



The Origins of Evil

How DID it all begin? Why IS there sin anyway? Here is one of the most sweeping chapters in this entire book of the ages. Read that most amazing of stories—how sin began. Although surrounded by continual selflessness, something happened. What could turn an angel of light into a devil—and do it right in the middle of heaven? This is something you will want to read. It will tell you why God had to wait—and the wonderful future in store for His children—because He did.

To many minds the origin of sin and the reason for its existence are a source of great perplexity. In their interest in these questions, the truths plainly revealed in God's word and essential to salvation are neglected; and the fact that the Scriptures furnish no explanation, is seized upon as an excuse for rejecting the words of Holy Writ.

It is impossible to explain the origin of sin, or to give a reason for its existence. It is an intruder, for whose existence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it, is to defend it. Could it be excused, could a cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin. Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is "the transgression of the law."

Sin originated with him, who, next to Christ, stood highest in the favor of God, and highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of Heaven. Before his fall, Lucifer was the covering cherub, holy and undefiled. The prophet of God declares, "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee." Ezekiel 28:15. Peace and joy, in perfect submission to the will of Heaven, existed throughout the angelic host. Love to God was supreme, love for one another impartial. Such was the condition that existed for ages before the entrance of sin.

But over this happy state there came a change. Says the prophet, addressing the prince of evil, "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness." Ezekiel 28:17. Though God had created Lucifer noble and beautiful, and had exalted him to high honor among the angelic host, yet he had not placed him beyond the possibility of evil. It was in Satan's power, did he choose to do so, to pervert these gifts. He might have remained in favor with God, beloved and honored by all the angelic throng, presiding in his exalted position with generous, unselfish care, exercising his noble powers to bless others and to glorify his Maker. But, little by little, he began to seek his own honor, and to employ his powers to attract attention and win praise to himself. He also

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gradually led the angels over whom he ruled to do him service, instead of devoting all their powers to the service of their Creator. This course perverted his own imagination, and perverted those who yielded implicitly to his authority.

The heavenly councils admonished Lucifer to change his course. The Son of God warned and entreated him not to venture thus to dishonor his Maker, and bring ruin upon himself. But instead of yielding, Satan represented to those who loved him, that he had been wrongly judged, that his dignity was not respected, and that his liberty was to be abridged.

That Christ should regard him as needing to be corrected, and should presume to take the position of a superior, aroused in him a spirit of resistance, and he charged the Son of God with a design to humble him before the angels. By misrepresentation of the words of Christ, by prevarication and direct falsehood, Satan secured the sympathy of the angels under his control, and they united with him in revolt against Heaven's authority.

To the last, he refused to acknowledge his own course to be deserving of censure. When the consequence of his disaffection became apparent, and it was decreed that with all his sympathizers he must be forever banished from the abode of bliss, the arch-deceiver threw the blame wholly upon Christ. With one accord, Satan and his hosts declared that had they not been reprov'd, the rebellion would never have occurred, thus making Christ responsible for their course. Thus stubborn and defiant in their disloyalty, seeking vainly to overthrow the government of God, yet blasphemously claiming to be themselves the innocent victims of oppressive power, the arch-rebel and all his sympathizers were at last banished from Heaven.

The rebellion in Heaven was prompted by the same spirit which inspires rebellion on earth. Satan has continued with men the same policy which he pursued with the angels. His spirit now reigns in the children of disobedience. There is a constant hatred of reproof, and a disposition to rebel against it. When God sends to wrong-doers a message of warning or correction, Satan leads them to justify themselves, and to seek the sympathy of others. Instead of changing their wrong course, they manifest great indignation against the reprover, as if he were the sole cause of difficulty. From the days of righteous Abel to our own time, such is the spirit which has been displayed toward those who dare to condemn sin.

Satan had excited sympathy in his favor by representing that God had dealt unjustly with him in bestowing supreme honor upon Christ. Before he was sentenced to banishment from Heaven, his course was with convincing clearness shown to be wrong, and he was granted an opportunity to confess his sin, and submit to God's authority as just and righteous. But he chose to carry his points at all hazards. To sustain his charge of God's injustice toward him, he resorted to misrepresentation, even of the words and acts of the Creator.

Here, for a time, Satan had the advantage; and he exulted in his arrogated superiority, in this one respect, to the angels of Heaven, and even to God himself. While Satan can employ fraud and sophistry to accomplish his objects, God cannot lie; while Lucifer, like the serpent, can choose a tortuous course, turning, twisting, gliding, to conceal himself, God moves only in a direct, straight-forward line. Satan had disguised himself in a cloak of falsehood, and for a time it was impossible to tear off the covering, so that the hideous deformity of his character could be seen. He must be left to reveal himself in his cruel, artful, wicked works.

He was not immediately dethroned when he first ventured to indulge the spirit of discontent and insubordination, nor even when he began to present his false claim and lying representations before the loyal angels. Long was he retained in Heaven. Again and again was he offered pardon on condition of repentance and submission. Such efforts as God alone could make, were made to convince him of his

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error, and restore him to the path of rectitude. God would preserve the order of the heavens, and had Lucifer been willing to return to his allegiance, humble and obedient, he would have been re-established in his office as covering cherub. But as he stubbornly justified his course, and maintained that he had no need of repentance, it became necessary for the Lord of Heaven to vindicate his justice and the honor of his throne; and Satan and all who sympathized with him were cast out.

By the same misrepresentation of the character of God as he had practiced in Heaven, causing him to be regarded as severe and tyrannical, Satan induced man to sin. And having succeeded thus far, he declared that God's unjust restrictions had led to man's fall, as they had led to his own rebellion.

But the Eternal One himself proclaims his character: "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Exodus 34:6, 7.

In the banishment of Satan from Heaven, God declared his justice, and maintained the honor of his throne. But when man had sinned through yielding to the deceptions of this apostate spirit, God gave an evidence of his love by yielding up his only begotten Son to die for the fallen race. In the atonement the character of God stands revealed. The mighty argument of the cross demonstrates to the whole universe that God was in no wise responsible for the course of sin that Lucifer had chosen; that it was no arbitrary withdrawal of divine grace, no deficiency in the divine government, which inspired in him the spirit of rebellion.

In the contest between Christ and Satan, during the Saviour's earthly ministry, the character of the great deceiver was unmasked. Nothing could so effectually have uprooted Satan from the minds and affections of the heavenly angels and the whole loyal universe as did his cruel warfare upon the world's Redeemer. The daring blasphemy of his demand that Christ should pay him homage, his presumptuous boldness in bearing him to the mountain summit and the pinnacle of the temple, the malicious intent betrayed in urging him to cast himself down from the dizzy height, the unsleeping malice that hunted him from place to place, inspiring the hearts of priests and people to reject his love, and at the last to raise the cry "Crucify him! crucify him!"—all this excited the amazement and indignation of the universe.

It was Satan that prompted the world's rejection of Christ. The prince of evil exerted all his power and cunning to destroy Jesus; for he saw that the Saviour's mercy and love, his compassion and pitying tenderness, were representing to the world the character of God. Satan contested every claim put forth by the Son of God, and employed men as his agents to fill the Saviour's life with suffering and sorrow. The sophistry and falsehood by which he had sought to hinder the work of Jesus, the hatred manifested through the children of disobedience, his cruel accusations against Him whose life was one of unexampled goodness, all sprang from deep-seated revenge. The pent-up fires of envy and malice, hatred and revenge, burst forth on Calvary against the Son of God, while all Heaven gazed upon the scene in silent horror.

When the great sacrifice had been consummated, Christ ascended on high, refusing the adoration of angels until he had preferred the request, "I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." John 17:24. Then with inexpressible love and power came forth the answer from the Father's throne, "Let all the angels of God worship him." Hebrews 1:6. Not a stain rested upon Jesus. His humiliation ended, his sacrifice completed, there was given unto him a name that is above every name.

Now the guilt of Satan stood forth without excuse. His lying charges against the divine character and government appeared in their true light. He had accused God of seeking merely the exaltation of himself in requiring submission and obedience from his creatures, and had declared that while the Creator exacted self-denial from all others, he himself practiced no self-denial, and made no sacrifice. Now it was seen that for the salvation of a fallen and sinful race, the Ruler of the universe had made the

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greatest sacrifice which God could make. It was seen, also, that while Lucifer had opened the door for the entrance of sin, by his desire for honor and supremacy, Christ had, in order to destroy sin, humbled himself, and become obedient unto death.

God had manifested his abhorrence of the principles of rebellion. All Heaven saw his justice revealed, both in the condemnation of Satan and in the redemption of man. Lucifer had declared God's law to be of such a character that its penalty could not be remitted, and therefore every transgressor must be forever debarred from the Creator's favor. He had claimed that the sinful race were placed beyond redemption, and were therefore his rightful prey. But the death of Christ was an argument in man's behalf that could not be turned aside. He suffered the penalty of the law. God was just in permitting his wrath to fall upon Him who was equal with himself, and man was set free to accept the righteousness of Christ, and by a life of penitence and humiliation to triumph as the Son of God had triumphed over the power of Satan.

God's law stands fully vindicated. He is just, and yet the justifier of all who believe in Jesus. Nothing less than this plan of atonement could convince the whole universe of God's justice.

In the final execution of the judgment it will be seen that no cause for sin exists. When the Judge of all the earth shall demand of Satan, "Why hast thou rebelled against me, and robbed me of the subjects of my kingdom?" the originator of evil can render no excuse. Every mouth will be stopped, and all the hosts of rebellion will be speechless before the great tribunal.

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