



# The Preservation of Identity in the Resurrection

*A Logical and Reasonable Explanation of How the Dead Will be Remembered and Awakened Exactly as They Were!*

[By Dr. John Edgar of Scotland. Reprinted with slight revisions.]

*"But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but [a] bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body" (1 Cor. 15: 35-38).*

WHEN we read these words with unprejudiced minds, we see that the Bible agrees with science in asserting that the body, which disintegrates after death, will not be resurrected. The Scriptures nowhere teach the resurrection of the individual's body; this passage distinctly denies it—"Thou fool ... *thou sowest not that body that shall be.*"

The question is often asked: If the body will not be resurrected, how will the identity be preserved in the resurrection? Must not some part of the old individual be preserved during the interval? What is this seed or bare grain, which, the Apostle says, is sown at death, and will be given a body as it pleases God? Is it not an immaterial something, whatever we may call it, whether soul or spirit, which God preserves and to which He gives a new body in the resurrection? We reply: The soul is the whole sentient being. When the soul or being dies, it goes out of conscious existence. God preserves the memory and character of the individual, not as an immaterial something, but merely as a remembrance. In the resurrection He will impart this memory and character to a new body, thus preserving the identity.

Many profess that they cannot understand how a man's mental, moral and religious characteristics can be preserved unless during the interval between death and the resurrection they have been embodied in some material or spiritual substance. Now this is really the old difficulty which led to the conception of the natural inherent immortality of the soul, and the theory of the disembodied spirits of the dead (both unscriptural). We admit that the subject is difficult for our finite minds to grasp. We cannot understand it completely. By and by, when that which is perfect is come, and when we know even as we are known, doubtless we shall be able to comprehend it clearly. We can, however, understand it to some extent.

## THE PHONOGRAPH ILLUSTRATION

A very satisfactory illustration is that of a phonograph. It is hinted at in Vol. 5 of *Studies in the Scriptures*, p. 404, pars. 5, 6: "But does doubt cry out, How could God in resurrection reproduce the millions of earth completely so that each will know himself and profit by the memory of present life experiences? We answer that in the phonograph record [and in tape recordings] even

man is able to preserve his own words and reproduce them; much more is our Creator able to reproduce for the entire race such brain organisms as will perfectly reproduce every sentiment, thought and experience.

"David seems to refer to the power of God in a manner that might be applicable either prophetically to the resurrection, or reflectively to the first birth. He says: 'I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. ... My substance [organism] was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, being yet imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance [gradually] were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them' (Psa. 139: 14-16)."

To follow out the illustration of the phonograph in detail, we see that the blank record represents our whole physical organism, particularly the brain.

The motive power of the recorder is the mechanism, which therefore represents our spirit or power of life. It is only when there is life in the machine that the record can be made, just as it is only during life that we can write our character on our organism.

The voice spoken into the instrument represents our thoughts, words and actions; and the vibrations of the needle represent the various chemical and other changes, which are necessary for the production of the impressions on our organism.

After the record is finished, it is found to consist of a more or less continuous series of minute wave-like impressions on the surface of the record. These correspond to impressions on our organism, particularly on our brain, caused by our thoughts, words and deeds. While the record proper is the series of wave-like impressions, yet the whole disc is also called a record. So is it with us: our whole being is the soul, yet the soul proper, the essential part of us, is our character.

When we replace the record in the phonograph, make the necessary changes and give life to the instrument by setting it in motion, the speech or song is reproduced with exactness—the same words, the same tone, the same inflections, *etc.*—everything identical with what had been spoken or sung into it.

Suppose the record is now destroyed, no man has power to produce one similar in all respects; but though man has not this power, the Almighty has it. It is possible for God to note and remember the marks on the original record so accurately, that years or even centuries after it has been destroyed He can inscribe them on a new one. He can reproduce the length, breadth, depth and shape of the lines, and their relationship one to another so exactly, that when played on a phonograph, all who hear it would say, "Why, that is the original record!"

That is what God is going to do with every individual, both of the Church and of the world. Each person is writing his own character on his organism, particularly on his brain. Every time he thinks, and especially every time he speaks or acts, he is making an impression on his organism. A thought makes a faint impression, a word makes a deeper impression, and an action makes a

still deeper impression, because "actions speak louder than words." These all go to the making of character. When a thought is often repeated, it is more likely to show itself by word or action; and the more often thoughts, words or actions are repeated, the deeper become the resultant lines of character on our organism, particularly on our brain. By and by these impressions become so deep that we call them *habits*.

## HABITS MAKE CHARACTER

*A man's character may be defined as the sum total of his habits.* When habits are formed, the impressions are made not only on the brain but frequently also on the whole organism. They are shown more or less on his face, in his gait, in the tone of his voice, and in the shake of his hand. When we are introduced to anyone, we form more or less consciously a rough estimate of his character. If he has a frank, honest expression in his eyes and in his whole face and manner, if he has a cheerful ring in his voice, if he gives a warm shake of the hand, we feel that we have met someone whom we can trust. On the other hand, if his eyes are mean and shifty, his smile cynical, his gait sneaking, and his handshake unresponsive, we have the feeling that we should have as little as possible to do with that man. It is not necessary to enter further into details. Sufficient has been said to remind us that a man's character is frequently revealed, to some extent at least, by his general appearance.

But these outward marks, while they are mainly the evidences of corresponding changes in the brain, are, to some extent at least, results of heredity and environment, and are not always a safe index of what is going on within. Hence we cannot always judge a man's character by his appearance; but God looks not so much at the outward appearance (1 Sam. 16: 7) as at the mind and heart, the mental and moral characteristics, evidenced by changes in the brain. He takes note of these changes; and as the Prophet Malachi (Mal. 3: 16) poetically puts it, He writes them all down in His "book of remembrance"—that is to say, He stores them up in His memory. Then when the time comes for the awakening of the dead, no matter how long the interval may have been, even though it may have extended to many centuries, He will reproduce or stamp these characteristics on a new body, just as He might have reproduced the wave-like impressions of a broken record on a new disc. No doubt God could have done this at the first without our requiring to form our own character, but He prefers to deal with us as free and intelligent moral agents.

Thus the identity of every individual in the world will be preserved in the resurrection. Each will remember his past life, just as he now remembers it; and his habits, good and bad, will be the same. Every sentiment, thought and experience will be perfectly reproduced. Thus he will recognize himself. His friends also will recognize him, not so much by his outward appearance as by his habits. You remember how our Lord's followers failed to recognize Him after His resurrection until He revealed Himself by one or another of His habits. Mary mistook Him for a gardener until He said tenderly in the manner so familiar to her, "Mary!" Then, at once recognizing Him, she turned herself and said, "Master!" The two disciples who walked with Him to Emmaus that same day, though their hearts burned within them while He talked with them by the way, failed to recognize Him by His appearance and voice; but when later "he took bread,

and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them," they immediately recognized Him; and then He "vanished out of their sight."

It has been objected that it is degrading God to state that He will store up in His memory any evil deeds. Surely there is some misconception here! Does the objector think that God would become contaminated in any way? The remembrance of the evil does not contaminate God. We know that it does not, because God is holy and cannot be tempted of evil. God is the judge, and it would be impossible for Him to judge aright unless He knew good and evil, and could remember the character of both the righteous and the unrighteous. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccles. 12: 14).

### *DERIVATION OF THE WORD "CHARACTER"*

The word "character," viewed derivatively, is very appropriate. It is a Greek word, meaning, according to Liddell and Scott, (1) an instrument for marking or graving; also, of a person, the engraver; (2) commonly, a mark engraved or impressed, the impress or stamp on coins and seals; also, *the mark or token impressed (as it were) on a person or thing, by which it is known from others*; a distinctive mark, characteristic, character.

### *MARKS ON THE BRAIN*

The brain is composed of two great hemispheres of *white matter* connected with each other at the base and covered over with a thin layer of *gray matter*. As the surface of the brain is thrown into lobes and convolutions by deep and shallow *sulci* (fissures), the resulting area of gray matter on the surface of the brain is very extensive. When extremely thin sections of this gray matter are examined under a powerful microscope, innumerable minute bodies, called neurons or nerve cells, are found crowded together. They are connected by delicate nerve filaments with one another and with all the various regions of the body, and it is these nerve filaments which compose the white matter of the brain. The neurons are supposed by physiologists to govern our thoughts, words and actions, and to be the storehouse of our memory. Possibly, therefore, the neurons, or rather the changes that take place in them, correspond to the wave-like impressions on the surface of the phonograph record.

If that be so, what God will do in the resurrection will be to reproduce a similar set of neurons in the brain of the new body, and the result will be that the old habits of thought, word and action will be restored.

### *"TO EVERY SEED HIS OWN BODY"*

Our God is infinitely loving and wise. "His tender mercies are over all his works" (Psa. 145: 9). He will grant to everyone the right and proper desire of his heart, if he is found worthy. New

Creatures should perseveringly set their affections on things above, and not on things on the earth (Col. 3: 2); for if so, they will receive a heavenly or spiritual body in the resurrection, like that of the last Adam, the great Forerunner and heavenly Lord. But there are grains "of some other" kind (1 Cor. 15: 37). These also will get their proper desire, if found worthy.

There are many who talk about heaven, say they hope to go to heaven, but their heart is not there. Their affections are not spiritual, but earthly. Such persons will be more than satisfied with Paradise restored. It will far exceed the fondest desires of their hearts or their wildest dreams of fancy.

A dear sister in the Truth, while shopping one day, overheard part of a conversation between a clergyman and a lady who were standing beside her at the same counter. It appeared that the lady had been very ill, and the clergyman was sympathizing with her. In the course of the conversation the lady said: "Yes, indeed, I was dangerously ill; it is only by the mercy of God that I'm not in heaven today." Evidently she did not desire to go to heaven. Her affections were centered on earthly things.

Those of mankind who have earthly, fleshly desires will Millennially, if obedient to the great Mediator, be resurrected to the likeness of the first Adam, perfect human beings with full dominion over a perfect earth. When they are awakened from the grave or death state, their bodies will be stamped with exactly the same character as they possessed at the time of their death; for "the eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15: 3), and He is taking note of the character of everyone, both of the Church and of the world. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6: 7). Thus the identity of each individual will be preserved in the resurrection, and everyone will be held responsible for the deeds done in the body.

"And so it has been written, The first Adam became a living soul; the last Adam, a life-giving Spirit. The spiritual, however, was not the first, but the animal [or natural]; afterwards, the spiritual. The first man was from the ground, earthy [of earthly origin]; the second man is from heaven [of heavenly or spiritual origin]. Of what kind the earthy one, such also the earthy ones; and of what kind the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones; and even as *we* bore the likeness of the earthy one, *we shall* also bear the likeness of the heavenly one. And I say this, brethren, because flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; nor shall corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor. 15: 45-50, Diaglott).

New Creatures, who are no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit, because the Spirit of God dwells in them, will receive spiritual or heavenly bodies in the resurrection. "But the natural man [not being consecrated to God] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2: 14). His mind is not spiritual but earthly, therefore in the resurrection he will receive an earthly body like that of the first Adam (1 Cor. 15: 47, 48). "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3: 6).

In the case of the Church, it is the heart's intentions, and the efforts put forth as the outcome of these intentions, that represent the character of the *New Creature*. The imperfections of thought, word and deed, which are not willful but are the result of our organism rendered imperfect through the fall, are covered by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. In the resurrection, therefore, the changes in the neurons due to the imperfections of the flesh will not be reproduced; but those which are the results of the heart's intentions will be stamped on the perfect spiritual body which God will create. In this way the identity of the New Creature will be preserved, but not the identity of the old human nature.

It is as if a trained vocalist were to sing into a phonograph which has been fitted with a faulty disc. The resulting record would be discordant. But God could destroy the faulty disc, make a new one of different material and finer quality, reproduce upon it the wave-like impressions caused by the singer's voice, and ignore the others due to the imperfections of the disc. The result would be a perfect record, which would give forth the beautiful melody exactly as it had been sung into the phonograph.

In the case of the world, however, the various changes in the neurons will be reproduced in the human or natural body, which will be created exactly as they were in the old organism. The result will be an exact reproduction of the character of the individual as it was at the time of his death. Little children who have died before they have had time to form character will have no bad habits to unlearn in the resurrection. This will be to some extent to their advantage, but on the other hand this advantage will be counter-balanced by their lack of the lessons gained by a previous experience of evil. They will require to gain their experience during the Millennium.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARACTER

We see, then, the great importance of forming the right kind of character now. That is the only thing we now have which will be restored to us in the resurrection. When we get this thought, we can realize the worthlessness and transitoriness of all else. Our attention will not be so much on what we shall eat and drink, what clothes we shall wear, how much money we can make, what remedies we should use for our various bodily ailments, *etc.* While these things are necessary in order that we may preserve our health and strength and do more efficient service for the Lord, the Truth and the brethren, the essential thing is the formation of a Christlike character. Our time, energies, *etc.*, should therefore be first and foremost in this direction, for it is God's will that His children "be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8: 29).

That is why Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matt. 6: 33). That is why the Apostle wrote, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3: 8). All the things that the world considers so wonderful and desirable are to be counted as loss and dross to us that we may win Christ's approval.

Are our domestic or business affairs filling our minds? Are we worrying over our balance sheet? If so, let us realize that these and all other earthly things are but secondary. Let us do our duty with regard to these, but let them not fill our minds and hearts. Rather let us say with the Apostle, "This one thing I do" (Phil. 3: 13).

## *DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PHONOGRAPH AND MAN*

Thus the phonograph serves as a good illustration of the method by which God will preserve the identity of each individual in the resurrection. Yet there is a considerable and important difference between a phonograph and a man. The one is merely a mechanical device, the other is a living soul, a sentient being.

(1) The phonograph is altogether the creature of its environment. It has no conscience or moral sense, that is to say, no faculty of discerning right and wrong; and it has no volition. If a person sings into it, it cannot say to itself: "I do not like that song. I do not approve of that sentiment." It cannot rise up and go out in search of more congenial society. In a word, it cannot voluntarily change its environment; and it *must* record everything that is spoken or sung into it, so long as its disc is moving.

Though, like the phonograph, a man is influenced by his environment, he can change it more or less, as he desires. As a rule, he can choose better or worse companions, better or worse books, better or worse modes of life, *etc.* There is a great deal of truth in the old saying "Birds of a feather flock together." If you are godly-minded, the worldly-minded will not desire your company, nor you theirs. If you persist in fellowshiping with worldly people when you can disassociate yourself from them, you will be more or less contaminated. Some of their worldly sentiments will be received by you; for as the Apostle says, "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15: 33).

Suppose you are a member of one of the sectarian denominations in Christendom and you have come to realize that serious errors, like the doctrine of eternal torment, are taught in its creed, and that you are fellowshiping with worldly people, you should disassociate yourself from them. God exhorts us, "Come out from among them"; and "be ye clean, that bear the vessels [teachings] of the LORD" (2 Cor. 6: 17; Isa. 52: 11). And the Apostle urges us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10: 25). Is this a contradiction? No. The Apostle is addressing those who are endeavoring to be like Christ, and exhorting them to meet often one with another, in order to provoke one another to love and to good works, and this the more as they see the day approaching, the day of the Lord—the day of vengeance upon Christendom, the day of the Church's deliverance. If we follow the Apostle's advice, we shall find that the resulting influence upon our minds and hearts will be good.

We cannot, however, altogether avoid contact with the evil that is in the world, and it is not meant by God that we should. Our forefathers, many of them godly men, perceiving the teaching of the Scriptures that the Church is not of the world but separate from it, shut themselves up in

monasteries, but it was in vain. They could not avoid the evil in the world, and it is not God's purpose that His children should withdraw from the world in this fashion. The evil which we cannot avoid we must resist, in the sense that we must not be influenced by it to do or think evil. On the contrary, we must overcome evil with good, for it is to the overcomers that Jesus has promised a share in His Kingdom. This means that the evil influences from without should be used as opportunities for enabling us by the grace of God to form good habits of thought, word and deed, habits of faith, patience, meekness and love. Suppose you had nothing to test your patience, how could you develop this strong quality? We learn obedience through the things we suffer, as did Jesus, our great Forerunner (Heb. 5: 8).

Thus, while the phonograph, so long as its disc is moving, must record all the sounds which come to it from without, we, on the contrary, record on our organisms our own thoughts, words and deeds, and not those of others unless we choose to make them our own. God is permitting each of us to have the freedom of our will, while at the same time He is seeing to it that all things are working together for good to those who love Him, the called according to His purpose (Rom. 8: 28).

Thus one great difference between a phonograph and a human being is that the latter possesses a conscience, the ability to discern what is right and what is wrong, and he has freedom of will to choose between the two, to accept or reject as he desires. The other great difference is that the machine cannot voluntarily obliterate or deepen the marks on its records once they are made. Men, on the contrary, can do this to a greater or lesser extent. In order to understand this, let us consider what is a living soul.

## A LIVING SOUL

The Word of God says: "The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2: 7). When man was formed of the dust of the ground, the elements of the earth, he had all the potentialities of hearing, speech, thought and action; but without the power of life none of these could be put into force. Then God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life—the spirit or power of life. Then, and not until then, man became a living soul. Thus we see that the soul is not the body, nor is it the spirit of life, but it is the whole sentient being, the being which is endowed with sense-perception.

The dominant part of the soul is the will. This is the *ego*, the real person, for in a sense the body is merely the instrument of the will. Yet there can be no will without a body. A man whose brain has been injured cannot tell after his recovery what occurred during the interval of his unconsciousness. This is surely a positive proof that his mind and will are not independent of his organism.

As already mentioned, the gray matter of the brain is the organ of volition and intelligence. It may be mapped out into three areas: (1) an area in the frontal region concerned in cogitation



and volition; (2) a motor or ideo-motor area in the middle above the ears; and (3) a sensory area behind. This distinction, however, is not absolute.

The neurons or nerve cells in these areas are arranged in groups. For instance, the nerve cells which control the *right* side of the body are situated on the *left* side of the brain—the leg area being in the gray matter at the summit of the brain, the arm area lower down on the same (left) side of the brain, and the neck and face area, including the speech, still lower down. What applies to mankind applies also, though in a lesser degree, to all mammals. They also have brains composed of gray and white matter, with neurons and nerve filaments. They also respond to stimuli, are conscious, and can reason to some extent. The arguments put forward in support of the unscriptural doctrine commonly held regarding the nature of the human soul and its supposed inherent immortality, would apply also to the lower animals.

Prof. David Ferrier, a Scottish neurologist, demonstrated the various areas by exposing the brain of a monkey and experimenting with the poles of a battery. (The brain is insensitive to pain.) After some practice he was able, by touching the various points of the motor area in turn, to cause the monkey to perform various actions, such as extending its arm, seizing an apple, conveying it to its mouth, and biting it. From these experiments valuable knowledge has been gained, enabling surgeons to localize the area of the brain affected in many cases of tumor, *etc.*, in human beings.

The filaments which connect the nerve cells with one another and with the various portions of the body, form, when gathered into fine or thick cords, the various nerves. These are classified as sensory nerves, motor nerves, *etc.* The sensory nerves convey impressions from the eye, ear, mouth, skin, and other parts to the respective cells in the sensory area; and from there the impressions are conveyed by connecting filaments, first to the higher intellectual centers, and then, as a rule, to the nerve cells in the motor area. These in turn originate impulses which are transmitted along the motor nerves to the corresponding muscles of the jaw, larynx, arm, leg, or other parts.

For instance, someone raises a stick in front of you. The impression strikes your eyes, and immediately an impulse is transmitted to the visual centers at the back of your brain, enabling you to see what is happening. The message is then conveyed to your intellectual centers, and you recognize the fact that the man is attempting to strike you. Immediately the intellectual centers are thrown into a great commotion. They flash a message along to both your arm centers; these in turn transmit impulses to the muscles of your arms, with the result that your left arm is raised to protect yourself, and your right arm attempts to seize your opponent's arm or the stick. At the same time, a message is flashed along to your speech center, and it in turn transmits impulses to the muscles of your throat and mouth, with the result that you call out "Stop." A complicated process, and yet it is all done in a second! Truly we are fearfully and wonderfully made!

## HOW HABITS ARE FORMED

At first the interval between the perception of some particular sensation and the action which results is of an appreciable duration; but the more frequently the same thoughts, words and actions follow upon the perception of a certain sensation or set of sensations, the shorter becomes the interval, until finally it is quite inappreciable. No conscious effort of the will is now required; the action has become more or less automatic, and a habit has been acquired.

How can we explain this? It may be that, just as the electric current flows much more readily through a thick wire than through a thin one, so the filaments which connect certain sensory cells with certain intellectual and motor cells may, from frequent use, become thicker and more active, and the cells themselves also may become more efficient, with the result that a conscious effort is no longer required.

## PHYSICAL HABITS

This may be illustrated by showing how a physical habit is formed. When a person begins to learn how to ride a bicycle, he is told that whenever the machine becomes inclined to one side he should at once turn the front wheel to the same side in order to save himself from falling. Yet no sooner is he mounted on the bicycle and left to his own resources than he finds himself sprawling on the ground. Why is this? His sensory cells warned him correctly when the bicycle became inclined to the side; but at this stage of his training, it is necessary for him to make a distinct conscious effort in order to pass the message on to the motor cells that govern the arm muscles. Before he has even thought of turning the front wheel to the side, he is on the ground.

After he has had a few falls, however, the painful experience teaches him to think more quickly and more definitely; and the next time he mounts the bicycle and feels it becoming inclined to one side, he at once turns the front wheel to the same side. But he has not yet learned how far to turn it; and as a result he turns it too far, and down he goes again. If he perseveres in further practice, extending over several days perhaps, he will be able to ride the bicycle, though he will take the breadth of the road while doing so. But before he has gone far, his nerve cells will become fatigued, and again he will fall. With more patience, more perseverance, he will find by and by to his joy that he can ride for miles with only an occasional wobble.

When he becomes an expert rider, how different is the action! How gracefully he glides along! With what perfect equilibrium! How accurately he chooses his path among the stones and between the ruts! And yet he scarcely requires to think of what he is doing! He engages in an animated conversation with his neighbor, or he admires the surrounding scenery, without so much as a wobble. Why is this? It is because those sensory and motor centers which have to do with the keeping of his equilibrium on a bicycle are so efficient and so well connected with each other by active intercommunicating filaments, that the effort of the will is no longer or scarcely at all necessary. The action has become automatic, and a habit has become acquired. This is how habits are formed.

The illustration just given demonstrates the method of acquiring physical habits; but the process necessary to the formation of mental, moral and religious habits (which are so much more important because they constitute the character and therefore the most important part of the identity of the individual) is essentially similar in kind. Surely, then, if a man, in his efforts to master the art of cycling, is willing to face the smiles and gibes of friends and strangers, and to submit to the pain and ignominy occasioned by frequent falls, and if he can persevere in spite of these and all other forms of discouragement until he has crowned his efforts with success, how much greater reason have we for laying aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, so that we may run with patience (patient endurance) the race that is set before us! In this endeavor we shall be greatly helped by reflecting on the faith of the Ancient Worthies and by looking to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and, as a result, is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12: 1, 2).

### MENTAL AND MORAL HABITS

The more often certain thoughts, words and actions follow upon certain sensations or sets of sensations, the more easily are they evoked. At first a conscious effort is necessary; but with long practice they become more or less automatic, and a mental or moral habit, good or bad, has been acquired. For instance, having consulted the Word of Counsel, which our Heavenly Father has granted us, and having found there the proverb that "a soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15: 1), and the injunction that we should bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us (Matt. 5: 44), suppose we resolve that by the grace of God we shall endeavor to follow the good advice thus given us. It will not be long before our resolution will be put to the test. Possibly on the same day someone will curse us, not as a rule in the sense of uttering an oath against us; but he will attempt, wittingly or unwittingly, to injure our good name. At once we feel annoyed and excited; and before we have had time to think, we give a sharp answer in return. Then what a feeling of shame comes over us! We recognize that we have returned evil for evil, and confessing our sin to our Heavenly Father, we pray for His forgiveness through the merit of our dear Lord's death on our behalf, and we beseech Him for continued favor in our further endeavors after righteousness. Realizing that our fall was due to the fact that our brain has been all along more accustomed to obey evil thoughts than good thoughts, and that we were thinking more of self than of God, we make an endeavor to "bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" and to think only of such things as are true, honorable, just, pure, loving, and of good report (2 Cor. 10: 5; Phil. 4: 8), and to turn to the Lord for grace and strength in every time of need.

If we persevere in spite of failures, we shall find by and by that we shall be able to suffer insults patiently, and to return good for evil. At first we shall do it awkwardly, so that sometimes we shall wonder whether it would not have been better simply to have taken no notice of the one who is using us despitefully; but if we continue to practice, we shall find that it will become easier

and easier to be meek, gentle, and kind to others, until at length we shall acquire the habit of lovingkindness; and then without much, if any, conscious effort, we shall bless them that curse us and do good to them that hate us.

One thing which will help us greatly in our efforts to love our enemies is the knowledge that God is the great First Cause, and that our enemies, the secondary causes, could not say or do anything against us without His permission. Everything that God does is for a wise and loving purpose. Therefore, when God permits anyone to insult us or injure our good name, it must be for our good. What good, you ask, could such an action do to us? The good it does is that it enables us to mortify the deeds of the flesh, to deny self, and to develop faith, meekness, self-control, patience, peace and love.

The old mind will demand justice, but the new mind will keep the body under, and love will eventually triumph. Instead of harming us, those who speak or do evil against us are conferring a benefit upon us. The promise of a share with Christ in His Kingdom is to those who not only believe on Christ, but also suffer for His sake, and who overcome evil with good. How can we be overcomers if our Heavenly Father does not permit us to be tempted? Let us, therefore, dear brethren, "glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed: because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5: 3-5.)

This does not mean that we should put others to the test in order that they may be benefited spiritually. Did not our Lord say, "It must needs be that offences [causes of stumbling] come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh"? Let us, therefore, beware lest we should put a stumbling-block before any of Christ's little ones. It would be better for a millstone to be hung around one's neck and for him to be drowned in the depth of the sea than for him to stumble one of Christ's little ones (Matt. 18: 6, 7).

It is always easier to acquire bad habits than good habits. Bad habits are more pleasing to the flesh; they have their basis in selfishness. Good habits, on the other hand, have their basis in love for God and righteousness, and require self-renunciation. Another reason why it is easier to form bad habits is that our organisms are all imperfect through the fall. "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3: 10).

The only human beings who have possessed perfect human organisms were Adam and Jesus. Adam disobeyed God. When he perceived that the one whom he loved so much had taken the forbidden fruit, he resolved to die with her and partook of it also. He should have had more faith in and love for God. Thus he evidenced not only lack of faith, but also self-will or self-love. His record became faulty; the character-tones which proceeded from it became harsh and discordant. As all of God's works are perfect, He was obliged by His love, no less than by His justice, to destroy Adam, and to condemn the whole race, imperfect through heredity, to the same fate.

Jesus, on the other hand, obeyed God in every respect. He evidenced faith, meekness, kindness, longsuffering, patience, love, *etc.* The resulting record gave a beautiful harmony, and

demonstrated that He was entitled to eternal life. His continual delight was to do His Father's will. In obedience to this will He humbled Himself to death, even the death of the cross; wherefore He has been highly exalted and given a name above every name. "Oh how sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear!" He is "the chiefest among ten thousand," "the altogether lovely One."

How different it is with us! When as little children we began to think, speak and act, we demonstrated the truth of the saying, "The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jer. 31: 29). Many of the notes which we produced from the beginning were grating, harsh and discordant, such as the notes of pride, impatience, anger, spite, envy, *etc.* You have all seen little children, when their toys are taken from them, cry with anger and perhaps endeavor to strike you. These various traits became accentuated as we grew older, with the result that when we reached years of discretion we found that the lines of our character were already deeply impressed on our organism, and that we had acquired many evil habits. We now find it extremely difficult, in some cases impossible, to eradicate these lines. There is a hint here to parents: fathers and mothers can do much by judicious training, keeping in check the natural bad qualities possessed by their children, and fostering the good qualities. On the other hand, each child has its own natural disposition and its own will, so that however judicious the training, parents are frequently disappointed with the result.

There are two antagonistic spirits underlying every thought, word and action; one mind or disposition is evil, and the other holy. If our thoughts, words and actions are the result of an evil spirit or mind, an evil disposition, the resulting notes are harsh and discordant; but if they spring from a holy spirit or mind, the spirit of truth and love, the resulting notes are sweet and harmonious. These two spirits are like the positive and negative poles of a magnet; they are antagonistic the one to the other. The evil spirit is the spirit of Satan, the spirit of pride, unbelief, selfishness, anger, envy, strife, backbiting and slander. The holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and of Christ, the spirit of humility, faith, love, self-control, patience, generosity, peace, kindness and self-sacrifice. The only ones who can receive the holy Spirit are the followers of Christ. By it they gradually obliterate the lines of pride, and slowly, painfully substitute the lines of humility. For the lines of unbelief they substitute the lines of faith; for the lines of impatience, the lines of patience; for the lines of covetousness, the lines of generosity, *etc.*

We must remember, however, that though God expects progress, He does not expect perfection in the flesh. It is in Christ the Beloved that we are accepted. If it had been possible for anyone to be perfect in the flesh, Jesus would not have died for us.

When we have formed the right lines of character, so far as is possible, on our organism, God will give us in the resurrection, as has been already explained, a new body with the lines of character that we have developed impressed upon it; but the spirit body will not have any of the imperfections which are due to the fall. Thus our identity will be preserved. We shall know ourselves, and we shall know one another. May we all be faithful to our vow of consecration, so that we may in the resurrection receive the honor of bearing the image of our precious Lord and Savior, to the glory of our dear Heavenly Father! Amen.

## RESURRECTION MORN

*Many sleep, but not for ever;  
There will be a glorious dawn;  
We shall meet to part, no, never,  
On the resurrection morn.  
From the deepest caves of ocean,  
From the desert and the plain,  
From the valley and the mountain,  
Countless throngs shall rise again*

*When we see a precious blossom,  
That we tended with such care,  
Rudely taken from our bosom,  
How our aching hearts despair!  
Round its little grave we linger  
Till the setting sun is low,  
Feeling all our hopes have perished  
With the flower we cherished so*

*Yes, they sleep, but not forever,  
In the lone and silent grave;  
Blessed promise! they shall waken  
Jesus died the lost to save.  
In the dawning of the morning,  
When this troubled night is o'er  
All these buds in beauty blooming  
We'll rejoice to see once more.*