

realization of the fact that there is an invisible world, inhabited by celestial beings who minister God's providence and who are personally interested in our spiritual welfare as children of God, should help us mightily to resist "the tyranny of things." What is needed most in our day and age is simple, childlike faith and trust with respect to "the revealed things" of God. Deut. 29:29.

REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON SEVENTEEN

27. Q. Does God have any creation other than our visible world?
28. Q. Who are the inhabitants of the invisible world?
29. Q. What special reason have we for believing in the existence of angels?
30. Q. Are the angels created beings?
31. Q. What do the scriptures teach regarding angels as to their number?
32. Q. What do the scriptures teach regarding angels as to their rank?
33. Q. What do the scriptures teach regarding angels as to their nature?
34. Q. What do the scriptures teach regarding angels as to their office and work?
35. Q. In what moral state were the angels when God created them?
36. Q. What, then, did God do through the angels?
37. Q. Of what value to us is belief in the angels and their ministry?

Lesson Eighteen

THE NATURE OF SIN

Scripture reading: 1 John 3:1-12.

Scripture To Memorize: "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). "To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (Jas. 4:17).

38. Q. What is sin?
A. Sin is transgression of the law of God.

(1) 1 John 3:4—"Sin is the transgression of the law" (A.V.); "sin is lawlessness" (R.V.). (2) As God is the only Being who is infinitely wise, holy, just and good, it follows that He alone has the necessary attributes for determining what is right, and for distinguishing right from wrong. (3) God's law is the expression of God's will; therefore sin is disobedience to God's will. (4) Crime is transgression of the civil law, which is man-made; sin is transgression of the divine law. (5) Rom. 7:7—"I had not known sin, except through the law; for I had not known coveting, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." The Apostle is writing here with reference to God's law. See Exo. 20:17.

39. Q. What are the two general kinds of sin?

A. Sins of commission, and sins of omission.

40. Q. What are the sins of commission?

A. By sins of commission we mean: wilfully doing the things or indulging in the practices which God has expressly prohibited or denounced.

Rom. 2:8—"unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness," etc. Rom. 13:9—"For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (cf. Exo. 20:1-17). Matt. 5:28—"every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Gal. 5:19-21, "now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of which I forwarn you . . . that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

41. Q. What are the sins of omission?

A. By sins of omission we mean: refusing or neglecting to do the things enjoined upon us by divine authority as essential to our salvation and growth in holiness.

Jas. 4:17—"to him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Matt. 22:37—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Matt. 22:39—"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Acts 16:31—"Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." Matt. 10:32—"Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven." Acts 2:38—"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins." 1 Cor. 11:26—"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come." 1 Cor. 16:2—"Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come." Gal. 5:22, 23—"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law." Heb. 2:3—"how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?"

42. Q. What is the essential principle of sin?

A. The essential principle of sin is selfishness.

(1) No sin was ever committed that was not essentially the choice of self above God. (Explain to the students as follows: You commit sin when you do what you want to do in preference to what God wants you to do; or, when you put your own way of doing things above God's way of doing things. This is a rule to which there is no exception). (2) All the confusion, apostasy, humanism and denominationalism of modern Christendom spring from two sources, viz., refusing to obey the laws which God has made, and in the manner He intended them to be obeyed; and making laws where God hasn't made any, and forcing them upon the church as tests of fellowship. (3) Some philosophers hold that life is made up of contrasts; therefore, they say, evil is necessary to counterbalance good. But this is an evasion rather than an explanation of the problem. To resolve evil into a principle of eternal necessity doesn't explain anything. (4) Many have tried to solve the problem of the origin of evil by denying its existence altogether, as the disciples of Mrs. Eddy attempt to do. But this is contrary

to the known facts of observation and experience. (5) others hold that the seat and source of evil is in the fleshly body. This is erroneous, however, because our bodies are not evil in themselves; rather, they become instruments for evil only when we use them in violation of the laws of God. We should remember that our bodies are, except in most unusual circumstances, subject to control by mind and will. (6) There is no getting around the conclusion that the essential principle of all sin is selfishness, i. e., its source is in the free, voluntary choice of self above God. There is no other rational explanation of evil and its origin. (7) A writer in *Bibliotheca Sacra* says: "Sin is essentially egoism, putting self in God's place. It has four principal characteristics, or manifestations: (a) self-sufficiency, instead of faith; (b) self-will, instead of submission; (c) self-seeking, instead of benevolence; (d) self-righteousness, instead of humility and reverence." (8) The big word in the vocabulary of evil, is Self. Isa. 53:6—"all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way."

43. Q. What does reason teach us about the beginning of sin?

A. It teaches us that the first sin must have been committed by a free moral being who chose his own way in preference to God's way.

(1) By a free moral being, we mean one capable of wilfully putting self above God. (2) To speak of good and evil as influences, principles, concepts, etc., is pure sophistry, for it must be admitted that neither good nor evil could exist separate and part from a person. If sin springs from selfishness, there must first be a self to make the choice which results in sin. In short, there could not be sin without a sinner. And the sum total of good in the universe is the sum total of obedience to the laws of God on the part of all intelligent creatures; while the sum total of evil in the world must be the totality of disobedience to the laws of God on the part of all intelligent creatures. (3) To put it another way: whatever is like God is true and good, and whatever is unlike God is, in proportion to its contrariety, false and evil.

44. Q. But why did not God so constitute His creatures

as to make it impossible for them to sin?

- A. For the reason evidently that not even Omnipotence Himself could achieve the particular end He had in view for His creatures, without having endowed them with free will; and where there is free will there is, in the very nature of the case, the potentiality of sin.

(1) The problem of evil and its origin is the most difficult problem of human life and experience. No solution has ever been proposed from a philosophical point of view that even comes near to an explanation of all the issues involved in the problem. Our own view is that this problem is one, not of philosophy, but of fact; and that God alone can reveal to us the facts in the case. Hence we accept by faith what the Bible intimates and teaches on the subject, and shall continue to do so as long as human wisdom fails to offer a more satisfactory solution. Over and above all the difficulties involved in the problem, however, the following truths stand out clearly. (2) God's eternal purpose is, as we have learned, to ultimately have a holy race. But holiness is the free, voluntary choice of right. It is the choice of God's way above all other ways, and God's way is always right. Before God could have holiness in His creatures therefore, it was necessary that He endow them with free will, or the ability to intelligently and consciously choose the right above the wrong. (3) Had He constituted them incapable of temptation and sin, He would, by the same act, have constituted them incapable of attaining holiness. (4) If you and I, as human beings, were not free to choose between right and wrong, we would no longer be human, and we would no longer be personal beings. Free will is an essential part of personality, in both angels and men. (5) It is also obvious that there is comparatively little virtue in our choosing what God wants us to do when that which God wants us to do is what we ourselves also want to do. The virtue, and corresponding holiness, accrues when we choose to do what God wants us to do in preference to what we want to do ourselves. In the light of this reasoning, although the circumstances of the case are partially obscure to us, temptation becomes a factor in

the development of true holiness. (6) "Could not all sin have been excluded from the world? By assuming man to be a free being, it could not have been avoided, for freedom is always liable to abuse. Therefore, if God decided that man was to be free in some cases to act right or wrong, it necessarily follows that he may act wrong. No Omnipotence could possibly alter this without destroying man's freedom" (Turton, *The Truth of Christianity*, pp. 75-76.)

(7) It seems therefore that God adopted the best possible procedure to attain the end He has in view, in that He supplied His creatures with allsufficient motives and warnings to encourage them in obedience, and left the issues of the case with them. Since God is all-wise, this was to have been expected of Him; for, as we have learned, when we say that God is all-wise, we mean that He knows how to ordain and dispose all things in the best manner to attain His ends. (8) Finally, we should keep in mind that when any free moral being chooses the wrong, he could have chosen the right. In every case, the choice is ours; and, since the choice is ours, ours must also be the responsibility. In the final analysis of the case, sin is in the world because man allows it to stay. Therefore the ultimate responsibility for sin must be borne by the creature and not by the Creator.

45. Q. Why should we strive earnestly to avoid sin?
A. For the following reasons: 1. Because it is an offense against God. 2. Because it separates us from God. 3. Because, in view of God's overwhelming love for us, it is a manifestation of base ingratitude. 4. Because it disfigures the image of God in us. 5. Because it disturbs the peace of our consciences. 6. Because it weakens us physically, morally and spiritually. 7. Because it engenders hatred, strife and chaos in human society. 8. Because it robs us of heirship to eternal life. 9. Because it entails disease, suffering and death in this world. 10. Because it will bring eternal condemnation upon us in the world to come.
46. Q. What should deter us from committing sin?

- A. Two things, viz., 1. the consideration of God's great love for us; and 2. the consideration of sin's certain and tragic consequences both here and hereafter.

John 3:16—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." Rom. 2:4—"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Gal. 6:7—"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Rom. 6:23—"For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON EIGHTEEN

38. Q. What is sin?
 39. Q. What are the two general kinds of sin?
 40. Q. What are the sins of commission?
 41. Q. What are the sins of omission?
 42. Q. What is the essential principle of sin?
 43. Q. What does reason teach us about the beginning of sin?
 44. Q. But why did not God so constitute His creatures as to make it impossible for them to sin?
 45. Q. Why should we strive earnestly to avoid sin?
 46. Q. What should deter us from committing sin?

Lesson Nineteen THE BEGINNING OF SIN

Scripture Reading: John 8:42-47.

Scripture To Memorize: "He that doeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

47. Q. Within what order of beings did sin have its beginning?