TWO VIEWS OF HELL THAT ARE WIDELY OPPOSED

Editor Missoulian: I take my pen in hand to say a word on Mr. Lowry and some of his would-be critics. I cannot say that I have read all that he has said but one sermon satisfied me that he was a true child of God and that I could extend unto him the right hand of fellowship and wish him God-speed in his work. Then I would say emphatically that I am not sat down to villify anyone personally, but as to the principle of those who sit in the chair of the scoffer, my Teacher says "Cast not your pearls before swine." I simply repeat. Then I would say that the scoffer ranks amongst the meanest specimens of humanity. Peter says, "Knowing this first," as if he held this to be one of the worst specimens of spleen, could be uttered by mankind, and he also saw this to be one of the leading indications of the ending of this dispensation. I would say I am a full-fledged premillenarian and shall stand by all that follows, considering that thought: "Woe to the man who sits in the chair of the scoffer, whose influence may be the means of bringing thousands into misery who might curse their ringleader through all eternity." I can not believe that the world could be much worse than at the present. The Word of God says: "Therefore rejoice ye heavens and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea for the devil is come down unto you having great wrath because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." What a fearful state of folly the world is indulging in today, the frivolities of life were never so rampant as at the present; well might the Christians of the world now indorse the words Lot who grieved his righteous soul from day to day, in witnessing the wickedness of Sodom. I started out to show my opinion of the scoffer backed by the Word of God. Now I will endeavor to set forth, many it may be, of the secondary evils of the day, leading up to the closing scenes of this dispensation, and would say that I will not attempt to give chapter, book and verse but would refer to Paul's saying of the Bereans that they were a noble people in that they searched the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Now, I will take under notice a few of the many evils that is enumerated in holy writ prior to the final consummation. Many shall run to and fro, knowledge shall be increased, and the Word says the world by wisdom knew not God. Well, what a running to and fro is being done at present. About the first thing you will hear when on returning from such a pastime "What a grand time we had." Would Jesus indorse your good time? He would if ye had drawn sweet communion from Him. Take the woman who touched the hem of His garment. He turned and said, "Who touched me?" for he knew that virtue had gone out of Him. Then if Jesus could not indorse the good time, certainly the devil could; there are only these two masters to claim us, God and mammon. Now I am not writing to please anyone or use personalities on this or that churchism. Thus saith the Lord "Are all things to me. I am ever on the alert to discover error." That hymn "Nearer My God to Thee" fills the heart of any Christian, but what follows is a fraud. The woman who composed it was a Universalist, and how well she evades any reference to Jesus. Now anyone who strives to climb up any other way is a thief and a robber. Give me "Rock of Ages." I am making a few sketches so as to arrive at a point. I am a true veteran, like John Knox, who said he never feared the face of clay. He was summoned into the presence of Mary, queen of Scotland, a Catholic, and had so offended her, that she burst into tears and some of those present reprimanded him for his unmanly treatment. He said, if her tears were for her soul's salvation, he would be much pleased. Children obey your parents, which is most fearfully disobeyed in these United States, which has been commented on by many. I read a good many years ago of a boy who posed as being the president of these United States. Some one asked him how he could lay claim to holding such a position; he said, I rule my mother and my mother rules my father, hence I am president. Then let us take a glance at the women of today. Paul says in like manner also that women adorn themselves "in modest apparel with shame facedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair of gold or pearls or costly array but which be-What a terrible departure from such cometh women professing Godliness." teaching! Now let us see by his teaching where the opposite sex stands and brethren I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk and not with meat for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. He says, "Quit you like men, be strong," and Paul could feed with strong meat. Read the ninth of Romans. I have given a few comments on scoffers and those who are out of the way, establishing my confidence that we are amid the closing scenes of this disposition and to those who would scoff at these sayings, the reply is "Ye hypocrites, well could ye discern the face of the sky but could ye not discern the signs of the times." Now hades, sheol, hell, all mean the same. A mighty angel comes down from heaven having a little book open and sets his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the earth and says that there should be time no longer. Now this closes what is called the former time, and former things have passed away; all the wicked who have been on the earth until this the time of the end, have been consigned to their graves, hell, hades, sheol, all meaning the same thing. When man fell, it is said, cursed is the earth for man's sake. Now man's first baptism is water, so with the earth, the flood; the second baptism of man is the Holy Spirit and fire. Now here at this point we are arrived at the baptism of the earth by fire. Now this great and dreadful day of the Lord winds up everything concerning the wicked; they are as if they had never been for a thousand years. From this baptism of the earth satan is laid hold on by an angel having a great chain in his hand and bound and cast him into the bottomless pit and set a seal upon him that he should deceive the nations no more for a thousand years and when the thousand years are expired he and the wicked comes upon the breadth of the earth which is the second resurrection. Now I would turn to this fearful conflagration that is to overtake the earth which will become a seething mass of fire and brimstone; take away some of the component parts from iron and water and they will burn as tinder, hence the lake of fire and brimstone; not a single particle will remain on the face of the earth to show that ever a human being abode there; the prophet says, "For behold I create new heavens and a new earth and the former shall not be remembered or come into mind." Not a human being but Noah and his family beheld this earth after the flood and none but the blood-bought children, the redeemed of the Lord, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, shall be permitted to dwell in this paradise restored. This, then, becomes the only heaven taught in the Bible; out of the ruins and ashes of this earth comes forth a pure and perfect heaven where the Bridegroom and the Bride shall be for at least a thousand years and when the thousand years are expired He gives up the kingdom to God, the Father, that He may be all and in all, and whether the Lord and His bride will make this restored earth further as their home, is not mentioned. Sufficient the statement, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord, and those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." Where bring from, "heaven," for it says the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, some favored place twixt heaven and earth, as possibly Paul in vision saw as paradise. I take it to comprehend two meanings, the righteous, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, goes up to meet the Bridegroom, to a place of safety to witness the burning earth and the subjugation of the devil and his followers; then the other thought, those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him to this favored place to honor the grandest nuptials ever performed. Peter says nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; the Lord will come down with His spouse to this renewed earth or heaven, as it will be if Jesus reigns there. There has been four universal kingdoms on earth and the fifth is to be the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. All on earth, spoken by Daniel, all shall come down from the marriage ceremony to be seated with the Bridegroom at the festal board, the marriage supper of the Lamb. It says blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, which is the first feast in this heavenly home, which will be a home of sense, but not of sensuality; "but I say unto you I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it with you in My Father's kingdom." Thus is shown that they will eat and drink in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ; except ye be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven; see a little child in the arms of its mother and one approacheth it with outstretched arms to take it from its mother, it will turn itself away as if to bury itself in her bosom; so with the child of God. Cleave to the Lord Jesus. "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples whom Jesus loved." There is the spot to find salvation and like the unfortunate woman take no refusal until He bless us. Now I will give a brief statement of my own experience when I joined the church of my Fathers, the old church; there was no free church then and was a member in full standing for 14 years and never missed a communion season; one day I went to a church, the free church, and about the closing of the service something got hold of me and I spoke for four hours and when I came out of that state I was completely turned out of myself. Before, I accosted preachers that God would be unrighteous to create me to be damned but then He took every prop of self from under me and what I discovered I was then taught was not from man nor through man, nor by man, and I have come to learn since that the great Chalmers of Scotland preached with his great eloquence 11 years before he was converted. The Apostle Paul was going on an evil mission and was converted in a moment. I would say read the valley of dry bones thirty-seventh of Ezekiel. I will close by giving the experience of and old Indian chief. Some asked him how he came to be such a good Christian; said he, "I made a circle of tinder and put fire to it all around and put a worm inside the circle and it went round and round the circle trying to get out, but could not; finally it went to the center and coiled itself up to die. I took it out and placed it on a safe spot. He said that was what Jesus did for him—snatched him as a brand from the burning.

WILLIAM JAMIESON.

The Agnostic View.

Editor Missoulian: Permit me through the columns of your valuable journal to make a few criticisms and publish a few thoughts concerning the Christian religion. This is an age of inquiry, investigation and discovery; it is also an epoch marked by the greatest inventions of all time. And whether the religion of the lowly Nazarene is true or false is a problem fraught with the most momentous consequences. Now the New Testament is founded and built upon the old and if we find by quoting the old Book itself that it is an allegory and a fable then it behooves us to take little stock in the new.

Now, readers, I am going to try and not make a mistake in citing chapter and verse to sustain me. Sometime ago I met a number of inexperienced and rather intelligent but illiterate young men who seemed to be "almost distilled to a jelly with fear because as they said they had just heard a horrible sermon on hell fire and brimstone and the worm that never dies. They expressed a fear that they might perchance die between night and morning and of course in their sins they expected to be consigned to a literal, seething, frying lake of fire and sulphurous liquid, there to roast through all the interminable aeons of futurity. I considered them very credulous but I proceeded to dispel these horrors from their minds, and this I accomplished by proving satisfactorily to them that both Jehovah and Christ are members of the genus homo and could not possibly have possessed any supernatural qualities, and of course, are created characters of whom no person, young or old, need be afraid, neither during this life nor at the hour of death. The juvenile gentlemen, who ranged in years from 18 to 24, assured me that if by talks and quotations I could establish clearly to their mind the human qualities of the two characters in question, they would endeavor to live moral lives but would approach their graves with no more dread than a weary child has of slumber.

We know that books generally are the productions of men and it is a natural and logical conclusion that all are, the Bible included. Even our opponents who believe in the Divine origin of the Book do not give credence to the idea that other Bibles deemed sacred by other nations are inspired. We have absolute proof that the Bible is of human origin.

1. The Bible in common use is a translation made by men as liable to err as ourselves—men who did err greviously. The translation bears marks of error on almost every page.

And it must not be forgotten right here that it is a historical fact that at the time the early bishops and fathers were selecting from the vast number of books which the Bible mentions but does not contain, those books which they deemed canonical, that it was decided by vote which books were inspired and which were not. This alone is fatal to the idea of inspiration.

The Christian world bears witness to the importance of the translation by its frequent demands for a new translation, the last one having been made, I think in 1881; up to that time no sect was satisfied with it and none of the leading believers or pretenders are yet.

The Greek and Hebrew Scriptures of which the translators profess the common English to be a translation were compiled by men weak and erring and their work is admitted to bear the marks of human imperfection and error. And as nobody has ever claimed that the translators were inspired, their errors stand out for the critics of the world to comment upon, and if one a little bolder or more fearless than the others publishes his discovery he is ostracized.

The Greek and Hebrew Bibles were compiled from pre-existing manuscripts, which are human transcripts of still earlier transcripts, which were also human transcripts. Those manuscripts are all imperfect. They differ from each other. The manuscripts of the New Testament alone differ in about 150,000 places. The originals are lost and the present Scriptures that we have in printed form can only be compared to transcripts of the originals. No means remains of ascertaining which is least corrupted. A perfect Bible, therefore, —a Bible Divine—is a thing that can not be hoped for, even if such a Bible once existed, but there is not the faintest iota of proof that such a book ever existed. If, therefore, we had the originals, there is no reason to believe we should find them less imperfect, less erroneous than our common translations.

The form, the arrangement, the language, the style of the different portions of the Bible, are all manifestly human. The grammar, the logic, the rhetoric, the poetry, all bear marks of human weakness.

The impartial, unbiased, disinterested critic can discern nothing supernatural, but human imperfection, error and weakness everywhere.

It represents God as subject to human infirmities; it represents Him as having a body subject to wants and weaknesses like those of our own bodies. When He appears to Abraham He appears as three men. These three men whom Abraham calls Lord, talk to Abraham. Abraham kills for them a calf; Sarah bakes them bread and they eat and drink. They wash their feet, soiled with their journey, and sit down to rest themselves under a tree.

God is also represented as appearing to Jacob in the form of a man. He wrestles with Jacob all night; Jake is too strong for Him; He wants to go but Jacob holds him fast. Jacob demands a blessing and refuses to let go his hold of the Deity till he obtains it. Jehovah, unable to free Himself from Jacob's grasp, is forced at length to yield to his demand and give him a blessing. He accordingly changes Jacob's name to Israel, which means the God—Conqueror. The man who vanquished God in a wrestling match; and still Mr. Lowry pretends to believe that this same old chief of the ancient Jews was and is the Creator of all the shining worlds, stars and suns that stud the vault of heaven.

In other parts of the Bible God is represented as tired and exhausted with His six day's work of creation. In Exodus 31:17 it is said that God rested and was refreshed. In Judges 1:19, God is represented as unable to vanquish some of the inhabitants of Canaan because they had chariots of iron. "And the Lord was with Judah; and He drove out the inhabitants of the mountains but He could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron." Say, Mr. Lowry, do you honestly believe that this old Israelitish governor was the real God of the universe, who made 125,000,000 of suns around each of which revolve planets, so that matter is now thought to be infinite in quantity?

God is further represented in the Bible as limited in knowledge. He did not know whether Abraham feared Him or not till he had tried Him by commanding him to offer up his son as a burnt offering.

Oh! what a God. But when Abraham had bound his son and raised up the knife to take his life, God, according to the Bible, said: "Now I know thou fearest me, since thou hast not withheld thy son, thy only son from Me. He is also represented as having to use similar means with the Israelites to ascertain how they were disposed toward Him. In one place He is said to have tried them by false prophets and dreamers to know whether they loved the Lord their God, with all their hearts Deut. 13:3. In another He is said to have led them 40 years in the wilderness to prove them, to know what was in their hearts and to find out whether they would keep His commandments, or not, Deut. 8:2. One passage represents Him as putting the rainbow in the clouds to aid His memory—that He might look upon it and remember His engagement to never again destroy the earth by a flood.

Other passages of Scripture represent God as both limited in knowledge and limited in His presence—as dwelling somewhere aloft and apart from mankind—as receiving His information respecting the doings of men through agents or messengers in whom He could not put confidence at all times, and as being obliged at times to come down and see for Himself how things were going on. In Genesis 11:5, we read, "And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded." So with regard to Sodom and Gomorrah we read, Gen. 18:20-21, "And the Lord said because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great and because their sin is very grievous I will go down and see whether they have done altogther, according to the cry of it which is come unto Me and if not I will know."

As Pastor Russell of the Brooklyn tabernacle said to his congregation in a sermon which was published in the Missoulian I think on Christmas morning, "Why don't the ministers tell their hearers the truth about the Bible?" It certainly does not require a great critic to perceive that the above passages represents God as a human being. Will Mr. Lowry dare to defend the Bible against this charge? The Bible further represents God as changeable; as repenting of His own doing. In one passage we are informed that it repenteth Him that He had made man when He saw how badly he had turned out; and in another that he repented that He had made Saul king for a similar reason. He is referred to in nearly all of the Old Testament as lacking in foresight. In many passages He is represented as being disappointed in men and as repenting of the good He had promised them or the evil which He had threatened them.

The Bible—inspired volume—gives still darker representations of God. It presents Him to our view as subject not only to innocent, human weakness, but to the most abominable and revolting vices. It represents Him as partial in His affections and dealings toward His children. He is charged with a kind of partiality, which in a human father would be deemed most unreasonable and inexcusable. He is said to have loved Jacob and hated Esau before either of them was born and of course, before either had done good or evil. Now turn to the New Testament, thus we read, Rom. 9:11-13, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of the Lord, according to election might stand, not of works but of Him that calleth. It was said unto her "the elder shall serve the younger." As it is written "Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated." Listen to Malachi: Malachi 1:2-4, "I have loved you," saith the Lord, "Yet ye say wherein hast thou loved Me? "Was not Esau Jacob's brother" saith the Lord; yet I loved Jacob and I hated Esau and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith "We are impoverished but we will return and build the desolate places," thus saith the Lord of hosts. "They shall build but I will throw down and they shall call them the border of wickedness and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever." A more cruel, a more deadly hate, a fiercer or more unrelenting and revengeful cruelty was never charged on any earthly tyrant. But these criticisms and comments are what Mr. Lowry calls "dictating to the Deity." The evangelist also talks about thwarting God's plans and asks us to give God a chance. Imagine the finite being asked to give a chance to the infinite, the immeasurable, the illimitable.

Jehovah is represented as caring more for the Israelites than for any other people which proves Him to be the God of the Jews the same as other nations had their gods. And if the progenitors of those who call themselves Christians had chosen any other God would they not today be equally justified in maintaining that their god and their religions are the only true variety.

It may be that religion has done a considerable of good in the world even if it has had a moral influence for only a short period of time but no enduring benefit can be conferred upon humanity by their believeing anything which is founded on fiction.

Mr. Lowry intimates that a person is wicked because he chooses to be.

A more fallacious declaration was never uttered. Look at the number of people one meets in a lifetime who are moral, honest, conscientious and sincere because their nature prompts them to be that way regardless of any religion. And consider the number of criminals who are such because their nervous tissue and the cells of the brain and the inherited diseased cerebellum and cerebrum make them what they are. The great debate between Alexander Campbell and Robert Owen which took place in 1829 brought out some facts by Mr. Owen which are maintained by the world's scientists today, viz: "That each individual is so created that when young, he may be made to receive impressions to produce either true or false notions and beneficial or injurious habits, and to retain them with great tenacity. That each individual is so created that he must believe according to the strongest impressions that are made on his feelings or other faculties, while his belief in no case depends upon his will.

That the individual is made to possess and acquire the worst character when his organization at birth has been compounded of the most inferior propensities, faculties and qualities of our common nature and when so organized, he has been placed, from birth to death, amid the most vicious or worst circumstances.

That the individual is made to possess and to acquire a medium character when his original organization has been created superior, and when the circumstances which surround him from birth to death produce continued or unfavorable impressions. Or, when his organization has been found of inferior materials, and the circumstances in which he has been placed from birth to death, are of a character to produce superior impressions only. Or, when there has been some mixture of good and bad qualities in the original organization, and when it has also been placed, through life, in various circumstances of good and evil. This last compound has been hitherto the common lot of mankind."

"That the individual is made the most superior of his species when his original organization has been compounded of the best proportions of the best ingredients of which human nature is formed and when the circumstances which surround him from birth to death are of a character to produce only superior impressions."

Now let us consider for a brief time the Divine claims of the New Testament. One of Christ's injunctions was "Take no thought for the morrow what you shall eat." The savages who now act upon this principle lead most wretched lives. The lillies and sparrows are poor patterns for healthy active human beings in making the struggle for life. Plucking the corn of others' planting would not now be regarded as an honest mode of living. Buddha and Christna of ancient India set far better examples than that. "Love your enemies" is a hard command to keep but when Christ afterwards said "But these mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them bring hither and slay them before me" reminds me of the tipsy Hibernian who said "I used to be able to fight but I can't now nor never could." Christ's prophecy that His twelve disciples would sit on twelve thrones and rule over the twelve tribes of Israel never met fulfillment. As 1,880 years have passed since the prediction was made and as ten of the twelve tribes were according to the Book itself, lost and gone out of existence hundreds of years before the promise was made, and as there is not the slightest indication that the descendants of those twelve tribes even if they could be brought together will ever sit on thrones the utter falsity of the prophecy is too flagrant to talk about. His counsel to His disciples to sell certain earthly possessions and buy swords was not a God-like advice and His treatment of His own mother when at a wedding after she had told Him the wine was out, He ungraciously answered "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"

I will not however, stop to recall all the points of His conduct that are open to criticism but to one who is not warped with partiality and prejudice it is easy to perceive that He was only a human being.

I am reminded of a little discussion which took place at a private residence on the south side about six years ago. Somebody had asked Mrs. C——— if she believed that the Christian religion is of Divine origin, whereupon she delivered herself of the following: "How can I believe a thing to be superhuman, when there are such desperate efforts put forth on the part of the exhorters to prove its Divinity; does truth require such pleadings, entreaties and exhortations to convince a sane person of truth. Don't you know that 'truth crushed to earth will rise again with renewed vigor.' They used to preach infant damnation but it was crushed to earth; did it rise again? They used to preach that the believing husband could and would be happy in heaven with his unbelieving wife in hell but that doctrine was crushed to earth; did it rise again?" And we all applauded the brave little woman.

Before I conclude this paper I must quote once more from the Bible the Book which teaches the fall of man while science teaches the rise of man. Christianity has from the first sustained tyranny, oppression and slavery since Paul said "Let every soul be subject to the powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore resisteth the powers, resisteth the ordinance of God and that they that resist shall receive unto themselves damnation Rom. 12:1-2; and Peter also said "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake whether it be to the king as supreme or unto governors. Honor the king; I Peter 11:13-14-17. From that day to this kingcraft and religion have worked together. My dear school childern, you who revere Paul Revere or his memory; you who consider hallowed the glorious name of Israel Putnam; you who cheer yourselves hoarse when you hear a fine reading of that grandest of political documents—the declaration of Independence. Oh! heavens! boys and girls; drop a tear of sympathy. Those 56 brave signers of the declaration, according to the New Testament are roasting in hell this minute; they resisted the king; they resisted his ordinances, his laws, his decisions; they resisted all these things which the New Testament evangelist says are ordained of God.

O, my brothers! listen to the heart-rending groans of Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane and Arthur Lee, who secured the assistance from France; hear the agonizing shrieks of Carroll of Carrollton and his uncle, who tried to get the co-operation of the French Canadians; open your imaginative ears to the sickening moans of John Hancock, Samuel Adams, Roger Sherman, Samuel Chase, Rob't Treat Paine, Robert Morris, Richard Henry Lee and all the others of heroic mould. But I must desist from further contemplation of this horrible picture and content myself with feeling and believing that these immortal heroes are either sleeping through eternity or are in blissful repose in a celestial abode which is not orthodox.

Now I must finish reading "The World's Sixteen Crucified Saviours," (all of them before Christ) before I go and hear a certain gentleman, in his attempt to harmonize the Bible with science.

MALCOLM GEORGE MAC———

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