

# THE GOSPEL MESSENGER,

OR UNIVERSALIST ADVOCATE.

["AND THE ANGEL SAID UNTO THEM, FEAR NOT, FOR BEHOLD! I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY WHICH SHALL BE UNTO ALL PEOPLE."—Luko 2: 10.]

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## Review of Hall on Universalism.

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies: bless them that curse you: do good to them that hate you and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you—that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: For he maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Math. 5: 44, 45. (No. 16; p. 42.)

This passage, as our author remarks, we consider "strong ground in our favor." It declares another glorious truth—that God is alike good unto all, the evil as well as the righteous—from which fact we justly infer the ultimate and universal blessedness of our race. Our Saviour commands us to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, &c., that we may be the children of our Father in Heaven—that is, that we may be like him in character—not in the primary sense of creation, for in that sense, as we have seen, all are his children—but his children characteristically; and then refers to two great blessings in nature, the sunshine and the rain, in proof that God is good to his enemies—that he is alike good to both "the just and the unjust." It not only refutes the idea that God will eternally torment his enemies—the "evil" and "unjust," but on the other hand, declares that he will even bless them! Surely we may infer any thing else from this than the doctrine of endless punishment!

But says our author, "the Savior here refers only to temporal things, and not to those things which relate to God's spiritual or moral government." Indeed! And are we to understand by this that although God is good to all in a temporal sense, yet that he is not so in a spiritual sense? Are his temporal blessings freely bestowed upon all—"the just and the unjust," while his moral and spiritual blessings are only for the "just?" We shall see. Let us now glance at some of the leading and more prominent blessings of the Father of all, and see, if possible, what are their character and extent.

1. The blessings of existence and life are direct blessings from the Almighty, and are conferred of his own free will and pleasure without any conditions on our part. Man was not consulted on the question whether he would be made or not be made; God created him in his own image, and pronounced the work good.

2. Natural, or temporal blessings:—These are "free and unconfined"—conferred alike upon the 'evil and the good'—the just and the unjust. God, in the bestowment of his favors, is no respecter of persons; and in proof that his temporal blessings are impartially distributed upon all, we need only refer to the two examples noted by our Savior—the sunshine, and the rain—although others might be mentioned. Now it is true, as our remarks, "Man must work—he must improve these blessings, or he will starve to death, and God will not pity him." But you will notice that God's blessings are uncondi-

tional—he has done his part. He gives life, reason, physical strength, and health—the soil to cultivate, the sun to invigorate it, and to give us light, the 'early and latter rain,' to cause the seed to spring up and grow,—seed time and harvest—earth, air and water, with all their ten thousand productions and facilities. These we call direct blessings, because they come directly from the Almighty and do not depend upon man's conduct or character for their existence. But it is necessary for man to eat in order to live; and in order to eat he must work, for, 'If any man will not work, neither shall he eat'—'the sluggard shall beg in the harvest and have nothing.' In fine we must work—must pursue the different avocations of life, in order to procure food, clothing, education, competence, and whatever we may desire of the luxuries of life. Here you perceive are other blessings, which may be termed indirect—such as we work out for ourselves. God here becomes the remote, and man the proximate cause. These, then, are not to be set down as blessings of God, in a direct sense, but are blessings which result from our own exertions, and our improvement of the liberal and impartial blessings which our Father bestows upon all.

3. Moral and Spiritual blessings:—God has given us a Moral Law and Moral precepts, to govern and regulate our conduct—by the observance of which we shall secure our present happiness, so far as it can be secured by righteous conduct and correct moral deportment. He has given us Spiritual blessings:—declared himself to be our Father and our Friend, and that he has prepared a Heaven and Home for us far beyond this vale of tears—has made known his purposes concerning us, and our future destiny—and by the advent, death, and resurrection of his Son, has revealed to us the Undying Life beyond the grave. These are the Moral and Spiritual blessings of our Heavenly Father; and now I ask, What did man ever do which caused God to bestow these blessings? Are they in any way consequent upon any thing which man has done, can or will do? No. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." What induced God to make the revelation which he has from time to time made by his holy prophets? What called the Savior from the bright realms above to suffer and die in this world, and thereby bring "LIFE and IMMORTALITY to light"—the greatest blessing ever yet bestowed upon man? Was it our righteousness, or any good thing we had done? Nothing, I affirm, but the unbounded LOVE and GOODNESS of our Father—unless it was our wickedness, our wretched condition, and our great need of such blessings. "The gifts and callings of God are WITHOUT REPENTANCE"—and so I contend are his blessings, all his blessings, to the children of men—both in Time, and in Eternity.—Now it is true in relation to these great Moral and Spiritual blessings, as in relation

to the Natural and Temporal—if we do not lay hold of, and turn them to account, we shall derive but little, if any, benefit from them. If we do not accept the Moral blessings, and govern our conduct according to their dictates, we will have to suffer the consequence; and if we neglect the Scriptural blessings which have been so freely placed at our disposal, our souls, the spiritual man, will famish—we shall starve to death! As God has given us Natural and Temporal blessings—the sun, rain, earth, air and seas, with all their fruits and countless products, and tells us to make use of them, prepare them and eat; and live, physically; so has he given us Moral and Spiritual blessings—his Divine Law—the relation he sustains to us—his character, Will and Purpose—his Promises and bright Revelations of what await in the Future—and commands us to lay hold of them, and BLESS OURSELVES;—to eat of them, that we may live, spiritually, while we tabernacle in the flesh. The blessings which thus result to us from faith and conduct, may, as in the other case, be termed secondary, or indirect blessings—such as we work out for ourselves, and are only for the present, or time being. But what if we neglect the Moral and Spiritual blessings which our Father has given us? what if we do not believe the promises and revelations he has made, disregard his Moral precepts, and thereby suffer a moral and spiritual death, all our life time? Will he damn us eternally on that account? As soon should it be said that he will eternally damn us for not making use of his Temporal blessings—for refusing to work or to eat, and thus allowing us to die from physical hunger! He that will not work, shall not eat, but must die—and that is the penalty. He that will not obey, must suffer the consequence, though it be even to death,—and that is the penalty.—He that rejects the gospel—refuses to believe the promises, will exist all his lifetime in a state of spiritual death—and that is the penalty. Thus you see God has supplied us with every blessing necessary for our existence, happiness, and well-being, in this present life; and it is with us to say whether we will make use of them, and live—or reject them, and die;—either physically, morally or spiritually—the consequence in neither case reaching beyond the present mode of existence. This leads me to speak,

4. Of the Future and Eternal blessings:—And as we have seen that the blessings of our Heavenly Father in the present world, whether Temporal or Spiritual, are free and impartial, not depending upon the conduct of man for their existence—so we conclude will they be in the future world. What are the conditions of the Resurrection? What of Immortality? What of the future Existence? These we affirm will be universal and unconditional blessings direct from the hand of the Almighty. Through his Son he has given us the assurance that he will raise all

men from the dead, and through him, endow them with an Immortal existence.—The assurance of this fact is given to us in this world, that through faith we may lay hold on the promise set before us—that it may comfort us here and sustain us in the hour of death. And just so sure as God's word is true, so sure will there be a resurrection of the dead, "both of the just and the unjust;" and just so sure as all men are raised from the dead, so sure will all be made immortal. And just so sure as "all bear the image of the earthy in this world, so sure will all bear the image of the heavenly" in the future; and, I will add, so sure as all bear the image of the heavenly in the resurrection or future state, just so sure will all be holy and happy. Thus we see the blessings of God to the children of men, both in time and in eternity, are free, universal and unmerited—by any thing we may or can do.—And why should they not be? He is our Father—the Father of ALL. Life and existence are given to all;—the sunshine and the shower are alike for all:—the Gospel is a free gift unbought by any thing we had done; and so will be the great blessings of the Future. The Resurrection will embrace all—all will be placed on the same footing, and all be happy in proportion to their capabilities for enjoyment. And now, if there be something for us to do in that world, as in this; if there be laws for us to obey, a Gospel for us to believe—if it be necessary for us to work in order to enjoy the blessings of that existence and be perfectly happy, then of course we shall have to do so, or suffer the consequence. But it will be time enough for us to know this when we get there.

Thus we view the blessing of God.—And although our Savior in the text referred to but two of them in proof of the impartial goodness of the Father—the sun and the rain—yet he might with equal propriety and certainty have referred to any, or to all. He chose these no doubt because they were the most striking and familiar, and would be the most readily recognized by his hearers. But to return.

This text we say is strong ground in our favor. We are commanded to love, bless, pray for, and do good to our enemies: Why so? that we may be like God, be the children of our Father in heaven. But how so? If God will torment, persecute, and cruelly punish his 'enemies'—those that 'curse,' and 'hate' him—in a hell of fire to all eternity, can we be like him—be his 'children' characteristically, if we bless and do good to our 'enemies?' Surely there is some mistake here! Either we should torment and punish our enemies to the utmost of our ability, and thereby gratify and still increase our hellish and diabolical propensities for cruelty and revenge, in order to be like God, to be his children—or else it is not true that he will deal thus with his enemies. But there is no room for doubt here: our Savior settles the question; for in blessing our enemies