

those men might have been saved, perchance, it is now too late! Hardened in sin have they become! They prefer darkness to light, because their deeds are evil.

Now I want to make this point with you. Not one of those wretched prisoners need have occupied that loathsome place without his own consent. I mean by this that his own consent was necessary to the perpetration of the crimes which sent him there. Conscience will force him to exclaim:

"Myself alone am cause of all my woe!"

The law would not have laid hold upon him had he not violated its enactments, Robbery, murder, arson, were deeds to which he was not forced. And he sinned wilfully and deliberately with eyes open to the consequences. Therefore he may be said to have made election of his own desperate fate. Just so in regard to hell. Were God's laws kept, the place would be abolished—none would be confined therein; and he who persistently breaks that law does so of his own accord. God created him a free agent, and so invested him with the responsibility of choice. Here it may be enquired:

II. WHAT CONSTITUTES THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF HELL IN THE HUMAN SOUL?

First: *adaptation of spirit.* He that goes thither goes to "his own place," like Judas. He goes, because he has virtually chosen it in defiance of warning and admonition, in preference to Heaven. For that a choice was offered him in the gospel cannot be denied.

"Evil, be thou my good!"

was his reply.

The bad man unfits himself for Heaven by foulness of tongue, impurity of life and conduct, and by deliberate self-will and hardness of heart. The door of mercy stood wide open inviting him to enter in; but he slammed it to, as it were, in the very face of God! His heavenly Father did not send him to perdition. He went there, because to the abode of kindred spirits. Unfitted for the companionship of the redeemed because of his wicked works, just as water will seek its level, he sought the companionship of the depraved, and so found his level in the nether world. There was nothing abnormal in this, but, in perfect correspondence with the processes of nature, sowing to the wind he reaped the whirlwind; exactly according to the tree which he planted, he gathers fruit.

"The mind is its own place, and in itself

Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."

—Paradise Lost; Book I., 235, 6.

Take a filthy man and set him in the midst of the Paradise of God, his heart unchanged, it were no Paradise to him. Talk of God's not being so cruel as to exclude any from his Kingdom! The

charge is groundless, in that the wicked are self-excluded—excluded by virtue of their own incapacity for the enjoyments and pursuits of Heaven. I see not how it could be justly otherwise. Put a pure and virtuous man into a prison, such as that I spoke of, it were a hell to him; because repugnant to every feeling of his own nature. Place an impure and devilish man in heaven; that, to him, were virtual hell, because out of harmony with his every desire and aspiration. *Each in his own place*, then, becomes a demand of justice—a first principle.

So that you see the wicked must herd with the wicked, such being their deliberate choice, the natural and fitting sequel to a life of wickedness. It needs no act of God to accomplish this. *Nature seeks an equilibrium*; and so, by the law of spiritual gravitation, will wicked and ungodly men and women gravitate towards each other there (just as they do in this world,) and conformably to the awards of the final judgment. And just as the magnet is attracted by the loadstone, and as the pious, the God-fearing and Christ-loving draw near to each other here on earth, so will they enjoy thereafter, but in heroic degree, the delights of heavenly intercourse and communion. This in the eternal fitness of things, from which I see no reason to expect any the least deviation.

Second: *The conviction of the forfeiture of heaven* will form, I think, an essential and most aggravating ingredient in the wretchedness of the lost.

When a soul created after the image of God shall come to consider in the eternal world what it might have been but for sin—sin wilfully and deliberately indulged—it appears to me that it were more than enough to drive that soul mad if such a thing might be. For one in torment to look upwards to those gates of light, and to realize in all its horror that the privilege of treading the golden streets is reserved for others, not for him or her; that, whilst enchained a prisoner in that awful place which he has chosen, more than by any act of the Almighty Father who might have crushed him in the days of his impotent rebelliousness, but simply in compassion would not, *his hands shall not be allowed to strike the chords of the heavenly harps, nor his voice attune to the heavenly music*; to think that, instead of a white robed saint, partaker of the marriage supper of the Lamb, his garments are those of filthiness, curses his clothing, his associates murderers, adulterers and all liars—his fate "the second Death," oh what horror that! who shall attempt to depict its awfulness? Inspiration alone could do it; and Inspiration has expressed it in that terrible