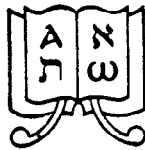


The Object of Creation



THE OBJECT OF CREATION

FOR WHAT PURPOSE is man in the world? This question is asked by all thinking men, but who is able to answer it? The solution is found in the Scriptures alone, and even there it is not on the surface. It is one of the "deep things of God," hidden from the carnal mind, from the religious as well as from the intellectual searcher. It can be revealed only by God's spirit. To say that we can know why man was created, may seem a stupendous claim to many, but it is really no great accomplishment for those who are guided only by His Word, not by what they think, nor by the philosophical notions emanating from the human brain.

We learn of a first act of creation by God through the texts which tell us of His having originated the Christ, His Son. In Colossians 1:15 the latter is called the "image of the invisible God," as well as "the first-born of every creation." The word "image" means a visible representation and must speak to us of God's longing to be revealed. His object in originating Christ was that this One should be His revelation. The word "first-born" in the Scriptures is a figure of speech, denoting the highest in rank and station, the one who is to take his father's place. Christ appears as the origin or beginning of God's creation (Rev. 3:14). He was there before anything else existed. No other being, no solar system, no speck of matter, was made before Him. There has been much theological discussion about whether the pre-human Christ was born from or created by the Father. All this is vain, for, in His case, there is no vital difference be-

tween the two thoughts. In Hebrews 2: 11 we read that He is not ashamed to call the many sons, whom He glorifies, His brethren, because He and they are out of One. All, that is the entire universe, is out of God (Rom. 11: 36, 1 Cor. 8: 6).

But it is through Christ, as Paul discloses to us in such majestic words: "For in Him is all created, that in the heavens and that on the earth. . . . all is created in Him and for Him, and He is before all, and all has its cohesion in Him" (Col. 1: 16, 17). "For us there is one God, the Father, *out* of Whom all is, and we for Him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, *through* Whom all is, and we through Him" (1 Cor. 8: 6). Nothing was to lack divine revelation, and as no creature can perceive the Invisible One, His visible Image had to be there before aught else, in order to be this revelation to all.

After bringing forth His Son, God needed intelligent beings to be the recipients of His revelation. We have no clue whatever as to when the creation of heavenly bodies or stars began, or when and with what kind of creatures these were populated. The only thing we do know is, that there was a wonderful world before our earth came into being. In Job 38: 4, 7, God Himself asks: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth. . . . when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" This one short passage teaches us wonderful and most important facts. That there were beings allowed to look on when God called some new, marvelous masterpiece into existence, able to appreciate the power and wisdom exhibited in it, and to rejoice in it. And it seems as if this grand and glorious universe was then not marred by any discordance, any trace of rebellion, enmity, and sin.

Now some might think that this must have been a perfect world, enjoying a perfect revelation, and therefore capable of bringing the most perfect satisfaction to both God and the beings He made. But this was not so. All

that His creatures were then able to see was a Creator of unlimited power and ability. His innermost heart remained hidden from them. They could know Him as the embodiment of might, but not as the embodiment of love. They could not know good as long as there was nothing to contrast it with. They did not know evil. They did not know what it was to overcome evil and to develop good to its sublimest height in the struggle with sin. The Deity they could grasp resembled the One Whom countless unbelievers, or heathen, admire in nature. The Christ, His revelation, could be worshiped only as a disclosure of awe-inspiring power and splendor, far above the weakness of the creatures, forcing all who beheld Him to fall at His feet as dead.

God knew that another revelation was needed; needed for His own sake, for the sake of His Christ, and for the sake of His creatures. It was the revelation of evil. The old theological quarrel, whether Satan fell from a state of perfection, or whether he was created as the personification of wickedness, is worthless, for even had he once been good, God made him so that he could *become* the very embodiment of everything that is evil. And that is what he was made for. He was a necessity for God's sublimest revelation.

We have already referred to the earth's foundation as having taken place later than the creation of the celestial hosts. And the fact that Satan exercises power over this earth makes it most probable that it was made in order to become the scene on which the great struggle between good and evil was to be enacted. It is beyond question that Satan rules today. He himself tells Christ that all the kingdoms of the world were given to him and that he gives them to whomsoever he wills. Paul calls him the god of this eon* (2 Cor. 4:4), and John tells us that the whole world lies in the wicked one (1 John 5:19). We also know that there was a disruption of

*Greek: *aîōnos* (Authorized Version: "world").

the world, which may be attributed to the misrule and failure of the one who dominated it. This disruption is clearly implied at the forefront of revelation. It harmonizes with the great truth that God did not create the earth "without form and void," or rather, a chaos and vacant, but that it *became* thus, and surely for a good reason.

Thus far we have an almighty God Who is Spirit and therefore invisible to those He has made. We have His visible Image, the Christ, and we have a universe of suns and stars, with intelligent beings on them, created for the purpose of receiving the revelation of God, in order that He should be satisfied through the response to it in their hearts. And, to activate this revelation, we have Satan, a being of incredible cunning, ability and power, to whom God gives a stage, a platform, on which he demonstrates what he can do in opposition to God, and what his capacities will achieve apart from God. This stage is the earth, on which he is allowed to display his true character. A fine object lesson for the hosts of heaven!

But would this alone accomplish God's purpose in creating evil? Where would the revelation of God's heart come in? Where the revelation of the unutterable superiority of Christ over every other being, not as the most high, but as the most worthy of all? Where the revelation of the value of absolute dependence on God in contrast to Satan's career of self-will and self-elevation? How would it benefit the witnesses of his misrule, if he were permitted to go on eternally as he has started to do, without his sin ever coming to a consummation, bringing about his utter defeat and the triumph of good? The heavenly onlookers might even become accustomed to behold him running about on the earth, resisting God, yet never having an opportunity of really challenging Him; opposing Christ, yet never able to harm Him; against all who were untouched by sin, but never in a position to tempt and mislead them. It would soon turn out to be a

sort of platonic enmity of evil against good, never coming to a real decision. It would never become an adequate revelation of the depths of grace hidden in God and of the lengths to which His love would go, nor of the depths of iniquity in Satan, and evil's awful culmination. Something more was needed.

So God went about to restore the ruined earth for the scene of His crowning revelation. This calls for circumstances in which Satan would have an opportunity to attack God, demonstrate all his antagonism toward God, and go to the incredible lengths of actually murdering God's Representative. Then, when he believes that he has triumphed over God, he must discover that he has brought about his own complete and final defeat, as well as the glorious victory of the One he wished to destroy.

Satan could never touch the Christ existing in the form of God. In order that He may be challenged by Satan to mortal combat, the Son of God had to empty Himself of His divine majesty and take on a body adapted to this struggle, a body that could be hurt, broken, and sacrificed. As the first specimen of such a being, God created the first man, Adam.

It is hard to express in human words all that it must have meant to God when he formed this wonderful creature in His own image. Man had to be god-like to such an extent that the Christ could become a man without sacrificing His real status. Even in the glory, Christ is and always will be a man. This one fact places man far above all the principalities and powers of the heavenly realms. Christ never took on their likeness, and God did not choose them to be the instruments of His crowning revelation to the rest of creation. Once we grasp that we were made in order that Christ could, in our form and likeness, reveal to the universe what God is, what He Himself is, and what Satan is, we can only bow our heads in adoration. Such a vision, once it dawns upon us, is overwhelming. It is an answer to the question of our existence that

surpasses in its marvelous grandeur all human explanations, as God's wisdom surpasses ours. But there it is, hidden in the Scriptures.

Paul says, in Colossians, that Christ, on the cross, stripping off the sovereignties and authorities (of wickedness, for Satan has many underlings), boldly made a show of them, triumphing over them. This certainly was no show for the people looking on. They saw nothing but utter weakness, defeat and death on Golgotha. It was a show for the benefit of all the heavenly hosts. And Peter speaks (1 Pet. 1:12) concerning Christ's sufferings and the glories to follow, into which the messengers are yearning to peer. That is why Christ always calls Himself the Son of mankind and again and again says that His task on earth is "to reveal the Father." But this had to be in the form of man. Evidently it was a revelation, superior to the one which He could become to the universe in His pre-human glory.

In Philippians we find much light on this subject. Christ emptied Himself of His divine form in order to become a man, and as a man became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Golgotha was the reason for His becoming a man, for it was God's central revelation to the entire creation. What the latter beheld on the cross cannot be surpassed by any other unveiling, or exhibition of power, splendor and majesty.

God did not reveal all this from the start to Satan and to humanity, so that it was clear and evident to all. This would have brought to naught His intention. Never would Satan have murdered the Christ, had he known that this would end in his own destruction, his exposure in unparalleled shame and disgrace before the entire creation. Satan is well able to read the Bible. Probably he knows it better than we do. He can also read the hearts of men and suggest his ideas to them. But he cannot find out what is hidden in God. Therefore God told man at his creation nothing more than that he was to rule

the earth. It was necessary that Adam should remain ignorant concerning God's further plans. Not influenced by any premature knowledge, he was to fulfill God's intention. And this was a very different one than we would have imagined.

Evidently Satan craved to bring man under his power as soon as the latter appeared on the scene. In this way he wanted to wreck God's purpose with mankind. And yet he has only fulfilled it. God's wisdom, in truth, surpasses all our comprehension. Every move which His enemy makes against Him, He turns into victory for Himself, into defeat for Satan.

Had man remained innocent, there would never have been a cross on this earth. It could not come to a Golgotha. Christ would not have become a man. The history of mankind would not have been what God needed for His purpose. Living in a magnificent garden, with no other task than to pick luscious fruit and associate with harmless animals—no member of such a humanity could ever become "a theater to the world and to messengers" (1 Cor. 4:9), as God's plan demanded.

When Satan without effort misled the first human beings, he surely believed he had frustrated God's purpose. Now these creatures would no longer be dangerous to him. Now he would keep them in bondage, use them as his instruments to fight the Creator. On the very same day he learned from God Himself how terribly mistaken he had been. Now he has himself brought about the conditions necessary for the advent of the true Son of Mankind in his domain. The very one whom he deceived first, the woman, would bring forth his destroyer. From now on there would be a "seed," which, standing on God's side, would be the enemy of Satan. His final dethronement by this seed was now certain.

The entire story of mankind that follows is a work of God, step by step, to reach the cross on Golgotha. The nation that was to bring forth the One Who hurts the

serpent, and at the same time, under Satan's leadership, become the instrument for His crucifixion, furnishes us example after example, how God prepares it for its destiny, how Satan in his turn tries everything to frustrate God's plan, and how he only gives God another opportunity to turn all his evil doings against himself.

If Satan had perhaps thought that man, after having become a sinner, would now never be able to conquer him, he overlooked the marvellous depths of God's plan of redemption. Adam, in spite of his innocence, was soulish. He was "flesh." This was never a match for Satan. God's intention was not to overcome Satan by a sinless first Adam, who knew neither good nor evil. To conquer a being like Satan, divine strength was needed. Evidently God had invested His enemy with so much power, that the struggle between him and the Christ had to be in truth a deadly combat. Else it would only have been a sham. It would never have meant for God, nor for Christ Himself, nor for Satan, nor for creation, what God intended. But because Adam did not remain innocent, humanity could receive in Christ a new Head, a second Adam. After the disqualification of the first Adam, another one, immeasurably better, took his place. Never would humanity have welcomed the second Adam without the bankruptcy of the first one. God let Satan win a seeming triumph with his seduction of man, in order to turn evil into good by a far higher plan of love.

Though Christ was to hurt the head of the serpent on Golgotha all alone, yet He was also to make a multitude, called out of the mass of mankind, conquerors, in order that they might in due time reign together with Him. What no son of the first Adam was able to become through the life he inherits, he now could be through the life communicated to him by the second. But how could man receive this divine life without first recognizing his own corruption? When God permitted Satan to poison man with sin, He made room for His life in all who are

willing to consign to death the life of the first Adam. In this way Satan will be conquered by men after all. But by men, who, by the spirit of God have received a power which the first Adam, in his innocence, never could know. If anyone thinks that redemption is nothing but restoration of innocence, as was found in paradise, then he is sadly mistaken. God let Satan rob man of this in order to give him His own righteousness instead. And if man was not to exalt himself in consequence of this fact, he had first thoroughly to learn the misery of his own sinful state.

With all his cunning and slyness, with all his desperate efforts, Satan, completely blinded, only brings about his own destruction. He himself makes provision for the cross on which he is defeated. He does not foresee what it will mean for himself. He works into the hands of God. That is the drama of the universe, the spectacle which holds all the heavens spellbound. Because of this, mankind came into existence, to play the different parts which this stupendous event demanded. Satan surely did not realize what he would accomplish for the entire creation on Golgotha.

One is in fact tempted to speak of divine irony when one grasps how God lets His enemy, step by step, exert himself to bring about the cross, always hoping to harm his Creator, and yet only serving the unfathomable depths of God's wisdom.

Golgotha had to be, for God's sake. If God longed for the responsive love of creatures capable of appreciating what He is, nothing else could reveal to them everything that is in His heart as the cross could. There He gave His Beloved One for His enemies. There He provided for the reconciliation of every being which had been estranged from Him. There He made manifest His perfect justice when He justifies all who believe in Him. There He showed to a wondering universe the unfathomable depths of the wisdom which finds a way to finally do

away with all sin, without leaving the least flaw on His Own rightcousness. Never will His creatures cease to find new marvels in the cross of Christ.

Golgotha had to be, for Christ's sake. He was not only to be adored and honored as the mighty representative of the all-powerful God, but to be worshiped as the One Whose obedience, self-denial and love surpassed everything that had been realized before. Christ was to be given the highest place above every other creature, not only because of His rank, but also because of His deeds. How could creation bring Him such heartfelt adoration, if He had only been the Most High, because God made Him thus? The cross proves Him to be worthy of all honor, because of what He did there, quite apart from His divine station. If God wanted to exalt Him (super-exalt is the literal Greek in Philippians), He could do it in no better way, than by first abasing Him to the depths of suffering and shame. Because He endured that, God gives Him a name that is above every name. Because He stooped so low, every creature will gladly and joyously acclaim Him as the One fit to be the Most High. Golgotha brought to Christ a wealth of honor to be had in no other way. Therefore it had to be, for His sake.

And Golgotha had also to be, for Satan's sake. There it was that God gave him the crowning opportunity to display the depths to which wickedness can go. Nothing like what he did there could ever have been considered possible by any intelligent being among the heavenly hosts. Now they may see what evil can come to. Now they may grasp its awful potentialities. But Satan, at the peak of his triumph, in reality was defeated, utterly brought to naught, displayed in all his iniquity before the horrified witnesses of his deed, and made a public show by the conquering Christ. Though God still lets him exercise dominion on earth, he is constantly overreaching himself, constantly showing his incapacity to

accomplish anything perfect. God looks on calmly at his efforts to make some show of his capabilities, to lift humanity to all sorts of heights. God turns everything he does into a great failure while He holds ready His Christ, and will dethrone him finally, when his time is over. And then the terrible state to which he has brought the earth will be the foil for Christ's wonderful reign, which is to undo all he has done.

Hitherto we have contemplated only the grand and overwhelmingly glorious aspect of what it means to be a man. There is still another, darker side. Man was not only to be the creature in whose form Christ could become God's crowning revelation. He was also to be the medium through which Satan reveals himself in his turn. The first man was trapped by Satan and brought under his sway. From then on, all men were used by him more or less to carry out his plans. Satan needs men to accomplish his aims. And God lets him have them. That was also according to His plan. The great tragedy featuring the conflict between good and evil, this spectacle for all the universe, is acted out by man. Tools of Satan on one hand, instruments of God on the other. A man can be either of the two.

It is necessary that we also give due emphasis to the somber side of man's role, a side which should well keep us from all self-exaltation. We surely have nothing to boast of. And God was wise to let it be that way. If ever a human being should elevate himself because he wears the image of God, because he exists in the likeness of Christ, let him realize that not a single one of his race remained as God created him, that man fell short at the very start of his career. But that does not alter the fact that man carries out God's intention. Quite the contrary. Man had to become a sinner for the same astounding reasons that there had to be a cross. For God's sake, for Christ's sake, for Satan's sake and for his own sake. That justifies God in making man so responsive to sin, that he

gave way to it in the face of the first temptation God put in his path. If God had not wanted it to be thus, He could well have kept man from ever knowing evil.

But a neutral humanity was not what God needed, for man has a special task in the universe, or else his creation, different from the heavenly hosts, would have been, to say the least, superfluous. God needed sinners and enemies to reveal to the onlooking witnesses His power to redeem and reconcile, to take what Satan had spoiled and reshape it to something much higher; to make mere innocents into conquerors; former slaves of His adversary into victorious overcomers, with the great enemy under their feet. He needed sinners, in order to awaken in them a response of gratitude and love, by saving them from their cruel bondmaster, such as would satisfy His heart. Their never-ending praise for His deliverance is something He would by no means want to go without. Surely, man had to become a sinner for God's sake.

And he had to become a sinner for Christ's sake. Christ yearns to have others partake of the glory which He Himself is enjoying. He longs for a reward for His sorrows, namely, to be given those which He delivers through His own blood. He needs a complement, a bride as well as a body, consisting of those whom He has made worthy to share His future reign, on this earth as well as in the heavenly realms. And such must be prepared for these tasks in the same way that He was prepared for His place above all. This preparation is by the cross. Christ died on it a literal death. His redeemed ones identify themselves with Him in this death, accepting God's curse on the old humanity, as expressed through the cross. By dying to everything involved in the term "flesh," and living by the indwelling power of the risen, victorious Christ, they become what He seeks in order to satisfy His heart. And that which counts for God, when it comes to the gratitude and fervent love from those who are delivered from Satan's thralldom, counts for Christ in the

very same way. Would He want to be without the praises and thanks of creatures whom He Himself redeemed at such tremendous cost? Any such adoration would be impossible in sinless man. Only a sinner needs crucifixion. In order to go literally to the cross, Christ took on Himself the sin of the world. In order to go figuratively to the cross, a man must realize his own shameful deserts.

And man had to become a sinner for Satan's sake. God is also just to His great adversary. He furnishes him with material to give him an opportunity to show what he can do. God lets him have millions of men, great empires, vast resources. Now let him prove that he can build a happy, peaceful world without God, that he can satisfy the craving of men's souls, that he can fill the void within them by what he has to offer. Power and glory, lust and pleasure, education and civilization, anything and everything that can be had, except the One Who alone can fill the human heart. But man would have never been Satan's dupe and tool had he not been estranged from God. That was the necessary preparation for Satan's great demonstration, which he stages in his realm, the earth. Where has his rulership led to? Wars upon wars, sorrows upon sorrows, one form of government and administration of earth's affairs following upon the other. Everyone a failure, everyone ruined by the sin and selfishness of those concerned. And the greatest disappointment for humanity under his leadership seems just ahead, when man proposes to build a better world by his own plans and powers, blind to the fact that a hidden hand works behind the scenes; blind to the fact that Satan's public bankruptcy is almost due, ousted as ruler of this world-system, to usher in the rule of Christ.

And man had to become a sinner for his own sake. If God and Christ need human love and gratitude to satisfy the longings of their hearts, it is the same with him. He needs the unutterable and never-ending joy of

thanking and adoring a Saviour and Redeemer from his former woes. He could not appreciate freedom without having experienced slavery. He would not be able to value God's righteousness, had he not become unrighteous. He could not realize the grace of the cross, had he not been in need of it himself. And, last of all, he could never have been prepared for his station with Christ upon His throne, had he not been deep in the depths of shame and sin and helplessness. Only with this experience behind him will he be fit for the exaltation which God has prepared for him. Without it he might glory in himself. Now he can only glory in Christ, knowing that through His indwelling power alone, will he be counted worthy of this, the highest place in all the universe.

And if we still need more scriptural proof to show us that God made man in order to bring about His crowning revelation to all that He created, let us consider what Paul says in Ephesians 3:8-10: "to bring the evangel of the untraceable riches of Christ . . . that now may be made known to the sovereignties and the authorities among the celestials, through the ecclesia, the multifarious wisdom of God. . ." And how can all the celestial beings, together with the terrestrial and subterranean ones, bow the knee in the name of Jesus (Phil. 2:10), because of His having gone to the cross, if they have no knowledge of this event?

Surely what is written is true: "That which the eye did not perceive, and the ear did not hear, and to which the heart of man did not ascend—whatever God makes ready for those who are loving Him. Yet to us God reveals them through His spirit, for the spirit is searching all, even the depths of God. . . Thus also, that which is of God no one knows, except the spirit of God. Now we obtained, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we may be perceiving that which is being graciously given to us by God . . ." (1 Cor. 2:9-12).