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THE ORIGIN, NATURE, AND DESTINY OF THE SOUL [PART IV]

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THE NATURE OF MAN'S SIN AGAINST GOD

Of all the living beings that dwell on planet Earth, one solitary creature was made “in the image of God” (Genesis 1: 26-27). Mankind was not created in the physical image of God, of course, because God, as a Spirit Being, has no physical image (John 4:24; Luke 24:39; Matthew 16:17). Rather, mankind was fashioned in the spiritual, rational, emotional, and volitional image of God (Ephesians 4:24; John 5:39-40; 7:17; Joshua 24:15; Isaiah 7:15). Humans are superior to all other creatures on Earth. No other living being has been given the faculties, capacities, potential, capabilities, or worth that God instilled in each man and woman. Indeed, humankind is the peak, the pinnacle, the apex of God’s creation. In its lofty position as the zenith of God’s creative genius, mankind was endowed with certain responsibilities. Men and women were to be the stewards of the entire Earth (Genesis 1: 28). They were to glorify God in their daily existence (Isaiah 43:7). And, they were to consider it their “whole duty” to serve the Creator faithfully throughout their brief sojourn on this planet (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Unfortunately, however, as the first man and woman, Adam and Eve used their volitional powers—and the free moral agency based on those powers—to rebel against their Maker. Finite man made some horribly evil choices, and thereafter found himself in the spiritual state designated biblically as “sin.”

The Old Testament not only pictures in vivid fashion the entrance of sin into the world through Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), but also alludes to the ubiquity of sin throughout the human race when it says: “There is no man that sinneth not” (1 Kings 8:46). Throughout its thirty-nine books, the Old Covenant discusses over and over sin’s presence amidst humanity, as well as its destructive consequences. The great prophet Isaiah reminded God’s people:

Behold, Jehovah’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear (Isaiah 59:1-2).

The New Testament is no less clear in its assessment. The apostle John wrote: “Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). Thus, sin is defined as the act of transgressing God’s law. In fact, Paul observed that “where there is no law, neither is there transgression” (Romans 4:15). Had there been no law, there would have been no sin. But God **had** instituted divine law. And mankind freely chose to transgress that law. Paul reaffirmed the Old Testament concept of the universality of sin when he stated that “all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

As a result, mankind’s predicament became serious indeed. Ezekiel lamented: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (18:20a). Once again, the New Testament writers reaffirmed

such a concept. Paul wrote: “Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned” (Romans 5:12). He then added that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Years later, James would write: “But each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death” (James 1:15-16). As a result of mankind’s sin, God placed the curse of death on the human race. While all men and women must die **physically** as a result of Adam and Eve’s sin, each person dies **spiritually** for his or her own sins. Each person is responsible for himself, spiritually speaking. The theological position which states that we inherit the guilt of Adam’s sin is utterly false. We do not inherit the **guilt**; we inherit the **consequences**. In Ezekiel 18:20, the prophet went on to say:

The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

The reality of sin is all around us, and its effects permeate every aspect of our lives. Disease and death were introduced into this world as a direct consequence of man’s sin (Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12). Many features of the Earth’s surface that allow for such tragedies as earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, violent thunderstorms, etc., can be traced

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directly to the Great Flood of Noah's day (which came as the result of man's sin; Genesis 6:5ff.). The communication problems that man experiences, due to the multiplicity of human languages, are traceable to ambitious rebellion on the part of our ancestors (Genesis 11:1-9). Man generally is without the peace of mind for which his heart longs (consider the number of psychiatrists in the Yellow Pages!). Isaiah opined: "They have made them crooked paths; whosoever goeth therein doth not know peace" (59:8; cf. 57:21). By sinning, man created a yawning chasm between himself and God (Isaiah 59:2). In his book, *Created in God's Image*, Anthony Hoekema addressed this chasm when he wrote:

Sin is always related to God and his will. Many people consider what Christians call **sin** mere imperfection—the kind of imperfection that is a normal aspect of human nature. "Nobody's perfect," "everybody makes mistakes," "you're only human," and similar statements express this kind of thinking. Over against this we must insist that, according to Scripture, sin is always a transgression of the law of God.... Sin is therefore fundamentally opposition to God, rebellion against God, which roots in hatred to God.... [T]hough fallen man still bears the image of God, he now functions wrongly as an image-bearer of God. This, in fact, makes sin all the more heinous. Sin is a perverse way of using God-given and God-reflecting powers (1986, pp. 169,171, emp. in orig.).

The well-known British writer, C.S. Lewis, expressed this very fact in a most unforgettable manner via a personal letter to one of his friends when he wrote:

[I]ndeed the only way in which I can make real to myself what theology teaches about the heinousness of sin is to remember that every sin is the distortion of an energy breathed into us.... We poison the wine as He decants it into us; murder a melody He would play with us as the instrument. We caricature the self-portrait He would paint. Hence all sin, whatever else it is, is sacrilege (1966, pp. 71-72).

Unless remedied, this rebellion, this sacrilege, will result in man's being unable to escape what the Son of God Himself called the "judgment of hell" (Matthew 23:33)—the end result of which is eternal separation from God throughout all eternity (Revelation 21:8; 22:18-19).

The key phrase in the above discussion, of course, is **unless remedied**. The question then becomes: Has Heaven provided such a remedy? Thankfully, the answer is "yes." One thing is certain, however. God had no **obligation** to provide a means of salvation for the ungrateful creature that so haughtily turned away from Him, His law, and His beneficence. The Scriptures make this apparent when they discuss the fact that angels sinned (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6), and yet "not to angels doth he give help, but he giveth help to the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:16). The rebellious creatures that once inhabited the heavenly portals were not provided a redemptive plan. But man was! Little wonder, then, that the psalmist was moved to ask: "What is **man**, that thou art mindful of **him**?" (8:4, emp. added).

Why would God go to such great lengths for mankind, when His mercy was not even extended to the angels that once surrounded His throne? Whatever answers may be proffered, there can be little doubt that the Creator's efforts on behalf of sinful man are the direct result of pure love. As a God of love (1 John 4:8), He acted out of a genuine concern, not for His own desires, but rather for those of His creation. And let us be forthright in acknowledging that Jehovah's love for mankind was completely **undeserved**. The Scriptures make it clear that God decided to offer salvation—our "way home"—even though we were ungodly, sinners, and enemies (note the specific use of those terms in Romans 5:6-10). The apostle John rejoiced in the fact that: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us" (1 John 4:10). God's love is universal, and thus not discriminatory in any fashion (John 3:16). He would have all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4)—**if they would be** (John 5:40)—for He is not willing that **any** should perish (2 Peter 3:9). And, further, Deity's love is unquenchable (read Romans 8:35-39 and be thrilled!). Only man's wanton rejection of God's love can put him beyond the practical appropriation of Heaven's offer of mercy and grace.

Did God understand that man would rebel, and stand in eventual need of salvation from the perilous state of his own sinful condition? The Scriptures make it clear that He did. Inspiration speaks of a divine plan set in place even "before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20). After the

initial fall of man, humankind dredged itself deeper and deeper into wickedness. When approximately a century of preaching by the righteous Noah failed to bring mankind back to God, Jehovah sent a global flood to purge the Earth (Genesis 6-8). From the faithful Noah, several generations later, the renowned Abraham descended, and, through him, the Hebrew nation. From that nation, the Messiah—God-incarnate—one day would come.

Some four centuries following Abraham, the Lord, through His servant Moses, gave to the Hebrews the written revelation that came to be known as the Law of Moses. Basically, this law-system had three purposes. First, its intent was to define sin and sharpen Israel's awareness of it. To use Paul's expression in the New Testament, the Law made "sin exceeding sinful" (Romans 7:7,13). Second, the law was designed to show man that he could not save himself via his own effort, or as a result of his own merit. The Law demanded perfect obedience, and since no mere man could keep it perfectly, each stood condemned (Galatians 3:10-11). Thus, the Law underscored the need for a **Savior**—Someone Who could do for us what we were unable to do for ourselves. Third, in harmony with that need, the Old Testament pointed the way toward the coming of the Messiah. He was to be Immanuel—"God with us" (Matthew 1:23). Jehovah left no stone unturned in preparing the world for the coming of the One Who was to save mankind.

One of God's attributes, as expressed within Scripture, is that He is an absolutely **holy** Being (cf. Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8). As such, He simply cannot ignore the fact of sin. The prophet Habakkuk wrote: "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong" (1:13). Yet, another of God's attributes is that He is absolutely **just**. Righteousness and justice are the very foundation of His throne (Psalm 89:14). The irresistible truth arising from the fact that God is both holy and just is **that sin must be punished!** If God were a cold, vengeful Creator (as some infidels wrongly assert), He simply could have banished mankind from His divine presence forever, and that would have been the end of the matter. But the truth is, He is not that kind of God! Our Creator is loving (1 John 4:8), and "rich in mercy" (Ephesians 2:4). When justice is meted out, we **receive what we deserve**. When mercy is ex-

tended, we **do not receive what we deserve**. When grace is bestowed, we **receive what we do not deserve**.

Thus, the problem became: How could a loving, merciful God pardon a wickedly rebellious humanity? Paul addressed this very matter in Romans 3. How could God be just, and yet a justifier of sinful man? The answer: He would find someone to stand in for us—someone to receive **His** retribution, and to bear **our** punishment. That "someone" would be Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He would become a substitutionary sacrifice, and personally would pay the price for human salvation. Paul wrote: "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God

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cally as "sin."*

in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). In one of the most moving tributes ever written to the Son of God, Isaiah summarized the situation as follows:

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.... He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors (53:4-6,12).

Paul reminded the first-century Christians in Rome:

Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:7-8).

Jehovah's intent was to extend grace and mercy freely—on the basis of the redemptive life and death of His Son (Romans 3:24ff.). Though part of the Godhead, Christ took upon Himself the form of a man. He came to Earth as a human being (John 1:1-4,14; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Timothy 3:16), and thus shared our full nature and life-experience. He even was tempted in all points exactly as we are, yet He never yielded to that temptation and sinned (Hebrew 4:15).

There was no happy solution to the justice/mercy dilemma. There was no way by which God could remain just (justice demands that the wages of sin be paid), and yet save His Son from death. Christ was abandoned to the cross so that mercy could be extended to sinners who stood condemned (Galatians 3:10). God could not save sinners by fiat—upon the ground of mere authority alone—without violating His own attribute of divine justice. Paul discussed God's response to this problem in Romans 3:24-26:

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood...for the showing of his righteousness...that he might himself be just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus.

Man's salvation was no arbitrary arrangement. God did not decide merely to consider man a sinner, and then determine to save him upon a principle of mercy. Sin placed man in a state of antagonism toward God. Sinners are condemned because they have violated God's law, and because God's justice cannot permit Him to ignore sin. Sin could be forgiven only as a result of the vicarious death of God's Son. Because sinners are redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, and not because of their own righteousness, they are sanctified by the mercy and grace of God. Our sins were borne by Jesus on the cross. Since Christ was tested, tempted, and tried (Isaiah 28:16), and yet found perfect (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22), He alone could satisfy Heaven's requirement for justice. He

alone could serve as the “propitiation” (i.e., an atoning sacrifice) for our sins. Just as the lamb without blemish that was used in Old Testament sacrifices could be the (temporary) propitiation for the Israelites’ sins, so the “Lamb of God” (John 1:29) could be the (permanent) propitiation for mankind’s sins. In the death of the Lamb of God, divine justice was satisfied; in the gift of Christ, Heaven’s mercy and grace were extended. When humans became the recipients of heaven’s grace, the unfathomable happened. God—our Justifiable Accuser—became our Vindicator. He extended to us His wonderful love, as expressed by His mercy and grace. He paid our debt so that we, like undeserving Barabbas (Matthew 27:26), might be set free. In this fashion, God could be just and, at the same time, Justifier of all who believe in and obey His Son. By refusing to extend mercy to Jesus as He hung on the cross, God was able to extend mercy to mankind—if mankind was willing to submit in obedience to His commands.

THE NECESSITY AND PURPOSE OF PUNISHMENT

But what if God does not exist? Or what if He does, but mankind is **unwilling to submit to Him**? What then? First, of course, if there is no Creator, if everything ultimately springs from natural causes and this life is all there is, what would it matter **how** man acts? If he is merely the last in a long chain of evolutionary accidents, why should his conduct be of any concern at all? The late, eminent evolutionist of Harvard University, George Gaylord Simpson, considered this point and concluded:

Discovery that the universe apart from man or before his coming lacks and lacked any purpose or plan has the inevitable corollary that the workings of the universe cannot provide any automatic, universal, eternal, or absolute ethical criteria of right and wrong (1951, p. 180).

Matter—in and of itself—is impotent to evolve any sense of moral consciousness. If there is no purpose in the Universe, as Simpson and others have asserted, then there is no purpose to morality or ethics. But the concept of a purposeless morality, or a purposeless ethic, is irrational. Unbelief therefore must contend, and, in fact, does contend, that

there is no ultimate standard of moral/ethical truth, and that, at best, morality and ethics are relative and situational. [Morality is the character of being in accord with the principles or standards of right conduct. Ethics generally is viewed as the system or code by which attitudes and actions are determined to be either right or wrong.] That being the case, who could ever suggest (correctly) that someone else’s conduct was “wrong,” or that a man “ought” or “ought not” to do thus and so? The simple fact of the matter is that infidelity cannot explain the origin of morality and ethics. If there is no God, man exists in an environment where “anything goes.” Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky, in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), had one of his characters (Ivan) say that in the absence of God, everything is allowed. French existential philosopher Jean Paul Sartre later wrote:

God certainly had no obligation to provide a means of salvation for the ungrateful creature that so haughtily turned away from Him, His law, and His beneficence.

Everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist, and man is in consequence forlorn, for he cannot find anything to depend upon either within or outside himself.... Nor, on the other hand, if God does not exist, are we provided with any values or commands that could legitimize our behavior (1961, p. 485).

Sartre contended that **whatever** one chooses to do is right, and that value is attached to the choice itself so that “we can never choose evil” (1966, p. 279). Thus, it is impossible to formulate a system of ethics by which one objectively can differentiate “right” from

“wrong.” Agnostic British philosopher Bertrand Russell admitted as much when he wrote in his *Autobiography*:

We feel that the man who brings widespread happiness at the expense of misery to himself is a better man than the man who brings unhappiness to others and happiness to himself. I do not know of any rational ground for this view, or, perhaps, for the somewhat more rational view that whatever the majority desires (called utilitarian hedonism) is preferable to what the minority desires. These are truly ethical problems but I do not know of any way in which they can be solved except by politics or war. All that I can find to say on this subject is that **an ethical opinion can only be defended by an ethical axiom, but, if the axiom is not accepted, there is no way of reaching a rational conclusion** (1969, 3:29, emp. added).

If there is no objective ethical axiom—no moral right or wrong—the concept of violating any kind of “law” becomes ludicrous, and punishment therefore would be futile. If no law or standard has been violated, with what justification may punishment then be enacted? Yet the concepts of moral right or wrong, and ethical obligation, are experienced by all men to a greater or lesser degree. Even though Simpson argued that “man is the result of a purposeless and materialistic process that did not have him in mind,” he was forced to admit that

[G]ood and evil, right and wrong, concepts irrelevant in nature except from the human viewpoint, become **real and pressing features** of the whole cosmos as viewed morally because **morals arise only in man** (1951, p. 179, emp. added).

Some have objected, of course, and suggested that there are serious differences in various cultures regarding what is perceived as right and wrong. Charles Baylis, in an article on “Conscience” in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, mentioned this objection and called attention to such differences as those between conscientious objectors to war versus volunteers, and cannibals versus vegetarians (1967, 1/2:190). This misses the point, however. C.S. Lewis observed that although there may be differences between moralities, those differences have not “amounted to anything like a total difference” (1952, p. 19). They clearly

would not, as Baylis suggested, “differ radically.” As Lewis went on to remark, a totally different morality would consist of something like (to choose just two examples) a country where people were admired for running away from battle, or a person who felt proud for double-crossing those who had been kindest to him. Yet as Thomas C. Mayberry has noted: “There is broad agreement that lying, promise breaking, killing, and so on, are generally wrong” (1970, 154:113). Atheistic philosopher Kai Nielsen even admitted that to inquire, “Is murder evil?” is to ask a self-answering question (1973, p. 16). Why is this the case? In his book, *Does God Exist?*, A.E. Taylor wrote:

But it is an undeniable fact that men do not merely love and procreate, they also hold that there is a difference between right and wrong; there are things which they **ought** to do and other things which they **ought not** to do. Different groups of men, living under different conditions and in different ages, may disagree widely on the question whether a certain thing belongs to the first or the second of these classes. They may draw the line between right and wrong in a different place, but at least they all agree that there is such a line to be drawn (1945, p. 83).

Paul wrote in Romans 2:14-15:

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.

Although the Gentiles (unlike their Jewish counterparts) had no **written** law, they nevertheless had a law—a **moral** law—and they felt an obligation to live up to that law. Their conscience testified in regard to certain moral obligations in agreement with the law—urging them to do right and discouraging them from doing wrong.

But why was this the case? How is it that “morals arise only in man” and thus become “real and pressing features” of the Cosmos? Why did the Gentiles feel an obligation to uphold a certain ethical law? Who, or what, was the source of that law “written in their hearts”? The answer to such questions, of course, can be found only in the acknowl-

edgment that the Creator of the Cosmos and the Author of that ethical law are one and the same—God!

Because of Who He is (Sovereign Creator), and because of what He has done (redeemed sinful man), He has the right to establish the moral/ethical laws that men are to follow, and to establish the punishment for any violation of those laws that might occur. I repeat: If there was no law, then there could be no sin—since where there is no objective standard there can be no right or wrong. If there is no sin, then there is no moral responsibility incumbent upon man. But if no moral responsibility is required of us, why, then, do we find courts and prisons spanning the globe?

*Imagine the
Son of God—
abandoned,
deserted, and
forsaken by His
own Father in
order to pay
the price for
our sins!*

Punishment for infractions of this moral/ethical code, however, can take any one of three forms—preventative, remedial, or retributive. Preventative punishment is a penalty exacted in order to deter others from acting in a similar unlawful fashion (e.g., soldiers who refused to obey a legitimate order from a superior officer being court-martialed). Remedial punishment is intended as a penalty to evoke improvement in the person(s) being punished (e.g., an employer requiring an employee to remain after his shift is over because of being a slacker on the job). Retributive punishment is a penalty meted out because, quite simply, it is deserved (e.g., a student being suspended from school for verbally abusing a teacher).

All three types of punishment are biblical in nature. Preventative punishment was evident in the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira after they lied about their donation to the church (Acts 5; note verse 11: “And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things”). Remedial punishment can be observed in passages like Hebrews 12:6-7, where the writer told the saints:

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not?

Retributive punishment is evident in God’s instructions to Noah after the Flood: “Who-so sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man.” Granted, at times the various types of punishment may (and often do) overlap. Forcing disobedient soldiers to endure a court-martial, and then sending them to prison, not only will have a beneficial effect on others (preventative punishment), but hopefully will deter those who broke the law from ever doing so again (remedial punishment).

In employing retributive punishment, however, God will “pay back” the wicked. Paul, in referring to God’s words in Leviticus 19:18 and Deuteronomy 32:35, reminded the first-century Christians who were undergoing severe persecution: “‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay,’ saith the Lord” (Romans 12:19). In writing his second epistle to the Christians at Thessalonica, Paul assured them that God was just, and that

It is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9).

When the writer of the book of Hebrews cried out, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (10:31), he was attempting to warn us against having to endure the retributive punishment of God. The famous British preacher, Charles H. Spurgeon, once said:

When men talk of a little hell, it is because they think they have only a little sin, and they believe in a little Savior. But when you get a great sense of sin, you want a great Savior, and feel that if you do not have him, you will fall into a great destruction, and suffer a great punishment at the hands of the great God (as quoted in Carter, 1988, p. 36).

Those who suggest that no “good God” ever could condemn people’s souls to eternal punishment obviously have failed to grasp the “great sense of sin” of which Spurgeon spoke. Nor do they understand the horrible price Heaven paid to offer sanctification, justification, and redemption to sinful mankind. As Paul stated the matter in Romans 5:10:

But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

As Jesus hung on the cross dying for sins that He did not commit—in order to pay a debt that He did not owe, and a debt that we could not pay—He raised His voice and implored: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). One writer described Christ’s words as “among the most shocking in Scripture” (Peterson, 1995, p. 214). Why? The word “forsaken” is defined as to “abandon, desert,” and is used here of “being forsaken by God” (Bauer, et al., 1979, p. 215). Imagine the Son of God—abandoned, deserted, and forsaken **by His own Father** in order to pay the price for **our** sins!

Christ suffered the wrath of God so that mankind would not have to endure that wrath. In the Garden of Gethsemane, as Peter drew his sword to defend his Lord, Jesus turned to him and asked: “The cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11). What was this “cup”? And why did it bring such anguish to Christ’s soul? The Old Testament provides the answer. In Jeremiah 25:15ff., the prophet wrote:

For thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, unto me: “Take this cup of the wine of wrath at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee,

to drink it. And they shall drink, and reel to and fro, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them.”

When the evil nations to whom Jeremiah spoke drank of the “cup of God’s wrath,” they were destroyed—never to rise again—because God’s anger at their evil ways was so intense (vss. 26-27). The psalmist referred to the same cup of wrath when he wrote:

But God is the judge: He putteth down one, and lifteth up another. For in the hand of Jehovah there is a cup, and the wine foameth; it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same. Surely the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall drain them, and drink them (75:7-9).

*At the cross, we
stare deeply into the
unfathomable love
of God and see a
Sovereign Who, while
willing to abandon
His own Son,
stubbornly refused
to abandon us.*

Peterson observed in regard to these two passages:

This is the cup from which our holy Savior recoiled. A cup for “all the wicked of the earth” (Ps. 75:8), this cup, full of the wine of God’s wrath (Jer. 25:15), should never have touched Jesus’ sinless hands. That is why he was “overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death” (Matt. 26:38) and prayed three times for the Father to take it away. On the cross the son of God drank to the dregs the cup of God’s wrath for sinners like you and me.... And he did so willingly! (1995, p. 216).

At the cross, we catch a glimpse of the enormity of our sin and its offense to God. Christ—forsaken by His Father—suffered the

retributive punishment that should have been ours. We deserved it; He did not. At the cross, we stare deeply into the vast chasm of human sin, and within it we see nothing but that which is vile and dark. But it is also at the cross where we stare deeply into the mysterious, unfathomable, incomprehensible love of God, and within it see a holy and righteous Sovereign Who, while abandoning and deserting His own Son, stubbornly refused to abandon and desert us. As Peterson went on to say:

Viewed in the light of the Father’s everlasting love for him, Jesus’ cry of abandonment in Matthew 27:46 is almost impossible to understand. **The eternal relations between Father and Son were temporarily interrupted!** The preceding verse hints at this when it tells us that darkness covered the land of Israel from noon until 3 p.m.; **a profound judgment was taking place** (1995, p. 214, emp. added).

Elizabeth Browning set these eternal truths into poignant poetic form when she wrote:

Yea, once Immanuel’s orphaned cry
his universe hath shaken.
It went up single, echoless, “My God,
I am forsaken!”
It went up from the Holy’s lips amid
His lost creation,
That, of the lost, no son should use
those words of desolation.

Once again, I say: Those who claim not to understand how God could send sinful men into eternal punishment simply do not comprehend either the abominable, repulsive nature of man’s rebellious crime against God or the inestimable, unspeakable price Heaven paid to redeem rebellious man from Satan’s clutches. Guy N. Woods wrote:

Those who would palliate the punishment or seek to shorten its duration by pointing to the love, long-suffering, and patience of God, ignore other attributes of deity, and disregard the fact that his goodness is evidenced just as much in his characteristics of justice and truth as in his love and long-suffering. As a matter of fact, love and long-suffering are valid only when the principles of justice and truth are also operative in the divine government. To promise punishment and then to unilaterally cancel it is impossible to One who is not only the God of love but also the God of truth! He will not do so because he cannot do so, and maintain his character. God cannot impeach

his own veracity, since “it is impossible for God to lie.” (Hebrews 6:18.) Were he to cease to be just and truthful, he would cease to be good. The effort to emphasize some of the attributes of the great Jehovah to the neglect of others, or to array some against others, is to compromise the divine character (1985, 127[9]:278).

I must confess that in my most private and contemplative moments, I have reflected on the meaning and seriousness of the moving passage found in Hebrews 10: 28-29.

A man that hath set at nought Moses’ law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses. Of **how much sorer punishment**, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, **who hath trodden under foot the Son of God**, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

And in those same private, contemplative moments, I confess that I also have wondered (viewing this matter from what is, admittedly, a purely human standpoint—as the proud, earthly father of two precious, irreplaceable, sons): If I gave “only” one of my sons’ lives (God had “only” one!) in order to save a wicked wretch who was my enemy in the first place—and that enemy then not only spurned the unique, exquisite, priceless gift of my son’s blood, but mocked the supreme sacrifice that both my son and I had gone to such great lengths to make on his behalf—what kind of retributive punishment would I devise for such a one?

[to be continued]

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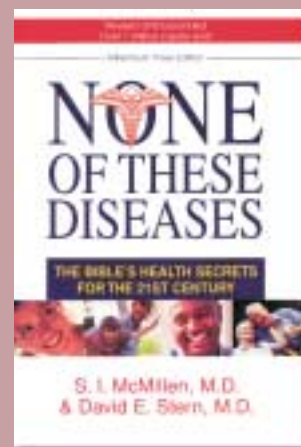
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BAD NEWS—OUT OF PRINT! GOOD NEWS—BACK IN PRINT!

One of the most popular books over the last 35 years was *None of These Diseases*, written in 1963 by the well-known medical doctor, S.I. McMillen. This small-but-powerful volume sold millions of copies, and presented in everyday, practical terms the medical foreknowledge found within the Bible. It dealt with common (and sometimes not-so-common) maladies, and presented biblical insights to, and solutions for, a host of problems that spanned the entire gamut of human existence—from physiological to psychiatric. After Dr. McMillen’s death, his grandson, David E. Stern (who also is a medical doctor), revised the book, and it was republished in 1984. The **bad news** is that, eventually, it went out of print.



The **good news** is that Dr. Stern has just completed a second, even-more-extensive revision of the book, and has put it back in print. In its 285 pages, the 2000 version not only contains fresh, updated information (e.g., on AIDS, the allegation that people are born as homosexuals, etc.), but also has been produced in a larger, easier-to-read format.

We have just received our first shipment of the newly revised book, and wanted to alert our readers to its availability. Cost is \$12.99 (worth every penny, I assure you!). To order by credit card, simply call us at 800/234-8558. Or, you may mail us your order with payment (\$1.51 s/h). This book contains rich, practical material that is great for use in either personal study or teaching situations. It should be in every home—and makes a wonderful gift. BT



Dr. Bert Thompson

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July 21-23	Bankston, AL	(205) 689-4488
July 28-29	Long Beach, MS	(228) 863-0471



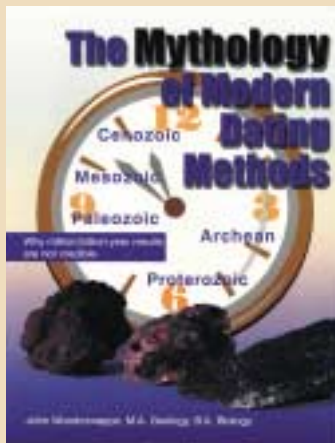
NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

ANNOUNCING: “THE MYTHOLOGY OF MODERN DATING METHODS”

For many Bible believers—young and old alike—one of the most puzzling and problematic topics in the Bible/science arena is the claim by evolutionary scientists that they have “proved” the Earth to be 4.6 billion years old. From cradle to grave, we are exposed to “authoritative” claims, the purpose of which is to reinforce in our minds this so-called “fact” of science. And, to make matters worse, evolutionary scientists delight in presenting a litany of methods (such as radiometric dating, to choose just one example) that, they say, documents beyond reasonable doubt the truthfulness of their conclusions. What is the humble Bible believer to think when accosted by these evolutionary scientists and their “absolute” dating methods?

The fact of the matter is, if most people knew the **real** truth about how these dating methods actually work, the faulty assumptions upon which they are based, and the numerous inconsistencies they produce, they would be insulted at the evolutionists’ brazen suggestion that they, and their dates, should be taken seriously.

Well, now “most people” **can** know the real truth about the dating methods that evolutionists employ to brow-beat people into believing in an ancient Earth. Creationist geologist John Woodmorappe has produced a marvelous volume that explains, and exposes, *The Mythology of Modern Dating Methods* (which, not coincidentally, happens to be the title of his new book). Published in 1999, and containing 11 chapters, this tome is a veritable gold mine of information on how the currently popular evolutionary dating methods work, their built-in limitations, and the frequent discrepant/discordant dates they produce.



Woodmorappe is a careful, serious scholar of the first class. His previous works [e.g., his 206-page, 1993 book, *Studies in Flood Geology*, and his 307-page, 1996 volume, *Noah’s Ark: A Feasibility Study* (the latter of which we carry in our catalog)] are textbook examples of how to write an eminently scholarly,

completely comprehensive, yet thoroughly understandable discussion of whatever topic happens to be under examination. With chapter titles in his latest new book such as “Bogus Arguments for the Overall Validity of Dating Methods” “Malfunctioning Watches,” and “Reliability Criteria,” the reader can judge for himself (or herself) the conclusions to which Woodmorappe has been forced by the data under consideration.

And to answer the question that probably is on your mind as you read this—yes, the book **does** contain some technical material that will appeal to readers who possess an “above average” interest in this subject. However, it also presents easy-to-understand information that is applicable to, and usable by, the “person on the street.” [This would be true especially of high school and college students who routinely are exposed to the diatribes of their evolutionist teachers and professors regarding how science has “proved” the Earth to be billions of years old.]

The book retails at \$12.95, but we are offering it for \$10.95. And while you are ordering, why not purchase a copy of our 1999 book, *The Bible and the Age of the Earth*, as a companion volume (\$4.95; \$1.50 s/h for one book, \$2.25 for both). Together, the two books present stunning facts from both science and the Bible about the **real** age of the Earth.

— Bert Thompson