

Understanding Human Nature

Sabbath Afternoon, October 8

When consideration is given to man's opportunities for research; how brief his life; how limited his sphere of action; how restricted his vision; how frequent and how great the errors in his conclusions, especially as concerns the events thought to antedate Bible history; how often the supposed deductions of science are revised or cast aside; with what readiness the assumed period of the earth's development is from time to time increased or diminished by millions of years; and how the theories advanced by different scientists conflict with one another,—considering all this, shall we, for the privilege of tracing our descent from germs and mollusks and apes, consent to cast away that statement of Holy Writ, so grand in its simplicity, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him”? Genesis 1:27. Shall we reject that genealogical record,—prouder than any treasured in the courts of kings,—“which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God”? Luke 3:38.

—*Education*, p. 130.

The hand that sustains the worlds in space, the hand that holds in their orderly arrangement and tireless activity all things throughout the universe of God, is the hand that was nailed to the cross for us.

The greatness of God is to us incomprehensible. “The Lord's throne is in heaven” (Psalm 11:4); yet by His Spirit He is everywhere present. He has an intimate knowledge of, and a personal interest in, all the works of His hand.

—*Education*, p. 132.

If men had been willing to receive the truth so plainly stated in the Scriptures concerning the nature of man and the state of the dead, they would see in the claims and manifestations of spiritualism the working of Satan with power and signs and lying wonders. But rather than yield the liberty so agreeable to the carnal heart, and renounce the sins which they love, multitudes close their eyes to the light and walk straight on, regardless of warnings, while Satan weaves his snares about them, and they become his prey. “Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,” therefore “God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” 2 Thessalonians 2:10, 11.

Those who oppose the teachings of spiritualism are assailing, not men alone, but Satan and his angels. They have entered upon a contest against principalities and powers and wicked spirits in high places. Satan will not yield one inch of ground except as he is driven back by the power of heavenly messengers. The people of God should be able to meet him, as did our Saviour, with the words: “It is written.” Satan can quote Scripture now as in the days of Christ, and he will pervert its teachings to sustain his delusions. Those who would stand in this time of peril must understand for themselves the testimony of the Scriptures.

—*The Great Controversy*, p. 559.

Sunday, October 9

“A Living Being”

Physical life is something which each individual received. It is not eternal or immortal; for God, the Lifegiver, takes it again. Man has no control over his life. But the life of Christ was unborrowed. No one can take this life from Him. “I lay it down of myself,” He said. In Him was life, original, unborrowed, underived. This life is not inherent in man. He can possess it only through Christ. He cannot earn it; it is given him as a free gift if he will believe in Christ as his personal Saviour. “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” John 17:3. This is the open fountain of life for the world.

—*Ellen G. White Comments, in The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1130.*

In the creation of man was manifest the agency of a personal God. When God had made man in His image, the human form was perfect in all its arrangements, but it was without life. Then a personal, self-existing God breathed into that form the breath of life, and man became a living, intelligent being. All parts of the human organism were set in action. The heart, the arteries, the veins, the tongue, the hands, the feet, the senses, the faculties of the mind, all began their work, and all were placed under law. Man became a living soul. Through Christ the Word, a personal God created man and endowed him with intelligence and power.

—*The Ministry of Healing, p. 415.*

The soul is through the Lifegiver capable of living through eternal ages, and man is to take special care of the soul which Christ has purchased with His own blood. . . . If the preciousness of the soul has not been appreciated, if its temple courts have been defiled with buyers and sellers, and with committing it to the rule and indwelling of Satan in thought or in feeling, I would in deep earnestness beseech you to make no delay, but come before God in sincere prayer without one moment’s speculation or hesitation, and say, “O Lord, I have opened the door of my heart to Thy worst enemy, and the worst enemy of my soul. I have acted as though I could save my own soul. . . . I dare not trust it with any power but Thine. . . . I lay it at Thy feet. Thou Lamb of God, wash my soul in the blood of the Lamb; clothe it with Thine own garments of purity and righteousness.

—*Lift Him Up, p. 215.*

Monday, October 10

“ ‘The Soul Who Sins Shall Die’ ”

When the voice of God awakes the dead, he will come from the grave with the same appetites and passions, the same likes and dislikes, that he cherished when living. God works no miracle to re-create a man who would not be re-created when he was granted every opportunity and provided with every facility. During his lifetime he took no delight in God, nor found pleasure in His service. His character is not in harmony with God, and he could not be happy in the heavenly family.

—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 270.

Satan told his angels to make a special effort to spread the lie first repeated to Eve in Eden, “Ye shall not surely die.” And as the error was received by the people, and they were led to believe that man was immortal, Satan led them on to believe that the sinner would live in eternal misery. Then the way was prepared for Satan to work through his representatives and hold up God before the people as a revengeful tyrant— one who plunges all those into hell who do not please Him, and causes them ever to feel His wrath; and while they suffer unutterable anguish, and writhe in the eternal flames, He is represented as looking down upon them with satisfaction. Satan knew that if this error should be received, God would be hated by many, instead of being loved and adored; and that many would be led to believe that the threatenings of God’s Word would not be literally fulfilled, for it would be against His character of benevolence and love to plunge into eternal torments the beings whom He had created.

—*Early Writings*, p. 218.

The Word of the living God is to be our guide. Each one is to realize his dependence upon Him, whose he is by creation and by redemption. Read and study the statements made in the sixth chapter of John. Pray for an understanding of these truths. I am alarmed as I see the spiritual weakness of those who have had such great light. Had they walked in this light, they would have been strong in the Lord. But they have not, and those who come into the truth through their efforts look to human beings for wisdom, instead of looking to Jesus Christ, “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9). When those who claim to believe in Christ receive Him by faith, He will be to them their sanctification, their righteousness, and their exceeding great reward.

—*The Upward Look*, p. 181.

Tuesday, October 11

The Spirit Returns to God

God sets before man life and death. He can have his choice. . . . Those who do not choose to accept of the salvation so dearly purchased, must be punished. But I saw that God would not shut them up in hell to endure endless misery, neither will He take them to heaven; for to bring them into the company of the pure and holy would make them exceedingly miserable. But He will destroy them utterly and cause them to be as if they had not been; then His justice will be satisfied. He formed man out of the dust of the earth, and the disobedient and unholy will be consumed by fire and return to dust again. I saw that the benevolence and compassion of God in this matter should lead all to admire His character and to adore His holy name. After the wicked are destroyed from off the earth, all the heavenly host will say, “Amen!”

—*Early Writings*, p. 221.

The nobility of earth are but men; they die, and return to dust; and there is no lasting satisfaction in their praise and honor. But the honor that comes from God is lasting. To be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, is to be entitled to unsearchable riches—treasures of such value that in comparison with them the gold and silver, the gems and precious stones of earth, sink into insignificance. Through Christ we are offered joy unspeakable, an eternal weight of glory. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

We are wanting in simple faith; we need to learn the art of trusting our very best friend. Although we see Him not, Jesus is watching over us with tender compassion; and He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities. No one in his great need ever looked to Him by faith, and was disappointed. . . . The Christian is . . . the happiest man in the world. He feels secure; for he trusts in Jesus, and enjoys His presence. His defense is “of God, which saveth the upright in heart.” Do not defer this matter, but begin . . . to fix your minds more firmly upon Jesus and heavenly things, remembering that by beholding we become changed into the same image. Have courage in God.

—*Lift Him Up*, p. 376.

“If death be the last enemy to be destroyed at the resurrection, we may learn how earnestly believers should long and pray for the second coming of Christ, when this full and final conquest shall be made. . . . This is the day that all believers should long, and hope, and wait for, as being the accomplishment of all the work of their redemption, and all the desires and endeavors of their souls.” “Hasten, O Lord, this blessed day!”. . . Such was the hope of the apostolic church, of the “church in the wilderness,” and of the Reformers.

—*Maranatha*, p. 14.

Wednesday, October 12

“The Dead Know Nothing”

“But, mother,” said I, “do you really believe that the soul sleeps in the grave until the resurrection? Do you think that the Christian, when he dies, does not go immediately to heaven, nor the sinner to hell?”

She answered: “The Bible gives us no proof that there is an eternally burning hell. If there is such a place, it should be mentioned in the Sacred Book.” . . .

It was some months after this conversation before I heard anything further concerning this doctrine; but during this time my mind had been much exercised upon the subject. When I heard it preached, I believed it to be the truth. From the time that light in regard to the sleep of the dead dawned upon my mind, the mystery that had enshrouded the resurrection vanished, and the great event itself assumed a new and sublime importance. . . . If at death the soul entered upon eternal happiness or misery, where was the need of a resurrection of the poor moldering body?

But this new and beautiful faith taught me the reason why inspired writers had dwelt so much upon the resurrection of the body; it was because the entire being was slumbering in the grave. I could now clearly perceive the fallacy of our former position on this question.

—*Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, pp. 49, 50.

Christ became one with humanity, that humanity might become one in spirit and life with Him. By virtue of this union in obedience to the Word of God, His life becomes their life. He says to the penitent, “I am the resurrection, and the life” (John 11:25). Death is looked upon by Christ as sleep—silence, darkness, sleep. He speaks of it as if it were of little moment. “Whosoever liveth and believeth in me,” He says, “shall never die” (John 11:26). “If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death” (John 8:52). “He shall never see death” (John 8:51). And to the believing one, death is but a small matter. With him to die is but to sleep. “Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 302.

Man was originally endowed with noble powers and a well-balanced mind. He was perfect in his being, and in harmony with God. His thoughts were pure, his aims holy. But through disobedience, his powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of love. His nature became so weakened through transgression that it was impossible for him, in his own strength, to resist the power of evil. He was made captive by Satan, and would have remained so forever had not God specially interposed. It was the tempter’s purpose to thwart the divine plan in man’s creation, and fill the earth with woe and desolation. And he would point to all this evil as the result of God’s work in creating man.

—*Steps to Christ*, p. 17.

Thursday, October 13

Resting With the Forefathers

“This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life.” 1 John 5:11, 12. And Jesus said, “I will raise him up at the last day.” Christ became one flesh with us, in order that we might become one spirit with Him. It is by virtue of this union that we are to come forth from the grave,—not merely as a manifestation of the power of Christ, but because, through faith, His life has become ours. Those who see Christ in His true character, and receive Him into the heart, have everlasting life. It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal.

—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 388.

It was not given Elisha to follow his master in a fiery chariot. Upon him the Lord permitted to come a lingering illness. During the long hours of human weakness and suffering his faith laid fast hold on the promises of God, and he beheld ever about him heavenly messengers of comfort and peace. As on the heights of Dothan he had seen the encircling hosts of heaven, the fiery chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof, so now he was conscious of the presence of sympathizing angels, and he was sustained. Throughout his life he had exercised strong faith, and as he had advanced in a knowledge of God’s providences and of His merciful kindness, faith had ripened into an abiding trust in his God, and when death called him he was ready to rest from his labors. . . .

. . . With the psalmist, Elisha could say in all confidence, . . . “As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness.” Psalm 17:15.

—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 263, 264.

The Bible clearly teaches that the dead do not go immediately to heaven. They are represented as sleeping until the resurrection. 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Job 14:10-12. In the very day when the silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl broken (Ecclesiastes 12:6), man’s thoughts perish. They that go down to the grave are in silence. They know no more of anything that is done under the sun. Job 14:21. Blessed rest for the weary righteous! Time, be it long or short, is but a moment to them. They sleep; they are awakened by the trump of God to a glorious immortality. “For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible.” 1 Corinthians 15:52.

As they are called forth from their deep slumber they begin to think just where they ceased. The last sensation was the pang of death; the last thought, that they were falling beneath the power of the grave. When they arise from the tomb, their first glad thought will be echoed in the triumphal shout: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” Verse 55.

—*The Great Controversy*, p. 549.

Friday, October 14

For Further Reading

The Great Controversy, “The First Great Deception,” pp. 531–550;

My Life Today, “Man Created in God’s Image,” p. 126.