

WE ARE GOD'S WORKMANSHIP

By A.P. Adams

A great and important truth is contained in this declaration, and one which practically most Christians deny. Perhaps this statement may seem too strong to some, but I think that I can show that it is correct. Theoretically all Christians believe that, in a sense, "we are God's workmanship." But in practice most of them deny it, and act as though they must make themselves and (in some cases) everybody else. In other words, most Christians live as though the responsibility of their own development and perfection rested entirely upon themselves; and in addition to this they oft-times act as though the responsibility of the world's salvation also rested upon them. Understand that I am not speaking of the expressed *belief* of Christians, but of their *practice*. Now I desire to show in this article, from the Bible, that the declaration — "we are God's workmanship" — is most absolute and literal and that we do not have anything to do with our own manufacture, so to speak, excepting to "*yield* ourselves unto God." Rom. 6:13; also the remainder of the chapter.

In the first place we must understand God's plan of creation. We must know something of what "our Lord is doing" (John 15:15). God's great work according to the scripture is *the creation of a race of beings in His own image and likeness*. When God said, "Let us make *man* in our image", He meant not the first man only, but the *race* of man. God was speaking prophetically here. He was speaking of things that were not as though they were. The work then of creating a race of beings in God's image began in Eden, and has been steadily carried on ever since and *will* be carried on to its completion without any check, hindrance, interruption or delay. The idea that most Christians have is that God created a perfect man and woman to begin with, intending that this perfect pair should be the progenitors of a perfect race. But Satan comes in and spoils God's work at the outset; he contaminates the fountain head, and the whole stream is befouled, and God must delay His originally intended work until He repairs damages, so to speak — until He has counteracted and undone the devil's evil work; in which endeavor He will only partially succeed according to the common view, and thus Satan will succeed in marring God's original plan eternally. Of course, we cannot suppose that, when God created man innocent in Eden, He *intended* that any of his descendants should be eternally tormented; and yet some of them *will* be eternally tormented, according to the so called orthodox view. Hence the conclusion necessarily follows that Satan has succeeded in permanently disarranging God's plan and has compelled Him to take a course that He would not have taken had it not been for the so called "fall of man". But how can we accept such an idea as this? Thus we make God to be "altogether such an one as ourselves" (Psa. 50:21). I for one could never accept such a view. What is the alternative then? The orthodox view must be wrong. Satan did *not* disarrange God's plan, nor compel Him to change it in the least; hence the "fall" was a *part of* the plan and a necessary

step towards its accomplishment. I want each one to see this point clearly and positively; for, unless we thus understand God's relation to the race as a whole, we cannot understand His relationship to us as individuals. I want each one to see that the above reasoning is absolutely inevitable. Either Satan, by the introduction of evil into the world with all its consequences, disarranged God's plan, and partially, at least, thwarted it, or else the fall of man was a part of God's plan, prearranged, provided for, and tending to the advancement of His purposes of grace and love. To my mind the former supposition is impossible; the latter one must be true. Do not stop now to think whether the Scripture is in harmony with this view or not. We will examine that by and by. Just use your own reasoning faculties and common sense and everyone must see that *if, God is supreme*, the introduction of evil into the world with all its consequences must be a part of the plan of God.

Perhaps I ought to say right here for the benefit of some of my readers that the idea that God *has* a plan may be to them a new one. According to the view of most Christians, God has no definite, prearranged plan, but is simply endeavoring to do the best He can through human instrumentality to repair the ruin that sin has made, and though thus far the majority of the race have been overwhelmed in that ruin, yet in the end truth will triumph and sin will be destroyed, or at least confined to an eternal prison house. To my mind such a view of God is very belittling and dishonorable. I cannot entertain it for a moment. The God of the Bible, the God that we can worship, and adore, and *trust* in, is Almighty and Supreme — "He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" — "He doeth all these things, and known unto Him are all His works from the beginning of the world". Acts 15:17, 18. "He doeth according to His will, in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" Dan. 4:35. God has a perfect, definite plan, embracing all the details and particulars of His work, and including in its sweep ages and worlds, past and to come. Paul announces this fact directly in Eph. 3:21: "According to His purpose of the ages"; See the margin of the Revised Version. Rotherham renders it the "plan of the ages." There can be no doubt that God has a perfect, exact, prearranged, and absolutely changeless plan of creation.

I will notice also in this connection why I speak of the plan of *creation*, and not the plan of *redemption*, as Christians commonly speak. The view presented above makes this change necessary. When we speak of God's plan of *redemption*, we seem to imply that *redemption* was an afterthought with God — that it is simply a means of remedying an unforeseen, or at least, an unintentional and undesirable contingency; and that while redemption is being worked out, God's original purpose must be delayed. We have already shown that this view cannot be accepted by anyone who believes in a supreme and all wise God; the so called fall of man and redemption as its consequent are a part of the original plan of God — they are steps in the carrying out of that plan; in fact God controls and directs "all things" to the furtherance of His own counsels, and hence all things are tending toward the completion of the purpose announced in Eden — the creation of the race in the image and likeness of God. Therefore we speak of God's plan of creation, not of redemption. Redemption is only one of the steps in the process where by man is ultimately to reach the divine image. To speak of the plan of redemption is to take a narrow, unscriptural, ungodlike

view of the situation. God's plan of creation covers the whole ground from the commencement of the work in Eden to the completion of it in Eden restored, in the New Heaven and New Earth.

I am well aware that the foregoing view involves several very startling and we might even say staggering conclusions; such, for instance, as that Satan is one of God's servants to help on His plan and that all evil, under God, shall eventuate in good, and that God in some sense is responsible for the introduction of evil into the world, etc. I cannot now stop to notice these points in detail; I have done so in other writings. I will now simply say that there is nothing in any of these conclusions contrary to the Scripture. Indeed, they harmonize and make plain the Word. The great principle set forth in the article "All Things are of God" makes this whole subject clear, and fully prepares us for all these otherwise startling conclusions. Let us not fear conclusions so long as we can feel the solid bed rock of truth under our feet at every step of our reasoning. Many a one has been enamoured of the truth for a season, and has gone a little way in the ever brightening pathway, but suddenly perceiving how far from the old ruts they were diverging, and that they must diverge still further if they kept on, they have become frightened and turned back again to the orthodox thoroughfare. Such a timorous, cowardly spirit will not be found among those who climb the highest peaks of inspiration to catch the first glimpse of the coming dawn. "Ye are bought with a price; be ye not the servants of men". "Then shall ye know if ye follow on to know. . ." God has His "friends" to whom He tells His "secrets". (John 15:15; Psa. 25-14). But if we would be "the friend of God", we must be willing, like Abraham, the great pattern friend, to leave home, kindred, and country if need be, and go forth "not knowing whither", alone with Him who is the source of all truth, and who will surely bring us into the Canaan of rest if we follow on.

We start out then in our investigation concerning how we are God's workmanship with this truth, that God is creating a race of beings like Himself; this work began in Eden and has been steadily progressing ever since; Christ is the only human being thus far that has been finished — He alone reached the goal, *likeness to God*. The rest of the race are unfinished, the mass of them being in the crude, rough, "natural" state, having lived and died in this condition; a few in the past have had some finishing work done for them; and during this gospel age a class, "they that are Christ's" (I Cor. 15:23 and John 17:9), are being finished off, so to speak; and during the "ages to come" "all shall be made alive in Christ," or finished, "but every man in his own order" (band or class). All this is entirely the work of the Father and the Son — Let *us* make man — and man has no more to do with it than Adam had to do with his own creation, or Eve with hers. What man has to do, and the purpose of it we will notice presently; but now we are speaking of the carrying out of the original purpose announced in Eden — "Let us make man in our image."

Now if we consider man in this light, as unfinished, half made — "Ephraim is a cake not turned" Hosea 7:8 — then we shall be able to understand the true condition of things. We shall see how thoroughly and absolutely he is God's workmanship. "If any man be in Christ, he is a *new creation*." "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." I Cor. 3:9. Surely the man cannot *recreate* himself any more than he could create himself in the first place. The

beginning, continuance, and completion of the process of creation is entirely of God. Read Rom 9:9-33 and see how absolute is God's sovereignty." The purpose of God according to the election stands not of works but of Him that calleth." He raised up Pharaoh for the very purpose for which He used him, and "He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth." "Shall the *thing* formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?" Are there not "vessels of wrath *fitted* to destruction," and "vessels of mercy *before prepared unto* glory." No stronger language than the above could be used to show how absolutely man is God's workmanship — clay in the hands of the potter. And this view clashes not with the true idea of man's freedom, but everything is harmonized and made clear when we see this truth. God is man's *proprietor*, and will surely make the best of His property. This view is full of hope and comfort. If we are God's workmanship, the work will surely be done, and done well. He speaks with the simplicity and quietness of conscious power — "Let us make man in our image" — as though it were the easiest thing imaginable to make a man in the image of God, and "hath He said and shall He not do it? Hath He spoken and shall He not make it good?" God's own veracity is at stake here; His own reputation and credit, so to speak, is involved. For His *own* sake, He will complete and perfect His work; and so He speaks by His prophets. "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for *mine own sake*, and will not remember thy sins." Moreover, mark these blessed words: "Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art My servant; *I have formed thee*; thou art my servant. O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me. *I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins. Return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee.*" Take notice that it does not read, "Return unto Me and I *will* redeem thee and blot out thy sins," but "Return unto Me *because I have redeemed* thee and blotted out thy sins." O blessed grace that reconciles a world unto God, not imputing their trespasses unto them (2 Cor. 5:18-21), "while they are yet sinners", and "before they call", and so is able to preface the invitation to come to God by the declaration of His finished work! Surely this is a gospel — glad tidings! No wonder that the prophet breaks out, "Sing, O ye heavens, *for the Lord hath done it*, shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains; O forest and every tree therein, for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob and glorified Himself (mark it — glorified *Himself* — made His own word good) in Israel. Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and *He that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things*, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by Myself." Isa. 44: 21-24. Read in the same line Ezek. 36:16 to the end of the chapter. First God charges Israel with their perversity and corruption and yet He has pity (verse 21) and makes them great promises (verses 25-30). Why? On what ground? Not for *their* sake; not because *they* deserved it; but for His holy name's sake." See verses 21-23, 31, 32, 36. See also Ezek, 20, the whole chapter, especially verses 9, 14, 22, 41-44. If we can only see this truth and get it well in mind, we shall have no fear of the final result of God's creative plan. God's own honor is at stake. His declared purpose — "Let us make man in our image" — *cannot* fail. For His *own* sake, if not for man's, He will bring the work to a perfect completion, a faultless consummation; and a godlike race shall yet people

the earth to the universal praise of God's workmanship, and the honor and glory of Christ, God's co-laborer.

The above blessed truth explains also why man is so imperfect and full of defects and flaws and failures. He is only half made. He is "a cake not turned". What can you expect of man in this crude, rough state? "He remembereth our frame; He knoweth that we are dust."

"ALL THINGS ARE OF GOD"

There is no statement in the Bible that is more remarkable and even startling than this. When you think of it seriously, it seems as though Paul was very unguarded and careless in his language. We are apt to think that he ought to have modified and limited it in some way such as, for instance, all *good* things are of God.

But no, Paul makes the sweeping, unqualified statement, "all things are of (literally, *out of*) God." Furthermore, so important did Paul consider this truth that he repeats it over and over again. The direct statement is made no less than six times in the writings of the apostle. See Rom. 11:36; I Cor. 8:6, I Cor. 11:12; 2 Cor. 5:18; Eph. 1:11, and Heb. 2:10. Now was the apostle careless and a little too bold in these utterances, or did he mean just what he said, and are they true, taken full strength? I say without hesitation, yes, to the two latter questions. The more we learn of God's works and ways the more we shall understand that in a sense absolutely "*all* things are of God"; or in other words, as it has often been expressed, God *is in everything*. We will notice a few passages that will set forth the Bible teaching on this point.

Says Christ, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Matt. 19:20, 30. In Luke 12:6 we read. "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and *not one of them is forgotten before God.*" Do you realize, friend reader, the stupendous character of this statement? How many millions of sparrows think you are there in the world? And of course it is not sparrows alone that God cares for, but all creatures. *Not one of them is forgotten, and even the hairs of your head are numbered.* The great men of earth manifest their greatness by their close attention to so called great things — the affairs of state, national interests, business ventures involving the risk of millions, vast philanthropic schemes, and such like matters of world-wide importance. These men generally have very little care and pay very little attention to the common every-day affairs of life. But God, between whom and the greatest of all earth's great ones there is an infinite disparity, displays *His* greatness by caring for what would seem to be the most trivial interests of His creatures, like the numbering of the hairs of their heads and taking notice of apparently the most unimportant events, like the falling of a single sparrow. Well may we exclaim with Faber in view of *such* greatness:

O, God! Thy loving greatness ever lies

Outside us like a boundless sea;

We cannot lose ourselves where all is home,

Nor drift away from Thee.

Thus doth Thy grandeur make us grand ourselves,

Thy goodness quells our fear;

Thy greatness makes us brave as children are

When those they love are near.

If you would see this thought of God's universal providence carried out in every detail, read Psalms 104, 107, and 147.

See the case of Joseph for an illustration of how God is in affairs of greater moment than it would seem. His unnatural brethren decided to kill him. (Gen. 37:12, etc.). Being dissuaded from this, they sell him to the Ishmaelites, thus bringing upon him a cruel servitude, and upon their aged father a heartbreaking agony. A blacker and more wicked deed could hardly be imagined; and yet in the sequel of the story, when Joseph is made ruler of Egypt and his brethren, coming down to buy corn, at last discover that he is their long-lost brother whom they had so cruelly wronged, he reassures and comforts them by saying, "Now therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither, for God *did send me* before you to preserve life. So now, *it was not you that sent me hither, but God.*" Gen. 45:5, 8. Could we have a more striking and positive illustration of how "all things are of God"? He is in everything, even in the crimes and cruelties of man.

Take another illustration not so prominent in the Bible but just as positive. See Judges 14:1-4. Samson becomes enamored of a Philistine woman and must have her for his wife. In vain his parents try to dissuade him from so improper an alliance as it would seem. Samson is completely bewitched and insists upon having her. Who would suppose that God had anything particular to do with this apparently foolish love affair? And yet it was of him, for the 4th verse reads, "But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the Lord, that He sought an occasion against the Philistines." For another illustration see 2 Chron. 10:15, 11:4.

Another very striking example of how all things are of God is brought out in the case of the priestly house of Eli. Read I Sam. 2:30-33. Now see how the fulfillment of this prediction was brought about in I Sam. 22:18-20. A more cold-blooded, barbarous butchery was never perpetrated, and yet it was the carrying out of the purpose of God. In I Sam. 2:31 God says, "/will cut off thy father's house." According to the account in chapter 22 it was Doeg that did the awful deed, and yet it is plain to see how God was in it. Abiathar escaped the massacre; the denunciation was against the entire house of Eli. Abiathar must be banished from the priesthood. See how it is done in I Kings 2:26, 27. "So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the Lord; to fulfill the word of the

Lord, which He spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh." Is not this a very plain illustration of the great truth we are considering? The awful deeds of wicked men are "of God" in such a sense that He makes them conducive to the carrying out of His own plans and brings good out of them in the end. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Him; the remainder of wrath (that which He cannot turn to His praise) will He restrain." "All are His servants." Psa. 119:91. "Fire and hail, snow and vapor and stormy wind fulfill His word." Psa. 147:8.

The heathen king Cyrus is another illustration of this truth. See Isa. 45:1-7. Cyrus was God's "anointed" to do His work. God used him as an instrument to accomplish a certain purpose, though Cyrus knew not that he was being thus used of God. See verses 4, 5. The case of the Assyrians is still more marked. God was using them just as the carpenter uses his tools. See Isa. 10:1-19, especially verse 15; and in the same connection see Jer. 51:19, 20. Again, see Josh. II: 15-20. Israel destroyed the Canaanites and made peace with none of them, except the Gibeonites. "For it was *of the Lord* to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle that *He* might destroy them utterly." See also a very remarkable illustration in Psa. 105:25. God sent His people down into Egypt, having sent Joseph before them (verse 17; this verse confirms Joseph's own statement that God, and not his wicked brethren, sent him) to prepare the way for them. God increased His people and made them stronger than their enemies (verse 24), and now mark, "He turned their heart to hate His people, to deal deceitfully with His servants." What! Did God incline the hearts of the Egyptians to hate His own people, to deal deceitfully with His own servants? So the record reads. Truly "all things are of God".

Take still another illustration from the New Testament. The crucifixion of Christ is always looked upon as the most awful crime that ever was committed, and the perpetrators of it are considered as deserving the most severe retribution; and yet they simply did what God's hand and counsel determined before to be done. Acts 4:28. And Peter tells us that Christ "was delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Acts 2:23. Thus we see how even this stupendous crime was of God, and since we know that He worketh *all* things after the counsel of His own will, (Eph. 1:11), we can readily understand from the illustrations cited how true it is that "all things are of God". Thus is God's universal sovereignty fully established by the plain teachings of the word. "He doeth according to His will, in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" Dan. 4:35. See also Isa. 40, the whole chapter, and Rev. 17:17.

To the child of God this truth is most precious and reassuring. It teaches us how absolutely safe we are while we "abide under the shadow of the Almighty." His power extends not simply to the smallest affairs like the hairs of our heads and the birds of the air, but also to greater things — individuals, communities, states, nations, and world — and no creature moves but by His appointment or permission. "All things are of God"; therefore I can understand how all things work together for good to them that *love* God, and how also all things shall yet turn for good to man, since God loves *him*. God uses the forces of the world,

whether human or otherwise, just as one would move the pieces on a chessboard. They are so many instruments — tools — in His hands. "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? As if a rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself as if it were no wood." Isa. 10:15.

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