

Christian Retirement

By [Thomas Reade](#)

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THE TWO SOURCES

While men of philosophic minds are busily employed in tracing effects to their causes, and others, of a more adventurous spirit, in traversing unknown regions, to trace some mighty river to its source; how few, considering the magnitude of the object, are employed in discovering the two most important of all sources—the source of misery, and the source of mercy. This discovery, so essential to our happiness, and, without an experimental knowledge of which, we must forever remain in a state of spiritual death, is but little regarded by the great bulk of mankind.

Human wisdom and philosophy have been laboring for ages to find out the origin of moral evil, and a remedy against it; but they have failed in the attempt. The world, by wisdom, knows not God, for darkness has covered the earth, and gross darkness the people.

We need only to pursue the fabled absurdities of heathen mythology; to witness the self-inflicted tortures of the Hindu devotee; to behold the superstitious penances imposed by the Church of Rome; yes, all the errors and evils which have abounded among Christians, Jews, Muhammadans, and Pagans, in every age; to be convinced that man can never, by any effort of his unassisted reason, discover the true source either of misery or of mercy.

The Bible alone reveals them both. There I learn that the sin of Adam is the source of human misery. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." "In Adam all die." From this fountain issue ten thousand poisonous streams, which embitter life, fill the world with wretchedness, and carry unnumbered millions on their boisterous waves, until they are plunged into endless perdition.

There I learn, that God in Christ is the only source of mercy. "God, in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." "Beside me," says Jehovah, "there is no Savior." "There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." All good, in time and in eternity, flows from him who is goodness itself. When man had destroyed himself, and was justly reaping the fruit of his doings, it pleased Almighty God, of his own free mercy and grace, to reveal the

wondrous plan of salvation, by declaring, "that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head."

This declaration of grace was unasked for and unexpected; and therefore proves to us fallen creatures, that God is the only source of mercy; that God is love; for he so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

As God is the source of mercy, so the channel through which this grace descends, is all of mercy. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.

By this stupendous sacrifice, divine justice is satisfied, the holy law is magnified, the holiness of Jehovah is unsullied, and eternal truth remains inviolate; yes, by this amazing sacrifice all the divine perfections receive additional luster in the eyes of saints and angels. The whole volume of inspiration is occupied with tracing the various streams which flow from these sources of misery and of mercy, in opening the nature and effects of sin, and in revealing the nature and operations of infinite love. To understand these aright, through the teaching of the Spirit, is to understand the Scriptures. To have an inward practical knowledge of them in the heart, is to be made wise unto salvation.

The excellent Archbishop Leighton thus beautifully describes this stream of mercy, flowing from the Fountain of eternal love: "The spring of these waters of salvation, hid in the councils of God before time began, was opened immediately after the fall, and began to flow in a small but reviving brook. Increasing by degrees, and, from the very beginning, making every place it passed through fertile and pleasant, it soon became a large stream. At length the main current of the Gospel flowed in, and now it rolls on full of water, greatly enriching the earth, a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal; the streams whereof make glad the city of God, and shall do so, until this river empties itself into the ocean of eternity." It is truly interesting to trace the windings of this sacred stream, sometimes blessing one country and sometimes another, according to the purpose and grace of Him who directs its course with wise and unerring skill.

What cause for gratitude, that this river of the of life flows in every direction through this highly favored island. But oh! how delightful to taste its sweetness, and to feel, through faith, its purifying and refreshing virtues. "Blessed Lord! be pleased to open my understanding, that I may understand the Scriptures. Give me the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, that I may know myself as a helpless sinner, and you as my only Savior. Let me never cavil at the deep mysteries of your holy word; but make me as a little child, humble, teachable, and submissive to your righteous will. May the knowledge of my ruined state, through original and actual transgression, fill me with shame and self-abhorrence. May the knowledge of your sovereign grace and purposes of mercy, through a crucified Redeemer, fill me with gratitude and adoring praise. Make me more and more acquainted

with the deceitfulness of sin, that I may watch against its subtle workings; and make me more and more acquainted with you, my Almighty Savior, that I may daily rejoice in your salvation, be exalted in your righteousness, and live to your glory."

Oh that I felt my soul upborne
On pure devotion's wings;
Far above earth's deceitful joys
And sublunary things!

Where you, blessed Savior, sit enthroned
In everlasting light;
The glory of the angelic host,
The source of their delight.

There, in your blissful presence, reigns
Immortal joy serene;
No wintry storms are heard to roar,
Nor desolation seen.

Around you flow unmixed delights,
Like rivers deep and wide;
While, from the ocean of your love,
Proceeds an endless tide.

Can such a sinful creature, Lord,
Partake this wondrous grace,
To dwell with you in heavenly bliss,
And view your glorious face?

Ah! then, let sin and earth usurp
My wayward heart no more;
Oh be, through life, my all in all,
My soul's unbounded store.

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