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The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

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My Story #5

My Unexpected Discovery

by – Hannah Whitall Smith (1832-1911)

Chapters taken from the original edition of *My Spiritual Autobiography*
Author of *A Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (1875)

QUESTIONINGS (Chapter XXI)

During all the years of which I speak the Plymouth Brethren were, as I have said, among my principal teachers. But I began gradually to find some things in their teachings that I could not accept. This was especially the case with their extreme Calvinism.



could I see how a Creator could be just, even if He were not loving, in consigning some of the creatures He Himself, and no other, had created to the eternal torment of hell, let them be as great sinners as they might be. I felt that if this doctrine were true, I should be woefully disappointed in the God whom I had, with so much rapture, discovered.

There have always been, I believe, differences of opinion among them in regard of this view; but those with whom I was thrown held very rigidly the belief that some people were “elected” to salvation, and some were elected to “reprobation,” and that nothing the individual could do could change these eternal decrees. We of course were among those elected to salvation, and for this we were taught to be profoundly thankful. I tried hard to fall in with this. It seemed difficult to believe that those who had taught me so much could possibly be mistaken on such a vital point. But my soul revolted from it more and more. How could I be content in knowing that I myself was sure of Heaven, when other poor souls equally deserving, but who had not had my chances, were “elected,” for no fault of their own, but in the eternal decrees of God, to “Reprobation?” It seemed to me such a doctrine was utterly inconsistent with the proclamation that had so entranced me. I could not find any limitations in this proclamation, and I could not believe there were any secret limitations in the mind of the God who had made it. Neither

I could not fail to see, moreover, that, after all, each of us was largely a creature of circumstance – that what we were, and what we did, was more or less the result of our temperaments, of our inherited characteristics, of our social surroundings, and of our education; and that, as these were all providentially arranged for us, with often no power on our part to alter them, it would not be just in the God who had placed us in their midst, to let them determine our eternal destiny.

As an escape from the doctrine of eternal torment, I at first embraced the doctrine of annihilation for the wicked, and for a little while tried to comfort myself with the belief that this life ended all for them. But the more I thought of it, the more it seemed to me that it would be a confession of serious failure on the part of the Creator, if He could find no way out of the problems of His creation, but to annihilate the creatures whom He had created.



Unconsciously, one of my children gave me an illustration of this. She woke me up one morning to tell me that she had been lying in bed having great fun in pretending that she had made a man. She described the color of his hair and his eyes, his figure, his height, his power, his wisdom and all the grand things he was going to do, and was very enthusiastic in her evident delight in the joy of creation. When she had finished enumerating all the magnificent qualities of her man, I said to her, "But, darling, suppose he should turn out badly; suppose he should do mischief and hurt people, and make things go wrong, what would thee do then?" "Oh," she said, "I would not have any trouble; I'd just make him lie down and chop his head off."

I saw at once what a splendid illustration this was of the responsibility of a Creator, and it brought to my mind Mrs. Shelly's weird story of the artist Frankenstein, who made the monstrous image of a man, which, when it was finished, suddenly, to his horror, became alive, and went out into the world, working havoc wherever it went. The horrified maker felt obliged to follow his handiwork everywhere, in order to try to undo a little of the mischief that had been done, and to remedy as far as possible the evils it had caused. The awful sense of the responsibility that rested upon him, because of the things done by the creature he had created, opened my eyes to see the responsibility God must necessarily feel, if the creatures He had created were to turn out badly. I could not believe He would torment them forever. Neither could I rest in the thought of annihilation as His best remedy for sin. I felt hopeless of reconciling the love and the justice of the Creator with the fate of His creatures, and I knew not which way to turn. But deliverance was at hand, and the third epoch in my Christian experience was about to dawn.

THE THIRD EPOCH IN MY CHRISTIAN LIFE (Chapter XXII)

As I stated in the last chapter, after a few years of exuberant enjoyment in the good news of salvation through Christ for myself and for those who thought as I did, my heart began to reach out after those who thought differently, and especially after those who, by reason of the providential circumstances of their birth and their surroundings, had no fair chance in life. I could not but see that ignorance of God, and, as a result, lives of sin, seemed the almost inevitable fate of a vast number of my fellow human beings,

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

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and I could not reconcile it with the justice of God, that these unfortunate mortals should be doomed to eternal torment because of those providential circumstances, for which they were not responsible, and from which, in most cases, they could not escape. The fact that I, who no more deserved it than they, should have been brought to the knowledge of the truth, while they were left out in the cold, became so burdensome to me, that I often felt as if I would gladly give up my own salvation, if by this means I could bestow it upon those who had been placed in less fortunate circumstances than myself.

I began to feel that the salvation in which I had been rejoicing was, af-

... *What about the awfulness of our fate in having been made sinners?*

ter all a very limited and a very selfish salvation, and as such, unworthy of the Creator who had declared so emphatically that His “*tender mercies are over all His works*” (Psalm 145:9), and above all unworthy of the Lord Jesus Christ, who came into the world for the sole and single purpose of saving the world. I could not believe that His life and death for us could be meant to fall so far short of remedying the evil that He came on purpose to remedy, and I felt that it must be impossible that there could be any shortcoming in the salvation He had provided. I began to be convinced that my difficulties had simply arisen from a misunderstanding of the plans of God, and I set myself to discover the mistakes.

As I have said, my first refuge had been in the annihilation of the wicked. But this had soon seemed unworthy of a wise and good Creator and a very sad confession of failure on His part; and I could not reconcile it with either His omnipotence or His omniscience. I began to be afraid I was going to be disappointed in God. But one day a revelation came to me that vindicated Him, and that settled the whole question forever.

We very often had revivalist preachers staying with us, as we sought every opportunity of helping forward what we called “gospel work.” Among the rest there came one who was very full of the idea that it was the privilege and duty of the Christian to share, in a very especial manner, in the sufferings of Christ, as well as in His joys. He seemed to think our doing so would in some way help those who knew nothing of the salvation of Christ; and he had adopted the plan of making strong appeals on the subject in his meetings, and of asking Christians, who were willing,

for the sake of others, to take a share of these sufferings upon themselves, to “come forward” to a front bench in the meeting to pray that it might be granted to them. Somehow it all sounded very grand and heroic, and it fitted in so exactly with my longings to help my less fortunate fellow human beings, that, although I did not go “forward” for prayer at any of his meetings, I did begin to pray privately in a blind sort of way, that I might come into the experience, whatever it was. The result was very different from what I had expected, but it was far from tremendous.

I had expected to enter into a feeling of Christ's personal sufferings in the life and death He

bore for our sakes, but instead I seemed to have a revelation, not of His sufferings because of sin, but of ours. I seemed to get a sight of the misery and anguish caused to humanity by the entrance of sin into the world, and of Christ's sorrow, not for His own sufferings because of it, but for the sufferings of the poor human beings who had been cursed by it. I seemed to understand something of what must necessarily be His anguish at the sight of the awful fate which had been permitted to befall the human race, and of His joy that He could do something to alleviate it. I saw that ours was the suffering, and that His was the joy of sacrificing Himself to save us. I felt that if I had been a Divine Creator, and had allowed such an awful fate to befall the creatures I had made, I would have been filled with anguish, and would have realized that simple justice, even if not love, required that I should find some remedy for it. And I knew I could not be more just than God. I echoed in my heart over and over again the lines found by one of George Macdonald's characters engraved on a tombstone.

“Oh Thou, who dist the serpent make,
Our pardon give and pardon take.”

I had been used to hearing a great deal about the awfulness of our sins against God, but now I asked myself, what about the awfulness of our fate in having been made sinners? Would I not infinitely rather that a sin should be committed against myself, than that I should commit a sin against anyone else? Was it not a far more dreadful thing to be made a sinner than to be merely sinned against? And I began to see that, since God had permitted sin to enter into the world, it must necessarily be that He would be compelled, ►

in common fairness, to provide a remedy that would be equal to the disease. I remembered some mothers I had known, with children suffering from inherited diseases, who were only too thankful to lay down their lives in self-sacrifice for their children, if so be they might, in any way, be able to undo the harm they had done in bringing them into the world under such disastrous conditions; and I asked myself, could God do less? I saw that, when weighed in balance of wrong done, we, who had been created sinners, had infinitely more to forgive than anyone against whom we might have sinned.

The vividness with which all this came to me can never be expressed. I did not think it, or imagine it, or suppose it – I saw it. It was a revelation of the real nature of things – not according to the surface conventional ideas, but according to the actual bottom facts – and it could not be gainsaid.

In every human face I saw, there seemed to be unveiled before me the story of the misery and anguish caused by the entrance of sin into the world. I knew that God must see this with far clearer eyes than mine, and therefore I felt sure that the sufferings of this sight to Him must be infinitely beyond what it was to me, almost unbearable as that seemed. And I began to understand how it was that the least He could do would be to embrace with untold gladness anything that would help to deliver the being He had created for such awful misery.

It was a never to be forgotten insight into the world's anguish because of sin. How long it lasted I cannot remember, but, while it lasted, it almost crushed me. And as it always came afresh at the sight of a strange face, I found myself obliged to wear a thick veil whenever I went into the streets, in order that I might spare myself the awful realization.

One day I was riding on a tramcar along Market Street, Philadelphia, when I saw two men come in and seat themselves opposite to me. I saw them dimly through my veil, but congratulated myself that it was only dimly, as I was thus spared the wave of anguish that had so often swept over me at the full sight of a strange face. The conductor came for his fare, and I was obliged to raise my veil in order to count it out.

As I raised it I got a sight of the faces of those two men, and with an overwhelming flood of anguish, I seemed to catch a fresh and clearer revelation of the depth of the misery that had been caused to human beings by sin. It was more than I could bear. I clenched my hands and cried out in my soul, "O, God, how canst thou bear it? Thou mightest have prevented it, but didst not. Thou mightest even now change it, but Thou dost not. I do not see how Thou canst go on living, and endure it." I upbraided God. And I felt I was justified in doing so. Then suddenly God seemed to answer me. An inward voice said, in tones of infinite love and tenderness, "*He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied*" (Isaiah 53:11). "Satisfied!" I cried in my heart, "Christ is to be satisfied! He will be able to look at the world's misery, and then at the travail through which He has passed because of it, and will be satisfied with the result. If I were Christ, nothing could satisfy me but that every human being should in the end be saved, and therefore I am sure that nothing less will satisfy Him." And with this a veil seemed to be withdrawn from before the plans of the universe, and I saw that it was true, as the Bible says, that "*as in Adam all die even so in Christ should all be made alive*" (I Corinthians 15:22). As was the first, even so was the second. The "all" in one case could not in fairness mean less than the "all" in the other. I saw therefore that the remedy must necessarily be equal to the disease. The salvation must be as universal as the fall.

I saw all this that day on the tramcar on Market Street, Philadelphia – not only thought it, or hoped it, or even believed it, but knew it. It was a Divine fact.

And from that moment I have never had one questioning thought as to the final destiny of the human race. God is the Creator of every

human being, therefore He is the Father of each one, and they are all His children; and Christ died for every one, and is declared to be "*the propitiation not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world*" (I John 2:2). However great the ignorance therefore, or however grievous the sin, the promise of salvation is positive and without limitations. If it is true that "*by the offense of one judgement came upon all men to condemnation,*" it is equally true that "*by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life*" (Romans 5:18). To limit the last "all men" is also to limit the first. The salvation

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is absolutely equal to the fall. There is to be a final “restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21; c.f. I Corinthians 15:28), when “at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10). Every knee, every tongue – words could not be more embracing. The how and when I could not see; but the one essential fact was all I needed: somewhere and somehow God was going to make every thing right for all the creatures He had created. My heart was at rest about it forever.

I hurried home to get hold of my Bible, to see if the magnificent fact I had discovered could possibly have been all this time in the Bible, and I had not seen it.

The moment I entered the house, I did not wait to take off my bonnet, but rushed at once to the table where I always kept my Bible and Concordance ready for use, and began my search. Immediately the whole Book seemed to be illuminated. On every page the truth concerning the “times of restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21) of which the Apostle Peter says “God Has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began,” shone forth, and no room was left for questioning. I turned greedily from page to page of my Bible, fairly laughing aloud for joy at the blaze of light that illuminated it all. It became a new book. Another skin seemed to have been peeled off every text, and my Bible fairly shone with a new meaning. I do not say with a different meaning, for in no sense did the new meaning contradict the old, but a deeper meaning, the true meaning, hidden behind the outward form of words. The words did not need to be changed, they only needed to be understood; and now at last I began to understand them.

I remember just about this time, in the course of my daily reading in the Bible, coming to the Psalms, and I was amazed at the new light thrown upon their apparently most severe and bloodthirsty denunciations. I saw that, when rightly interpreted, not by the letter, but by the spirit, they were full of the assured and final triumph of good over evil, and were a magnificent vindication of the goodness and justice of God, who will not, and ought not, and cannot, rest until all His enemies and ours are put under His feet. I saw that the kingdom must be interior before it can be

God’s wrath is against the sin not against the sinner. and when His enemies are scattered, ours are also. His sword is the righteousness that puts to death sin in order to save the sinner. The fire of His anger is the “refiner’s fire” ...

exterior, that it is a kingdom of ideas, and not one of brute force; that His rule is over hearts, not over places; that His victories must be inward before they can be outward; that He seeks to control spirits rather than bodies; that no triumph could satisfy Him but a triumph that gains the heart; that in short, where God really reigns, the surrender must be the interior surrender of the convicted free men, and not merely the outward surrender of the conquered slave. Milton says, “Who overcomes by force hath overcome but half his foe,” and I saw that this was true.

Read in the light of these views, my whole soul thrilled with praise over the very words that had before caused me to thrill with horror: “Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered;

let them also that hate Him flee before Him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melted before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God” (Psalm 68:1-2). God’s wrath is against the sin, not against the sinner, and when His enemies are scattered, ours are also. His sword is the righteousness that puts to death sin in order to save the sinner. The fire of His anger is the “refiner’s fire,” and He sits, not as the destroyer of the human soul, but as its purifier, to purge it as gold and silver are purged.

Implacable is love
Foes may be bought or teased
From their malign intent;
But He goes unappeased
Who is on kindness bent.

The Psalmist says, “You were a God Who forgave **them**, though You take vengeance of **their inventions**” (Psalm 99:8); and with this key to interpret it, all the denunciations of God’s wrath, which had once seemed so cruel and so unjust, were transformed into declarations of His loving determination to make us good enough to live in Heaven with Himself forever.

I might multiply endlessly similar instances of the new illumination that shone in entrancing beauty on every page of the Bible, but these will suffice. I began at last to understand what the Apostle Paul meant when he said that he had been made the minister of the New Testament, not of the letter but of the ►

spirit, for “the letter kills but the spirit gives life”(II Corinthians 3:6). Things I had read in the letter, and had shuddered at, now, read in the spirit, filled me with joy.

THE UNSELFISHNESS OF GOD (CHAPTER XXIII)

I have always felt that this time my real discovery of the unselfishness of God began. Up to then, while I had rejoiced in the salvation for myself that I had discovered, I had been secretly beset from time to

time with a torturing feeling that, after all, it was rather a selfish salvation, both for Him and for me. How could a good God enjoy Himself in Heaven, knowing all the while that a large proportion

of the beings He had Himself created were doomed to eternal misery, unless He were a selfish God? I had known that the Bible said that He was a God of love, and I had supposed that it must be true, but always there had been at the bottom of my mind this secret feeling that His love could not stand the test of comparison with the ideal of love in my own heart. I knew that, poor and imperfect as my love must be, I could never have enjoyed myself in Heaven while one of my children, no matter how naughty, was shut out; and, that He could and did enjoy Himself, while countless thousands of His children were shut out, seemed to me a failure in the most essential element of love. So that, grateful as I had felt for the blessings of forgiveness and of a sure and certain hope of Heaven for myself, I still had often felt as if after all the God I worshiped was a selfish God, Who cared more for His Own comfort and His Own glory than He did for the poor suffering beings He had made. But now I began to see that the wideness of God’s love was far beyond any wideness that I could even conceive of; and that if I took all the unselfish love of every mother’s heart the whole world over, and piled it all together, and multiplied it by millions, I would still only get a faint idea of the unselfishness of God.

I had always thought of Him as loving, but now I found out that He was far more than loving: He was love, love embodied and ingrained. I saw that He was, as it were, made out of love, so that in the very nature of things He could not do anything contrary

to love. Not that He would not do it, but actually could not, because love was the very essence of His being. I saw that the law of love, like the law of gravitation, is inevitable in its working, and that God is, if I may say so, under this law, and cannot help obeying it. I saw that, because He is love, He simply, in the very nature of things, must be loving. It is not a matter of choice with Him, but a matter of necessity. I saw that, once this fact was known, to trust in this God of love would be as natural as to breathe. Every doubting question was answered, and I was filled with an illimitable delight in the thought of having

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been created by such an unselfish God. I saw that as a matter of course the fact of His being our creator was an absolute guarantee that He would care for us, and would make all things work together for our good. The duties of ownership blazed with tremendous illumination. Not its rights, of which I had hitherto chiefly thought, but its duties, the things ownership necessarily demands of its owner. I saw that just as in a civilized community people are compelled by public opinion, or if necessary by the law, to take proper care of things that belong to them, so our Creator, by the laws of common morality, is compelled to take proper care of the creatures He has created, and must be held responsible for their well being.

It was all so glorious that it often seemed too good to be true, that we actually did belong to such an unselfish God; that many a time, when a fresh insight into His goodness would come over me, I would be obliged to get my Bible and open it at the texts that declared we really were His property, and put my fingers on them, and read them aloud, just to reassure myself that they did actually say, without any limitations, that He was my owner.

The expression “Remember your Creator” (Ecclesiastics 12:1) assumed a totally different aspect to me. I had always thought of it as a kind of threat held over us into good behavior; but now it seemed full of the most delightful warrant and assurance that all was well for the creatures this unselfish Creator had created. I saw that God was good, not religiously good only, but really and actually good in the truest sense of the word, and that a good Creator was of course

bound to make every thing go right with the creatures He had created. The fact that nothing was hid from His eyes, which had once been so alarming, now began to seem the most delightful fact in the whole universe, because it made it certain that He knew all about us, and would therefore be able to do His best for us.

My own feelings as a mother, which had heretofore seemed to war with what I had believed of God, now came into perfect harmony.

My children have been the joy of my life. I cannot imagine more exquisite bliss than comes to one sometimes in the possession and companionship of a child. To me there have been moments, when my arms have been around my children, that have seemed more like what the bliss of Heaven must be than any other thing I can conceive of; and I think this feeling has taught me more of what are God's feelings towards His children than anything else in the universe. If I, a human being with limited capacity, can find such joy in my children, what must God, with His infinite heart of love, feel towards His? In fact most of my ideas of the love and goodness of God have come from my own experience as a mother, because I could not conceive that God would create me with a greater capacity for unselfishness and self sacrifice than He possessed Himself. Since this discovery of the mother heart of God I have always been able to answer every doubt that may have arisen in my mind, as to the extent and quality of the love of God, by simply looking at my own feelings as a mother. I cannot understand the possibility of any selfishness on the mother's part coming into her relation to her children. It seems to me a mother, who can be selfish and think of her own comfort and her own welfare before that of her children, is an abnormal mother, who fails in the very highest duty of motherhood.

If one looks at what we call the lower creation, one will see that every animal teaches us this supreme duty of self-sacrifice on the part of the mother.

The tiger mother will suffer herself to be killed rather than that that harm should come to her offspring. She will starve that they may have food. Could our

God do less? I speak of self-sacrifice, but I cannot truthfully call it sacrifice. Any true mother, who knows the reality of motherhood, would scorn the idea that the care of her children involved a sacrifice, in the ordinary sense of sacrifice, on her part. It may involve trouble or weariness, but not what I could call sacrifice. The sacrifice would be if she were not allowed to care for them, not if she were. I know no more fallacious line of argument than that which is founded upon the idea that children ought to be grateful for the self-sacrifice on the mother's part. Her claim to love and consideration on the part of her children depends altogether to my mind upon how true a mother she has been in the sense I describe; and I believe that thousands of disappointed mothers, who have not received the gratitude and consideration they would like, have only themselves to thank, because they have demanded it, instead of having won it. All this has taught me to understand God's feelings towards us: that what we call self-sacrifice on the part of Christ was simply the absolutely necessary expression of His love for us; and that the amazing thing would have been, not that He did it, but if He had not done it.

Since I had this insight of the mother-heart of God, I have never been able to feel the slightest anxiety for any of His children; and by His children I do not mean only the good ones, but I mean the bad ones just as much. Are we not distinctly told that the Good Shepherd leaves the ninety and nine good sheep in order to find the one naughty sheep that is lost, and that He looks for it until He finds it? Viewed in the light of motherhood, has not that word "lost" a most comforting meaning, since nothing can be lost that is not owned by somebody, and to be lost means only not yet found? The lost gold piece is still gold, with the image of the King upon it; the lost sheep is a sheep still, not a wolf; the lost son has still the blood of his father in his veins.

Thus if a person is a lost sinner, it only means that he is owned by the Good Shepherd, and that the Good Shepherd is bound, by the very duties of His ownership, to go after that which is lost, and to go until He finds it. The word "lost" therefore, to my mind, contains in itself the strongest proof of ownership that one could desire. Who can imagine a mother with a lost child ever having a ray of comfort until the child is found, and who can imagine a God being ►

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more indifferent than a mother? In fact I believe that all the problems of the spiritual life, which are often so distressing to conscientious souls, would vanish like mist before the rising sun, if the full blaze of the mother-heart of God should be turned upon them.

Moreover, I saw that since it was declared we were created in the image of God, we were bound to believe that the best in us, and not the worst, was the reflection of that image, and that therefore things which to us in our best moments looked selfish, or unkind, or unjust, or self-seeking, must never, no matter what the "seeming," be attributed to God. If He is unselfish, He must be at least as unselfish as the highest human ideal; and of course we know He must be infinitely more.

All the texts in the Bible revealing God's goodness shone with a new meaning, and I saw that His goodness was not merely a patronizing benevolence, but was a genuine *bona fide* goodness that included unselfishness and consideration, and above all justice, which last has always seemed to me one of the very first elements of goodness. No unjust person could ever, in my opinion, lay the slightest claim to being good, let their outward seemings of goodness be as deceiving as they may. I had in short such an overwhelming revelation of the intrinsic and inherent goodness and unselfishness of God that nothing since has been able to shake it. A great many things in His dealings have been and still are mysteries to me; but I am sure they could all be explained on the basis of love and justice, if only I could look deep enough; and that some day I shall see, what now I firmly believe, that His loving kindness is really and truly over all His works.

I do not mean to say that all this acquaintance with God came to me at once; but I do mean to say that when I had that revelation on the tram-car in Philadelphia that day, a light on the character of God began to shine, that has never since waned in the slightest, and has only grown brighter and brighter with every year of my life. It is enough for me to say "God is" and I have the answer to every possible difficulty.

The amazing thing is that I, in company with so many other Christians, had failed, with the open Bible before me, to see this; and that all sorts of travesties on the character of God, and of libels upon His goodness, can find apparently a welcome entrance into Christian hearts. To me such things became at this

time well nigh intolerable. I could listen patiently, and even with interest, to any sort of strange or heretical ideas that did not touch the character of God, but the one thing I could not endure, and could not sit still to listen to, was anything that contained, even under a show of great piety, the least hint of a libel on His love or His selfishness.

I shall never forget a memorable occasion in our own house, when a celebrated Preacher from Boston, was visiting us. The conversation at the breakfast table turned on the subject of God's love, and this Preacher declared that you must not count on it too much, as there were limits as to what His love could endure, just as there were limits to a mother's love; and he went on to declare that there were certain sins a daughter could commit which the mother never could forgive, and which would forever close her heart and her home against her child, and he asserted that it was just so with God, and that he considered it was a grandmotherly religion that taught anything different.

I have no doubt his object was to combat my views on Restitution, although we were not talking on that subject; but he evidently wanted to convince me that God was not quite so foolishly loving as I thought. It was more than I could endure to hear both mothers, and the God who made mothers, so maligned, and, although the speaker was my guest, I broke forth into a perfect passion of indignation, and, declaring that I would not sit at the table with any one who held such libelous ideas of God, I burst into tears and left the room, and entirely declined to see my guest again. I do not say this was right or courteous, or at all Christ-like, but it only illustrates how overwhelmingly I felt on the subject. The honor of God seemed to me of more importance than any ordinary rules of politeness. But I see now that I might have vindicated that honor in an equally effectual but more Christ-like way.

Still, to this day, the one thing which I find it very hard to tolerate, is any thing which libels the character of God. Nothing else matters like this, for all our salvation depends wholly and entirely upon what God is; and unless He can be proved to be absolutely good, and absolutely unselfish, and absolutely just, our case is absolutely hopeless. God is our salvation, and, if He fails us, in even the slightest degree, we have nowhere else to turn.

