impossible to say. Probably his mind had gone no farther as yet than to dream of just one other human being corresponding in all material respects to himself. Perhaps he did, perhaps he did not, hear the avowed intention of the Lord, *"I will make him an help meet for him"* but even if he did he could have had no conception of the wonderful thing that was soon to happen to him.

This word "help meet" has suffered from improper confusion with the English word "help-mate" and has been made to appear as if God was proposing a wife for Adam. Although, of course, the one so soon to come into existence was destined to become Adam's wife, this is not the meaning of the word. "Help meet" is the Hebrew *"ezer-ki-neged"* which means, literally, an opposite counterpart, as in a mirror reflection. "One like himself standing opposite him" is an equivalent rendering. Adam had seen all the animals and found none there like himself, none having properties either of body or mind with which he could find something in common. There was no other living creature like Adam in the whole wide world; he was unique. God proposed to alter that situation by bringing him face to face with another like himself with whom he could hold communion and who could share with him the interests of his life.

The popular idea that Eve was created from one of Adam's ribs which was taken from his body for the purpose while asleep has to be mentioned because it is the popular idea and because it appears like that in the Authorised Version narrative. Obviously there is much more behind the story than this; the account warrants closer examination.

"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man." (ch. 2. vs. 21-22).

The word translated "deep sleep" does not refer to ordinary sleep but indicates a trance, being in a senseless or stupefied condition, as in the case, in modern days, of a patient being under an anaesthetic preparatory to a surgical operation. How long this trance lasted we do not know, but it was during its course that Adam was subjected to something very analogous to a surgical operation. It was not necessarily the removal of one of his ribs which would incidentally have left him something less than a perfect man, physically. This word *"tselā"* translated "rib" is not primarily a medical word. It is a mechanical term referring to rooms, beams or walls flanking the sides of buildings or other structures. *"Tselā"* denotes the side chambers of Solomon's and Ezekiel's Temples, eleven times, the side walls of the Mosaic Tabernacle seventeen times, constructional details of buildings such as beams, boards, planks, corners, etc., another seven times, and "rib" in the medical sense only in the Genesis story; nowhere else. The word is derived from a root which means to incline to one side. On this account Jewish traditions pictured Adam as having been created a kind of dual being, Eve being joined to him at his side, the trance like period of insensibility becoming the occasion for the separation. But before considering further just what is intended to be conveyed by the "rib" it may be helpful to examine the succeeding stages of the process. Of that which was taken from Adam, God "made" a woman. This word "made" is not that used of the creation of Adam, *"yatsar"*, which means to form,

fashion, shape, or construct. It is “*banah*” which means to build, and is used with this meaning everywhere in the Old Testament – over 300 times – when the building of a thing is referred to. The woman’s body was not formed in the same manner as that of the man. *His* was fashioned from earthly material by the hand of God; *hers* was built up by a process of growth, and that which eventually blossomed into the perfection of full womanhood had its origin in the body of the man.

This fact is stressed by Adam’s words when he set eyes upon his destined companion. “*This now*” he said “*is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.*” In Semitic dialects “bone” is often used as a synonym for “self” and Adam’s exclamation might well have inferred “This is self of myself and flesh of my flesh”. It is clear that Adam was perfectly well aware that the woman had not been created independently, as he himself had been, and then brought to him; she derived her form and her life from his own self, under the provision of God.

Did Adam originally find Eve a fully-grown mature woman or did he first watch a process of development through childhood into womanhood? There is a certain romance associated with the idyll of the first man coming face to face with his destined bride and taking her to himself in the rapture of such a meeting; but if in fact it was like that, then the part taken from Adam must have been supplemented by a generous allowance of “dust of the ground” in order completely to fashion the physical frame of a fully grown adult. Perhaps, rather, Adam awoke from his short time of unconsciousness to find himself the custodian of a new young life which until that time had been part of his own self. He must have seen the same kind of thing happening among the lower animals and his mind would quickly grasp the situation. Such a supposition would account for the use of the expression “*builded he a woman*” instead of “*fashioned*” as in the creation of the man, and would give full meaning to Adam’s exclamation “This is self of myself and flesh of my flesh”. In such case it would have been a number of years before his charge could become his wife; he must first guide her through the experiences of early childhood and maidenhood, observing her development until at last she attained relative equality with him both mentally and physically.

Cases have been known in this modern world where male and female characteristics are combined in one individual – hermaphrodite is the medical term – one or the other usually obtaining the ascendancy eventually. Remembering the Scriptural insistence that all men owe their life and their form to Adam, all die “in Adam” and indirectly in consequence of his sin, it is perhaps not unreasonable to think of the first man Adam as created with all the powers and vehicles of life built into his own organism, retaining only the predominantly manlike characteristics when he had passed life and form with all womanly attributes to the one who was of him and one with him, yet separate from him.

In some such manner may be understood how Eve was taken from Adam’s side and the flesh closed up to leave him whole and entire, fitted to fulfil his destiny as the father of the human race. That all this had been intended and planned from the beginning, that Adam at his creation already bore within his body the beginnings of the one who was afterwards to attain separate existence as his companion and wife, may be inferred from the parallel accounts in chapters 1 and 5. “*So God created man in his own image . . . male and female created he them.*” (ch. 1:27). “*In the day that God created man . . . male and female created he them; and blessed them and called their name Adam.*” (ch. 5:1-2).

Although God gave to man the name of Adam, derived from a root meaning to be red or ruddy, and in Arabic at least implying handsome, it seems that Adam himself invented his own name to describe his species, “*ish*”. “Adam” has lingered in the Hebrew language as a general name for mankind – *Beni-adam*, the sons of men; *Ha-adam*, the man – and in the Genesis account the word is used both as a general term, *ha-adam*, the man, and as a proper name, *Adam*. When however Eve was brought before him, Adam exclaimed “she shall be called woman” (*ishshah*) because she was taken out of man (*ish*). *Ish* and *ishshah* are the most common Hebrew words for man and woman, or wife, respectively. There seems to be almost the beginnings of language making here; students of ancient languages have repeatedly noticed how primitive words are often based upon natural sounds – the Hebrew word for

“sneeze”, for example, is “*atishoo*”— and one wonders if Adam coined the word *Ish* from the apparent sound of the drawing in of breath. The most fundamental act of his life was breathing; it is not difficult to detect the sound of “*ish*” in this most common of all processes, and that sound may well have seemed to Adam an appropriate one with which to form a spoken word descriptive of himself. Then when Eve came along, taken out of himself, what more natural than the double sound caused by breathing in and exhaling again; so “*ishshah*” was derived and the first simple grammatical distinction created. Learned men have written voluminous books on the origin and growth of language, endeavouring to demonstrate its development from the inarticulate cries of wild animals; in fact the first words must have been deliberately coined by the first man, establishing a means of intellectual communion with the woman who stood beside him.

The declaration which forms verse 24 “*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh*” is no part of Adam’s speech. The compiler of the story added this as his comment. Adam knew nothing of fathers and mothers and it was Eve who was brought to Adam, not vice versa. The writer of the story, correctly perceiving that the whole basis of the marriage relation was established by God in the union of these two, laid down this basic principle which stands for all time. Some have used this text as support for the claim that the primitive state of human society was matriarchal, i.e., that the woman was the head of the family and the man was received at marriage into the tribe of his wife and remained the subordinate member. This is sometimes the case even to-day among certain primitive peoples but the Bible is consistently emphatic that “the husband is the head of the wife”. (Eph. 5:23) and the whole setting of the Eden story is clear that God held the man to be the responsible partner of the two. The verse can be very well understood as referring to the clearly implied truth that in the Divine order a man, on taking to himself a wife, forms a new unit in society, leaving the parental roof and establishing a new home over which his wife presides and in the shelter of which his children are born and reared. Although that ideal is violated in many ways by both primitive and civilised man, in ages past and present, it is never violated without contributing to the further degeneracy of the human race. Only the Divine ideal and the Divine arrangement can endure and produce eventually what God determined when at the beginning “male and female created he them”.

“*And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed*” (vs. 25). This verse is usually completely misunderstood. So far as physical nudity is concerned, the two concerned had never known any other state since their creation and it must therefore have seemed the most natural condition of things to them. No other human beings as yet existed. The imposition of modern standards of taste and propriety upon these two at that time is therefore quite improper, especially since although such standards are those of western civilisation at this present time, they are not universally applicable throughout the world. There are, even now, some tribes in tropical regions where it is considered highly improper for unmarried persons to appear in anything other than a state of nudity; the briefest of coverings is only worn after marriage. We have therefore to look for something more fundamental in this remark that, although naked, they were not ashamed.

The Hebrew word “*erom*” translated “naked” is derived from the idea of being elevated or raised up so as to be plainly in view. There is nothing concealed or hidden. Perhaps the best O.T. text to illustrate the basic meaning of the word is Job 26:6 “*Hell is naked* before him, and destruction hath no covering.” Adam and Eve were open and uncovered, upright and guileless, in the sight of God, who was the only One who at that time had anything to do with them. They could, to use a modern expression, “look God in the face” without shame or fear; complete frankness and sincerity characterised their communion and relations with God. This was the state of complete innocence, not of physical knowledge in which their intelligent, perceptive minds must already have made considerable progress, but of mind. Physically and mentally perfectly mature, they were as little children, living in the Kingdom of Heaven. No shadow of sin, no thought of disobedience, had as yet entered their minds. In perfect trust and union with their Creator, they stood upright and open before him and were not ashamed.

How long this happy state endured we have no means of determining. The one clue is that no children were born to Adam and Eve whilst in the Garden. There is no reason why there should not have been. They had received the Divine command to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and in fact any failure on their part to do so would itself have been disobedience to God, and therefore sin. But the first child was born after the Fall and their expulsion from the Garden; perhaps their time of unalloyed happiness together was relatively short after all. We do not know; we only know that even as they stood there before God, radiant in their happiness and full of promise for the future, the agent of all evil was moving in quickly to sow the seeds of which men have reaped so disastrous a harvest.

6. That Old Serpent the Devil

With the opening of chapter 3 of Genesis, a new character appears on the stage, and with his coming the idyll merges into tragedy. In chapter 2 there is in all the world nothing but innocence and sincerity, and all creation is at peace and unashamed in the sight of God. Chapter 3 introduces something else, craftiness, deceit, lying and sin, bitter seeds whose harvests have never since ceased from the earth, and will not, until the Divine rule of the Messianic Age shall have undone all that the Tempter wrought in Eden, and raised mankind to the sinless condition which was the Creator's intention from the beginning.

The religious plays of the Middle Ages depicted this archangel of all evil, upon whom is laid the blame for the seduction of our first parents, as a hideous monster having long horns, cloven feet, forked tail, and eyes and mouth breathing out fire and smoke. The idea was to strike healthy terror into the hearts of the beholders, for this was the Prince of Hell, and Hell was preached as a place of grievous torments in which all who did not observe the precepts of true religion, or at least did not obey the mandates of the priests, would spend eternity. Instructed Christians know better than to believe such crudities nowadays, but it is still essential to accept the fact that there does exist a powerful celestial being, in a continuing state of rebellion against God, who first introduced sin and death to humanity and has actively promoted the same ever since. Through the long ages men have pictured that malevolent being in various ways and under different guises but until modern times have not doubted his dread reality. Here in Genesis the writer of the account faithfully reflected the spirit and outlook of his own day when he described him under the figure of a serpent.



Long and protracted, earnest and sometimes acrimonious have been discussions on the manner in which an ordinary snake – any one of the two thousand varieties known to exist – could have been used to tempt Mother Eve in the matter of the forbidden fruit. No one doubted, of course, that the Devil was behind the whole thing, but was it that the Devil “materialised” in the form of a serpent, thus to appear to the woman, or did he merely use a conveniently handy reptile as an instrument? Did the serpent actually talk to Eve in the words of chapter 3, or was the temptation by force of example, the creature twining its sinuous body round the tree to partake of the fruit with evident relish while Eve looked on? Each hypothesis has its advocates although unfortunately for most of them the naturalist has to point out that snakes have no sense of taste, no ear-openings, are quite deaf, and lack ability to make audible sounds except the well-known hissing which is effected by the rapid expulsion of air from the lungs (exceptions are the rattlesnake which produces its rattle by rubbing its scales together, and the bull snake which bellows like a bull, also by expelling air from the lungs). It is necessary therefore either to conclude that the serpent of Eden was a very special kind of serpent, perhaps deliberately created for the purpose, or else to examine the text much more closely than is usually done.

The Hebrew word for serpent is “*nachash*”, a word which has two basic meanings. In the first place it means to hiss or whisper, especially the whisperings or mutterings of soothsayers, from which usage it also denotes the practising of enchantment or sorcery. Examples are the “enchantments” of Balaam in Num. 24, the “divining” of Joseph in Gen. 44, and the sorcery practised by Israel in the days of Ahaz and Manasseh (2 Kings 17:17 and 21:6). From this usage of the word the serpent became known as the “*nachash*” because of its characteristic hissing. The other meaning is that of brightly shining from which the word for copper, “*nechushah*”, is derived. The fact that two such dissimilar ideas as enchantment and bright shining have their origin in the same word points to something which connected the two in the early days of language making.

A clue to this connection is found in the fact that, as shown earlier in this treatise, when the Genesis account of creation was first written in its present form in Abraham’s native land about twenty-five centuries before Christ, the writer used phrases and allusions familiar to his immediate readers. When he said “the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made” he knew what his readers would understand by those words, and he clearly meant them to understand that this serpent was the means by which evil came into the world. The Babylonians and the Sumerians looked upon the serpent as the symbol of everlasting life and identified it with the sun as a life-giving power and object of worship. In early sculptures the serpent was given a dragon-like form and endowed with wings to denote its heavenly origin; eight such winged serpents stood guard at the gates of the Temple of Bel in Babylon, the centre of the whole system of early Sumerian religion, and those mythological figures were of highly burnished copper. Here is the connection between the two dissimilar meanings of “*nachash*”. In the far-off days when the story of the Garden of Eden was written down for men to read, the serpent was identified in men’s minds, theologically or mythologically, with a brilliant supernatural being claiming to be the bringer of life to men and demanding their worship. But, says the chronicler, he was in fact a sorcerer and an enchanter, more cunning than any of the beasts of the field which God had made.

The word “subtil” in Gen. 3:1 is “*arum*” which means to be crafty or cunning. It is rendered “devices of the *crafty*” in Job 5:12, “tongue of the *crafty*” in Job 15:5, “taking *crafty* counsel” in Psa. 83:3 and “dealeth very *subtilly*” in I Sam. 23:22. When St. Paul quotes the Eden story in 2 Cor. 11:3 “as the serpent beguiled Eve through his *subtilty*” he uses the equivalent Greek word “*panourgia*” which is rendered “*cunning craftiness* whereby they lie in wait to deceive” in Eph. 4:14, “he (Jesus) perceived their *craftiness*” in Luke 20:13, and “not walking in *craftiness* nor handling the word of God deceitfully” in I Cor. 3:19, which is a direct quotation from Job 5:13 where “*craftiness*” is again “*arum*”. The subtlety of the serpent, then, is not wisdom in an intellectual sense, but cunning, deceitfulness, in an immoral sense, and this explains the reference to the beasts of the field. The writer of Genesis 2 was fully aware of the cunning displayed by wild beasts – the Hebrew word is one denoting wild beasts as distinct from cattle and domestic animals – as they hunted their prey, but the serpent, he said, was more cunning than any of them. It is apparent therefore that the serpent he is talking about is not one of the literal serpents which may have existed in Eden, for they were “beasts of the field” like other animals. This serpent was a creature apart. It was in fact the serpent whom the Sumerians of his own day worshipped, “*Ha-nachash*”, the serpent, just as in the preceding chapter we have *Ha-adam*, the man, the particular man Adam. When we read in Gen. 2:1 that “*The serpent was more cunning than any of the wild animals*” we are intended to think of that brightly shining heavenly creature of evil intent whom the Babylonians worshipped as the giver of life – the one whom we now call Satan, the Devil, “who deceiveth the whole world”.

Who or what was it, then, talking to Eve as she walked in the garden, in words of human speech which she could hear and understand? Remember that up to this time the only spoken speech she had heard had been from the lips of her husband, apart from the possibility that if in fact God’s communications to them both were made by the agency of the Word of God appearing in visible form and speaking in audible words, she might also have listened to speech from that source. Eve knew that the lower animals were all inferior and subservient to Adam and herself, and that none of them had

the gift of speech. Is it likely that she would have accepted a talking snake as a reliable guide in preference to those words of authority to which she may have been accustomed from a much more impressive and dignified source? Eve must have known that the snakes were created beings like herself; she must have known they were liable to death like all other animals, perhaps had even seen them die. How could she be deceived by such a creature's claim to know the secrets of godlike wisdom and of eternal life? She would have possessed a reasonable understanding of the facts of her own creation and that of Adam and of the earth on which she lived, and realised something of the difference between this earth and the celestial world in which dwelt their Creator, the One to whom they were indebted for all their knowledge and understanding. It is surely inconceivable that Eve would have listened to, or been persuaded by, any message unless it seemed to come from that same celestial world from which all they already knew had emanated.

If then in fact Eve did find herself confronted by a gloriously radiant heavenly being, majestic and awe-inspiring in his splendour, her acceptance of his deception is much easier to understand. His use of spoken words would excite no astonishment or doubt; his professed knowledge of the ways of God would seem perfectly logical; and his insinuation that he was in a position to reveal knowledge formerly with-held by God would appear a fairly reasonable proposition. He had come from there, and he should know. Somehow such an interview sounds a much more natural occurrence than a conversation between a gullible woman and a six foot snake standing erect on the tip of its tail.

There is some evidence both outside and inside the Scriptures to support the view that something like this is what actually happened. The worship of the serpent as the life-bringer or life-preserver or source of immortality is very widespread in the world and pervades almost all pagan religions, both now and in the past. In many cases the serpent thus venerated in the plain literal snake, of one species or another, but the farther back we go in history the more that snake takes on the form of the stylised creatures of Babylonian and Assyrian and Sumerian myth. We know what they looked like; hundreds of them are found in wide variety on clay tablets and marble slabs excavated in the lands of the Bible and now displayed in the world's museums or the treasuries of private collectors. All these artistic representations converge on and are centred on the great god Marduk or Bel, the deity of Babylon. Marduk, son of the supreme god, the Saviour, the Redeemer, the firstborn from the dead, creator of the earth and of man upon it – yes, the Devil has arrogated to himself, thousands of years in advance, all the titles which belong of right to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and has drawn to himself the worship of all the world throughout all the ages. And the tablets and sculptures show this Marduk as the ancients conceived him to be – noble of feature, aggressive and terrible of mien, sturdy feet that he might stand on the earth and six-winged that he might fly from the heavens, strong hands grasping the lightnings and thunderbolts whereby he might deal destruction to all enemies. This was the glorious radiant one to whom the Babylonians sang praises, he who deceived the whole world in appearing to them as an angel of light. But from whence did the ancients draw their inspiration for this terrible and glorious appearance? Might it not be a lingering recollection, handed down through the generations, of one who once was seen by the first mother of all, and whose form, because of the tragic consequences, was indelibly impressed upon her memory and described to her children, generation after generation? It might well have been so, for the sculptured form of Marduk, preserved through generations of idolators, bears some resemblance to those angelic beings, the “seraphim”, whom Isaiah the prophet saw in vision standing around the throne of God.

The seraphim of Isaiah 6 also had six wings, and so glorious was the sight of them that the prophet covered his eyes and cried out that he was undone. The word means fiery ones or burning ones, alluding to their dazzling appearance, and is the plural form of the word for “burning”. The same word is used for the fiery serpent which Moses made and held aloft on a pole, by looking to which the serpent-bitten Israelites in the desert were healed (Num. 21:8) and for the “fiery flying serpents” of Isa. 14:29 and 30:6. These two latter verses are metaphors describing the scourge of invading Babylonian and Assyrian kings who described themselves in their own records as servants and representatives of their serpent-gods, Marduk and Asshur. The *seraph* or *seraphim* as described by

Isaiah is a recollection of the same visible manifestation of a celestial being as preserved in Babylonian idolatry. In the one case Isaiah sees the seraphim as in constant attendance upon the throne of God crying his praises "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory"; in the other they are fiery flying serpents, like their prototype the serpent of Eden, bringing sorrow, destruction and death.

Then in final support of the conclusion that the visible form of the serpent of Eden is the origin of the serpent-god of Babylon and is similar to the seraphim of Isaiah we have a graphic description by the prophet Ezekiel of the heavenly being who was once in Eden the garden of God but because of rebellion was condemned to eternal death. In his 28th chapter the prophet after denouncing the sins of the prince of Tyre, takes up a more intense and obviously metaphorical denunciation of one whom he terms the "king of Tyre" but clearly is not an earthly being at all. The covert reference evidently is to the fallen archangel who rebelled against God. This one is said to have been full of wisdom and perfect in beauty, in appearance as though clad in dazzling jewels, and to have been in Eden the garden of God. Adopting Leeser's rendering, which translates a number of obscure words a little more accurately than does the A.V., *"thou wast a cherub with outspread wings and I had set thee upon the holy mountain of God as thou wast. Thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the bright shining ones"*. The likeness of this to the company of the *seraphim*, the "fiery" or "burning" ones of Isaiah 6 is too striking to be ignored. Here, surely, is a vivid description of the happy state of that celestial being of high rank who once moved among the holy attendants of God and eventually became a visitor to the garden which God had planted on earth, and there, because of rebellion in his heart, seduced the first human pair from their allegiance to God and from that moment became "that old serpent, the Devil, and Satan". *"Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created, till unrighteousness was found in thee..."* So the prophet proceeds with his denunciation, culminating in the utter and hopeless doom of this prince of all wickedness.

It is not suggested that these wondrous beings who thus attend in the Heavenly courts do in their normal state bear such strange and perhaps bizarre forms as the Scriptures above describe. We have the authority of St. Paul for knowing that the celestial world is so utterly unlike this terrestrial one that no image conceivable by the human mind can possibly depict the nature and the form, so to speak, of its citizens. It is when such a messenger comes to earth to hold converse with man that a form which is perceptible to the human senses is required. It is logical to expect the instantaneous creation of such a form, as must have been the case repeatedly in Old Testament times when a visitant from above came to man, to Abraham, to Moses, to Daniel, to the father of John the Baptist and Mary the mother of Jesus. His mission accomplished, the ambassador would return to the celestial realm in the glory of a nature more greatly excelling that of man than the nature of man excels the humblest form of plant life on this planet, a glory having nothing in common with the shapes and forms of this world.

So it might well have been that Eve, wandering alone one day in the sunny glades of Eden, pondering over the ever widening vista of experience which life was opening before her, came face to face with a dazzlingly radiant, dignified, commanding figure strangely similar in form to her husband and herself and yet in many respects dissimilar. The burning glory which surrounded him and the voice of authority with which he spoke told her at once that here was a visitor from that unseen world from which God had so often spoken, maybe had before this sent a visible messenger bringing guidance and instruction. But this was a different visitor; perchance he also came with a message, possibly something new which she had never heard before. There could have been no suspicion in her mind, for the very idea of an intelligent creature from heaven being disloyal to God who had made them all could never have crossed her mind. It must have been with the most intense interest and curiosity that Eve gave all her attention to the stranger as he began to speak.

7. Shadow of Death

“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” (Rom. 5:12).

When the Apostle Paul wrote those terrible words, he took his stand definitely and irrevocably for the doctrine of the Fall. His whole argument for the saving grace of God in Christ, set out so lucidly in the fifth chapter of Romans, hinges upon the literal truth of the Genesis story. If there was no one man, back there in the beginning of history, who fell from his sinless state and embraced sin, and suffered death in consequence, then there is no Christ in the latter days by whose righteousness the grace of God operates to the removal of sin and the restoration of all that men lost when Adam sinned. The two facets must stand or fall together. St. Paul is recognised as the predominant authority on Christian belief and doctrine and his insistence upon the inerrancy of the fundamental principles underlying the story of Creation and the Fall must be accepted, by all who “profess and call themselves Christians”.



Having received the story as true, it remains to examine the narrative in order to determine as nearly as possible, just what actually did take place. What precisely was the nature of that sin which had such grievous consequences for the entire human race? What temptation was this which proved so overpoweringly strong that it completely submerged all that man knew of God and felt toward God, and led him into an entirely strange and alien path? How was it that the effect of one single action in the life of the first man reacted physically and mentally on all his descendants to such an extent that none since have been able to resist sin and all have been subject to death? The forbidden fruit must surely have been potent fruit indeed to have produced such far-reaching consequences!

The story relates how God introduced man to the trees in the garden of his creating; first, trees that were good for food, in all their variety: second, the tree of life: thirdly, the tree of “knowledge of good and evil”. A prohibition was laid upon him; he was not to eat of the fruit of the tree of good and evil, for the eating of that fruit would result in death. After Eve’s creation the serpent assured her that no such consequence would ensue, that in fact she would be greatly enlightened and become like the celestial beings. Both Eve and Adam succumbed to the suggestion and partook, finding too late that the serpent had lied and that in disobeying the Divine injunction they had signed their own death-warrants. There is the story in the simplicity which has made it understandable to men of every level of intelligence and culture in every generation of history and we in this twentieth century have to relate it to our own understanding of God and his ways and ask ourselves if a more detailed picture can be discerned behind this simple outline of one forbidden tree with its tempting fruit.

More than one agnostic has enquired scoffingly why God took so serious a view of a misdemeanour which is perpetrated annually by nearly every small boy when the apples are ripe – not always waiting until they are ripe – and what kind of a God of love can He be to have made this one apparently trivial act the alleged cause of all the fearful horrors which sin and death have inflicted upon the world in all the ages since. Put like that, the critic’s query is a reasonable one, and the action of God seems on the surface to be harsh and arbitrary in the extreme. One might make answer that the entire episode is represented as a test of obedience, and that Adam’s disobedience in even a minor matter is sufficient to demonstrate the fact that he had disobeyed and therefore stood condemned before God. That argument was fairly conclusive a few generations ago when accepted theology viewed God as a somewhat vengeful Deity intent upon the eternal condemnation of the vast majority of his creatures, most of whom were never in the whole of life’s experience to have any opportunity to hear,

much less accept, the only Name in which salvation could be attained. It does not ring so convincingly today when it is realised that, so far from seeking the condemnation of men, God made men for life, to fulfil a definite function in the Creation, and that death comes only if man refuses, after full opportunity and knowledge of the issues involved, to fulfil the duty for which he is created. The eating of the forbidden fruit, or whatever was the reality behind that apparently trivial action, was something far more fundamental than an act of petty disobedience; it must have represented a deliberate repudiation and defiance of God. If we can establish a reasonable basis for relating the simple story of the Fall to such a defiance we will go far to appreciating why there were such terrible and far-reaching consequences.

Let the stage be viewed with all its scenery and its characters in position as the drama moves into action. Against the background of the fair garden of God's planting stand the two trees, each laden with fruit, the one giving righteousness and eternal life, the other evil and eternal death. Behind the Tree of Life, but not seen on the stage, is the invisible presence of God, the Creator and giver of all good. Beside the other Tree stands in dazzling splendour a wonderfully radiant celestial being, known and worshipped in later times as the Serpent, one claiming to be the giver of life and happiness to men but in reality bringing only misery and death. Before the two trees stands Eve the first woman; Adam the first man is as yet off the stage. The woman has learned something of the mysteries and duties of life, perhaps directly from God's messenger, certainly at second hand through her husband. This new friend she has never seen before and with womanly curiosity and natural interest she listens to his rather patronising query...

"Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

Strange that so exalted a being should seem ignorant of the basic instructions of God. Eve hastens to put him right. *"We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die"*.

The smiling lips curl scornfully and the piercing eyes look upon the woman with barely veiled amusement. *"Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods (elohim – celestial ones) knowing good and evil"*.

And she believes him! The woman believes her new-found friend rather than God who at this moment seems to be far away. She can taste of the forbidden fruit and yet avoid its effects. Her new friend has told her so and she believes him. The fruit is good for food, and it is attractive to the eyes, and now she knows that it will confer wisdom and knowledge – she hesitates no longer but steps forward, and plucks, and eats. Desirous that her husband shall share with her in this new experience, she goes to him bearing the fruit in her arms, and he, when he sees, takes also of the fruit, and eats...

They look round now towards the tree, but the Serpent is gone. The sunshine has faded, and a chill wind begins to blow down from the mountains...

Was it all as starkly simple as that, or was the sin that drove our first parents out of Eden and planted in their bodies the seeds of every ill and disease which has since afflicted humanity something much more fundamental? Is this part of the story strictly literal or a picturesque metaphor?

It can be strictly literal, and yet the true sin be something much more serious than the touching of a prohibited tree. Many a child's relatively minor act of disobedience is but the outward symptom of an inward state of defiance or insubordination which itself is far more serious than the precise act that furnishes the occasion for punishment, and that the parent concerned knows perfectly well and acts accordingly. So it could well have been with Adam and Eve. The partaking of the forbidden fruit could have been a ritual act expressive of inward rebellion against God in just the same manner as Christians, partaking of the bread and wine in holy communion, memorialising their Lord's death, perform a ritual act expressive of their inward loyalty to, and communion with, their God. The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge might well have had a real and objective existence as ritual trees, the first human beings expressing their state of heart toward God according to which tree they chose.

This opens up an interesting train of thought. There has always been a close connection, not only in the Bible stories, but in all human history, between trees and worship. Before men built temples – and in places even now where men do not build temples – they set aside groves of trees, or on occasion single trees, as places where they could come to do homage to their gods. The Old Testament makes frequent reference to the “groves” where Baal and Ashtaroth and other pagan deities were worshipped in Israel. To such an extent is this true that the Hebrew word “*ets*” is used indiscriminately for “tree”, “grove”, “idol”, “image”, and several allied words. The idea always is that a god, an idol, an image, is produced from the trunk of a tree. There were obviously no temples, no man-made sanctuaries, in Eden, yet man must have been created with the instinct to worship, a trait which after millenniums of sin still persists. What more natural than that a special grove of trees (“tree of life” and “tree of knowledge” in Genesis might equally accurately be translated “trees” or “grove”) should have been set aside by God as the place for his meeting with man and so constitute the first Divine sanctuary on earth ever to exist? Adam and Eve could go into that grove and feel that there in a very special sense they stood, like Jacob later on, at the very gate of God and gate of heaven. They might in ceremonial manner have partaken of the fruit of that grove in symbol of their continued obedience just as we today partake of the bread and wine. That would give a vital meaning to the expression “Tree of Life”. It was not merely a fruit that would confer continuing life upon earth; it was a fruit which symbolised the eternal life of God given to those who kept themselves within the sustaining power of God. It has to be realised that so long as Adam and Eve remained in harmony with their Creator and the laws of their being; completely obedient and loyal to him, they would never have known physical death; they would have lived forever into all eternity, and so under similar conditions would all their posterity. The Tree of Life could be a source of life to Adam and Eve only whilst they remained righteous before God, because all life comes from, and is sustained by, God. Later in the story, because they had eaten of the Tree of Knowledge, they were barred from the Tree of Life. They could not have both.

If then the Tree of Life was in this manner a place of ritual acknowledgment of man’s dependence upon, and loyalty to, God, then logically the Tree of Knowledge could well be a similar place of ritual denial of God’s claims upon man, and of avowed rebellion and disobedience against God. The expression “knowledge of good and evil” might well indicate man’s acquisition of that knowledge on his own initiative and in his own way, rather than by waiting for God’s revelation in God’s own due time. That, at any rate, is how it has worked out. Man has learned good and evil by bitter experience; God’s way would have been less painful.

An interesting light is shed on this aspect of the story from Babylonian tradition. The very ancient “*Epic of Paradise*” to which reference has already been made speaks, not of two trees in the garden, but of two temples in either of which the first man and woman could worship. The name of the one is deciphered as the “temple of the living plant,” or possibly “plant of life,” and the other, deciphered only with difficulty and uncertainty, appears to be a word meaning to sweep away, cut off, break in pieces, or expel. It might well be that the original form of the tradition pictured them as temples of life and death. The legend proceeds “*In the temple of ‘life’ he (the man) stood. In the temple of ‘death’ he stood, and there he sat down, and Ea (the supreme god) saw him. Laying aside his sceptre, Ea waited for the man ‘Open, open’ he cried at the door of the temple. ‘Who art thou?’ asked the man. ‘I am a gardener rejoicing in the tree. I will give thee the knowledge of a god.’ The man joyfully opened the door.*” The legend goes on to enumerate and name seven different plants the fruit of which man was free to eat, and then tells how man took of another fruit not included in the list. “*The man approached the ‘amhara’ plant; he plucked; he ate. And Aruru (the earth-goddess) pronounced a curse in the name of Ea (the supreme god), ‘He shall not see life all his days but shall certainly die.’*” There is enough in this old tradition to show that it had its source in the events which are recorded in the Book of Genesis even though it had afterward become coloured and influenced by Babylonian mythology. And its likening the two trees to two temples whilst still preserving the eating of forbidden fruit as the occasion of the death sentence is significant.

What then really was the nature of Eve's and Adam's sin? What fundamental transgression did they commit which, culminating in and signalled by, the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, involved the sentence of death which has since rested upon the entire human race? Can any clue be gathered by considering the sins to which mankind has since been prone? Do the expressed laws of God yield any suggestion? The Ten Commandments given to Israel at Sinai enshrined the Divine standards for that nation at that time. It is interesting to notice that of those ten commandments the last six could not be broken by the first human pair for they treat of man's relationship to his fellows and the first pair had no fellows. The only sins they could commit were those against God, refusing to accord him that which is his due. Likewise if we take Jesus' interpretation of the law, only one half could be applicable to Adam and Eve. They could not love their neighbours as their own selves for there were no neighbours. They could only observe, or break, the injunction to love the Lord their God with all their heart. There remains the commission laid upon them by God at the beginning, a three-fold one. They were, first to be fruitful and multiply, using their powers to bring children into the world and populate the earth; second, till the earth and bring it into subjection, this implying that all the earth was not like the Garden but required the expenditure of labour to bring it under control; third to exercise proper dominion and control over the animals so that all creation followed an orderly and peaceful course. Failure to execute any of these commissions would involve disobedience and disloyalty to God, the violation of that basic law of later time, to love the Lord their God with all their heart. Such a refusal would surely be the most fundamental transgression of all, for it would profoundly affect the entire Divine purpose for this earth at the outset.

Suppose then that the Devil, appearing to Eve, persuaded her that there was no need to be scrupulous about observing the Divine commands, that idleness in the Garden was much to be preferred to work on the untilled lands, that the tending of the trees and crops inside the Garden was quite unnecessary while Nature, unaided, produced sufficiency for their wants, that the exercise of their powers of control over the animals was quite unnecessary since the animals had always managed tolerably well by themselves? Suppose he thus induced Eve to a renunciation of the purpose for which she had been created, and she in turn persuaded her husband to the same, the pair yielding themselves to allegiance and the guidance of this new friend who had come to them from on high, thus consciously and deliberately disavowing their loyalty to the God they had known before? The alleged benefits for which they were induced thus to deny their Creator must have been of the lowest material kind – the pleasures of idleness and freedom from responsibility, a selfish enjoyment of the good things of the present to utter disregard of the future or the ultimate purpose of God in their creation. After all, that is largely the story of sin through the ages and men in general have shown themselves true sons of Adam in this respect. *"Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom; pride, fulness of bread and abundance of idleness was in her, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy."* (Ezek. 16:49). So it was with Eve. She saw that the tree was pleasant to the eyes, and good for food, and to be desired to give wisdom. All these things are appeals to the immediate selfish tastes. And the Tempter, following up his advantage, intimated that by accepting his sovereignty and guidance they would enter into the range of experience and knowledge possessed by the celestial ones of heaven – *"ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"*. He would enrich their lives with things God had withheld.

The terrible decision taken, Adam and Eve could no longer appear before the Tree of Life, there to partake of its fruit in symbol of their dependence upon God for continued life and as an act of worship and token of loyalty. A new master now required another and a distinct symbol of submission. They came now to the Tree of Knowledge, Eve taking the more active part, and there enacted a solemn covenant, partaking of that fruit in sacramental fashion in pledge of their allegiance and obedience to the Archangel of Evil and their rejection of God who had given them life. It was a fearful moment – surely the angels in heaven veiled their faces and God looked down in pity and sorrow. Creatures of free-will, He had made them, and given them every possible good gift along with the responsibilities He must lay upon them. They had taken the gifts and rejected the responsibilities.

With the eating of that fruit, the ritual act which sealed their decision and made them the servants of the Devil, the link of life which connected them with God snapped. The Devil had persuaded them that their life on earth could continue without God – he probably believed that himself – but he was wrong. The acceptance of sin means separation from God and the cutting off of that power flowing from him by which eternal life is possessed. After that the duration of life is measured only by the extent to which the residual vitality can keep the organism going within the general framework of the processes of Nature. In Adam's case it was nine hundred and thirty years, but death came eventually. And so it has come to all men since, with accelerated pace in proportion as the physical vitality of men has declined.

It is only as men and women come "into Christ" that the processes of eternal life can commence again. *"Ye must be born again"* said Jesus to Nicodemus, and on another occasion *"He that believeth in me hath everlasting life."* The evil wrought in Eden can be nullified in the believer who comes in sincere acceptance of Christ and pledges his allegiance and loyalty to him. *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus . . . for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."* (Rom. 5:1-2). The broken link is re-established; in a manner too wonderful for our human minds to comprehend, the life from God cut short by Adam's sin commences to flow again, so that it can be truthfully said *"He that hath the Son hath life . . . God hath given to us eternal life"* (1 Jno. 5:11-12). True, only a few, a fraction of earth's millions, do thus enter into life during this present Age; Jesus himself said they would constitute but a "little flock." That is in the Divine purpose, that a trained and qualified people might be prepared for the much more extensive and spectacular work of the next Age, the Messianic Age. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as king over all the earth, together with all who have been his faithful followers now, will conduct the last and the greatest evangelical work of all time and call all men, without exception, to repudiate sin and the Devil, come to him in repentance and contrition, give themselves in complete dedication and submission, that they too might receive that same gift of life which will make them to all eternity the loyal sons of God. Even though sin's penalty must, at the last, be exacted from those who will not repent, and who wilfully reject Christ, it will be gloriously true that every one who can possibly be reached by the searching and all-pervading love of God through his Son Jesus Christ will have reached the standard which God has set, and will enter into life. For it must yet be that *"in the name of Jesus shall every knee bow in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* (Phil. 2:10-11.) That declaration cannot be true until all who can be reclaimed from sin have been reclaimed, and all who cannot be reclaimed have passed into that death which is the inevitable consequence of sin, so that throughout the whole of God's creation there are none who do not live in him and for him, no conscious mind that is not at all times rendering heartfelt praise and adoration to his holy Name. There will be no Tree of Knowledge then, for there will be neither worshippers at such a Tree nor Devil to accept such worship; the Devil is at the end cast into the lake of fire which is the Second Death (Rev. 20:10 and 14.) There will be only the Tree of Life, to which all will come for that enduring life which is the eternal link between God and his creatures. So, in John's vision of the New Jerusalem, thrown open to the nations which are saved but into which nothing can enter which defileth or maketh a lie, there is no sign of the Tree of Knowledge and no Tempter; only the Tree of Life and the glory of God, dwelling with men. (Rev. 21:3-6 and 22-27; Rev. 21:1-5.)

But away back there in the days of Eden these wonders of the future were still hidden in the unrevealed counsels of God. The first man and the first woman, standing side by side before the Tree of Knowledge, the taste of its fruit still on their palates, thought of the trust they had betrayed and the God they had disowned. There is no evidence at this moment of remorse or repentance, only of fear and apprehension. They did not seek to find a way back to God; they sought rather to flee from His presence and hide themselves that He might not find them. The story gives no ground for thinking that they were yet ready to repudiate their sin, only that they might escape its consequences. They were afraid, and to escape God they hid themselves among the trees of the garden.

8. Sentence on the Serpent

“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.” (ch. 3:7).

The last act in the drama opens with this verse. Light and darkness, good and evil, truth and falsehood, obedience and rebellion, all have played their part on the stage that is Eden, and now it remains only for sin's penalty, death, to be displayed. There settles over the scene the dark cloud of tragedy, relieved only by the silver gleam of hope that this is not, after all, the end. But it is at the most a gleam, not even sufficient to illumine the bowed figures of the two chief characters as they make their way from the light of Eden into the gloomy obscurity in which all the remaining years of their lives are to be spent. They were never themselves to see that gleam brighten into day; the promise was not to them but to their seed and for a day in the far distant future. For them, there remained only the inevitable consequence of the choice they had deliberately made.

The usual interpretation of this seventh verse is that the eating of the forbidden fruit had the physical effect of rendering Adam and Eve conscious, for the first time, of their own nudity, and they took steps immediately to fabricate a somewhat scanty and impermanent covering from the leaves of the fig tree. It has already been shown that the expression “they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” in chap. 2:25, did not have reference to sexual nakedness, for which a totally different Hebrew word is used in the Bible, but to the fact that they stood open and fully revealed in the sight of God; there was nothing in them that was hidden from him. At that time, before their sin, they were “not confounded”, abashed or ashamed, for they had the consciousness of perfect harmony and union with God, and could, so to speak, “look God in the face”. Now the case was different. Although they had been persuaded by the serpent into pledging him their allegiance and repudiating God, this sequel to their action was the swift realisation that God knew all about it. Their eyes were suddenly opened to the fact that they still stood plainly revealed in the sight of God, not now as trusting and obedient children, but as rebellious and disobedient sinners. Their condition at that moment is well illustrated by words in the Book of Hebrews *“all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do”* (Heb. 4:13). When, a little later on, they heard the voice of the Lord God in the garden, the aprons they had made yielded no assurance of the protection they needed. They hid themselves among the trees in the vain hope of escaping God. We need therefore to look beyond the surface meaning of the words and consider what more vital significance they may have had.

The word here rendered “aprons” is *“chagorah”* which denotes an article girded around the body, not an apron in the modern English sense of that word. In 2 Kings 3:21 it is used for “armour” and in numerous instances refers to the girding the body with sackcloth at times of mourning. In general the word applies to the wearing of ceremonial garments having some religious significance, such as the robes of the Aaronic priesthood (Lev. 8:7-13 and 16:4), of Samuel the child prophet to indicate his dedication to God (I Sam. 2:18), of the symbolic clothing of the Messiah with righteousness and faithfulness (Isa. 11:5), and so on. The fig-leaf coverings made by Adam and Eve were probably designed to enshroud their bodies in the same manner and we have to ask for what purpose they were made. The action appears to have been taken consequent upon their eyes being opened to a realisation of their position, sinners completely and fully revealed in the sight of God. *“They knew that they were naked.”* Now there is still no evidence that they were in any sense repentant. All the indications point to the opposite. Had they repented, and returned to God at that moment, it is unthinkable that He would not have done something other than condemn them as He did, even although it might well be that the mere fact of sin had already wrought some harm to their physical bodies which needed a fresh exercise of Divine creative power to rectify. But true repentance and reformation always brings at least reconciliation with God and fellowship with him; these two on the contrary passed under Divine condemnation and were banished from fellowship with God. If then there was consciousness of sin but no repentance, for what purpose was the covering of fig-leaves?

The solution may well lie in the following verse. Having made themselves the apron-coverings, they heard the voice of the Lord in the garden. Instead of going to meet him as had apparently been their custom, they hid themselves for fear among the trees, hoping thus to escape observation. It seems fairly clear that God appeared to them in visible form – the “theophany” of the Word of God – and in their immature state of mind they felt they only had to be physically hidden to escape that searching eye. What more natural thing that in order to facilitate their concealment they should adopt this very obvious and familiar means of disguise? Arrayed in complete coverings of leaves they could remain motionless among the trees of the garden and hope to escape detection. These two had not sinned against each other, they had sinned against God. Husband and wife, they had nothing to conceal from each other, but they both had something to conceal from God. And verse 10 sets the seal upon this understanding of the nakedness and the fig-leaves when Adam says “I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, *because I was naked*, and I hid myself.” It was Adam’s nakedness before God that was the subject of his concern and his fear, and for that reason he and his wife clothed themselves with leaves in the vain hope that God would not see them amidst the trees of the garden. He was naked before God in both senses of the word when he was created but there was no fear and no concealment then. He could stand upright before God in perfect confidence. But now sin had entered into his soul and he could not bear the thought of appearing before the visible manifestation of God and meeting that accusing eye. So, with his wife, he went away and hid himself.

But “the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.” (Prov. 15:3). “*Where art thou*” God called to Adam, knowing all the time where he was. Adam could not ignore that commanding voice; he and his wife came forth, trembling, before the Presence, “*I heard thy voice in the garden*” he said, “*and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.*” Came the stern accusation “*Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree...?*” How, indeed, did Adam know that he had no covering in the sight of God and no confidence to stand before God, if it were not for sin? Just as, in Isaiah’s day many centuries later, “your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you” (Isa. 59:2) so now the man who heretofore had enjoyed fellowship and union with God in perfect confidence found that fellowship broken and that union severed; he shrank within himself and could no longer look God in the face.

This part of the story shows up in sharp relief some important considerations. First, consciousness of sin is not the same thing as repentance. Adam was clearly conscious of his sin as thus he stood before God but the idea of repentance was still not in his mind. He admitted the fact of his sin, but as yet did not seem conscious that he ought to do something about it. He contented himself rather by indicating how it came about. “*The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*” That excuse did not get him very far. He finished up by being condemned on two counts, one for partaking of the fruit and one for listening to the voice of his wife instead of the voice of God. Merely being conscious of sin and deploring it never saved anyone. The Jews at Pentecost were convicted of sin, “pricked in their hearts,” (Acts 2:37) but when in consequence they asked Peter and the apostles “what shall we do” the answer came, swift and unhesitant “Repent ...” Adam did not ask God what he should do; he merely attempted to excuse himself without repudiating his action.

So God turned to the woman. “*What is this that thou hast done?*” This is an expression of great emphasis in the Hebrew, as though laying supreme stress on the serious nature of the matter concerned. Eve, following her husband’s example, offered a similar reply, perfectly truthful, a clear statement of fact, but again ignoring her own part in the sin. “*The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.*”

It is an interesting conjecture as to whether the scene of verse 14, the condemnation of the serpent, was on earth or in heaven. There is not much doubt that here we have the banishment of Satan from heaven. As “star of the morning” to use Isaiah’s poetic description, this radiantly glorious celestial being must long have moved among the citizens of the heavenly realm; perhaps been held in high honour among them. But nothing that is of sin can exist in the presence of God. “*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil.*” (Hab. 1:13) cried the prophet when he thought upon the holiness of

God. From the time of the Fall that “star of the morning” must have been forbidden entry to the presence of God; according to every Scripture passage which refers to the subject he was cast out and limited to the material creation which he had sought to gain for himself. *“Brought down to sheol (the death state) to the sides of the pit”* (the grave) is how Isaiah (14:15) defines his doom. Says God through the prophet Ezekiel *“I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God, and I will destroy thee, O anointed cherub, from the midst of the shining ones, . . . I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth . . . and never shalt thou be any more.”* (Ezek. 28:16-19). In the more prosaic language of Genesis, maintaining the setting of the earthly garden, the same fate is described in the words *“upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.”* The word for “belly” here occurs only twice in the Old Testament and is not the usual anatomical word employed elsewhere. It is derived from a root meaning to bow down or to bend, and taken in conjunction with the second part of the phrase the meaning is that the fallen archangel was sentenced to be bowed down to the dust for the remainder of his life. “To bite the dust” is a familiar expression in modern English and conveys the same idea.

“Thou art cursed above all cattle and above every beast of the field.” The key to the meaning of this rather enigmatic expression lies in the fact that every part of God’s handiwork is created for a purpose and with a definite function to perform in the orderly progress of what God’s hands have made. The cattle and the wild beasts (beasts of the field) all have their appropriate place in Nature and carry out their designed functions in obedience to their instincts. The Devil ceased to fulfil his allotted place in the Divine scheme and became an anarchist, choosing his own course heedless of its effects upon the orderly development of the Divine plans. The brute beasts were fulfilling the will of God; Satan was not. That is why he is said to be “cursed above all cattle.”

But God had not finished yet. The process by which the end of Satan and his schemes is to be brought about had to be defined. “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (vs. 15). History reveals the meaning of this cryptic saying. The seed of the woman is Christ, and by an extension of thought justified by the Apostle’s words in Gal. 3:29, in a secondary sense all who are Christ’s. The serpent has his seed also, those in every age who have given themselves to the active opposing of God and all that is associated with God. The serpent was to have a seeming but not conclusive victory; *“thou shalt bruise (break or crush) his heel,”* but the seed of the woman is to have the ultimate victory in crushing the head of the serpent. The visions of Revelation have the final word. *“The Devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone . . . this is the second death,”* (Rev. 20:10 & 14). “Through death” Christ will “destroy him that hath the power of death, the Devil” (Heb. 2:14). The bruising of the heel may very well refer to the suffering inflicted upon loyal servants of God in all ages by the active forces of evil; particularly must it point to the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, and in a lesser sense again to the martyrdom and suffering of Christians throughout this Age until the last of those who are Christ’s have been gathered to him in the First Resurrection. There will be no more bruising of the heel after that, for, as Revelation 20 shows so clearly, at the Second Advent the Devil is to be bound and cast into the abyss *“that he should deceive the nations no more”* throughout the duration of the Messianic Age. Perhaps Satan the rebellious archangel, through all the long ages of human history, has never really believed that this could happen. Perhaps the forbearance and wisdom of God, in deferring the execution upon him of the penalty for sin, death, has led him to think that God could or would not exact that penalty. It is true that sin has a blinding effect which might eventually bring the inveterate sinner to the point where he has destroyed his own capacity for repentance and God can do nothing with him. We do not know; we do know that eternal death awaits the arch enemy of God and man when at the last God gathers together the tangled threads of this world’s experiences and makes of them the basis of humanity’s everlasting inheritance. In all Scripture doctrine and prophecy the only intelligent being of God’s creating who is definitely known to be irreclaimable for righteousness is the Archangel of Evil. For all others there is at least still hope.

So the serpent was banished for ever from the presence of God. This might well be the occasion to which Jesus referred when He said *“I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.”* (Luke 10:18). The word is *astrape*, which denotes, not only lightning, but any dazzling radiance of light, and is so used in various connections in the New Testament. The One who was revealed to men as the Word made flesh in those few words identified himself with the Word of God which was the manifestation of God to Adam in the far off days of Eden. What more likely thing than that this same Word of God was the agent who pronounced the Divine sentence against the lawless one? Jesus talking to disciples flushed with excitement because the very demons were subject to them through his Name, might very well have ranged back in memory to a day long past when He on his Father’s authority judged the rebellious archangel and watched his departure from the heavenly courts.

And now the scene changes to the earth again. Confession of guilt has already been extracted from the two human parties to the rebellion. The prime instigator has been dealt with. Now God, again manifest in the form of the Word, appears to Adam and Eve to tell them their fate. It would almost seem as if they have been kept waiting whilst the Heavenly Assize was being held; now they stand before him in deepest fear and woe to hear what he has to say.

9. Penalty of Sin

Slowly the majestic Presence turned, and gazed upon the stricken pair. They knew, now, that they must pay the penalty of their sin. The one who had deceived them and seduced them from their loyalty had himself been sentenced and had disappeared from the scene. They saw him no more. They stood before the One whom they had known in times past only as a Benefactor; now they saw in His face the lineaments of a Judge. The trial had been held; there was no valid defence; it remained only to await the passing of sentence.



Strangely enough, what has often been called the sentence on the woman savours really more of hope than of despair. Against a background of pain and sorrow it promises new life. The human race was not to be suffered to die out; the death sentence was not to be executed immediately. There were to be children born; that promise, when as yet Eve had no child, must of itself have been wonderfully comforting. The situation was dark, but it was not altogether hopeless. Even though they themselves must go into death – and there is no way of discerning to what extent, if any, the idea of a resurrection from the dead had entered their minds – there would be some born of their own bodies, made in their own image and likeness, to carry on the story and perchance see rectified the evil that had been wrought.

So the strange words were spoken *“I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.”* (vs. 16). Perhaps a more careful rendering would be “In multiplying I will multiply thy pain and thy conceiving; with sorrow thou shalt bear sons, because thy longing shall be for thy husband; therefore he shall rule over thee.” The original commission given to Adam and Eve was to multiply and fill the earth; here Eve is given the assurance that the commission was not withdrawn; she with her husband were still to multiply and fill the earth, but with a difference. In that process of multiplying God would increase her pain and frequency of conception, and she would bear her sons with sorrow instead of joy. Later on she was to know the bitterness of that destiny. One son murdered, another a

murderer, exiled and outcast from his family. For the rest of a long life she was to witness the slow spreading of evil through the multiplying human family and hug to her heart the anguish of knowing that it was by her own deliberate act all this had come about. Perhaps in that sad life which was Eve's after the tragedy of Cain and Abel, true repentance for her sin did come to her and she rested her trust in the Lord. There is evidence that she did, in after days, come back to God. At the birth of Seth, apparently the third to be born to them, his mother gave him a name (*Sheth* in the Hebrew, not Seth as in the A.V.) which means one raised up or appointed to a place "*for God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew*". It is fairly obvious that Cain and Abel were grown men at the time of Cain's crime, so that Eve would have had quite a few years in which the lesson of the Fall and its consequences could sink in. The fact that she is thus found, at Seth's birth, in a reverential attitude towards God, and moreover still trusting in the promise of the "seed", casts a bright light over the sombre story. With the birth of Cain she had believed the Lord was fulfilling his promise to undo the work of the serpent; that confidence was shattered by the tragic event which followed, but now at the birth of a third son hope revived and Eve is found believing that God would be faithful, and that is a great thing to know.

Now it was Adam's turn. This time the voice of the Divine Presence did not speak of life, as it did to Eve; it spoke of death. This indeed was the passing of sentence, a sentence which was to involve Eve because she owed her life and form to the man and, although physically separate, was still a part of the man. "*Unto the man* (Heb. Ha-adam, "the man", not Adam as a proper name) *he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken, for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*" (ch.3, vs. 17-19).

It was a fearful sentence. It must have struck despair into both their hearts. There had been nothing said to Eve about expulsion from the Garden; nothing about toil and weariness and pain in the uncultivated world outside. Even in apprehension of that death penalty which they knew to be the consequences of their sin, they probably expected its execution to be within the confines of the Garden. They may well have reconciled themselves to the idea of death, but they could have had no conception whatever of what life was to involve before death came. Now they heard the dread words. They were to be banished for ever from the Garden, dragging out weary lives darkened by the necessity of constant labour in a land not yet really ready for human habitation, seeking desperately to maintain life, if not for their own sakes, at least for the sakes of their unborn children through whom alone the promise could be fulfilled, ere death should overtake them, and put an end to all further effort.

Was there something in the infinite wisdom of God which saw that only in some such way could fallen man begin to demonstrate the sincerity of his remorse, by his efforts to leave behind him beings in his own image through whom at length God could work to achieve his purpose? It almost seems so. When at last the sword fell, and the two parents of the human race passed into death, they left behind them children, descendants too, perhaps, the seventh or eighth generation, who had a love for God. True, there were evil men and evil things; but there were also good men and good things. In every generation there were to be found godly men and women who took care to preserve the story of the olden time when God made man upon the earth, and the coming of sin, and death, and the promise that one day sin and death would be overcome and be no more. We are able to read these things in the first four chapters of Genesis today only because Adam and Eve, in sad and humble yet confident faith, instructed their children in that knowledge of God which they themselves possessed, and because some of those children profited by that instruction.

So Adam, with bowed head, listened to the details of his doom. "*Cursed is the ground for thy sake*" (on thy account) "*Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee*". It has sometimes been thought that God at this time imposed a special curse upon the ground the result of which was the appearance for the first time of thorns and thistles. That cannot be quite right. Thorns and thistles

existed long before man and their fossil remains have been found along with those of other plants. There were apparently no thorns and thistles in Eden but there were probably plenty outside. Is it possible that the curse consisted very largely, not in any sudden and miraculous change of the condition of the ground outside Eden, but in the impossibility of one pair doing anything practical toward making so vast a territory of wild uncultivated country sufficiently productive to afford them a reasonably comfortable living. If in fact, as suggested earlier in this treatise, the Garden of Eden extended throughout the extensive valley which is now the Persian Gulf, there would have been room there for many generations of men to find their sustenance, without need to venture into the outside world. When at last increasing numbers rendered migration imperative, the population would have been sufficiently numerous to render the systematic and progressive subjugation of the uncultivated world a practical proposition, involving no hardship to any one individual. But that would be on the assumption that sin had not entered, that all men were perfect and virile and ever-living, as was Adam at his creation. As the matter turned out, Adam and his wife found themselves faced with the problem of gaining a livelihood in an unfriendly and mostly hostile world, without knowledge, without materials, without tools, without anything with which to set about their task. Small wonder the ground brought forth thorns and thistles; the real wonder is that they did not starve to death in the first few months.

Many centuries later Lamech the father of Noah spoke of *"the ground which the Lord hath cursed"* (Gen. 5:29). The human race apparently were still finding it a matter of toil and labour to wrest a living out of the ground. And the curse still persists. Forests disappear, lakes and rivers dry up, deserts grow and swallow up productive ground, and man seems unable to do much to stop it. The fear of world famine is abroad in the earth, even though all the wonders of modern discovery are at men's beck and call. And the cause of it all is sin – human sin, selfishness and greed, which prevents men co-operating together and working together as they should for the preservation and the right development of this wonderful planet on which we live. *"Cursed is the ground on thy account"*; surely when God uttered those words He was looking into the future and saw what havoc would be created by fallen man in the fair earth of his creating. One has to remember that when God created the earth He saw that all He had made was "very good". It is man who has despoiled God's handiwork, through the centuries, and that surely is an important factor in the curse which rests upon the ground.

Now comes a more personal word. *"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return unto the dust, for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."* Here it is, a clear definition of the nature of death. *"In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die"*. Adam, formed of the dust of the ground, vivified by the breath of life from God, became a living, conscious being, a living soul, a personality having his own distinct individual existence and yet utterly dependent upon God for continued life. When, because of sin and in accord with His own decree, God withdrew that vivifying life, when He gathered to himself his Spirit and breath (Job 34:14) then the physical frame fell apart and returned to its dust, and the man was no more. How could he know conscious life again unless there be a resurrection from the dead, a re-creation of physical frame, a gathering together of the dust of the ground and once again the bestowal by God of the breath of life? Is that why Isaiah, seeing in vision the day of God's rising up to fulfil his promise of deliverance, sang *"Thy dead shall live ... awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust, ... and the earth shall cast out the dead"* (Isa. 26:19). If God could once, as He did, create a man in his own image and likeness, it must be a very easy thing for God to re-create a man in the image and likeness, mental as well as physical, which that man possessed before death claimed him and his body was absorbed again into the dust from which it was made. Logically such a man would take up the thread of conscious existence from the point where he dropped it in death, as a man does upon awaking out of sleep. Be all this as it may, there is no doubt that the Christian faith is built solidly upon two fundamental theses, one, that man is a fallen being, under sentence of death because of sin, and must surely die physically; and two, that the promised future life guaranteed by Christ comes by means of a resurrection from the dead, a reversal of the death state by re-creation and re-vivifying to a new life.

But all of this was hidden from Adam. He saw before him the dreary prospect of a life of toil and hardship, terminated only by death. Such a hope or confidence, if ever he did possess such, must have come later. In the sweat of his face must he eat bread until he returned to the dust from which he was taken.

It is at this point we have a strange little interlude. “*Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them*” (vs. 21). For what purpose were these “coats” and what was their nature? Some commentators, looking for a theological symbol in every action of the Eden story, have suggested that by this means God sought to teach Adam that a covering for sin involving the shedding of blood was the only means whereby his guilt could be purged, it being assumed that the Lord God could only obtain the material for the coats by slaying suitable beasts. Thus, it is said, the death of Christ upon the cross was foreshown. It is questionable whether Adam was in a suitable condition of mind to appreciate such a lesson at that moment, even though the fitness of the symbol be admitted. It might well be, though, that there is something in this provision of covering for the exiles which has a closer connection with their immediate problems. The word for “coats” in this verse is not the usual Hebrew word for garments, “*beget*,” which occurs nearly two hundred times, but a much more unusual word, “*kothenoeth*”. This word *kothenoeth* is the name of an inner garment made of woven material and worn next to the skin. And here is an amazing thing. The *kothenoeth* was a garment denoting ceremonial cleanliness, and when used in connection with Divine things, a cleanliness in God’s sight. This fact can be easily verified by noting all the uses of *kothenoeth* in the Old Testament.

- First: the linen “coats” of the Aaronic priesthood, denoting their purity in the sight of God. In the case of the High Priest this was covered over by the ornate outer robe. See Exodus 28:4, 39, 40; 29:5, 8; 39:27; 40:14; Lev. 8:7, 13; 10:5; 16:4; Ezra 2:69; Neh. 7:70, 72.
- Second: The “coat of many colours” Jacob made for his son Joseph. See Gen. 37:3, 23, 32-33.
- Third: The “garment of divers colours” worn by Tamar the daughter of King David, in token of her virginity and royal station. See 2 Sam. 13:18-19.
- Fourth: The robe which betokened the high position and Divine calling of Eliakim, the one appointed of God to administer Jerusalem in the days of Isaiah. (Isa. 22:21).
- Fifth: The virgin girl in the “*Song of Solomon*”, awakened from sleep by her beloved’s knocking at the house door, says (Cant. 5:3) “I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on”. “Coat” here is *kothenoeth*.

There is only one other example. Job in his discourses refers to his wearing a *kothenoeth* (Job 30:18). As an Arab ruler of high rank he was probably accustomed to wear this garment on the same basis as Eliakim mentioned above.

If this then is the garment with which the Lord God clothed Adam and Eve a totally new avenue of thought is opened up. The *kothenoeth* was never made of animal skins or hides; it was always of woven linen or flax – the same word in Syriac denotes linen or flax, – and it was usually beautifully decorated, as was Joseph’s coat and Tamar’s robe. The old idea that God had to conduct a slaughtering operation in the Garden of Eden to provide material for the “coats” has to be abandoned. And this is made evident by a closer study of the actual words in Genesis. The A.V., together with most translations, renders “coats of skins”, but in actual fact in the Hebrew, while “coats” is plural, “skin” is in the singular. The expression really means “coats-of-the skin” i.e. coats worn next to the skin, the distinguishing feature of the *kothenoeth*. Dr. Moffatt, unusually, seems to be the only translator who has noticed this; he renders “And God the Eternal made skin tunics for the man and his wife, and clothed them”.

Why then did God provide these two with woven garments preparatory to expelling them from the Garden. Adam was not, as was Aaron later, holy in the sight of God and dedicated to him in

priestly service. Eve was no king's daughter like Tamar, serene and confident in her royal station; no would-be bride like the virgin in the Song of Solomon, waiting and looking for her beloved. These two had deliberately and voluntarily rebelled against God and repudiated him, and had tried to hide from him when He came to find them. Why then, after all that, did He give them the ceremonial garment of honour and privilege?

Can it be, after all that has been said about the gravity of Adamic sin and the stern justice of offended Deity, the heinousness of eating forbidden fruit and the imperative necessity of immediate condemnation; can it be, despite all this, that in reality the Almighty Father knew perfectly well that this tragic lapse on man's part was not irremediable, that man was not intrinsically evil, that after sin had worked itself out righteousness would come into its own? Was it perhaps that God did not intend to let Adam go into exile completely without hope, that although He must of necessity allow the fruit of sin to be reaped by those who had sown sin, they should not go into the wilderness without some indication that the love of God was going with them? They were to be banished from Eden, separated from the presence of God, but they were to take with them an indication that God still cared, that He would not forget them, and that one day, in some wonderful fashion they could not at present be expected to visualise or comprehend, they would come back to him again and the old relationship be restored. So God gently took away from them the pitiful coverings of fig leaves with which they had thought to hide themselves from his sight, and gave them instead woven garments of glory and beauty, fabricated by the hand of God just so surely as the Law at Sinai was written on the tablets of stone by the finger of God, and so sent them forth.

The question naturally arises, how would Adam understand the significance of the garments. In later days the use of the *kothenth* was well understood and taken as a matter of course. Tamar wore her robe because she was a king's daughter and it was the privilege of king's daughters. Aaron donned his ceremonial garment because it was so laid down in the ritual and he knew that thus arrayed he was ceremonially clean in the Divine sight. But nothing of this had developed at the time of the Fall. What was there in the bestowal of these woven "coats" to give ground for hope to Adam and Eve?

Perhaps we can find the answer by going back a little. "*Ye shall be as gods*" – celestial ones – "*knowing good and evil*" was the alluring temptation which led them into this trouble. But instead of coming thus into closer relationship with the celestials and with the place of God's Throne they were farther away and about to be completely cut off. Instead of becoming more like the glorious beings from another world with whom they had talked they had become more conscious of their own nakedness and weakness. They had received many gifts from God in past time, and because of their own folly and sin had lost them all. Now they found that of themselves they had nothing, nothing wherewith to cover themselves or feed themselves. And at that point God brought them a gift – the first gift and the only gift they had from him since their rebellion against him.

That in itself must have been a great thing. God was not so angry with them that He would turn his back upon them completely. He was sending them away but He gave them a gift to take with them. And the nature of the gift could well have given Adam and Eve the first dim hope that after all they might one day become like the celestials, knowing good and evil, but this time in God's way. For these garments, unlike their former ones of fig-leaves, had come from God; they were garments as it were of the other world, and with those they were differentiated at once from all other living creatures on the earth. They had a connection with heaven.

The idea of a body covering of any kind was probably quite a new one to Adam and Eve. They had not felt the need of anything of that nature. But they may have been accustomed to some such idea with respect to their celestial visitants. It is probable that the Father talked with Adam before his sin in the person of the Son, appearing in visible form on earth. He may have sent angelic messengers as was certainly the case in later Old Testament days, and without doubt Satan appeared to Eve in visible form. It has already been shown that those appearances probably gave rise to the later beliefs among men of the "seraphim" and Isaiah describes the seraphim as he saw them in vision. Each one had six wings, he said, using two with which to fly and four with which to cover the body. If this is an

accurate picture of early man's recollection of the full story of Eden handed down from generation to generation, we might be justified in thinking of the angelic visitors to Adam and Eve appearing before them as though clothed in their wings. If then, Adam, receiving this garment of beauty at the hand of God, remembered that the angels he had seen were similarly arrayed in a covering of enshrouding wings, he might very well have taken this gift as an indication that God intended him, after all, one day to be, like the citizens of Heaven, restored to favour and fellowship with Him.

So they turned their faces toward the unknown outer world, with sorrow and foreboding, but their despair lightening a little as they felt the soft pressure of the unaccustomed garments against their flesh, and reflected that these were God's parting gifts. He was not utterly wroth with them; He had not utterly cast them off; and these garments, the only possession they had to remind them of their lost Eden, would be an ever-present reminder to them that one day they would find the way back, and eventually, like the wing-clad celestials, be clothed with the garments of righteousness in the glorious liberty of the children of God.



10. The Flaming Sword

“And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever; therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.” (Gen. 3:22-23).

This verse requires very careful examination, for as it stands in the A.V. it tends to convey an entirely wrong impression. The prevailing understanding is that Adam, having now become a sinner, must be expelled from the garden to prevent him having access to the tree of life and in consequence living for ever – even though a sinner. Now it is self-evident that such interpretation cannot possibly be true. The Divine instruction to him in the first place was that the eating of the forbidden fruit would result in death. After the sin Divine judgment was given and the sentence of death re-affirmed. To say that if Adam continued to eat of the tree of life he could escape the death penalty is making a mockery of the whole story. Tree of Life or no Tree of Life, the Divine principle remains that the wages of sin is death. In all of God's creation there is no way by which any of his creatures can escape

the operation of that law. In whatever manner we understand this verse, that fact must be realised and upheld.

So the statement needs analysis, and the very first item is this expression “The man *is become* as one of us, to know good and evil” as though this was the effect of eating the forbidden fruit. Once again a small incursion into elementary Hebrew grammar is necessary. The word “is become” – “*hayah*” – is in the preterite tense, and the primary meaning of the preterite is past time. Two examples in the same narrative are Gen. 1:2 “The earth *was* without form, and void”, and Gen. 3:1 “The serpent *was* more subtil than any beast of the field”. In the one case the preterite marks the formless condition of the earth in past time, before God began to fashion terrestrial things; in the other it marks the time of the happenings in Eden relative to that in which the narrator was writing, some thousands of years later. Likewise in this case God is speaking of the past, of the condition of man before sin and sentence entered the picture, before the moment in which He uttered these particular words. The word rendered “to know” means to have knowledge, understanding, wisdom, intelligence. The entire sentence is best translated “The man was like one of us to understand good and evil”. That was God’s reflection on man’s condition before sin entered. The Devil lied to Eve in suggesting that she would understand good and evil only by partaking of the forbidden fruit; in actual fact man, made in the image and likeness of God, preserving his uprightness and loyalty inviolate, would have come to understand good and evil in God’s own way, and much more comfortably. But sin had entered and man was no longer “like one of us”.

Now comes the next clause “and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life...” The Hebrew copulative has to be translated “and” or “but” according to the requirements of the context. In this case there is a contrast between the former state of man “one of us” and his present state which because of sin has produced an opposite condition; the copulative should therefore be rendered “but”. The man *was* sinless, *but now* the position has changed. This word “now” means literally “now this” or “this being so”. It contrasts the past sinless with the present sinful condition of man in explanation of the action that is to follow, his banishment from the tree of life. The next word is “lest”, Hebrew “*pen*”. This word is translated in a number of different ways in the Old Testament. Its primary meaning is that of prohibition or dissuasion, as in Job 32:13 “none of you convinced Job, *lest* ye should say, we have found out wisdom” where the inference is that having failed to convince Job they could not now claim to have found out wisdom. The same word “*pen*” appears when in Gen. 24:6 Abraham says to Eleazar “Beware *that thou bring not* (pen) my son hither again”. In the same way “lest” here means that now, this being so, sin having entered, man cannot or shall not put forth his hand and take of the Tree of Life; it is an impossibility. So the entire verse should read something like this “*The man was like one of us to understand good and evil. But now, this (the sin) being so, he shall not put forth his hand and take of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever. So the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken.*” In his originally created state, in the image of God and sinless, man had the capacity to understand good and evil, and had access to the Tree of Life, the power and privilege of communion with God and the deriving of continued everlasting life from God. But now, now that sin had entered, the whole position was changed. No longer could he enter into that communion with God which is the privilege only of those who stand justified in the sight of God. No longer could he draw supplies of enduring, lasting life from the source of all life, for sin stood between him and God. It was sin, and not an arbitrary fiat of the Almighty, which barred Adam from the Tree of Life, and sin which bars his descendants from the same. Not until sin is eradicated may any return to the Tree of Life. The last Book in the Bible makes that clear. “*Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city*” (Rev. 22:14). There is nothing to bar the converted redeemed from the Tree of Life; that is why Jesus said “Whosoever believeth in me hath everlasting life and I will raise him up at the last day”. Only the minority have such access now, for only the minority have thus accepted Christ. The time has yet to come when “*the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it*” (the Holy City – Rev. 21:24) and the visions of Revelation 21 and 22 be fulfilled.

“So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (vs. 24).

More than one mediaeval painting has depicted the stern-faced guardians at the gate of the garden, wielding the many-pointed sword of fire whereby man was finally debarred from the delights of the garden. Within remained light and happiness; outside all was darkness and despair. But what was really the physical nature of this closing scene in the history of man’s fall? The Cherubim; the flaming sword; what was the true nature of the barrier which henceforth separated Adam and his wife from the garden of delight for the rest of their days?

The form of the Cherubim, as understood by Israel in later days, was that of four-headed creatures, four in number; their function was to surround and guard the Throne of God. Ezekiel saw them in vision and, after describing what he saw *“I knew” he said “that they were the cherubims”* (Ezek. 10:20. See ch. I and 10). Each cherub (cherubim is the plural form) possessed the heads of a man, an ox, a lion and an eagle. Each cherub had four wings and two human arms, but their legs and feet were those of cattle. The winged human-headed lions and bulls of Assyrian and Babylonian sculpture, which used to stand at the entrances to palaces and temples, were of much the same pattern and in the native languages were called by the same name, *kirub*. It is evident that the origin of the cherubim goes back a long way earlier than the days of Ezekiel, and that their form was already well known. The likenesses of the cherubim were woven on the tapestries of the Tabernacle which Moses constructed in the wilderness; it is noteworthy that the Divine instructions did not include a description of the creatures. Here again all Israel evidently knew quite well what they looked like. It is worthy of notice also that the four “beasts” – more accurately “living creatures” in the Throne scene of Revelation 4 are quite evidently Cherubim and that John saw in vision substantially what Ezekiel had seen five centuries previously.

This does not mean that the guardians of Eden were necessarily replicas of the symbolic beings described by Ezekiel and John as attending on the heavenly Throne of God. It is absurd to think that such grotesque creatures really do have an objective existence in the spiritual world; they exist, evidently, only as symbolic descriptions seen in vision and in order to convey certain spiritual truths. The term “cherubim” itself, whether in Hebrew or Assyrian or Babylonian, is synonymous with guardians of Temple portals and it must have been in that sense that the writer of Genesis 3 used the term. God placed – caused to dwell, is the meaning of the Hebrew verb – at the east, or in front (same thing in Hebrew) of the garden, heavenly guardians for the purpose of forbidding passage into the garden. It is reasonable to suppose that there were such visible guards appointed; perhaps they took the form already familiar to Adam and his wife, the form of the seraphim, radiantly glorious wing-clad figures, standing sentinel-like at the boundary which man might not henceforth cross.

There was also the flaming sword, one which turned every way. A sword of flame is fairly easy to visualise and for the artist to draw; one which in addition turned every way has proved quite a problem in religious art. The resultant effort has usually presented the effect either of a bundle of forked lightning darting in all directions from a clenched fist or an apparition something like a gigantic Catherine wheel. But since the effective range of either as a deterrent is necessarily limited, and the Garden of Eden was an extensive place with in all probability means of access at many points it might well be asked whether the “flaming sword which turned every way” might not have been something much more far-reaching, and to test this hypothesis it is necessary to look more closely at the text.

The word for “flaming” is a substantive standing before a noun and it means just what it says – flaming. Whatever the agency used to bar man from the tree of life its principal characteristic was fire.

“Sword” needs a little more consideration. The word *“chereb”* is not only rendered “sword” but is applied to other cutting instruments as knife, dagger, graving tool, axe; see Josh. 5:2, Jud. 3:16, Exod. 20:25, Ezek. 5:1 and 26:9. The idea behind the word is that of a destroying weapon or force, and it comes from a root meaning to desolate or dry up. In this sense it is used nearly fifty times to denote the land being laid waste, as for example:

Isa. 42:15 "I will *make waste* mountains and hills."
 Ezek. 36:35 "And the *waste* and desolate and ruined."
 Lev. 26:33 "Your land shall be desolate and your cities *waste*."
 Ezek. 29:9 "The land of Egypt shall be desolate and *waste*."
 Isa. 34:10 "From generation to generation it shall lie *waste*."

Other uses of the word illustrate its range of meaning:

Isa. 50:2 "At my rebuke I *dry up* the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness."
 Jer. 25:11 "This whole land shall be a *desolation*."
 Hag. 1:11 "And I called for a *drought* upon the land."
 Isa. 25:4 "A refuge from the *heat* when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall."

The flaming sword, then, could well be something that caused widespread desolation and destruction, "turning every way". This latter phrase has the meaning of turning aside, turning upside down, overthrowing or overturning. It is only in this text that it is translated "turn every way". Elsewhere it intensifies the idea of destruction, as for example:

Joel 2:31 "The sun shall be *turned* into darkness."
 Isa. 34:9 "The streams thereof shall be *turned* into pitch."
 Psa. 105:29 "He *turned* the water into blood."
 Isa. 29:16 "Surely your *turning of things upside down* shall be esteemed as the potter's clay."
 Job 28:9 "He *overturneth* the mountains by the roots."
 Jon. 3:4 "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be *overthrown*."
 Amos 4:11 "I have *overthrown* you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah."
 Gen. 19:9 "Sent Lot out of the midst of the *overthrow*."
 Gen. 19:25 "Then the Lord *overthrew* those cities, and all the plain."

Those last three texts are significant. The word used to describe the destruction of the Cities of the Plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, is the same which in Genesis describes the operation of the flaming sword in Eden. To this day the Arabic name for that district around the Dead Sea where the cities stood is this same word – "the overthrown". And it is when one recalls the physical circumstances which brought about the destruction of those notorious five cities that a possible clue to the meaning of the "flaming sword which turned every way" is found.

"A *flaming destruction, which laid waste and overthrew in every direction*." That is a literal definition of the flaming sword when once the basic meaning of the term has been searched out. That is a good definition also of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Now the destruction of those cities is known to have been due to the release by earthquake or subterranean explosion of long pent-up natural gases and oils which ignited upon reaching the surface and soared flaming into the heavens to return to the earth in a rain of fire; sulphur, bitumen, oil, all descending in a flaming cascade which burned up and desolated the entire region. That was the end of the Cities of the Plain. For four thousand years after that the district lay barren and desolate; only since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 is some effort being made to establish a holiday resort on the empty shore.

Is it possible then that the Garden of Eden was not preserved through the centuries, supernaturally inaccessible to human beings until it was destroyed in the Flood, which has been the general assumption of those who believe in the literal truth of the Eden story, but rather that it was on the contrary destroyed by a great natural cataclysm similar to that which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah? All the natural agents necessary were, and still are, there. The area of the Persian Gulf, under whose waters it has already been shown probably lies the site of the lost Garden, is one of the great oil-producing areas of the world. Oil and bitumen exists under the sea-bed as in the surrounding countries. The combination of a powerful earthquake, driving deep crevasses into the ground, with a violent tropical storm of thunder and lightning, would have been all that was needed to start a conflagration which would produce the same result which Abraham saw on the day that Sodom and

Gomorrah were destroyed. *“And Abraham got up early in the morning, to the place where he stood before the Lord”* (on the mountain top) *“and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.”* (Gen. 19:28). Adam and his wife might well have had that same experience and thus known of a surety that Eden was lost to them for ever.

But not really for ever. The flaming destruction may have desolated the fair terrain Adam had known, and blasted the trees beyond recall, but it was a preserving influence as well as a destroying one. It overthrew as it did overthrow, *“to keep the way of the tree of life”*. Those are the concluding words of the story of Eden and they are words of hope. The word “keep” here means to keep safe and to preserve. The “way” is a path leading to a known destination. In the infinite wisdom of God Eden was destroyed that the road to the Tree of Life might be preserved. Man was not yet ready to tread that path, not yet fit to put forth his hand, and take of the Tree of Life, and eating, live for ever. But man’s failure to prove himself fit has not nullified God’s purpose. It will yet be true that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess in the name of Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father. Yet will be realised the Divine declaration *“As truly as I live, the whole earth shall be filled with my glory”*. Eden was destroyed that one day the whole earth shall become as Eden. Adam went into death that one day the whole human race shall enter into life. The Devil was allowed to proceed with the deception of our first parents in order that man may hereafter be proof against deception to all eternity. God suffered, and suffers, disloyalty and disobedience for a time that He might eventually enjoy loyalty and obedience for ever. Here is the whole reason for the permission of evil and the full explanation of God’s apparent inactivity in the face of evil through the ages.

The story of Eden has no meaning unless it enshrines three fundamental things – the origin of man upon earth; the reason for his present unhappy and unsatisfactory condition; the nature of the hope and destiny that is before him. A right understanding of these fundamentals is necessary to intelligent Christian faith and the maintenance of that hope in the eventual overthrow of evil and establishment of everlasting righteousness without which the Christian faith would be a hollow mockery.

Like Adam, the human race is still outside Eden, toiling in the sweat of its brow for the bare essentials of existence. The fact that a relatively small proportion of men, chiefly among the white races, enjoys what is called a high standard of living and at least gets enough to eat does not alter the fact that on more than three-quarters of the world’s population the curse still rests as heavily as it did in the days of Adam. And the favoured one quarter pays the penalty of its higher living standards in stress and strain, nervous and mental disease, and general dissatisfaction with life. The whole of the human race still need, as desperately as Adam and Eve needed it, the advent of the Messianic Kingdom of prophecy. When it comes under the rulership of the Son of God the world will be led into better ways and the earth itself yield its increase. *“In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.” “And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.”*

THE END

