

CONCORD OF AGES

OR
THE INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIC HARMONY
OF GOD AND MAN

Edward Beecher, D. D.

Edited by
Phillip A. Ross

“One God, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”
— Eph. 4:6

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Edward Beecher (1803–1895)
Picture courtesy of The Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Connecticut.

Dedicated to

Local Christian Pastors

in the hope for Christian Resolution

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INTRODUCTION

This book cannot be understood without first reading Beecher's preceding volume, *Conflict of Ages*. So, if you have not read that, please do not continue. *Conflict* traces the problem through the history of Christianity up to the publishing of *Concord*, 1850s. And *Concord* provides the solution to the problem delineated in *Conflict*.

Beecher's perspective and style very much reflect the best aspects of Nineteenth Century America prior to the Civil War. This does not mean that it comes from a time of great peace and tranquility, but rather that it is fraught with the angst that eventually resulted in the Civil War. The fact that this book is thoroughly modern, but not postmodern makes it a very interesting for anyone who truly wants to understand the world we actually live in today.

Beecher was not a backwater hick or a Southern sympathizer, but represents the best of American theology and literature of his day. His sister was the famous Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Edward was widely recognized as the best scholar among the Beechers, and the Beecher family produced an amazing array of scholars. Interestingly, his scholarship landed him in conflict with the religious pundits of every stripe in his day. The two conflicting trends in Nineteenth Century America involved the consolidation of Reformation churches, which had become the American Establishment, and the rejection of religious establishment mentality that has been described by many as a continuation of the principle of the Reformation.

Nineteenth Century America produced a prodigious raft of new philosophies, denominations and religious movements, including German idealism, Utilitarianism, Marxism, Existentialism, Positivism, Pragmatism, British idealism, Transcendentalism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, Cooneyites, and many more. Obviously, all of these are not the product of the principle of the Christian Reformation. It was a time of great dissociation from the Christian roots

of Western Civilization and from the Protestant roots of the original American society. It was the season of the flowering of the Great Awakenings in the sense that the Great Awakenings produced a kind of cross-pollination of the Reformation and the Enlightenment.

Edward's father, Lyman Beecher, had been a major player in the Second Great Awakening. Trained and ordained as a Connecticut Congregational Calvinist, Lyman Beecher served several Presbyterian churches in the Northeast and later on the Western Frontier in Ohio. He was the preeminent "Presbygational" pastor, who was deeply involved in the 1801 Plan of Union, a short-lived cooperation between the Congregational and Presbyterian churches. Lyman Beecher was a "son" of Jonathan Edwards, and Edwards is usually given the rank of the greatest American theologian.

The more you know about the history of Christianity in America, the better you will understand the Beechers because they are so heavily involved that it cannot be properly understood apart from them and their contributions. Lyman, Edward's father, defended himself from charges of heresy by the Cincinnati Presbytery in 1835. While he was successful in his defense and was acquitted of all charges, he could not free himself from the stench of accusation.

Lyman made every effort to bridge the conflict through personal relationships, appeals and the charisma of his character. Edward responded by retreating into his established scholarly abilities by engaging in a comprehensive study of Christian history in an effort to simply understand the problem. That study became his book, *Conflict of Ages*. Once he believed that he sufficiently understood the problem, he turned his attention to solving it, which is the content of this book. The breadth and depth of his analysis is astonishing.

Whether he was correct or not is more difficult to determine because the correctness of his arguments is not a winner-take-all assessment, but will require not merely parsing and determining which of his arguments are right and which are wrong, but *how* they are right or wrong in the light of the continuing and progressive revelation of Jesus Christ in history.¹ But whatever determinations are eventually made about Edward Beecher's work, it must not remain abandoned and for-

1 For more on this theme, see Ross, Phillip A. *Peter's Vision of Christ's Purpose in First Peter and Peter's Vision of The End in Second Peter*, Pilgrim Platform, Marietta, Ohio, 2011.

gotten to history. Indeed, it is quite possible that many of the the problems of the modern and postmodern world have occurred in part because Beecher's work has been ignored. If he has put his proverbial finger on a potential solution to the greatest conflict in history, and the world has ignored his efforts, then a reexamination of his efforts may prove to be quite helpful. Indeed, this is my hope—not that Beecher has solved the problem, but that his work can contribute to a real solution. Any real solution must issue out of a correct diagnosis.

The careful reading of these pages will reveal a man who has a profound love of God, who honors true biblical orthodoxy and is not afraid to confront and expose those doctrines that stand on tradition rather than Scripture. Beecher knows what it means to have been born again by the grace of God and magnifies and advances the importance of regeneration for every aspect of theology and Christian life. His reading of Scripture is surprisingly plain and unvarnished in that he understands it at what we call *face value*. His treatment of the book of Revelation is particularly illustrative in this regard.

For the most part, the difficulties that people will have with him have been imported into their understanding from various extra-biblical sources, some from history, some from denominational loyalties and some from various contemporary ideas that been normed by mere repetition. Beecher's criticism of some long-established orthodox doctrines will be difficult to comprehend until the fullness of his argument is grasped. Patience and perseverance are required to read both volumes in their entirety. Please refrain from jumping to any conclusions about Beecher or his work until you understand it. My purpose in this volume is not to encourage you to believe or disbelieve what he says, but to simply help you understand what he has said in its fullness. And it is very full.

To read Beecher's concern about "system" as if he means some sort of mere systematic theology would be a serious error. Traditional systematic theology is more akin to Gnosticism than to the wholeness of thought and practice that Beecher calls for. Systematic theology has been an effort to arrange the various pieces of academic Christian theology in the abstract, to make the ideas fit into a grand scheme. In contrast, Beecher has in mind not just theological ideas, but habits of thought and behavior, the physics of nature—not just the laws of physics but the actuality of the material world, and even the reality of

astronomy. When Beecher uses the word *system* he means to indicate much more than mere ideas, he means the wholeness of everything in human experience, both subjective and objective. Indeed, when God spoke to Adam about the “tree of life” and the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:9) He was speaking of these trees as systems in a Beecherian sense.

I have treated the text much in the same way that I treated it in *Conflict of Ages*. My purpose is not to produce historically accurate copies of Beecher’s work, but to understand it. In this vein I have freely exercised the editorial prerogative—seeking to clarify the author’s intent. But because the author has been long dead I have not had the opportunity to engage him in discussion regarding that clarity. So, I have simply assumed the responsibility myself by adjusting his words to better suit my understanding of Christianity and what I think he intended to say. I have endeavored to improve the text where I found it inadequate or confusing in order to make his argument more clear. For instance, I have changed Beecher’s use of *typical* to *typological* because those unfamiliar with typology may misunderstand him. I have also capitalized the pronouns that refer to God in order to make pronoun reference more clear. Beecher uses a lot of pronouns, and it is sometimes difficult to determine their referents. In addition, I have engaged in a kind of dialog by inserting footnotes where I want to extend or comment on his arguments.

I confess that my efforts in this regard will prove to be neither adequate or consistent, and apologize for my deficiencies. Strict scholars will frown on my efforts because one of the pillars of good scholarship is to distinguish which arguments belong to which authors. I invite scholars to examine the original text before they evaluate the success or failure of my efforts. Those familiar with biblical scholarship will note that the biblical authors had no such concerns, but were more concerned with establishing and extending the veracity of God’s arguments by making them as simple, clear and available as possible. I believe that Beecher’s work will prove to be a treasure-trove to serious Christians for a long time to come. Indeed, Beecher deserves to be placed alongside of Luther and Calvin in the history of the Reformation for the heart of his concern and the quality of his scholarship are commensurate in every way.

And like Luther and Calvin, Beecher was rabidly anti-papal, but his anti-papalism extended to all established churches in his day, not just to the Roman Catholic Church, because he saw in them the same spirit of wrong-headed institutionalism that has infected every institution in the modern world. This is the central argument he makes in this book.

The original printing of this book, like Beecher's *Conflict*, suffered from the want of editorial expertise. I suspect that Beecher was so severely misunderstood that those who tried to work with him editorially were simply of little help. Both of his manuscripts suffer from excessive wordiness and nearly indecipherable bombast, neither of which help his arguments. But neither of which are endemic to the content or structure of his arguments. Anyone who has read Luther or Calvin will understand that the ferocity necessary to challenge the status quo necessarily accompanies the success of such undertakings. Opposition to ideas often serves to help clarify them.

Again, I have tried to improve Beecher's language and to dialog with him in some of the footnotes. I have provided other footnotes as an explanation of the various people he mentions, many of whom were cutting edge scholars, churchmen and politicians in his day, but will not be known by most people today. Beecher's own footnotes are set in **Arial font** to distinguish them from my own.

I dedicated *Conflict* to Pope Benedict and *Concord* to local pastors. Why such apparently widespread dedications? Because Beecher was self-consciously writing to provide a foundation for the continuing Reformation of Christianity. And I think that the various new denominations that began in the Nineteenth Century were efforts, or at least hopeful, to carry the Reformation forward. The most "successful" of those efforts has been Mormonism. I'm not saying that Mormonism is a continuation of the Reformation, but only that it hoped to be that. Unfortunately, as Beecher noted, every denomination has succumbed to the same errors that led to the Reformation in the Fifteenth Century, and for precisely the same reasons. In this work, he intended to address and correct the problem that has hamstrung Christianity from its earliest beginnings. This is the subject of Beecher's books.

I especially thank Dr. David Torbett at Marietta College for help in securing a copy of Beecher's *Concord of Ages*, from which I worked to create this manuscript. Thanks also to my friend, Paul Williams, who has engaged and encouraged me in this work, and to my wife,

Stephanie, who continues to have both the patience and endurance to proof my copy, and continue to love me in spite of it. Let me also apologize to my children for producing these books. Because they are all young Christians who have followed my exploits and because they are all theologically astute, they may suffer the burden of Beecher's ideas more than I will, being that I am moving into retirement. I pray that all of my books may be helpful and useful to them, and that they will see the pattern of my work.

Beecher's ideas will seriously challenge and threaten every Christian church in existence, which is why he was so maligned, sidelined and ignored in his own day. Nonetheless, whether Beecher is right or wrong, his contributions to the discussion will not only break up the fallow ground of institutional Christianity, but will significantly contribute to the cause of real Christian Reformation. I pray that this work may contribute to that process through the coming generations.

Phillip A. Ross
Marietta, Ohio
February 2013

DEDICATION

To all who long for the advent of better days for man, and for the glorious reign of God.

To you I dedicate this work, because, however diverse may be our views in many respects, it discusses themes in which you have both a personal and a social interest of the highest kind.

There is no individual whose highest personal interests are not affected by the views which he entertains of God; nor are any emotions so deep and intense as those which rationally arise from true conceptions of Him.

Moreover, all the highest social and organic results which lie in the future are to proceed, not from the energy of unaided human action, whether individual or social, but from the concurrent action of the divine and human minds in unity; and the possibility of this in perfect forms depends entirely upon having correct conceptions of God. The simple object of this work is to develop such conceptions, and to apply them to all the individual and social problems of the coming age.

I therefore dedicate it to all who believe that a better day is about to dawn upon the suffering nations, and that a glorious reign of God is at hand, and who long for their advent. And that you may more fully apprehend my purposes in this work, allow me to lay before you a brief exposition of ends and principles.

EXPOSITION

The origin and relations of the work are full of deep interest to me. I have ever felt the assurance that the greatest and most comprehensive principles are always of necessity the most simple, intelligible and sublime. The all-pervading law of gravitation, which holds together, not only our solar system but also the universe, is as simple and intelligible as it is sublime. I felt assured that the great law of benevolent sympathetic

attraction, by which the moral universe is to be organized and held together around God is simple and intelligible, and still more sublime and glorious.

Yet, when I came to examine the Christian system¹ as it is now taught I found that, although such a law was proclaimed in words it was denied in fact, and a law of repulsion is substituted in its place, and that God was virtually represented as holding this universe together by a kind of naked, mechanical power, in opposition to the great law of repulsion, which by false doctrine had been made to pervade all things.

This repulsion exists in two respects,—between God as represented in His dealings with our race through Adam, and the moral affinity of the mind, as sensitive to honor and right; and no less between God represented as an unsympathizing God, and the benevolent sympathies of the mind as sensitive to reciprocal affection.

It was my great aim in the *Conflict of Ages* to convince the church of the real existence of the first great cause of repulsion, although I also indicated the second. It is my purpose in this work to prove the existence of the second, and in opposition to it, to develop and apply the true law of benevolent sympathy between God and His creatures, without which the organization of a vital and concordant universe would be impossible.

I engage in this work with more interest because I am assured that the deepest and most intense thinking and feeling of this age are rapidly turning into this channel. Never was there a time when so many were with such intense desire seeking a new and a higher life in God. I speak therefore with the more earnestness because I am perfectly assured that the greatest difficulties in the way of the attainment of this life are found in the repulsion between the false views of God given by the theology of the age, and the true laws of sympathetic communion with Him, and of life in Him, which He has established in the very nature of the soul.²

1 The idea of *system* (an assemblage or combination of things or parts forming a complex or unitary whole) plays a large role in Beecher's thought. He uses it in an inclusive sense to include everything involved in the lives of Christians: theology, philosophy, history, astronomy, morality, discipline, faithfulness, worship, emotion and behavior. It is not a mere abstract thought, but includes everything involved in life and living.

2 For a discussion of communion see: Ross, Phillip A. & Nevin, John Williamson. *The True Mystery of the Mystical Presence*, Pilgrim Platform, Marietta, Ohio, 2010.

There is also a deep and wide-spread feeling that Christianity for some reason does not have the divine energy which it ought to possess, as the great antagonist of despotism and every form of organized injustice and social wrong. I am no less assured that this lack of energy is real, and that it is caused by false views of the character of God, which have been promulgated for ages by the leaders of the church, and which directly tend to effect an entire paralysis of the peculiar and characteristic spirit of Christianity.

There is also an intense desire to redeem religious experience in communion with God from the reproach of mysticism, enthusiasm and subjective delusion, and to present it as in fact the highest and most rational action of the human mind, and as being integral for sustaining scientific relations to every organization and interest of human society. With this desire I fully and heartily sympathize, and have accordingly constructed this whole work on the principle that the highest religious experience in communion with God will finally be found to coincide with the highest scientific development; and that to expect to secure perfect, well-developed, symmetrical science in its truest colors and relations, or harmonious social organization without full and constant communion with God, and life in Him, is absurd.

There is a vital connection between this work and the *Conflict of Ages* which precedes it. That work was designed to prepare the way for this one, and the results secured by it are here used for the ultimate ends at which I have always aimed. Moreover, though this work is not intended to be controversial, I have, as occasion has called for it, vindicated the positions of my former volume.

When I first saw the replies to the *Conflict of Ages*, it appeared to me that to answer them would require a wearisome amount of controversial detail. But, on reflection, I saw that almost all the objections to my views had their roots in various false conceptions of God, and erroneous views of His system growing out of them. I determined, therefore, to entirely avoid controversial detail and to concentrate my energies on the great organic law of the universe, as growing out of a true conception of God, and to apply it to that perfect organization of earthly society and of the universe which lie in the future.

This has led me from time to time to develop the radical elements of the difference between me and my opponents, and thus, by cutting

off the roots of their errors, to wither those objections which have sprung up from them to the surface.

It would indeed seem wonderful that, at this late day, I should be obliged to charge on the leaders of the church a radical misconception of the character of God, and of the great organic law of the universe, had not biblical prophecy distinctly foretold that such a state of things would exist until just before the coming reign of God. The leaders of the church in our day have not denied the great law of divine love in words; but by denying the possibility and the reality of suffering in God, they have denied it in fact. For I have proved in this work, that, as things are, the existence of suffering in God is a necessary and essential result of true love; and that to deny it, is to deny the great law of sympathetic love in Him, and to enthrone a false god of heartless and loveless force as the Lord of the universe.

It will be conceded by all that the denial of any such great law can never permanently be defended, though the whole energy of man, and all the power and wiles of Satan, acting through the associations, interests and committals of many generations, be put forth to sustain it. In such laws are invested the life and the happiness of God, and who can contend with Him and prevail?

For this reason I have been little moved by the fact that the leaders of the church have thus far arrayed themselves against me. I had indeed hoped for and desired their cooperation in the great work in which I have felt it to be my duty to engage. But since they have seen fit to withhold it, and to array their whole influence, whatever it may be, against me, it has simply made it necessary for me to throw myself more entirely upon the sustaining intellect, emotions, and sympathy of God.

To Him, also, I commit them, in confiding love, imploring for them His illumination, sanctification and guidance; knowing that they need His favor and sustaining power more than all things beside, and that, if He brings them into intellectual and moral sympathy with Himself, they will sustain me if I am right; and that, if they are not in such sympathy, they can have no permanent power to depress me. For the thoughts and emotions of God are eternal, while the unfounded speculations of ages and generations wither like the grass when cut down by the mower's scythe.

After a careful consideration of all that has been said by the leaders of the church, in the light of the Word of God, I feel more fully satisfied than ever that the positions that I have assumed are correct, and that in His own good time God will vindicate them and give them power, from a regard to His own glory and the coming developments of His eternal kingdom.

Though I readily concede to them the utmost freedom of opposition or censure so far as my personal rights are concerned, yet I deem it my duty to remind them of the heavy responsibilities which they assume if they oppose my views without suitable preparation, and under the influence of personal, local or partisan emotions or ends.

No higher responsibility is conceivable than is involved in the call to transmit to coming ages those great principles upon which the Christian reorganization of this great nation, and its highest and most evangelical influence upon the world, depends. And nothing can be more fearful than to be arrayed against principles, on the prevalence of which the heart of God is fully fixed, and which the full energy of His power will sustain. As the authority of the church of past ages has been arrayed against me, and much relied on, I have felt that fidelity to God demanded a careful scrutiny of her moral traits in the light of both prophecy and history, and in particular of her knowledge of the true character of God, and her qualifications as an interpreter of His Word. I have also endeavored to set forth the extent and the danger of that evil education which in her apostasy she gave to the nations, and which are yet but very imperfectly understood.

As the logical validity of my argument for preexistence³ has been denied, I have felt called on to investigate the true basis and principles of Christian philosophy and logic, and to consider their results when applied to the questions at issue, and wielded, not by man, but by God.

As all men look with interest to the future, and shape their present conduct by it, I have endeavored by these principles, in connection with prophetic disclosures, to throw light on the coming state of the

3 Beecher's doctrine of preexistence is both simple and complex. By it he means that humanity has come to flower in previous times, in the dark, unavailable recesses of prehistory. This idea is a logical construct, similar to the idea of black holes. No one has or can ever see a black hole by definition, but they are posited based on the evidence that surrounds them and their logical necessity as an explanation of the evidence.

world in the reign of God, and the mode of transition into it by the intervention of the great Head of the church.

The standard of human perfection I derive from that of God as a suffering God, as developed in this work; and, by the sympathy of God, I aim to give power to the spirit of heroic self-sacrifice, self-denial and suffering love as the only possible basis of the perfection of society on earth or in heaven.

In aiming at these practical and experiential results, I do not doubt but actually believe that all good men will agree with me, for they cannot deny that these things are of the very essence of Christianity, and occupy the very highest place in the appreciation and love of God, and are most earnestly enjoined by His highest authority and example.

Let me, then, be allowed to hope that they will no longer paralyze and confound the human mind by throwing the example and spirit of God against all that is most divine, and all that He holds most dear in this respect, by adhering to the false teaching of past ages.⁴

Though some have spoken of me with no small severity, many others have manifested great generosity and magnanimity of feeling, and much fraternal affection. All such kindness I heartily acknowledge and reciprocate; nor am I disposed to withdraw my affection and esteem from anyone. I did not introduce this discussion as a controversialist, nor do I propose to pursue it as such. I refer to my reviewers and respondents only, as the general course of the investigation renders necessary an exposition and defense of those principles which are of fundamental importance in the argument.

The sympathy which I have ever felt for all involved in the conflicts, temptations and struggles of this great discussion, I still feel. And I pray to God that He will use this work to lead them all into His own glorious truth, and with it to harmony and peace.

⁴ Beecher identifies two doctrines that he determines by Scripture, logic and history to be false.

Book I

The Standard of Hope

I. THE CONCORD OF AGES DEFINED

The *Conflict of Ages*, I have already attempted to develop and set forth.¹ I have presented it as not a conflict concerning a mere metaphysical theory, nor as a controversy with respect to any mere heartless abstraction. Its originating cause has been the greatest calamity that can befall mankind, the obscuration or an eclipse of the glory of God. This has been effected by no conscious human malignity, but with a sincere and earnest effort truly to represent and to account for the dark facts of human depravity, and of Satanic influence. The conflict has revealed itself in a struggle to escape from the deep gloom of such an eclipse into the sunshine of the divine glory, and yet not lose the real facts as to human depravity, guilt and danger.

The dark shadow of this conflict meets us wherever we turn in the life and history of the church. Its record is the history of centuries. Here is the deep channel in which the profoundest emotions of which man is capable have for ages flowed. I undertook to give an account of it, I trust, from a deep interest in the welfare of humanity, and from a sincere regard to the glory of God, and not in the interest of any sect or party, nor for any local and temporary ends. Believing that this conflict is unnatural, pernicious and destined to come to an end, I sought to point out its causes, and aid in its removal. I think, too, that it will finally appear, by the aid of God, that I have not labored in vain.

It now remains that I speak of a more pleasing theme, a theme not less adapted to elevate and delight the mind, than the other to depress it and fill it with gloom. I refer to the Concord Of Ages,² the great result at which, as an ultimate end, I aimed in writing the *Conflict of Ages*.

1 Beecher, Edward, D.D. *Conflict Of Ages, The Great Debate of the Moral Relations of God and Man*, 1853; Ross, Phillip A., Editor, Pilgrim Platform, Marietta, Ohio, 2012.

2 This is a reference to the end of the religious conflict that has burdened this world since its creation, to the new heavens and new earth in 2 Pet. 3:13 Rev. 21:1.

Of this final and glorious Concord, the originating cause will be the removal of all errors which have hitherto eclipsed the divine glory, and a consequent full, symmetrical and deeply penetrating and affecting development of God, in harmony with a thorough and radical presentation of human depravity, resulting in deep and perfect conviction of sin in man, and in the highest degrees of purification and reunion to God, and communion with Him, leading to universal harmony in the whole system—material, corporeal, and spiritual. To prepare the way for this final result, past ages have groaned and travailed together in pain until now. Of course, its full and perfect development lies wholly in the future. Nonetheless, it is one of those bright visions of glory to God in the highest, and peace, on earth, and good-will to man, which are delineated in the colors of heaven on the pages of biblical prophecy; a vision almost too glorious for human faith to receive, and yet concerning which the recording angel has said, “These words are faithful and true” (Rev. 22:6).

Nothing can be of greater practical moment to any man than these two things: in the first place, a true conception of this coming state of divine concord as a standard by which to test and judge the present state of the church and of human society; and in the second place, an enlarged, profound and scriptural view of the mode in which the transition is to be effected from the present to the coming state of the kingdom of God. These, and nothing else, will furnish us with an elevated point of view, from which we can look down upon and judge the discussions and the general policy of the present age, and decide what belief and what line of conduct will at this time bring us into true harmony with God with respect to the coming developments of His eternal purposes.

IMPORT OF THE CONCORD OF AGES

These words may include two ideas. The highest and the most sublime is the eternal concord of God’s holy kingdom, after the present great revolt is subdued, and the system of the universe is reorganized.³ The other is that the concord in human society which is to result from God’s victory on earth, and the entire suspension of Satanic power to

3 The reorganized system of the universe is another way of describing the *new heaven and earth*. Beecher’s idea of *system* includes everything necessary for human life, physical, spiritual emotional, intellectual, etc.—not just ideas.

deceive the nations. I will use the words in the second sense, in this volume, although I will not exclude a consideration of the first and main concord also, for it will be involved in the discussion.

The *Concord of Ages* is, therefore, more than the exact counterpart of the *Conflict of Ages*, of which I have already written, which I propose to consider; for that referred mainly to a conflict with respect to one aspect of doctrine,⁴ but this impending *Concord* refers to the whole range of life and society. In order to form a more exact idea of its importance and relations as a subject of thought and investigation, I would call attention to the following points:

1. It (the Concord of Ages or establishment of the kingdom of God) is not to be regarded as a natural result of human impulses and energy. It is not a result of human, social progress, as these words are commonly understood. It is a sublime result of God's supernatural regenerating and sanctifying power, exerted in fulfillment of His own eternal plans.

2. Though this great result is thus effected by the power of God, it will not involve any disregard of the intellectual and moral laws of the human mind. On the other hand, it will involve the removal all of the elements of discord and derangement from the system of Christianity which have been hitherto caused by theories and doctrines at war with those laws, so that the church can be rationally and morally united as never before in one glorious system.

3. Though God, in effecting this result, works primarily through His Word, yet He does not overlook the revelations He has made by any part of the system, but acts through them all with reference to His own ultimate results.

4. Though the sanctification and eternal salvation of individuals, and the organization of the church in eternity, are the main and eternal results of the whole system of this world, yet as this is affected by the organizations of human society—and these have been the great centers of opposition to Him!—God regards them as of great importance, and intends entirely to regenerate and perfect them. But this is no light work. For the regeneration of social organizations is the last, the high-

4 The Old School/New School conflict that during and following in the American Second Great Awakening.

est and the most difficult work in which men are called to engage, and requires the widest range and comprehensiveness of thought.

5. God, in producing these final and ultimate results, employs the principles developed and illustrated by the results of past ages, and acts through the study and labor of men, as much as if they alone were the agents in effecting the coming reorganization of society.⁵

6. All of the developments and changes of this world are tending to and will result in the final reorganization of the universe, at the close of this dispensation. The principles for which God now contends are the same as will then be victorious. This He will cause more and more to be understood, and the final issue to be more vividly apprehended and constantly contemplated, as a means of overcoming worldliness, and subordinating and sanctifying the whole system of this life.

7. Among the highest means of sanctification and reorganization yet to be employed, will be a full development and systematic use of the analogy existing between the material and the spiritual systems; an analogy that is not lawless or accidental, but which has been established deliberately, and in the exercise of the highest divine wisdom, for the greatest and most momentous ends.

8. The great idea regarding the future course of events is not so much the gradual progress in individual sanctification, as it is the sudden and decisive victory over the organized Satanic powers of error and sin. Every man, even if he is not aware of it, has some theory regarding the course of future events in leading to the issues which he anticipates. Nor are these theories regarding the future of small moment. Rather, they color and control our constant and all-pervading habits of thought and association. In truth, all men live more in the future than in the past. Among Christians there are two very unlike theories regarding this future, which I will consider: one makes man and his agency prominent, and the result gradual, the other makes the result sudden, and represents it as turning upon a vivid and powerful development of God,—not, indeed, excluding the agency of man, but making that of God most predominant and supreme.

The first theory assumes that the system of the present dispensation is complicated, profound, mysterious and impossible to be understood; but that by faith, and as the result of gradual divine influence, we will,

5 God works through human agency.

by an insensible gradation, pass into a reorganized society under its influence.

The second theory supposes the system of the present dispensation to be, in fact, simple, popular (common) and easily understood, even by the masses;—but that, under the influence of a vast and powerful invisible intellect (Eph. 6:12), it has been systematically misrepresented, disorganized and deranged; and that, by the exercise of Satan’s profound powers of delusion—even the good men of past ages, as well as of the present—have been induced to adopt and to defend the fundamental principles by which the disorganization was effected, by resorting to the idea of God and His purpose as mysterious. It also supposes that this system of disorganization, in its fundamental elements, is also, from the necessity of the case, as simple and intelligible as is the true system which it is designed to disorganize and derange.

This being the case, it supposes that it is the purpose of God, when the fullness of time has come, is to make a sudden development of Himself (Christ) as the center of the true system in its simplicity, and of Satan as the center of the false and disorganizing system in contrast with Himself; and to do it with such intellectual and moral power as to immediately paralyze Satan, and to cause the greatest, most fundamental and sudden revolution ever known in the world before, which will result in the total destruction, not only of the system of falsehood, but of all the institutions and organizations based upon it; and that this will be done with such manifestation of the divine displeasure, and such retributive judgments, as will cause great and inconceivable terror, and utter ruin to all the obstinate defenders of the system of falsehood to be exposed and destroyed.⁶

This view also assumes that, before events come to this crisis, all of the real people of God, the truly faithful and all who are to become such by His discriminating providence and the illumination of His Spirit, must be undeceived, and led to abandon and to escape from the

6 As God’s truth replaces Satan’s falsehood, one worldview is replaced by another, resulting in the destruction of the former *system*, and while such systemic destruction is real and cataclysmic, it can also be described as a reorganization of human society, not its widespread destruction. What will be destroyed is the system, the worldview, the principalities and powers of Satan. The target of destruction is not people or real estate, but ideas. Think of it as a kind of Copernican revolution, where falsehoods are simply abandoned.

system about to be exposed and destroyed, lest they also perish in its ruins.⁷

It also assumes that when the great and central system of falsehood and delusion has been destroyed, and the true system of the universe is clearly seen, there will be no difficulty in reorganizing human society, in all its parts, in harmonious accord with God's principles and spirit; and thus, at last, will be brought to pass the concord of ages.⁸

7 Satan's system leads to death, while God's system leads to life. Or, Satan's system is ultimately unsustainable, while God's system is ultimately sustainable.

8 The concord of ages suggests a time when religious conflict will cease, or be reduced to a level of no practical consequence, as is predicted in the book of Revelation.

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