



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

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What Is Ultimate Reconciliation?

by – A.E. Saxby (1873-1960)

And having made peace through the blood of the cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven (Colossians 1:20).

ALL THINGS

The universal list of these “all things” is expressed in verse 16 of the same chapter.

... All things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers ...

In such things as “thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers,” it is to be noted, are included those currently marshaled against the saints in Ephesians 6:12.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

All things in the two sections of *earth* and *heaven* are to be reconciled, and the reconciliation is to be identical with the nature and extent of the reconciliation of the Colossian saints.

And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight (Colossians 1:21-22).

THE THREE STAGES OF RECONCILIATION

The **first stage** is from the entrance of Adam to that of Christ, each the head of one of the two creations.

One became the foundation of death to all; the other being the source of new life to all (Romans 5:12-21).

*Therefore as by the offense of **one** judgment came unto **all men** to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of **One** the free gift came upon **all men** unto righteousness of life (Romans 5:18, literal [Saxby]).*

Adam was introduced by the Creator in the words, “Let us make man in our image” (Genesis 1:26). This is the far-off perspective of God (Who calls those things which be not as though they were – Romans 4:17) being involved in a pursuit concerning man as a species, of which I Corinthians 15:22-28 foretells. Then comes “*the end*,” of which the Creator foresaw the completion in the beginning.

During this first period, when man went his own way and evil raged, here and there were individuals who were so devoted to attaining that Image that one was designated “*the friend of* ▶

God,” and another, in spite of his failures, was described as “a man after My own heart, who shall fulfill all My will.”

Through the surrender of a woman to the will of God there was introduced into the world the One whose work it would be to effect the reconciliation by His great and wonderful life and death. Animated by the love of His Father He fulfilled the words uttered in after-days by Paul,

When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life (Romans 5:10).

The **second stage** consists of the present age. It was made clear by Jesus Christ Himself that He would eventually draw every member of the human race to Himself (John 12:32). Ultimate Reconciliation teaches that God will fully carry out this purpose – first in the present age, and then in the ages to come.

Ultimate Reconciliation holds that this age is a selective one, and has for its object the formation of a company which will be as a body is to a head in carrying out the other declared purpose of the Word of God: to bring the whole world to Christ, that “*God may be All in all.*”

The history of Christianity in the present age goes to show the truth of its selective character. In the face of the most stupendous assurances of the fulfillment of the Divine undertakings to reach and save all men, huge tracts of the world are still pagan today, and by the admission of experts on the subjects, millions of souls still without the knowledge of the Gospel. Efforts are made by trained theologians to explain these facts, but no adequate reason can be given for the astounding shortfall between the promises of the universal acceptance of the Gospel and the numbers known to be even nominally Christian.

The principal explanation given by ordinary

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the “preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

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theology is that God *wishes* to save all men; that when Paul wrote that “*God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*” there was no more in it than that He *desired* it. If that is so, it has to be granted that, though He has made the effort at tremendous cost to Himself, there are forces so powerful opposing His *wishes* that Satan and man will be successful in alienating a preponderant majority of men from His love, and that these will be under the domination of the devil forever and ever. “If man will not, God cannot,” is the position indicated by one present writer.

The **third stage** is carried out in “*the ages to come.*” It is clear from Scripture that the demarcation between the second and third stage is made by the return of Christ. The order can be found in the climactic passage of I Corinthians 15:22-28.

In approaching the third stage in the work of God to make mankind in His own image we see that in the first stage God did exactly what He said He would do. The express image of Himself in human form emerged from the mass of beings, seeking their own ends, in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4). We see, too, how the plan of a company of saved men and women has been selected out of every kindred and tribe and tongue at present in existence on this globe. May we not then draw the conclusion that, if God has kept His word hitherto, we can rely on Him to finish His plan and keep His promises to the very letter?

THE STAGES AND JUDGMENTS

During the development of these stages there were manifest Divine judgments which always had a dual objective. One was the visitation of penalty on the sins of the individuals comprising the stage then reached. The other was the selection and education of a nucleus, which was to be the seed of the next development. An example of this was that Noah and his family “*found grace in the eyes of the Lord*” when the judgment of

the flood fell on the antediluvian world, from which only eight of the human race emerged for the further development of that first stage.

The present age, which forms the second stage of the process in which God is working out His purpose to make man after His Own image, will be concluded by judgments in which the three divisions into which Paul ranked the world (I Corinthians 10:32) will be involved previous to the millennium.

Thus will God exercise loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth (Jeremiah 9:24), testing every section of His work with Divine judgment before He proceeds to the next phase.

We deal with the remaining judgments and what is retrieved from them in the rest of this article with the order in which they appear in the future Divine program of the ages (eons).

After the Great Tribulation and the Second Coming of Christ there will follow the Millennium, when the Kingdom of Christ will be established on the earth, when “*the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea*” (Habakkuk 2:14).

During that wonderful time “*the Dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan*” will be bound and cast into the “*bottomless pit*” from which at its close he will be “*loosed for a little season.*”

At the close of this strange act of God – which seems to have for its object the testing of the Beloved City, a test through which the latter passes by Divine deliverance – the devil that “*deceived the nations*” into a final rally to his support is cast into the Lake of Fire and brimstone.

In the accompanying scene of the “*dead small and great standing before God,*” because their names are not found written in the book of life ►

they are “cast into the Lake of Fire” where, also at the same time, are cast death and hades.

NEW HEAVEN, NEW EARTH

At this juncture in the vision, John sees a “new heaven and a new earth.” To a growing number of students, among whom are A.T. Pierson, George Soltau, P.G. Parker, and Mr. George Trench, the author of *After the Thousand Years*,¹ the conclusion has been reached that “the new heaven and earth” constitute the final age of the history of mankind, previous to the kingdom of Christ being delivered up to God, even the Father, at “The End” (I Corinthians 15:24).

In studying this vision stress is laid usually upon the questions of the “second death” and the period of “ever and ever.” Ultimate Reconciliation differs radically from the views held by most teachers on these two points. It believes, with the late Dr. G. Campbell Morgan that,

There is no word in the whole book of God corresponding with our “eternal,” which, as commonly used among us, means absolutely without end (*God's Method with Man*, pages 185-156).

In one of the later books that he wrote, he had not changed from this conclusion, when he denied that the judgment scene pictured under the figure of “Sheep and Goats” was “the last judgment,” but expounded it as being “the picture of the initial process of the new administration of earth's affairs,” or the inaugural judgment of the Millennium (*Parables and Metaphors of our Lord*, pages 140-145).

The effort to prove from the book of Revelation the idea, that this famous scholar repudiated, is itself discounted in the *very* book itself. Readers may not be cognizant that the word which forms the basis of the term “for ever and ever” is translated in the *Authorized Version* in several entirely different and opposite meanings. It is

1. *After the Thousand Years* has been republished by Bible Student's Press and is available from StudyShelf.com

given the meaning of *time* by the translation of “age,” (Ephesians 2:7; Colossians 1:26); of *eternity* when translated “for ever” and “everlasting” (II Peter 2:17; II Thessalonians 2:16); while in the translating of that word with “world” (I Timothy 6:17; I Corinthians 2:7), it is applied to something material.

This *confusion in translation* which in any document in any language would quite prevent understanding, does also prevent it particularly in the Bible. It is the Greek word “aion” whose translation in such varied ways causes the confusion of which we are speaking. The rendering of the word “aion” as an eternal period would make both Jesus and Paul declare that eternity comes to an end, in the following passages: Matthew 13:39, where Jesus speaks of the end of “aion;” also in verse 40 and 49 Jesus speaks of the end of “aion,” which word is so often translated “eternity.” Can eternity have an end? The fact is, “aion” means an age of *TIME!* and time can come to an end, whereas eternity cannot. Matthew 28:20 is another passage in which Jesus says, “I will be with you unto the end of the ‘aion.’” Here again eternity comes to an end, if “aion” means forever, as the *Authorized Version* translates.

So the translators incorrectly used the word “world.” This confusion in translation presents the reader of the *Authorized Version* with an obvious absurdity like that in Hebrews 9:26, where we are informed that Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself “in the end of the world,” when everybody knows that the end of the world has not come yet, with Calvary two thousand years ago. The correct translation is “the end of the ages,” which makes sense and can be clearly understood.

Another instance of the confusion caused by the erroneous translation in the *Authorized Version*, is found in Romans 16:25-26, where the same word “aion” is once translated “everlasting” and again translated “since the world began”; whereas “since the world

began” refers to time and “*everlasting*” refers to eternity.

Ultimate Reconciliation holds that the consistent correct translation of the word “*aion*” would remedy every apparent contradiction in the *Authorized Version* and make clear that the New Testament relates what God is doing in human history during the ages of time, of which the end is reached in I Corinthians 15:28. It teaches that, in what is the only statement yet given to us by God of what the two future ages will consist, there is definite and decisive evidence of the fulfillment of the undertaking of God expressed in these words: “*Let us make man in our image.*” We are justified by this statement – together with many other Divine assurances – in our confidence that the end of His work within the scope of the history of man will be so perfect that Deity will be “*satisfied.*”

It is assured by the context in the five times in the book of Revelation where the term “*for ever and ever*” appears, that the correct measurement of time for these passages is literally stated as being “*for the ages of the ages,*” as the Revised Version shows in every case, in the marginal reading.

It is also most clearly proven in the literal translation of Revelation 11:15 which the *Authorized Version* renders, “*Christ will reign for ever and ever.*” That this is a misstatement is shown by reading I Corinthians 15:28, which states, “*Then comes the **end**, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father.*” So that while the substance of the Kingdom is delivered in its completed form into the Father’s hand, its duration in the history of the human race terminates, since all have willingly subjected themselves to the Christ and the Father, and this was the full extent of the work the Father had designed for His Son to accomplish.

In the two instances as found in Revelation 14:9-11 and 20:10 we have the following statements:

If any man worships the beast and his image,

*and receives his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared undiluted in the cup of His wrath, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb, and the smoke of their torment goes up **for ever and ever**, and they have no respite day and night who worship the beast and his image, and if any one receives the mark of its name.*

*And the devil who deceives them was cast into the lake of fire and of brimstone, where are the beast and the false prophet, and they shall be tormented day and night **for ever and ever.***

In these two instances it should be closely observed that in both passages the statement is concerning a **selection** of beings. In the first, only those who worshipped the beast were condemned; while in the other passage the devil and his companions are the parties in question.

In both cases the context reveals that the judgment takes place in a period of time where there is still *day and night*; whereas, in eternity there is no time. Where there is *day and night*, there time is still being reckoned. The duration of this judgment, therefore, is limited to time, and the words “*for ever and ever*” (as in the *Authorized Version*) are erroneous and should read as in the original Greek, “*to ages of ages*” (of time).

Turning to Genesis we learn that “*day and night,*” like seed time and harvest, cold and heat and summer and winter are all evidence of time and last “*while the earth remains*” (Genesis 8:22). With these may be joined the information that the smoke of the evil system of Babylon lasts only also during that period of duration when “*day and night*” are present to witness of the presence of TIME – not eternity.



WHEN THE “DAY AND NIGHT” PERIOD ENDS

The remaining reference to the term “*for ever and ever*” (*Authorized Version*) is found in the fourth and fifth chapters of Revelation. Here we see a *general view of the whole*, so that the doxology of chapter 5:13 closes the happenings following in the period of which these two chapters are the summary.

This doxology shows that there will be *AN END TO JUDGMENTS*, for in the context of I Corinthians 15:22-28 every bit of insubjection will have ended, so also will “*day and night*,” for there is no reference to such.

We have, therefore, the net result of the final ages of judgment and restoration set out in plain language. Here it is:

And every creature, which is in heaven and on the earth and on the sea, and ALL that in them is [not one exception in all of God’s universe] heard I saying, “blessing and honor and glory and power, be unto Him that sits upon the Throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”

Young’s *Literal Translation* of the Bible translates the above passage thus:

Blessing and honor and glory and power IS unto Him that sits upon the throne and unto the Lamb.

After all creation has been brought back into subjection to the Lamb and to God, they become enlightened and see that blessing and honor and glory and power belongs to God and the Lamb, and they now give expression to a fact they had neither understood nor recognized before. The period of time expressed as “*the ages of the ages*” has brought about this transformation.

Every expositor consulted about this passage is content with just quoting it and making no

comment. The only commentator who faces the implication of the passage is Robert Govett in his *Apocalypse Expounded*. Here is his comment, honestly summing up on page 128:

Four regions are specified: four ascriptions of praise ascend. I am unable therefore fully to comprehend **THE UNIVERSALITY HERE STATED.**

It must be concluded that either here is a contradiction to the other statements in Revelation about the term “*the ages of the ages*,” or the final issue of these two ages is the entire subjection and restoration of the wayward human race. Ultimate Reconciliation believes the passage means this, and that the goal of God will be ultimately reached.

THE SECOND DEATH

It is *supposed* by most eschatologists that the Second Death is endless, but *Scripture never says so*. The arguing on this point is curious, but shows the confusion that theology is in on the matter. It is affirmed quite positively that the second death must be eternal because the Bible never says that it is not. On the other hand they affirm that the term “*for ever and ever*” must be correct because the *Authorized Version* says so. Hence negative and positive are both the same in ordinary theology.

Ultimate Reconciliation learns instead that the Second Death is not a place, or an eternal condition, but is a process. It is supported in this view by the fact that those who have a part in the first resurrection do so owing to their being reckoned as “*blessed and holy*.” Therefore the second death has no authority over them, for the reason that they have attained to the “*out-resurrection*,” to which Paul refers in Philippians 3:11-12, that they are exempt from any further experience in the process of the second death.

That it is a process is shown by the warning to the church of Sardis of the possibility of being

“hurt by the second death.” The figure of being “hurt,” when used with regard to the earth and the men on the earth in subsequent chapters, indicates a partial judgment.

The overcomer shall not be hurt of the Second Death, in consequence of his victory; shall not, then, the one so conquered be hurt by it in consequence of his defeat? (Robert Govett).

When the statements are compared, one showing that some believers take part in the first resurrection because the Second Death has no authority any more over them, and the other statement warning of the danger of being “hurt” by the Second Death, it follows that the first group of overcomers must have gone through that process, which those who have not fully overcome will have to face when the time for their test arrives.

If Ultimate Reconciliation is right in its claim that the Second Death is a process, there must be something about it in the rest of the New Testament. Do the writers in it refer to any process subsequent to that of initial salvation?

Is there not an allusion in every epistle to the saints to the necessity of a death to sin? Are such not urged to “work out their own salvation”? Does not “sanctification” in the growth and development of the Christian life follow “justification?” This must be all so patent to the ordinary reader of the New Testament that no stressing of the fact is needed here.

Thus, Ultimate Reconciliation teaches the Second Death to inbred sin and the self life, which remains for treatment and victory in every soul that is truly “saved.” In these scenes of judgment every grade of life comes under the searching light and purging, and we see how “God is a consuming fire,” not to burn the transgressor with unabated fury for evermore, but to bring all that has been created into the perfection of God.

The view that the Second Death is the ultimate means used by God in the process of the restitution of all things is in line with the rest of revelation.

The Bible speaks many times about God’s first and second things, and always sets forth unmistakably the fact that all of God’s second things come in to counteract, and remedy, the fault and imperfections of the first ones (Robert Govett).

In I Corinthians 15:45-47 we read of the first man Adam who brought ruin to us all, and of the “second Man, the Lord from heaven,” who restores to man far more than Adam lost.

If, as every Christian maintains, Christ was made a propitiation for the sins of the whole world there remains the process of working the great fact out in the experience of all those for whom Christ died.

When will God keep His undertaking to Israel and to Sodom and Gomorrah, whom Ezekiel links together in the 16th chapter of his prophecy as fellow sinners, of whom God says Israel has been the worst? He promises both, not only to turn their captivity, to “restore” them, so the Septuagint has it, using the same word that Peter does in his vision of the “Restitution of All Things” in Acts 3, and they shall know that “I am the Lord.”

Further on in Ezekiel’s prophecy a restoration even to service, even in the temple, is guaranteed to the worst of them in the shape of their return to some of their duties in God’s temple (44:10-14).

We may not throw away the truth because perverters of it have dressed it up as scarecrows. Ultimate Reconciliation accepts the amended rendering of II Corinthians 6:2, which substitutes the indefinite article “a” in the place of the definite article “the” quoting thus correctly from the Old Testament in Isaiah 49:8.



Thus says the LORD, "In an acceptable time have I heard you, and in **a** day of salvation have I helped you ..." (Isaiah 49:8).

We come now to the last reference in the book of Revelation, to the Second Death, which Ultimate Reconciliation holds is the crowning evidence that it is part of the process in the Divine order. Unless this is so, then, in the first eight words of the 21st chapter we are faced with a contradiction from the lips of the One who assures us, as He speaks, that His words are "true and faithful." We have here the immutable things, "His counsel and His oath," in which it is "impossible for God to lie." Having expressed His determination to "make **all things new**" there follows the Divine order in which this is done, an order repeated often in the Word.

The exact same order is visible in the closing scene of the ages of human history, ere its glorious consummation is delivered up to the Father in I Corinthians 15:22-28. In that glorious and triumphant close of the Savior's ministry through the ages Christ is the Firstfruits: afterwards at His coming they that are Christ's, and in the third company at the expiration of the two ages of judgment and restoration the residue of mankind. The latter are joined by Christ in a subjection of the same character as His own. There is only one exception, in the person of the One who made the subjection, and to Whom in that wonderful hour a perfected race of humanity will be delivered up. Particularly is it stressed that all enemies – including death, the last enemy – will share in the willing subjection of Christ.

It is plain therefore that in this great ultimatum which will fall from the lips of the Alpha and Omega of mankind in its creation, history and victorious consummation in this last reference to the Second Death, we are not to take the words as an exception to the proclamation of victory, but as the order in which the goal has been reached. Otherwise the statement

constitutes a denial by the Lord of words spoken on His oath.

Here is again first of all the One who is the Beginning and the End. In the second place are the overcomers who inherit these things with Him. Finally the rest of mankind who at last have their part in the experience that brought the overcomers into their earlier participation of rest and triumph.

Is not this Reconciliation (Colossians 1:19-20) for all who have not "now" (Romans 5:11) received the reconciliation, the process that is going on during the judgment? ... Is not this the work of the great third stage described in I Corinthians 15, during which the great third "company" is being formed? During this period the prince of this world is being cast out, and all drawn – by judgment and mercy, graciousness and righteousness – to Christ ... During this period is the subjection of all hostile powers (James Langton Clarke, M.A., *The Eternal Saviour-Judge*, page 91).

So, we close on the same high note with which we began. The Creator visualized His end in the Garden of Eden when He announced His final purpose to which He would work in the ages of human history "Let us make man in our image."

He has assured us with equal certitude that the time will come when He *will* be "All in all." That God may be All in all things – without any interruption, without the intervention of any creature, without the opposition of any enemy – ALL shall be subordinate to God. **This is the end.**

So that God may be everything to everyone (I Corinthians 15:29, *Moffatt's Translation*).

London, 1923

