

"In the Evil Day."*

"WATCH YE, STAND FAST IN THE FAITH, QUIT YOU LIKE MEN."

The Tests of Faith and Obedience Now Upon the Church.—Why the Present Time is Designated by the Apostle the "Evil Day," in Which It will be Difficult to Stand, Easy to Fall.—Escape by Watching and Prayer.

"TAKE unto you the whole armor 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 Millennial 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 recognized 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 to 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 I address you on this occasion, believing

* Pastor Russell's discourse at Carnegie Music Hall, Allegheny, Pa., and published, as usual, in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* and other journals.

that this entire harvest period, according to the Scriptures, is to be forty years long, and that we entered it in 1875, and that consequently it will close with 1915. I desire to point out to you 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 specially severe during the next eight years. We have not the necessary time to examine here the various Scriptural evidences which indicate that we are in the closing time of the Gospel age and in the opening or dawning time of the Millennial age. Many of you already have our Studies in the Scriptures, in which these are fully presented, with their Scriptural evidences. We must content ourselves at this time by pointing to some of the outward demonstrations that we are in this time, which in our text the Apostle designates as

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Throughout the Scriptures 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 fulfillments 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), for such reasons many 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

You will enjoy reading this!

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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 the great favor 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 so 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 favored 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, which began in 1875, 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 applies, refers to, the harvest time of this age, and that it also calls it a day, and designates it an "evil day"—a day or epoch in which trials, testings, etc., will be upon the Lord's people for the development, proving worthy, of those who love the Lord with all their heart, mind, soul, strength, and their neighbors as themselves, 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, much in harmony with the quotation I have made from the Psalms, indicates a need for the armor, 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 armor of God—not merely the shield of faith, not merely the helmet of salvation, not merely the breastplate of righteousness, not merely the sword of the Spirit, not merely the sandals of preparation, not merely the girdle of Truth; but that we take all of these—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. Alas! how few seem to realize the importance of this armor which God has commended; their difficulty is the result of not knowing the time in which they are living, not being sufficiently awake, not being sufficiently zealous to search the Scriptures and to put on the armament and preparation for the battle there alone provided.

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 honor faith 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 inoculated with the poisons. I must elaborate this point, because 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 recognize them. What a shock it would give to Christendom could it be realized that these pestilential influences are going forth from the pulpits—not, perhaps, from all, but surely from four out of five in the larger cities, and increasingly it is spreading to the smaller towns and country places. Let us look the matter squarely in the face. 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—over thirty years.

To-day every college, every theological seminary throughout the whole civilized world, is teaching what is commonly known as higher criticism of the Bible—though the proper name for it would be higher infidelity—infidelity amongst the high ones of all Christendom. 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—appealing not to the gross and the vile, but to the refined, intelligent and truth seeking. 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—they merely made the unbelief more rank and foul. 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, great and small, rich and poor, cultured and ignorant. 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, and to gradually, stealthily, craftily wean the people from the faith of the Bible to their higher critical dogmas. And they are succeeding most wonderfully. A "pestilence" is the only figure of speech which really fits to this pernicious influence.

"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," and incapable of using its strong meat. 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! Hearken now while I read to you the confession of one of these false shepherds and his explanation of the trickery and deceit by which he keeps the people quiet while inculcating 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.

I read you his words as they were printed in the most prominent religious paper in the world, the *Independent*, New York City. The editor of that journal, respecting the desire of this wolf not to be exposed, and apparently sympathizing with him in the whole procedure, vouches for him as a man of intelligence and Christian character, and of high standing in an orthodox Church, so-called, whose unorthodoxy would never be suspected.

THIS IS THE CONFESSION:

"I 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."

What think you of that confession, dear friends? 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 of Christ. But I have not concluded his confession. Let me continue to read to you from his own lips, 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? I wish to clear my skirts by crying aloud and sparing not these wolves in sheep's clothing. I proceed to read:—

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."

How true this is! We pointed out thirty years ago from the Scriptures that the testing of Christendom was coming 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 prophetic delineations of the Scriptures which I cannot here discuss, some of them belonging to the symbolic book of Revelation. What a great change since that time! Christian Science has largely influenced all denominations by their false statements that there is no original sin and that there is no death and hence no penalty for 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 since that time also Higher Criticism has gotten in its work all over the civilized world and is surely destroying faith in the very center 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 I 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 aforesaid 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 honorable business man would, without blushing, make such an acknowledgment respecting his method of conducting business to the editor of the *New York Independent*, even if his name were kept secret? Would he not be ashamed that even the editor should know of his perfidy? 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 is it to his shame. Hearken while we read further:—

"For this reason I am not shouting out every Sunday that I do not believe in the virgin birth of Jesus nor in the physical resurrection. Much as I honor and admire Doctor Crapsey, I am not scurrying to put myself in the pillory beside him. I let others do the talking, answer questions cautiously."

Doctor Crapsey, referred to, was recently tried for heresy and expelled from the Episcopal pulpit. He, magnanimous soul! after having avowed his own faith in the teachings of the Bible, after having been honored with a high position amongst those who reverence the Bible, and while drawing a good salary for expounding it to his congregation, considered it the proper and honorable course to break those vows, and, while retaining his hold upon the

For Conclusion see Part 4.