**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**GENESIS-003. EDEN LOST AND RESTORED by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"So He drove out the man: and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."*

*Genesis 3:24*

*"Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."*

*Revelation 22:14*

Better is the end of a thing than the beginning. Eden was fair, but the heavenly city shall be fairer. The Paradise regained is an advance on the Paradise that was lost. These are the two ends of the history of man, separated by who knows how many millenniums. Heaven lay about him in his infancy, but as he journeyed westwards its morning blush faded into the light of common day--and only at eventide shall the sky glow again with glory and colour, and the western heaven at last outshine the eastern, with a light that shall never die. A fall, and a rise--a rise that reverses the fall, a rise that transcends the glory from which he fell,--that is the Bible's notion of the history of the world, and I, for my part, believe it to be true, and feel it to be the one satisfactory explanation of what I see round about me and am conscious of within me.

**I. Man had an Eden and lost it.**

I take the Fall to be a historical fact. To all who accept the authority of Scripture, no words are needed beyond the simple statement before us, but we may just gather up the signs that there are on the wide field of the world's history, and in the narrower experience of individuals, that such a fall has been.

Look at the condition of the world: its degradation, its savagery-all its pining myriads, all its untold millions who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. Will any man try to bring before him the actual state of the heathen world, and, retaining his belief in a God, profess that these men are what God meant men to be? It seems to me that the present condition of the world is not congruous with the idea that men are in their primitive state, and if this is what God meant men for, then I see not how the dark clouds which rest on His wisdom and His love are to be lifted off.

Then, again--if the world has not a Fall in its history, then we must take the lowest condition as the one from which all have come; and is that idea capable of defence? Do we see anywhere signs of an upward process going on now? Have we any experience of a tribe raising itself? Can you catch anywhere a race in the act of struggling up, outside of the pale of Christianity? Is not the history of all a history of decadence, except only where the Gospel has come in to reverse the process?

But passing from this:

* What mean the experiences of the individual-these longings; this hard toil; these sorrows?
* How comes it that man alone on earth, manifestly meant to be leader, lord, etc., seems but cursed with a higher nature that he may know greater sorrows, and raised above the beasts in capacity that he may sink below them in woe, this capacity only leading to a more exquisite susceptibility, to a more various as well as more poignant misery?
* Whence come the contrarieties and discordance in his nature?

It seems to me that all this is best explained as the Bible explains it by saying:

**(1)** Sin has done it;

**(2)** Sin is not part of God's original design, but man has fallen;

**(3)** Sin had a personal beginning. There have been men who were pure, able to stand but free to fall.

It seems to me that that explanation is more in harmony with the facts of the case, finds more response in the unsophisticated instinct of man, than any other. It seems to me that, though it leaves many dark and sorrowful mysteries all unsolved, yet that it alleviates the blackest of them, and flings some rays of hope on them all. It seems to me that it relieves the character and administration of God from the darkest dishonour; that it delivers man's position and destiny from the most hopeless despair; that though it leaves the mystery of the origin of evil, it brings out into clearest relief the central truths that evil is evil, and sin and sorrow are not God's will; that it vindicates as something better than fond imaginings the vague aspirations of the soul for a fair and holy state; that it establishes, as nothing else will, at once the love of God and the dignity of man; that it leaves open the possibility of the final overthrow of that Sin which it treats as an intrusion and stigmatises as a fall; that it therefore braces for more vigorous, hopeful conflict against it, and that while but for it the answer to the despairing question, Hast Thou made all men in vain? must be either the wailing echo In vain, or the denial that He has made them at all, there is hope and there is power, and there is brightness thrown on the character of God and on the fate of man, by the old belief that God made man upright, and that man made himself a sinner.

**II. Heaven restores the lost Eden.**

God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared them a city.

The highest conception we can form of heaven is the reversal of all the evil of earth, and the completion of its incomplete good: the sinless purity--the blessed presence of God--the fulfilment of all desires--the service which is blessed, not toil--the changelessness which is progress, not stagnation.

**III. Heaven surpasses the lost Eden.**

**(1)** Garden--City. The perfection of association--the nations of the saved. Here we mortal millions live alone, even when united with dearest. Like Egyptian monks of old, each dwelling in his own cave, though all were a community.

**(2)** The richer experience. The memory of past sorrows which are understood at last. Heaven's bliss in contrast with earthly joys. Sinlessness of those who have been sinners will be more intensely lustrous for its dark background in the past. Redeemed men will be brighter than angels. The impossibility of a fall. Death behind us.

The former things shall no more come to mind, being lost in blaze of present transcendent experience, but yet shall be remembered as having led to that perfect state.

Christ not only repairs the tabernacle which was fallen, but builds a fairer temple. He brings a statelier Eden, and makes us dwell for ever in a Garden City.