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The Genesis of Sin: A Study in the Third Chapter of Genesis

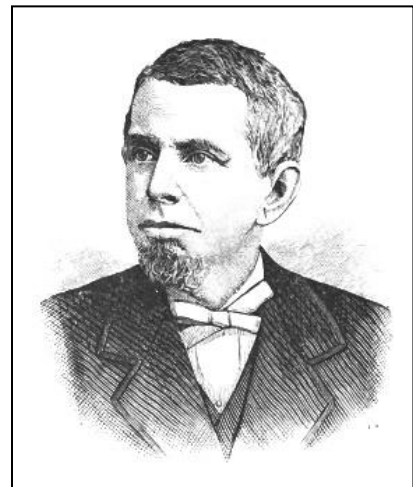
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How long did the Primal Pair continue innocent, and, therefore, in Eden? We have not been told. Enough that we know that in process of time they fell, and thereby forfeited Paradise. The melancholy tale is told in the Third Chapter of Genesis.

I. THE TWO TREES

And, first, the Two Trees: "The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, Eastward, and there He put the man whom He had formed; and the Lord God caused to spring up out of the ground every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food, and the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden, and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil." What now was signified by these two trees? No question can be more thrillingly important: for in this story of Adam's Fall through the eating of the forbidden fruit our own destinies have been mysteriously and inextricably involved. What then was meant by these two trees?



1. The Tree of Life. — Take, first, the Tree of Life. What kind of life did the tree represent? Why was it called the Tree of Life?

If I conceive it rightly, it was called the Tree of Life because it was the symbol of a bestowed immortality. Observe precisely the statement here made; the statement is not that man is not immortal; the statement is that man is not naturally, inherently, in the original make-up of his being, immortal. Observe again: I am not speaking of the evidences of man's natural immortality as indicated by reason, or instinct, or the general sense of mankind; I am speaking of the doctrine of immortality as indicated in the story of the Fall. And yet candor compels me to add that not a single passage of Holy Writ from Genesis to Revelation, so far as I am aware, teaches the doctrine of man's natural immortality. On the other hand, Holy Writ emphatically declares that God only hath immortality; that is to say, God alone is naturally, inherently, in His own essence and being, immortal; He alone is the eternal I am—having this as His name forever, His memorial unto all generations. If then man is immortal, it is because immortality has been

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bestowed on him. He is immortal, not because he was created so, but because he has become so, deriving his deathlessness from Him who alone hath immortality. And of this fact the Tree of Life seems to have been the appointed symbol and pledge. That this is the meaning of the Tree of Life is evident from the closing words of the account of the Fall: "The Lord God said: Behold, the man hath become as one of Us, to know good and evil: and now, *lest he stretch forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life and eat, and live forever*— therefore the Lord God drove the man forth from Eden, and stationed on the east of the garden the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way to the Tree of Life."

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But how much did this immortality mean? How much of man was it intended to include? The entire man—spirit, and soul, and body. Let us go somewhat into detail.

And, first, the Tree of Life meant immortality for man's spiritual nature. What is it which distinguishes man from animal? Is it the having a body? Certainly not; for animals have bodies. Is it the having a sentient nature? Certainly not; for animals have a sentient nature: they too can feel and choose and will, can remember and dream and reason, can feel emotions of love and dislike, joy and grief, fear and shame. What, then, is it which distinguishes man from brute? Evidently this: man's capacity to be religious—his capacity to see God, and worship Him, and love Him, and be consciously glorified in Him. And this is life indeed. This is that for which man was created. He was made for something more than to eat and drink—the swine does that; something more than to wear fine raiment—the butterfly does that; something more than to build houses—the robin does that; something more than to provide for the future—the bee does that. Man was made to be divinely inbreathed, to be God's image, to share God's character, feelings, modes, society, blessedness, life; in brief, to walk with God, even as Enoch walked, and was not, for God took him. And of the everlasting continuance of this Godward capacity the Tree of Life seems to have been the divinely ordained symbol and pledge, or, if you please, "Sacrament."

Again: the Tree of Life meant immortality for man's bodily nature. Indeed, it is the opinion of the theologians generally that this is the chief significance of the Tree of Life. It seems to me, however, that this is reversing the natural, true order; putting the less for the greater, the consequence for the occasion. Trees do not grow from leaves to root—trees grow from root to leaves. God's true order, at least for man, is from the inward to the outward, from character to drapery. It has often been asked whether man would have died in respect to his body had he never sinned? If by bodily death you mean death in the penal sense, I answer—No. "Through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin, death; and so death passed upon all men, for all sinned." But if by bodily death you mean death in the physiological sense, then I answer—Yes. For Adam's body

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was formed out of dust of the ground; *i.e.*, of material atoms organized under a vital force, and, as such, must have obeyed the laws of matter as organized; and laws of organized matter, at least under the present constitution of things, are laws of change—laws of growth and decay, of combination and dissolution. In this sense, our bodies even while living are daily dying. Moreover, life, whether of plant, animal, or man, has what may be called a natural lease, or definite course to run, involving a sort of physiological wax and wane. In this sense bodily death is only chemical dissolution, in no necessary respect a penalty or curse. Indeed, so far from this being the case, it is quite possible that in Eden death may have been simple rejuvenescence, or even an ascending metamorphosis, and so in strictest truth an euthanasia. We know not what modifications matter in the hands of an infinite God may be made to assume. And it is possible, as many theologians have supposed, that the Tree of Life had the power of imparting physical immortality, or of converting the body as now organized into another and a nobler; so that death in Eden would have been, not dissolution, but translation; not penalty, but beatitude. In all events, the Tree of Life was in some way or another the symbol and pledge of a bodily immortality.

This then seems to have been the meaning of the Tree of Life: Immortality for the entire man.

2. *The Tree of Death.* — But there was a second tree—the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, or, more briefly, the Tree of Death. What now was meant by this Tree? What kind of death did it signify? In other words, what is the Scriptural idea of death considered as the consequence of eating of the forbidden tree?

And, first, alike in order of time and of importance, the Tree of Death meant death of man's spiritual nature, or that part of man which, as we have seen, separates him from the animal, and makes him kin to Deity. It involved many awful particulars, among them such as these: loss of innocence, sense of guilt, of internal schism, of shame, of alienation from God, of God's displeasure, growing insensibility to heavenly truth and motive, inexorable tendency to sin, and, finally, extinction of the religious faculty itself. And this is death indeed; death spiritual, essential, everlasting. It is the second death.

Again: the Tree of Death meant the death of man's bodily nature. By death of man's bodily nature I do not mean death in the bare physiological sense of the term; for that, as we have seen, would have occurred had man never fallen; but I mean the penal hastening of that death and the dread escort of disease and pang. While it is true that, physiologically speaking, man, in virtue of his very structure as an organized being, carries within him the seeds of his own dissolution, I see no reason why, under an unfallen, normal condition of things, his life might not be protracted far beyond the present maximum. If the chronological table given in the Fifth of Genesis is to be taken

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literally—*i.e.*, as a genealogy of personages and not a table of dynasties—Adam himself, on whom the curse of death directly fell, lived 930 years; and during the first seventeen centuries of the race—*i.e.*, between Adam and Noah, following the line of Seth—there were only ten patriarchs, the average duration of their lives being 857 years; and all this in a fallen, and therefore abnormal world. Now if such great longevity has already been possible in a world more or less disorganized by the intrusion of such an alien and disturbing force as sin, who shall say what might have been the immense longevity of human life had man never fallen and access to the Tree of Life never been barred? However this may have been, enough that we know that death as a disaster is a consequence on sin; through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death; and thus death doth spread to all men.

We have thus in our study of the Tree of Death, as in our study of the Tree of Life, proceeded from the inward to the outward, from the root to the fruit. To draw a figure from astronomy, bodily death is but penumbral, the region of partial shadow; spiritual death is the full umbra itself—the region of complete eclipse. It is not bodily death which is the reality, and spiritual death which is the metaphor; it is spiritual death which is the reality, and bodily death which is the metaphor.

Such seems to have been the meaning of the Tree of Death, even

“That forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden.”

II. THE TEMPTATION

And so we pass to ponder the story of the Temptation.

And, first, the Tempter himself: “Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field.” Here is a stupendous problem: sin is in the world; how shall we account for it? Philosophy retreats from the problem discomfited. Holy Scripture solves it—at least so far as such a problem is capable of solution to a finite being—by declaring that sin was introduced into the world by an alien, superhuman foe. That foe, it declares, is capable of assuming all sorts of guises, even of transfiguring himself into an angel of light. Here, in this primal temptation, it represents him as assuming the guise of a serpent; and this perhaps because of his stealthiness, sinuousness, craftiness, charmingness, deadliness. Remember that the primal pair, according to the narrative in hand, had never known any thing of evil, and were strangers to our sense of antipathy to the snake. This entry of the Prince of Evil into the serpent form is the first recorded instance of demoniacal possession. Who does not instantly recall the story of the demonized swine of Gadara?

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And now we pass to the temptation itself. The serpent said to the woman: "Is it even so that God hath said: 'Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden?' " Observe how artful this is. First, he misrepresents the Creator's prohibition by extending it to all the trees of the garden. "Hath God said—'Ye shall not eat of *any* tree of the garden?' " Thus he prepares the way to induce Eve to explain, and so enter into conversation. Satan has half won the battle when he has taken "Ear-gate." Don't parley. Secondly, in the very fact of recalling to her that there has been a prohibition he awakes the sense of restraint and restlessness, and so allures to transgression of the limit. Don't hover too near moral boundaries. The woman's answer proves that the subtle temptation has taken effect: she said to him: "Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden God hath said: 'Ye shall not eat of it, and ye shall not touch it, lest ye die.'" You perceive that she has already fallen. For, first, she depreciates her privileges; in quoting the Creator's broad permission—"Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat"—she omits the word "every" and the word "freely," and substitutes the cold expression—"Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat." Beware of belittling the Heavenly Father's goodness. Secondly, she exaggerates her restraints. In forbidding the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, God had simply said: "Thou shalt not eat of it." To this prohibition of eating she adds the prohibition of touching: "Ye shall not touch it." Beware of over-religiousness or pharisaic addition of extra-scriptural command. Thirdly, she softens the divine threat in case of disobedience; for the stern words—"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," she substitutes the gentler phrase—"lest ye die." Beware of trifling with the government of God, or diluting the severity of His menaces. And now the Tempter advances from insinuation to asseveration. The serpent said to the woman: "Ye shall not surely die; for God knoweth that in the day ye eat thereof your eyes will be opened, and ye will be as God, knowing good and evil." First: he gives the lie direct: "Ye shall not surely die." Whether the doctrine of universal salvation be true or not, one thing is certain, the Devil was the first preacher of it. Secondly: he makes a very magnificent promise: "God knoweth that in the day ye eat thereof your eyes will be opened, and ye will be as God, knowing good and evil." Thus he adroitly appeals to one of the noblest instincts of the race—the thirst of knowledge. Again: he seeks to awaken the sense of independence of God, tempting Eve to substitute egotism for loyalty. It is the very essence of the sin of the young man in the parable of the Lost Son. It is in an eminent sense the characteristic temptation of these modern times. Satan still tempts us to become as wise as God. He still tempts us to renew the Jewish outlawry during the period of the Judges: "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes." He still tempts us to say with the King of Babylon: "I will ascend into heaven—I will exalt my throne above the stars of God—I will make myself like the Most High." Self-worship is that awful and final form of blasphemy which the Apostle Paul describes when he speaks of the Man of Sin—that son of perdition who opposeth and exalteth himself above every one that is called God, or is worthy of worship: so that

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he sitteth in the temple of God, giving out that he himself is God. Let us take care then lest, being puffed up with pride, we also fall into the condemnation of the Devil.

III. THE FALL

And now we pass to the tragic issue. "And the woman saw that the Tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a Tree to be desired to make one wise; and she took of its fruit, and ate, and gave also to her husband with her, and he ate." Observe: The temptation was threefold; good for food, pleasant to the eyes, desired to make one wise. As such it recalls the threefold temptation of the second Adam—the Wilderness, the Pinnacle, the Mountain; and also the threefold lust of the Apostle John: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. "And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked: and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." Ah, the awful irony of Satan's promise! Their eyes were indeed opened, but it was to see guilt instead of innocence, folly instead of wisdom, shame instead of trust. And now the cooling breeze of an oriental afternoon has come. It is the hour of sacred contemplation, the blessed hour in which the Son and Word of God—Jehovah's true voice—had been wont to visit them in love and blissful communion. "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden at the cool of the day." Had they been penitent, had they in that awful hour confessed their sin and besought forgiveness, who knows but that humanity would have had an altogether different history and all earth been to-day one blessed Eden? But "the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." It was the cowardice of conscious guilt. Already has the penalty threatened against disobedience begun to take effect. Already has the fallen pair begun to die. See how shame has fallen like a mantle of filth on these hitherto untarnished, blithesome spirits. See how security has given way to restlessness, trust to dread, fellowship with God to aversion from Him. Behold them a guilty, remorseful, shame-faced, cowering pair, trying to hide themselves amongst the trees of the garden. And this is death indeed—a genuine, intense, perfect death. Verily, on the very day Adam fell, Adam died. It was scarcely necessary he should be expelled Eden; the instant he tasted of the forbidden fruit, Eden became for his spirit a charnel-house. And as with him, so with us:

"Conscience doth make cowards of us all."

"And the Lord God called the man, and said to him: 'Where art thou?' " It was not the voice of wrath, but the voice of love; not the Judge's summons, but the Good Shepherd's call, piping back the lost sheep. And Adam said: "I heard Thy voice in the garden and was afraid, because I was naked, and hid myself." It was a hollow, sophistical answer. Naked he had been from the beginning, but never before had he been ashamed or afraid.

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But now in his fall and self-delusion he substitutes effect for cause, shame for guilt. It was the birth of conscience as an accuser. But the Heavenly Father would still bring His erring son to penitence and confession, and so He saith to him: "Who told thee that thou art naked? Hast thou eaten of the Tree of which I commanded thee not to eat?" Instead of frankly confessing, he makes selfish, mean, impious defence: "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the Tree, and I ate." Thus he ignobly blames the wife who had been supernaturally bestowed upon him, and in the same breath he impiously blames the Divine bestower Himself. And now the Lord God turns to the poor woman herself: "What is this that thou hast done?" And again the blame is transferred, but more frankly than in the man's case. The woman said: "The serpent beguiled me, and I ate." Thus has the Heavenly Father's visitation at the cool of the day become a Divine Avenger's inquisition. Such is the story of the victorious Temptation.

IV. THE SENTENCE

And now let us turn to the Sentence. It was threefold.

1. The Tempter's Sentence. — And, first, the Tempter's Sentence: "The Lord God said to the serpent: 'Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; on thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life; and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: He shall bruise thee on the head, and thou shalt bruise him on the heel.' " The sentence involves three dooms.

First: a doom of degradation: "Cursed art thou above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; on thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." And here comes into view one of the many hints that the story of the Fall is to be taken as a Divine parable. As a matter of fact, prone locomotion is and always must have been the serpent's natural gait; it was so, if geology is true, ages before man's advent upon earth; for the serpent to walk erect is and always must have been an anatomic impossibility — that is, so long as he is a serpent. Again: dust is not, except in a very limited sense, the serpent's food. Once more: we do interpret the "bruising," the "head," the "heel," figuratively: and if a part of the serpent's sentence is confessedly figurative, why may not the whole of it? It is a Divine parable, written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. As the serpent itself was not Satan, but only the symbol of him, so the prone gait, the dust-food, the bruised head, are symbols of Satan's character, habits, and doom. We know but little of Satan's antecedent history. All we know touching this is that he kept not his first estate. In his original character and condition he was doubtless superhumanly glorious. But because he had entrapped the primal pair into a fall, the Lord God pronounced on him a doom of degradation: "Cursed art thou above every beast

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of the field—on thy belly shalt thou go—dust shalt thou eat.” Beware of Milton’s magnificent Satan: for it is not the Satan of Scripture. As we feel the snake to be—mean, odious, loathsome—so is the real Satan, the Satan of man’s fall. How graphically Horace Bushnell portrays him:

“The serpent makes no appearance till we ascend to the tertiary formation, and then it wriggles out into being contemporaneously with the more stately and perfect order of mammalia. When the mammoth stalks abroad as the gigantic lord of the new creation, the serpent creeps out with him, on his belly, with his bag of poison hid under the roots of his feeble teeth, spinning out three or four hundred lengths of vertebræ, and having his four rudimental legs blanketed under his skin: a mean, abortive creature, whom the angry motherhood of nature would not go on to finish, but shook from her lap before the legs were done, muttering ominously, ‘Cursed art thou above all cattle: upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.’ ” —*Nature and the Supernatural*, p. 208.

And again John Ruskin:

“That rivulet of smooth silver: how does it flow? It literally rows on the earth, with every scale for an oar. Watch it when it moves slowly! A wave, but without wind! A current, but with no fall! All the body moving at the same instant, yet some of it to one side, some to another, or some forward, and the rest of the coil backward: but all with the same calm will and equal way: one soundless, ceaseless march of sequent rings and spectral procession of spotted dust, with dissolution in its fangs, dislocation in its coils. Startle it: the winding stream will become a poisoned arrow: the wave of poisoned life will lash through the grass like a cast lance. It scarcely breathes with its one lung (the other shrivelled and abortive): it is passive to the sun and shade, and is cold or hot like a stone; yet it can outclimb the monkey, outswim the fish, outleap the zebra, outwrestle the athlete, and crush the tiger. It is a divine hieroglyph of the demoniac power of earth.” —*Queen of the Air*, pp. 83, 84.

Secondly: it was a doom of hatred: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.” “I will put enmity between thee and the woman.” Already he had hated her: henceforth she would hate him. May we not hope from this that even Eve was saved? “And between thy seed and her seed.” “Thy seed”—*i.e.*, all the wicked; for he that committeth sin is of the Devil; for the Devil sinneth from the beginning. “And her seed”—*i.e.*, all the righteous—even that church which consists of Christ the Head, and Christians His body; for, as head and body are one, so are Christ and His church; Christ the Centre, His church the circumference, the fullness of Him who filleth all in all. The enmity between the serpent and his seed on the one hand, and the

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woman and her seed on the other, was true, first, in the case of Him who was in the eminent sense the seed of the woman—even Jesus Christ. And the enmity was mutual. On the one hand, Satan hated Jesus all the way between Manger and Sepulchre; and, on the other hand, Jesus hated Satan all the way from heaven to heaven again. Again: the mutual enmity is true of the Church, which is Christ's Body. How relentless and ceaseless Satan's temptations, persecutions, ambushes, sieges, assaults! The very meaning of the word Satan is adversary. He showed me Joshua the high-priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan at his right hand to oppose—Satan—him. And the Church reciprocates the enmity. She is in very truth a church militant, on a war footing, wrestling, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers, world-rulers of darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places. Once more: the enmity is true of each saint, every Christian being a member of Christ's own Body. For Satan is a personal foe, hating the Church in detail, member by member. And each Christian reciprocates the hate. In proportion as he walks in light, he is a conscious fighter against the Powers of Darkness. And so the doom of enmity is ever being fulfilled. The intense antipathy we feel to the snake, our involuntary recoil from him, our instinctive impulse to crush him: all this is a parable and type of the Church's antipathy to the great Dragon, that old serpent called the Devil and Satan.

Thirdly: it was a doom of defeat: "He shall bruise thee on the head, and thou shalt bruise Him on the heel."¹ How true this was of Jesus Christ, the Church's Head! For this very purpose was He manifested that He might destroy the works of the Devil. Listen to the disciple whom He loved, as, in his Patmos banishment, he beheld in prophetic trance the coming victory: "Now is come the salvation and the might and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ, because He hath fought with the great Dragon, and cast him down." Again: this victory over Satan is true also of the Church, which is Christ's Body: for the body shares the fortunes of the head. Listen to a sublime saying of the Church's Lord: "I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning: lo, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and nothing by any means shall hurt you." And so the church militant, even while on earth, is gliding into the church triumphant, overcoming Satan through the blood of the Lamb. Once more: this bruising of Satan's head is true of each Christian, each saint being a member of Christ's body. Take courage, then, O panting, staggering, soiled one! Thou shalt yet tread on the lion and the adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under foot. "And thou shalt bruise Him on the heel." For Satan's warfare is cowardly, biting the heel instead of smiting the brow. But his wound, thank God, cannot be mortal. Thus he bruised the heel of Christ, who is the Church's Head. Behold the wounds of the Wilderness, the Pinnacle, the Mountain,

¹ The Vulgate, misconceiving the Hebrew pronoun, turns it into a feminine. Accordingly, Roman Catholic interpreters declare the Virgin Mother to be the conqueror of Satan.

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the Garden, the Cross, the Tomb. But after all it was only Messiah's heel that he bruised. And in the very act of having His heel bitten Jesus crushed the serpent's head. Through His own death He destroyed him who had the power over death—that is, the Devil. The cross was alike Satan's gibbet and Jesus' sceptre. Again: the serpent's bruising of the heel is true of the Church, which is Christ's Body. Behold the wounds of persecution, affliction, temptation, toppling. But after all it is only her heel that he bites. No permanent disaster has ever befallen or ever will befall the true Church. As vital and immortal as her Head, she

“Cannot but by annihilating die.”

Once more: Satan's bruising of the heel is true of every saint—all being members in Christ's Body. If they persecute the Head, they will also persecute His members: for the servant is not greater than his lord. Yet it is only the heel that Satan bites. Perplexed, yet not in despair; persecuted, yet not forsaken; struck down, yet not destroyed; dying, and, behold, we live!

Such is the Tempter's sentence; the threefold doom of degradation, aversion, defeat. God grant that His Church may bruise Satan under her feet shortly!

2. The Woman's Sentence. — And now we pass to the Woman's Sentence: To the woman He said: “I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception: in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.”

And, first, her sentence as mother: “I will greatly multiply the pains of thy pregnancy: in pain shalt thou bring forth children.” Oh, the birth-sorrows of humanity! How many a Rachel in giving birth to her child calls him Benoni—son of my anguish—and dies! And spiritual birth-woes there are as well as bodily. When Zion travaileth, she bringeth forth children. Here too is a type of the great vicarious sacrifice. Jesus Christ—the true seed of the woman—in the very act of bringing forth the children whom God had given Him surrendered His own life. For aught I know this is the reason why, as an apostle tells us, woman shall be saved through her childbearing; her very pangs are prophetic of untold blessing. Well then may woman's sorrow be revered! I do not wonder that millions are worshipping, as millions have worshipped for centuries, the Nazarene Mother. But, after all, that is the truest birth-hour when the Son of God Himself is born within us.

But the woman was not only sentenced as mother: she was also sentenced as wife: “Unto thy husband shall be thy desire, and he shall rule over thee.” True, woman from the instant of her creation had been subordinate to man. As the man is the image and the glory of God, so the woman is the glory of the man; for the man is not from the woman, but the woman from the man: and the man was not created for the woman, but the

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woman for the man: for Adam was first formed, then Eve. Subordination to man then is woman's normal state. But the Fall intensified and debased the subordination, for it was not Adam who was first deceived, but Eve. Henceforth allegiance sank into thralldom. Unto thy husband shall be thy desire, and he shall rule over thee. What a commentary on these words has been the history of woman from the beginning!

3. The Man's Sentence. — And now we turn to the Man's Sentence: to the man He said: "Because thou didst hearken to the voice of thy wife, and didst eat 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 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 to the ground: for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The sentence involves four dooms.

And, first, a doom of nature: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake: thorns and thistles shall it cause to spring up to thee." Observe: while the Tempter has been cursed directly—"cursed art thou above all cattle"—his victim is cursed obliquely—"cursed is the ground for thy sake." But I hear an objection: "Is not this cursing the soil for man's sake unjust?" Remember then that man, in virtue of his body-side, is linked and even kinned with nature. At the same time, in virtue of his spirit-side, man is superior to nature, standing forth as its epitome, representative, genius, head. Hence Adam's fall was nature's fall. Earth's true Samson, when man fell, nature's pillars fell with him.

"Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat,
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe,
That all was lost!"

But I hear another objection: "If geology be true, disorder, monstrosity, pain, death were in the world before sin or man." To this I think it may be answered: This story of the Fall is a divine parable, to be taken spiritually, setting forth in way of colossal hint and shadow the emergence of evil on the stage of time. One thing is certain, nature to-day is visibly under a curse. Thorns and thistles are characteristically the soil's natural produce. This, in fact, is the meaning, to large extent, of agriculture itself. What is the larger part of tilling the soil but the uprooting of thorn and weed? And this curse of the thorn is a typical curse, representing volcanoes and earthquakes, simoons and deserts, miasms and plagues, deformities and abortions, diseases and death. The bar sinister is on nature's heraldry. Verily, creation has been made subject to vanity—*i.e.*, to disappointment, abortion, as though she had been made in vain, unable to realize her own inherent gifts and ends. In a word, nature has been de-natured.

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Hence, secondly, a doom of toil: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.” Not but that man from the very beginning was meant for work. Labor was man’s normal condition, having been installed in Eden to keep and till it even while still unfallen. But there is a difference between work and toil, between normal activity and penal service, between Eden as a gymnasium and earth as a work-house. I do not undertake to explain the philosophy of the primal curse. All I know is that if, while man was yet in Paradise and the ground uncursed, it was necessary for him to work, that necessity was vastly heightened when he was driven from Paradise, and the thorn and thistle choked the vine and fig. Labor—what is it but the price of life? In Eden man was to work that he might conquer nature: now man has to toil that nature may not conquer him. Ah, the ceaseless toil of hand, as in the farm, the mine, the factory! The ceaseless toil of brain, as in the study, the office, the laboratory! The ceaseless toil of heart, as in society, the household, the sick-chamber!

Hence, thirdly, a doom of grief: “In sorrow shalt thou eat bread all the days of thy life.” How true this was in Adam’s own case: a lost Eden, a murdered Abel, a fugitive Cain! How touching the many plaints of sacred litany! The plaint of a Lamech on the birth of his son Noah, of a Jacob before Pharaoh, of a Job beneath the bruises of Satan, of a David fleeing before Saul, of a Solomon in his old age, of a Paul impaled with the thorn! And so it is with all earnest, deep, keen-sighted men. Whatever the philosophers say, these deep natures know that earth has been cursed. The unwritten tragedies of shop and farm, of forum and pulpit, of mart and home! The tones of nature herself, we are told, are in the minor key: as such they are ever echoing the primal curse. Here is the secret of earth’s woes. Had sin never entered the world, the world had never known such words as disappointment, anxiety, disgust, terror, shame, heartache, despair, suicide. We have mourning-weeds for those whose bodies we have laid in the ground; what weeds shall we wear for dead affections? How mighty, how funereal the procession that follows in thy train, O sin! Verily, the world is administered, not from the Gerizim of blessing, but from the Ebal of cursing. But there is another woe, even sadder.

Fourthly, a doom of death: “Till thou return to the ground: for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” Dust thou art. How it recalls the story of man’s creation! “The Lord God formed the man of dust of the ground.” How it forebodes the psalmist’s dirge: “Thou turnest man to dust, and sayest, Return, ye sons of men!” How pathetic the echo of this curse of death in our own great poem of Thanatopsis.

V. THE EXPULSION

And now we come to the last scene in the great drama of the Fall: “And the Lord God said: ‘Behold, the man has become as one of Us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he

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stretch forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live forever:’ therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken; and He drove out the man, and He stationed on the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way to the Tree of Life.”

And, first, the sorrowful acquisition: “The Lord God said: ‘Behold, the man has become as one of Us (probably the imperial plural—*Pluralis Excellentiae*), to know good and evil.” I cannot think, as some scholars have imagined, that the Creator uses here the language of irony. No, the saying is profoundly true. Not that God knows evil in the same way that we know it. He knows it from without—by observation: we know it from within, by experience. Here we see the reason why the forbidden tree was called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Satan tempted the primal pair to decide for themselves, independently of their Creator’s will and teaching, what is right and what is wrong: that is to say, he tempted them to lay down for themselves the foundations and standards of morality, and thus become as God, knowing good and evil. There are some things which had better remain forever unknown. And Satan succeeded in his temptation: “Behold, the man has become as one of us, to know good and evil.” That is to say: “Man has become law and God to himself.” Verily it was a most sorrowful acquisition.

Thank God, we are told of a merciful denial: “And now, lest he stretch forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live forever, therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken: and He drove out the man.” The Tree of Life was, as we have seen, the symbolic sign and pledge of immortality. And so the exclusion from the Tree was a genuine mercy. For immortality in a state of sin—and to continue in a state of sin is to be evermore growing more and more sinful—what is it but the hell of hell?

“And He stationed before the Garden of Eden the Cherubim.” It is the first occurrence of this mysterious word. Yet, figuring as it does throughout Holy Scripture, at Eden, in Moses’ tabernacle, in Solomon’s temple, in visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel and John, it is a most mysterious word. But whatever their nature or structure, they seem to have been symbols of creation; and as such answering to the four living creatures of the Apocalypse. Here at Eden they were stationed to barricade the avenue to the Tree of Life. Nor was this all. A flaming sword there also was, brandishing every way—east, west, north, south—to ward off every possible approach to the same life-continuing Tree. Thus the Garden of Eden, once committed to man, to be kept by him, has been taken from him, henceforth to be kept against him. Yes, nature herself is a retributive economy; so that he who sins sets nature against himself. Man has fallen, and all creation stands guard at the Tree of Life.

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Such is the story of Man's Temptation, Fall, and Doom, or, more briefly, the Genesis of Sin.

Glancing back in way of review, let us briefly note some of the lessons of the story.

VALUE OF MORAL PROBATION

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First: The value of moral probation. For it is evident that the Forbidden Tree was intended to serve among other purposes the purpose of a moral test. And we may bless God that there was and still is such a Tree. For no one knows or can know himself till he has been tested. Ordeal is necessary to the proof of character—aye, to character itself. What the Adam, when installed in Eden, was fresh from his Maker's hand and radiant with His image? He needed a forbidden tree in order that he might not only awake to the sense of right and wrong, and so of morality, but also that he might awake to the sense of his power of choice between right and wrong, obedience and disobedience. And so the forbidden tree tested him, alas, too well. Nevertheless the test was intended to be, and but for his own fault would have been, a genuine kindness. For the sense of obedience, not less than the obedience itself, is essential to moral joy. Thus a specific prohibition gave to Adam the opportunity of knowing whether he was obedient or not. Had he obeyed the prohibition, that very sense of obedience would have been to him the source of a genuine bliss. Nor was Adam the only man who has had this test of a forbidden tree. All human life—oh, that we more thoroughly understood and believed it!—is a probation, a probing, a testing. In our own moral constitution itself—in the very make-up of our moral structure—each of us necessarily has in himself a Forbidden Tree. In fact, Eden itself would not be an Eden unless it had such a Tree. God grant that we may endure the test better than did our first father!

JESUS CHRIST THE TRUE TREE OF LIFE

Secondly, Jesus Christ is Himself the true Tree of Life. Listen to one of the legends of medieval Christendom. When Adam lay at the point of death he sent his son Seth to the gates of Paradise that he might gain access to the Tree of Life, and bring some of the oil of mercy which flowed from its twigs, to anoint him for his burial. That oil Seth was not allowed to have. But the cherub who guarded the gates of Eden gave him a slip from the sacred Tree, and with this he returned and planted it on his father's grave at Golgotha. There it took root and grew and became a tree. From that tree came the wood of the wand which Moses so often miraculously wielded, also the rod which budded in token of Jehovah's sanction of the priesthood of Aaron, also the pole on which the brazen serpent was uplifted, and, finally, the Cross of Cavalry itself. It is but a legend. Thank God, it conveys a profound truth. That truth is this: Jesus Christ—Son of God and Son of Man,

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Seed of the Woman—He is the true Tree of Life. Our Saviour Jesus Christ, by His appearing, hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. This, in fact, is the Gospel, the Evangel, the glad tidings of great joy unto all people. Out of Christ, death—in Christ, life: this is the teaching of Him who alone hath immortality. He who touches His cross, and only he, lives forever. To draw a figure from arithmetic: Jesus Christ is Himself the separatrix between powers and zeros. Our destiny depends on our position with reference to Him, whether we are on His right hand or on His left, whether we are for Him or against Him. And the way to the true Tree of Life is now open. No sleepless cherubim, no gleaming scimitar stand guard before it: “The gates of Paradise open stand on Calvary.” Whoso eateth His flesh and drinketh His blood hath everlasting life: for His flesh is the true food and His blood the true drink. It is the nectar and ambrosia of the true immortality. Philosophers of the Middle Ages spent many a long and weary year in quest of what they called the *Elixir Vitæ*, or life-prolonging tincture of gold. O ye weary, plodding ones, dying ones, yet panting for immortal youth, ye shall not find it where alchemists searched for it in alembic and crucible, nor where ye are looking for it in the chase after wealth, or power, or pleasure, or fame. Jesus the Nazarene, the man of Joseph’s tomb and Olivet’s cloud—He only is the true *Elixir Vitæ*. In Him alone is immortal youth, immortal beauty, immortal life.

SUPERIORITY OF THE SECOND ADAM’S EDEN

Lastly, the lost Eden is to be regained, and more than regained. The day is coming when the curse shall be uplifted, and there shall be neither serpent nor thorn, neither death nor tear. Aye, that is the true Golden Age for which the great poets are ever sighing: not the Eden that has been, but the Eden that is to be. For the paradise future shall be as much nobler than the paradise past as the second Adam is nobler than the first. This is the meaning of the majestic paragraph, Romans 5:12–21, paradoxically blending parallel and contrast, and which may be summed up in the last part of the twentieth verse, “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” The new Eden is the old Eden intensified and transfigured—*e.g.*, instead of a garden there is a city; instead of a single pair a multitude whom no man can number; instead of a Euphrates or Tigris of natural water, the River of the Water of Life; instead of the occasional visitation of the Lord God in the cool of the day, the permanent tabernacling of God with men; instead of the coats of skin the fine linen, pure and shining, of the righteousness of the saints; instead of vengeful cherubim and averting sword, the rapturous welcome of the Living Creatures, representatives of creation. Heaven grant that as all of us have died in the first Adam, all

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of us may be made alive in the Second! Washing our robes in the blood of the Lamb, we shall have right to the Tree of Life, and enter through the gates into the City.²

George Dana Boardman the Younger was born in Burma, the son of the Baptist missionaries George Dana Boardman and Sarah Hall Boardman. He returned to the United States as a boy and attended first Worcester Academy from which he graduated in 1846, then Brown University, where he graduated in 1852. He continued his education at the Newton Theological Institution and graduated in 1855.

In 1855, he became pastor of the Baptist church in Barnwell, South Carolina, but his views on the slavery question impelled him to exchange his charge in 1856 for a church further north. He was pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Rochester, New York, until 1864, and pastor of the First Baptist Church, Philadelphia, from 1864 to 1894. In 1893, Boardman was the closing presenter to speak at the *World's Parliament of Religions* in Chicago; delivering the lecture, *Christ the Unifier of Mankind*.

In June 1899, he established at the University of Pennsylvania the permanent lectureship known as the "Boardman Foundation in Christian Ethics." He was president of the Christian Arbitration and Peace Society and of the American Baptist Missionary Union. His most important production is a monograph, *Titles of Wednesday Evening Lectures*. It embraces 981 of his lectures, delivered between 1865 and 1880, and comprises a complete exegesis of the Bible.

² Boardman, G. D. (1880). "The Genesis of Sin: A Study in the Third Chapter of Genesis." *The Princeton Review*, 2, 42–61.