

THE PRESENT TRUTH

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If So or If Not

The two parties represented by Cain and Abel will exist till the close of this earth's history. The well-doer, the obedient man, does not war against the transgressor of God's holy law. But those who do not respect the law of God oppress and persecute their fellow-men. They follow their leader, who is an accuser of God and of those who are made perfect through obedience. {Signs of the Times, March 21, 1900}

"This is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that ye should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." The Cain-spirit, which leads men to accuse, condemn, imprison, and put to death their fellow-men, has waxed strong in our world. The transgressors of God's plain commands are inspired by the spirit of Satan to harm their fellow-men, because they differ from them in religious belief. They disregard God's law, enacting man-made laws, and trying, by their cruel inventions, to compel men to blaspheme God, as they themselves are doing. But they have been given no right to do this. Those who pass sentence of pain and death upon their fellow-men because of a difference of religion, will have just such sentence passed upon them if they continue to transgress. By their works they bear testimony that should Christ come the second time as He came the first time, they would reject Him and put Him to death.

Like Cain, men are today violating a plain "Thus saith the Lord." God has sanctified and blessed the seventh day, requiring all men to keep it sacred as His memorial of creation. But, inspired by the arch-deceiver, man has set up a rival rest day, which God regards as He did the offering of Cain. Like Cain, those who worship this idol are offended because God's chosen people will not reject the day specified in His law as holy, to keep a rest day of man's creation. They try to force their fellow-men to worship this idol. Thus did Nebuchadnezzar, when he set up a golden image in the plains of Dura, and in his pride and self-exaltation sought to compel all to bow down to it. As Cain set aside God's holy command, and offered a sacrifice of his own choice, so men have set aside God's holy Sabbath, and have exalted one of their own creation. And as Cain was filled with bitterness against Abel, so they are filled with bitterness against those who by keeping God's Sabbath cast reflections upon the worship of a day which bears no divine sanction or appointment. {Signs of the Times, March 21, 1900}

Thus it has been, and thus it will be till the end of time. Sin is Satan's attribute, and it is always leagued against good. The spirit of Cain is manifest in all false religions. Satan's work is to condemn and destroy, to take away man's liberty and destroy his life. Transgression always leads men to act as Satan's agents, to carry out his purposes against God and righteousness. {Signs of the Times, March 21, 1900}

Today, as in the days of Babylon, the accuser of the brethren is working through human agencies to hurt and destroy those who are dear to the Lord. Men in power do not realize that they can not in justice control the minds of their fellow-men, and Satan works through them to corrupt right dealing. Those who try to keep the commandments of God, will meet with much opposition. Satanic attributes will take possession of the hearts of men, making them as hard as steel; and all who depart from evil will make themselves a prey to the hatred of those that refuse to obey the law of God.

But when the State forms laws directly opposed to the laws of Jehovah, and thus strives to compel men to obey them, it is following the example set by the king of Babylon. When it takes the guardianship of the religious interests of the nation, a spirit of intolerance is manifested if men seek to practise the truth, which, by earnest study, they have found in God's Word. Those who are actuated by such a spirit of oppression can not understand what religious liberty means. {Signs of the Times, May 13, 1897}

Through the apostles, God gave the Jewish people a last opportunity to repent. But they turned away from every entreaty. In the arrest, the trial, and the imprisonment of his witnesses, God manifested himself. He gave them words to speak, and a tongue and voice with which to vindicate the truth and acknowledge him as the Son of God. They were men of whom the world was not worthy, yet their judges pronounced on them the death sentence. They were not allowed to live and serve their God. By killing them, the Jews crucified afresh the Son of God.

So it will be again. But it is over the seventh-day Sabbath that the battle will be fought. The authorities of this world will rise up in their pride and power to make laws to restrict religious liberty. They will assume a right that is God's alone, and, like Nebuchadnezzar, will think that they can force the conscience, which only God can control. Even now they are making a beginning, and this they will

carry forward till they reach a boundary over which they can not step. Then God will interpose in behalf of his loyal, commandment-keeping people. {Review and Herald, December 20, 1898}

Christ told his disciples that they would be delivered up to councils; but he told them, also, that they were not to be anxious as to how they should vindicate the truth; for he would give them a mouth and wisdom that all their adversaries could not gainsay nor resist. These words were fulfilled at the trial of Stephen, and at the trial of Paul, who made Felix tremble as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. {Review and Herald, December 20, 1898}

This scheme, devised in the counsel of Satan, was made in order to compel the three Hebrew children to obey human laws in direct opposition to the laws of Jehovah. The most learned of the nation, men who were noted for their aptness and educational advantages, thus worked to form a confederacy that would exalt the king of Babylon and excite enmity against the Hebrew captives. They prevailed upon the king to enact certain laws which these youth could not consent to respect. {Signs of the Times, September 2, 1897}

The lessons we may learn from the loyalty of the Hebrew captives toward God and his law, have a direct and vital bearing upon our experience in these last days. We have a confession to make different from that which we have made; and we shall have to make it under trying circumstances. In order to impress idolaters with the power and greatness of the living God, we, as his servants, must reveal our own reverence for God. We must make it manifest that he is the only object of our adoration and worship, and that no consideration, not even the preservation of life, can induce us to make the least concession to idolatry.

The vainglory and oppression seen in the course pursued by the heathen king, Nebuchadnezzar, is being and will continue to be manifested in our day. History will repeat itself. In this age the test will be on the point of Sabbath observance. The heavenly universe behold men trampling upon the law of Jehovah, making the memorial of God, the sign between him and his commandment-keeping people, a thing of naught, something to be despised, while a rival sabbath is exalted as was the great golden image in the plain of Dura. Men claiming to be Christians will call upon the world to observe this spurious sabbath that they have made. All who refuse will be placed under oppressive laws. This is the mystery of iniquity, the devising of satanic agencies, carried into effect by the man of sin. {Youth Instructor, July 12, 1904}

By the deliverance of His faithful servants, the Lord declared that He takes His stand with the oppressed, and rebukes all earthly powers that rebel against the authority of Heaven. The three Hebrews declared to the whole nation of Babylon their faith in Him whom they worshiped. They relied on God. In the hour of their trial they remembered the promise, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Isaiah 43:2. And in a marvelous manner their faith in the living Word had been honored in the sight of all. The tidings of their wonderful deliverance were carried to many countries by the representatives of the different nations that had been invited by Nebuchadnezzar to the dedication. Through the faithfulness of His children, God was glorified in all the earth.

Important are the lessons to be learned from the experience of the Hebrew youth on the plain of Dura. In this our day, many of God's servants, though innocent of wrongdoing, will be given over to suffer humiliation and abuse at the hands of those who, inspired by Satan, are filled with envy and religious bigotry. Especially will the wrath of man be aroused against those who hallow the Sabbath of the fourth commandment; and at last a universal decree will denounce these as deserving of death.

The season of distress before God's people will call for a faith that will not falter. His children must make it manifest that He is the only object of their worship, and that no consideration, not even that of life itself, can induce them to make the least concession to false worship. To the loyal heart the commands of sinful, finite men will sink into insignificance beside the word of the eternal God. Truth will be obeyed though the result be imprisonment or exile or death.

As in the days of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so in the closing period of earth's history the Lord will work mightily in behalf of those who stand steadfastly for the right. He who walked with the Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace will be with His followers wherever they are. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain. In the midst of the time of trouble--trouble such as has not been since there was a nation--His chosen ones will stand unmoved. Satan with all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God's saints. Angels that excel in strength will protect them, and in their behalf Jehovah will reveal Himself as a "God of gods," able to save to the uttermost those who have put their trust in Him. {Prophets and Kings 512-513}