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Volume XXI
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The Genesis and Exodus of Evil

Sin Entered by Choice, Not Chance; It Will Depart with the Same Certainty

by — Alan Burns (? -1929)

To understand the *genesis* of evil is half way towards understanding its *exodus*. To grasp how it came into the universe is to simplify the understanding of how it will go out. There is obviously a logical relationship between its incoming and its outgoing, for naturally the rationale of its departure from creation will be the reverse of its entrance.

In chemistry the work of analysis is the necessary prelude to the process of synthesis. By reducing a substance into its several chemical elements in their exact proportions, the method of composing that substance is revealed.

Synthetic chemistry is the reversal of analytic experiments. Such statements are nothing more than scientific platitudes; but, simple as they are, they will explain what we mean by saying that the *exodus*

of sin is the reversal of its *genesis*. Spiritual chemistry in its analysis of sin finds it to flow from the divine *absence*, and in its synthesis determines that its departure is consequent upon the divine *presence*. The result of this is to show that if it were God's plan, or part of His plan, for evil to enter any part of His creation, all He would need to do in order to obtain that result would be for Him to withdraw Himself from that part.

We need not pause here to consider the origin of evil on the hypothesis of creation out of nothing. It may be that the naturelessness of such a creation would be considered sufficient ground for the production of sin, the will, or choice of such natureless creatures being like a needle that might turn to any and every point of the compass. The will, or choice, of such essentially *colorless* beings may hardly be called "free." They may be said to have a "lawless" will rather than a "free" will; and the creation of such "beings," absolutely "free" from God, each with the power of absolute choice, or self-determination, reduces creation from being a determined plan and purpose on the part of Deity to nothing more

than a *speculation* on His part. Both heart and head revolt at the suggestion that the creation of man was God's gamble in humanity.

To speak of it, or to consider it, as an *experiment* on His part is to reduce it to the level of

chance, and we cannot speak of God and accident in the same breath. The dice of God are always loaded. Granting that God is the Absolute Ruler of the Universe, then it must have been as much a part of His plan that man should sin, as it was that man should exist. Nor does this make God the source of sin, for, as we shall see, the Infinite *cannot* do so.

**Through all of the mess and through
all of the blundering of human
doings there runs the controlling
activity of God, guiding history
onwards to the grand goal of time. —**

Alan Burns

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This free weekly electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will 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 in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (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 freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

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ABBREVIATION KEY

<u>Scripture Version</u>	Concordance (Knoch)
(Unless otherwise noted all Scripture quotations are taken from the Bible Student's Version).	CL: A Critical Lexicon and Concordance (Bullinger)
CV: Concordant Literal Version	CWS: Complete Word Study Dictionary (Zodhiates)
DAR: Darby Translation	FoS: Figures of Speech (Bullinger)
DT: Dabhar Translation	SEC: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance
FF: Ferrar Fenton Bible	TGL: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon
KJV: King James Version	UR: Unsearchable Riches
RE: Rotterdam's Emphasized Bible	VED: Vine's Expository Dictionary
WT: Weymouth Translation	YAC: Young's Analytical Concordance
YLT: Young's Literal Translation	
<u>Reference Sources</u>	<u>Reference Notations</u>
AA: Analytical Analysis (Welch)	cf. – compare
BDB: Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon	e.g. – for example
CB: Companion Bible Notes & Appendixes (Bullinger)	et al. – and others
CC: Concordant Commentary (Knoch)	etc. – et cetera (and so on)
CKC: Concordant Keyword	ff. – and the following
	i.e., – that is

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EVIL (continued from front page)

God is not lawless, nor is that which He creates lawless. God is bound by the law of His nature, as His creatures are bound by the laws of their natures. His acts reflect His nature: what He does indicates what He is. His acts, His choices, His determinations, are all subject to the law of His Infinite perfection. His choice is not free from the law of His nature.

God, therefore, cannot be said to have “free-will” in the sense in which so many understand that term. God is not free – He cannot sin, for instance, nor can He lie – He cannot deny the truth of His Being. God is bound by the infinite perfections of His glorious nature, a bondage which is His liberty, as it also becomes the means of man's true freedom. Nothing can be free from itself. The nature of a thing is the imperative law of its use, and the nature of a man is the determining law of his activities and attitudes.

We need to enforce this fact of universal law, and more especially as the human will has become a kind of outlaw in creation, absolved, so to speak, from that obedience that all else within it yields. The atom is as much under the physical law of its nature as God is under the moral and spiritual law of His nature. Neither one nor the other may act in self-contradiction.

Mind as well as matter is subject to law. Were it not so, chaos would reign eternally. Everywhere is law in some form, and it ceases to exist only on the frontier of creation. The laws that operate in the physical sphere of creation are merely the shadows of those which control activities in the mental sphere.

NOT FATALISM, BUT AFFECTION

The principal objection to recognizing the universality of law, and as affecting mind as well as matter, controlling the choices of the heart as much as the movements of the bodily members, lies in this: that it seems to endorse the philosophy of Fatalism with its

sorry train of pessimistic thought. When we translate the thought of universal law as being but the absolute control of a God Who is, in essence, Love, and Whose attributes include the crowning glory of Fatherhood, then this objection, with its dread of fatalistic pessimism, disappears. If God does not control each and every part of His creation, if He does not govern the thoughts of men's minds and the activities of their bodies, superintending their desires and their determinations – if He does not do this, how can the inspired Scripture declare that He “*worketh all things after the counsel of His own will?*”

Through all of the mess and through all of the blundering of human doings there runs the controlling activity of God, guiding history onwards to the grand goal of time. Beneath the disorder of earth's affairs there is an order which only the enlightened eye of faith can perceive. Even lawlessness is under its own appointed laws, and from one point of view we may make the certain claim that in the universe

of the God Who is Himself under law, the law of His own perfect Nature, there is no such thing as a bandit force or element.

“FREE” WILL IS LAWLESSNESS

Another objection to the universality of law lies in the dread lest its admission seem to charge God with responsibility for sin, and lest the Holy One be made to appear as if He were the Fountain of all uncleanness. Now God is well able to take care of His own character; He needs no aid from any human apologist. The God of the Scriptures – we should have said – needs no defense. The god of the Creeds needs all of the apologies which men have written and uttered, and more. Let us take the impression which prevails in the average pew that by some means or other sin entered the universe against the divine will. The logic of the situation is this: that if sin could enter contrary to the divine will, how may we know that it may not continue there whether God wills it or not?

Of course, the average pew-holder is at least con- ►

The god of theology is a well-meaning, good-intentioned weakling, whose intentions, however amiable, cannot in every case be carried into effect, and whose universe is a rickety affair subject to accidents of every kind. — Alan Burns

sistent in this, for as **He believes in a God who is too weak to keep sin out of His creation, He also believes that this God is too weak to put it out there-after.** He consequently apologizes for the presence of sin by finding its source in the lawlessness, or as he calls it erroneously, the *freedom* of the human will.

The god of theology is a well-meaning, good-intentioned weakling, whose intentions, however amiable, cannot in every case be carried into effect, and whose universe is a rickety affair subject to accidents of every kind. The salvation which theology offers is based on the principle that man must do the best he can, and the god of that theology is one who can but do the same.

The God of the Scriptures – what a different Being we now contemplate! The All-Ruler; the God Whose goal in creation is nothing less than *Himself*; The God from Whose mighty grip the smallest atom in the universe is not exempt, Who holds all things safely in the hollow of His hand.

The dilemma which puzzles the orthodox thinker is this – given such a God, and allowing endless future torment to be a fact, surely – *surely* – if God is Love the entrance of sin could not have been His *deliberate intention*. Yet if it was not His *intention*, the alternative is that sin got in, in spite of His intention! Obviously, if one would rescue any fragment of the thought of a God of Love from the wreckage of such theology, it can be done only through sacrificing some of the conception of His power, and the only way to keep endless sin in the universe in spite of what God is, is for us to conceive of its coming into the universe as having been in spite of Him, too.

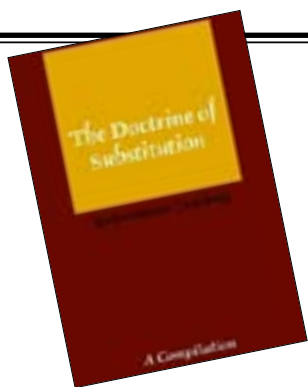
Such well-meant apologies are simply so many slanders of the Almighty. When we learn the scriptural truth that *sin will go out of creation when God wills it*, we also learn the fact that apart from His will it could never have entered therein.

ALL ARE BOUND BY THEIR OWN NATURES

If the reign of law is universal and all-inclusive, then Adam, even before his fall, cannot have been “free” as some imagine. As God Himself is not “free” from the laws of His Being and Nature, so neither was man “free” from his own peculiar laws. Neither God nor Adam was lawless, and as the choices of the Creator were not lawless, so neither were the choices of the creature. This application of law to the will of Adam, with its suggestion that his choices were under the bonds of necessity, compels us to define what we mean by “freedom” as applied to the first man.

We have already seen – what we think is obvious – that neither God, nor man, nor created substance can possess “freedom” in the absolute sense of the word. Nothing can be free from itself, and consequently the activities and choices of God and man are controlled in the most absolute sense of their natures. God is free in the sense that it is He Who binds Himself, because the necessity which directs His activities has its source within.

Man is also free in the sense that in his choices he is free from external *compulsion*. Adam was not compelled to sin *against* his will, or against his wish, Adam sinned because he willed and wanted to sin. If a power greater than his own had *compelled* his tak-



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ing the forbidden fruit, then Adam would have been more sinned against than sinning – but the cause of Adam’s disobedience had its origin within, the impetus towards the transgression having an internal and not an external source.

It is because of the fact that Adam was thus bound by Adam that we affirm that, had God created a thousand Adams instead of one, of the same sort, and under identical conditions, there would have been a thousand falls instead of one, and a thousand ruined worlds.

In the popular view, which considers Adamic freedom in an *absolute* sense, and which involves the idea that he could even free himself from himself, the result of such a test, because of the uncertainty in such freedom, would or could have produced a thousand different varieties of action. May we not again repeat that the will that could produce such lawless results must in itself be *lawless* rather than *free*?

“NATURE” AND ESSENCE ARE DISTINCT

In a being supposedly created out of nothing, the naturelessness of the creature suggests itself as the source of the lawlessness of the creature’s choice. Thus, as we have seen creation out of nothing to be an impossibility, so lawlessness of choice must be considered to be equally impossible. Creation out of nothing appears to be an absolutely necessary preface to the popular definition of freedom. Each fiction is indispensable to the other. Both are in utter opposition to every line of thought that may be called logical.

We may as little think of Adam being mentally and morally lawless as we may attempt thinking of nothing becoming something. It is evident that when Adam was confronted by the alternative of obedience or transgression, that there must have been an impetus, or tendency towards the evil act within. He must have been in some sense *inclined* towards the

course of conduct which he pursued. If Adam was natureless, how could that which was not evil generate a propensity for evil? It would be the natural equivalent for the popular doctrine of creation. If he was naturally disposed to the right, inclined towards good, whence could come the impetus towards denying himself? The theologies flounder amongst these difficulties, which all flow from the false alphabet of creation.

NATURE DEPENDS UPON CONDITIONS

The problem of evil, as it presents itself to the believer in creation-out-of-spirit, is this: How could that which is in essence *good* become *evil*? Can the *nature* of a thing change? Can that which acts in one direction today, act in an opposite direction tomorrow? If spirit in essence is good, how could it ever become evil? If righteous, how could it sin?

This, however, is a problem only in name, for the world of nature and of humanity supplies us with a thousand answers. *The “nature” of a thing is not independent of its conditions.* What anything will do, or how it will act, depends largely upon the circumstances in which it is placed. Subject to intense cold, water becomes a solid. It is its “nature” to become so under such an influence. Subject to intense heat, it assumes the form of vapor. It is its “nature” so to act under such conditions. Its *nature* changes, its “*essence*” never does.

As a solid, under the influence of cold, water becomes heavy and sinks; as a vapor, under the influence of heat, it contradicts its former action and rises. So also with the activities of spirit: in *essence* spirit ever remains unchanged, but its *natures* vary. Finite and separate from Infinite Spirit it is its nature to *sin*, to *err*, to *fall*; united to Infinite Spirit it becomes its nature to reflect the perfections of its Source in goodness, and truth, and love.

SEVERANCE FROM GOD BRINGS SIN AND DEATH; UNION WITH HIM IS LIFE AND HOLINESS

In the condition of “separateness” the creature *must* sin, and when in the condition of “union” he *cannot* sin. The universe *out* of God comes under the disintegrating laws of its condition, and *must* collapse in chaos. The universe *in* God cannot degrade or deteriorate; the law of its condition forbids that possibility.

Let us again resort to God’s great picture-book to find an illustration of what we mean. Take the rose that charms us with its blushing glory: its petals bloom and its perfume is bestowed, because the perfect bloom is in organic union with its hidden parent root. As long as it continues in such unity, so long will it continue to bloom. So long as the root sends up the juices of life to the blossom above, so long will that blossom retain its wondrous beauty. The perfection and the perfume of the rose depend entirely upon the *one-ness* between blossom and root.

In like manner, so long as there is union between God and the universe, so long will the universe display its inherent glories, so long will nature be wonderful, and man be good. The perfection and the righteousness of creation depend upon the unity between it and its infinite Root.

But let us resort to the picture-book again. There comes a time in the history of the rose when the vital juices cease to rise towards the flower, they are withdrawn into the root. As the flow of life decreases so also does the beauty of the blossom droop and fade, until finally, when the flow has entirely ceased, the petals fall asunder shrivelled and dead. In the union with the root, the flower *must* bloom. Severed therefrom, the imperative of life and beauty is exchanged for the imperative of death.

The lesson of its experience to the rose, could it but think, would surely be to note the vital fact that the

root was the source and sustenance of all of its fairness, indispensable and imperative. The lesson of creaturedom’s experience will be similar, expressing the fact that God is the grand *necessity* – the Necessity of Life, and not simply the Luxury of Thought.

Another illustration may be taken from the human body. The body is a *unit*, an organism, the welfare and well-being of each part depending upon its unity with every other part of the organism. United and in perfect accord the law of the body is *health*. Yet let the blood cease to flow in a certain member and the law of health is at once exchanged for the law of sickness and disease. What the blood is to the body, the Spirit of God is to the universe.

The health of the universe depends on His Presence. The world is sick because of His absence, and it will continue in lessening degrees of ill health until the time when God becomes *All in all* and the organic unity of the universe is restored.

Just one more illustration. A pool of water left to itself comes under the law of conditions inherent within it: it *stagnates*. That is what humanity did when left to itself – it stagnated. The cure, of course, is through the river of living water flowing into it; then, united with the higher springs, it becomes renewed and healed.

Each human being is like a little pool of spirit, cut off from unity with the reservoir of Deity. It is only when the life of God again flows into humanity that the stench of human sin will disappear.

So far we have determined that the term “freedom” must not be interpreted as “lawlessness”; but rather that, with men and angels, “freedom” is but a relative term implying the absence of *external* constraint or compulsion. What they chose was *their* choosing and not another’s. What they did was their doing and not another’s – but what they *chose* and what they *did* was because of what they *were*. Their actions and choices were in strict bondage to their natures. Though spirit-born (physically), they were severed

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from their Source, and their *nature* was determined by that condition of *separation*.

**SIN ENTERED BY CHOICE, NOT CHANCE;
IT WILL DEPART WITH THE SAME
CERTAINTY**

It was not through some unfortunate *chance* that Adam fell, nor will it be through some lucky accident that he will be saved.

In parenthesis, we might remark that theologians may talk as they like *about first chances* and *second chances*, but where they say *chance* we are compelled to say CERTAINTY.

Separate from God, man is *certain* of damnation. United to God, man is *certain* of salvation. Were man given a “second chance” of being saved (on the grounds of his separate responsibility) it would inevitably prove the *second certainty* of his damning himself. A million chances under the same circumstances would only be a million certainties of the same result. When God created man we may therefore say that *He did not merely foresee the possibility of sin*, but that the *certainty* of its entrance into the world through His withdrawal of His spirit was no greater than its disappearance, and eradication, when He again makes the universe the temple in which He dwells.

We have learned that, just as naturally as the rose fades when severed from the root, so does man sin when separated from God. Each – both plant and man – is under the law of his being. All of this brings us back to the point that to understand the genesis of evil is to understand its exodus, the mode of its disappearance being the exact reverse of its entrance. Man cannot sin when God lays hold of him, and he cannot but sin when God lets go.

When I hold an article in my hand, and let it go, it *must* fall. Its own weight is the law of its downfall. So with God’s creatures when God, in His wisdom, left them to themselves, they *had* to fall, they could do nothing but fall, they were helpless because of their independence of Him. Yet just as the incoming of sin was the natural outcome of God’s withdrawal from creaturehood, so will the incoming of life and righ-

teousness be the natural fruitage of His invasion of humanity.

The whole problem of evil, so far as its manifest solution is concerned, waits on GOD. He alone has the key which can open the lock of sin.

THE NATURE OF FAITH

The doctrine of creation out of spirit also throws light on the nature of faith. The infant’s confident yearning towards its mother’s breast illustrates what faith means. We may call it the “homing instinct of the soul.”

Man’s spirit – having had its origin in the divine – when under proper conditions, **MUST** exhibit or display the truth of its essence. When water comes under the influence of the sun’s intense heat it of necessity assumes a different form, floating upwards in vapor towards the heavenly attraction. And so when the Holy Spirit works effectually upon the human spirit and when divine truth is presented to the united soul, then faith naturally flows upward from the human spirit to the divine. Faith is the beginning of the spirit’s assertion of its own true nature.

GOD IS NOT A RESPECTER OF PERSONS

In conclusion, we may perhaps best say that if the divine interference is absolutely necessary for the salvation of *any* creature, it must also be necessary for the salvation of **EVERY** creature. The fact that in blessed Sovereignty He *does* thus save *one* of His creatures is conclusive proof that He will also in due time save *all* of them, because if He thus saved *some* and not *others*, a few and not all, then the Scripture which He inspired would be nothing more than a lying mockery and deceit: “*There is no respect of persons with God.*” ■

— *Unsearchable Riches*, vol. 9, pp. 59-70
(*edited & abridged*)

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