

## “LET YOUR YEA BE YEA AND YOUR NAY, NAY”

(The discourse immediately below is by M. L. Herr as reported in the 1915 Convention report, starting on page 107.)

*“But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea be yea and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.” (James 5:12) “Again, ye have heard that it hath been said of them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself but thou shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne; Nor by the earth; for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea and Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.” (Matt. 5:34-37)*

To God’s holy ones every word of his counsel is fitting and needful. To those who see in the Scriptures quoted only the prohibition of the ordinary legal oath, the Lord’s real thought is completely obscured. The counsels of the Lord are for those in heart relationship with Him. These in heart sympathy with his spirit are able to discern his viewpoint that others fail to grasp because of the divergence of thought that comes of a heart not in tune with the Infinite One.

The natural mind of man is not all evil; nor is it wholly good. In dealing with the ordinary affairs of life men do not expect accuracy of statement of each other. The very fact that when a matter is of grave importance a specially solemn statement called an oath is employed makes evident that ordinary statements are considered unreliable. But in view of the generally prevailing fallen conditions could men do better, otherwise? In the words quoted the Apostle James is not addressing the world of mankind in general but as he specifically states, “my brethren.” The Lord is letting the world manage its affairs according to its best judgment until such time as he himself shall take the control. By this time it will have discovered its unwisdom and inability to effect its highest interests and will welcome the rule of him whose right it is.

Man created in God’s image was Godlike in his dealings with others. It was then unnatural to exercise authoritative dominion over a fellow man. But men have fallen in different degrees. Under human government it has become absolutely necessary not only to have human laws but representatives of government with power to execute punishment upon persons who violate the law. Not all discern the distinction between the government that creates the laws it seeks to enforce and uphold and a very different kind of government that creates no laws at all but is strictly limited to the enforcement of laws divinely provided. The former government is purely a human institution, while the latter is of divine origin. No government on earth today is of divine origin except the

government that exists in the true Church of Christ. It is this fact that makes the words and instruction of our texts limit their counsel to the Church and to members of Christ only. The law that exists in Christ differs from the law that we find in the world. In the world men who have fallen farther in the scale of death often find a real or fancied advantage in giving themselves over to various forms of enslavement. Various social, political, financial and even religious institutions are organized under more or less of enslavement of the individual will. Because these are on the whole, of higher attainment than the individual can himself attain, he submits himself to them for the sake of such advantage as he may be able to receive therefrom. These matters are purely human affairs and are part of “this present evil world” (Gal. 1:4) that is some day to be superseded by the Kingdom of Christ.

On the other hand, there are those amongst men who, because less fallen, have superior ability. These find it to their advantage to lord it over their less fortunate neighbors, which, as we see, has not been wholly to the disadvantage of others. Because there has been some such advantage the world has managed to exist under some form or other of despotism. This spirit, this form of authority, has existed ever since man departed from the loving divine government in Eden. It persists in the State, the municipal control, the school, the religious order and the home. There is in every organization formed by man more or less of the element of domineering control. This is to be found also in the secret order, by which men are bound together by a solemn oath of obedience to an agreed-upon course of action. This agreed-upon course of action is presumed to bring individual advantage. Whether this be the case or otherwise is a matter for the individual concerned to determine, but it must be obvious to all that oaths that forswear that one will do the bidding of another human being, thus setting aside his own individual judgment, is in absolute violence of the allegiance of Sons of God to their Lord and Head.

The divine law under which all obedient Sons of God are organized is the law of love. Its formula is (John 13:34): “A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” None can possibly come under this law except by willing, intentional obedience. The language of the Lord Jesus, the first to come under the divine law, was “I delight to do thy will, O God, yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa. 40:8). How wide the difference in this divine law of joyful, intentional obedience and the obedience enforced. In 1 Cor. 11:3 we read: “And the head of Christ is God.” But must we not discern a very different kind of headship in this divine control of the great Head of the Church than that which we find in the organizations of men? Would our Heavenly Father have found delight in the obedience of his ever-loyal Son had that obedience been enforced? Would our Lord find in the members of Christ copies of God’s dear Son, were our obedience to be in any sense enforced? Must it not be obvious just why our Lord said: “But I say unto you, swear not at all”?

The Scriptures indicate that amongst those who come into the legal relationship as Sons of God would be some who fail to qualify as final members of that body. They were accepted to legal justification and to the begetting of the Spirit in that they had access to holy things: the knowledge of divine truths and the privilege of sacrifice. But is it not evident from the language defining their experience that they failed to enter into the JOY of the Lord? In Heb. 2:15 these are described as “All their lifetime subject to bondage.”

Let us carefully examine into the cause that lies behind this great difference in these two classes, the rewards for which are as different as are the present human experiences. The one class is spoken of as having so great joy that they even “Take joyfully the spoiling of their goods knowing that they have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.” (Heb. 10:34) Man created in the divine image fully possessed the power to order all the affairs of his life in harmony with righteousness; the will of God. This ability means will-power and freedom of will. As long as the will remains harmonious with the divine will it has freedom and ability to choose as it wills to choose. The first step aside from the will of God is a step into enslavement. It means that we then and there relinquish our power to choose as we will and give over into enslavement to the inclinations of some predetermined desire. The freedom of the will ceases not with the giving over to self-will but with the first act in this direction. One may contemplate the wrong course, entertain the fallacious reasonings by which it is made desirable but it has no power over us until we act. With that act comes the enslavement. It was wrong for Mother Eve to entertain the unholy desire to be wiser than God provided for her. But not until she acted did she come into enslavement. It was wrong for Lucifer to contemplate: “I will be like the Most High” (Isa. 14:14); not until he did the act of disloyalty did he come into enslavement to his unholy ambitions. By this act these desires become part of his heart. While we cannot know the heart when the acts are merely in contemplation but when they are turned into acts they reveal the heart as the Master specifically says “By their fruits ye shall KNOW them” (Matt. 7:20).

When Lucifer was a holy angel his obedience to the will of God was the intelligent choice of his heart. He had the freedom of an individuality that had power to choose within the wide limits of the loving, holy will of God. When he became a slave to insatiate GREED his power to choose found a narrow limit. He himself came under domination and he could do only that which commended itself to the exactions of a self that could not possibly be satisfied. He was no longer Lord and Master but in a condition of most absolute slavery. How exceedingly short-sighted was his procedure. He was making impossible the very thing he thought he was about to attain. God delights only in the KINGSHIP of his creatures. His loving interest in the highest welfare of all of His children is such that He desires that within the limits of the realm in which He places them, they shall have full control. When earth is restored to the original design every man will be a king. In the angelic realm obedience is so complete that so far as we are informed, all are kings. No necessity existed for Lucifer’s domination hence it was an

evil aspiration. The only hearts who could possibly recognize such authority of necessity must be hearts out of accord with the Divine will and government.

Man created in the Divine image realized great JOY in fellowship with his Creator. It was the JOY of the glorious liberty, the freedom of the will which the Creator accorded him. No such joy can be found from obedience to self-cravings. The very impossibility of satisfying such cravings makes this self-evident. There is a kind of “pleasure” in the pursuit but joy is not and cannot be possible. In Gen. 3:8 we read “And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.” Is it not plainly evident why this change? Is it not clear to be seen that the will having changed toward God and self becoming master, JOY the basis of fellowship with God must of necessity depart? Do we wonder that sadness must fill such hearts? There is no Joy except in loyal obedience to the Divine will.

The heart that returns to God after tasting of the sorrows of disobedience comes into a first-fruits of Joy. This JOY increases in proportion as the Divine rule comes into the heart more and more and the Divine will is done in the mortal body. Fullness of JOY will come to humanity with earth restored, perfected, complete, with the Perfection of human organism, their purchased gift of the Redeemer. A special JOY is the “taste of the powers of the world to come” possibly only to the Church in this life on condition that they lay aside the human self-will and its sorrow and accept as an “earnest of the purchased possession” (Eph. 1:14) the Joy possible to them through obedience to the Divine will.

This Gospel message has gone to many. Among those who are in obedience to the Apostle’s words “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1), there have been many to respond. These all justified as “brethren” (“holy brethren”) have entered into legal relationship as “sons” by act of consecration. They all made by this act an agreement with the Lord. But have these ALL diligently and faithfully departed from the self-will of the natural heart and in thought, word and deed of daily life conformed to the Divine will, seeking Divine counsel as so richly provided in His Holy Word? Have these all employed the “helps” Divinely provided, 1 Cor. 12:28 (“helps”) for their complete furnishment? But how may we know? “By their fruits ye shall KNOW them.” Is it not plain that all who are not in some degree entering into the JOY of the Lord are in some measure of “bondage”?

In our self examination let us not overlook the difference between suffering that must come to the flesh of all faithful and JOY in the heart. In the flesh our Lord was a “man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3) but in spirit we are informed: “Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” (Heb. 1:9) “In the world ye shall have tribulation but in me ye shall have peace” (John 16:33).

It is the heart experience of the faithful that becomes the indication of their standing with the Lord. In what do they find their JOY?

After tasting the JOY of the Lord there are various testings to prove the fixedness or unfixedness of the heart in the Divine will. It is to be wondered why any should depart from faithfulness to the will of the Lord after taking the preliminary steps of consecration. The Lord desires as members of the glorious Body such as remain fixed in heart under all conditions. The heart is the will or intention. The Lord provides changes in circumstances in life; a variety of experiences that shall demonstrate without peradventure just what is the individual choice of each heart. The heart that can find pleasure apart from the Lord is entirely out of harmony with the Lord. The heart that is "prone to wander" from the will of the Lord is not fixed in holy desires. Neither of these classes are of the kind the Lord desires for His Bride, members of His Body.

Is it not therefore clear that persons whose hearts measurably assent to the cravings of their flesh are surely unfit for the Kingdom? Is it not also clear that such cannot enter into the JOY of the Lord? Is it not equally evident that all such are in a measure of bondage and fail to experience "the glorious liberty of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:21)? Is it not this bondage to the will of the flesh that makes the course of these uncertain? Jas. 1:8 says: "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." The reason for this unstableness is his want of fixedness in the will of the Lord. Such are far from the counsel of the Apostle, "Let your yea be yea." They seek to be yea and nay which is surely unsatisfactory. Nor is their nay always and only nay, but sometimes one and sometimes the other, and they are uncertain. Such cannot be satisfactory either to themselves, the Lord, or the world.

Beloved fellow-members of Christ, the closing hours of the experiences of the Church on earth are upon us. Our hearts will surely be tested as to their fixedness in the Divine will. Shall we not give heed to this counsel of the Lord? Shall we not in view of the fact that all the precious JOYS that have become our most sacred treasures are ours because we resolutely cast aside the self-will of the natural heart. Shall we not, now that our hopes are so near a realization, take our fixed stand in the Divine will?

I love thy will, O God!  
Thy blessed, perfect will,  
In which this once rebellious heart  
Lies satisfied and still.

I love thy will, O God!  
It is my joy, my rest;  
It glorifies my common task,  
It makes each trial blest.

I love thy will, O God!  
The sunshine or the rain.  
Some days are bright with praise, and some  
Sweet with accepted pain.

I love thy will, O God!  
O hear my earnest plea,  
That as thy will is done in heav'n,  
It may be done in me.  
—Hymn No. 114