

CAUSE AND EFFECT AND THE MYTH OF UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

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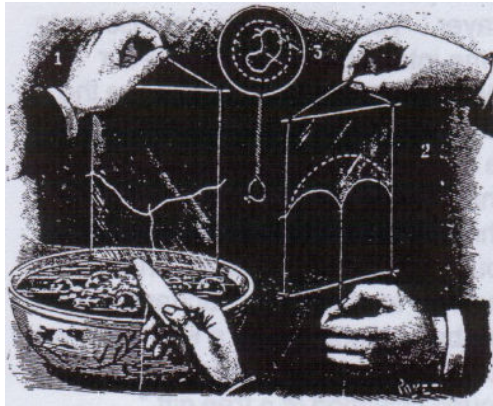
When God created the heavens and the earth, He built into this universe a system of cause and effect. The world operates by laws of cause and effect. For every effect there is a cause. Nothing happens or comes into existence without some known or unknown cause behind it.

God made it clear to Adam that his choices would be the cause of either positive or negative consequences. Choosing to eat from the tree of life would produce the effect of life; choosing to eat from the tree of knowledge would produce the effect of death. If Adam died, there would be a cause behind his death. Some 5,000 years after Adam's death, we still realize that death does not happen without some cause behind it. When we hear that someone has died, we usually ask, "How did it happen?"

This phenomenon of cause and effect is very obvious when the effect is something as serious and irreversible as death. But when the effect is something less serious than death, it is easy to forget (or even to deny) that there is a cause behind the effect. Because we live in a world of cause and effect, we should assume that whenever something happens, whether good or bad, there is some cause behind it. (This does not mean that every bad thing that happens to us is always the result of our own personal sins. Sometimes it is, but sometimes it is a test of our faith, as was the case with Job.)

The Bible is filled with statements of cause and effect. Many of the warnings to obey God's commandments are worded in the language of cause and effect. "If you do this, then I will do that"; "Do this... so that..."; "Don't do that... lest..."; "Thou shalt not... or else!" The first few chapters of Deuteronomy contain several cause-and-effect warnings like these.

"If... then..." statements are conditional. When God says, "If you will obey



not obligated to bless you unless you first obey Him. Your obedience becomes the cause of God's blessings. Conversely, your disobedience becomes the cause of God's curses.

Some people do not like to hear about consequences and conditions when discussing the blessings of God. Some folks believe that God's love is unconditional, that He loves everybody, even the wicked, unconditionally. There is so much talk in the church world about God's "unconditional love" that many people mistakenly assume that this idea is from the Bible.

In a general, universal sense, God's love for the human race as a whole could perhaps be called "unconditional." (See John 3:16.) But God does not have unconditional love for every individual of the human race. There are some individuals whom God hates. This is not just Daniel Botkin's personal opinion; it is what the Bible plainly states. Psalm 5:5 says that God hates all workers of iniquity. Psalm 11:5 says He hates the wicked and lovers of violence. Proverbs 6:19 says He hates a false witness who speaks lies, and he who sows discord among brethren.

It may disappoint some readers to hear this, but God does not unconditionally love every individual of the human race. He does not unconditionally love workers of iniquity, nor the wicked, nor lovers of violence, nor

false witnesses who speak lies, nor those who sow discord among brethren. God hates these individuals, the Bible says.

To speak of "unconditional love" implies that there is no "If... then..." that there is no cause and effect. But we live in a world of cause and effect. *If* a person is a worker of iniquity, or wicked, or a lover of violence, or a false witness that speaks lies, or one who sows discord among brethren, *then* God hates that person.

If we are not one of these recipients of God's hatred, why is it important for us to know this? It is important to know this because we do not want to misinform people about the nature of God's love. If I say, "Smile, God loves you" to workers of iniquity, or to the wicked, or to lovers of violence, or to false witnesses who speak lies, or to those who sow discord among brethren - people whom God in fact hates - then I myself become a false witness speaking a lie.

One rarely hears sermons about God's hatred for certain classes of individuals. That is to be expected, because the overall message of the gospel is the love of God as expressed through His Son. It is true that Jesus came into the world to call sinners to repentance and to save them. But Jesus' love for sinners will not stop Him from killing them and casting them into the lake of fire if they refuse to repent. When the Bible describes the Lord's return, it says that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2Thes. 1:7-9). The first time the Messiah came, He demonstrated the love of God and called sinners to repentance. The second time He comes, He will execute the wrath