
WESTERN WISDOM BIBLE STUDY

Miscellaneous Interpretations

The Forgiveness of Sins; Everlasting Salvation and Damnation; Conversion.

PART I

REFERENCES: Matthew 18:3; 23:14; Mark 3:29; Luke 1:69; 2:30; 22:32; John 4:22; Acts 4:12; 13:26-47; 15:3; 26:1-23; 28:28; Romans 11:11; 13:2; I Corinthians 11:29; Ephesians 1:1-7; Colossians 1:14; Revelation 12:10.

THE *Forgiveness of Sins*.—The inability to believe in the forgiveness of sins has caused many to believe exclusively in the law of cause and effect, as taught in eastern countries under the name of *Karma*. There are also many who think that, because eastern religions teach that law, and the law of rebirth more clearly than the western religion, Christianity, these eastern religions are better and more scientific than the western religion, which teaches as popularly interpreted, that the Christ died for our sins and that, in consequence, belief in Him will bring us forgiveness.

As a matter of fact, however, the Christian teaching also enunciates the doctrine that "as we sow so shall we reap," and thus it teaches both the law of cause and effect and the forgiveness of sins. *Both* of these laws are vitally operative in the unfoldment of humanity, and there are good reasons why the earlier eastern religions have only one part of the *complete teaching which is found in the Christian religion*.

In those early days when the religions of the East were given to humanity,

mankind were still more spiritual in nature than the material beings of the present-day Western World. They knew that we live many lives in different shapes and forms here upon this earth. In the East today they are yet thoroughly imbued with that idea, and as a consequence they are exceedingly indolent. They are more concerned with thoughts of Nirvana—the invisible world—where they may rest in peace and joy, than with taking advantage of their present material resources for advancement. As a consequence, their country is arid and waste, their crops are small and often destroyed by a scorching sun and devastating floods. They suffer famine, they die by millions, but although they teach the law of cause and effect, they seem to be unaware that their miserable conditions are brought about by indolence and indifference to material things. For, naturally, when they have nothing to assimilate in the heaven life between death and a new birth, and as an organ or limb that is disused gradually atrophies, so a country that is not developed by the spirits incarnating therein gradually atrophies and becomes useless as a habitation for mankind. It was necessary to the evolution of humanity to enter this material world and develop all its resources.

Therefore, the Great Leaders have

taken various means to cause us to forget temporarily the spiritual side of our nature. In the West where the pioneers of the human race are found, they commanded marriage outside the family. They gave to the West a religion that did not definitely teach the doctrine of rebirth and the law of cause and effect as means of advancement. They also originated the use of alcohol, with its paralyzing effect upon the spiritual sensibilities of man. By these means we have in the West temporarily forgotten that there is more than one life on earth, and in consequence we apply ourselves with the utmost diligence to making the fullest possible use of what we believe to be our only opportunity here. Therefore, we have developed the West into a veritable garden; we have made for ourselves, *between incarnations*, a land that is exceedingly fertile and rich in the minerals which we need in our various industries, and thus we are conquering the visible material world.

It is evident, however, that the religious side of man's nature must not be entirely neglected, and as Christ, the great Ideal of the Christian religion, had been set before us for imitation, and we could not possibly hope to become Christ-like in one life, which is all that we now have any knowledge of, there must be given us a compensatory doctrine, otherwise we should in despair cease to strive, knowing that it would be futile. Therefore the Western World was taught the doctrine of the forgiveness of sin through the righteousness of Christ Jesus.

It is equally certain, however, that no doctrine which is not a truth in nature could have any uplifting power, and, therefore, there must also be a sound basis behind the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, which seem to vitiate the law of causation. It is this:

When we look about us in the material world, we observe the different phenomena of nature, we meet other people and have various transactions with

them, and all these sights, sounds, and scenes are observed by means of our sense organs. Yet not all, for we are usually exceedingly unobservant of details. It is exasperatingly true when it is said that "we have eyes and see not and ears that hear not." We lose a great deal of experience on that account. Besides, our memory is woefully lacking. While we are able to recall a little, most of our experiences are lost to us because we forget them. Our conscious memory is weak. There is another memory, however. As the ether and the air carry to the photographic plate in a camera the impression of the landscape without, omitting not the slightest detail, so also do the air and the ether which carry impressions from the outside to our sense organs carry into the lungs, and thence to the blood, an actual picture and a record of everything with which we come in contact. Those pictures are stored in the minute seed atom resting in the left ventricle of the heart, and that little atom may be considered the Book of the Recording Angels, where all our deeds are inscribed. Thence it is mirrored in the Reflecting Ether of our vital body.

In the ordinary course of life, man passes into Purgatory at death and expiates the sins inscribed upon that atom. Later he assimilates all the good stored there in the First Heaven, working upon his future environment in the Second Heaven. But a devout person realizes each day his shortcomings and failings. He examines the events of this life daily and prays from a devout heart to be forgiven for sins he has committed. Then the pictures which have recorded the sins of omission and commission fade, and are wiped out of life's record from day to day. For it is not the aim of God or nature to "get even" as it would seem under the law of causation, which decrees an exact retribution for every transgression, as well as a reward or compensation for every good act. It is the aim of God that we should learn

by experience here to do justly and well. When we have realized that we have done wrong and determine to do better, we have learned the lesson, and there is no necessity for *punishing* us.

Thus the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins is an actual fact in nature. If we repent, make restitution and reform, the sins we have repented of, made restitution for and reformed from are forgiven and wiped out of life's record. Otherwise they are eradicated by corresponding pains in Purgatory after death. Thus the doctrine of Karma, or the law of cause and effect as taught in the East, does not fully meet human needs, but the Christian teaching which embodies *both* the law of causation and the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, gives a more complete teaching concerning the method employed by the Great Leaders to instruct us.

Everlasting Salvation and Damnation.—The orthodox religions say that those who have done well in this life are saved, that is to say, they will go to a heaven not very clearly defined, and those who fail to reach this salvation are plunged into a hell of which not very much is known save that it is a place of misery. The good and the bad stay in their respective places, once they have been judged; there is no redemption for lost souls, and no danger of a fall for those once saved.

Such an interpretation is radically wrong, if the Greek dictionary is taken as authority, for obviously the meaning hinges upon the word translated "everlasting." That word is *aionian*, and in the dictionary it is translated to mean "an age, an indefinite period, a lifetime," etc. What, then, is the true meaning of the passage quoted, we may ask ourselves, and in order to find that meaning it will be necessary to take a comprehensive view of life.

In the beginning of manifestation, God, a Great Flame, differentiates a vast number of incipient flames or sparks, *within* Himself, not from Him-

self, for it is an actual fact that "in Him we live and move and have our being." *Nothing can exist outside God.* So within Himself, God differentiates these countless spirits. Each of them is *potentially* divine, each enfolds all His powers as the seed enfolds the plant, but as the seed must be buried in the ground to bring forth the plant, so it is necessary that these divine sparks should be immersed in material vehicles in order that they may learn lessons that can be mastered only in such a separative existence as there is in the world.

The world may be regarded as a training school for the evolving spirits. Some of them started early and applied themselves diligently to the task before them; consequently they progressed rapidly. Others started later and are laggards. They are therefore left behind in the race; but all will ultimately attain the goal of perfection. In consequence of the foregoing fact there are a number of classes of these pilgrim spirits, and before one set, or class of spirits can be moved up another step in evolution it is necessary that they should have attained a certain standard of proficiency. They are *saved* from a lower condition which they have outgrown. Once this measure of efficiency has been acquired, they are promoted into another race, another epoch. But among a large number there are always laggards, and these are *condemned* to stay in the class where they were until they have arrived the stage of growth required for advancement. The plan is similar to the method in which children in a school are promoted into the next higher class *at the yearly examination* if they have attained a certain standard of knowledge; if not, they are condemned to stay behind—*not forever, but only until another year's examination proves that they have qualified.*

The foregoing is not a distorted or a wrong representation of the meaning of

the word *aionian*. It has been used in other places in the Bible in a manner which bears out our contention. For instance, in Paul's letter to Philemon, where he returns to him the slave Onesimus with the words, "Perhaps it was well that you should lose him for a time that he might be given back to you forever." The word "forever" is the same word *aionian* which is translated "everlasting" in connection with damnation and salvation, and it will readily be seen that in this case it can only mean a part of a lifetime, for neither Paul or Philemon, as such, would live forever.

Conversion.—There are conversions and conversions. There is the conversion which takes place in a revival meeting to the beating of drums, the clapping of hands, the singing of gospel hymns, and the insistent calling of the evangelist to "come before it is too late." All these aids to conversion produce an intense hypnotic influence, which works upon the emotional nature of many people in such a way that these "sinners," so called, can no longer remain in their seats, but are *forced* in the most literal sense to obey the command and come forward to "the mourner's bench." That kind of a conversion is usually of very little worth. Revivalists find that it is extremely easy to convert people in this manner. The exasperatingly difficult problem is, as one of them expressed it, "to make it stick," for when the victim of the hypnotic revivalist leaves the meeting, the influence gradually wears off, and sooner or later he relapses into his original attitude. And though these "backsliders" may feel no pang at all when backsliding, the next revival meeting draws them to the mourners' bench again as surely as a magnet draws a needle. They are converted repeatedly and backslide regularly every time there is a revival meeting, to the disgust of the revivalist and the amusement of the community, who are unaware that it is a simple case of mild hypnotism.

There is another conversion, however, always accompanied by planetary influences, and according to the strength of these influences the conversion, or change in the life, will be more or less radical. It then shows that the soul has reached a certain point in its pilgrimage where it feels attraction to the higher life. The immediate cause of conversion may be a sermon, a lecture, or a book, a verse in the Bible, or something in nature, but that is only the physical cause of something which was already a fact spiritually. From that moment the man or the woman will commence to take a new view of life, will lay aside the old vices, will follow new lines of thought and endeavor. It may change his whole attitude toward life and also his environment. In fact, very often a journey has brought him out of the usual environment for the **time being**, to give the proper condition for sowing the new seed.

(To be continued)

PILGRIM'S PETITION

Come into my mind, Most Merciful One,
and make it a tower to rise
from an humble hall with ruined walls
to a meeting place for the Wise.

Come into my soul, Compassionate One,
and make it Thy Lamp of Gold
bearing the Light of Brotherly Love
in service to young and old.

Come into my heart and be its Guest:
Oh, dwell here forever with me.
The earthly coals of my Love will glow
in the Flames of Thy Unity.

Come into my body, direct its growth,
Oh, Heaven's Most Radiant One,
that my life shall be as an arrow sped
from the golden bow of Thy Sun.

—VEDA BURNAUGH COLLINS.