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Issue 394

The Salvation of Judas

An Answer to Our Critics

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

Those whose hearts have been enlarged and whose affections overflow because of the matchless grace revealed by the universal reconciliation will seek to engage others with this marvelous truth. In this joyful endeavor they will meet a rebuff from those who sincerely desire to cleave to the Word of God and who bring up passages which, in our versions, and apart from their context, certainly seem to deny the possibility of God's fulfillment of His purpose to reconcile the universe to Himself through the blood of Christ's cross¹ (Colossians 1:20).

One of the more common objections is the case of Judas. The following extract, which is intended to show that Christ contradicted the doctrine, is characteristic of this opposition.

"Christ says of Judas,

"Good were it for that man if he had not been born' (Mark 14:21).

"The Restorationist says it would have been an incalculable misfortune for him; for however long and heavily his miseries hereafter might lie upon him, the endlessness of bliss in which they are ultimately to terminate would immeasurably outweigh them all; and the blessedness of his existence in the condition to which he is to be finally introduced would be infinitely in favor of the fact that he *had* been born."



Let us concede at once that this seems to be a formidable objection to the truth so definitely taught elsewhere. If it was better for Judas never to have been born (as the verse is generally quoted) it is hard to see how he can have part in the universal reconciliation, or how he can share the universal vivification (I Corinthians 15), or how all men can be saved and come to a realization of the truth (I Timothy 2:4).

The first question which must be settled is, *Did* Christ utter these words? Is our translation reliable in this passage?

The method, if such it may be called, which was employed by our translators, or, rather, revisers (for the so-called *Authorized Version* was also a revision) made their work a reflex of current theology rather than of the inspired text. Could we expect them to translate except in line with their own concept of "truth"? Would we have them make the Bible teach "error"? To the credit of a minority of the later revisers, it must be admitted, however, that they insisted on a marginal record which is founded on sound principles. Both the English and American revisions note in their margin that the words "*of Him*" are omitted in their translation of the text we are studying.

IT WERE WELL FOR THE SON OF MAN IF JUDAS WAS NOT BORN

In order that each one may have the evidence clearly before him, we reproduce the original text of this passage with a literal, consistent interlinear. Thus we will be able to see whether they were justified in their

(see *JUDAS*, page 355!)

1. *i.e.*, "An upright stake or pale, without any crosspiece." — A.E. Knoch (*Concordant Keyword Concordance*, page 63). For more information read **THE "CROSS": Was Christ Nailed to a "Cross" or a "Stake"?** by Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

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- 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 law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (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);
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 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
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JUDAS (continued from front page)

omission of “of Him,” or whether these words were left out to enable them to give a turn to the passage in line with their concept of what it *ought* to teach.

KALON AUTOO EI OUK EGENNEETHEE
well to him if not was-born

HO ANTHROOPOS EKEINOS
the man that

There is no real reason why this should not be rendered “*it were well for Him if that man was not born.*” This leaves nothing out and does not unite the “*well*” with “*that man*” instead of “*Him.*”

The question arises, Who is the “Him”? The versions say that he is “*that man*”; but just as soon as they introduce the pronoun “*Him*” it is in *contrast* to “*that man*,” rather than the same. *That man* suggests a *different* one from the subject of the sentence, which is the Son of Man.

A most simple solution is offered us in the preceding clause of this sentence. There we have the pronoun “*Him*” and “*that man*” both referred to in such a way that we cannot mistake them. “*The Son of Man indeed goeth, as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!*” “*Him*” is the Son of Man; “*that man*” is Judas. How can it be otherwise in the balance of the sentence? It simply is out of the question for “*Him*” to refer to Judas. We must read on, “*well were it for Him [the Son of Man] if that man [Judas] was not born.*”

That there need be no hesitancy in speaking of things being “*not well*” or “*well*” for the Son of Man is made clear by the act of the woman with the alabaster box of ointment in the very same chapter. The same word is used of her act as of Judas’. He said, “*she hath wrought a good work on Me*” (Matthew 26:10). It is not the usual word for “good” or for “well.” It denotes that which is fitting and agreeable. Her act was one which became His exalted station; Judas’ act was one altogether out of keeping with His kindness and favor.

Christ said many awful things concerning the son of perdition, but not one of them conflicts with His purpose or power to save him eventually together with all mankind. He never said it was good, or better, if he had not been born.

This case is a good illustration of the kind of difficulties which confront those who seek for truth beyond what the translators knew. Time and again have they modified or colored passages so as to conform with their idea of orthodoxy. Indeed, on some line of truths – and especially where God’s ultimate goal is concerned – the “Bible” is sufficiently perverted to be the most effectual enemy which the truth can have, for, in spite of the plain, categorical statements dealing with the subject, isolated misstatements such as we have been considering, blind the hearts of His people lest the glorious effulgence of His glory should illumine them (II Corinthians 4:4).

JUDAS IS NOT A “DEVIL”

Another argument (if it can be called such) is as follows:

“If Judas is ultimately to be saved so also is the devil; for Judas ‘is a devil,’ and the possibility of salvation in the case of one devil argues the possibility of the salvation of all devils (John 6:70).”

This is reasoning. The major premise is that there is no salvation for devils. The minor premise is that Judas is a devil.

The first premise is absolutely unfounded, and the second is perverted.

Let us apply the very same mode of reasoning to the case of Peter. Our Lord called Peter “*Satan*” (Matthew 16:23). According to orthodoxy, Satan is absolutely beyond the pale of salvation. Hence, Peter cannot be saved; or, conversely, the possibility of the salvation of one Satan argues the possibility of the salvation of another.

The logic is unanswerable, but the premises are untenable. Two things must first be proved: (1) There is no salvation for “devils”; (2) Judas actually was not a human being but one of the order of beings usually called “devils.” Neither premise is sustained by Scripture.

Satan and Devil are descriptive terms, like Christ. Satan means Adversary. Devil means Slanderer. It is applied especially to the one great Adversary of Christ and Slanderer of His people, but is not confined to him. There are many other satans and slanderers.

The angel of Jehovah was a "satan" to Balaam (Numbers 22:22). Hadad, the Edomite, was stirred up to be Solomon's "satan" (I Kings 11:14).

"Devil" or slanderer is also applied in this general sense to human things. If we insist that all "devils" or slanderers are outside of the scope of redemption, it is useless to preach the gospel to the "false accusers" of these last days (II Timothy 3:3).

Neither is there any hope for those aged women who fall into this sin (Titus 2:3). In both of these Scriptures the expression "false accusers" is the same as "devils" elsewhere (except where devil is the rendering of *demon*). The deacons' wives who are slanderers are all hopelessly lost, for this is the same word in the Greek.

SLANDERERS CAN AND WILL BE SAVED

When reasoning lands us in such a morass as this it is time that we link our reason to revelation. Our major premise is wrong. Some devils, or slanderers, *will* be saved; and, in the language of our opponent, "the possibility of salvation in the case of one devil argues the possibility of the salvation of all devils." We conclude, therefore, that Judas may be saved. Our opponent founds his argument on fallacies: we found ours on facts. He bases all on the Bible: we stand on the Scriptures.

Another argument of this sort is drawn from the hazy misconception that a "devil" is a distinct order of beings. If Judas had been called a "demon" (which our translators usually render "devil") there would be at least some show of substance to this argument. Yet Judas is called a "slanderer," not a "demon."

"Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21) are essential conditions of salvation. But "[repentance unto salvation]" is only wrought by "godly sorrow" for sin (II Corinthians 7:10) and is always directed "toward God ..."

"The *Restorationist* has to prove from the Word of God that a devil is capable of such repentance and such faith. If not, then Judas can never be saved (John 6:70); and if one man may be endlessly lost, the whole fabric of 'Final Restoration' is shattered."

The broad statement that repentance and faith are

always essential to salvation will not stand the test of Scripture. Repentance is essential in connection with the *Kingdom*, but has no place in the gospel for today. Paul's later ministries will be searched in vain for it. The repentance of those who *are* saved (such as are referred to in the passage in II Corinthians) has no bearing on the salvation of the lost. Repentance is sometimes, *not always*, a condition of salvation.

The same is true of faith. No one insists more strongly than we on this condition (if we may call it such) in the present economy. In fact it is essential throughout the eons; but after the eons are past, faith gives way to sight and salvation no longer needs to be conditional in any sense. God is the Savior of all mankind, *especially* of those who believe. Faith gives a special salvation to be enjoyed during the eons, long before He becomes the Savior of all mankind at the consummation.

"There is no provision made by God for the salvation of demons (Hebrews 2:16; II Peter 2:4; Jude 6); nor, yet for the salvation of those who, in this life, have 'willfully sinned' in a final rejection of God's grace and love in Christ Jesus (John 8:21, 24; Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-29)."

The strange thing about this argument is the fact that "demons" are neither mentioned nor suggested by the context in any of the passages referenced. It is always *messengers* or "angels," quite a different order of beings. What this has to do with the case of Judas is not clear.

Yet far be it from us to allow for one moment that God has not made provision for any of His creatures! Far be it from us to set limits to the efficacy of the reconciliation which is being effected by His Son! Through the blood of His cross God will reconcile all creation (Colossians 1:20), and that includes both messengers and demons.

Surely no one will countenance the "Authorized" rendering of Hebrews 2:16. With a view to the administration of the kingdom He does not *take hold* of messengers but of the seed of Abraham. The coming world is not subjected to them (Hebrews 2:5). There is nothing at all said concerning their salvation. On the contrary, we are assured that in the name Jesus (*the Savior*) every knee will bow, not only subterranean and terrestrial, but *celestial* realms as well (Philippians 2:11). The messengers are included among His celestial trophies.

THE SCRIPTURES KNOW NOTHING OF BEING "FINALLY" LOST

In both of the other passages (II Peter 2:4 and Jude 6) we have the fate of messengers, who sinned, *until* the day of judgment. What that judgment will be we are not told, but we may well imagine that it will call for severe measures. But none of this is *final*. It is all concerned with their career during the eons, in which the Scriptures give us no idea that they will be saved. After that they are explicit. All creatures will be reconciled to God.

The passage adduced on "willful sinning," etc., have no real bearing on the case except as the objector becomes the injector of the word "*final*." The fulfillment of God's purpose to save all does not in the least interfere with judgment on Christ-rejectors during the eons.

"Christ says 'None of them is lost, but the son of perdition' (John 17:12; Romans 2:5-11; Revelation 22:11).

"The *Restorationist* affirms that the son of perdition is not so hopelessly lost as Christ would have us believe – an affirmation which amounts to this: that, if Christ's word is not final in the one case, neither is it in the other. If I am to believe that the son of perdition is not finally lost, what security have I for believing that the rest of whom Christ speaks are finally saved?"

First let us affirm our full belief in what our Lord said.

Judas, the son of perdition, perished; but we refuse to add to His words and say that he is *finally* lost. We will not be wise above what is written. What then of the rest? Were they *not* "finally" saved? The question rests on a mistaken assumption. It is based on a deliberate refusal to believe what *God* says is to be the "final" condition of all humanity. Salvation, like perdition, is *eonian*: they both come to an end; but both issue into a state of perfect bliss, characterized by the eloquent statement that God will be "*All in all*" (I Corinthians 15:28).

If those who use the word "final" so freely would inquire as to *God's* "final" achievement, their difficulties and objections would vanish. When we insist that salvation as well as judgment is *eonian* and not endless or final, we do not in the least detract

from the salvation, nor do we give any license to the thought that those who are saved will be lost. On the contrary, after the *eons* have rolled away sin and death, no one will be lost, but all will enjoy His salvation – not *eonian* salvation which follows faith, but a later exhibition of His grace which will work out His sovereign will that all mankind shall be saved and come to a realization of the truth.

"Christ says that between the just and the unjust, in the after state, "*there is a great gulf fixed,*" so that to pass from the side of death to the side of life is as impossible as it is to pass from the side of life to that of death (Luke 16:26).

"The *Restorationist* necessarily denies this."

Here a parabolic scene in the unseen is called the "after state" and the inference is that this is final. Yet, even if this was literal narrative, the unseen is cast into the lake of fire long before the consummation. It is transitory, not final. As to the gulf being fixed between *life* and *death* – that is wholly beside the mark. Both the rich man and Lazarus were *dead*. We deny nothing in the narrative, only that which is injected into it, which is that it represents the *final* state of the just and the unjust.

"Christ says that '*the last state of the deliberately wicked man is worse than the first.*' So, also, says the Holy Ghost, using precisely the same words (Matthew 12:45; II Peter 2:20).

"The *Restorationist* absolutely denies this. 'The last state of that man' as he represents it, is beyond all conception good; for it is not 'corruption' – even though God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost say it is (Matthew 12:33; Galatians 6:8) – but eternal life."

"FIRST" AND "LAST" ARE RELATIVE TERMS; THEY CANNOT BE TAKEN ABSOLUTELY

The whole weight of this argument rests on a meaning of the word "last" which it will not sustain. Even in our English translation we cannot give the word the sense of absolute finality. It always has a relative value. The "*last day*" so often spoken of (John 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48) or the "*last days*" (Acts 2:17; I Corinthians 15:8; II Timothy 3:1; Hebrews 1:2; James 5:3; II Peter 3:3) or the "*last time*" (I Peter 1:5, 20; I John 2:18; Jude 18) are none of them final. We ►

are living in the *last* days. Are there to be no more days after this? Are there no days in the millennium? We are not living in the last days absolutely, but in the last days of *this economy*. So the last state in the Scripture quoted from Matthew is the last state of *that generation*. It has absolutely no bearing on their individual destiny either at the judgment or at the consummation.

What was their “first” state? Was it their absolute beginning as babes? Is it not rather a contrast between two states which bear the relation of first and last? The word “first,” like “last,” often has this relative value. The translators themselves recognized this when they rendered it “former” in Revelation 21:4. The *former* things passed away. Not the absolute *first* things, for they had long since gone. So, too, the *first* heaven and earth refers to the *previous* ones, and the *first* resurrection is the former or previous one. There is a resurrection before it.

“Christ says there is a sin beyond the reach of the pardoning mercy of God. *‘It shall not be forgiven him’* – never – *‘neither in this age, nor in that which is to come’* (Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:29).

“The *Restorationist* gives an open denial to the statement.”

If there is anyone claiming the title “Restorationist” (which we refuse) who really denies this statement, we have no sympathy with them. Yet we have far less sympathy with those who insist that those who are not forgiven in this age, or in the next, will not and must not be forgiven after the ages are past. The “never” is literally “not for the age,” or eon.

We are even willing to allow that they will not be forgiven for the age *after* the next age; but we will not insist on this, for it is only our opinion. Yet it shows that, instead of denying this Scripture, we are ready to allow even more than it explicitly states. The “open” denial is on the part of the objector who tries to make Christ his mouthpiece in denying God’s plain declarations concerning *all mankind* at a time altogether out of the range of this passage.

“The *Holy Spirit* affirms that the lake of fire and the doom of the lost belong as much to the fixed and final order of things, where God is all in all, as the new heavens and the new earth (Revelation 21-22).

“The *Restorationist* ‘takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy’ and deliberately affirms that they do not.

We have read the last two chapters of the Revelation in the original and in various translations. We have not found any statement to the effect that “the lake of fire and

the doom of the lost belong to the *fixed* and *final* order of things,” nor have we discovered any hint therein that God has become “*All in all.*”

These are *added* by the opposer, who invites on himself the very curse which he seeks to fasten on others, for he *adds* to the prophecy (Revelation 22:18). Yet what shall we do when they deliberately state that *the Holy Spirit affirms* their own ignorant assumptions and charges others who believe what is written with the very sin of which they themselves are guilty? We challenge anyone to show any passage in the last two chapters of Revelation which denies God’s purpose to reconcile the universe to Himself through the blood of His Son’s cross. We challenge them to show that the scenes there described are “fixed” or “final,” or that God has become “*All in all.*”

We are exhorted to “*try the spirits whether they be of God*” (I John 4:1). We have tried this “holy” spirit and have found that it is not of God, but is the false human spirit of one who knows but little of God and His gracious Word, and is so blinded by the creed he is defending that he has no hesitancy in putting a lie into the mouth of God’s holy spirit and even tries to hurl God’s curse against such a practice at anyone who dares to snatch it out.

It is a desperate doctrine which needs to be established on the deliberate omission of a phrase in order to pervert a passage in its favor. It is a decadent doctrine which depends on an appeal to popular misconceptions to support it. It is a dangerous doctrine which dares to insistently inject the thought of finality into every passage without the least foundation. It is a false doctrine which flatly contradicts definite declarations dealing directly with its deductions. In fact, the lack of principle involved in every phase of the opposition to the salvation of Judas is no less a betrayal of our Lord than the act of Judas himself.

NOT JUDAS, BUT PAUL, WAS THE CHIEF OF SINNERS

Shall we then retaliate and say that those who pervert the Scriptures thus will not be saved? Far from it! Paul, not Judas, was the *chief of sinners*. His call is the pattern for us today.

Grace super-abounds. Much as Judas deserves destruction, and in full recognition of the dread judgment which will be his portion for the eons, we still believe that the Lord whose power was so potent in the case of Paul (even though the Scriptures seemed to seal his doom) will also be displayed in the case of Judas, as it is written,

“*That God may be All in ALL.*” ■

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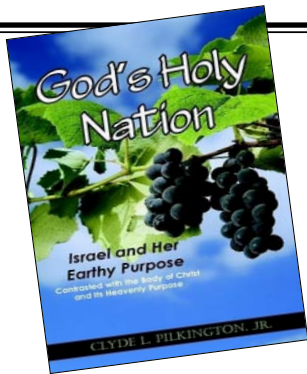


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