

RELIGIOUS LAWS ARE COMING!



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CHAPTER XXIX.

SPIRITUALISM.

THE doctrine of natural immortality has prepared the way for modern Spiritualism. If the dead are admitted to the presence of God and holy angels, and privileged with knowledge far exceeding what they before possessed, why should they not return to the earth to enlighten and instruct the living? How can those who believe in man's consciousness in death reject what comes to them as divine light communicated by glorified spirits? Here is a channel regarded as sacred, through which Satan works for the accomplishment of his purposes. The fallen angels who do his bidding appear as messengers from the spirit world. While professing to bring the living into communication with the dead, Satan exercises his bewitching influence upon their minds.

He has power even to bring before men the appearance of their departed friends. The counterfeit is perfect; the familiar look, the words, the tone, are reproduced with marvelous distinctness. Many are comforted with the assurance that their loved ones are enjoying the bliss of Heaven; and without suspicion of danger, they give ear to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.

When they have been led to believe that the dead actually return to communicate with them, Satan [370] causes those to appear who went into the grave unprepared. They claim to be happy in Heaven, and even to occupy exalted positions there; and thus the error is widely taught, that no difference is made between the righteous and the wicked. The pretended visitants from the world of spirits sometimes utter cautions and warnings

which prove to be correct. Then, as confidence is gained, they present doctrines which directly undermine faith in the Scriptures. With an appearance of deep interest in the wellbeing of their friends on earth, they insinuate the most dangerous errors. The fact that they state some truths, and are able at times to foretell future events, gives to their statements an appearance of reliability; and their false teachings are accepted by the multitudes as readily, and believed as implicitly, as if they were the most sacred truths of the Bible. The law of God is set aside, the Spirit of grace despised, the blood of the covenant counted an unholy thing. The spirits deny the divinity of Christ, and place even the Creator on a level with themselves. Thus under a new disguise the great rebel still carries forward his warfare against God, begun in Heaven, and for nearly six thousand years continued upon the earth.

Many endeavor to account for spiritual manifestations by attributing them wholly to fraud and sleight of hand on the part of the medium. But while it is true that the results of trickery have often been palmed off as genuine manifestations, there have been, also, marked exhibitions of supernatural power. The mysterious rapping with which modern Spiritualism began was not the result of human trick- [371] ery or cunning, but the direct work of evil angels, who thus introduced one of the most successful of soul-destroying delusions. Many will be ensnared through the belief that Spiritualism is a merely human imposture; when brought face to face with manifestations which they cannot but regard as supernatural, they will be deceived, and will be led to accept them as the great power of God.

These persons overlook the testimony of the Scriptures concerning the wonders wrought by Satan and his agents. It was by Satanic aid that Pharaoh's magicians were enabled to counterfeit the work of God. The apostle John, describing the miracle-working power that will be

manifested in the last days, declares: "He doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do." (Revelation 13:13-14) No mere impostures are here brought to view. Men are deceived by the miracles which Satan's agents have power to do, not which they pretend to do.

The very name of witchcraft is now held in contempt. The claim that men can hold intercourse with evil spirits is regarded as a fable of the Dark Ages. But Spiritualism, which numbers its converts by hundreds of thousands, yea, by millions, which has made its way into scientific circles, which has invaded churches, and has found favor in legislative bodies, and even in the courts of kings—this mammoth deception is but a revival in a new disguise of the witchcraft condemned and prohibited of old. [372]

Satan beguiles men now, as he beguiled Eve in Eden, by exciting a desire to obtain forbidden knowledge. "Ye shall be as gods," he declares, "knowing good and evil." But the wisdom which Spiritualism imparts is that described by the apostle James, which "descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." (James 3:15)

The prince of darkness has a masterly mind, and he skillfully adapts his temptations to men of every variety of condition and culture. He works "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness" to gain control of the children of men; but he can accomplish his object only as they voluntarily yield to his temptations. Those who place themselves in his power by indulging their evil traits of character, little realize where their course will end. The tempter accomplishes their ruin, and then employs them to ruin others.

To those who regard themselves as educated and refined, Satan addresses himself by exciting the

imagination to lofty flights in forbidden fields, leading them to take so great pride in their superior wisdom that in their hearts they despise the Eternal One. To this class the great deceiver presents Spiritualism in its more refined and intellectual aspects, and he thus succeeds in drawing many into his snare. He who could appear clothed with the brightness of the heavenly seraphs before Christ in the wilderness of temptation, comes to men in the most attractive manner, as an angel of light. He appeals to the reason by the presentation of elevating themes, he delights the fancy with enrapturing [373] scenes, and he enlists the affections by his eloquent portrayals of love and charity. That mighty being who could take the world's Redeemer to an exceedingly high mountain, and bring before him all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them, will present his temptations to men in a manner to pervert the senses of all who are not shielded by divine power.

To the self-indulgent, the pleasure-loving, the sensual, the grosser forms of Spiritualism are adapted; and multitudes eagerly accept teachings that leave them at liberty to follow the inclinations of the carnal heart. Satan studies every indication of the frailty of human nature, he marks the sins which each individual is inclined to commit, and then he takes care that opportunities shall not be wanting to gratify the tendency to evil. He tempts men to excess in that which is in itself lawful, causing them through intemperance to weaken physical, mental, and moral power. He has destroyed and is destroying thousands through the indulgence of the passions, thus brutalizing the entire nature of man. When the people are led to believe that desire is the highest law, that liberty is license, and that man is accountable only to himself, who can wonder that corruption and depravity teem on every hand? The reins of self-control are laid upon the neck of lust, the powers of mind and soul are made subject to the

animal propensities, and Satan exultingly sweeps into his net thousands who profess to be followers of Christ.

But none need be deceived by the lying claims of Spiritualism. God has given the world sufficient light to enable them to discover the snare. If there were [374] no other evidence, it should be enough for the Christian that the spirits make no difference between righteousness and sin, between the noblest and purest of the apostles of Christ and the most corrupt of the servants of Satan. By representing the basest of men as in Heaven, and highly exalted there, Satan virtually declares to the world, No matter how wicked you are; no matter whether you believe or disbelieve God and the Bible. Live as you please; Heaven is your home.

Moreover, the apostles, as personated by these lying spirits, are made to contradict what they wrote at the dictation of the Holy Spirit when on earth. They deny the divine origin of the Bible, and thus tear away the foundation of the Christian's hope, and put out the light that reveals the way to Heaven.

Satan is making the world believe that the Bible is a mere fiction, or at least a book suited to the infancy of the race, but now to be lightly regarded, or cast aside as obsolete. And to take the place of the word of God he holds out spiritual manifestations. Here is a channel wholly under his control; by this means he can make the world believe what he will. The book that is to judge him and his followers he puts into the shade, just where he wants it; the Saviour of the world he makes to be no more than a common man. And as the Romish guard that watched the tomb of Jesus spread the lying report which the priests and elders put into their mouths to disprove his resurrection, so do the believers in spiritual manifestations try to make it appear that there is nothing miraculous in the circumstances of our Saviour's life. After thus seeking

to put Jesus [375] in the background, they call attention to their own miracles, declaring that these far exceed the works of Christ.

Says the prophet Isaiah: "When they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony. If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isaiah 8:19-20) If men had been willing to receive the truth so plainly stated in the Scriptures, that the dead know not anything, they would see in the claims and manifestations of Spiritualism the working of Satan with power and signs and lying wonders. But rather than yield the liberty so agreeable to the carnal heart, and renounce the sins which they love, the multitudes close their eyes to the light, and walk straight on, regardless of warnings, while Satan weaves his snares about them, and they become his prey. "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved," therefore "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11)

Those who oppose the teachings of Spiritualism are assailing, not men alone, but Satan and his angels. They have entered upon a contest against principalities and powers and wicked spirits in high places. Satan will not yield one inch of ground except as he is driven back by the power of heavenly messengers. The people of God should be able to meet him, as did our Saviour, with the words, "It is written." Satan can quote Scripture now as in the days of [376] Christ, and he will pervert its teachings to sustain his delusions. But the plain statements of the Bible will furnish weapons powerful in every conflict.

Those who would stand in this time of peril must understand the testimony of the Scriptures concerning the

nature of man and the state of the dead; for in the near future many will be confronted by the spirits of devils personating beloved relatives or friends, and declaring the most dangerous heresies. These visitants will appeal to our tenderest sympathies, and will work miracles to sustain their pretensions. We must be prepared to withstand them with the Bible truth that the dead know not anything, and that they who thus appear are the spirits of devils.

Just before us is the "hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Revelation 3:10) All whose faith is not firmly established upon the word of God will be deceived and overcome. But to those who earnestly seek a knowledge of the truth, thus doing what they can to prepare for the conflict, the God of truth will be a sure defense. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee," is the Saviour's promise. He would sooner send every angel out of Heaven to protect his people, than leave one soul that trusts in him to be overcome by Satan.

The prophet Isaiah brings to view the fearful deception which will come upon the wicked, causing them to count themselves secure from the judgments of God: "We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement. When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto [377] us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves." (Isaiah 28:15) In the class here described are included those who in their stubborn impenitence comfort themselves with the assurance that there is to be no punishment for the sinner; that all mankind, it matters not how corrupt, are to be exalted to Heaven to become as the angels of God. But still more emphatically are those making a covenant with death and an agreement with hell, who renounce the truths which Heaven has provided as a defense for the righteous in the day of trouble, and accept

the refuge of lies offered by Satan in its stead, —the delusive pretensions of Spiritualism.

Marvelous beyond expression is the blindness of the people of this generation. Thousands reject the word of God as unworthy of belief, and with eager confidence receive the deceptions of Satan. Skeptics and scoffers with great clamor denounce the bigotry of those who contend for the faith of prophets and apostles, and they divert themselves by holding up to ridicule the solemn declarations of the Scriptures concerning Christ and the plan of salvation, and the retribution to be visited upon the rejecters of the truth. They affect great pity for minds so narrow, weak, and superstitious as to acknowledge the claims of God, and obey the requirements of his law. They manifest as much assurance as if, indeed, they had made a covenant with death and an agreement with hell,—as if they had erected an impassable, impenetrable barrier between themselves and the vengeance of God. Nothing can arouse their fears. So fully have they yielded to the [378] tempter, so closely are they united with him, and so thoroughly imbued with his spirit, that they have no power and no inclination to break away from his snare.

Long has Satan been preparing for his final effort to deceive the world. The foundation of his work was laid by the assurance given to Eve in Eden, "Ye shall not surely die." "In the day that ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Little by little he has prepared the way for his master-piece of deception in the development of Spiritualism. He has not yet reached the full accomplishment of his designs; but it will be reached in the last remnant of time, and the world will be swept into the ranks of this delusion. They are fast being lulled into a fatal security, to be awakened only by the outpouring of the wrath of God.

Saith the Lord God: "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand. When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it." (Isaiah 28:17-18) [379]

CHAPTER XXX.

CHARACTER AND AIMS OF THE PAPACY.

ROMANISM is now regarded by Protestants with far greater favor than in former years. There is an increasing indifference concerning the doctrines that separate the reformed churches from the papal hierarchy; the opinion is gaining ground that, after all, we do not differ so widely upon vital points as has been supposed, and that a little concession on our part will bring us into a better understanding with Rome. The time was when Protestants placed a high value upon the liberty of conscience which has been so dearly purchased. They taught their children to abhor popery, and held that to remain at peace with Rome would be disloyalty to God. But how widely different are the sentiments now expressed.

The defenders of popery declare that she has been maligned; and the Protestant world is inclined to accept the statement. Many urge that it is unjust to judge the Romish Church of to-day by the abominations and absurdities that marked her reign during the centuries of ignorance and darkness. They excuse her horrible cruelty as the result of the barbarism of the times, and plead that civilization has changed her sentiments. [380]

Have those persons forgotten the claim of infallibility for eight hundred years put forth by this haughty power? So far from relinquishing this claim, the church in the nineteenth century has affirmed it with greater positiveness than ever before. As Rome asserts that she has never erred, and never can err, how can she renounce the principles which governed her course in past ages?

The papal church will never relinquish her claim to infallibility. All that she has done in her persecution of those who reject her dogmas, she holds to be right; and would she not repeat the same acts, should the opportunity be presented? Let the restraints now imposed by secular governments be removed, and Rome be re-instated in her former power, and there would speedily be a revival of her tyranny and persecution.

It is true that there are real Christians in the Roman Catholic communion. Thousands in that church are serving God according to the best light they have. They are not allowed access to his word, and therefore they do not discern the truth. They have never seen the contrast between a living heart-service and a round of mere forms and ceremonies. But God looks with pitying tenderness upon these souls, educated as they are in a faith that is delusive and unsatisfying. He will cause rays of light to penetrate the dense darkness that surrounds them. He will reveal to them the truth as it is in Jesus, and they will yet take their position with his people.

But Romanism as a system is no more in harmony with the gospel of Christ now than at any former period in her history. The Protestant churches are in [381] great darkness, or they would discern the signs of the times. The Roman Church is far-reaching in her plans and modes of operation. She is employing every device to extend her influence and increase her power in preparation for a fierce and determined conflict to regain control of the world, to re-establish persecution, and to undo all that Protestantism has done. Catholicism is gaining ground in our country upon every side. Look at the number of her churches and chapels. Look at her colleges and seminaries, so widely patronized by Protestants. These things should awaken the anxiety of all who prize the pure principles of the gospel.

Protestants have tampered with and patronized popery; they have made compromises and concessions which papists themselves are surprised to see, and fail to understand. Men are closing their eyes to the real character of Romanism, and the dangers, to be apprehended from her supremacy. The people of our land need to be aroused to resist the advances of this most dangerous foe to civil and religious liberty.

Many suppose that the Catholic religion is unattractive, and that its worship is a dull, stupid round of ceremony. Here they mistake. While Romanism is based upon deception, it is not a coarse and clumsy imposture. The religious service of the Romish Church is a most impressive ceremonial. Its gorgeous display and solemn rites fascinate the senses of the people, and silence the voice of reason and of conscience. The eye is charmed. Magnificent churches, imposing processions, golden altars, jeweled shrines, choice paintings, and exquisite sculpt- [382] ure appeal to the love of beauty. The ear also is captivated. There is nothing to excel the music. The rich notes of the deep-toned organ, blending with the melody of many voices as it swells through the lofty domes and pillared aisles of her grand cathedrals, cannot fail to impress the mind with awe and reverence.

This outward splendor, pomp, and ceremony, that only mocks the longings of the sin-sick soul, is an evidence of inward corruption. The religion of Christ needs not such attractions to recommend it. In the light shining from the cross, true Christianity appears so pure and lovely that external decorations only hide its true worth. It is the beauty of holiness, a meek and quiet spirit, which is of value with God.

Brilliancy of style is not an index of pure, elevated thought. The highest conceptions of art, the most delicate refinement of taste, often spring from minds wholly

earthly and sensual. They are often employed by Satan to lead men to forget the necessities of the soul, to lose sight of the future, immortal life, to turn away from their infinite Helper, and to live for this world alone.

A religion of externals is attractive to the unrenewed heart. The pomp and ceremony of the Catholic worship have a seductive, bewitching power by which many are deceived; and they come to look upon the Roman Church as the very gate of Heaven. None are proof against her influence but those who have planted their feet firmly upon the foundation of truth, and whose hearts are renewed by the Spirit of God. Thousands who have not an experimental knowledge of Christ will be swept into this deception. [383] A form of godliness without the power is just what they desire. The Romanist feels at liberty to sin, because the church claims the right to pardon. To him who loves self-indulgence, it is more pleasing to confess to a fellow-mortal than to open the soul to God. It is more palatable to human nature to do penance than to renounce sin. It is easier to mortify the flesh by sackcloth and nettles and galling chains than to crucify fleshly lusts. Heavy is the yoke which the carnal heart is willing to bear rather than bow to the yoke of Christ.

There is a striking similarity between the church of Rome and the Jewish church at the time of Christ's first advent. While the Jews secretly trampled upon every principle of the law of God, they were outwardly rigorous in the observance of its precepts, loading it down with exactions and traditions that made obedience painful and burdensome. As the Jews professed to revere the law, so do Romanists claim to reverence the cross. They exalt the symbol of Christ's sufferings, while in their lives they deny him whom it represents.

Papists place crosses upon their churches, upon their altars, and upon their garments. Everywhere is seen the

insignia of the cross. Everywhere it is outwardly honored and exalted. But the teachings of Christ are buried beneath a mass of senseless traditions, false interpretations, and rigorous exactions. The Saviour's words concerning the bigoted Jews apply with still greater force to the Romish leaders: "They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." (Matthew 23:4) [384] Conscientious souls are kept in constant terror, fearing the wrath of an offended God, while the dignitaries of the church are living in luxury and sensual pleasure.

Satan instigates the worship of images, the invocation of saints, and the exaltation of the pope, to attract the minds of the people from God and from his Son. To accomplish their ruin, he endeavors to turn their attention from Him through whom alone they can find salvation. He will direct them to any one that can be substituted for the One who has said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

It is Satan's constant effort to misrepresent the character of God, the nature of sin, and the real issues at stake in the great controversy. By his sophistry he blinds the minds of men, and secures them as his agents to war against God. By perverted conceptions of the divine attributes, heathen nations were led to believe human sacrifices necessary to secure the favor of Deity; and the most horrible cruelties have been perpetrated under the various forms of idolatry. The Romish Church, uniting the forms of paganism and Christianity, and in a similar manner misrepresenting the character of God, has resorted to practices no less cruel and revolting. In the days of Rome's supremacy there were instruments of torture to compel assent to her doctrines. There was the stake for

those who would not concede to her claims. There were massacres on a scale that will never be known to mortals. Dignitaries of the church studied, under Satan their master, to invent means to cause the [385] greatest possible torture, and not end the life of their victim. The infernal process was repeated to the utmost limit of human endurance, until nature gave up the struggle, and the sufferer hailed death as a sweet release.

Such was the fate of Rome's opponents. For her adherents she had the discipline of the scourge, of famishing hunger, of bodily austerities in every conceivable, heart-sickening form. To secure the favor of Heaven, penitents violated the laws of God by violating the laws of nature. They were taught to sunder every tie which he has formed to bless and gladden man's earthly sojourn. The churchyard contains millions of victims who spent their lives in vain endeavors to subdue their natural affections, to repress, as offensive to God, every thought and feeling of sympathy with their fellow-creatures.

If we desire to understand the determined cruelty of Satan, manifested for hundreds of years, not among those who never heard of God, but in the very heart and throughout the extent of Christendom, we have only to look at the history of Romanism. And as we see how he succeeds in disguising himself; and accomplishing his work through the leaders of the church, we may better understand why he has so great antipathy to the Bible. If that book is read, the mercy and love of God will be revealed; it will be seen that he lays upon men none of these heavy burdens. All that he asks is a broken and contrite heart, a humble, obedient spirit.

Christ gives no example in his life for men and women to shut themselves in monasteries in order to become fitted for Heaven. He has never taught that [386] love and sympathy must be repressed. The Saviour's heart

overflowed with love. The nearer man approaches to moral perfection, the keener are his sensibilities, the more acute is his perception of sin, and the deeper his sympathy for the afflicted. The pope claims to be the vicar of Christ. How does his character bear comparison with that of our Saviour? Was Christ ever known to consign men to the prison or the rack because they did not pay him homage as the King of Heaven? Was his voice heard condemning to death those who did not accept him? When he was slighted by the people of a Samaritan village, the apostle John was filled with indignation, and inquired, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" Jesus looked with pity upon his disciple, and rebuked his harsh spirit, saying, "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." (Luke 9:54, 56) How different from the spirit manifested by Christ is that of his professed vicar.

The Romish Church now presents a fair front to the world, covering with apologies her record of horrible cruelties. She has clothed herself in Christ-like garments; but she is unchanged. Every principle of popery that existed in ages past exists to-day. The doctrines devised in the darkest ages are still held. Let none deceive themselves. The popery that Protestants are now so ready to embrace and honor is the same that ruled the world in the days of the Reformation, when men of God stood up at the peril of their lives to expose her iniquity. She possesses the same pride and arrogant assumption [387] that lorded it over kings and princes, and claimed the prerogatives of God. Her spirit is no less cruel and despotic now than when she crushed out human liberty, and slew the saints of the Most High.

Popery is just what prophecy declared that she would be,—the apostasy of the latter times. It is a part of her policy to assume the character which will best accomplish

her purpose; but beneath the variable appearance of the chameleon, she conceals the invariable venom of the serpent. "We are not bound to keep faith and promises to heretics," she declares. Shall this power, whose record for a thousand years is written in the blood of the saints, be now acknowledged as a part of the church of Christ?

It is not without reason that the claim has been put forth that Catholicism is now almost like Protestantism. There has been a change; but the change is in Protestants, not in Romanists. Catholicism indeed resembles the Protestantism that now exists; but it is far removed from Protestantism as it was in the days of Cranmer, Ridley, Knox, and other reformers.

As the Protestant churches have been seeking the favor of the world, false charity has blinded their eyes. They do not see but that it is right to believe good of all evil; and as the inevitable result, they will finally believe evil of all good. Instead of standing in defense of the faith once delivered to the saints, they are now, as it were, apologizing to Rome for their uncharitable opinion of her, begging pardon for their bigotry.

A large class, even of those who look upon Romanism with no favor, apprehend little danger from her [388] power and influence. Many urge that the intellectual and moral darkness prevailing during the Middle Ages favored the spread of her dogmas, superstitions, and oppression, and that the greater intelligence of modern times, the general diffusion of knowledge, and the increasing liberality in matters of religion, forbid a revival of intolerance and tyranny. The very thought that such a state of things will exist in this enlightened age is ridiculed. It is true that great light, intellectual, moral, and religious, is shining upon this generation. In the open pages of God's holy word, light from Heaven has been shed upon the world. But it should be remembered that the greater the

light bestowed, the greater the darkness of those who pervert or reject it.

A prayerful study of the Bible would show Protestants the real character of the papacy, and would cause them to abhor and to shun it; but men are so wise in their own conceit that they feel no need of humbly seeking God that they may be led into the truth. Although priding themselves on their enlightenment, they are ignorant both of the Scriptures and of the power of God. They must have some means of quieting their consciences; and they seek that which is least spiritual and humiliating. What they desire is a method of forgetting God which shall pass as a method of remembering him. The papacy is well adapted to meet the wants of all these. It is prepared for two classes of mankind, embracing nearly the whole world,—those who would be saved by their merits, and those who would be saved in their sins. Here is the secret of its power. [389]

A day of great intellectual darkness has been shown to be favorable to the success of popery. It will yet be demonstrated that a day of great intellectual light is equally favorable for its success. In past ages, when men were without God's word, and without the knowledge of the truth, their eyes were blindfolded, and thousands were ensnared, not seeing the net spread for their feet. In this generation there are many whose eyes become dazzled by the glare of human speculations, "science falsely so called;" they discern not the net, and walk into it as readily as if blindfolded. God designed that man's intellectual powers should be held as a gift from his Maker, and employed in the service of truth and righteousness; but when they are idolized, and laid upon the shrine of Satan to be employed in the service of a false religion, then intelligence can accomplish greater harm than ignorance.

In the movements now in progress in this country to secure for the institutions and usages of the church the support of the State, Protestants are following in the steps of papists. Nay, more, they are opening the door for popery to regain in Protestant America the supremacy which she has lost in the Old World. And that which gives greater significance to this movement is the fact that the principal object contemplated is the enforcement of Sunday observance,—a custom which originated with Rome, and which she claims as the sign of her authority.

The spirit of the papacy,—the spirit of conformity to worldly customs, the veneration for human traditions above the commands of God,—is permeating the Protestant churches, and leading them on to do [390] the same work of Sunday exaltation which the papacy has done before them. Would the reader understand the agencies to be employed in the soon-coming contest? He has but to trace the record of the means which Rome employed for the same object in ages past. Would he know how papists and Protestants united will deal with those who reject their dogmas? Let him see the spirit which Rome manifested toward the Sabbath and its defenders.

Royal edicts, human councils, and church ordinances sustained by secular power, were the steps by which the pagan festival attained its position of honor in the Christian world. The first public measure enforcing Sunday observance was the law enacted (A. D. 321) by Constantine, two years before his profession of Christianity. This edict required towns-people to rest on the venerable day of the sun, but permitted countrymen to continue their agricultural pursuits. Though originally a heathen statute, it was enforced by the emperor after his nominal acceptance of the Christian religion.

The royal mandate not proving a sufficient substitute for divine authority, the bishop of Rome soon after conferred upon the Sunday the title of Lord's day. Another bishop, who also sought the favor of princes, and who was the special friend and flatterer of Constantine, advanced the claim that Christ had transferred the Sabbath to Sunday. Not a single testimony of the Scriptures was produced in proof of the new doctrine. The sacred garments in which the spurious Sabbath was arrayed were of man's own manufacture; but they served to embolden men in [391] trampling upon the law of God. All who desired to be honored by the world accepted the popular festival.

As the papacy became firmly established, the work of Sunday exaltation was continued. For a time the people engaged in agricultural labor when not attending church, and the name Sabbath was still attached to the seventh day. But steadily and surely a change was effected. Those in holy office were forbidden to pass judgment in any civil controversy on the Sunday. Soon after, persons of all rank were commanded to refrain from common labor, on pain of a fine for freemen, and stripes in the case of servants. Later it was decreed that rich men should be punished with the loss of half of their estates; and finally, that if still obstinate they should be made slaves. The lower classes were to suffer perpetual banishment.

Miracles also were called into requisition. Among other wonders it was reported that as a husbandman who was about to plow his field on Sunday, cleaned his plow with an iron, the iron stuck fast in his hand, and for two years he carried it about with him, "to his exceeding great pain and shame."

Later, the pope gave directions that the parish priest should admonish the violators of Sunday, and wish them to go to church and say their prayers, lest they bring some

great calamity on themselves and neighbors. An ecclesiastical council brought forward the argument since so widely employed, that because persons had been struck by lightning while laboring on Sunday, it must be the Sabbath. "It is apparent," said the prelates, "how high the displeasure of God was upon their neglect of this day." [392] An appeal was then made that priests and ministers, kings and princes, and all faithful people, "use their utmost endeavors and care that the day be restored to its honor, and, for the credit of Christianity, more devoutly observed for time to come."

The decrees of councils proving insufficient, the secular authorities were brought to issue an edict that would strike terror to the hearts of the people, and force them to refrain from labor on the Sunday. At a synod held in Rome, all previous decisions were reaffirmed with greater force and solemnity. They were also incorporated into the ecclesiastical law, and enforced by the civil authorities throughout nearly all Christendom.

Still the absence of scriptural authority for Sunday-keeping occasioned no little embarrassment. The people questioned the right of their teachers to deny the positive declaration of Jehovah, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God," in order to honor the day of the sun. To supply the lack of Bible testimony, Satan was ready with expedients. A zealous advocate of Sunday, who about the close of the twelfth century visited the churches of England, was resisted by faithful witnesses for the truth; and so fruitless were his efforts that he departed from the country for a season; and cast about him for some means to enforce his teachings. When he returned, the lack was supplied, and in his after-labors he met with greater success. He brought with him a roll purporting to be from God himself, and containing the needed command for Sunday observance, and awful threats to terrify the

disobedient. This precious document—as base a counter-[393] feit as the institution it supported—was said to have fallen from heaven, and to have been found in Jerusalem, upon the altar of St. Simeon, in Golgotha. The pontifical palace at Rome was the source whence it proceeded. Frauds and forgeries to advance the power and prosperity of the church have in all ages been esteemed lawful by the papal hierarchy.

The roll forbade labor from the ninth hour, three o'clock, on Saturday afternoon, till sunrise on Monday; and its authority was declared to be confirmed by many miracles. It was reported that persons laboring beyond the appointed hour were stricken with paralysis. A miller who attempted to grind his corn, saw, instead of flour, a torrent of blood come forth, and the mill-wheel stood still, notwithstanding the strong rush of the water. A woman who placed dough in the oven, found it raw when taken out, though the oven was very hot. Another who had dough prepared for baking at the ninth hour, but determined to set it aside till Monday, found the next day that it had been made into loaves and baked by divine power. A man who baked bread after the ninth hour on Saturday, found, when he broke it the next morning, that blood started there-from. By such absurd and superstitious fabrications did the advocates of Sunday endeavor to establish its sacredness.

In Scotland, as in England, a greater regard for Sunday was secured by uniting with it a portion of the ancient Sabbath. But the time required to be kept holy varied. A law was passed that Saturday from twelve at noon ought to be accounted holy, [394] and that no man, from that time till Monday morning, should engage in worldly business.

But notwithstanding all the efforts to establish Sunday sacredness, papists themselves publicly confessed the

divine authority of the Sabbath, and the human origin of the institution by which it had been supplanted. In the sixteenth century a papal council plainly declared: "Let all Christians remember that the seventh day was consecrated by God, and hath been received and observed, not only by the Jews, but by all others who pretend to worship God; though we Christians have changed their Sabbath into the Lord's day." Those who were tampering with the divine law were not ignorant of the character of their work. They were deliberately setting themselves above God.

A striking illustration of Rome's policy toward those who honor the Sabbath was given in the long and bloody persecution of the Waldenses. Others suffered in a similar manner for their fidelity to the same truth. Amid the gloom of the Dark Ages, the Christians of Central Africa were lost sight of and forgotten by the world, and for many centuries they enjoyed freedom in the exercise of their faith. But at last Rome learned of their existence, and the emperor of Abyssinia was soon beguiled into an acknowledgment of the pope as the vicar of Christ. Other concessions followed. An edict was issued forbidding the observance of the Sabbath under the severest penalties. But papal tyranny soon became a galling yoke; and the Abyssinians determined to break it from their necks. After a terrible struggle, the Romanists were banished from their dominions [395] and the ancient faith was restored. The churches rejoiced in their freedom, and they never forgot the lesson they had learned concerning the deception, the fanaticism, and the despotic power of Rome. Within their solitary realm they were content to remain, unknown to the rest of Christendom.

The churches of Africa held the Sabbath as it was held by the papal church before her complete apostasy. While they kept the seventh day in obedience to the commandment of God, they abstained from labor on the

Sunday in conformity to the custom of the church. Upon obtaining supreme power, Rome had trampled upon the Sabbath of God to exalt her own; but the churches of Africa, hidden for nearly a thousand years, did not share in this apostasy. When brought under the sway of Rome, they were forced to set aside the true and exalt the false Sabbath; but no sooner had they regained their independence than they returned to obedience to the fourth commandment.

These records of the past clearly reveal the enmity of Rome toward the true Sabbath and its defenders, and the means which she employs to honor the institution of her creating. The word of God teaches that these scenes are to be repeated as papists and Protestants shall unite for the exaltation of the Sunday. (Revelation 13:11-12, See Appendix Note 8) For nearly forty years Sabbath reformers have presented this testimony to the world. In the events now taking place is seen a rapid advance toward the fulfillment of the prediction. There is the same claim of divine authority for Sunday-keeping, and the same lack of scriptural evidence, as in [396] the days of papal supremacy. The assertion that God's judgments are visited upon men for their violation of the Sunday-Sabbath, will be repeated. Already it is beginning to be urged.

Marvelous in her shrewdness and cunning is the Romish Church. She can read what is to be. She bides her time, seeing that the Protestant churches are paying her homage in their acceptance of the false Sabbath, and that they are preparing to employ the very means which she herself employed in bygone days. Those who reject the light of truth will yet seek the aid of this self-styled infallible power to exalt an institution that originated with her. How readily she will come to the help of Protestants in this work, it is not difficult to conjecture. Who

understands better than popery how to deal with those who are disobedient to the church?

The Christian world will learn what Romanism really is, when it is too late to escape the snare. She is silently growing into power. Her doctrines are exerting their influence in legislative halls, in the churches, and in the hearts of men. Throughout the land she is piling up her lofty and massive structures, in the secret recesses of which her former persecutions will be repeated. She is stealthily and unsuspectedly strengthening her forces to further her own ends when the time shall come for her to strike. All that she desires is vantage ground, and this is soon to be given her. In the near future we shall see and shall feel what the purpose of the Roman element is. Whoever shall believe and obey the word of God will thereby incur reproach and persecution. [397]

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE COMING CONFLICT.

THE greatest and most favored nation upon the earth is the United States. A gracious Providence has shielded this country, and poured upon her the choicest of Heaven's blessings. Here the persecuted and oppressed have found refuge. Here the Christian faith in its purity has been taught. This people have been the recipients of great light and unrivaled mercies. But these gifts have been repaid by ingratitude and forgetfulness of God. The Infinite One keeps a reckoning with the nations, and their guilt is proportioned to the light rejected. A fearful record now stands in the register of Heaven against our land; but the crime which shall fill up the measure of her iniquity is that of making void the law of God.

Between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah will come the last great conflict of the controversy between truth and error. Upon this battle we are now entering,—a battle not between rival churches contending for the supremacy, but between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition. The agencies which will unite against truth and righteousness in this contest are now actively at work.

God's holy word, which has been handed down to [398] us at such a cost of suffering and blood, is but little valued. The Bible is within the reach of all, but there are few who really accept it as the guide of life. Infidelity prevails to an alarming extent, not in the world merely, but in the church. Many have come to deny doctrines which are the very pillars of the Christian faith. The great facts of creation as presented by the inspired writers, the fall of

man, the atonement, and the perpetuity of the law of God, are practically rejected by a large share of the professedly Christian world. Thousands who pride themselves upon their wisdom and independence regard it an evidence of weakness to place implicit confidence in the Bible, and a proof of superior talent and learning to cavil at the Scriptures, and to spiritualize and explain away their most important truths. Many ministers are teaching their people, and many professors and teachers are instructing their students, that the law of God has been changed or abrogated; and they ridicule those who are so simple-minded as to acknowledge all its claims.

In rejecting the truth, men reject its Author. In trampling upon the law of God, they deny the authority of the Lawgiver. It is as easy to make an idol of false doctrines and theories as to fashion an idol of wood or stone. Satan leads men to conceive of God in a false character, as having attributes which he does not possess. A philosophical idol is enthroned in the place of Jehovah; while the true God, as he is revealed in his word, in Christ, and in the works of creation, is worshiped by but few. Thousands deify nature, while they deny the God of nature. Though in a different form, idolatry exists in the Christian [399] world today as verily as it existed among ancient Israel in the days of Elijah. The god of many professedly wise men, of philosophers, poets, politicians, journalists,—the god of polished fashionable circles, of many colleges and universities, even of some theological institutions,—is little better than Baal, the sun-god of Phenicia.

No error accepted by the Christian world strikes more boldly against the authority of Heaven, none is more directly opposed to the dictates of reason, none is more pernicious in its results, than the modern doctrine, so rapidly gaining ground, that God's law is no longer

obligatory upon men. Every nation has its laws, which command respect and obedience; and has the Creator of the heavens and the earth no law to govern the beings he has made? Suppose that prominent ministers were publicly to teach that the statutes which govern our nation and protect the rights of its citizens were not obligatory,—that they restricted the liberties of the people, and therefore ought not to be obeyed; how long would such men be tolerated in the pulpit? But is it a graver offense to disregard the laws of States and nations than to trample upon those divine precepts which are the foundation of all government? When the standard of righteousness is set aside, the way is open for the prince of evil to establish his rule in the earth.

It would be far more consistent for nations to abolish their statutes, and permit the people to do as they please, than for the Ruler of the universe to annul his law, and leave the world without a standard to condemn the guilty or justify the obedient. Would we know the result of making void the law of God? The [400] experiment has been tried. Terrible were the scenes enacted in France when atheism became the controlling power. It was then demonstrated to the world that to throw off the restraints which God has imposed is to accept the rule of the cruelest of tyrants.

Wherever the divine precepts are set aside, sin ceases to appear sinful, or righteousness desirable. Those who refuse to submit to the government of God are wholly unfitted to govern themselves. Through their pernicious teachings, the spirit of insubordination is implanted in the hearts of children and youth, who are naturally impatient of control; and a lawless, licentious state of society results. While scoffing at the credulity of those who obey the requirements of God, the multitudes eagerly accept the

delusions of Satan. They give the rein to lust, and practice the sins which called down judgments upon the heathen.

Let the restraint imposed by the divine law be wholly removed, and human laws would soon be disregarded. Because God forbids dishonest practices, coveting, lying, and defrauding, men are ready to trample upon his statutes as a hindrance to their worldly prosperity; but the results of banishing these precepts would be such as they do not anticipate. If the law were not binding, why should any fear to transgress? Property would no longer be safe. Men would obtain their neighbor's possessions by violence; and the strongest would become richest. Life itself would not be respected. Those who disregard the commandments of God sow disobedience to reap disobedience. The marriage vow would no longer stand as a sacred bulwark to protect the family. He who [401] had the power, would, if he desired, take his neighbor's wife by violence. The fifth commandment would be set aside with the fourth. Children would not shrink from taking the life of their parents, if by so doing they could obtain the desire of their corrupt hearts. The civilized world would become a horde of robbers and assassins; and peace, rest, and happiness would be banished from the earth.

Already the doctrine that men are released from obedience to God's requirements has weakened the force of moral obligation, and opened the flood-gates of iniquity upon the world. Lawlessness, dissipation, and corruption are sweeping in upon us like an overwhelming tide. In the family, Satan is at work. His banner waves, even in professedly Christian households. There is envy, evil surmising, hypocrisy, estrangement, emulation, strife, betrayal of sacred trusts, indulgence of lust. The whole system of religious principles and doctrines, which should form the foundation and frame-work of social life, seems to be a tottering mass, ready to fall to ruin. The vilest of

criminals, when thrown into prison for their offenses, are often made the recipients of gifts and attentions, as if they had attained an enviable distinction. The greatest publicity is given to their character and crimes. The press publish the revolting details of vice, thus initiating others into the practice of fraud, robbery, and murder; and Satan exults in the success of his hellish schemes. The infatuation of vice, the wanton taking of life, the terrible increase of intemperance and iniquity of every order and degree, should arouse all who fear God, to inquire what can be done to stay the tide of evil. [402]

Courts of justice are corrupt. Rulers are actuated by desire for gain, and love of sensual pleasure. Intemperance has beclouded the faculties of many, so that Satan has almost complete control of them. Jurists are perverted, bribed, deluded. Drunkenness and revelry, passion, envy, dishonesty of every sort, are represented among those who administer the laws. "Justice standeth afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter."

The iniquity and spiritual darkness that prevailed under the supremacy of Rome were the inevitable result of her suppression of the Scriptures; but where is to be found the cause of the wide-spread infidelity, the rejection of the law of God, and the consequent corruption, under the full blaze of gospel light in an age of religious freedom? Now that Satan can no longer keep the world under his control by withholding the Scriptures, he resorts to other means to accomplish the same object. To destroy faith in the Bible serves his purpose as well as to destroy the Bible itself. By introducing the belief that God's law is not binding, he as effectually leads men to transgress as if they were wholly ignorant of its precepts. And now, as in former ages, he has worked through the church to further his designs. As the religious organizations of the day have refused to listen to unpopular truths plainly brought to view in the

Scriptures, they have sown broadcast the seeds of skepticism. Clinging to the papal error of natural immortality and man's consciousness in death, they reject the only defense against the delusions of Spiritualism. Nor is this all. As the claims of the fourth commandment are urged upon the people, [403] popular teachers find that the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath is there enjoined; and as the only way to free themselves from a duty which they are unwilling to perform, they declare that the law of God is no longer binding. Thus they cast away the law and the Sabbath together. As the work of Sabbath reform extends, this rejection of the divine law to avoid the claims of the fourth commandment will become well-nigh universal. Upon those religious leaders whose teachings have opened the door to infidelity, to Spiritualism, and to contempt for God's holy law, rests a fearful responsibility for the iniquity that exists in the Christian world.

Yet this very class put forth the claim that the fast-spreading corruption is largely attributable to the desecration of the so-called "Christian Sabbath," and that the enforcement of Sunday observance would greatly improve the morals of society. Combining the temperance reform with the Sunday movement, they represent themselves as laboring to promote the highest interests of society; and those who refuse to unite with them are denounced as the enemies of temperance and reform. But the fact that a movement to establish error is connected with a work which is in itself good, is not an argument in favor of the error. We may disguise poison by mingling it with wholesome food, but we do not thereby change its nature. On the contrary, it is rendered more dangerous, as it is more likely to be taken unawares. It is one of Satan's devices to combine with falsehood just enough truth to give it plausibility. The leaders of the Sunday movement may advocate reforms which the people need, princi-

[404] ples which are in harmony with the Bible, yet while there is with these a requirement which is contrary to God's law, his servants cannot unite with them. Nothing can justify them in setting aside the commandments of God for the precepts of men.

Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of Spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome. Protestantism will yet stretch her hand across the gulf to grasp the hand of Spiritualism; she will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, our country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience.

Spiritualism is now changing its form, veiling some of its more objectionable and immoral features, and assuming a Christian guise. Formerly it denounced Christ and the Bible; now it professes to accept both. The Bible is interpreted in a manner that is attractive to the unrenewed heart, while its solemn and vital truths are made of no effect. A God of love is presented; but his justice, his denunciations of sin, the requirements of his holy law, are all kept out of sight. Pleasing, bewitching fables captivate the senses of those who do not make God's word the foundation of their faith. Christ is as verily rejected as before; but Satan has so blinded the eyes of the people that the deception is not discerned.

As Spiritualism assimilates more closely to the nominal Christianity of the day, it has greater power to deceive and ensnare. Satan himself is converted, [405] after the modern order of things. He will appear in the character of an angel of light. Through the agency of Spiritualism, miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and many undeniable wonders will be performed.

And as the spirits will profess faith in the Bible, and express regard for Sunday, their work will be accepted as a manifestation of divine power.

The line of distinction between professing Christians and the ungodly is now hardly distinguishable. Church-members love what the world loves, and are ready to join with them; and Satan determines to unite them in one body and thus strengthen his cause by sweeping all into the ranks of Spiritualism. Papists who boast of miracles as a certain mark of the true church, will be readily deceived by this wonder-working power; and Protestants, having cast away the shield of truth, will also be deluded. Papists, Protestants, and worldings will alike accept the form of godliness without the power, and they will see in this union a grand movement for the conversion of the world, and the ushering in of the long-expected millennium.

Through Spiritualism, Satan appears as a benefactor of the race, healing the diseases of the people, and professing to present a new and more exalted system of religious faith; but at the same time he works as a destroyer. His temptations are leading multitudes to ruin. Intemperance dethrones reason; sensual indulgence, strife, and bloodshed follow. Satan delights in war; for it excites the worst passions of the soul, and then sweeps into eternity its victims steeped in vice and blood. It is his object [406] to incite the nations to war against one another; for he can thus divert the minds of the people from the work of preparation to stand in the day of God.

Satan works through the elements also to garner his harvest of unprepared souls. He has studied the secrets of the laboratories of nature, and he uses all his power to control the elements as far as God allows. When he was suffered to afflict Job, how quickly flocks and herds, servants, houses, children, were swept away, one trouble succeeding another as in a moment. It is God that shields

his creatures, and hedges them in from the power of the destroyer. But the Christian world has shown contempt for the law of Jehovah; and the Lord does just what he has declared that he would do, he withdraws his blessings from the earth, and removes his protecting care from those who are rebelling against his law, and teaching and forcing others to do the same. Satan has control of all whom God does not especially guard. He will favor and prosper some in order to further his own designs, and he will bring trouble upon others, and lead men to believe that it is God who is afflicting them.

While appearing to the children of men as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, he will bring disease and disaster until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation. Even now he is at work. In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, is Satan exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine [407] and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence. These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous. Destruction will be upon the inhabitants of the world. The beasts of the field will groan, and the earth will languish.

And then the great deceiver will persuade men that those who serve God are causing these evils. The class that have provoked the displeasure of Heaven will charge all their troubles upon the faithful few whom the Lord has sent to them with messages of warning and reproof. It will be declared that the nation is offending God by the violation of the Sunday-Sabbath, that this sin has brought calamities which will not cease until Sunday observance shall be strictly enforced, and that those who present the

claims of the fourth commandment, thus destroying reverence for Sunday, are troublers of the nation, preventing its restoration to divine favor and temporal prosperity. Thus the accusation urged of old against the servant of God will be repeated, and upon grounds equally well established. "And it came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim." (1 Kings 18:17-18) As the wrath of the people shall be excited by false charges, they will pursue a course toward God's ambassadors very similar to that which apostate Israel pursued toward Elijah [408]

The miracle-working power manifested through Spiritualism will exert its influence against those who choose to obey God rather than men. Messages will come from the spirits declaring that God has sent them to inform the rejecters of Sunday that they are in error, and that the laws of the land should be obeyed as the law of God. They will lament the great wickedness in the world, and second the testimony of religious teachers, that the degraded state of morals is caused by the desecration of Sunday. Great will be the indignation excited against all who refuse to accept their testimony.

Those who honor the Bible Sabbath will be denounced as enemies of law and order, as breaking down the moral restraints of society, causing anarchy and corruption, and calling down the judgments of God upon the earth. Their conscientious scruples will be pronounced obstinacy, stubbornness, and contempt of authority. They will be accused of disaffection toward the government. Ministers who deny the obligation of the divine law will present from the pulpit the duty of yielding obedience to the civil authorities as ordained of God. In legislative halls

and courts of justice, commandment-keepers will be censured and misrepresented. A false coloring will be given to their words; the worst possible construction will be put upon their motives.

The Protestant churches have rejected the clear, scriptural arguments in defense of God's law, and they long to stop the mouths of those whose faith they cannot overthrow by the Bible. Though they blind their own eyes to the fact, they are now adopting a course which will lead to the persecution [409] of those who conscientiously refuse to do what the rest of the Christian world are doing, and acknowledge the claims of the papal Sabbath.

The dignitaries of Church and State will unite to bribe, persuade, or compel all classes to honor the Sunday. The lack of divine authority will be supplied by oppressive enactments. Political corruption is destroying love of justice and regard for truth, and in order to secure public favor, legislators will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance. Liberty of conscience, which has cost this nation so great a sacrifice, will no longer be respected. In the soon-coming conflict we shall see exemplified the prophet's words: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Revelation 12:17)

Our land is in jeopardy. The time is drawing on when its legislators shall so abjure the principles of Protestantism as to give countenance to Romish apostasy. The people for whom God has so marvelously wrought, strengthening them to throw off the galling yoke of popery, will by a national act give vigor to the corrupt faith of Rome, and thus arouse the tyranny which only waits for a touch to start again into cruelty and despotism. With rapid steps are we already approaching this period.

When Protestant churches shall seek the support of the secular power, thus following the example of that apostate church, for opposing which their ancestors endured the fiercest persecution, then will there be a national apostasy which will end only in national ruin. [410]

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SCRIPTURES A SAFEGUARD.

"To THE law and to the testimony. If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isaiah 8:20) The people of God are directed to the Scriptures as their safeguard against the influence of false teachers and the delusive power of spirits of darkness. Satan employs every possible device to prevent men from obtaining a knowledge of the Bible; for its plain utterances reveal his deceptions. At every revival of God's work, the prince of evil is aroused to more intense activity; he is now putting forth his utmost efforts for a final, despairing struggle against Christ and his followers. The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true, that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested.

Those who endeavor to obey all the commandments of God will be opposed and derided; their way will be made very hard. They can stand only in God. In order to endure the trial before them, they must understand the will of God as revealed in his word; [411] they can honor him only as they have a right conception of his character, government, and purposes, and act in accordance with them. None but those who have trained the intellect to grasp the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict. To every soul will come the searching test, Shall I obey God rather than men? The decisive hour is even now at hand. Are our feet planted on the rock of

God's immutable word? Are we prepared to stand firm in defense of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus?

Before his crucifixion the Saviour explained to his disciples that he was to be put to death, and to rise again from the tomb; and angels were present to impress his words on minds and hearts. But the disciples were looking for temporal deliverance from the Roman yoke, and they could not tolerate the thought that He in whom all their hopes centered should suffer an ignominious death. The words which they needed to remember were banished from their minds; and when the time of trial came, it found them unprepared. The death of Jesus as fully destroyed their hopes as if he had not forewarned them. So in the prophecies the future is opened before us as plainly as it was opened to the disciples by the words of Christ. The events connected with the close of probation and the work of preparation for the time of trouble, are clearly brought to view. But multitudes have no more understanding of these important truths than if they had never been revealed. Satan watches to catch away every impression that would make them wise unto salvation, and the time of trouble will find them unready. [412]

When God sends to men warnings so important that they are represented as proclaimed by holy angels flying in the midst of heaven, he requires every person endowed with reasoning powers to heed the message. The fearful judgments denounced against the worship of the beast and his image, (Revelation 14:9-12) should lead all to a diligent study of the prophecies to learn what the mark of the beast is, and how they are to avoid receiving it. But the masses of the people turn away their ears from hearing the truth, and are turned unto fables. The apostle Paul declared, looking down to the last days, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine." (2

Timothy 4:3) That time has fully come. The multitudes do not want Bible truth, because it interferes with the desires of the sinful, world-loving heart; and Satan supplies the deceptions which they love.

But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority,— not one or all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain "Thus saith the Lord" in its support.

Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the [413] scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then by controlling the minds of these leaders he can influence the multitudes according to his will.

When Christ came to speak the words of life, the common people heard him gladly; and many, even of the priests and rulers, believed on him. But the chief of the priesthood and the leading men of the nation were determined to condemn and repudiate his teachings. Though they were baffled in all their efforts to find accusations against him, though they could not but feel the influence of the divine power and wisdom attending his words, yet they encased themselves in prejudice; they rejected the clearest evidence of his Messiahship, lest they should be forced to become his disciples. These opponents of Jesus were men whom the people had been taught from infancy to reverence, to whose authority they had been accustomed implicitly to bow. "How is it," they asked,

"that our rulers and learned scribes do not believe on Jesus? Would not these pious men receive him if he were the Christ?" It was the influence of such teachers that led the Jewish nation to reject their Redeemer.

The spirit which actuated those priests and rulers is still manifested by many who make a high profession of piety. They refuse to examine the testimony of the Scriptures concerning the special truths for this time. They point to their own numbers, wealth, and popularity, and look with contempt upon the advocates of truth as few, poor, and unpopular, having a faith that separates them from the world.

Christ foresaw that the undue assumption of authority practiced by the scribes and Pharisees [414] would not cease with the dispersion of the Jews. He had a prophetic view of the work of exalting human authority to rule the conscience, which has been so terrible a curse to the church in all ages. And his fearful denunciations of the scribes and Pharisees, and his warnings to the people not to follow these blind leaders, were placed on record as an admonition to future generations.

With the many warnings against false teachers, why are the people so ready to commit the keeping of their souls to the clergy? There are to-day thousands of professors of religion who can give no other reason for points of faith which they hold than that they were so instructed by their religious leaders. They pass by the Saviour's teachings almost unnoticed, and place implicit confidence in the words of the ministers. But are ministers infallible? How can we trust our souls to their guidance unless we know from God's word that they are light-bearers? A lack of moral courage to step aside from the beaten track of the world, leads many to follow in the steps of learned men; and by their reluctance to investigate for themselves, they are becoming hopelessly

fastened in the chains of error. They see that the truth for this time is plainly brought to view in the Bible, and they feel the power of the Holy Spirit attending its proclamation; yet they allow the opposition of the clergy to turn them from the light. Though reason and conscience are convinced, these deluded souls dare not think differently from the minister; and their individual judgment, their eternal interests, are sacrificed to the unbelief, the pride and prejudice, of another. [415]

Many are the forms of human influence through which Satan works to bind his captives. He secures multitudes to himself by attaching them by the silken cords of affection to those who are enemies of the cross of Christ. Whatever this attachment may be, parental, filial, conjugal, or social, the effect is the same; the opposers of truth rule with despotic power, and the souls held under their sway have not sufficient courage or independence to obey their own convictions of duty.

The truth and the glory of God are inseparable; it is impossible for us, with the Bible within our reach, to honor God by erroneous opinions. It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light, and encourage others to follow his example. Ignorance of God's word is sin, when every provision has been made that we may become wise. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought, and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help, we are to form our opinions for ourselves, as we are to answer for ourselves before God.

The truths most plainly revealed in the Bible have been involved in doubt and darkness by learned men, who, with a pretense of great wisdom, teach that the Scriptures have a mystical, a secret, spiritual meaning not apparent in the language employed. These men are false

teachers. It was to such a class that Jesus declared, "Ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God." (Mark 12:24) The language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious [416] meaning unless a symbol or figure is employed. Christ has given the promise, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." (John 7:17) If men would but take the Bible as it reads, if there were no false teachers to mislead and confuse their minds, a work would be accomplished that would make angels glad, and that would bring into the fold of Christ thousands upon thousands who are now wandering in error.

We should exert all the powers of the mind in the study of the Scriptures, and should task the understanding to comprehend, as far as mortals can, the deep things of God; yet we must not forget that the docility and submission of a child is the true spirit of the learner. Scriptural difficulties can never be mastered by the same methods that are employed in grappling with philosophical problems. We should not engage in the study of the Bible with that self-reliance with which so many enter the domains of science, but with a prayerful dependence upon God, and a sincere desire to learn his will. We must come with a humble and teachable spirit to obtain knowledge from the great I AM. Otherwise, evil angels will so blind our minds and harden our hearts that we shall not be impressed by the truth.

Many a portion of Scripture which learned men pronounce a mystery, or pass over as unimportant, is full of comfort and instruction to him who has been taught in the school of Christ. One reason why many theologians have no clearer understanding of God's word is, they close their eyes to truths which they do not wish to practice. An understanding of [417] Bible truth depends not so much on the power of intellect brought to the search as on the

singleness of purpose, the earnest longing after righteousness.

Never should the Bible be studied without prayer. The Holy Spirit alone can cause us to feel the importance of those things easy to be understood, or prevent us from wresting truths difficult of comprehension. It is the office of heavenly angels to prepare the heart to so comprehend God's word that we shall be charmed with its beauty, admonished by its warnings, or animated and strengthened by its promises. We should make the psalmist's petition our own: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." (Psalm 119:18) Temptations often appear irresistible because through neglect of prayer and the study of the Bible the tempted one cannot readily remember God's promises and meet Satan with the Scripture weapons. But angels are round about those who are willing to be taught in divine things, and in the time of great necessity, they will bring to their remembrance the very truths which are needed. Thus when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him.

All who value their eternal interests should be on their guard against the inroads of skepticism. The very pillars of truth will be assailed. It is impossible to keep beyond the reach of the sarcasms and sophisms, the insidious and pestilent teachings, of modern infidelity. Satan adapts his temptations to all classes. He assails the illiterate with a jest or sneer, while he meets the educated with scientific objections and philosophical reasoning, alike calculated to excite [418] distrust or contempt of the Scriptures. Even youth of little experience presume to insinuate doubts concerning the fundamental principles of Christianity. And this youthful infidelity, shallow as it is, has its influence. Many are thus led to jest at the faith of their fathers, and to do despite to the Spirit of grace. Many a life that promised

to be an honor to God and a blessing to the world, has been blighted by the foul breath of infidelity. All who trust to the boastful decisions of human reason, and imagine that they can explain divine mysteries, and arrive at truth unaided by the wisdom of God, are entangled in the snare of Satan.

We are living in the most solemn period of this world's history. The destiny of earth's teeming multitudes is about to be decided. Our own future well-being and also the salvation of other souls depends upon the course which we now pursue. We need to be guided by the Spirit of truth. Every follower of Christ should earnestly inquire, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" We need to humble ourselves before the Lord, with fasting and prayer, and to meditate much upon his word, especially upon the scenes of the Judgment. We should now seek a deep and living experience in the things of God. We have not a moment to lose. Events of vital importance are transpiring around us; we are on Satan's enchanted ground. Sleep not, sentinels of God; the foe is lurking near, ready at any moment, should you become lax and drowsy, to spring upon you and make you his prey.

Many are deceived as to their true condition before God. They congratulate themselves upon the wrong [419] acts which they do not commit, and forget to enumerate the good and noble deeds which God requires of them, but which they have neglected to perform. It is not enough that they are trees in the garden of God. They are to answer his expectation by bearing fruit. He holds them accountable for their failure to accomplish all the good which they could have done, through his grace strengthening them. In the books of Heaven they are registered as cumberers of the ground.

When the testing time shall come, those who have made God's word their rule of life will be revealed. In

summer there is no noticeable difference between evergreens and other trees; but when the blasts of winter come, the evergreens remain unchanged, while other trees are stripped of their foliage. So the false-hearted professor may not now be distinguished from the real Christian, but the time is just upon us when the difference will be apparent. Let opposition arise, let the voice of the dragon be heard, let persecution be kindled, and the half-hearted and hypocritical will waver and yield the faith; but the true Christian will stand firm as a rock, his faith stronger, his hope brighter, than in days of prosperity.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."
(Psalms 1:1-3) [420]

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LOUD CRY.

"I saw another angel come down from Heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." "And I heard another voice from Heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." (Revelation 18:1-2, 4)

In this scripture the announcement of the fall of Babylon, as made by the second angel, (Revelation 14:8) is repeated, with the additional mention of the corruptions which have been entering the churches since 1844. A terrible condition of the religious world is here described. With every rejection of truth, the minds of the people have become darker, their hearts more stubborn, until they are entrenched in an infidel hardihood. In defiance of the warnings which God has given, they continue to trample upon one of the precepts of the decalogue, and they persecute those who hold it sacred. Christ is set at naught in the contempt placed upon his word and his people. [421] As the teachings of Spiritualism are accepted by the churches, no real restraint is imposed upon the carnal heart, and the profession of religion becomes a cloak to conceal the basest iniquity. A belief in spiritual manifestations opens the door to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. The influence of evil angels is felt in the churches throughout the land.

Of Babylon at this time it is declared, "Her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." (Revelation 18:5) She has filled up the measure of her guilt, and destruction is about to fall upon her. But God still has a people in Babylon; and before the visitation of his judgments, these faithful ones must be called out, that they "partake not of her sins, and receive not of her plagues." Hence the movement symbolized by the angel coming down from Heaven, lightening the earth with his glory, and crying mightily with a strong voice, announcing the sins of Babylon. In connection with his message the call is heard, "Come out of her, my people." As these warnings join the third angel's message, it swells to a loud cry.

Fearful is the issue to which the world is to be brought. The powers of earth, uniting to war against the commandments of God, will decree that no man may buy or sell, save he that has the mark of the beast, and, finally, that whoever refuses to receive the mark shall be put to death. (Revelation 13:15, 17) The word of God declares: "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the [422] cup of his indignation." (Revelation 14:9-10) But not one is made to feel the wrath of God until the truth has been brought in contact with his mind and conscience, and has been rejected. There are many in the churches of our country who have never, even in this land of light and knowledge, had an opportunity to hear the special truths for this time. The obligation of the fourth commandment has never been set before them in its true light. Jesus reads every heart, and tries every motive. The decree is not to be urged upon the people blindly. Every one is to have sufficient light to make his decision

intelligently. The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty; for it is the point of truth especially controverted.

Heretofore those who presented the truths of the third message have often been regarded as mere alarmists. The prediction that Church and State would unite to persecute those who keep the commandments of God has been pronounced groundless and absurd. It has been confidently declared that this land could never become other than what it has been, the defender of religious freedom. But as the question of enforcing Sunday observance is widely agitated, the event so long doubted and disbelieved is seen to be approaching, and the third message produces an effect which it could not have had before.

In every generation God has sent his servants to rebuke sin, both in the world and in the church. But the people desire smooth things spoken to them, and the pure, unvarnished truth is not acceptable. Many reformers, in entering upon their work, determined to exercise great prudence in attacking the sins of [423] the church and the nation. They hoped, by the example of a pure Christian life, to lead the people back to the doctrines of the Bible. But the Spirit of God came upon them as it came upon Elijah, and they could not refrain from preaching the plain utterances of the Bible,—doctrines which they had been reluctant to present. They were impelled to zealously declare the truth, and the danger which threatened souls. The words which the Lord gave them they uttered, fearless of consequences, and the people were compelled to hear the warning.

Thus will the message of the third angel be proclaimed. As the time comes for the loud cry to be given, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to his service. The laborers will be qualified rather by the

unction of his Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. The sins of Babylon will be laid open. The fearful results of a union of Church and State, the inroads of Spiritualism, the stealthy but rapid progress of the papal power,—all will be unmasked. By these solemn warnings the people will be stirred. Thousands upon thousands have never listened to words like these. In amazement they hear the testimony that Babylon is the church, fallen because of her errors and sins, because of her rejection of the truth sent to her from heaven. The people go to their former teachers with the eager inquiry, Are these things so? The ministers present fables, prophesy smooth things, to soothe their fears, and quiet the awakened con- [424] science. But many refuse to be satisfied with the mere authority of men, and demand a plain "Thus saith the Lord." The popular ministry, like the Pharisees of old, are filled with anger as their authority is questioned; they denounce the message as of Satan, and stir up the sin-loving multitudes to revile and persecute those who proclaim it.

As the controversy extends into new fields, and the minds of the people are called to God's down-trodden law, Satan is astir. The power attending the message only maddens those who oppose it. The clergy put forth almost superhuman efforts to shut away the light, lest it should shine upon their flocks. By every means at their command they endeavor to suppress the discussion of these vital questions. The church appeals to the strong arm of civil power, and in this work, papists are solicited to come to the help of Protestants. The movement for Sunday enforcement becomes more bold and decided. The law is invoked against commandment-keepers. They are threatened with fines and imprisonment, and some are

offered positions of influence, and other rewards and advantages, as inducements to renounce their faith. But their steadfast answer is, "Show us from the word of God our error,"—the same plea that was made by Luther under similar circumstances. Those who are arraigned before the courts make a strong vindication of the truth, and some who hear them are led to take their stand to keep all the commandments of God. Thus light is brought before thousands who otherwise would know nothing of these truths.

Conscientious obedience to the word of God will be treated as rebellion. Blinded by Satan, the parent [425] will exercise harshness and severity toward the believing child; the master or mistress will oppress the commandment-keeping servant. Affection will be alienated; children will be disinherited, and driven from home. The words of Paul will be literally fulfilled, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12) As the defenders of truth refuse to honor the Sunday-Sabbath, some of them will be thrust into prison, some will be exiled, some will be treated as slaves. To human wisdom, all this now seems impossible; but as the restraining Spirit of God shall be withdrawn from men, and they shall be under the control of Satan, who hates the divine precepts, there will be strange developments. The heart can be very cruel when God's fear and love are removed.

As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third message, but have not been sanctified through it, abandon their position, and take refuge under the banner of the powers of darkness. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. Men of talent and pleasing address, who

once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren. When Sabbath-keepers are brought before the courts to answer for their faith, these apostates are the most efficient agents of Satan to misrepresent and accuse them, and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the rulers against them. [426]

The Lord's servants have faithfully given the warning, looking to God and to his word alone. They have not coolly calculated the consequences to themselves. They have not consulted their temporal interests, or sought to preserve their reputation or their lives. Yet when the storm of opposition and reproach bursts upon them, they are overwhelmed with consternation; and some are ready to exclaim, "Had we foreseen the consequences of our words, we would have held our peace." They are hedged in with difficulties. Satan assails them with fierce temptations. The work which they have undertaken seems far beyond their ability to accomplish. They are threatened with destruction. The enthusiasm which animated them is gone; yet they cannot turn back. Then, feeling their utter helplessness, they flee to the Mighty One for strength. They remember that the words which they have spoken were not theirs, but His who bade them give the warning. God put the truth into their hearts, and they could not forbear to proclaim it.

The same trials were experienced by men of God in ages past. Wycliffe, Huss, Luther, Tyndale, Baxter, Wesley, urged that all doctrines be brought to the test of the Bible, and declared that they would renounce everything which it condemned. Against these men, persecution raged with relentless fury; yet they ceased not to declare the truth. Different periods in the history of the church have each been marked by the development of some special truth, adapted to the necessities of the people

of God at that time. Every new truth has made its way against hatred and opposition; those who were [427] blessed with the light were tempted and tried. The Lord gives a special truth for the people in an emergency. Who dare refuse to publish it? He commands his servants to present the last invitation of mercy to the world. They cannot remain silent, except at the peril of their souls. Christ's ambassadors have nothing to do with consequences. They must perform their duty, and leave results with God.

As the opposition rises to a fiercer height, the servants of God are again perplexed; for it seems to them that they have brought the crisis. But conscience and the word of God assure them that their course is right; and although the trials continue, they are strengthened to bear them. The contest grows closer and sharper, but their faith and courage rise with the emergency. Their testimony is, "We dare not tamper with God's word, dividing his holy law, calling one portion essential and another non-essential to gain the favor of the world. The Lord whom we serve is able to deliver us. Christ has conquered the powers of earth; and shall we be afraid of a world already conquered?"

Persecution in its varied forms is the development of a principle which will exist as long as Satan exists, and Christianity has vital power. No man can serve God without enlisting against himself the opposition of the hosts of darkness. Evil angels will assail him, alarmed that his influence is taking the prey from their hands. Evil men, rebuked by his example, will unite with them in seeking to separate him from God by alluring temptations. When these do not succeed, then a compelling power is employed to force the conscience. [428]

But as long as Jesus remains man's intercessor in the sanctuary above; the restraining influence of the Holy

Spirit is felt by rulers and people. It still controls, to some extent, the laws of the land. Were it not for these laws, the condition of the world would be much worse than it now is. While many of our rulers are active agents of Satan, God also has his agents among the leading men of the nation. The enemy moves upon his servants to propose measures that would greatly impede the work of God; but statesmen who fear the Lord are influenced by holy angels to oppose such propositions with unanswerable arguments. Thus a few men will hold in check a powerful current of evil. The opposition of the enemies of truth will be restrained that the third message may do its work. When the loud cry shall be given, it will arrest the attention of these leading men through whom the Lord is now working, and some of them will accept it, and will stand with the people of God through the time of trouble.

The angel who unites in the proclamation of the third message is to lighten the whole earth with his glory. A work of world-wide extent and unwonted power is here brought to view. The Advent movement of 1840-44 was a glorious manifestation of the power of God; the first message was carried to every missionary station in the world, and in this country there was the greatest religious interest which has been witnessed in any land since the Reformation of the sixteenth century; but these are to be far exceeded by the mighty movement under the loud cry of the third message. The work will be similar to that of the day of Pentecost. Servants of [429] God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, hasten from place to place to proclaim the warning from Heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the message will be given. Miracles are wrought, the sick are healed, and signs and wonders follow the believers. Satan also works with lying wonders, even bringing down fire

from heaven in the sight of men. Thus the inhabitants of the earth are brought to take their stand.

The message will be carried, as was the midnight cry of 1844, not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God. The arguments have been presented. The seed has been sown, and now it will spring up and bear fruit. The publications distributed by missionary workers have exerted their influence; yet many whose minds have been impressed have been prevented from fully comprehending the truth or from yielding obedience. Now the rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number take their stand upon the Lord's side. [430]

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE TIME OF TROUBLE.

"AT that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." (Daniel 12:1)

When the third message closes, mercy no longer pleads for the guilty inhabitants of the earth. The people of God have accomplished their work; they have received the latter rain, or the refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and they are prepared for the trying hour before them. Angels are hurrying to and fro in Heaven. An angel returning from the earth announces that his work is done, that the seal of God (See Appendix, Note 9) has been placed upon his people. Then Jesus ceases his intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts his hands; and with a loud voice says, "It is done;" and all the angelic host lay off their crowns as he makes the solemn announcement: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." (Revelation 22:11) Every case has been decided for life [431] or death. Christ has made the atonement for his people, and blotted out their sins. The number of his subjects is made up; "the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven," is about to be given to the heirs of salvation, and Jesus is to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

When he leaves the sanctuary, darkness covers the inhabitants of the earth. In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor. The restraint which has been upon the wicked is removed, and Satan has entire control of the finally impenitent. The power attending the last warning has enraged them, and their anger is kindled against all who have received the message. The people of God are then plunged into those scenes of affliction and distress described by the prophet as the time of Jacob's trouble.

"Thus saith the Lord: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace." "All faces are turned into paleness. Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." (Jeremiah 30:5-7)

Jacob's night of anguish, when he wrestled in prayer for deliverance from the hand of Esau, (Genesis 32:24-30) represents the experience of God's people in the time of trouble. Because of the deception practiced to secure his father's blessing, intended for Esau, Jacob had fled for his life, alarmed by his brother's deadly threats. After remaining for many years an exile, he had set out, at God's command, to return with his wives and children, his flocks and herds, to his [432] native country. On reaching the borders of the land, he was filled with terror by the tidings of Esau's approach at the head of a band of warriors, doubtless bent upon revenge. Jacob's company, unarmed and defenseless, seemed about to fall helpless victims of violence and slaughter. And to the burden of anxiety and fear was added the crushing weight of self-reproach; for it was his own sin that had brought this danger. His only hope was in the mercy of God; his only defense must be prayer. Yet he leaves nothing undone on his own part to atone for the wrong to his brother, and to avert the threatened danger. So should the followers of Christ, as

they approach the time of trouble, make every exertion to place themselves in a proper light before the people, to disarm prejudice, and to avert the danger which threatens liberty of conscience.

Having sent his family away, that they may not witness his distress, Jacob remains alone to intercede with God. He confesses his sin, and gratefully acknowledges the mercy of God toward him, while with deep humiliation he pleads the covenant made with his fathers, and the promises to himself in the night vision at Bethel and in the land of his exile. The crisis in his life has come; everything is at stake. In the darkness and solitude he continues praying and humbling himself before God. Suddenly a hand is laid upon his shoulder. He thinks that an enemy is seeking his life, and with all the energy of despair he wrestles with his assailant. As the day begins to break, the stranger puts forth his superhuman power; at his touch the strong man seems paralyzed, and he falls, a helpless, weeping [433] suppliant, upon the neck of his mysterious antagonist. Jacob knows now that it is the Angel of the covenant with whom he has been in conflict. Though disabled, and suffering the keenest pain, he does not relinquish his purpose. Long has he endured perplexity, remorse, and trouble for his sin; now he must have the assurance that it is pardoned. The divine visitant seems about to depart; but Jacob clings to him, pleading for a blessing. The Angel urges, "Let me go; for the day breaketh;" but the patriarch exclaims, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." What confidence, what firmness and perseverance, are here displayed! Had this been a boastful, presumptuous claim, Jacob would have been instantly destroyed; but his was the assurance of one who confesses his weakness and unworthiness, yet trusts the mercy of a covenant-keeping God.

"He had power over the Angel, and prevailed." (Hosea 12:4) Through humiliation, repentance, and self-surrender, this sinful, erring mortal prevailed with the Majesty of Heaven. He had fastened his trembling grasp upon the promises of God, and the heart of Infinite Love could not turn away the sinner's plea. As an evidence of his triumph, and an encouragement to others to imitate his example, his name was changed from one which was a reminder of his sin, to one that commemorated his victory. And the fact that Jacob had prevailed with God was an assurance that he would prevail with men. He no longer feared to encounter his brother's anger; for the Lord was his defense.

Satan had accused Jacob before the angels of God [434] claiming the right to destroy him because of his sin; he had moved upon Esau to march against him; and during the patriarch's long night of wrestling, Satan endeavored to force upon him a sense of his guilt, in order to discourage him, and break his hold upon God. Jacob was driven almost to despair; but he knew that without help from Heaven he must perish. He had sincerely repented of his great sin, and he appealed to the mercy of God. He would not be turned from his purpose, but held fast the Angel, and urged his petition with earnest, agonizing cries, until he prevailed. Heavenly messengers were sent to move upon Esau's heart, and his purpose of hatred and revenge was changed to fraternal affection.

As Satan influenced Esau to march against Jacob, so he will stir up the wicked to destroy God's people in the time of trouble. And as he accused Jacob, he will urge his accusations against the people of God. He numbers the world as his subjects; but the little company who keep the commandments of God are resisting his supremacy. If he could blot them from the earth, his triumph would be complete. He sees that holy angels are guarding them, and

he infers that their sins have been pardoned; but he does not know that their cases have been decided in the sanctuary above. He has an accurate knowledge of the sins which he has tempted them to commit, and he presents these before God in the most exaggerated light, representing this people to be just as deserving as himself of exclusion from the favor of God. He declares that the Lord cannot in justice forgive their sins, and yet destroy him and his angels. He claims them as his prey, and demands that they be given into his hands to destroy. [435]

As Satan accuses the people of God on account of their sins, the Lord permits him to try them to the uttermost. Their confidence in God, their faith and firmness, will be severely tested. As they review the past, their hopes sink; for in their whole lives they can see little good. They are fully conscious of their weakness and unworthiness. Satan endeavors to terrify them with the thought that their cases are hopeless, that the stain of their defilement will never be washed away. He hopes to so destroy their faith that they will yield to his temptations, and turn from their allegiance to God.

Though God's people will be surrounded by enemies who are bent upon their destruction, yet the anguish which they suffer is not a dread of persecution for the truth's sake; they fear that every sin has not been repented of, and that through some fault in themselves they shall fail to realize the fulfillment of the Saviour's promise, "I will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world." If they could have the assurance of pardon, they would not shrink from torture or death; but should they prove unworthy, and lose their lives because of their own defects or character, then God's holy name would be reproached.

On every hand they hear the plottings of treason, and see the active working of rebellion; and there is aroused within them an intense desire, an earnest yearning of soul, that this great apostasy may be terminated, and the wickedness of the wicked may come to an end. But while they plead with God to stay the work of rebellion, there is a throb of self-reproach that they themselves have no more power [436] to resist and urge back the mighty tide of evil. They feel that had they always employed all their ability in the service of Christ, going forward from strength to strength, Satan's forces would have less power to prevail against them.

They afflict their souls before God, pointing to their past repentance of their many sins, and pleading the Saviour's promise, "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." (Isaiah 27:5) Their faith does not fail because their prayers are not immediately answered. Though suffering the keenest anxiety, terror, and distress, they do not cease their intercessions. They lay hold of the strength of God as Jacob laid hold of the Angel; and the language of their souls is, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

Had not Jacob previously repented of his sin in obtaining the birthright by fraud, God would not have heard his prayer and mercifully preserved his life. So in the time of trouble, if the people of God had unconfessed sins to appear before them while tortured with fear and anguish, they would be overwhelmed; despair would cut off their faith, and they could not have confidence to plead with God for deliverance. But while they have a deep sense of their unworthiness, they have no concealed wrongs to reveal. Their sins have gone beforehand to Judgment, and have been blotted out; and they cannot bring them to remembrance.

Satan leads many to believe that God will overlook their unfaithfulness in the minor affairs of life; but the Lord shows in his dealings with Jacob that he [437] will in no wise sanction or tolerate evil. All who endeavor to excuse or conceal their sins, and permit them to remain upon the books of Heaven, unconfessed and unforgiven, will be overcome by Satan. The more exalted their profession, and the more honorable the position which they hold, the more grievous is their course in the sight of God, and the more sure the triumph of their great adversary. Those who delay a preparation for the day of God cannot obtain it in the time of trouble or at any subsequent time. The case of all such is hopeless. Those professed Christians who come up to that last fearful conflict unprepared, will, in their despair, confess their sins in words of burning anguish, while the wicked exult over their distress.

Yet Jacob's history is an assurance that God will not cast off those who have been deceived and tempted and betrayed into sin; but who have returned unto him with true repentance. While Satan seeks to destroy this class, God will send his angels to comfort and protect them in the time of peril. The assaults of Satan are fierce and determined, his delusions are terrible; but the Lord's eye is upon his people, and his ear listens to their cries. Their affliction is great, the flames of the furnace seem about to consume them; but the Refiner will bring them forth as gold tried in the fire. God's love for his children during the period of their severest trial is as strong and tender as in the days of their sunniest prosperity; but it is needful for them to be placed in the furnace of fire; their earthliness must be removed that the image of Christ may be perfectly reflected.

The season of distress and anguish before us will [438] require a faith that can endure weariness, delay, and

hunger,—a faith that will not faint, though severely tried. The period of probation is granted to all to prepare for that time. Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. His victory is an evidence of the power of importunate prayer. All who will lay hold of God's promises as he did, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed as he succeeded. Those who are unwilling to deny self, to agonize before God, to pray long and earnestly for his blessing, will not obtain it. Wrestling with God—how few know what it is! How few have ever had their souls drawn out after God with intensity of desire until every power is on the stretch. When waves of despair which no language can express sweep over the suppliant, how few cling with unyielding faith to the promises of God.

Those who exercise but little faith now, are in the greatest danger of falling under the power of Satanic delusions and the decree to compel the conscience. And even if they endure the test, they will be plunged into deeper distress and anguish in the time of trouble, because they have never made it a habit to trust in God. The lessons of faith which they have neglected, they will be forced to learn under a terrible pressure of discouragement.

We should now acquaint ourselves with God by proving his promises. Angels record every prayer that is earnest and sincere. We should rather dispense with selfish gratifications than neglect communion with God. The deepest poverty, the greatest self-denial, with his approval, is better than riches, honors, ease, and friendship without it. We must [439] take time to pray. If we allow our minds to be absorbed by worldly interests, the Lord may give us time by removing from us our idols of gold, of houses, or of fertile lands.

The young would not be seduced into sin if they would refuse to enter any path, save that upon which they could ask God's blessing. If the messengers who bear the last solemn warning to the world would pray for the blessing of God, not in a cold, listless, lazy manner, but fervently and in faith, as did Jacob, they would find many places where they could say, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." They would be accounted of Heaven as princes, having power to prevail with God and with men.

The time of trouble such as never was, is soon to open upon us; and we shall need an experience which we do not now possess, and which many are too indolent to obtain. It is often the case that trouble is greater in anticipation than in reality; but this is not true of the crisis before us. The most vivid presentation cannot reach the magnitude of the ordeal. And now, while the precious Saviour is making an atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in Christ. God's providence is the school in which we are to learn the meekness and lowliness of Jesus. The Lord is ever setting before us, not the way we would choose, which is easier and pleasanter to us, but the true aims of life. None can neglect or defer this work but at the most fearful peril to their souls.

The apostle John in vision heard a loud voice in Heaven exclaiming, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto [440] you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." (Revelation 12:12) Fearful are the scenes which call forth this exclamation from the heavenly voice. The wrath of Satan increases as his time grows short, and his work of deceit and destruction reaches its culmination in the time of trouble. God's long-suffering has ended. The world has rejected his mercy, despised his love, and trampled upon his law. The wicked have passed the

boundary of their probation, and the Lord withdraws his protection, and leaves them to the mercy of the leader they have chosen. Satan will have power over those who have yielded themselves to his control, and he will plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old.

A single angel destroyed all the first-born of the Egyptians, and filled the land with mourning. When David offended against God by numbering the people, one angel caused that terrible destruction by which his sin was punished. The same destructive power exercised by holy angels when God commands, will be exercised by evil angels when he allows. There are forces now ready, and only waiting the divine permission, to spread desolation everywhere.

Fearful sights of a supernatural character will soon be revealed in the heavens, in token of the power of miracle-working demons. The spirits of devils will go forth to the kings of the earth and to the whole [441] world. Rulers and subjects will be alike deceived. Persons will arise pretending to be Christ, and claiming the title and the worship which belong to the world's Redeemer. They will perform wonderful miracles of healing, and will profess to have revelations from Heaven contradicting the testimony of the Scriptures.

As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will attempt to personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Saviour's advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the

description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out upon the air, "Christ has come! Christ has come!" The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him, while he lifts up his hands, and pronounces a blessing upon them, as Christ blessed his disciples when he was personally upon the earth. His voice is soft and subdued, yet full of melody. In gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the same gracious, heavenly truths which the Saviour uttered; he heals the diseases of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. He declares that those who persist in keeping holy the seventh day are blaspheming his name [442] by refusing to listen to his angels sent to them with light and truth. This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion. Like the Samaritans who were deceived by Simon Magus, the multitudes, from the least to the greatest, give heed to these sorceries, saying, This is "the great power of God."

But the people of God will not be misled. The teachings of this false christ are not in accordance with the Scriptures. His blessing is pronounced upon the worshipers of the beast and his image,—the very class upon whom the Bible declares that God's unmingled wrath shall be poured out. And, furthermore, Satan is not permitted to counterfeit the manner of Christ's advent. The Scriptures teach that "as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be;" (Matthew 24:27) that he "cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him;" (Revelation 1:7) that he will "descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God;" (1 Thessalonians 4:16) that he will "come in his

glory, and all the holy angels with him," (Matthew 25:31) and will "send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect." (Matthew 24:31) Those who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive. By the testimony of the Scriptures they will detect the deceiver in his disguise.

To all, the testing time will come. By the sifting of temptation, the genuine Christian will be revealed. Are the people of God now so firmly established upon his word that they would not yield to the evi- [443] dence of their senses? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible, and the Bible only? Satan will, if possible, prevent them from obtaining a preparation to stand in that day. He will so arrange affairs as to hedge up their way, entangle them with earthly treasures, cause them to carry a heavy, wearisome burden, that their hearts may be overcharged with the cares of this life, and the day of trial may come upon them as a thief.

Satan will continue to act a double part. Appearing to be the dispenser of great blessings and divine truths, he will, by his lying wonders, hold the world under his control; and at the same time he will indulge his malignity by causing distress and destruction, and will accuse God's people as the cause of the fearful convulsions of nature and the strife and blood-shed among men which are desolating the earth. Thus he will excite to greater intensity the spirit of hatred and persecution against them. God never forces the will or the conscience; but Satan will employ the most cruel measures to control the consciences of men, and to secure worship to himself. And this work of compulsion is always in favor of human creeds and laws, and in defiance of God's holy law.

In the last conflict the Sabbath will be the special point of controversy throughout all Christendom. Secular

rulers and religious leaders will unite to enforce the observance of the Sunday; and as milder measures fail, the most oppressive laws will be enacted. It will be urged that the few who stand in opposition to an institution of the church and a law of the land ought not to be tolerated; and a decree [444] will finally be issued denouncing them as deserving of the severest punishment, and giving the people liberty, after a certain time, to put them to death. Romanism in the Old World, and apostate Protestantism in the New, will pursue a similar course toward those who honor the divine precepts. The people of God will then flee from the cities and villages, and associate together in companies, dwelling in the most desolate and solitary places. Many will find refuge in the strongholds of the mountains. Like the Christians of the Piedmont valleys, they will make the high places of the earth their sanctuaries, and will thank God for the "munitions of rocks." But many of all nations and all classes, high and low, rich and poor, black and white, will be cast into the most unjust and cruel bondage. The beloved of God pass weary days, bound in chains, shut in by prison bars, sentenced to be slain, some apparently left to die of starvation in dark and loathsome dungeons. No human ear is open to hear their moans; no human hand is ready to lend them help.

Will the Lord forget his people in this trying hour? Did he forget faithful Noah when judgments were visited upon the antediluvian world? Did he forget Lot when the flood came down from heaven to consume the cities of the plain? Did he forget Joseph surrounded by idolaters in Egypt? Did he forget Elijah when the oath of Jezebel threatened him with the fate of the Baal prophets? Did he forget Jeremiah in the dark and dismal pit of his prison-house? Did he forget the three worthies in the fiery furnace? or Daniel in the den of lions!? Christ cannot

forsake [445] those who are as the apple of his eye, the purchase of his precious blood.

Though the people of God endure privation, and even suffer for want of food, they are not left to perish. While God's judgments are visited upon the earth, and the wicked are dying from hunger and thirst, angels provide the righteous with food and water. Said Jesus, in his lessons of faith to his disciples: "Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them; how much more are ye better than the fowls?" (Luke 12:24) "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." (Matthew 10:29-31)

Yet to human sight it will appear that the people of God must soon seal their testimony with their blood, as did the martyrs before them. They themselves begin to fear that the Lord has left them to fall by the hand of their enemies. It is a time of fearful agony. Day and night they cry unto God for deliverance. The wicked exult, and the jeering cry is heard, "Where now is your faith? Why does not God deliver you out of our hands if you are indeed his people?" But the waiting ones remember Jesus dying upon Calvary's cross, and the chief priests and rulers shouting in mockery, "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." (Matthew 27:42) Like Jacob, all are wrestling with God. Their countenances express their internal [446] struggle. Paleness sits upon every face. Yet they cease not their earnest intercession.

Could men see with heavenly vision, they would behold companies of angels that excel in strength stationed about those who have kept the word of Christ's patience. With sympathizing tenderness, angels have

witnessed their distress, and have heard their prayers. They are waiting the word of their Commander to snatch them from their peril. But they must wait yet a little longer. The people of God must drink of the cup, and be baptized with the baptism. The very delay, so painful to them, is the best answer to their petitions. As they endeavor to wait trustingly for the Lord to work, they are led to exercise faith, hope, and patience, which have been too little exercised during their religious experience. Yet for the elect's sake, the time of trouble will be shortened. The end will come more quickly than men expect. The wheat will be gathered and bound in sheaves for the garner of God; the tares will be bound as fagots for the fires of destruction.

The heavenly sentinels, faithful to their trust, continue their watch. In some cases, before the time specified in the decree, enemies will rush upon the waiting ones to put them to death. But none can pass the mighty guardians stationed about every faithful soul. Some are assailed in their flight from the cities and villages; but the swords raised against them break and fall as powerless as a straw. Others are defended by angels in the form of men of war.

In all ages God has wrought through holy angels for the succor and deliverance of his people. Celestial beings have taken an active part in the affairs of [447] men. They have appeared clothed in garments that shone as the lightning; they have come as men, in the garb of wayfarers. Angels have appeared in human form to men of God. They have rested, as if weary, under the oaks at noon. They have accepted the hospitalities of human homes. They have acted as guides to benighted travelers. They have, with their own hands, kindled the fires of the altar. They have opened prison doors, and set free the servants of the Lord. Clothed with the panoply of Heaven, they came to roll away the stone from the Saviour's tomb.

In the form of men, angels are often in the assemblies of the righteous, and they visit the assemblies of the wicked, as they went to Sodom, to make a record of their deeds, to determine whether they have passed the boundary of God's forbearance. The Lord delights in mercy; and for the sake of a few who really serve him, he restrains calamities, and prolongs the tranquility of multitudes. Little do sinners against God realize that they are indebted for their own lives to the faithful few whom they delight to ridicule and oppress.

Though the rulers of this world know it not, yet often in their councils angels have been spokesmen. Human eyes have looked upon them; human ears have listened to their appeals; human lips have opposed their suggestions and ridiculed their counsels; human hands have met them with insult and abuse. In the council hall and the court of justice, these heavenly messengers have shown an intimate acquaintance with human history; they have proved themselves better able to plead the cause of the oppressed than their ablest and most eloquent defenders. They have defeated purposes and arrested evils that would have greatly retarded the work of God, and would have caused great suffering to his people. In the hour of peril and distress let it never be forgotten that "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." (Psalm 34:7)

With earnest longing, God's people await the tokens of their coming King. As the watchmen are accosted, "What of the night?" the answer is given unfalteringly, "The morning cometh, and also the night.' Light is gleaming upon the clouds above the mountain tops. Soon will there be a revealing of His glory. The Sun of Righteousness is about to shine forth. The morning and the night come hand in hand,—the opening of endless day

to the righteous, the settling down of eternal night to the wicked."

As the wrestling ones urge their petitions before God, the veil separating them from the unseen seems almost withdrawn. The heavens glow with the dawning of eternal day, and, like the melody of angel songs, the words fall upon the ear, "Stand fast to your allegiance. Help is coming." Christ, the almighty victor, holds out to his weary soldiers a crown of immortal glory; and his voice comes from the gates ajar: "Lo, I am with you. Be not afraid. I am acquainted with all your sorrows; I have borne your griefs. You are not warring against untried enemies. I have fought the battle in your behalf, and in my name you are more than conquerors."

The precious Saviour will send help just when we need it. The way to Heaven is consecrated by his [449] footprints. Every thorn that wounds our feet has wounded his. Every cross that we are called to bear, he has borne before us. The Lord permits conflicts, to prepare the soul for peace. If we had no storms, no shadows, we could not appreciate the sunshine. The time of trouble is a fearful ordeal for God's people; but it is the time for every true believer to look up, and by faith he may see the bow of promise encircling him.

"The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head; they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. I, even I, am he that comforteth you; who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker; . . . and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor? The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the

pit, nor that his bread should fail. But I am the Lord thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared. The Lord of hosts is his name. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand."

"Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted and drunken, but not with wine: Thus saith thy Lord the Lord, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again. But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which [450] have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over." (Isaiah 51:11-16, 21-23)

The eye of God looking down the ages, was fixed upon the crisis which his people are to meet, when earthly powers shall be arrayed against them. Like the captive exile, they will be in fear of death by starvation or by violence. But the Holy One who divided the Red Sea before Israel, will manifest his mighty power and turn their captivity. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." (Malachi 3:17) If the blood of Christ's faithful witnesses were shed at this time, it would not, like the blood of the martyrs, be as seed sown to yield a harvest for God. Their fidelity would not be a testimony to convince others of the truth; for the obdurate heart has beaten back the waves of mercy until they return no more. If the righteous were now left to fall a prey to their enemies, it would be a triumph for the prince of darkness. But Christ has spoken: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be

overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity." (Isaiah 26:20-21) Glorious will be the deliverance of those who have patiently waited for him, and whose names are written in the book of life. [451]

CHAPTER XXXV.

GOD'S PEOPLE DELIVERED.

AS THE time appointed in the decree against God's people comes, the inhabitants of the earth unite to destroy the disturbers of their peace. In one night they determine to strike the decisive blow that shall forever silence the voice of the reprovcr. The waiting ones, in their solitary retreats, are still pleading for divine protection. In every quarter, companies of armed men, urged on by hosts of evil angels, are preparing for the work of death. With shouts of triumph, with jeers and imprecations, they are about to rush upon their prey.

But lo, a dense blackness, deeper than the darkness of the night, falls upon the earth. Then a rainbow, shining with the glory from the throne of God, spans the heavens, and seems to encircle each praying company. The angry multitudes are suddenly arrested. Their mocking cries die away. The objects of their murderous rage are forgotten. With fearful forebodings they gaze upon the symbol of God's covenant, and long to be shielded from its overpowering brightness.

By the people of God a voice, clear and melodious, is heard, saying, "Look up," and, lifting their eyes to the heavens, they behold the bow of promise. [452] The black, angry clouds that covered the firmament are parted, and like Stephen they look up steadfastly into Heaven, and see the glory of God, and the Son of man seated upon his throne. In his divine form they discern the marks of his humiliation; and from his lips they hear the request, presented before his Father and the holy angels, "I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me

where I am." Again a voice, musical and triumphant, is heard, saying, "They come! they come! holy, harmless, and undefiled. They have kept the word of my patience; they shall walk among the angels;" and the pale, quivering lips of those who have held fast their faith, utter a shout of victory.

It is at midnight that God manifests his power for the deliverance of his people. The sun appears shining in its strength. Startling signs, and wonders follow in quick succession. The wicked look with terror and amazement upon the scene, while the righteous behold with solemn joy the tokens of their deliverance. Everything in nature seems turned out of its course. The streams cease to flow. Dark, heavy clouds come up, and clash against each other. In the midst of the angry heavens is one clear space of indescribable glory, whence comes the voice of God like the sound of many waters, saying, "It is done."

That voice shakes the heavens and the earth. There is a mighty earthquake. The firmament appears to open and shut. The glory from the throne of God seems flashing through. The mountains shake like a reed in the wind, and ragged rocks are scattered on every side. There is a roar as of a [453] coming tempest. The sea is lashed into fury. There is heard the shriek of the hurricane, like the voice of demons upon a mission of destruction. The whole earth heaves and swells like the waves of the sea. Its surface is breaking up. Its very foundations seem to be giving way. Mountain chains are sinking. Inhabited islands disappear with their living freight. The seaports that have become like Sodom for wickedness are swallowed up by the angry waters. Great hailstones, every one "about the weight of a talent," (Revelation 16:21) are doing their work of destruction. The proudest cities of the earth are laid low. The costly palaces, upon which the world's great men have lavished their wealth in order to glorify themselves,

are crumbling to ruin before their eyes. Prison walls are rent asunder, and God's people, who have been held in bondage for their faith, are set free.

Graves are opened, and "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth" "awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Daniel 12:2) All who have died in faith under the third angel's message come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God's covenant of peace with those who have kept his law. "They also which pierced Him," those that mocked and derided Christ's dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of his truth and his people, are raised to behold him in his glory, and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient.

Thick clouds still cover the sky; yet the sun now and then breaks through, appearing like the avenging eye of Jehovah. Fierce lightnings leap from the [454] heavens, enveloping the earth in a sheet of flame. Above the terrific roar of thunder, voices, mysterious and awful, declare the doom of the wicked. The words spoken are not comprehended by all; but they are distinctly understood by the false watchmen. Those who a little before were so reckless, so boastful and defiant, so exultant in their cruelty to God's commandment-keeping people, are now overwhelmed with consternation, and shuddering in fear. Their wails are heard above the sound of the elements. Demons acknowledge the divinity of Christ, and tremble before his power, while men are supplicating for mercy, and groveling in abject terror.

Said the prophets of old as they beheld in holy vision the day of God: "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand." "And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army; for his camp is very great; for he is strong that

executeth his word; for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" (Joel 2:1, 11) "Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty." (Isaiah 13:6) "Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low." (Isaiah 2:10-12) "In that day a man shall [455] cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth." (Isaiah 2:20-21)

Through a rift in the clouds, there beams a star whose brilliancy is increased fourfold in contrast with the darkness. It speaks hope and joy to the faithful, but severity and wrath to the transgressors of God's law. Those who have sacrificed all for Christ are now secure, hidden as in the secret of the Lord's pavilion. They have been tested, and before the world and the despisers of truth they have evinced their fidelity to Him who died for them. A marvelous change has come over those who have held fast their integrity in the very face of death. They have been suddenly delivered from the dark and terrible tyranny of men transformed to demons. Their faces, so lately pale, anxious, and haggard, are now aglow with wonder, faith, and love. Their voices rise in triumphant song: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be

troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." (Psalm 46:1-3)

While these words of holy trust ascend to God, the clouds sweep back, and the starry heavens are seen, unspeakably glorious in contrast with the black and angry firmament on either side. The glory of [456] Heaven is beaming from the gates ajar. Then there appears against the sky a hand holding two tables of stone folded together. The hand opens the tables, and there are revealed the precepts of the decalogue, traced as with a pen of fire. The words are so plain that all can read them. Memory is aroused, the darkness of superstition and heresy is swept from every mind, and God's ten words, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, are presented to the view of all the inhabitants of earth. Wonderful code! wonderful occasion!

It is impossible to describe the horror and despair of those who have trampled upon God's holy requirements. The Lord gave them his law; they might have compared their characters with it, and learned their defects while yet there was opportunity for repentance and reform; but in order to secure the favor of the world, they set aside its precepts and taught others to transgress. They have endeavored to compel God's people to profane his Sabbath. Now they are condemned by that law which they have despised. With awful distinctness they see that they are without excuse. They chose whom they would serve and worship. "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." (Malachi 3:18)

The enemies of God's law, from the ministers down to the least among them, have a new conception of truth and duty. Too late they see that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is the seal of the living God. Too late they see the true nature of [457] their spurious Sabbath, and the

sandy foundation upon which they have been building. They find that they have been fighting against God. Religious teachers have led souls to perdition while professing to guide them to the gates of Paradise. Not until the day of final accounts will it be known how great is the responsibility of men in holy office, and how terrible are the results of their unfaithfulness. Only in eternity can we rightly estimate the loss of a single soul. Fearful will be the doom of him to whom God shall say, Depart, thou wicked servant.

The voice of God is heard from Heaven declaring the day and hour of Jesus' coming, and delivering the everlasting covenant to his people. Like peals of loudest thunder, his words roll through the earth. The Israel of God stand listening, with their eyes fixed upward. Their countenances are lighted up with his glory, and shine as did the face of Moses when he came down from Sinai. The wicked cannot look upon them. And when the blessing is pronounced on those who have honored God by keeping his Sabbath holy, there is a mighty shout of victory.

Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man's hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Saviour, and which seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness. The people of God know this to be the sign of the Son of man. In solemn silence they gaze upon it as it draws nearer the earth, becoming lighter and more glorious, until it is a great white cloud, its base a glory like consuming fire, and above it the rainbow of the covenant. Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror, and the armies of Heaven follow him. With songs of [458] triumph, a vast retinue of holy angels escort him on his way. The firmament seems filled with shining forms, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. No pen can picture, no human mind conceive, the glory of

the scene. As the living cloud comes still nearer, Jesus can be clearly seen. He does not wear a crown of thorns, but a crown of glory rests upon his holy brow. His countenance shines as the noonday sun. Upon his vesture and thigh is a name written, "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

Before him every face turns pale, and upon those whom God has rejected, falls the blackness of despair. The righteous cry with trembling, "Who shall be able to stand?" The song of the angels ceases, and there is a period of awful silence. Then the voice of Jesus is heard, saying, "My grace is sufficient for you." The faces of the righteous are lighted up, and joy fills every heart. And the angels strike a note higher, and sing again, as they draw still nearer to the earth.

The King of kings descends upon the cloud, wrapped in flaming fire. The earth trembles before him, the heavens are rolled together as a scroll, and every mountain and every island is moved out of its place. Says the psalmist: "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens [459] shall declare his righteousness; for God is judge himself." (Psalm 50:3-6)

"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free-man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" (Revelation 6:15-17)

The derisive jests have ceased. Lying lips are hushed into silence. The clash of arms, the tumult of battle, "with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood," (Isaiah 9:5) is stilled. Naught now is heard but the voice of prayer and the sound of weeping and lamentation. The cry bursts forth from lips so lately scoffing, "The great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" The wicked pray to be covered by the rocks of the mountains, rather than meet the face of Him whom they have despised and rejected.

Those who mocked Christ in his humiliation are in that throng. With thrilling power come to their minds the Sufferer's words, when, adjured by the high priest, he solemnly declared, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." (Matthew 26:64) Now they behold Christ in his glory, and they are yet to see him sitting on the right hand of power.

That voice which penetrates the ear of the dead, [460] they know. How often have its plaintive, tender tones called them to repentance. How often has it been heard in the touching entreaties of a friend, a brother, a Redeemer. To the rejecters of his grace, no other could be so full of condemnation, so burdened with denunciation, as that voice which has so long pleaded, "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?" Oh that it were to them the voice of a stranger! Says Jesus, "I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. But ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof." (Proverbs 1:24-25) That voice awakens memories which they would fain blot out,—warnings despised, invitations refused, privileges slighted.

Those who derided his claim to be the Son of God are speechless now. There is the haughty Herod who jeered at his royal title, and bade the mocking soldiers crown him

king. There are the very men who with impious hands placed upon his form the purple robe, upon his sacred brow the thorny crown, and in his unresisting hand the mimic scepter, and bowed before him in blasphemous mockery. The men who smote and spit upon the Prince of life, now turn from his piercing gaze, and seek to flee from the overpowering glory of his presence. Those who drove the nails through his hands and feet, the soldier who pierced his side, behold these marks with terror and remorse.

With awful distinctness do priests and rulers recall the events of Calvary. With shuddering horror they remember how, wagging their heads in Satanic [461] exultation, they exclaimed, "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him." (Matthew 27:42-43)

Vividly they recall the Saviour's parable of the husbandmen who refused to render to their lord the fruit of the vineyard, who abused his servants and slew his son. They remember, too, the sentence which they themselves pronounced: The lord of the vineyard will miserably destroy those wicked men. In the sin and punishment of those unfaithful men, the priests and elders see their own course and their own just doom. And now there rises a cry of mortal agony. Louder than the shout, "Crucify him! crucify him!" which rang through the streets of Jerusalem, swells the awful, despairing wail, "He is the Son of God! He is the true Messiah!" They seek to flee from the presence of the King of kings. In the deep caverns of the earth, rent asunder by the warring of the elements, they vainly attempt to hide.

In the lives of all who reject truth, there are moments when conscience awakens, when memory presents the

torturing recollection of a life of hypocrisy, and the soul is harassed with vain regrets. But what are these compared with the remorse of that day when "fear cometh as desolation," when "destruction cometh as a whirlwind!" (Proverbs 1:27) Those who would have destroyed Christ and his faithful people, now witness the glory which rests upon them. In the midst of their terror they hear the voices of the saints in joyful strains exclaiming, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us." (Isaiah 25:9) [462]

Amid the reeling of the earth, the flashing of lightning, and the roaring of thunder, the voice of the Son of God calls forth the sleeping saints. He looks upon the graves of the righteous, then raising his hands to heaven he cries, "Awake, awake, awake, ye that sleep in the dust, and arise!" Throughout the length and breadth of the earth, the dead shall hear that voice, and they that hear shall live. And the whole earth shall ring with the tread of the exceeding great army of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. From the prison-house of death they come, clothed with immortal glory, crying, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55) And the living righteous and the risen saints unite their voices in a long, glad shout of victory.

All come forth from their graves the same in stature as when they entered the tomb. Adam, who stands among the risen throng, is of lofty height and majestic form, in stature but little below the Son of God. He presents a marked contrast to the people of later generations; in this one respect is shown the great degeneracy of the race. But all arise from their last deep slumber with the freshness and vigor of eternal youth. In the beginning, man was created in the likeness of God, not only in character, but in form and feature. Sin defaced and almost obliterated the divine image; but Christ came to restore that which had

been lost. He will change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his glorious body. The mortal, corruptible form, devoid of comeliness, once polluted with sin, becomes perfect, beautiful, and im- [463] mortal. All blemishes and deformities are left in the grave. The redeemed bear the image of their Lord. Oh, wonderful redemption! long talked of, long hoped for, contemplated with eager anticipation, but never fully understood.

The living righteous are changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. At the voice of God they were glorified; now they are made immortal, and with the risen saints are caught up to meet their Lord in the air. Friends long separated by death are united, never more to part. Little children are borne by holy angels to their mothers' arms, and together, with songs of gladness, they ascend to the city of God.

On each side of the cloudy chariot are wings, and beneath it are living wheels; and as the chariot rolls upward, the wheels cry, "Holy," and the wings, as they move, cry, "Holy," and the retinue of angels cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." And the people of God shout "Alleluia!" as the chariot moves onward toward the New Jerusalem.

Before entering the city, the saints are arranged in a hollow square, with Jesus in the midst. In height he surpasses both the saints and the angels. His majestic form and lovely countenance can be seen by all in the square. Upon the heads of the overcomers the Saviour, with his own right hand, places the crowns of glory. For every saint there is a crown, bearing his new name, and the inscription, "Holiness to the Lord." In every hand is placed the victor's palm and the shining harp. The commanding angels strike the note, and every voice is raised in grateful praise, every hand sweeps the harp-

strings [464] with skillful touch, awaking sweet music in rich, melodious strains.

Before the ransomed throng is the holy city. Jesus opens wide the pearly gates, and the nations that have kept the truth enter in. There they behold the Paradise of God, the home of Adam in his innocence. Then that voice, richer than any music that ever fell on mortal ear, is heard, saying, "Your conflict is ended." The Saviour's countenance beams with unutterable love as he welcomes the redeemed to the joy of their Lord.

Suddenly there rings out upon the air an exultant cry of adoration. The two Adams are about to meet. The Son of God is standing with outstretched arms to receive the father of our race,—the being whom he created, who sinned against his Maker, and for whose sin the marks of the crucifixion are borne upon the Saviour's form. As Adam discerns the prints of the cruel nails, he does not fall upon the bosom of his lord, but in humiliation casts himself at his feet, crying, "Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain!" Tenderly the Saviour lifts him up, and directs his attention to the Eden home from which he has so long been exiled.

After his expulsion from Eden, Adam's life on earth was filled with sorrow. Every dying leaf, every victim of sacrifice, every blight upon the fair face of nature, every stain upon man's purity, was a fresh reminder of his sin. Terrible was the agony of remorse as he beheld iniquity abounding, and, in answer to his reproofs, met the reproaches cast upon himself as the cause of sin. With patient humility he bore, for nearly a thousand years, the penalty of trans- [465] gression. Faithfully did he repent of his sin, and trust in the merits of the promised Saviour, and he died in the hope of a resurrection. The Son of God redeemed man's failure and fall, and now, through the

work of the atonement, Adam is re-instated in his first dominion.

Transported with joy, he beholds the trees that were once his delight,—the very trees from which he plucked fruit when he rejoiced in the perfection of innocence and holiness. He sees the vines that his own hands have trained, the very flowers that he once loved to care for. His mind grasps the reality of the scene; he comprehends that this is indeed Eden restored, far more beautiful now than when he was banished from it. The Saviour leads him to the tree of life, and plucks the glorious fruit, and bids him eat. He looks about him, and beholds a multitude of his family redeemed, standing in the Paradise of God. Then he casts his glittering crown at the feet of Jesus, and, falling upon his breast, embraces the Redeemer. He touches the golden harp, and the vaults of Heaven echo the triumphant song, "Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and lives again!" The family of Adam take up the strain, and cast their crowns at the Saviour's feet as they bow before him in adoration.

This reunion is witnessed by the angels who wept at the fall of Adam, and rejoiced when Jesus, after his resurrection, ascended to Heaven, having opened the grave for all who should believe on his name. Now they behold the work of redemption accomplished, and they unite their voices in the song of praise. [466]

The Saviour's chosen have been educated and disciplined in the school of trial. They walked in narrow paths on earth; they were purified in the furnace of affliction. For Jesus' sake they endured opposition, hatred, calumny. They followed him through conflicts sore; they endured self-denial and experienced bitter disappointments. By their own painful experience they learned the evil of sin, its power, its guilt, its woe; and they look upon it with abhorrence. A sense of the infinite

sacrifice made for its cure, humbles them in their own sight, and fills their hearts with gratitude and praise which those who have never fallen cannot appreciate. They love much, because they have been forgiven much. Having been partakers of Christ's sufferings, they are fitted to be partakers with him of his glory.

The heirs of God have come from garrets, from hovels, from dungeons, from scaffolds, from mountains, from deserts, from the caves of the earth, from the caverns of the sea. But they are no longer feeble, afflicted, scattered, and oppressed. Henceforth they are to be ever with the Lord. They stand before the throne clad in richer robes than the most honored of the earth have ever worn. They are crowned with diadems more glorious than were ever placed upon the brow of earthly monarchs. The days of pain and weeping are forever ended. The King of glory has wiped the tears from all faces; every cause of grief has been removed. Amid the waving of palm-branches they pour forth a song of praise, clear, sweet, and harmonious; every voice takes up the strain, until the anthem swells through the vaults of Heaven, "Salvation to our God which [467] sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." And all the inhabitants of Heaven respond in the ascription, "Amen; blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever." (Revelation 7:10, 12)

The theme of redemption has but just begun to be understood. With our finite comprehension we may consider most earnestly the shame and the glory, the life and the death, the justice and the mercy, that meet in the cross; yet with the utmost stretch of our mental powers we fail to grasp its full significance. The length and the breadth, the depth and the height of redeeming love are but dimly comprehended. The plan of redemption will not be fully understood, even when the ransomed see as they

are seen and know as they are known; but through the eternal ages, new truth will continually unfold to the wondering and delighted mind. Though the griefs and pains and temptations of earth are ended, and the cause removed, the people of God will ever have a distinct, intelligent knowledge of what their salvation has cost.

The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In Christ glorified they will behold Christ crucified. Never will it be forgotten that He who could command all the powers of nature, who by a word could summon mighty angels to do his will and execute vengeance upon his enemies,—the beloved of God, the Majesty of Heaven,—submitted to insult, torture, and death, that sinners might be redeemed. That the Maker of all worlds, the Arbiter of all destinies, [468] should lay aside his glory, and humiliate himself from love to man, will ever excite the wonder and admiration of the universe. As the nations of the saved look upon their Redeemer, and behold the eternal glory of the Father shining in his countenance; as they behold his throne, which is from everlasting to everlasting, and know that his kingdom is to have no end, they break forth in rapturous song, "Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his own most precious blood!"

The mystery of the cross explains all other mysteries. In the light that streams from Calvary, the attributes of God which had filled us with fear and awe appear beautiful and attractive. Mercy, tenderness, and parental love are seen to blend with holiness, justice, and power. While we behold the majesty of his throne, high and lifted up, we see his character in its gracious manifestations, and comprehend, as never before, the significance of that endearing title, our Father.

It will be seen that He who is infinite in wisdom could devise no plan for our salvation except the sacrifice of his Son. The compensation for this sacrifice is the joy of peopling the earth with ransomed beings, holy, happy, and immortal. The result of the Saviour's conflict with the powers of darkness is joy to the redeemed, redounding to the glory of God, throughout eternity. And such is the value of the soul that the Father is satisfied with the price paid; and Christ himself, beholding the fruits of his great sacrifice, is satisfied. [469]

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DESOLATION OF THE EARTH.

"THEREFORE shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more." (Revelation 18:8-11) Such are the judgments that fall upon Babylon in the day of the visitation of God's wrath. She has filled up the measure of her iniquity; her time has come; she is ripe for destruction.

When the voice of God turns the captivity of his people, there is a terrible awakening of those who have lost all in the great game of life. While probation continued, they were blinded by Satan's deceptions, and they justified their course of sin. The rich prided themselves upon their superiority to those who were less favored; but they had obtained their [470] riches by violation of the law of God. They had neglected to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to deal justly, and to love mercy. They had sought to exalt themselves, and to obtain the homage of their fellow-creatures. Now they are stripped of all that made them great, and are left destitute and defenseless. They look upon the destruction of the idols which they preferred before their Maker. They sold

their souls for earthly riches and enjoyments, and did not seek to become rich toward God. The result is, their lives are a failure; their pleasures are now turned to gall, their treasures to corruption. The gain of a lifetime is swept away in a moment. The rich bemoan the destruction of their grand houses, the scattering of their gold and silver. But their lamentations are silenced by the fear that they themselves are to perish with their idols.

The wicked are filled with regret, not because of their sinful neglect of God and their fellow-men, but because God has conquered. They lament that the result is what it is; but they do not repent of their wickedness. They would leave no means untried to conquer if they could.

The world see the very class whom they have mocked and derided, and desired to exterminate, pass unharmed through tempest and earthquake and pestilence. He who is to the transgressors of his law a devouring fire, is to his people a safe pavilion.

The minister who has sacrificed truth to gain the favor of men, now discerns the character and influence of his teachings. It is apparent that an omniscient eye was following him as he stood in the desk, as he walked the streets, as he mingled with [471] men in the various scenes of life. Every emotion of the soul, every line written, every word uttered, every act that led men to rest in a refuge of falsehood, has been scattering seed; and now, in the wretched, lost souls around him, he beholds the harvest.

Ministers and people see that they have not sustained the right relation to God. They see that they have rebelled against the Author of all just and righteous law. The setting aside of the divine precepts gave rise to thousands of springs of evil, discord, hatred, iniquity, until the earth became one vast field of strife, one sink of corruption. This is the view that now appears to those who rejected

truth and chose to cherish error. No language can express the longing which the disobedient and disloyal feel for that which they have lost forever,—eternal life. Men whom the world has worshiped for their talents and eloquence now see these things in their true light. They realize what they have forfeited by transgression, and they fall at the feet of those whose fidelity they have despised and derided, and confess that God has loved them.

The people see that they have been deluded. They eagerly accuse one another of having led them to destruction; but all unite in heaping their bitterest condemnation upon the ministers. Unfaithful pastors have prophesied smooth things; they have led their hearers to make void the law of God and to persecute those who would keep it holy. Now, in their despair, these teachers confess before the world their work of deception. The multitudes are filled with fury. "We are lost!" they cry, "and you are the [472] cause of our ruin;" and they turn upon the false watchmen. The very ones that once admired them most, will pronounce the most dreadful curses upon them. The very hands that once crowned them with laurels will be raised for their destruction. The swords which were to slay God's people are now employed to destroy their enemies. Everywhere there is strife and bloodshed.

The mark of deliverance has been set upon those "that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done." Now the angel of death goes forth, represented in Ezekiel's vision by the men with the slaughtering weapons, to whom the command is given: "Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary." Says the prophet, "They began at the ancient men which were before the house." (Ezekiel 9:6) The work of destruction begins

among those who profess to be the spiritual guardians of the people. The false shepherds are the first to fall. There are none to pity or to spare. Men, women, maidens, and little children perish together.

"The Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." (Isaiah 26:21) "And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come [473] to pass in that day that a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbor, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbor." (Zechariah 14:12-13) In the mad strife of their own fierce passions, and by the awful outpouring of God's unmingled wrath, fall the wicked inhabitants of the earth,—priests, rulers, and people, rich and poor, high and low. "And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried." (Jeremiah 25:33)

At the coming of Christ the wicked are blotted from the face of the whole earth,—consumed with the spirit of his mouth, and destroyed by the brightness of his glory. Christ takes his people to the city of God, and the earth is emptied of its inhabitants. "Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof." "The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled; for the Lord hath spoken this word." "Because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured

the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned." (Isaiah 24:1, 3, 5-6)

The whole earth appears like a desolate wilderness. The ruins of cities and villages destroyed by the earthquake, uprooted trees, ragged rocks thrown out by the sea or torn out of the earth itself, are scattered over its surface, while vast caverns mark the spot where the mountains have been rent from their [474] foundations. Here is to be the home of Satan with his evil angels for a thousand years. Here he will be confined, to wander up and down over the broken surface of the earth, and see the effects of his rebellion against the law of God. For a thousand years he can enjoy the fruit of the curse which he has caused. Limited alone to the earth, he will not have the privilege of ranging to other planets, to tempt and annoy those who have not fallen. During this time, Satan suffers extremely. Since his fall his life of intense activity has banished reflection; but he is now deprived of his power, and left to contemplate the part which he has acted since first he rebelled against the government of Heaven, and to look forward with trembling and terror to the dreadful future, when he must suffer for all the evil that he has done, and be punished for the sins that he has caused to be committed.

Shouts of triumph ascend from the angels and the redeemed saints, that they are to be no more annoyed and tempted by Satan, and that the inhabitants of other worlds are delivered from his presence and temptations.

During the thousand years between the first and the second resurrection, the Judgment of the wicked dead takes place. The righteous reign as kings and priests unto God; and in union with Christ they judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the

body. Then the portion which the wicked must suffer is meted out, according to their works; and it is written against their names in the book of death. Satan also and evil angels are judged by Christ and his people. [475]

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE CONTROVERSY ENDED.

AT the close of the thousand years, Christ again returns to the earth. He is accompanied by the host of the redeemed, and attended by a retinue of angels. As he descends in terrific majesty, he bids the wicked dead arise to receive their doom. They come forth, a mighty host, numberless as the sands of the sea. What a contrast to those who were raised at the first resurrection! The righteous were clothed with immortal youth and beauty. The wicked bear the traces of disease and death.

Every eye in that vast multitude is turned to behold the glory of the Son of God. With one voice the wicked hosts exclaim, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!" It is not love to Jesus that inspires this utterance. The force of truth urges the words from unwilling lips. As the wicked went into their graves, so they come forth, with the same enmity to Christ and the same spirit of rebellion. They are to have no new probation, in which to remedy the defects of their past lives. Nothing would be gained by this. A lifetime of transgression has not softened their hearts. A second probation, were it give them, would be oc- [476] cupied as was the first, in evading the requirements of God and exciting rebellion against him.

Christ descends upon the Mount of Olives, and as his feet touch the mountain, it parts asunder, and becomes a vast plain. Then the New Jerusalem, in its dazzling splendor, comes down out of Heaven. As it rests upon the place purified and made ready to receive it, Christ, with his people and the angels, enters the holy city.

Now Satan prepares for a last mighty struggle for the supremacy. While deprived of his power, and cut off from his work of deception, the prince of evil was miserable and dejected; but as the wicked dead are raised, and he sees the vast multitudes upon his side, his hopes revive, and he determines not to yield the great controversy. He will marshal all the armies of the lost under his banner, and through them endeavor to execute his plans. The wicked are Satan's captives. In rejecting Christ they have accepted the rule of the rebel leader. They are ready to receive his suggestions and to do his bidding. Yet, true to his early cunning, he does not acknowledge himself to be Satan. He claims to be the Prince who is the rightful owner of the world, and whose inheritance has been unlawfully wrested from him. He represents himself to his deluded subjects as a redeemer, assuring them that his power has brought them forth from their graves, and that he is about to rescue them from the most cruel tyranny. The presence of Christ having been removed, Satan works wonders to support his claims. He makes the weak strong, and inspires all with his own spirit and energy. He proposes to lead [477] them against the camp of the saints, and to take possession of the city of God. With fiendish exultation he points to the unnumbered millions who have been raised from the dead, and declares that as their leader he is well able to overthrow the city, and regain his throne and his kingdom.

In that vast throng are multitudes of the long-lived race that existed before the flood; men of lofty stature and giant intellect, who, yielding to the control of fallen angels, devoted all their skill and knowledge to the exaltation of themselves; men whose wonderful works of art led the world to idolize their genius, but whose cruelty and evil inventions, defiling the earth and defacing the image of God, caused him to blot them from the face of

his creation. There are kings and generals who conquered nations, valiant men who never lost a battle, proud, ambitious warriors whose approach made kingdoms tremble. In death these experienced no change. As they come up from the grave, they resume the current of their thoughts just where it ceased. They are actuated by the same desire to conquer that ruled them when they fell.

Satan consults with his angels, and then with these kings and conquerors and mighty men. They look upon the strength and numbers upon their side, and declare that the army within the city is small in comparison with theirs, and that it can be overcome. They lay their plans to take possession of the riches and glory of the New Jerusalem. All immediately begin to prepare for battle. Skillful artisans construct implements of war. Military leaders, famed for their success, marshal the throngs of warlike men into companies and divisions. [478]

At last the order to advance is given, and the countless host moves on,—an army such as was never summoned by earthly conquerors, such as the combined forces of all ages since war began could never equal. Satan, the mightiest of warriors, leads the van, and his angels join their forces for this final struggle. Kings and warriors are in his train, and the multitudes follow in vast companies, each army under its appointed leader. With military precision, the serried ranks advance over the earth's broken and uneven surface to the city of God. By the command of Jesus, the gates of the New Jerusalem are closed, and the armies of Satan surround the city, and make ready for the onset.

Now Christ again appears to the view of his enemies. Far above the city, upon a foundation of burnished gold, is a throne, high and lifted up. Upon this throne sits the Son of God, and around him are the subjects of his kingdom. The power and majesty of Christ no language can

describe, no pen portray. The glory of the Eternal Father is enshrouding his Son. The brightness of his presence fills the city of God, and flows out beyond the gates, flooding the whole earth with its radiance.

Nearest the throne are those who were once zealous in the cause of Satan, but who, plucked as brands from the burning, have followed their Saviour with deep, intense devotion. Next are those who perfected Christian characters in the midst of falsehood and infidelity, those who honored the law of God when the Christian world declared it void, and the millions, of all ages, who were martyred for their faith. And beyond is the "great multitude which no [479] man could number, of all nations and kindred and people and tongues," "before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." Their warfare is ended, their victory won. They have run the race and reached the prize. The palm branch in their hands is a symbol of their triumph, the white robe an emblem of the spotless righteousness of Christ which now is theirs.

The redeemed raise a song of praise that echoes and re-echoes through the vaults of Heaven, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." And angel and seraph unite their voices in adoration. As the redeemed have beheld the power and malignity of Satan, they have seen, as never before, that no power but that of Christ could have made them conquerors. In all that shining throng there are none to ascribe salvation to themselves, as if they had prevailed by their own power and goodness. Nothing is said of what they have done or suffered; but the burden of every song, the keynote of every anthem, is, Salvation to our God and unto the Lamb.

In the presence of the assembled inhabitants of earth and Heaven takes place the final coronation of the Son of God. And now, invested with supreme majesty and power,

the King of kings pronounces sentence upon the rebels against his government, and executes justice upon those who have transgressed his law and oppressed his people. Says the prophet of God: "I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before [480] God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." (Revelation 20:11-12)

As soon as the books of record are opened, and the eye of Jesus looks upon the wicked, they are conscious of every sin which they have ever committed. They see just where their feet diverged from the path of purity and holiness, just how far pride and rebellion have carried them in the violation of the law of God. The seductive temptations which they encouraged by indulgence in sin, the blessings perverted, the messengers of God despised, the warnings rejected, the waves of mercy beaten back by the stubborn, unrepentant heart,—all appear as if written in letters of fire.

Above the throne is revealed the cross; and like a panoramic view appear the scenes of Adam's temptation and fall, and the successive steps in the great plan of redemption. The Saviour's lowly birth; his early life of simplicity and obedience; his baptism in Jordan; the fast and temptation in the wilderness; his public ministry, unfolding to men Heaven's most precious blessings; the days crowded with deeds of love and mercy, the nights of prayer and watching in the solitude of the mountains; the plottings of envy, hate, and malice which repaid his benefits; the awful, mysterious agony in Gethsemane, beneath the crushing weight of the sins of the whole world; his betrayal into the hands of the murderous mob;

the fearful events of that night of horror,—the unresisting prisoner, forsaken by his best-loved disciples, [481] rudely hurried through the streets of Jerusalem; the Son of God exultingly displayed before Annas, arraigned in the high priest's palace, in the judgment hall of Pilate, before the cowardly and cruel Herod, mocked, insulted, tortured, and condemned to die, —all are vividly portrayed.

And now before the swaying multitude are revealed the final scenes,—the patient Sufferer treading the path to Calvary; the Prince of Heaven hanging upon the cross; the haughty priests and the jeering rabble deriding his expiring agony; the supernatural darkness; the heaving earth, the rent rocks, the open graves, marking the moment when the world's Redeemer yielded up his life.

The awful spectacle appears just as it was. Satan, his angels, and his subjects have no power to turn from the picture of their own work. Each actor recalls the part which he performed. Herod, who slew the innocent children of Bethlehem that he might destroy the King of Israel; the base Herodias, upon whose guilty soul rests the blood of John the Baptist; the weak, time-serving Pilate; the mocking soldiers; the priests and rulers and the maddened throng who cried, "His blood be on us, and our children!"—all behold the enormity of their guilt. They vainly seek to hide from the divine majesty of His countenance, outshining the glory of the sun, while the redeemed cast their crowns at the Saviour's feet, exclaiming, "He died for me!"

Amid the ransomed throng are the apostles of Christ, the heroic Paul, the ardent Peter, the loved and loving John, and their true-hearted brethren, and with them the vast host of martyrs; while out- [482] side the walls, with every vile and abominable thing, are those by whom they were persecuted, imprisoned, and slain. There is Nero, that monster of cruelty and vice, beholding the joy and

exaltation of those whom he once tortured, and in whose extremest anguish he found Satanic delight. His mother is there to witness the result of her own work; to see how the evil stamp of character transmitted to her son, the passions encouraged and developed by her influence and example, have borne fruit in crimes that caused the world to shudder.

There are papist priests and prelates, who claimed to be Christ's ambassadors, yet employed the rack, the dungeon, and the stake to control the consciences of his people. There are the proud pontiffs who exalted themselves above God, and presumed to change the law of the Most High. Those pretended fathers of the church have an account to render to God from which they would fain be excused. Too late they are made to see that the Omniscient One is jealous of his law, and that he will in no wise clear the guilty. They learn now that Christ identifies his interest with that of his suffering people; and they feel the force of his own words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

The whole wicked world stand arraigned at the bar of God, on the charge of high treason against the government of Heaven. They have none to plead their cause; they are without excuse; and the sentence of eternal death is pronounced against them.

It is now evident to all that the wages of sin is [483] not noble independence and eternal life, but slavery, ruin, and death. The wicked see what they have forfeited by their life of rebellion. The far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory was despised when offered them; but how desirable it now appears. "All this," cries the lost soul, "I might have had; but I chose to put these things far from me. Oh, strange infatuation! I have exchanged peace, happiness, and honor, for wretchedness, infamy, and

despair." All see that their exclusion from Heaven is just. In their lives they declared, We will not have this Jesus to reign over us.

As if entranced, the wicked have looked upon the coronation of the Son of God. They see in his hands the tables of the divine law, the statutes which they have despised and transgressed. They witness the outburst of wonder, rapture, and adoration from the saved; and as the wave of melody sweeps over the multitudes without the city, all with one voice exclaim, "Marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints;" and falling prostrate, they worship the Prince of life.

Satan seems paralyzed as he beholds the glory and majesty of Christ. He who was once a covering cherub remembers whence he has fallen. A shining seraph, "son of the morning;" how changed, how degraded! From the council where once he was honored, he is forever excluded. He sees another now standing near to the Father, veiling his glory. He has seen the crown placed upon the head of Christ by an angel of lofty stature and majestic presence, and he knows that this office might have been his. [484]

Memory recalls the home of his innocence and purity, the peace and content that were his until he indulged in murmuring against God, and envy of Christ. His accusations, his rebellion, his deceptions to gain the sympathy and support of the angels, his stubborn persistence in making no effort for self-recovery when God would have granted him forgiveness,—all come vividly before him. He reviews his work among men and its results,—the enmity of man toward his fellow-man, the terrible destruction of life, the rise and fall of kingdoms, the overturning of thrones, the long succession of tumults, conflicts, and revolutions. He recalls his constant efforts

to oppose the work of Christ and to sink man lower and lower. He sees that his hellish plots have been powerless to destroy those who have put their trust in Jesus. As Satan looks upon his kingdom, the fruit of his toil, he sees only failure and ruin. He has led the multitudes to believe that the city of God would be an easy prey; but he knows that this is false. Again and again in the progress of the great controversy has he been defeated and compelled to yield. He knows too well the power and majesty of the Eternal.

The aim of the great rebel has ever been to justify himself, and to prove the divine government responsible for the rebellion. To this end he has bent the power of his giant intellect. He has worked deliberately and systematically, and with marvelous success, leading vast multitudes to accept his version of the great controversy which has been so long in progress. For thousands of years this chief of conspiracy has palmed off falsehood for truth. But the [485] time has now come when the rebellion is to be finally defeated, and the history and character of Satan disclosed. In his last great effort to dethrone Christ destroy his people, and take possession of the city of God, the arch-deceiver has been fully unmasked. Those who have united with him see the total failure of his cause. Christ's followers and the loyal angels behold the full extent of his machinations against the government of God. He is the object of universal abhorrence.

Satan sees that his voluntary rebellion has unfitted him for Heaven. He has trained his powers to war against God; the purity, peace, and harmony of Heaven would be to him supreme torture. His accusations against the mercy and justice of God are now silenced. The reproach which he has endeavored to cast upon Jehovah rests wholly upon himself. And now Satan bows down, and confesses the justice of his sentence.

Every question of truth and error in the longstanding controversy is made plain. God's justice stands fully vindicated. Before the whole world is clearly presented the great sacrifice made by the Father and the Son in man's behalf. The hour has come when Christ occupies his rightful position, and is glorified above principalities and powers and every name that is named.

It was for the joy that was set before him,—that he might bring many sons unto glory,—that he endured the cross and despised the shame. And inconceivably great as was the sorrow and the shame, so great is the joy and the glory. He looks upon the redeemed, renewed in his own image, every face [486] reflecting the likeness of their King. In their perfect purity and surpassing joy he beholds the result of the travail of his soul, and he is satisfied. Then, in a voice that reaches the assembled multitudes of the righteous and the wicked, he declares, "Behold the purchase of my blood! For these I suffered; for these I died; that they might dwell in my presence throughout eternal ages." And the song of praise ascends from the white-robed ones about the throne, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

Notwithstanding Satan has been constrained to acknowledge God's justice, and to bow to the supremacy of Christ, his character remains unchanged. The spirit of rebellion, like a mighty torrent, again bursts forth. Filled with frenzy, he determines not to yield the great controversy. The time has come for a last desperate struggle against the King of Heaven. He rushes into the midst of his subjects, and endeavors to inspire them with his own fury, and arouse them to instant battle. But of all the countless millions whom he has allured into rebellion, there are none now to acknowledge his supremacy. His power is at an end. The wicked are filled with the same

hatred of God that inspires Satan; but they see that their case is hopeless, that they cannot prevail against Jehovah. Their rage is kindled against Satan and those who have been his agents in deception. With the fury of demons they turn upon them, and there follows a scene of universal strife.

Then are fulfilled the words of the prophet: "The [487] indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter." (Isaiah 34:2) "Upon the wicked he shall rain quick burning coals, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." (Psalm 11:6 Margin) Fire comes down from God out of Heaven. The earth is broken up. The weapons concealed in its depths are drawn forth. Devouring flames burst from every yawning chasm. The very rocks are on fire. The day has come that shall burn as an oven. (Malachi 4:1) The elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein are burned up. (2 Peter 3:10) The fire of Tophet is "prepared for the king," the chief of rebellion; the pile thereof is deep and large, and "the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." (Isaiah 30:33) The earth's surface seems one molten mass,—a vast, seething lake of fire. It is the time of the judgment and perdition of ungodly men,—"the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion." (Isaiah 34:8)

The wicked receive their recompense in the earth. They "shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts." Some are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days. All are punished according to their deeds. The sins of the righteous have been transferred to Satan, the originator of evil who must bear their penalty. Thus he is made to suffer

not only for his own rebellion, but for all the sins which he has caused God's people to commit. His punishment is to be far [488] greater than that of those whom he has deceived. After all have perished who fell by his deceptions, he is still to live and suffer on. In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch,—Satan the root, his followers the branches. The justice of God is satisfied, and the saints and all the angelic host say with a loud voice, Amen.

While the earth is wrapped in the fire of God's vengeance, the righteous abide safely in the holy city. Upon those that had part in the first resurrection, the second death has no power. (Revelation 20:6) While God is to the wicked a consuming fire, he is to his people both a sun and a shield. (Psalm 84:11)

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." (Revelation 21:1) The fire that consumes the wicked purifies the earth. Every trace of the curse is swept away. No eternally burning hell will keep before the ransomed the fearful consequences of sin. One reminder alone remains: our Redeemer will ever bear the marks of his crucifixion. Upon his wounded head, his hands and feet, are the only traces of the cruel work that sin has wrought.

"O Tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, to thee shall it come, even the first dominion." (Micah 4:8) The kingdom forfeited by sin, Christ has regained, and the redeemed are to possess it with him. "The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever." (Psalm 37:29) A fear of making the saints' inheritance seem too material has led many to spiritualize away the very truths which lead us to look [489] upon the new earth as our home. Christ assured his disciples that he went to prepare mansions for them. Those who accept the teachings of God's word will not be wholly ignorant

concerning the heavenly abode. And yet the apostle Paul declares: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9) Human language is inadequate to describe the reward of the righteous. It will be known only to those who behold it. No finite mind can comprehend the glory of the Paradise of God.

In the Bible the inheritance of the saved is called a country. (Hebrews 11:14-16) There the great Shepherd leads his flock to fountains of living waters. The tree of life yields its fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree are for the service of the nations. There are ever-flowing streams, clear as crystal, and beside them waving trees cast their shadows upon the paths prepared for the ransomed of the Lord. There the wide-spreading plains swell into hills of beauty, and the mountains of God rear their lofty summits. On those peaceful plains, beside those living streams, God's people, so long pilgrims and wanderers, shall find a home.

There is the New Jerusalem, "having the glory of God," her light "like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." (Revelation 21:11) Saith the Lord, "I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people." (Isaiah 65:19) "The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, [490] and God himself shall be with them, and be their God, And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." (Revelation 21:3-4)

In the city of God "there shall be no night." None will need or desire repose. There will be no weariness in doing the will of God and offering praise to his name. We shall ever feel the freshness of the morning, and shall ever be

far from its close. "And they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light." (Revelation 22:5) The light of the sun will be superseded by a radiance which is not painfully dazzling, yet which immeasurably surpasses the brightness of our noontide. The glory of God and the Lamb floods the holy city with unfading light. The redeemed walk in the sunless glory of perpetual day.

"I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." (Revelation 21:22) The people of God are privileged to hold open communion with the Father and the Son. Now we "see through a glass, darkly." (1 Corinthians 13:12) We behold the image of God reflected, as in a mirror, in the works of nature and in his dealings with men; but then we shall see him face to face, without a dimming veil between. We shall stand in his presence, and gaze upon the glory of his countenance.

There, immortal minds will study with never-failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love. There is no cruel, deceiving foe [491] to tempt to forgetfulness of God. Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body.

And as the years of eternity roll, they will bring richer and more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of his character. As Jesus

opens before them the riches of redemption, and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed beat with a stronger devotion, and they sweep the harps of gold with a firmer hand; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise.

"And every creature which is in Heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

Sin and sinners are no more; God's entire universe is clean; and the great controversy is forever ended. [492]

THE greatest and most favored nation upon the earth is the United States. A gracious Providence has shielded this country, and poured upon her the choicest of Heaven's blessings. Here the persecuted and oppressed have found refuge. Here the Christian faith in its purity has been taught. This people have been the recipients of great light and unrivaled mercies. But these gifts have been repaid by ingratitude and forgetfulness of God. The Infinite One keeps a reckoning with the nations, and their guilt is proportioned to the light rejected. A fearful record now stands in the register of Heaven against our land; but the crime which shall fill up the measure of her iniquity is that of making void the law of God.

Between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah will come the last great conflict of the controversy between truth and error. Upon this battle we are now entering,—a battle not between rival churches contending for the supremacy, but between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition. The agencies which will unite against truth and righteousness in this contest are now actively at work. — *“The Coming Conflict”*, pg. 26

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