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In the Evil Day.

“Watch ye, standfast in the faith, quit you like men.”

“Take unto you the whole armour of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”—Eph. 6:13.

ONLY those who have learned the meaning of the Apostle’s words concerning rightly dividing the Word of Truth—only those who have learned from the Scriptures that the divine plan is a progressive one, in which successive ages form links—can understand why divine providence should permit peculiar experiences, trials, etc., upon the Church at one time, not permitted at another. Would that all Christian people would awake to a proper study of the Bible—to see the object of the divine dealings with the Jews during the Jewish age, with Christians during this Gospel age, and with the world during the coming age. From this standpoint they would see what the Scriptures represent, namely, that there is a seed time or sowing time and a harvest or reaping time with each age, which, when it has served its purpose, passes away, giving place to another age and a different work. In the end of the Jewish age, for instance, there came to that people a peculiar sifting and testing, while John the Baptist, the last of the prophets, was preaching, viz., a winnowing of the wheat, a separating of the chaff preparatory to the gathering of the wheat into the garner of the next age, and the permission of trouble to come upon the chaff class of that people, which utterly destroyed them as a nation.

Similarly the Lord tells us in one of His parables—Matt. 13:24, 37—that in the end of this Gospel age there will be a separation of wheat from tares, the former being gathered into the glorious Kingdom for which we pray,

“Thy Kingdom come,” the latter being consumed as tares, though not as individuals. The destruction of a tare, an imitation Christian, will signify that the person thus posing as a Christian, drawing nigh unto the Lord with his lips while his heart is far from Him, will cease to make such profession. Thenceforth, the true Church will be recognised in its peculiar position as the “very elect” of God, a “little flock” who follow in the footsteps of the Master, gladly sacrificing earthly interests for the attainment of the heavenly. Thereafter, as the parable shows, these will shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom for the blessing of all the families of the earth, including the tare class, who thereafter will be no longer deceived nor deceivers in respect of their true position, but be privileged with the remainder of mankind to come into full harmony with God.

The “Harvest” of this Age.

It is concerning the harvest time of this Gospel age that we now speak, believing that we are now living in the harvest period. We desire to point out that the special ‘trials and difficulties and testings of faith and obedience appropriate to the complete separation of the wheat from the tares is upon Christendom now—has been upon us as a “thief in the night” for some years, and will be more severe as time goes on.

“In the Evil Day.”

Throughout the Scripture this period is most dramatically set forth as being a time of thorough testing, a time in which the separation of the wheat from the tares will be most absolutely accomplished, so that not one grain of wheat will be

lost and not one grain of tare will by any mischance be preserved with the wheat, for the Lord declares that He will make a thorough work of separation. It seems difficult for the majority of people to think of anything specially occurring in their day—that they should be in the midst of the fulfilments of prophecy. If we were telling that these things would take place within a century or within a thousand years far more would be ready to investigate and acknowledge the force of the arguments; but familiar with the conditions, the trials, the difficulties, the perplexities and the suggestions of many—as the Apostle predicted, that all things will continue as they were from the beginning of the world (2 Pet. 3:4)—a great number shut the eyes of their understanding to the most remarkable condition of affairs in our day.

The Apostle says they are “willingly ignorant”; and again, “They see not, neither will they understand”; and again, the Lord, through the Prophet, says, “My people perish for lack of knowledge.” (2 Pet. 3:5; Matt. 13:13; Hosea 4:6.). Indeed the majority do not want knowledge. Imbued with the spirit of the world, they want money or pleasure or fame or name; and, to say the least, the majority of professing Christians are careless, indifferent, to what the Lord has caused to be written for their admonition and encouragement and assistance in this “evil day.” Such are not of the “very elect.” The latter, as the Apostle shows, will not be in darkness that that day should overtake them as a thief—they will be earnest, vigilant, watchful and standing fast in the faith. Therefore, using the means the Lord has provided, they will receive the blessing, the special reward, while others by neglecting their privileges mark themselves as unworthy of the great favour the Lord is now dispensing to the “little flock.” We will not say that they will not have opportunities in that “great company” that the Scriptures point out, who will come up out of great tribulation, and be “before the throne” instead of “in the throne.”—Rev. 7:9, 14, 15.

Mark how our Lord declared that the trial of our time would be critical, so crucial, that it would deceive if it were possible the “very elect.” (Matt. 24:24.). But this will not be possible, for the Lord has promised them the assistance needful, and they will be in that attitude of heart and mind to seek assistance and use it. Mark how the Lord, through the Prophet David, foretold the special trials of this time, picturing the various devices of Satan, Spiritualism, Higher Criticism, Christian Science, etc., as pestilences and arrows. He tells us that a thousand shall fall at our side, yea, ten thousand at our right hand—amongst those whom we consider most favoured and, in some respects at least, as our friends in the Lord. Then the reason is given why the very elect will not fall under these same pestilences and arrows, namely, “Because thou hast made the Lord, even the Most High, thy refuge and thy habitation, no plague shall come nigh thy dwelling” (Psa. 91), the “wicked one toucheth him not.” (1 John 5:18.). What to others will be a stone of stumbling, will to this class be an assistance, in that they will climb upon it to still higher personal development and character-likeness of the Lord. All things must work together for good to these because they love God truly, sincerely, above self or any other creature, and because of their faithfulness to their covenant—their consecration to the Lord. The pestilence of error cannot harm them, because in the secret of the Lord’s presence they have an armament of grace and truth specially provided, as it is written, “The secret of the Lord is with them that reverence Him, and He will show them His covenant.” Psa. 25:14.

“The Day shall Declare It.”

Pointing down to this harvest time, the Apostle calls it a special day or epoch, and such it surely has been. No other period in the world’s history has ever been so notable in so many ways. Referring to this time, and to the testings of faith that will come upon the Lord’s people here, the Apostle says, “Let every man take heed how he build (faith), for other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” By these words, the Apostle shows that he refers not to the heathen world, but to those who at least nominally accept Christ as the foundation of their hopes. He proceeds, “Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man’s work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it: because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.”—1 Cor. 3:11, 12.

How could a plainer statement of this be made? The fire referred to, of course, is symbolical, as are the wood, hay, stubble, gold, silver, precious stones. As wood, hay, stubble can be destroyed by literal fire, so selfish doctrines, errors and all improper faith will be destroyed in this time which the Apostle designates—“the day shall declare it,” or demonstrate the faith that will stand and the faith that will be consumed. The Apostle proceeds, “If any man’s work shall abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss.” Alas, how many are finding their faith burned out! how few are having the great reward of finding that they have a faith that will stand all the tests of this day! Is it not true that Spiritualism, Theosophy, Christian Science and Higher Criticism are consuming the faith of many—of all who have come in touch with them, who have only the wood, hay,

stubble of human tradition and who lack the gold, silver and precious stones of the divine revelation!

The Apostle, continuing, assures us that all who have built upon Christ will ultimately be saved, even though they suffer great loss as respects their faith. He says, "He himself shall be saved, so as by fire." The fire of this day, then, will demonstrate to some how poorly they have built, how little they have heeded the Word of the Lord, to what extent they have been influenced by human traditions and creeds of the "dark ages." Many we may be sure, will lose all faith in Christ at this time, but if so it will prove that their faith was not properly founded upon Him.

Note again our text that it refers to the harvest time of this age, and that it also calls it an "evil day"—a day in which trials, testings, etc. will be 'upon the Lord's people for their development, proving worthy, of those who love the Lord with all their heart, the Israelites indeed, and for the demonstrating also of those who have been only lukewarm in their love for the Lord and the brethren, and who have been overcharged with the cares of this life or the deceitfulness of riches, and so overtaken by "that day"—this day. (1 Thess. 5:4.) Our text, in harmony with the quotation from the Psalms, indicates a need for the armour, a difficulty in withstanding the assaults of this day, and the fewness of those who will eventually stand. The Apostle's exhortation is that we take the whole armour of God—the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of the Spirit, the sandals of preparation, and the girdle of Truth—that we will need all of these if we would be able to withstand all the assaults to be expected in this "evil day," and having done all, to stand.

Why God will Permit It.

St. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, foretold •this "evil day" in which we are living—in which so many will fall because not attentive to the Word of the Lord, because overcharged with the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of the earthly riches so many are seeking. He tells us that the trials of our day will come from the great Adversary, Satan, not because God will be unable to prevent him from bringing these deceptions and tests, but because God wills that he should bring them—wills to permit him to thus test and prove and sift the professed Church of our day, that all may be confused, deceived, stumbled who are not at heart loyal to Him. After telling about the workings of Satan that are to be expected, with great power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceitfulness of unrighteousness, the' Apostle explains that this is permitted, "because they received not the love of the Truth." He adds, "For this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, that they all should be condemned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness"—in untruth-2 Thess. 2:9-12.

Many tell us that it makes no difference what we believe—truth or falsehood—that it is by our works that the Lord will determine our standing. But the Scripture forbids this thought, and assures us that none have works that would be pleasing to God because all are imperfect. The divine proposal is that during this age God will honour and reward faith, it being assumed and declared that a true faith will be backed by good works to the extent of ability, and that God will reckon this as perfection through Christ. The Apostle in his words last quoted corroborates all the teachings of Scripture respecting the value of the Truth to the people of God: mark the Master's words, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"; and again His prayer to the Father for His followers, "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth." (John 8:32; 17:17.) The Lord has provided His Word, and from time to time has used instrumentalities for the unfolding of its meaning to those who are in the right attitude of heart to receive it; but He has also permitted errors, falsehoods and lying wonders to stalk about, though never before to the same extent as in this "evil day"—because now He desires specially to use these errors as a testing, sifting, separating work amongst His professed people, that the improper faiths may be manifested and may be destroyed, and that the true faith may shine the more brightly and ultimately the professors of it be glorified with Himself in the Kingdom.

In view of the Apostle's words respecting the love of the Truth, it behooves each one to examine himself whether he is loving and serving a creed of the "dark ages" or a denomination and creed of modern times, or whether his love and devotion are simply to the Truth presented to us in the divine Word. We may deceive others, we may even to some extent deceive ourselves, for, as the Apostle declares, the heart is exceedingly deceitful, but we cannot deceive God. If in the Lord's providence the Truth comes to us and we get some glimpse of its beauty in contrast with the hopelessness of error, a test is upon us: if we reject the Truth because of its unpopularity; and hold to the abominable error because it is popular, we are thereby tested. Or, if we receive the Truth and rejoice in it in our minds, but if, because of its unpopularity we hide the light under a bushel, concealing it in order to thus shield ourselves from the opposition of darkness, we may be sure that this would be displeasing to the Lord, who seeketh not such for His "elect." He puts His Word on a parity with Himself, saying, "He that is ashamed of me and my Word, of him will I be ashamed when I

come in the glory of my Kingdom.” This is what the Apostle refers to as receiving not the Truth in the love of it. Whoever receives the Truth in the love of it will to the best of his ability and judgment show it to others at whatever the cost may be: he will thus be proving himself a child of the light, a child of God. He will be saved, but the one who seeks to save his life, to save earthly interests by hiding the light or failing to publicly acknowledge it, will be sure to find his course injurious to himself.

Like the Hypocrites of Old.

We have already pointed out that the influences at work in the present time undermining faith, consuming it, destroying it, are likened to a pestilence which is in the very air and which lays hold upon all whose systems are in condition to be susceptible. The evil influences by which we are surrounded at the present time are so subtle, so deceptive, so all-pervading, that the majority do not recognise them. What a shock it would give to Christendom could it be realised that these pestilential influences are going forth from the pulpits—not, perhaps, from, all, but surely from four out of five. It is necessary for the Lord’s true people to know the facts; as for others, they are so stupidly asleep, so thoroughly intoxicated with the wine of Babylon (Rev. 18:2), that we have no hope of influencing them. Ever since this evil day began this pestilence has been going forth.

To-day nearly every college, every theological seminary throughout the whole civilised world, is teaching what is commonly known as higher criticism of the Bible, though the proper name for it would be higher infidelity. These higher critics are doing the same work exactly that Thomas Paine and Robert Ingersoll did, only that they are carrying on their work on a higher plane. As a result, their influence is a thousand-fold more injurious. Those to whom Paine and Ingersoll appealed were very rarely Christians at all; hence they destroyed very little faith. But these higher critic infidels of this “evil day” are making use of all the vast machinery of Christendom in all denominations, especially through theological seminaries, to undermine and overthrow the faith of all who have named the name of Christ. It is being done systematically, too, — craftily, deceitfully, in a manner that the masses of the people would scarcely credit. It is safe to say that fully four out of five who graduate from theological seminaries, of all denominations, are higher critic infidels, who are instructed that their main business is to promote morality amongst the people, especially to build up Churchianity, particularly their own denomination.

“Out of Thine own Mouth will I Judge Thee.”

said the Lord, and in harmony with this we find that in the Lord’s providence these higher critics are gradually more and more telling on themselves. But the nominal Christian is quite obtuse, and many of the true Christians, as the Apostle explains, are merely “babes in Christ,” unable to use the strong meat of the Word, and capable only of enjoying or using the “milk of the Word.” Hence the open declarations of these wolves in sheep’s clothing, who masquerade as sheep, are not taken seriously. If the sheep are startled by the words, they are soothed again by the thought that this is our kind minister, polished in manner and well educated, and he surely would not lead us astray, he surely would not deceive us. If he had ceased to believe the Bible and become an infidel, he surely would have left the pulpit; he could not be so dishonest as to wear sheep’s clothing and to use it for our deception and destruction.

Poor innocents! The following is a confession of one of these false shepherds and his explanation of the trickery and deceit by which he keeps the people quiet while inoculating them from time to time with a little and a little more of the higher critical poison, which eventually brings on spiritual stupefaction and tends to spiritual death:

This is the Confession:

have never won distinction by my heresy, nor even acquired a local reputation from violent departures from orthodoxy. If I should set about some Sunday morning to tell my congregation all my divergences from the accepted Christian belief, I would shock them beyond measure. They understand in a general way that I am a liberal-minded person, and I take occasion not infrequently to hasten their heels in their movements from worn-out dogma to the truth that is to be. That they are engaged in such a journey I have no doubt, and most of them are willing to maintain a reasonable pace. My congregation is above normal in intelligence, information and sympathy with forward movements; but nevertheless I am fully persuaded that a complete revelation on my part of the beliefs to which my studies have forced me would set their ears a-tingling, and not only awaken antagonism to me personally, but also cause a turn of sentiment in the direction of conservatism and orthodoxy.”

The Rapid Growth of Refined Infidelity.

“So rapid is the advance in religious opinion—at least, as I experience it in my parish—that I would not hesitate for a moment now to give’ fullest utterance to views utterly condemnatory of the whole scheme of sacrificial atonement and imputed righteousness. Devout saints who were wont to inquire anxiously why I did not mention that ‘Christ made full atonement for our sins’ every week or two, after a sermon on any subject from Dan to Beersheba, now sit patiently under preaching which never refers to Christ as a propitiatory sacrifice.”

What think you of the stealthy, murderous deliberation of this educated man, professing to be a minister of the Word of God, and as such “highly esteemed amongst men”? He is a pattern, a fair sample, of about four-fifths of all the preachers in all denominations—a sample of the hypocrisy which has come into the Church. What a confession from his own pen, of his dastardly cunning or deceit whereby he is entrapping, enslaving and destroying the sheep. Judge, then, if we are not right in thus particularly calling attention to the matter. Do not the Scriptures say that the shepherds, pastors, who see the wolves coming and give no alarm and seek not to defend the flock, are unfaithful to their responsibilities?

How true this is! The testing of Christendom was to be along this very line—that the atonement for sin effected by our dear Redeemer was the foundation for all Scriptural faith and hope and that it would be repudiated by Christendom as a whole according to the ‘Scriptures, Christian Science has largely influenced all denominations by their false statements that there is no original sin and hence also that Christ did not die and redeem from the original penalty, and that there was no’ necessity for a redemptive work because there is no sin—they claim that it is merely a delusion. Not only this, but also Higher Criticism has gotten in its work all over the civilised world and is surely destroying faith in the very centre of the divine plan. Because whoever does not believe in the atonement work of Christ is not a Christian.

Christianity is not merely an acceptance of the fact that Jesus was born and that Jesus died, nor is it an acceptance of merely the moral and religious teachings of Jesus. Christianity is an acceptance of the fact that we are sinners, and that Christ died for our sins and rose again on the third day for our justification; that through Him we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins through faith in His blood. He who has lost this faith in His blood has lost his relationship to true Christianity, and the sooner he and all mankind know it the better for all concerned. If he be an honest man he will come out plainly and profess his position; if he be like the writer from whom we have quoted, a dishonest man, he thus evidences his unworthiness of the Truth, because he prefers, as he tells us, to act a lie, to destroy the faith of the too confiding sheep whom he leads, and whose praise and money he enjoys. But we must quote from him further, as follows:

“Experience has taught me not to be too rampant in my heresies. I have learned that if one keep his doctrinal discoveries in his Study drawer for about five years, and take them out now and then to refresh his soul, allowing occasionally a delicate effluence from them to steal over a page or two of his next Sunday’s sermon, he will find at the end of the period that he may avow them as violently as he please, and they who aforetime would have lit the torch for his burning will sit peacefully under his doctrine, and sing the last hymn lustily in satisfaction that they have heard once more the truth they have always believed.”

Awake, O Sheep, and Listen!

What noble-minded, truth-loving layman would change places with this self-satisfied deceiver and fraud? What honourable business man would, without blushing, make such an acknowledgment respecting his method of conducting business. And indeed we can make much more excuse for those who practise some deception in connection with their business advertising and the overstatement of the quality of their goods, etc., because they are professedly self-seeking, and the public know to take their statements with a grain of allowance; but the minister of the Gospel professes to be a philanthropist who is sacrificing his life to the service of the Truth, to the service of the Lord, to the building up of his fellow-creatures in the most holy faith once delivered to the saints. How abominably mean and contemptible, then, is such a man as well as his course! The more refined and polished and educated he is the more it is to his shame.

This gentleman, along with other higher critics and evolutionists occupying the pulpits of Christendom, are in exactly

the position of the Scribes and Pharisees of old, of whom the Lord said, “Ye do make void the Word of God through your traditions.” He told them that outwardly they were clean and respectable, as this man appears to be, but that inwardly they were full of all manner of corruption—deceit, selfishness, unfaithfulness.

Then, as now, the people were so hypnotised by their Doctors of the Law and priests, that they hesitated to hear the voice of the Son of man and His humble followers, waiting first to get the approval of the hypocritical teachers who, with outward raiment, feign to be servants of God and for pretence make long prayers. What the common people needed then was what the same class need now—an awakening. As the Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile, received the message then, so a similar class will receive the message now. To this class is the promise made—“To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom,” as the Lord prayed: “I thank Thee, O Father Lord of Heaven and Earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes.” We are in the shaking time, the burning time, when all wood, hay, stubble of falsehood must be consumed, when only the precious truths of God’s Word—gold, silver and precious stones of faith—will stand the test.

“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men.” Seek the “old paths,” not the paths or theories of the “Dark Ages” and their horrible “doctrines of devils,” but the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles: that your faith should not stand in the doctrines of men, but in the power of God.

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In the Last Days.

CHRISTIANS generally, until they investigate the subject of the Lord's presence and harvest work, etc., have such ideas of literal manifestations of fire, trumpets, voices, etc., and of seeing the Lord descending through the air, a shining body of flesh, that when they hear of His invisible presence, without taking time to investigate a subject upon which they feel so sure, busied with worldly plans, and intoxicated with the spirit of the world, they will dismiss the matter quickly as unworthy of investigation.

It is to this class of professed Christians that the Apostle refers, saying, "In the last days (in the closing years of the Gospel Age—in the 'harvest') shall come scoffers, walking after their own desires (plans, theories, etc.), asking, Where is the promise of His presence (parousia)? for ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as at present from the beginning of creation." (2 Peter • 3:3, 4.) When referred to our Lord's statement (Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26) that in His days, in the days of His presence, things would indeed continue as before; and that, as in Noah's day, men would be eating, drinking, marrying, planting and building; and that, as then, the world would know not of His presence, and read not the signs of the speedy and great changes just at hand, they are too busy to consider the testimony carefully, and only continue to scoff.

Ah! says Peter, they forget the great change which occurred in the days of Noah; and then, under the symbol of fire, he describes the overwhelming flood of trouble which shall shortly overtake the whole world, utterly overthrowing all civil and ecclesiastical rule (the heavens) and melting the entire social fabric (the earth)—producing anarchy and social chaos until the new heavens (ruling powers—the Kingdom of God) shall be fully established, as well as a new earth (society organised on a new and better basis, of love, equality and righteousness). The Apostle then reminds us (verse 8) that this Day of the Lord's presence, for which the Church has long hoped and looked, is a thousand-year day.

In verse 10 he assures us that "the Day of the Lord will arrive (Greek, heko) as a thief (unobservedly, quietly: it will be present, while some are scoffing and smiting those fellow-servants who declare the truth). The Apostle then exhorts the saints to separateness from the world; that they be not swallowed up by politics, money-getting, etc., but that they set their affections on higher things. He says, Seeing that in God's plan present earthly conditions are only temporary and will soon give place to the better order, what manner of persons ought we to be, in respect of holy conduct and piety?—"looking for the presence (parousia) of the Day of God"—watching for the evidences (signs) to prove that it has come.

And, thanks be to God, His provision is so abundant that all those of piety, who are looking for that day, will know of it before the full bursting forth of the fire of wrath. Through Paul he assures us that none of the children of the light will be left in darkness, that that day should come upon them unawares. (1 Thes. 5:4.) Hence, though we are already in the day of the Lord's presence, and in the great fire of trouble, we see that it is even as shown us in symbol (Rev. 7:1, 2)—the storm is, to a great extent, held in check until the faithful servants of God are "sealed in their foreheads:" i.e., until such are given an intellectual appreciation of the time, presence, etc., which will not only comfort them, and shield them, but also be a mark, seat or evidence of their sonship, as indicated by our Lord when He promised that the holy spirit should show to the faithful "things to come."—John 16:13.

Some take Peter's statement literally, that "the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and pass away with a great noise;" and also the Revelator's description of the same events, by a very similar symbol, "The heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together." It would seem, however, that one glance upwards at the myriad gems of night shining through millions of miles of space, with nothing between to roll away, or to take fire, should be argument enough in one moment to convince such that they had erred in supposing these statements to be literal—should convince them that their expectation of a literal fulfilment is absurd in the extreme.

So, then, God veiled from mankind under figures of trumpets, voices, fire, etc., information (which was not for the worldly to know, but only for the "little flock" of consecrated saints) regarding the harvest, the Lord's presence, His spiritual kingdom, etc., and yet He arranged them so that, in due time, they would speak clearly and emphatically to the class for whom He intended the information. As at the first advent, so to a similar consecrated class it may now be said, in the time of the second advent—"Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables"—in figures and dark sayings—in order that, even though having the Bible before them, others than the consecrated may not really see and understand—Mark 4:11, 12.

The world is not ignorant of the unprecedented events and circumstances of the present time, and their increasing

noteworthiness with every passing year; but not perceiving the grand outcome, these only fill their minds with dark forebodings of evil. As foretold, they are in fear, looking forward to those things that are coming on the earth; for already the powers of the heaven (the present ruling powers) as well as the earthly order, are being shaken.

What comfort is conveyed to the Lord's people, amidst these earthly scenes of commotion abroad in the earth to-day, by meditating upon the precious truths concerning the spiritual kingdom to which they aspire, from whence shall flow the healing streams for the blessing of all mankind, in the grand time following the dissolving of this present order of things. "We, according to His promise look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"—2 Peter 3:13.

God's Will Concerning the Church.

(1 Thes. 4:3)

IN our text the expression, "This is the will of God," is in the nature of advice rather than command. Considering the class to whom this advice is given, we find them to be those who desire to draw near to God and to have Him draw near to them. God has promised a great reward for submission to His will in every particular; and the Apostle Paul is stating what the will of God is concerning those who desire to live in nearness to Him. He tells them that it is God's will that they be fully set apart to His service; that they lay down their lives in His work; that in all the affairs of life their hearts should be set to know and to do His will.

In words of loving entreaty the Apostle elsewhere addresses this, class, saying, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 1 2:I.). The phrase, "Present your bodies," includes not only the primary presentation, but the continuation of the living sacrifice to the completion of the work. In other words, the Gospel Age is the acceptable time when God is willing to receive those who come unto Him through Christ. It is the time for His drawing, calling, those who are to become members of the Elect Church.

God's will for His believing people, justified by faith in the Ransom and consecrated to His service, has always been the same as the Apostle stated, namely, "This is the will of God (concerning you), even your sanctification." To produce this sanctification in believers God has given unto us "exceeding great and precious promises," and declares that the truth of His Word will produce the sanctification of character acceptable to Him—conformity to the image of His dear Son, our Redeemer.

Sanctification does not mean human perfection. It is the consecration, or devotion of the will, which through Christ is accepted of the Father as perfect; it is a consecration of the body to sacrifice—even unto death. As we have seen, that body is not made actually perfect through justification by faith, but merely reckoned perfect, according to our will, our heart, our intention. The new will should seek to bring every power, every talent, every endowment of its body, into full accord with the Lord, and should seek to exercise an influence in the same direction upon all with whom it comes in contact.

This does not mean, however, that in the few short years of the present life it will be able to bring its poor, imperfect body to perfection. On the contrary, the Apostle assures us in connection with the Church, that in death it is sown in corruption, sown in weakness, sown in dishonor, sown a (an imperfect) natural body (1 Cor. 15:42-44); and that not until in the Resurrection we are given new bodies, strong, perfect, glorious, immortal, shall we have attained the perfection which we seek and which the Lord promises shall be ours eventually, if in the present time of weakness and imperfection we manifest to Him the loyalty of our hearts.

Our text, as well as many other portions of the Scriptures, teaches us that the great work which God asks of us is not for others, but is a work in ourselves, subduing, conquering, ruling self. Everything else, therefore, our doing service to the household of faith, our doing good unto all men, by home or foreign missions, etc., is subservient to this most important work within. For, as the Apostle by inspiration declares, though we should preach the Gospel eloquently to others, and though we should give all our goods to feed the poor, or become martyrs for a good cause, we should be nothing from the Divine viewpoint, without love—the Spirit of Christ and of the Father—developed in us as the ruling principle of life. (1 Cor. 13:3.). But before we can "put on love—the bond of perfectness"—and have its rule established, we have many enemies to put out.

Our Three Great Foes.

The heart is the battleground on which the holy spirit helps us to wage warfare against the enemies which since the Adamic fall have taken possession of the human mind. Our battle is to be against Sin, the great taskmaster, which captured our race more than six thousand years ago. Satan, the great master or general of Sin, is our enemy, and has largely to do with the various influences against which we must contend. We are not, however, to battle directly with Satan, though we are to “resist” him; that is we are to resist his influence, his deceptions, and his endeavours to lead us into error and into sin. We should be powerless against this great enemy were it not that our Lord Jesus has conquered Sin, and that He is on our part, so that we can confidently say, Greater is He that is on our part than all they that be against us.

Again, our battle is with the world. By this we do not mean with our fellow-creatures; for, blinded by the adversary, they are little, if at all, accountable for their course. We are to do battle with “the spirit of the world” and its influences. The disposition of the world, the mind of the world, the motives which actuate the world, the pride of life and the deceitfulness of riches—the wrong views of matters as seen from the worldly standpoint—we are to resist, to fight against. And it is a daily battle.

Finally, our battle is with the flesh—our own flesh. Ever since Sin captured our race, its slavery has been conducive to mental, moral and physical degradation. Its every tendency has been toward evil, and that continually; and although our Lord Jesus had compassion on us and redeemed us from slavery to Sin, with His own precious blood, yet we have in our bodies the motions, the tendencies toward sin.

So, although we are now free, and are with the mind serving the Law of Christ, and although we have covenanted to battle for righteousness, truth, goodness and purity, we find our new selves harassed by the old, perverted tastes and inclinations of our own flesh toward the service of the old taskmaster. Not the least of our battles, therefore, is against these perverted tendencies of our flesh; and the battle with these is also a daily battle. With the great Apostle Paul we should be able to say “I keep my body (my flesh and its desires) under”—in subjection to my new will, the New Creature.

From the moment we make a full consecration of ourselves unto death in the service of the Lord, He reckons our flesh as dead, and begets us as New Creatures. Our new minds are alive toward God with a newness of life. Hence those motions of sin which we are seeking to bring into absolute subjection to the will of God in Christ are not recognised by the Lord as the will or the motions of the New Creature enlisted in His service; but merely as a part of the general enemy, Sin, pursuing after and battling with us. These we are pledged to resist, and to war against; and to overcome these He promises sufficient grace and help.

Our Daily Battle with Self.

These enemies in our own flesh cause us the greatest difficulties. To these Satan appeals; these he seeks to encourage in the warfare against the new spirit of our minds; through these the spirit of the world gains closest approach to us, and seeks to capture us and lead us back as captives to Sin. So to speak, the “New Creature in Christ” is beset, surrounded on every hand with enemies seeking its disaster and re-enslavement. We must battle for ourselves, for our own liberty, for victory over our own weaknesses; we must battle against the spirit of the world, against delusions and snares of the Adversary by which he would make evil things appear good, and right to appear undesirable. No wonder that the child of God is urged to be continually watchful; that he is urged to “put on the whole armor of God”; that he is cautioned in respect of his various wily foes and especially against those of his own flesh; that he is urged to faithfulness and loyalty of heart!

Heart-loyalty to the Lord means continual effort to bring all the conduct of our lives, yea, the very thoughts and intents of our hearts, into subjection to the Divine will. (2 Cor. 10:4, 5.). This is our first duty, our continual duty, and will be the end of our duty; for “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” “Be ye holy; for I (the Lord) am holy.”—1 Peter 1:16.

Absolute holiness is to be the standard which our minds can gladly and fully indorse and live up to, but to which we can never attain actually and physically so long as we are subject to the frailties of our fallen natures and the besetments of the world and the Adversary. But day by day we are taught of God; and as we come to a fuller

knowledge of His glorious character, and as the appreciation of it more and more fills our hearts, the new mind will more and more gain influence, strength, power, over the weaknesses of the flesh, whatever they may be—and these weaknesses vary with the different members of the Body.

If we be sanctified to God by the Truth, if our wills be dead and the Lord's will be fully accepted as ours, in thought, word and deed, then we have attained the will of God, and shall win the prize as "overcomers" even if we have never had opportunity to preach, to give to the poor, or to suffer as martyrs for, the Truth's sake. Let us all note well this point: "This is the Lord's will (concerning you), even your sanctification." Let nothing becloud or obscure this truth; but let it dominate our course in life. Then if God's will is really our will, we have a clearly marked pathway before us.

But without doubt, before all such God will open opportunities to serve the Truth to others, to let their light shine to the glory of the Father and the blessing of fellow-creatures; for this is His command to us, and we may be sure He gives us no commands impossible to be obeyed. If you have been seeking opportunities of service and have found none, there must be something wrong; you may have been seeking some special service of your own preference (your old will meddling with your newly adopted will—the Lord's).

Possibly the great Teacher sees in you pride, which you would have been prompt to crush had you recognised it, but which hid itself from you under the cloak of "self-respect." Possibly the great Teacher by His providence and His Word is saying to you, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." (Eccl. 9:10.). Possibly He sees that you would be spoiled were He to give you a more important service for others, before you have learned the lesson of humility—all important in God's sight. Act quickly, therefore; the time is short. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God (to do whatever service His providence has made possible to you), and He may exalt you in due time."—1 Peter. 5:6.

Sanctification the Result of Love of God.

True sanctification of the heart to the Lord means diligence in His service; a declaration of the good tidings to others; the building up of one another in the most holy faith. It also means that we do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially unto the household of faith; that in these various ways our lives, consecrated to the Lord, shall be laid down for the brethren day by day, opportunity by opportunity, as they shall come to us; that our love for the Lord, for the brethren, for our families and sympathetically for the world of mankind, will increasingly fill our hearts as we grow in grace, knowledge and obedience to the Divine Word and example. —Gal. 6:10; 1 John 3:16.

Nevertheless, all this exercising of our energies for others is merely one of the many ways in which by the Lord's providence our own sanctification may be accomplished. As iron sharpeneth iron, so our energies in behalf of others brings blessings to ourselves. Additionally, while we should more and more come to the condition of loving our neighbors as ourselves—especially the household of faith—yet the mainspring back of all this should be our supreme love for our Creator and Redeemer, and our desire to be and to do what would please Him. Our sanctification, therefore, must be primarily toward God and first affect our own hearts and wills and, as a result of such devotion to God, find its exercise in the interest of the brethren and of all men.

"Oh, for a life to please my God
In every little thing,
A holy life that day by day
To Him will glory bring.

"A life lived only unto Him,
No double aim in view ;
The outcome of a Christlike heart,
By God made pure and true.

"Jesus, complete Thy work in me,
The work Thou hast begun.
Each day may I grow more like 'Thee.,
Until my race is run."

Another Year

Another year is dawning!
Dear Master, let it be,
In working or in waiting,
Another year for Thee.

Another year of leaning
Upon Thy loving breast,
Of ever-deepening trustfulness,
Of quiet, happy rest.

Another year of mercies,
Of faithfulness and grace;
Another year of gladness
In the shining of Thy face.

Another year of progress,
Another year of praise;
Another year of proving
Thy presence "all the days."

Another year of service,
Of witness for Thy love;
Another year of training
For holier work above.

Another year is dawning!
Dear Master, let it be,
On earth, or else in heaven,
Another year for Thee.

F. R. Havergal.

CORRESPONDENCE

My Dear Brother,

Greetings of love in the Lord.

Your welcome letter of 9th August reached me a few days ago. It was good to hear from you again and of your well-being; of your love for the Lord and efforts to serve His saints. These things are all very well pleasing in His sight and will merit their reward in due course, though I know full well that the question of rewards does not enter into your efforts . . . May you continue in the good work as unto Him; the brethren appreciate your efforts and we thank you, your work will live after you are gone. I am sure the brethren will appreciate the little "P.P." I have already heard from some of them that their copies have arrived safely and they will be pleased with a few lines from you I am sure in these difficult days; some of them are surely at "Wit's end corner," but they will surely find the dear Lord waiting there to bless them and to help them in their trouble.

The dear Brother of whom I told you who was discharged as a C.O. just after the war started had his home damaged by a bomb the other day; they were sleeping downstairs and scrambled under the table as the ceiling came crashing down around them and so saved themselves many bruises . . . Their home has been patched up and they are back in it again, but some of the other dear ones have lost their all and are staying with friends for the time being; others are in the homes of other brethren, thankful that they have escaped with their lives.

Well, Brother, it will be almost Christmas when you receive this. We hope that you will spend a very blessed time: it does not look as if it will be a very happy time in this land, and yet as you know, we do not depend upon circumstances or surroundings for our happiness, but the Lord, and He does not change, His love never withdrawn, He is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. So if spared till then, we will be looking to Him and thinking of that time of which the angels sang, "Peace on earth, goodwill toward men." This of course is our portion now and we rejoice because the peace of God fills our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. May yours be a happy time, just at present you are far away from the strife, but one wonders how long this will last. Well we are not afraid of what man can do unto us as members of the Body of Christ. The Lord bless you, and other dear ones; if times come that we can no longer correspond, we shall still pray.

With much love to you all, I am by His grace,
Your Brother in Christ.

New South Wales, December.

My Dear Brother,

We feel to-day that the time for His Kingdom is indeed drawing near, and how glad we are. Not only does the Bride pant for her living Head and long for Him as the hart pants for the water, but we yearn to see the end of Satan's kingdom and the poor world free from wars and tumult and strife. I do not envy the young and feel how much they have to go through.

Well, dear Brother, just five little shillings for the Tract Fund and will you please send me 200 Kingdom Cards. I long to be out again with the harvest message, God will give the increase.

And now Xmas is almost here; how few think of it in the right way. Praying for the Israel of God and yearning for that living water, that true bread which came down from Heaven.

Your Sister in Christ.

A Cure for Care.

O Lord, how happy we should be

If we could cast our care on Thee;

If we from self could rest.

And feel at heart that One above, In perfect wisdom, perfect love,

Is working for the best.

—Anon.

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