

THE PRESENT TREND.

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A WORD OF WARNING AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

GOD'S way is perfect. His whole counsel will surely be fulfilled. And He will be glorified in and of all. In the end all will turn to His everlasting praise. He is strong who executeth His word. He is infallible, and He only. Man is, so to speak, like a pawn on the chessboard in this world. Originally created and made by God for His own praise, he became a great moral and irretrievable wreck through the power of Satan and by his own disobedience. A fallen creature, he is now moved either by God or Satan. Being alienated in heart from God, through sin, he is, apart from His intervention in grace and government, Satan's tool. Men are used of Satan as his instruments, in order to carry out his ends. It is manifest that the two great powers of good and evil are at work in the world, emanating from

these two sources. Evil is getting more and more the upper hand, for He who came and introduced the perfection of good in its very essence was refused. "There is none good, but one, that is God" (Mark x. 18). And the Son was and is God. He was manifest in flesh. But the heart of man, prone to evil, and under sin's mastery, could not bear the light of His presence, and deliberately chose evil. Christ was rejected and crucified.

From that moment Satan ruled as the god of this world. And the whole (not part) of the world lieth in the wicked one (1 John v. 19). God has glorified His Son Jesus Christ in another world, the Man who glorified Him, and has taken possession of His own here, by the gift of the Spirit, for that same world. And thereby, to use a figure, God puts a brake on Satan's wheel. Without the Spirit's presence the whole world would long ago, as in Noah's day, have again been filled with violence and corruption. Both have been and are, undoubtedly great and daily increasing, and will continue to increase till the manifest intervention of God. The world has ever been lawless since sin entered. The press daily witnesses to it in this the twentieth century. The church, commenced by the Spirit's presence,

has sunk down more or less in the hand of man to the world's level. God's blessed work continues in souls, and not one of Christ's shall be lost, but the mass are rushing into *apostasy*. The elements which form it are seething around us. It is well for Christians to realize it. It will aid to exercise us to keep our garments undefiled. The germs of the evil were early sown by Satan. You will find them indicated in the Acts, the Epistles, and the Revelation. And he has not been idle, nor have his tools, in promoting their growth, these nineteen centuries.

In Christendom, enlightened as compared with heathendom, etc., men are born in the midst of a state of departure from God, both in the world and in the professing church. Hence thousands of false principles are accredited on all sides, and called Christian, which are really anti-christian. From the evil seed sown by Satan at the outset we have around us now a rapidly growing tree, with birds of the air (demons) lodging in the branches thereof (Matt. xiii. 32). *The present trend* is all to the bad. Many will no doubt dispute it, but the mass, under Satan, are colour-blind. They will tell you the world is getting better, but their assertion is in the very teeth of scripture. But see, says man in triumphant

tone, the advance in, and the effect of, education and science, etc. Readily we admit, and we are thankful for it, that where the influence of the word of God has been felt education and science have advanced, and there is an *outward* betterment. But though greatly adding to man's comfort and profit here, after all it is but a thin veneer, and the heart of man, the citadel, so to speak, remains unchanged. It is on the heart that God looks; but apart from His grace it is as far from Him as ever, and desperately wicked (Jer. xvii. 9). See it in its working at the Chicago exhibition. Humanly speaking, it was a triumph of human genius and ability, and of the results of education and science, but what was its motto? "I will" was stamped visibly on the girdle of the emblematical figure which represented it. And "I will" is a stout denial of God's will; a striking witness to man's fall and Satan's power. It is the exact opposite of the precious words of the perfect Man, Jesus, God's Son, whose delight it was to do His will. The will of man apart from God is self-will, and self-will is sin. Jesus was ever in communion with God, His will ever subject to His.

The whole bent of man's course, apart from the action of the Spirit is to the bad. "Evil men and

seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. iii. 13). Satan's wheel is, so to speak, still going round, and though there is still a check, it is ever revolving more and more rapidly on a downward road. As soon as the restraining power is removed, the foretold final crisis and awful crash will come. A fearful calamity, unparalleled in the world's history, is nigh at hand. Many are horrified as they read of the sudden destruction of thousands upon thousands by the eruption of a volcano. But that, solemn as it is, is as nought in comparison with the things which are shortly coming upon the earth.

The long-awaited and blessed event of the coming of the Lord from the right hand of God for His own may at any moment be accomplished (1 Thess. iv. 15-18). Shortly after, Satan having first made a desperate stand against archangelic power contending for Christ's rights in the heavens, will be cast down. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth at that awful moment (Rev. xii. 7-17). How great the mercy of God to those who shall previously have been caught up to meet Christ, and are thus kept out of the hour of temptation that shall come upon all the world to try (or test) them that dwell upon the earth (Rev. iii. 10).

The Holy Ghost, who dwells in the church, will cease to be here as a divine Person at that wondrous moment of the translation to glory of the heavenly saints. For a short period He will still continue to restrain through governmental power, as before the formation of the church at Pentecost (2 Thess. ii. 6). But the evil will rapidly develop, and men, casting God off altogether in their infidelity and wickedness, will accept the man of their own choice, a man who will be the very personification of all that is evil and devilish—the man of sin, the son of perdition—the *antichrist* (2 Thess. ii. 3–4). The words of Christ to the Jews will be fulfilled, “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive” (John v. 43). The Spirit ceasing to restrain, Satan, cast down to earth, will have it pretty well all his own way, but for God in mercy intervening in the blessing of a remnant of Jews (and through them of a people from among the outside nations), whom He will hide in their chambers till the indignation be overpast (Isa. xxvi. 20).

Energizing the beast, the head of the revived Roman Empire, and the wilful king of the Jews (the antichrist or false prophet), Satan will present

himself as the object of universal homage. As the dragon who gives his power to these his vessels to carry out his awful purpose, he will sway the mass (Rev. xiii. 4). Through miracles, wonders, and signs wrought by Satanic power men will be completely deceived, and *believe a lie*, because they received not the love of the truth (2 Thess. ii. 9-11). The worship of a false trinity will then supplant the worship of the true God. Satanic power in relation to man will have its full play, and men (Jews and Gentiles) will worship Satan, the beast, the false prophet, and an image (Rev. xiii. ; 2 Thess. ii.). This is the general tendency of the currents permeating Christendom, with all its boasted enlightenment. The great ship (again to use a figure) with rudder broken and sails rent, is fast drifting on to the jagged, sunken rock of the worship of the devil. Coming events cast their shadows before. Newspapers have already witnessed to the studied practice of Satan worship in Paris, suppressed, however, for the moment by the law. Only yesterday the writer saw an article in a paper, advertising a daily circulation of nearly a million copies, openly blaspheming God and mocking at scripture and His ways. The harvest of evil is rapidly ripening. The real state of things is clearly manifest to

those who have a spiritual mind, controlled by the revelation of God. They receive His thoughts about it all, which are not as ours. Such are not deceived. But unregenerate men *love* darkness and *hate* the light (John iii. 19-20).

The Satanic infidel power getting thus the upper hand, at the close infidel violence will destroy religious corruption. The beast, long more or less controlled by the bridle of the false church, and long restive, will finally break the bridle and refuse the religious whip. The beast will overthrow its rider and destroy her (Rev. xvii.), the ten kings giving their power to the head of the revived Roman Empire, will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. The awful scenes of revolutionary France will be re-enacted on a far wider stage. The infidel powers (once professedly Christian) will seize and feast upon the wealth of the professing church, and with fire destroy on all hands the witness of her presence. Morally and materially, speaking broadly, the mother of harlots will be destroyed (Rev. xviii.), and infidelity enjoy its triumph. But though man himself is thus the instrument used of God (who is behind and above all the scenes and actings of men in this world) for the destruction of that which is externally

held in such high reverence by hundreds of millions to-day, his infidel triumph will be short-lived. The Lord Himself, the Son of Man, shall appear with saintly and angelic train, in power and great glory (Rev. xix. ; Matt. xxv. 31). The mock trinity will reap swift and signal judgment at His hand, and Satan's mimic millennium will cease. A short three and a half years will be its utmost limit (Rev. xii. 2-3 ; xiii. 14 ; Matt. xxv. 22). The two great earthly leaders of the apostasy, the beast and the false prophet, caught red-handed at the head of an armed array against the rights of God's Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, will be cast alive into the lake of fire (Rev. xix. 19-20). And Satan, cast from his supremacy, shall be taken by a strong angel and bound in the bottomless pit (Rev. xx. 1-3). The Lord, the despised and rejected Jesus, the lowly, humble Man of Nazareth, shall triumph then. He shall reign and rule with a rod of iron. All lawlessness, whether worldly or religious, shall be put down with authority and power. All shall be compelled to bow to Jesus, the Man whom God delighteth to honour (Phil. ii. 9-11 ; Isa. xlvi. 23). And the world shall be filled with His glory, all His saints participating with Him in it during the thousand years of His blessed reign.

Loosed at the close, scripture witnesses to Satan's final effort to overthrow the throne and authority of Christ, but he will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. xx. 10). Then shall the wicked dead be judged, and Christ shall give up the kingdom to the Father. A fixed and ever-abiding state in heaven and earth shall succeed where righteousness shall dwell, and *God shall be all in all* (1 Cor. xv. 28).

The general stream of human thought and teaching is now trending in Christendom to that which scripture so graphically foretells. The mass of the heathen nations has long been wholly idolatrous or infidel. The Mohammedan and the Jew have not escaped. The mystery of iniquity (or lawlessness) doth already work (2 Thess. ii. 7). The end will be that men will accept Satan instead of God. And this will bring down the judgment of God, closing with the glory and exaltation of Christ.

In His great grace God has unveiled the future to His servants. We are not in ignorance. These things must shortly come to pass, and we are instructed beforehand by the Holy Ghost what God will do. In this sense the Christian has the privilege of Abraham. "Shall I hide from Abraham," said the Lord, "that thing which

I do" (Gen. xviii. 17). The patient student of divine revelation traces all the dark shadows, but discovers all through at the same time bright glimpses of the rays of the Sun of righteousness—*Christ* (Mal. iv. 2). With the Person of Christ, the Son of the living God, before his soul, whilst the sea and the waves are already beginning to roar, and men's hearts to fail for fear, on account of those things which are shortly coming upon the earth, the Christian finds a sure refuge for his soul in Him, and is at peace. Whilst the greatest minds of the world are oft manifestly anxious as to what will be the outcome of the vast armaments of the nations, and the testing questions in the east (it is really a question of Christ), the far east, and many other parts of the globe, the Christian is better informed than all as to the final solution. He sees the trend. He knows the end. And if wise he will keep near to God and continue to cleave to His word.

Now, sides are already being taken. The question of questions to-day is, Are you for Christ, or for antichrist, for God or for Satan? There is no neutral ground. The strong trend of the mass is for the latter. How is it with the reader of these lines? Happy indeed is that soul, who, bowing to Christ as Saviour and Lord, gets

present deliverance from Satanic power, sin, and the world, whether infidel or religious, and with a happy heart and an exercised conscience traces the steps of his Master in the paths of holiness. It is a golden opportunity for faithfulness. The door, God's opened door, is still open, and none can shut (Rev. iii. 8). It is not a question of feats of religious heroism, or of triumphing as a martyr at the stake in the presence of false priests, and the religious rancour and hatred of thousands on a public square, but of patiently holding fast that which we have, in these difficult times, the last days (Rev. iii. 11). A little strength, keeping His word, and *not denying* His name in the presence of bigotry, formalism, indifference, and unbelief, is what is all precious to the heart of Christ at the present moment. Where is it? Let each one ask himself before God, Does that characterize me? And does that characterize those with whom I have fellowship? There is nothing extreme about it. But if *Christ* is really before our souls, we shall preach Him, and be kept well balanced and preserved from both narrowness and looseness, legality and license; from the pressing of one aspect of the truth to the weakening of another and the formation of sects; also from the preaching of a mixed character of gospel

assisted by human methods, to the hindrance of the work of God in souls. Then as we seek to dwell in the love of God, and to keep with prayer and exercise close to Him, His beloved saints will be helped to walk together in rank without a double heart (1 Chron. xii. 33) till their glorious hope is fulfilled by the coming of the Lord. Neither doctrine received merely in the intelligence nor busy work will keep us, and sooner or later each is tested, but gazing on the living Christ in glory in the power of the Spirit, as in the attitude of our souls we sit at rest and peace at His blessed feet, will. We shall then be transfigured morally after Him, and become a reflection of Him in this dark world. This will keep all in its right place in our souls, and in our relations with others. And continuing in communion with God and with spiritual energy in the service of the gospel and of the mystery according to our measure, and esteeming others better than ourselves, the only strife amongst His people will be, who can be most Christlike, so that He may be exalted now in our midst in the scene of His great sorrow even unto death.

E.H.C.