

LOVE NOT THE WORLD.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."
– 1 John 2:15.

ONE can scarcely read this advice of the Apostle John without having another scripture suggested to his mind, which, at first sight, may seem contradictory; *viz*, "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." The two, however, are not antagonistic, but are in full harmony when rightly understood. If God so loved the world, even while they were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8), as to sacrifice the dearest treasure of his heart in order to redeem and save them, then such love and such benevolence toward the world on our part cannot be out of harmony with his will. Indeed, such is the direct teaching of the Word. "Do good to all men as you have opportunity;" "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust....Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." – Matt. 5:44-48.

To love the world as God loves it, is not the sentiment against which the Apostle warns the Church, as the context clearly shows. That is a grand and ennobling love – a love which stands on the high plane of purity, and without having the least fellowship with the impure, nevertheless pities the fallen, and is active in efforts to rescue them from their degradation. This divine love, so worthy of our imitation, is that which benevolently ignores personal antagonisms and animosities, and, overleaping all selfish considerations and vengeful feelings, considers only the possibilities and the ways and means for peace and reformation and salvation.

But the love of the world to which John refers, as the context shows, is the love of fellowship, which implies the partaking of its spirit – its aims, ambitions and hopes, and its methods of pursuing them. If any man love the world in this sense, surely the love of the Father is not in him; "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world [*i.e.*, according to the spirit of this present evil world]. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." [R1956 : page 66]

As children of God we have been called to a position of great favor and advantage. Our Heavenly Father has revealed to us his plans and purposes and has condescended to take us into his fellowship and active cooperation; and so grand and extensive is our outlook of the future that we are able to view the present life in a very different light from that in which the world views it. The world walks on in darkness without the light of life, and consequently to them the things of this present life, which we have learned to count but as dross, are to them of great value, and they strive and run and contend for the delusive prizes that bring with them only labor and sorrow and quickly pass away.

The Apostle has very briefly summed up the world's treasures as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The lust of the flesh includes all the fleshly appetites and passions, the merely animal instincts. To these thousands sacrifice all the higher interests. To fare sumptuously in eating and drinking and frolic and pleasure is their delight. The lust of the eyes demands luxury in dress and home appointments, and the gathering for self-gratification of all that is admired and desired. And the pride of life glories in the shame of that selfishness which has ignored the wants and woes of the needy and suffering, and complacently said to self, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." And it goes further: it despises the poor and needy and oppresses them.

Such is the spirit of this world. It is the very opposite of the spirit of God and of Christ; and those who are led of the spirit of God should keep as far from it as possible. Their conduct, their dress, their home-life and home appointments must all speak a different language. We are to mind not high things, but to condescend to men of low estate; to show no preference to the man that wears [R1956 : page 67] the fine clothing or the gold ring, but, like our Master, to regard with highest esteem and Christian love those who do the will of our Heavenly Father. – Rom. 12:16; James 2:1-5.

"God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is love with us made perfect [completed] that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he [God] is, so are we in this world." As God is love, and is so manifested to all his creatures, so ought we to be love, and thus to shine as lights in the world. And if in this world we become living embodiments and representatives of love, we may be confident that at the end of our course we will stand approved before Him who seeks above all things to see in us this likeness to himself. – 1 John 4:16-18.

To fellowship the world is to walk in harmony with its ideas and to conform to its ways. In this sense we may not love it, but must be apart from it and in opposition to it. The way thus pointed out to us is, in some respects at least, a difficult way, and a lonely way; but it is the only way of peace and lasting happiness. This world with the lust thereof is rapidly passing away: it is hollow and unsatisfying and eventually leads to disaster and ruin; but those whose delight is in the Lord's way have blessed communion and fellowship with him. Their joys come from a source which the world cannot comprehend. They live on a higher plane, breathe a purer atmosphere and enjoy a holier, sweeter friendship than the world could ever offer.

But if any man in Christ descend from these high privileges to partake of the poor substitutes which the world has to offer, he is thereby proving his lack of appreciation, and hence his unworthiness of the

heavenly things: the love of the Father is not in him; and he may well fear the verdict of the day of decision.
