

WRITINGS OF H BORLASE

by H. Borlase

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by H. Borlase, compiled for study and devotional reading.

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S. On Conformity to the World

S. Present Prospects

S. On Conformity to the World.

On Conformity to the World.

One principal purpose which the Lord had in view, by continuing for a season in their present state the people who should be gathered together in one, through His death, was that a practical witness of the character of God might be given to the world; and this in the joint testimony of those who by one Spirit were united together; and who, though not indeed taken out of the world, were to be delivered from the evil of it. Such was the church, whilst continuing in holy separateness; it was a living warning to all around, "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." But where is that witness now? A long and dreary period has passed away since the church stood as a burning and a shining light; and the very name of christian was sufficient to brand its possessor as an enemy of the world. Its failure is continually and painfully exhibited in the overwhelming mass of nominal profession, which now assumes its place, and the perplexity and inconsistency which tarnish the walk of many a child of God in the present day. But though as a collective body the church has lost the place of witness, still is each believer a temple of the Holy Ghost; and as such, answerable for being led by the Spirit in all the circumstances in which he may be placed. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, THEY are the sons of God." One thing is clear, that with the world the Spirit of Christ can have no connection; for He must ever lead from the world to God. As professing therefore to be guided by the Spirit, it is a sure and safe criterion in every case of doubt and perplexity, to consider how far God has fellowship in that which we do. The present day is so peculiarly characterised by the inconsistent walking of believers, and the efforts of Satan to unite them with one or another of the manifold forms of worldliness, that it may be well to notice some of the prevailing evils, which have contributed, in no small degree, to lower the standard of christian practice. Remember, that the word of God is clear, "All that is in the world is not of the Father;" and that upon all the natural heart desires scripture passes one unqualified judgment, "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."

There is one special snare to which believers are peculiarly liable in the present time; more perhaps than in any other since Paul warned Timothy against the antitheseis tes pseudonymou gnoseos, "the oppositions of science falsely so called," words which so well describe the character of the antithetical philosophy of the present day. We speak of the seductions of the intellect, to which many who may be free from the grosser forms of self-seeking are peculiarly exposed. The expressions of scripture respecting the world and worldliness are too often qualified by them to suit their own particular tastes and propensities. Men easily profess to abjure that for which they have little or no natural inclination, whilst they strenuously contend for that which is only the world in its more refined state, and is all the more dangerous, because more delusive, than the temptations peculiarly addressed to the lower tendencies of human nature. The two are distinguished by the apostle as the desires of the flesh and of the mind (Eph. ii). And verily the spiritual idolatry, which is the sin of the present day, the consummation of all that man is capable of doing against God, is infinitely more dangerous from its subtlety, and the manifold phases which it assumes in the mind, than all the other depths into which a wayward heart and the devices of the enemy may beguile

us.

Let us not be mistaken in this. We argue not against the improvement of the mind. Most assuredly it is desirable that every faculty should be fully and healthfully developed; and education, in the proper sense of the word (i.e., the opening all the powers of the mind, and directing them to God's glory), is above all things to be looked to. But the error against which we firmly contend is that of making the means the end. The desire for the improvement of the mind, considered by itself, is but a refined selfishness if it stops there, and does not train every power of the intellect with a direct view to the service of God. All that tends not to His service, all that may not in some way be wielded as an instrument in this work, is for self alone; and in its results will invariably be found unprofitable, however splendid such acquirements may appear to the mind which judges of their value by the proportion of credit which they obtain amongst men. For let it be considered, as assuredly we ought, that life, whether natural or spiritual, is ACTION; and in the christian, action constant and undivided for God's glory. Nay more; the mind which is held to be the most informed and accomplished is in fact but a wilderness, if it knows not the only true wisdom. It is grievous when we look, not merely to the pursuits of the natural man, following the wanderings of his own mind, and seeking a phantom which eludes his grasp, but to the objects which engage so much of the attention even of God's children, to see such an infinity of labour bestowed on what is called truth, but is not so; and the practical denial of its only source, the knowledge never ending, never wearying, of God, that knowledge which also opens a field for the richest and most varied application of every intellectual power, and maintains them all in true and healthful proportion. Anything short of this (from which it is manifest that the great mass of what is called the intelligence of the world is systematically and voluntarily alienated) is but the laborious idleness of the mind seeking happiness in something out of God, and the evidence that it has never yet acknowledged the full length and breadth of the Spirit's testimony concerning Jesus, "that in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

It is well for every believer to realise how much God can do — how little man. All human aids indeed we take with thankfulness, as from Providence, Who orders these things, as well as all others, to work together for His own glory, though men are little conscious of it. Yet they are still but aids; and one ray of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God has more real effect in expanding the mind, than all the combined instrumentality of human genius and learning besides. Things are not depreciated, as has been rightly said, when placed on their true level. The machinery in ordinary use is not undervalued by the assertion that, when it has raised man to its utmost reach, God can raise him infinitely higher. At a time when mere human power is rated so high, and the productions of that which is purely man's intellect are gazed upon by many, as in no small degree approximating to a participation in the divine nature; it is well to remember the terms in which scripture speaks of all that descends to us from Adam, not merely in this body of death, but in the mind which dwells within it.

"There is none that understandeth," is God's estimate of all the boasted light of human reason; though we know it not till informed by the Spirit. "Having the understanding darkened" is the universal character of man, however bright the array of natural powers with which he is gifted may appear. And let it not be forgotten, that the source of much of this power is "the tree of knowledge of good and evil;" so that men ignorantly pride themselves upon that knowledge which found an entrance into the mind only through the first act of disobedience against God; and which, as to all

its diversified semblances, proves itself in every natural man to be the legitimate fruit of the tree from which it sprang, which was good indeed in itself, but was obtained by the subtlety of Satan, in disbelief of God's sufficiency. It is instructive to observe that, when Cain went forth from the presence of the Lord, the inventions and luxuries of life began; and doubtless power in the earth continued exclusively with his descendants, until the "sons of God," the holy seed, united themselves with the children of men, and all trace of separation in the fear of God was lost in the indiscriminate exhibition of self-will and violence which overspread the world. The child of this world often professes to approach God by science and the study of nature. And here again the christian is called upon to discriminate. In that which is truly and properly the work of God in creation, he cannot but rejoice; yea, and renders "glory, honour, and power" to Him "Whose hand has made all these things;" for they are His, and are the expression of His wondrous mind. We see in them (what we cannot see in the works of fallen man) the evidence and expression of His eternal power and Godhead; and so far glory in them. But as sons of God we are called to know Him in a character far more excellent and blessed, even as THE FATHER. And this knowledge we do not gain from without, for it is the Spirit's special office "to tell us plainly of the Father." All other ways by which men may profess to approach Him bring them no farther than the Gentile outer court of the Holy of Holies; an Israelite alone can enter in.

Let us learn by the example of one who had tried everything, and not only sought out and gathered to himself all earthly glory and pleasure, such as fell to the lot of none, before or after ("for what can the man do that cometh after the king?"); but applied to the discovery such wisdom as none ever had; and moreover exceeded all in knowledge, "for he spake of trees, of the cedar that is in Lebanon, even to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth which had heard of his wisdom." Yet what is the end? "I, the preacher, was king over Israel, in Jerusalem; and I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are under heaven. This sore travail hath God given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight; and that which is wanting cannot be numbered." The character of the intellect of the present day, by which so many "professing themselves to be wise" are led astray, is but one of the manifold forms of human perverseness setting itself up against God; with more refinement it may be, but with no less determinateness of opposition than in those who impugn God's declared will because He has not written a revelation of it in the skies. "The Greeks seek after wisdom." Hence have arisen the philosophical expositions of Christianity, and "metaphysical projections" of the christian scheme, peculiar to this age and to the second century; all only the attempts of man to penetrate by the mere subtlety of human reason the mysterious doctrine of the cross; which is either never reached, or, if seen, continues as ever "foolishness."

Take another view. The state of the world, as ignorant of God, is this: "Rejoicing in the works of their own hands" (Acts 7:41). But are there not many whose lives should be a practical testimony against it all, who appear as though their hearts were in it as much as others? It is wisdom to learn from an enemy; let us hear the testimony of the sharp-sighted world against the inconsistencies of believers.

"As far as we are enabled to discover, they (the serious) testify no reluctance to follow the footsteps of the worldly in the road to wealth; we look in vain for any distinguishing mark in this respect between the two classes of society; that which is 'of the world,' and that which is 'not of the world.' All appear to be actuated by the same common impulse to push their fortunes in life; all exhibit the same ardent, enterprising zeal in their respective pursuits."

Again,

"They live in the common haunts of men, gratify their common desires, engage in their common pursuits, partake of their common indulgencies; they toil along with the worldly through paths beset with temptation in various shapes. They run with all imaginable alacrity and cheerfulness in the race after fame, and honours, and emoluments, where the faith and principles of men are most severely tried; they acquiesce in all the devices of luxury, to pamper the children of prosperity, and manifest the same indifference with others to the cost of human happiness and innocence, at which these may be supplied" (Edinburgh Review).

These answers come from no friend to God's truth; yet they are but too true, and may serve to shame many a professed disciple, who is occupied by "the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things." We may add one remark in reference to the children of religious parents. In too many instances the same anxiety for placing them in situations which the world counts honourable is manifested as in worldly families; and for this end many a believer will not hesitate to place his child in scenes of temptation, and in circumstances of exposure to evil, where it cannot be expected that the care of the Spirit of God will follow them. The result is, that we believe it will be found in numberless instances that religious parents have been visited with a curse upon their children, just in proportion as they themselves have been involved in the world. Is there not too little consistent exemplification of the apostle's command, "Let your moderation be known unto all men:" too little proof of our "counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord"? On the contrary, does not the deceitfulness of the heart or carelessness about the Lord's glory lead many to seek by various sophistries to satisfy themselves that the christian may have fellowship with the world, at least in some things, if not in all? But if there be any truth in every scripture declaration respecting the world, this one thing is certain, that he who argues deliberately how far he may continue in the world proves that his affections are in it altogether. The application of the expression of scripture is often indeed sought to be evaded by the question, What is the world? But is it credible that the Scripture would set forth so pregnant, so critical a principle, enforced by such fearful warnings, and then leave to every man's notions what he was to avoid? The truth is that its language is infinitely more exact than is commonly supposed; and the everyday conversation of men, in their common use of the term "the world," invariably expresses the thing against which we are warned. But in fact they who ask this question are able full well to answer it themselves. When they speak of rising in the world, of getting credit and a name in it, they know precisely what "the world" means. But when anything is to be given up for Christ's sake, a sudden indistinctness invests everything; and the unfaithful heart is allowed to draw its own line between what is and what is not of the world. But in all the various appearances which the world assumes, however fair and attractive to the mind and eye, it is exclusively spoken of in Scripture as a thing to be overcome. God has laid down a broad principle, which he who runs may read; and love and faithfulness to Christ alone can be the true guide in applying it. It is judging of things rather by our own thoughts concerning them than by the plain statements of the word of

God, which keeps men in it. In truth, the great secret of conformity to the world is taking for granted that "things are as they should be. It has been truly said that "there are many saints, but very few Christians:" many who owe to Christ the unspeakable debt of forgiveness through His blood, few who are willing to follow Him Who has so loved them, even to the renunciation of all things. And what was His distinct unqualified testimony against the world? That "the deeds thereof are evil;" and whilst Himself in it, it was simply in witness for God and against them. A disciple could not remain in it, for the call was ever, "Follow Me;" although, like Jesus, he would be habitually there, as far as he was enabled to bring God's testimony to bear upon the consciences of men by his own conversation in the world. This is the true answer to the question, "How far may we mingle with the world?" As far and as often as we can witness for Jesus. One consideration which at once overrules all others in a Christian's mind is this, that Christ's mission, as regards His people, was for this sole object, "That He might deliver us from this present evil world." And therefore in pleading for conformity to the world we plead for conformity to that, deliverance from which cost nothing less than the death of the Son of God. The practical question for the believer is, Can I have fellowship with that with which He has none? The example of others is often pleaded; but to our own Master we stand or fall. If many Christians are mingled with it, this only renders it the more imperative on any who see the mischief which is thus occasioned by the church of God to give by their lives a more distinct protest; and thus it becomes not only a matter of faithfulness to God, but of love for the souls of others.

"My meat is to do the will of Him That sent Me, and to finish His work;" "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?" Thus did Jesus speak of His own labour of love; and who that professes to be a follower of Him can set a lower measure for his own life than his Master's, "Who left us an example that we should follow His steps"? Not indeed that he has no natural fellowship with all that charms the senses or the mind of man; but the melody of the songs of heaven is heard above the voice of earthly music, and the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, seen by the eye of faith, outshines the transient spark of earthly splendour. "The time is short." Most blessed word, whether for the stirring up of our diligence in our Lord's work, that "when He cometh" we may be found doing His will; or for the gladdening of our souls in the prospect of Him Whose coming shall be "as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds" (2 Sam. xxiii). Let us try everything that the world holds dear by the glory of that day, by the power and coming of Jesus, by the joy of His saints, in whom He will come to be glorified; and then let our hearts decide whether we are ready to count all as dung, that we may win Christ.

One thing more remains. If we are looking with anything of the mind of Christ upon a world which lies in wickedness, it cannot be with the desire to share in those things which bind down the hearts of those who are deceived by the god of this world: yea which are the very objects that render it so hard even for Christians to leave it; nor in the unfaithful course which temporises with the evil, but rather in the spirit with which Jesus beheld Jerusalem and wept over it. True love for the souls of others will lead to a clear and distinct disavowal of all connection with the world, that the testimony may lead those who are involved in it to see their danger. But the charity, falsely so called, of the present day is the most murderous principle of Satan, who first deceives and then destroys. The days are few and evil; the long-suffering of a God is waiting still, but we know not for how long. May He give us grace to do His work in the "little while." H. Borlase.

S. Present Prospects.

Present Prospects. The knowledge of the mind of God is the Christian's only security both for determining his true position in the world, and his being preserved in it, steadfast and immovable. Where this is not ascertained, all must be doubt and perplexity, and his path must be uncertain, nay, inevitably wrong. Where it is known, he is, in a certain sense, omnipotent. This consideration has an especial application to the present state and prospects of the people of God. Many may say indeed, as to any inquiry beyond present things, What is truth? But the scripture sets before us the clear and definite counsels of Him Who changeth not; marks out the distinct character of every principle, whether good or evil, in His view; traces their respective advances, and exhibits the great general results to which they are severally progressing. And these things the church is directed to observe. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn," etc. And the same apostle, after portraying the characters of evil in the last days, specifies this as the safeguard of the saints, "That they know these things before" (2 Peter 1:19; 2 Peter 3:17).

All our light then is darkness, unless our apprehension of the circumstances in which we are standing accord with the revealed truth of God concerning them. To take a practical example. One visible anxiety of the believer, I mean of one who is accepted in the Beloved, with regard to himself, is that his service be given wisely to the Lord. But it seems evident that, unless the purposes of God for this dispensation be gathered by him from the written word, his labours must often be misdirected, and possibly, as to their results, given more to the house of the stranger (Proverbs 5:10) than to God's. For instead of ministering according to his ability in God's husbandry, his powers may be diverted into channels, whence no enduring fruit is returned to the Lord's glory, and where His Spirit would never have led him; and to all that is not done in the Spirit the word of Jesus applies, "He that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad." Unless the unchanging distinction between the church and the world up to the "time of the end" be seen, the expectation of a gradual diffusion of Christianity must constantly operate to the consuming of our services upon that which will absorb into itself all the energy and power of the labourer, and still remain the world.*

[*Of course I do not here speak of preaching the gospel, or of otherwise meeting the world in testimony, the only way in which a christian can meet it.] The subject assumes an import even still more weighty when considered with regard to the consummation declared in that portion of the revelation of God's will which embraces the present age. For it must inevitably make a wide practical difference in the Christian's position in the world, whether he considers it as going on to blessedness, or, on the contrary, to judgment. For on this must, to a great extent, depend the actual character in which it appears to his eyes, and consequently his own conduct and views with regard to it. The views of surrounding things, taken by two believers, one of whom considers them to be thus far in their progress to perfection, while the other sees that sentence upon them is delayed, only because "the long suffering of the Lord is salvation" (2 Peter 3:1-18 :), must be as different as light from darkness. Nor is it too much to say that the character of their testimony will

equally vary. For testimony is given in power, only in proportion as the truth of the circumstances in which he stands is recognised by him who has to give it; and if his mind is resting upon the hope of a progressive enlightening of the world, while it may be that fearful darkness is fast closing in, all his wisdom will be folly. Most of the Lord's people indeed, in common with others, feel that the aspect of the times is sufficiently awful; yet perhaps the greater number are inclined to consider it as temporary, with the hope that it will subside.

Let us briefly try present things by the test of scripture, for to this will be our safest appeal. If we judge by sight in anything, we shall assuredly err. And therefore it is only by taking the word as our criterion, though appearances may seem ever so contradictory, that our judgment can be true.

First, then, how does scripture uniformly describe the character of the church throughout the dispensation? And here we at once meet with the incontrovertible fact that the whole tenor of the commands and exhortations throughout the Gospels and Epistles to the people of God are, from their very nature, applicable only to a comparatively small number, in the midst of a world lying in wickedness. The irreversible principle of the dispensation is that "many are called but few chosen;" and with this correspond all the practical addresses of our Lord and His apostles. It is therefore in absolute contrast to a dispensation, in which it is said, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord." The two can never become identical; for, on the supposition that this dispensation should grow into one of universal truth, the whole character of the apostolic Epistles would gradually become inappropriate to the circumstances of the church. The characters to whom they are addressed are thus described, "The sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Php 2:15). "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not" (1 John iii). "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one, en toi poneroi" (1 John 5:19). "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9).

More especially is the nature of the dispensation, as regards His followers, described by the Lord: they are said to be "the poor in spirit," "the mourners," "the meek," "the persecuted for righteousness' sake" they are the salt of the earth, the light of the world, as sheep among wolves, as the wheat among tares, which, grow, increase, and ripen together, until, in the end of this age, tou aionos toutou, the Son of man shall send to gather out of His kingdom all things that offend. The present is a dispensation of witness, and of witness only (Matthew 24:14); and as such essentially incongruous with one of universality: the insignia of God's people throughout are the cross and the reproach of Christ. In truth, the position of the church in the world, if it were faithful, never could be any other, and, in the present earthly glory of the professing church, the light of scripture exhibits only the deceit of Satan and apostasy.

1889 325 The character of the world also is no less clearly and decisively given as being ever in invariable opposition and enmity to God and to His Christ; and so characterised, not in a vague and generalising way, but as a definite mass, in which the "prince of the power of the air" rules, even the god of this world, "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Any supposed amelioration of the world as such, is only Satan's lie to bring the children of God into contact with it in some way or other, by inducing the supposition that the principles of God are working in it, to unite by degrees all in the Truth. Yet is the church's state spoken of as being ever

a suffering one till her Lord returns, and He has spoken of no time of blessedness to her, or to the groaning creation, until then. "She that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day." But the sure word of prophecy does not fail us here. The last days are shown to terminate in the deepest shades of moral evil; and they have been written for the church's warning, if her eyes were but open to read them. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. iii). "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Peter 3:1-18 :) "Little children, it is the last time, and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists" (1 John 2:18). The whole of Jude is also an awakening testimony to the same effect. But above all, in the last book of prophecy, is the dispensation presented in its true aspect, both in progress and consummation. And here, whatever difference there may be as to details of interpretation, the principles exhibited in it are at least distinctly stated. Not a word is contained in it of progressive advance in the world, not one of the gradual spread of Christianity; but darkness, fearful darkness, is brought out in unvarying direct opposition to the light of life; for the conclusion is that the earth and the whole world are gathered together in collective array against the Lamb (Rev. xix). We see presented in it (and this, excluding all theories of interpretation) the principles upon which the world is acting, and how they end; and God's principles, their full and marked separation from the world, and their result; the progress and final development of the mysteries of godliness and iniquity; the separation of the powers of holiness and sin. The obvious practical application to all, even to the poor and unlearned (for "blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein"), is in the observing the characters of evil which are described in this book, in order to avoid being in any way mingled with them, and with the final judgment in which they are indiscriminately involved. The principles on which the world proceeds must clearly end, not in peace, but in judgment. And whatever may be predicted from present appearances of the moral elevation of the world, all things that the children of this generation esteem, the riches, the luxury, the magnificence, the pride of man, come only to this, "Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come." Let our hearts weigh this well, if we are looking for anything better from the strength and power of man, or are connected with what gives place and distinction in the world. "The Lord alone will be exalted in that day." But is there nothing now corresponding to these dark features? I say nothing as to the time when the full consummation of these things shall take place, though we may believe them not to be far off: but is not the mystery of iniquity now working, and are not all the principles already in operation, which as soon as the restraining hand of God upon evil is removed, will burst forth unto the full manifestation of the power of darkness? Let us watch the present movement in this country, in Ireland, nay, over the whole of Europe; and we shall see that it is not a superficial modification of things which is now in progress, but an impulse arising from the very central springs of this world's action. The mind of the age is working definitely and steadily to one object, which to the infidel and the philosophising christian may seem the commencement of the renovation of society.

Yet it cannot but be seen, by one who looks below the surface, that the very foundations of the established constitution of things are breaking up under an irresistible influence, which may produce the explosion at any hour. Even the apparent approximation to unity is but the selfish principle of man's nature, gathering together all which ministers to his senses or his intellect, for himself and against God, in a word, the unity of an antichrist. For a season indeed there may be an appearance of calmness on the face of things. But this we are prepared to expect, for deceivableness is the special character of the last days; and therefore the Spirit of God is more than ever needed to detect the falsehood which surrounding circumstances ever convey to the eye of sense, and to enable the Christian to judge of them as they are in the estimate of God. The natural man judging according to sense must necessarily err in all his conclusions, for they are drawn from external appearances.

Reason may be correct enough in its deductions from natural facts, but reason does not recognise the one great fact that sin is in the world; and therefore all its conclusions are astray, because they are not based upon that which alone enables the spiritual man to account for all the apparent strangeness and contrariety of existing things. Man has not a thought in communion with God, except through His Spirit, Who dwells in those that believe and know the truth; and it is marvellous (seeing that the fall brought utter disunion from God, and that fallen nature, under every colouring that may be superinduced by the pride of civilized man, is still nature separated from God, and acting for itself), that the supposition should be entertained by any of our christian brethren of a state of universal peace and righteousness being established through the causes which are at present in operation. There is and can be no foundation for the reign of holiness (setting aside all that prophecy teaches as to the introduction of this period) in a state of things built up by man, arising out of the necessity of his case; for the whole result of the energy and power of the world is based upon a system of necessity, and that necessity springs from its alienation from God. Nay, such a reign as is looked for would be nothing but the dominion of Satan, using for his own purposes the folly and self-will of men, and bringing them into confederated union with every outward display of human glory against the glory of the King of kings and Lord of lords. And if this day be expected, are we to think it far distant? The evident tendency of all the principles now at work in the world is to bring men into organised association, upon the ground of their common wants and pleasures. And the result, hastened as it will be by the resources afforded by modern inventions and facility of intercommunication, will be the acting, upon a grander and more daring scale, of the scene of gathering together against God, which was prefigured at Babel. For "now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do," to be succeeded, indeed, by an outpouring of judgment, of which the scattering of the nations, the destruction of the old world, and the fires of Sodom, have been merely foreshadowings. "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man: they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot: they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded: but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:26-30).

It may be well imagined, if these things are so, and if the present dispensation ends in apostacy and consequent excision, that the whole policy of Satan will be used to divert the minds of

believers from the consideration of them. And thus in truth it is; and we may observe his power exercised, both in leading some into unholy and unscriptural speculations, and also in using these as instruments for bringing the study of the simple truth itself into discredit in the estimation of others. Either way his end is gained; for "if we know not these things before," there is no security against "being led away by the error of the wicked" (2 Peter iii). In the meantime what is the church doing — that which should be a light in the world, bearing a clear-shining testimony for God, and against all the deceivableness of unrighteousness, in separation from all evil? Even as it has ever done, seeking its own and not the things of Jesus Christ. We have one portion of so-called churchmen (in Ireland) defending their present position, on the lately discovered plea, that "The body that professes to be guided solely by the written word is certain to be wrong in principle, and defective in practice;" and proposing tradition to be taken as the supplement of this deficiency in the means provided for the guidance and instruction of the church of Christ.* Another division (at Oxford), having discovered the insufficiency of former vindications, have so far progressed toward Romanism, as to rest their claims upon apostolic succession alone, and already speak of dispensing the sacrifice.** [*See a tract published by the Rev. W. Burgh, Dublin.

**An advance towards Popery, which is so far honest and consistent, for to this the principles of a strict churchman would necessarily lead, if followed out to their legitimate extent. See "Tracts" published at Oxford; also a sermon preached by the Archdeacon of Totnes, at Exeter Cathedral.] In another quarter the Dissenters are marshalling themselves in the ranks of the infidel and the Socinian, and grasping at all the power and privilege that the world can give them. And the evangelical body alas! are more guilty and inconsistent than all, inasmuch as they profess a form of sound doctrine, seeking to unite the confession of Jesus with the possession of credit and influence in the world, instead of being content to take the only portion of His followers here, even suffering for His name's sake. Each party is contending for its own in present things; but in one thing they are all united — in closing their ears to the whole succession of fearful warnings which are pealing around them, and in soothing into slumber themselves, and those to whom they should be as watchmen, in utter disregard of the clear and distinct announcements, which — line upon line — are given in scripture, of the manner in which this dispensation arrives at its close. "The vision of all is become as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned" (Isaiah 29:11).

All these are indications of the latter days, which the scripture leads us to expect; but there is nothing in them which need for a moment move or perplex the mind that looks at them in the light of God's word. Nay, the rushing in of evil on all sides even becomes in mercy the means of establishing the christian more firmly, because it has been spoken of before; and that which in itself might disturb, does in reality only add to his confidence in the sure word of Him Who has written it for his warning, and Who will deliver those who have kept "the word of His patience" "from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them which dwell upon the earth." Yea, there is yet more, far more, of comfort to be drawn from the evil day; one thought in which the believer may find rest, even in the hope of the coming and kingdom of Jesus, the period of resurrection-glory to His saints, and of righteousness and peace to the earth; when the world-kingdom that is now shall change its present rulers, even Satan and wicked spirits in

heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12), and become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice," was the special character of the period of His absence; but He has fixed no interval to faith; and the point on which the eye of His disciples rests is His coming, when the word of promise shall be fulfilled. "I will see you again; and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." In the present crisis, as ever, there is but one position for the church to occupy, and this is separation from "all that is in the world," whilst keeping the "testimony of Jesus;" a position of which the strength is in knowing that there God is on our side, and against all sin. It is a day in which it well behoves believers to look to themselves, that on the one hand they may be found walking in the Spirit, and on the other that they may not be connected with any form of evil, however accredited. "Judgment must begin at the house of God;" and since nothing of human might or device will stand in that day, it is of the deepest importance, if we look for it, to stand clear of all that will be swept away at His appearing. May the Lord enable us to abide in Him, and to walk in that simplicity which alone is wisdom, and which will remove every difficulty from our path. H. Borlase.

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