

The Plan of Salvation in *Cranford*, *My Lady Ludlow*, and *Cousin Phillis*

Tatsuhiko OHNO

1. Introduction

This study is an attempt to examine Elizabeth Gaskell's fiction *Cranford* (1853), *My Lady Ludlow* (1858), and *Cousin Phillis* (1863-64) in terms of God's Plan of Salvation, one of the principal Christian doctrines prevailing throughout the Bible.

The key concept of the doctrine is that God has held a plan to save us human beings, or His children, since before sending our spirits to the earth (See Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). God's premeditated plan is referred to in such biblical verses as these. Paul the Apostle, "a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ" (Tit. 1.1), confirms that Jesus's delivery to the earth is foreordained: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2.23; my emphasis)¹⁾. Peter the Apostle addresses his Asian listeners, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and

peace, be multiplied" (1 Pet. 1.2; my emphasis), and testifies that Christ "verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Pet. 1.20; my emphasis).

Some critics' references to the Plan are quoted below. Salvation is "freely offered to all men, but is conditioned upon repentance and faith in Christ," and "proceeds from the love of God, is based upon the atonement wrought by Christ, is realized in forgiveness, regeneration, sanctification, and culminates in the resurrection and glorification of all true believers" ("Salvation," *Unger's* 956). Mary Fairchild observes "Biblical salvation is God's way of providing his people deliverance from sin and spiritual death through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ" ("The Plan"). Viewing Christian salvation in the context of English literature, George Newlands states "Salvation is from God, and as such it is understood as the goal to which all humanity has been directed from the beginning of the creation: to be saved is to become truly human" (830). Calling the Apostle John the evangelist, Adele Reinhartz implies the existence of salvation in

¹⁾ All references to the scriptural verses are to the authorized King James version. In other versions of the Bible, "the determinate counsel" is translated into "the definite plan" (English Standard Version), "the determined purpose" (New King James Version), and "God's deliberate plan" (New International Version) (*BibleGateway*).

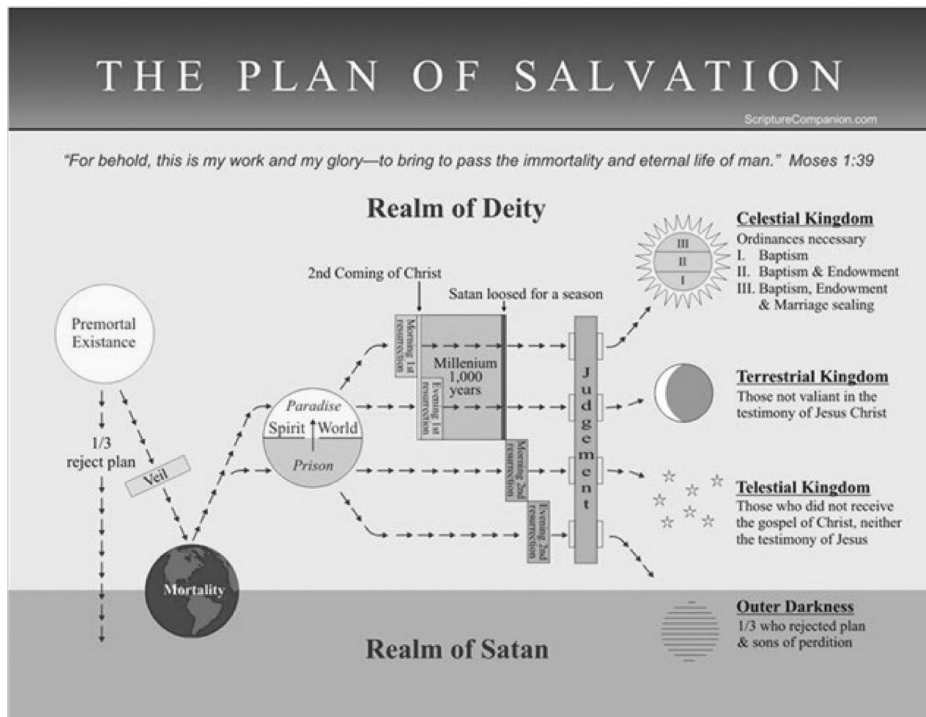


Fig. 1. The Plan of Salvation (Source: Scripturecompanion.com)

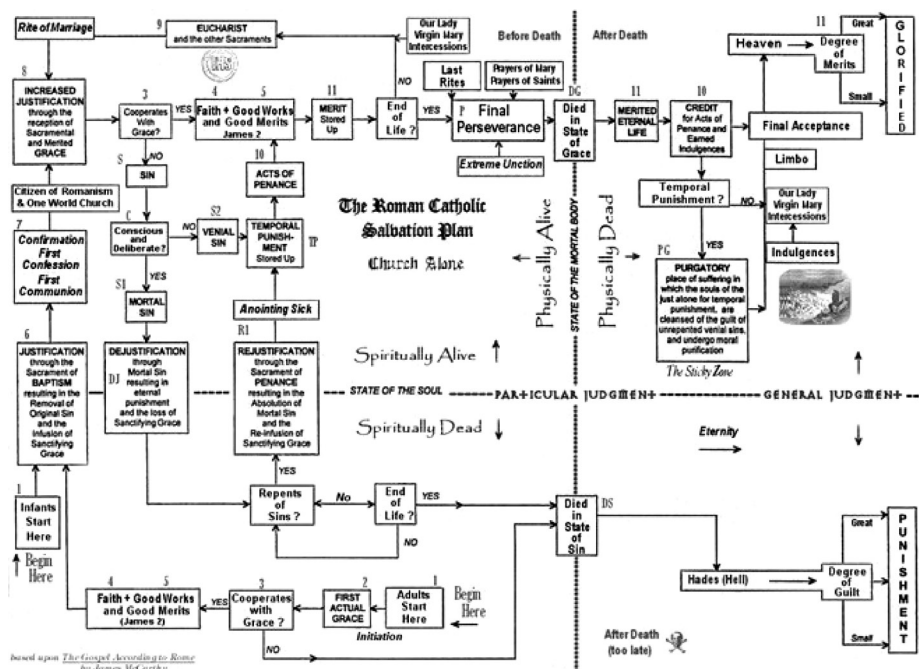


Fig. 2. The Roman Catholic Salvation Plan
(Source: James McCarthy's *The Gospel According to Rome*. Puritanboard.com)

the Gospel: “Throughout the Gospel, the evangelist takes pains to explain the superiority of his vision of salvation through Christ” (330).

Although there are some differences among Christian denominations as to the details of the Plan of Salvation, they principally agree that there *is* God’s plan of saving mankind which is one of the core doctrines in the Bible. The Catholic Church teaches that “salvation comes through Jesus alone (Acts 4:12)²⁾, since he is the ‘one mediator between God and man’ (1 Tm 2:5-6)³⁾” (“What Is the Catholic Understanding of the Biblical Plan of Salvation?”, *Catholic Answers*). Revd Paula Hollingsworth, the Chaplain of St Paul’s Cathedral, expresses the Anglican view of salvation:

Salvation comes from Jesus—indeed the name Jesus means saviour, that is, one who saves (Matthew 1: 21)⁴⁾, so Anglicans believe that Jesus was born into the world to be our saviour. At the heart of this salvation is the forgiveness of our sins—sin meaning the things that we think, say or do (consciously or unconsciously) that are wrong, and which cause a barrier between us and God. Anglicans believe that through Jesus’ death on the cross, Jesus brings our forgiveness from all those sins and it saves us from the judgement of God. Salvation brings eternal life, which means that in this world we can

experience inner peace from knowing we have been put right with God, and that we will be in God’s presence after death. Hence the word salvation can be used in the past sense—Jesus has saved us from our sins, and the future sense—Jesus will save us from being judged (at the time of our death or at the end of time) and found guilty of sin. (“Beliefs”; my emphasis)

Some key concepts of the Plan of Salvation are explicit in such statements as Jesus brings forgiveness from sins, salvation brings eternal life, and there is the afterlife. In his lecture to Romanists and Protestants, Revd John Hamilton Thom, a Unitarian minister, hints at his acknowledgement of the existence of the Plan, although he considers it incomplete because Christians cannot stop perpetual warfare:

God (you both agree), pitying mankind, has disregarded the natural laws fixed by himself, and for a space of four thousand years, and more, has multiplied miracles for the purpose of acquainting men with the means of obtaining salvation, and avoiding eternal death, *eternal death* signifying almost universally, among you, *unending torments*. But when I turn to examine the result of this (as you deem it) *miraculous and all-wise plan*, I find it absolutely incomplete. (“Lecture III,” *Unitarian Defended* 7-8; my emphasis)

²⁾ “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

³⁾ “For *there* is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; / Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Tim. 2:5-6).

⁴⁾ “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21).

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Revd G. H. Gerberding, a pastor of St Mark's evangelical Lutheran church, Fargo, Dakota, USA, observes, "Luther's Small Catechism is indeed a priceless Bible manual. It sets before us, in matchless order, God's plan of salvation"; "We speak now of those who have been made disciples; . . . they have an intelligent understanding of the plan of salvation revealed in the Word of God" (*The Way of Salvation*). Seventh-Day Adventists consider, "God had a plan to redeem humanity through His Son, Jesus Christ. He will ultimately have victory over sin and death and restore us and our earth to its original state of beauty and perfection" ("Official Beliefs"; my emphasis). "All can be saved" is a traditional summary of Methodist teaching: "Salvation is there for everyone who turns to God, and not just for a chosen few" ("All Can Be Saved," Methodist Church). They stress the need of conversion for salvation: "Salvation is the result of a process of conversion, away from sin and toward God. Methodists believe that all humans are born sinners, thus all require conversion to be saved" ("Afterlife and Salvation," Patheos). Pleasant Hill Baptist Church explains the Plan of Salvation, saying "God's plan of salvation is simple enough for everyone to understand":

first, admit "that you are a sinner, and in need of salvation from sin," second, believe "that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He is the only way to obtain salvation—to get to heaven," third, confess "your sin and faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord to others," and pray to Jesus that "I believe that you died upon the cross for me. . . . And, because you are my Savior, . . . I shall

not die, but have everlasting life." ("Plan of Salvation"; my emphasis)

The main concepts of the Plan of Salvation include the following four: (a) all human beings are children of God, (b) their spirits were good before the original sin was committed, (c) Christ is sent to the earth to save humankind, and (d) the belief in the premortal and postmortal worlds. These four concepts shall be explored in Section 2. Section 3 examines how the Plan of Salvation—especially the concepts (a) and (b): the innate goodness of the spirit as incorporated into a child of God—is reflected in Elizabeth Gaskell's depiction of characters and their actions in *Cranford*, *My Lady Ludlow*, and *Cousin Phillis*. The conclusion summarises the argument above and emphasises the significance of verifying the truthfulness of the divine plan since literature is fundamentally a study of human beings, or children of God.

2. Key Concepts of the Plan of Salvation

2.1. Children of God

All men and women are "children of God," so brothers and sisters after all. The term is used in two ways in the Bible ("Sons and Daughters of God"). In the first sense, we are literally the spirit children of our Heavenly Father. In the second sense, it is applied to those who are reborn through the Atonement of Christ; that is, "Since man is fallen, a person only becomes a child by faith in Christ" ("Children of God," *Unger's* 194).

2.1.1. Spirit Children

The use of the term in the first sense is hinted at in the following scriptural verse where

Paul the Apostle implies that God is the Father of spirits.

Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? (Heb. 12.9; my emphasis)

In contrast to “fathers of our flesh” which means our earthly fathers, “the Father of spirits” bespeaks our heavenly father. Accordingly, “spirits” refer to us, or some spiritual beings within ourselves, and therefore could denote what we are before we come to the earth, should there be the premortal world as indicated in the Bible. Paul confirms this interpretation in his address to the saints at Ephesus:

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ; / According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: / Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, / To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. (Eph. 1.3-6)

The Apostle testifies that we are God’s children

who have been blessed with “all spiritual blessings” in heavenly places, probably in the premortal world, as we have been (a) chosen “before the foundation of the world” to “be holy and without blame,” and (b) “predestinated . . . into the adoption of children” through Christ to God himself.

Furthermore, Paul observes that we become “the sons of God” or “the children of God” because our spirits are guided by the Holy Ghost to receive “the Spirit of adoption,” which brings about our “adoption to sonship” (Rom. 8.15, *Holly Bible*, New International Version Anglicized):

⁵⁾ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. / For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. / The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: / And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” (Rom. 8.14-17; my emphasis)

Human beings adopted as God’s children become His heirs, and “joint-heirs with Christ” as well. Our being God’s “joint-heirs with Christ” means that Christ is His eldest child and our eldest brother, which is testified by the same Apostle: God “did predestinate to *be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn

⁵⁾ The Spirit of God is the Holy Ghost as is implied by the following biblical verses: “Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him” (Matt. 3.16; my emphasis), “[T]he Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you” (2 Chron. 24.20; my emphasis), and “Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (1 Cor. 12.3; my emphasis).

among many brethren” (Rom. 8.29; my emphasis). Paul’s testimony to the sensibility of spirits accords with one of the Old Testament prophets Job’s: “But *there* is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding” (Job 32.8). Paul here implies that we are not merely God’s children but also made of spirit and flesh.

Spirit is “a term used in the Scriptures generally to denote purely spiritual beings, also the spiritual, immortal part in man” (“spirit,” *Unger’s* 1043). Henry M. Morris interprets the “spirits” in “the Father of spirits” as a spirit within our body: “our spirit/soul nature, as distinct from our body of physical/mental flesh, has come from God, who created it and united it with our body” (“The Father of Spirits”). Old Testament prophet Moses and his brother Aaron call Heavenly Father “the God of the spirits of all flesh” (Num. 16.22). This phrase also testifies that “there is a spirit in man” (Job 32.8). Whether it has been since the premortal life or the mortal, the Bible verifies that a human being has been made of spirit and flesh.

Asaph, an author of Psalms, writes that God, who “standeth in the congregation of the mighty” and “judgeth among the gods” (Ps. 82.1), said to the members of the assembly,

“Ye *are* gods; and all of you are children of the most High. / But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. / Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.” (Ps. 82.6-8; my emphasis)

The purport of God’s utterance is that the mighty judges are gods and His children, but shall die and fall like ordinary human beings. The psalmist is probably lamenting their failure to

assume divine responsibilities and asking God the Almighty to intervene in the world to bring justice to the earth. God’s phrase “Ye *are* gods” is quoted by Jesus in the sense that gods are those “unto whom the word of God came” (John 10.35). That is, “those who received the message of God” are called gods (“What Does the Bible Mean by ‘You Are Gods’”). Therefore, the “gods” above probably denote not spirit children but human judges.

Evan Minton, “a Christian Apologist . . . who defends the faith against intellectual attacks from non-Christians” (“My Theological Beliefs,” *Cerebral Faith*), however, opposes this view about the “gods”:

To interpret them as being Jewish leaders doesn’t work . . . as there is no biblical or extra-biblical evidence that the Jews ever ruled nations outside of Israel (which is what Psalm 82 says the “gods/elohim” did, and did so in a corrupt manner). The only alternative candidates are other supernatural entities. (“Reflecting on ‘The Divine Council’”; my emphasis)

He then concludes that they should be “a spirit’ to be an ‘elohim’ simply meant to be a powerful, immaterial, supernatural entity”:

We would consider all four categories [Yahweh, angels, demons, and even deceased humans] “spirits”. The ancients would consider all four “elohim”. There is only one Ultimate Supreme Elohim. There is only one Maximally Great Spirit. That is Yahweh (The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). All others are lesser elohim/gods/spirits. (“Reflecting on ‘The Divine Council’”; my emphasis) Michael S. Heiser, “an Evangelical scholar”

(Stephen O. Smoot 158), regards the “gods” in Psalm 82 as “angelic beings” (qtd. in Minton, “Reflecting on ‘The Divine Council’”). Kaspars Oxolins, a research associate at Tyndale House in Old Testament and the Ancient Near East, states: “Consequently, it is better to speak of the members of the divine council as ‘heavenly beings’ and not ‘divine beings.’ For although the council is of a heavenly, spiritual nature, and although Scripture portrays God as heading this council, these beings are not in the same class as him” (“The Divine Council”; my emphasis). Quoting the following passage as an example, Smoot observes that “these gods cannot be humans but must be divine beings” (167).

And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. / For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? / God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him. (Ps. 89:5-7; my emphasis)

The above theologists’ conclusions—council members should be “spirits,” “angelic beings,” “heavenly beings,” and “divine beings”—accord with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints’ interpretation which considers “gods” in Psalm 82.1, 6 as spirit children of Heavenly Father (“Sons and Daughters of God”) or “Jesus Christ and other ‘noble and great’ premortal intelligences, ‘souls,’ or ‘spirits’” (Smoot, et al., “The Divine Council”).

2.1.2. Spiritually Reborn Children

The “children of God” in the second sense is applied to “only those who of the fallen race are

regenerated as a result of faith in Christ” (“Children of God,” *Unger’s* 194). John the Apostle confirms this view by stating that those who receive Christ are given the right to become “the sons of God”:

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: / Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1.12-13)

John’s purport is that “to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— / children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (NIV, *BibleGateway*). That is, those who believe in Christ will become children born of God.

Nathanael Emmons, the pastor of the church in Franklin, Massachusetts, USA, agrees with this second interpretation, stating that Christ “represents the children of God as bearing his divine image, and possessing his divine spirit, which distinguishes them from the rest of mankind, who are utterly destitute of such a holy and heavenly temper” (552-53; my emphasis). As his rationale, the pastor quotes Jesus’s words to “Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews” (John 3.1) that “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3.3), and that “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. / Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John 3.6-7). Emmons’s comprehension that “children of God” signifies those who are reborn through the faith in Jesus Christ is endorsed by such biblical verses as “Except ye be converted, and become

as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18.3) and "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5.17). A more concrete elucidation of Emmons's view is provided by Ellen G. White, a co-founder of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church: "Only when selfishness is dead, when strife for supremacy is banished, when gratitude fills the heart, and love makes fragrant the life—it is only then that Christ is abiding in the soul, and we are recognized as laborers together with God" (*Christ's Object Lessons* 166). If this interpretation is correct, the Apostle Paul's statement quoted in Section 2.1.1—"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8.14)—could be construed similarly, since we become humble and righteous when we are led by the Holy Spirit.

John the Apostle states that God's love for us is so great as to give us the privilege to be called "the sons of God" and hence become like Christ when he appears on the earth for the second time:⁶⁾

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. / Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it

doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3.1-2; my emphasis)

John's statement that we are called "the sons of God" as a token of His love and will become like Christ implies that we will become children of God through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The transformation is necessary because "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3.23) and because "as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5.12). Tempted by the serpent, Satan's instrument, our first parents Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2.17) in violation of God's commandment not to eat (Gen. 3.6-7). It is believed by Christians that sin entered us since this event of the original sin, and hence "all people are sinners by nature and practice" ("What Do We Believe?").

John's affirmation of our becoming like Christ at His second coming is interpreted principally in two ways. First, we will undergo a literal transformation, or be given new bodies that are perfect and imperishable, in the next world. The moment of mysterious transformation is elucidated by Paul the Apostle:

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not

⁶⁾ There is no lack of biblical verses that testify to Christ's second coming to the earth. For instance, "I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth" (Job 19.25), "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26.64), "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21.27). and "[T]his same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1.11).

all asleep, but we shall all be changed, / In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. / For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. / So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. (1 Cor. 15:51-54; my emphasis)

The transformation of our bodies to immortality like the Saviour's is underscored also by Paul in such scriptural verses as "O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? / The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. / But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:55-57), "the Lord Jesus Christ / Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:20-21; my emphasis), and "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18; my emphasis). Besides, the prophet Job gives his "assurance of the bodily resurrection" and his "testimony of the Redeemer" ("Job, Book of"): "For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth: / And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh

shall I see God: / Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; *though* my reins be consumed within me"⁷⁾ (Job 19:25-27).

As for the validity of this supernatural phenomenon, a critic observes that the truth is unknown until the Second Coming of Christ: "In eternity with the Lord, believers will experience a new body and exist forever in God's presence, in a way far superior to our lives today. Some of this is simply impossible for us to understand; certain things will only be 'revealed' to us once Christ appears to bring us home" ("What Does 1 John 3:2 Mean?").

The second interpretation of the Apostle John's statement that we shall be like Christ when He returns to the earth is that our transformation is not physical but spiritual. Unger explains that the transformation is "the change of the moral character for the better . . . through *the renewal of the thinking power*. . . . [T]he Christian, studying the Gospel, becomes so transformed that the same image which he sees in . . . the image of the glory of Christ . . . presents itself on him, i.e., he is so transformed that he becomes like the glorified Christ" ("Transformed," *Unger's*). Unger's interpretation is endorsed by Douglas M. Beaumont, a Catholic PhD in theology: neither the scriptural verses, including 1 John 3:1-2, teaching that man can become God-like, nor any other verses "mean that human nature can be changed into the divine nature of God. What they mean is that human nature can partake in the divine nature of

⁷⁾ The New International Version and the New King James Version of the Bible translate the last phrase as "How my heart yearns within me!" (*Bible Gateway*).

God” (“Can Man Become God?”; my emphasis). Emmons observes that the scriptural verse is the manifestation of the Apostle John’s belief in Christians’ growth in the present life when they are affected by Christ’s goodness:

Though his presence be invisible, yet it is sensible, by the happy effects which he produces in their hearts. He exerts his influence in producing faith, and love, and joy, and that peace, which passes all understanding. He gives them to realize what they shall be, and do, and enjoy, when they arrive at the mansions, which he has gone before to prepare for them. He causes them to feel as the apostle John did, when he said [1 John 3.1-2].’ It is difficult for christians to keep their hearts in a devout and solemn frame, while they are necessarily employed in the common courses of life; but it is comparatively easy to fix their attention and affections upon spiritual and divine objects, when the world is shut out from them and divine things are clearly brought into view at the table of Christ, where his friends mutually promote each other’s holy and devout affections. (509)

The Apostle Paul’s following beseeching to saints to metamorphose themselves as a living sacrifice to God hints that the meaning of spiritual transformation is the improvement of the moral character in the present world: “[B]e not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12.2; my emphasis).

Spiritual metamorphosis could take place also in the next world according to the following

remark on John’s meaning in “we shall see him as he is”: “[O]ur ability to appreciate and understand the depth, breadth, and fullness of Christ—and who we are in Christ—will only be complete when He returns. When we stand before Him, our spiritual eyes will be wide open, expanding our visual field to take in all of Him” (“What Does It Mean that We Shall See Him as He is?”; my emphasis).

In short, as for the true meaning of the Apostle John’s testimony that “we shall be like Christ” (1 John 3.2) —whether it means our literal and physical metamorphosis or figurative and spiritual transformation—, it should probably be most discreet to conclude that the true meaning of the verse is clarified only when Christ comes back: “Right now, while we live in this fallen world, the transformation process is gradual, inconsistent, and sometimes imperceptible. But, when we are in the presence of Jesus, our transformation will be swift and all-encompassing. We will see the Son in all His magnificent glory, and, at last, we will fully comprehend what it means to be a child of God” (“What Does It Mean that We Shall See Him as He is?”; my emphasis). Otherwise, its true meaning could be detected in the current world only through faith which is to believe in something unseen, because the question is rather a matter of faith and interpretation than a historical and scientific fact: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. . . . Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb. 11.1, 3).

2.2. The Origin of Conscience

The second key concept of the Plan of Salva-

tion is that our spirits are originally good because, in the Heavenly War that took place between Michael and Satan in the premortal world (Rev. 12.7-9) concerning how to redeem human beings and who should be their Redeemer, they followed God, His son, and good angels (“War in Heaven,” *Bible Dictionary*)⁸⁾. If we are literal children of our Heavenly Father, “spiritually begotten in the premortal life, each person has a divine, eternal potential” (“Children of God,” *Topics and Questions*). The Church of England considers that human beings are “by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath,” but that, by a “death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness,” they are “made the children of grace” (Charlotte Mitchell, “Notes” 462). However, after stressing that the original sin is a corruption of human nature that is passed down from Adam to all his descendants, the ninth article in “Articles of Religion” of *The Book of Common Prayer* states that “whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit” (566; my emphasis). The article confirms that we had *original righteousness* before coming to the earth and are made of flesh and spirit. The view of our goodness before the Fall is shared by Baptist leaders: “Mankind was perfect until the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. The first man and woman doubted God’s

word and chose to disobey God, thereby bringing evil into their lives and to this earth. Ever since, people are sinners by nature and by choice” (“Plan of Salvation,” Southern Baptist Conference; my emphasis).

The goodness of our premortal spirit is hinted at in the War in Heaven revealed to John the Apostle:

And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. / And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth. . . . / And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, / And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. / And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Rev. 12. 3-4, 7-9; my emphasis)

The Apostle denotes that one-third of angels or spiritual beings followed Satan and that they were cast away from heaven into the earth. The event is referred to in the Book of Isaiah as well.

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down

⁸⁾ This cause of the Heavenly War is offered by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. The scriptures do not give much detail regarding the cause of Satan’s rebellion against God, except his arrogance (Isa. 14.12-14). Milton assigns its cause to his pride (“his pride / Had cast him out from heaven” (Bk 1, lines 36-37)) and his anger (“his doom / Reserved him to more wrath; for now the thought / Both of lost happiness and lasting pain / Torments him” (Bk 1, lines 53-55)).

⁹⁾ “[T]he Articles of Religion . . . defined the basis of the Protestant belief and confirmed the Holy Scriptures as containing ‘all things necessary for salvation’” (Lynne Long 66).

to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! / For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: / I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. / Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. (Isa. 14.12-15)

Jesus also testified to the seventy that he “beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Luke 10.18)¹⁰⁾. If one-third of the angels followed Lucifer in the War in Heaven that occurred between Michael and him (Rev. 12.4, 7-9), it should mean that the remaining two-thirds stayed loyal to God since Michael was His archangel (Jude 1.9).

What are angels? The interpretation of angels varies among different Christian denominations and theologians. According to the definition by the Church of the Latter-Day Saints,

There are two kinds of beings in heaven who are called angels: those who are spirits and those who have bodies of flesh and bone. Angels who are spirits have not yet obtained a body of flesh and bone, or they are spirits who have once had a mortal body and are awaiting resurrection. Angels who

have bodies of flesh and bone have either been resurrected from the dead or translated.¹¹⁾ (“Angels,” *Guide to Scriptures*)

Quoting Paul the Apostle’s testimony to Christ as the creator of all things—“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him” (Col. 1.16; my emphasis) —, the former pastor Keathley III observes that beings in powers are “a reference to angels” (“Angelology”). Unger remarks that the word “angels” is applied to “human beings” or figuratively to “impersonal agents,” i.e. “certain spiritual and superhuman beings” (“angels,” *Unger’s* 52). In his statement that Christ is the “firstbegotten” (Heb. 1.6) son and thus above all the angels, Paul the Apostle implies that God’s angels are “spirits” (Heb. 1.7) and “ministering spirits” (Heb. 1.14).

The interpretation that the angels in Apostle John’s vision (Rev. 12. 3-4, 7-9) should be spirit children of God is upheld by God’s inquiry to one of the Old Testament prophets Job respecting where the “perfect and upright” (Job 1.1) man was when all the sons of God, or His children, shouted for joy at the foundations of the earth:

¹⁰⁾ Traditionally, Lucifer is referred to Satan (“Lucifer,” *Unger’s*; Dickason 138; “Satan,” *Britannica*). According to the Latin Vulgate, however, “*lucifer* is not a proper name, but is the Latin word for ‘morning star’ or ‘day star’” (Daniel B. Wallace, “Is ‘Lucifer’ the Devil”). Dickason explains that Satan was as brightly shining an angel as “the morning star” before his rebellion against his father God: “The one whose name was Lucifer, who shone with the holy light of God, the ‘star of the morning, son of the dawn,’ now has become Satan, the opposer of all that God is” (141-42).

¹¹⁾ The “angels who have bodies of flesh and bones” should be equal to what is meant by J. Hampton Keathley III, “a 1966 graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and a former pastor of 28 years”: “the existence of a higher order of beings between God and man, superior to man and inferior to God” (“Angelology”).

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. / Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? / Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; / When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38.4-7; my emphasis)

The concept that angels are spirit children of God created before the foundation of the earth is implied also by Job when he articulates, "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them" (Job 1.6; my emphasis). Depending on the depictions in the Book of Job, Keathley III observes, "In their holy state, unfallen angels are called 'sons of God' in the sense that they were brought into existence by the creation of God" ("Angelology").

According to the description of the heavenly conflict by John Milton (1608-74) in his epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667), God's militant powers march "Under their godlike leaders [Michael and Gabriel], in the cause / Of God and his Messiah [Christ]" (Bk. 6, lines 67-68) towards the north to fight against the "branded powers of Satan" (Bk. 6, lines 85), who aims "To win the mount of God, and on his throne / To set the

envier of his state, the proud / Aspirer [Satan]" (Bk. 6, lines 89-90). "Michael of celestial armies prince" (Bk. 6, line 44), Gabriel "in military prowess next" (Bk. 6, line 45-46), and Christ "the filial Godhead" (Bk. 6, line 722), are the leaders of God's spirit children whom He asks to end the war: "the glory may be thine / Of ending this great war, since none but thou / Can end it" (Bk. 6, lines 701-03). For "the blind bard of the epic" (Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg vii), the premortal War in Heaven was a reality not merely because his "avowed intention" was to "justify the ways of God to men" but also because "the underlying assumption was that God's ways need justification and that Milton was authorized to be God's spokesman" (Orgel and Goldberg xvi).

In *Paradise Lost*, the Independent Congregationalist¹²⁾ poet interprets angels as God's spirit children, as is shown in the goblin's insults hurled at Satan in front of the gates of hell:

Art thou that traitor angel, art thou he, /
Who first broke peace in heaven and faith,
till then / Unbroken, and in proud rebellious
arms / Drew after him the third part of
Heaven's sons, / Conjured against the high-
est, for which both thou / And they, outcast
from God, are here condemned / To waste
eternal days in woe and pain? / And reckon'st
thou thyself with spirits of heaven / Hell-

¹²⁾ "Whereas in *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* and *Animadversions* Milton had argued as a presbyterian within the national church of England, in *The Reason of Church Government* he moves away from state presbyterianism towards independent congregationalism, which had taken root in the puritan colonies of America and had been re-exported to England as radical tolerationism: Milton had not become a sectarian, but he now differed from the presbyterians in arguing for a measure of toleration, so adumbrating the explicitly tolerationist position that he was to take up in his later years" (Gordon Campbell, "Milton," *DNB*; my emphasis).

doomed. . . . (Bk. 2, lines 689-97; my emphasis)

God's words of satisfaction uttered after the completion of creation—"God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, *it was very good*" (Gen. 1.31; my emphasis)—imply that everything He created, including the spirits and bodies of Adam and Eve, was also "very good" until they surrendered to Satan's temptation to betray their heavenly father (Gen. 3.6). Unger emphasizes that there were "the pristine, sinless spheres" in the universe "before the creation of man" ("Lucifer," *Unger's* 670) and that "Man at his creation was in a state of moral purity" ("Fall of Man," *Unger's* 342).

Even if we are born as sinners, we have reason, or "the innate moral sense of right and wrong (something like conscience), the exercise of which was essential to living a virtuous life" (Rhodri Lewis 102; my emphasis). We have *this innate moral sense* because we were "spirit children of God, with the potential to be 'partakers of the divine nature' (2 Peter 1:4)" ("Fall of Adam and Eve," *Gospel Topics*).

The immortality of the soul is one of the controversial questions among Christian churches. Louis Berkhof, a "Dutch American theologian" (Jefferson Vann), observes that man was "immortal before the fall," but that "it was entirely possible that through sin he would become subject to the law of death" ("Immortality of the Soul"). Father Jerome Harmer stresses Catholic belief in the immortality of soul (or

spirit)¹³⁾, or the body-soul dualism in human beings:

The Church affirms that a spiritual element survives and subsists after death, an element endowed with consciousness and will, so that the "human self" subsists. To designate this element, the Church uses the word "soul," the accepted term in the usage of Scripture and Tradition. ("Letter on Certain Questions Concerning Eschatology")

James the Apostle's testimony that "as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (Jas 2.26; my emphasis) endorses the dichotomy of spirit and body.

On the contrary, some Christian denominations do not believe in the immortality of the soul. They distinguish "spirits who have not yet obtained a body of flesh and bone" from "spirits who have once had a mortal body and are awaiting resurrection": they keep some understanding of the former as they believe in the war between spiritual beings which took place in the premortal world, but make a flat denial of the latter since, for them, each of us is "an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit" ("Official Beliefs of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church"; my emphasis). On the basis of such biblical verses as "the Lord God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2.7; my emphasis) and "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath *given* me life" (Job 33.4; my emphasis), they consider that the

¹³⁾ "The term soul specifies that in the immaterial part of man which concerns life, action and emotion. Spirit is that part related to worship and divine communion. The two terms are often used interchangeably, the same functions being ascribed to each" ("Spirit," *Unger's* 1043).

being remaining in the body is not the spirit but “the breath of life” (Arao Kondo 163). For them, the Apostle Paul’s testimony to the existence of the spirit—“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Eccles. 12:7) —is a piece of biblical evidence that the spirit never continues to live after death but returns to its Father.

Richard T. Ritenbaugh, a Church of the Great God pastor, shares Seventh-Day Adventists’ denial of body-spirit dualism:

“We believe that man indeed has a spirit” as in “there is a spirit in man” (Job 32:8), “but that it is not his soul. When combined with a human brain, the human spirit allows a person to have the powers of mind. When he dies, the body returns to the dust, but his spirit returns to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7), who safeguards it as a record of his life. / Solomon also informs us” that “the dead know not any thing” (Eccles. 9:5), and “there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave” (Eccles. 2:10), “meaning that there is no consciousness in death. The person knows nothing, learns nothing, communicates nothing, does nothing—until the resurrection from the dead when God will unite that spirit with a new body, either a spiritual body or another physical body, depending on the resurrection.” (“What the Bible Says about Doctrine of ‘Immortality’ of the Soul”)

For Seventh-Day Adventists, “The wages of sin is death. But God, who alone is immortal, will grant eternal life to His redeemed. Until that day death is an unconscious state for all people. When Christ, who is our life, appears, the resur-

rected righteous and the living righteous will be glorified and caught up to meet their Lord. . . . His [man’s] breath is what made him a living soul—a living creature. When we die, we stop breathing and we rest. Nowhere in the Bible does it say the soul is separate from the body” (“Death, the State of the Dead, and Resurrection”). The immortality of the spirit is hardly biblical for these denominations.

2.3. Jesus Christ the Saviour

The third key element in God’s Plan of Salvation is that Jesus Christ, the first son of God, came to the earth to sacrifice himself to redeem humankind. This atonement motif is “a major strand of salvation theology” (Newlands 836). After the Fall, sin comes into mankind. Paul the Apostle states, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; / Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:23-24). John the Apostle testifies, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. / If we confess our sins, he [Jesus Christ] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9). In short, “every soul stands in need of the Savior’s mediation, since all are sinners” (James E. Talmage 26).

The doctrine of Christ’s atonement is shared by most Christian denominations as it is the foundation of Christianity. For instance, Baptists believe “the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins and that all who trust in Him, and Him alone are declared righteous because of His sacrificial death and are, therefore, in the right relationship with God” (“What Do We Believe?,” *Faith Baptist Church*). Catholics’ view of Christ is this: “God

the Son became man to free us from sin and open to us the way to Heaven and everlasting life with God" ("What We Believe about Jesus," *Catholic Online*). The following citation from Seventh-Day Adventists' belief in Christ provides us with a succinct summary of the role of Jesus in the divine plan of redeeming human beings:

Though humanity is sinful and corrupt (Romans 3:23), God is love (1 John 4:8). In His love for us He devised a plan 'before the foundation of the world' (Ephesians 1:3-14) to redeem mankind from sin. / This plan involves God's only Son, Jesus Christ, being born of a virgin, taking on our humanity, and then dying in our place—bearing the eternal consequences of sin so we can be reconciled with God (John 3:16). Through Him humanity can find atonement for our sins, as He was willing to be our substitute, suffering the condemnation that should have been meant for us. ("What Adventists Believe about the Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ")

As for the identity of Jesus Christ, there are three positions: (a) He is God, (b) He is the first son of God, and (c) He is a human being. Most Christian churches believe in the Trinity—the orthodox Christian belief in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as constituting one God ("trinity," *OED*) —, or in the concept of a mixture of (a) and (b). The Church of England is a typical example of avowing faith in the Trinity: "Belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is at the heart of our faith. Christians believe that Jesus is God's Son. Jesus reveals to us that God is our Father, and that God is available to us through the Holy Spirit" ("What We Believe").

Paul the Apostle calls God "our Saviour" in his statement that leading "a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty . . . *is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour*" (1 Tim. 2:3). Orthodoxically, our Saviour has been regarded as Christ, the first son of God: according to Unger, it is "a term applied . . . to Jesus Christ" ("Saviour," *Unger's* 976). Nevertheless, the Apostle's further explanation about who is "God our Saviour" denotes his recognition that God is also our saviour since it is He who sends his first son to wash away our sin and that, therefore, their identities are not the same: God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. / For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; / Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Tim. 2:4-6).

The Apostle John's quotation from Jesus's teaching not only casts doubt on the Trinity, but also testifies to the existence of the premortal world:

He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. / These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. / But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:24-26; my emphasis)

The "word which ye hear is . . . the Father's which sent me" presupposes that Jesus and His Father are different persons. The "Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name" makes

sense when the three beings are different characters. Because the phrase “being *yet* present with you” signifies the time when Jesus has yet to be present with his disciples, what is meant by his words—“These things have I spoken unto you, being *yet* present with you”—is that these teachings have already been spoken to his disciples in the premortal world.

John Milton describes Father and Son as different beings in *Paradise Lost* as is found, for instance, in the dialogue between them: “O Son, in whom my soul hath chief delight, Son of my bosom” (Bk. 3, lines 168-69) and “Father, thy word is past, man shall find grace” (Bk. 3, line 227).

Unitarians take the (c) position as to Jesus’s identity. They “base their religious beliefs on reason as well as experience” (“Unitarianism and Universalism,” *Britannica*) and believe “the simple humanity of Jesus” (John Rowland 2; “General Preface” xii). Therefore, he is “not the proper object of . . . worship, but God the Father” for them (Rowland 2):

As Unitarians believe that men and women are capable of helping themselves because their nature is basically good, they have always been interested in the likeness of Jesus to ordinary men and women rather than in his difference from them. Jesus became an example of how we might live instead of a means by which we might in some way purchase our salvation. (Rowland 2; my emphasis)

Rowland continues, “Unitarians . . . recognize that the authority for a person’s religious faith lay neither in the church nor in the Bible but within individual people. In contemporary Uni-

tarianism the individual conscience, guided by human reason, is the source of what Unitarians believe. This makes Unitarianism a religion of personal responsibility” (3). For them, the Bible is a useful guide “in helping us to form our own religious beliefs. In the Bible may be found religious truth and insight, but the Bible in its entirety would certainly not be regarded as the Word of God” (Rowland 3; my emphasis). As for the question of immortality, Unitarians “keep on open mind on the matter,” believing that “men and women deserve their salvation in this world rather than the next” (Rowland 4). Many Unitarians believe the resurrection of Jesus not as a historical fact, but in the light of a metaphysical concept: “best deeds and thoughts live on working themselves out in history” (Rowland 4). Early Unitarian ministers condemn the Orthodox view of salvation and proclaim their view of the humanity of Christ:

[T]he love of Christ’s God, and the prayerful seeking after Christ’s goodness are sufficient to place us on the way of everlasting Safety. . . . Let it acknowledge that the pure heart, and the pure life, and the spirit of faith in God, may save a soul from death, and Orthodoxy will have dissolved itself, for nothing but the last necessity, the attainableness of safety by no other means, could justify its existence. . . . Was it, then, the intention of Jesus to establish a certain Creed [the Athanasian Creed: “He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity”] breathing curses against all who do not think alike,—however they may love and live? . . . If Jesus had been charged with the delivery of an exclusive Creed, as the only

instrument of Salvation, would he have veiled it from the eyes of those he came to save? Orthodoxy is *not Christianity*; — yet that in Orthodox bosoms the Spirit of Christ may dwell, we are not the persons to deny. (“General Preface” xviii-xix)

For Unitarians, accordingly, the Plan of Salvation is a contentious doctrine. Although acknowledging the basic goodness of human spirits, they are uncertain as to whether it stems from our pre-mortal life.

2.4. The Premortal and Postmortal Worlds

The fourth principal element of the Plan of Salvation is the belief in the premortal world along with the hope for the postmortal world.

2.4.1. The Premortal World

In addition to the biblical implications of War in Heaven and the spirit children of God explored in Section 2.2, the existence of the premortal

world is testified by Jeremiah, whom God confirmed to have been ordained a prophet before he was born: “Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, / Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jer. 1.4-5; my emphasis). It is indicated also in the prophet Job’s citation of God’s affirmation that “all the sons of God shouted for joy” at His “foundation of the earth” (Job 38.4, 7).

Another biblical reference to the pre-earth life is the Council in Heaven (See Fig. 3) which God opened to disclose his Plan of Salvation to his spirit children (“Plan of Salvation,” *Truth to the Faith*). *Got Questions* introduces a few scriptural verses which allude to heavenly councils. For instance,

And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O



Fig. 3. The Grand Council by Robert T. Barrett (Source: altusfineart.com)

Lord: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. / For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? *who* among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord? / God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.

(Ps. 89.5-7; my emphasis)

This citation portrays a divine council where heavenly beings are referred to as “the assembly of the saints” (“What Is the Divine Council?”). Nehemiah, “a man of pure and disinterested patriotism” (“Nehemiah,” *Unger’s* 787), who restored “the wall of Jerusalem” (Neh. 4.7), records the Levites’ praise of the Lord which alludes to God’s creation of all things with his spiritual beings.

Thou, *even* thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all *things* that *are* therein, the seas, and all that *is* therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. (Neh. 9.6; my emphasis)

The “host of heaven” is “most likely angelic beings,” as God is the “Lord of hosts” (Ps. 24.9; Isa. 44.6) (“What Is the Divine Council?” *Got Questions*)¹⁴. Another scriptural passage that could be read as describing a meeting of the divine council is found in the Book of Job: “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them” (Job 1.6). The council or

assembly in the above examples, however, remains uncertain if they really allude to the premortal divine council where Satan opposed God’s plan. The third one in Job’s testimony obviously does not, since God’s topic in the meeting is not his Plan of Salvation but “his servant Job” (Job 1.8).

Asaph, a psalmist, mentions that “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods” (Ps. 82.1). In answer to the inquiry of the king of Israel, the prophet Micaiah states that “I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left” (1 Kings 22.19; my emphasis). These scriptural verses also allude to heavenly councils, but their contexts diminish the possibility of their being the council held prior to the Heavenly War.

On the other hand, Milton describes two such councils in *Paradise Lost*. First, the “portress of hell gate” named Sin reminds her father Satan of his “bold conspiracy against heaven’s king” formed “at the assembly”:

To whom thus the portress of hell gate replied; / Hast thou forgot me, then; and do I seem / Now in thine eye so foul, once deemed so fair / In heaven, when at the assembly, and in sight / Of all the seraphim with thee combined / In bold conspiracy against heaven’s king, / All on a sudden miserable pain / Surprised thee, dim thine eyes and dizzy swum / In darkness, (Bk. 2, lines 746-54; my emphasis)

¹⁴ “Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I *am* the first, and I *am* the last; and beside me *there* is no God” (Isa. 44.6; my emphasis). The redeemer here should be read as Israel’s redeemer, i.e. God, not Christ.

Second, in the heavenly council, the almighty Father discloses to “the blessed spirits elect” (Bk. 3, line 136) “my eternal purpose” (Bk. 3, line 172), or his plan of saving humankind, and recruits a volunteer filled with divine charity who will die for them:

Man shall not quite be lost, but saved who
will, / Yet not of will in him, but grace in me
/ Freely vouchsafed; (Bk. 3, lines 173-75) /
. . . / He with his whole posterity must die, /
Die he or justice must; unless for him /
Some other able, and as willing, pay / The
rigid satisfaction, death for death. / Say
heavenly powers, where shall we find such
love, / which of ye will be mortal to redeem
/ Mans mortal crime, and just the unjust to
save, / Dwells in all Heaven charity so dear?
(Bk. 3, lines 209-16)

In reply, the Son of God tells his Father his intention to offer himself for man:

Behold me then, me for him, life for life / I
offer, on me let thine anger fall; / Account
me man; I for his sake will leave / Thy
bosom, and this glory next to thee / Freely
put off, and for him lastly die / Well pleased,
on me let Death wreck all his rage. (Bk. 3,
lines 236-41)

Then, Milton relates the War in Heaven depicted in Chapter 12 of Revelation (See Section 2.2 of this study) through the mouth of Raphael the Archangel in Book 6. The poet seems to understand that Satan has already been expelled from Heaven by God after his defeat in the “impious war in heaven and battle proud / With vain attempt” (Bk. 1, line 43-44). The fallen angel starts another war against his Father (Bk. 6, Lines 85-86) to regain his position in heaven

(Bk. 2, lines 37-42), and is defeated by Christ (Bk. 6, lines 878-88).

2.4.2. The Postmortal World

As for the biblical references to the postmortal life, the Apostle Paul testifies that eternal life is promised before the world begins: “I hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Tit. 1.2; my emphasis). Paul’s comparison between the mortal and postmortal worlds in his testimony that “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8.18; my emphasis) is another confirmation of his belief in the next world. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, believes in the afterlife as well: “This life was a precursor to the next, and the most significant question for a person was whether this life’s trajectory ended in heaven or hell. . . . What salvation means is to be free of sin and thus able to live in the presence of God. This presence is available to believers in this life, but is available fully and directly in the life to come” (“Afterlife and Salvation”; my emphasis).

The Plan of Salvation is referred to in the scene of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* where God asks His son Jesus to carry out His plan:

I . . . in a moment will create / Another
world, out of one man a race / Of men innumerable, there to dwell, / Not here, till by
degrees of merit raised, / They open to
themselves at length the way / Up hither,
under long obedience tried, / And earth be
changed to heaven, and heaven to earth, /
One kingdom, joy and union without end. /
Meanwhile inhabit lax, ye powers of heaven,
/ And thou my word, begotten Son, by thee

/ This I perform; speak thou, and be it done.

(Bk. 7, lines 152-64; my emphasis)

God will create the earth to let Adam and his “innumerable” descendants “dwell” there, not in heaven, and prepare the way for them to return “by degrees of merit” to heaven “under long obedience tried”; then, the earth will be changed to the heavenly place, or one “kingdom,” where “joy and union” continue “without end”; this shall be performed by the sacrifice of “my word, begotten Son, by thee.” Milton makes another reference to God’s Plan in the same Book where God looks at the newly created earth from heaven to examine how it answers “his great idea”:

Here finished he, and all that he had made /
Viewed, and behold all was entirely good; /
So even and morn accomplished the sixth day: /
Yet not till the creator from his work /
Desisting, though unwearied, up returned /
Up to the heaven of heavens his high abode, /
Thence to behold this new created world /
The addition of his empire how it showed /
In prospect from his throne, how good how fair, /
Answering his great idea.
(Bk. 7, lines 548-57; my emphasis)

There are quite a few characters in English fiction who express their belief in the next world.

For instance, in Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of the Wildfell Hall* (1848), Helen Huntingdon, the “not five or six and twenty”-year-old (*TWH* 12) protagonist wife, encourages the 24-year old gentleman farmer (*TWH* 9) Gilbert Markham, who loves her and regrets about their separation, to believe that they will meet in heaven:

[C]an you really derive no consolation from the thought that we may meet together where there is no more pain and sorrow, no

more striving against sin, and struggling of the spirit against the flesh; where both will behold the same glorious truths, and drink exalted and supreme felicity from the same fountain of light and goodness—that Being whom both will worship with the same intensity of holy ardour, and whose pure and happy creatures both will love with the same divine affection? (*TWH* 389-90; my emphasis)

Helen’s belief comes from John the Apostle’s testimony that in “a new heaven and a new earth. . . . God shall wipe away all tears from their [men’s] eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21.1, 4) and also that there is “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. . . . And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: / And they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads” (Rev. 22.1, 3-4). The “Being” whom Gilbert and Helen “will worship” should be God, and “whose pure and happy creatures” should be angels. Heaven is a real place for Helen.

In Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Ruth* (1853), at the funeral service for Ruth Hilton, who has devoted her life to self-purification after committing a sexual sin, Revd Benson quotes from John the Apostle’s testimony recorded in Chapter 7 of Revelation which promises that repentant sinners, like Ruth, will surely be forgiven by Heavenly Father:

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in

white robes? and whence came they? / And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. / Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. / They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. / For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. (*RU* 457; Rev. 7.13-17; my emphasis)

Phillip Hepburn, the shop clerk who bestows “tender and true” (*SL* 501) devotion to his cousin Sylvia Robson throughout the story, in Gaskell’s *Sylvia’s Lovers* (1863), dies with the hope of their reunion in the next world.

I’m getting low and faint, lassie; but thou must remember this: God knows more, and is more forgiving than either you to me, or me to you. I think and do believe as we shall meet together before His face; but then I shall ha’ learnt to love thee second to Him; not first, as I have done here upon the earth. (*SL* 496)

In George Eliot’s “Janet’s Repentance” (1858), Revd Edgar Tryan, “a zealous Evangelical clergyman, aged thirty-three” (“JR” 223), reminds Janet Dempster, who develops alcoholism as a means of escaping from the pains of her

husband’s physical violence, of the meaning of the present life:

Ah, dear Mrs Dempster, you will never say again that life is blank, and that there is nothing to live for, will you? See what work there is to be done in life, both in our own souls and for others. Surely it matters little whether we have more or less of this world’s comfort in these short years, when God is training us for the eternal enjoyment of His love. Keep that great end of life before you, and your troubles here will seem only the small hardships of a journey.” (“JR” 305; my emphasis)

Revd Tryan’s advice signifies his belief in the postmortal life where those who strive to make sincere living in “this world” can find “the eternal enjoyment” of God’s love.

3. Human Spirits’ Innate Goodness in Gaskell’s Novellas

This section examines how Gaskell’s characters in *Cranford*, *My Lady Ludlow*, and *Cousin Phillis* are described to mirror one of the key concepts of the Christian doctrine “The Plan of Salvation”—the human spirit’s innate goodness.

3.1. *Cranford* (1853)

One of the Christian virtues of Captain Brown, a “half-pay”¹⁵⁾ captain “upwards of sixty” years old (*CD* 10), is his preservation of righteousness by nonchalantly ignoring how he is viewed by others: “He had been friendly, though the Cranford ladies had been cool; he had answered small sarcastic compliments in good

¹⁵⁾ Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford*, Penguin 8. All further page references to the novella are taken from this edition and inserted in the text with the abbreviation *CD*.

faith. . . . He, himself, went on in his course, as unaware of his popularity, as he had been of the reverse" (CD 9). Consciously or unconsciously, he keeps such scriptural words of wisdom as "Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice. / Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. / Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. / And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4.4-7), "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6.34), and "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5.9-10).

Another instance of Captain Brown's goodness is depicted in the scene of Miss Jenkyns's party held in Mary Smith's honour.¹⁶⁾ He "immediately and quietly" attends to "everyone's wants," lessens the "maid-servant's labour by waiting on empty cups, and bread-and-butterless ladies" (CD 12). The narrator's emphasis on his uprightness is another echo of Christ's selfless consideration for neighbours expressed, for instance, in such a scriptural verse as "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22.39): he "did it all in so easy and dignified a manner, and so much as if it were a matter of

course for the strong to attend to the weak, that he was a true man throughout" (CD 12).

Also, in the often-quoted "clash between Captain Brown and Miss Jenkyns over the relative merits of Johnson and Dickens" (Peter Keating 17), Captain Brown's repentance and forbearance are slotted into his response to Deborah's persistent assertion of support for Dr Johnson:

It is said—I won't vouch for the fact—that Captain Brown was heard to say, *sotto voce*, 'D—n Dr Johnson!!' If he did, he was penitent afterwards, as he showed by going to stand near Miss Jenkyns's arm-chair, and endeavouring to beguile her into conversation on some more pleasing subject. (CD 14-15; my emphasis)

In addition, he endeavours "to make peace with her soon after the memorable dispute" by a present of his self-made "wooden fire-shovel," having heard her complaint about "the grating of an iron one" (CD 17-18). He has such Christian morality of abstaining from revenge as taught in the scriptural verses: "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. 19.18), "Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I [God] will render to the man according to his work" (Prov. 24.29), and "The Lord *is* slow to anger" (Nah. 1.3).

Mary Smith continues to record "the Captain's infinite kindness of heart" (CD 16). He helps "a poor old woman. . . one very slippery Sunday" by taking her "dinner out of her hands"

¹⁶⁾ Deborah and Matilda Jenkyns are the middle-aged daughters of "a deceased rector of Cranford" (CD 13), and the former has "long taken the lead" (CD 32) in the country "town" (CD 5); the narrator Mary Smith is a frequent visitor to their house.

(CD 16).

He had met her returning from the bake-house as he came from church, and noticed her precarious footing; and, with the grave dignity with which he did everything, he relieved her of her burden, and steered along the street by her side, carrying her baked mutton and potatoes safely home.

(CD 16; my emphasis)

His action of labouring on a Sunday is thought “eccentric” enough to disturb “the Cranford sense of propriety,” but he makes no apologies for what he has done with “the grave dignity,” and appears as nonchalantly as ever as if he were “untouched by any sense of shame” (CD 16). For him, it is natural for children of God to help their brothers and sisters in need whether it is Sunday or not. His action is an echo of Jesus’s answer to the Pharisees’ question as to the lawfulness of healing on the sabbath days: “What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift *it* out? / How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days” (Matt. 12.11). The Cranford ladies’ change of thought concerning this “Sunday morning’s occurrence” from defiance to tolerance, or from the offence against their “sense of propriety” to “great goodness of heart” (CD 16), indicates that they are also children of God as it is a sign of their having the ability to distinguish good from evil.

The Brown trio’s mutual consideration is another instance of the moral integrity of God’s children.

Miss Brown used to accuse herself, not

merely of hasty and irritable temper, but also of being the cause why her father and sister were obliged to pinch, in order to allow her the small luxuries which were necessities in her condition. She would so fain have made sacrifices for them, and have lightened their cares, that the original generosity of her disposition added acerbity to her temper. All this was borne by Miss Jessie and her father with more than placidity—with absolute tenderness. (CD 17; my emphasis)

Despite being “seriously ill of some lingering, incurable complaint” (CD 17), Captain Brown’s elder daughter accuses herself of the troubles she causes, since she fails to lighten the burdens of her father and younger sister. Indeed, the “original generosity of her disposition” makes her willingly sacrifice herself for them. This guilty conscience testifies to the inborn goodness of her spirit, or the quality of her being a divine child. Her acerbic temper is endured by her father and her younger sister “with more than placidity—with absolute tenderness.” They are also children of God. The Captain’s thoughtfulness is spotlighted by the narrator in her reference to his special kindness towards his servant who helps them even in this difficult situation: “he was not above saving the little maid-servant’s labours in every way,—knowing, most likely, that his daughter’s illness made the place a hard one” (CD 17).

Captain Brown is depicted as a man of faith and morals. When he almost runs against Miss Jenkyns on a street, he makes “earnest and sincere” apologies although in fact he does not “do more than startle her and himself” (CD 20). His

anxieties about his first daughter's health make him look "older" and "more worn"; also, the expenses for her treatment make him little care about his clothes even if they are "very threadbare" (*CD* 20). Notwithstanding, he looks "as bright and cheerful as ever" (*CD* 20-21). His long-suffering or patience is a virtue praised by the Apostle Paul: "the fruit of the Spirit is . . . longsuffering" (Gal. 5.22; my emphasis), "ye walk . . . / With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love" (Eph. 4.2; my emphasis), and "we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; / And patience, experience; and experience, hope" (Rom. 5.3-4; my emphasis).

The Captain's remark and action concerning his elder daughter—"She suffers a great deal, and she must suffer more; we do what we can to alleviate her pain—God's will be done! He took off his hat at these last words" (*CD* 21)—demonstrate his manliness of viewing reality calmly, his long-sufferance, his altruistic affection for his invalid daughter, and his faith in Heavenly Father. His taking off his hat is a sign of his reverence for as well as faith in God. The Captain and his second daughter "denied themselves many things in order to make the invalid comfortable; but they never spoke about it" (*CD* 21). Their secret patience is another sign of the Christian virtue of doing good in secret: "when thou does alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth" (Matt. 6.3).

The narrator Mary Smith discloses one more instance of Captain Brown's goodness when she introduces the reason why Lord Mauleverer gives no financial help to the Captain, who saved his life in the war (*CD* 19, 21): "he never speaks

about being poor" and looks "as happy and cheerful as a prince" (*CD* 21) to give his lordship no hint about "how much care there was in the background" (*CD* 22). Captain Brown's secrecy echoes the scriptural virtue of doing good in secret. The narratorial description of the painful father who visits Miss Jenkyns to thank her for her many surreptitious little kindnesses provides a condensation of his manly forbearance and devoutness:

He did not—could not—speak cheerfully of his daughter's state, but he talked with manly pious resignation, and not much. Twice over he said, "What Jessie has been to us, God only knows!" and after the second time, he got up hastily, shook hands all round without speaking, and left the room. (*CD* 22; my emphasis)

The biblical teaching that we are all children of God and hence have fundamental goodness in our spirits is echoed especially in the Cranford ladies' association with the Brown family. Deborah Jenkyns renders "many little kindnesses" to the family, such as preparing "an apple full of cloves, to be heated and smell pleasantly in Miss Brown's room" (*CD* 22) in secret. She knows Captain Brown's second daughter Jessie's selfless devotion to the care of her invalid elder sister. The innate goodness of Cranfordians' spirits is hinted at in the narrator's stress on their thoughtfulness for others: such things as a pot-pourri of rose-leaves for someone with no garden and "the little bundles of lavender-flowers" for "some town-dweller" and "some invalid" that "many would despise, and actions which it seemed scarcely worth while to perform, were all attended to in Cranford" (*CD* 22).

Captain Brown's death in the railroad accident is an episode that spotlights the intrinsic goodness of the human spirit, one of the key beliefs in the Plan of Salvation. His death happens when he attempts to save a toddling "little lass" from the approaching train (CD 23). Thomas E. Recchio calls his courageous deed "a spontaneous, half-conscious act of self-sacrifice" (16). According to the Scriptures, his self-sacrifice symbolizes that of Jesus, who states that "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15.13) and actually lays down his life for humankind. When Matty invites the eyewitness to her drawing room to hear the details of the accident, none of the Jenkyns family members cares about his standing "with his wet boots on the new carpet" (CD 23) whose "purity" they have hated to be defiled by visitors' shoes (CD 20); their primary concern is Captain Brown's life. Deborah's first thought after knowing the details is her mission of conveying the news to his daughters and her prayer to God for forgiving her inconsiderateness: "I must go to those girls. God pardon me if ever I have spoken contemptuously to the Captain" (CD 23). Before going out, Deborah tells his younger sister to give the eyewitness "a glass of wine" (CD 23), another instance of her spirit's inborn kindness. Recovering from the faint she has had after hearing the news of her father's accidental death, Jessie Brown asks Miss Jenkyns or Miss Pole, Cranford's kind-hearted gossipmonger, to go upstairs and simply "sit with" her invalid sister without disclosing the news to

her, because she "would be so utterly miserable, not merely at my father's death, but to think of what would become of me; she is so good to me" (CD 24). Miss Pole can hardly bear Jessie's "absolute tenderness" (CD 17) for her ill-tempered sister because she knows how "Miss Brown treated her sister" (CD 24).

The innate goodness of the human spirit is drawn also in Miss Jenkyns's treatment of Miss Jessie's resolution to follow her father's corpse to the grave. At first Deborah opposes her obstinacy because it is not fit for the pain-struck girl to go alone, and "against both propriety and humanity" (CD 24) as it is "not usual in polite society for women to attend funerals" (CD "Notes" 237); however, she finally grants Jessie's desire since she is aware that to her "the dear father" has been "all in all" (CD 24). Deborah accompanies Captain Brown's second daughter to the interment to support her with an invaluable "tender indulgent firmness," and allows Jessie, as she has wished, to weep "for one little half-hour, uninterrupted by sympathy, and unobserved by friendship" (CD 24-25).

Cranford ladies' unselfish act of helping the bereaved Brown sisters and the Brown sisters' mutual consideration for each other (CD 25-26) signify that they are all God's children.

3.2. *My Lady Ludlow* (1858)

From the first couple of pages, the story spotlights the innate goodness of the spirit of Lady Ludlow, a former "maid of honour to Queen Charlotte" and the aristocrat's widow at Hanbury Court, when she offers help to the narrator

¹⁷⁾ Elizabeth Gaskell, *My Lady Ludlow*, Pickering 151. All further page references are taken from this edition and inserted into the text with the abbreviation *MLL*.

Margaret Dawson's mother:

[W]hen my poor father died, and my mother who was sorely pressed to know what to do with her nine children, and looked far and wide for signs of willingness to help, Lady Ludlow sent her a letter, proffering aid and assistance. (*MLL* 146)

The appreciation of Margaret, a cripple, for Lady Ludlow's secret kindness towards her is inserted when she is asked for "some help in arranging the drawers of her bureau" in the lady's sitting room and told to sit down in "the easy chair near the window" (*MLL* 169-70) by her. The "soft and luxurious" chair which gives "one's body rest just in that part where one most needed it" is brought in "on purpose" for the handicapped narrator (*MLL* 170).

Lady Ludlow's Hanbury estate is mortgaged "for a sum of money which had gone to improve the late lord's Scotch lands" (*MLL* 173) because she "loved him and his memory" with "as fond and proud a love as ever wife gave husband" (*MLL* 175). Her wish "to pay off this before her death, and so to leave her own inheritance free of incumbrance to her son" (*MLL* 173) comes from her maternal love for Rudolph the present Earl. She stints "herself of any personal expense, such as . . . only decorous and becoming in the heiress of the Hanburys" to make "the payments of the interest" (*MLL* 175); she "would have lived on bread and water sooner than have called upon" the "ambassador at some foreign place" "to help her in paying off the mortgage, although he was the one who was to benefit by it in the end" (*MLL* 175). Her self-willed frugality to pay the mortgage in full is based not only on her enduring and proud affection for the deceased husband

but also on her strong determination to devote her motherly love to her son to fulfill her parental responsibility. Her moral integrity accords with such scriptural verses as recommending ethical righteousness: "Blessed *are* they that keep judgment, *and* he that doeth righteousness at all times" (Ps. 106.3) and "Righteousness keepeth *him* that is upright in the way" (Prov. 13.6).

Besides, Lady Ludlow's thoughtfulness for others is hinted at in her way of holding weekly meetings with her tenants: she does so, not in the morning according to the old custom, but in the afternoon in consideration of their convenience as "it spoilt a whole day for a farmer, if he had to dress himself in his best and leave his work in the forenoon" (*MLL* 174).

The inborn goodness of the human spirit is manifested in the narratorial depictions of other characters as well. For instance, the groom Randal's tenderness for his horse is revealed in his gratitude to the narrator who begs him to help her down from the gig to walk among the pasture grass: "Randal, out of pity for his steaming horse, wearied with the hard struggle through the mud, thanked me kindly, and helped me down with a springing jump" (*MLL* 148). The old clergyman Mr Mountford cannot "bear to see pain, or sorrow, or misery of any kind": "if it came under his notice, he was never easy till he had relieved it" (*MLL* 154). At his death, he leaves "some of his property . . . to the poor of the parish, to furnish them with an annual Christmas dinner of roast-beef and plum-pudding, for which he wrote out a very good receipt in the codicil to his will" (*MLL* 155-56). When "a great jump . . . from the top of one of the stiles" (*MLL* 168) causes Margaret Dawson a cripple,

Mrs Medlicott, “a gentle little woman, who had been companion to my lady for many years” (*MLL* 157), offers priceless comforts to the “active, wilful, strong girl of seventeen” who has had “long, hard fits of crying” (*MLL* 168). She gives the young narrator “a basin of melted calves'-foot jelly,” which should be, according to her, “a cure for every woe,” and advises her to stop “fretting for what can't be helped” (*MLL* 168). Her advice mirrors such biblical instructions as encourage us to look forward not backward: “Say not thou, What is *the cause* that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this” (Eccles. 7.10), “Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. / Behold, I [God] will do a new thing” (Isa. 43.18-19), and “*this* one thing I [Paul the Apostle] *do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3.13).

The depth of Lady Ludlow's motherly love for her lost son is explicit in her remark after reading his old friend Clément de Créquy's letter of condolences: “What could he—or any one—say to a mother who has lost her child? . . . judging from my own experience, I should say that reverent silence at such times is the tenderest balm” (*MLL* 184).

Clément de Créquy, the old friend of Lady Ludlow's son Urian, fulfills the filial duty for his ill mother in London: the bearer of Clément's note testifies to Lady Ludlow that “the young man waited upon her, did everything for her, never left her, in fact” (*MLL* 185). His action is an echo of the scriptural teaching “Honour thy

father and thy mother” (Exod.20.12; Deut. 5.16; Eph. 6.2).

The Good Samaritan kindness is depicted through the characters' actions. The landlady of the lodging at the back of Leicester Square, London, where Madam de Créquy and her son Clément have stayed, shows sympathy towards the French emigrants: “The landlady as a kind, good woman, and though she but half understood the case, she was truly sorry for them, as foreigners, and the mother sick in a strange land” (*MLL* 186). In response to Clément's request for help, Lady Ludlow takes his messenger to London in her carriage (*MLL* 186), leaves one of her men in the lodging, “who can understand a few words of French” (*MLL* 187) for the sick mother before the Lady drives off to see the doctor to ask “his permission to remove Madame de Créquy to” her own house (*MLL* 187), pays “fifty pounds” (*MLL* 187) to have his permission, and finally achieves her purpose. Clément's prayer to God to express his gratitude to Lady Ludlow for her Good Samaritan help to bring his mother to Lord Ludlow's apartment in St James's Square, London (*MLL* 198) is a token of his humility attributed to God's children: “he had shown his gratitude by every possible action (for we none of us dared to speak): he had kneeled at my feet, and kissed my hand, and left it wet with his tears. He had thrown up his arms to Heaven, and prayed earnestly, as I could see by the movement of his lips” (*MLL* 188). Lord Ludlow also shows kindness towards his wife's friends: “He sent for his own tailor, and bade him bring patterns of stuffs, and engage his men to work night and day till Clément could appear as became his rank. . . . Their diamonds, too, were

sold well by my lord's agents" (*MLL* 188).

Further instances of the goodness of humanity indicate that, in creating characters, Gaskell keeps in mind the concept in the Plan of Salvation that all human beings are fundamentally good since they are children of God. Miss Galindo who has been employed by Lady Ludlow as her steward Mr Horner's assistant and "unsparing in her expressions of opinion about" Revd Gray introduces an episode of his goodness: "And yet there is some good in the young man, too. He sat up all night with Billy Davis [a villager], when his wife was fairly worn out with nursing him" (*MLL* 236). Lady Ludlow is pleased to hear about his altruistic clerical ministry, with "her face lighting up, as it always did when she heard of any kind or generous action, no matter who performed it" (*MLL* 236).

Although being critical of his project of establishing "a Sunday-School" (*MLL* 153) — "What a pity he is bitten with these new revolutionary ideas, and is so much for disturbing the established order of society!" (*MLL* 237) —, the conservative Lady keeps a sound sense of judgment to appreciate "the new clergyman" (*MLL* 153) for his benevolence to "old Betty Brown" (*MLL* 153). On a "Saturday," when Lady Ludlow and Margaret Dawson come "out of the cottage" of the "poor bed-ridden woman" who lives "some miles away at the other end of the estate and of the parish"—this charity visit is an instance of her spirit's goodness—, they meet "Mr Gray walking up to it, in a great heat, and looking very tired" (*MLL* 153). Moved by the altruism of the young clergyman who walks to his old parishioner's cottage located "so far from his home" or "beyond a Sabbath-day's journey," she

offers him a return ride (*MLL* 153) —another instance of the goodness of her spirit. To Lady Ludlow, who makes a light joke about his violation of the scriptural law of Sabbath observance —"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exod. 20.8) —, Revd Gray replies that the clerical duties abrogate "all inferior laws regarding the Sabbath" (*MLL* 153). His noble-minded answer —a sign of his spirit's goodness—is an echo of Jesus's to "the ruler of the synagogue" (Luke 13.14) who criticizes him for healing "a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years" on a Sabbath day (Luke 13.11): "*Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? / And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?*" (Luke 13.15-16). The goodness of Revd Gray's spirit, or his being a child of God, is shown in his thoughtfulness for the Lady when he tells her that "he must go in and read to old Betty Brown, so that he would not detain her ladyship" (*MLL* 153; my emphasis). To his polite consideration, she replies also with her considerate politeness: "But I shall wait for you, . . . Or I will take a drive round by Oakfield, and be back in an hour's time," for "she would not have him feel hurried or troubled with a thought that he was keeping her waiting, while he ought to be comforting and praying with old Betty" (*MLL* 153). This small episode concerning the mutual respect between Lady Ludlow and Revd Gray is filled with instances showing they are the children of God whose spirits are fundamentally good.

3.3. *Cousin Phillis* (1863—64)

The goodness of the spirit of Revd Holman, the eponymous heroine Phillis's father, is explicit in Paul Manning's narration below depicting not merely his wife Cousin Holman's jealousy of Phillis for her affinity with her husband but also Revd Holman's thoughtfulness for his wife who is unable to "understand the pleasure her husband and daughter took in intellectual pursuits":¹⁸⁾

I had once or twice thought she was a little jealous of her own child, as a fitter companion for her husband than she was herself; and I fancied the minister himself was aware of this feeling, for I had noticed an occasional sudden change of subject, and a tenderness of appeal in his voice as he spoke to her, which always made her look contented and peaceful again. ("CP" 184)

Paul the narrator, or probably Gaskell the author, stresses the minister's considerateness for his wife in drawing a similar situation:

I had noticed before that she had fleeting shadows of jealousy even of Phillis, when her daughter and her husband appeared to have strong interests and sympathies in things which were quite beyond her comprehension. I had noticed it . . . and had admired the delicate tact which made the minister, on such occasions, bring the conversation back to such subjects as those on which his wife, with her practical experience of everyday life, was an authority. ("CP" 203)

The Hornby doctor Mr Brown's ("CP" 239) apprentice is also a child of God ("CP" 238)

when he returns a thoughtful response to Paul's emergency call. When Paul finds at his door that the doctor is out, the "good-natured" ("CP" 238) apprentice replies, "I'll send him out to the Hope Farm directly he comes in"; in addition, expressing sympathy to the Holmans, he promises the errand boy his assistance: "It would be a pity if she was to go. She's an only child, isn't she? I'll get up, and smoke a pipe in the surgery, ready for the governor's coming home. I might go to sleep if I went to bed again" ("CP" 238). Paul's reply—"Thank you, you're a good fellow!" ("CP" 238; my emphasis) —represents the biblical concept of the innate goodness of the human spirit.

To save Phillis from "a brain fever" ("CP" 238), all characters do their best, and thus demonstrate their value of God's children. Paul puts aside his predetermined plan of leaving Hope Farm for his home "without a word being spoken," i.e. as if the cancellation were quite a natural choice, and confirms his father's goodness when he asserts that "my father was the last man in the world, under such circumstances, to expect me home" ("CP" 238). All "the men employed on the farm" also reveal the goodness of their spirits: in answer to Revd. Holman's request "to go on with their daily labours . . . without his direction" since he is incapable of thinking "any other thing in this world but his" dying "little daughter," "these honest men" do "their work to the best of their ability" ("CP" 239).

The episode of a "half-wit" ("CP" 180, 233) labourer Timothy Cooper also spotlights the

¹⁸⁾ Elizabeth Gaskell, "Cousin Phillis" 183. All further page references are taken from this edition and inserted into the text with the abbreviation "CP."

divine quality of human beings. Although having been “turned away” by the minister for “his slothful ways” (“CP” 233), the “downright lazy tyke” exhibits his kind heart in sitting on the bridge “all day long” (“CP” 242) to keep off the carts of the Hornby market since they “might ha’ waken you wench” (“CP” 243). Paul’s farewell greeting to the tyke—“God bless you, Timothy” (“CP” 243)—implies his appreciation of the goodness of Timothy’s spirit.

The goodness of Revd. Holman’s spirit is reaffirmed in his treatment of Timothy. Soon after hearing from Paul “his unsolicited watch on the bridge during the long summer’s day,” the minister utters his repentance: “God forgive me! . . . I have been too proud in my own conceit. The first steps I take out of this house shall be to Cooper’s cottage” (“CP” 243). Paul concludes this episode of the lazy labourer by saying,

I need hardly say Timothy was reinstated in his place on the farm; and I have often since admired the patience with which his master tried to teach him how to do the easy work which was henceforward carefully adjusted to his capacity. (“CP” 243-44; my emphasis)

When Paul mentions Timothy’s name for the first time in this story in “the coming autumn” (“CP” 180) of 1838, Revd. Holman is under “a daily temptation to anger” caused by his “impatience at seeing” Timothy’s lazy work (“CP” 180). Having “been overcome with anger” at last, the minister dismisses the “stupid fellow” (“CP” 233), which takes place in the “summer” (“CP” 232) of 1840. Thus, it turns out that he has been hesitating to do so for nearly two years, considering Timothy has “a wife and children” (“CP” 180, 233), and that, if he turns off the lazy

labourer, “no one else will take him on” (“CP” 180). His two-year delayed indecision signifies his thoughtfulness for the weak, i.e. the divine quality of his spirit. Besides, Revd. Holman has been “blaming himself” since he fired him (“CP” 233), which is another sign of the innate goodness of his spirit.

4. Conclusion

The chief objective of this study is to analyse Elizabeth Gaskell’s three novellas in terms of the Plan of Salvation. After explaining the general concept of the Christian doctrine and surveying some denominations’ views of the teaching in Introduction, this paper highlights the four fundamental elements of the doctrine in Section 2: (a) human beings as God’s children, (b) the innate goodness of the human spirit, (c) the role of Jesus Christ, and (d) premortal and postmortal life. Section 3 argues how consciously or unconsciously Gaskell depicts her characters to endorse this doctrine, focusing on the major characters in *Cranford*, *My Lady Ludlow*, and *Cousin Phillis*. The character analysis above reveals the reflection of Jesus’s succinct summary of Moses’s Ten Commandments on Gaskell’s stories: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. / This is the first and great commandment. / And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt. 22.37-39). Her work echoes the scriptural concept in the divine plan that we are all children of the same Father.

The Plan of Salvation is one of the principal beliefs streaming in the Bible and supported by

many Christian churches. Among the four primary concepts of the doctrine, the view of human beings as God's children whose spirits have innate goodness is a controversial question and, therefore, its truthfulness will be disputed by theologians and clergymen from now on too.

This paper verifies the validity of the biblical doctrine by investigating Gaskell's depiction of human beings. A further attempt to confirm its truthfulness shall be made soon by scrutinizing her shorter fiction as a case study since she is one of the most pious Christian authors in the history of English literature. The application of the four fundamental concepts of the divine plan to the delineation of ordinary people's lives is frequent in Gaskell's works. To gain a comprehensive understanding of her mission as a Christian novelist by inspecting her shorter fiction in terms of the Plan of Salvation is my next target of research.

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