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"PAY THY VOWS UNTO THE LORD"

DEAR BROTHER AND PASTOR: –

I have been wanting to write you for some time concerning the matter of *proper conduct between the sexes* in the Ecclesia. Some items have come to my attention within the last few months, that I feel it incumbent upon me again to call your attention to the subject. I am not at liberty to write you as plainly and fully as I might, concerning the specific instances of which I know; but I have both heard and seen enough to become convinced that the Adversary is making a strong attack along these lines all over the country, deceiving some of the dear brethren (who are *old enough*, both in the flesh and spirit, to *know better*) into thinking that hugs and kisses and letters, laden with terms of excessive endearment, etc., are proper expressions of *spiritual affection* between brothers and sisters in no way related in the flesh.

The *consequences* of such an attitude of mind would surely be a decline of spirituality; sometimes with unkindness toward and neglect of those who have a *right* to the affections lavished on others. If the Adversary accomplishes his ultimate design, gross immorality and public disgrace of the cause we love will surely follow. Shall it come to this? God forbid! *He* can, and I believe will, deliver us. If the heart-intentions of the dear brethren are pure (as I *believe* them to be), then certainly this matter is the deception of Satan himself.

What I desire earnestly to entreat of you now, dear Brother Russell, is that you publish in the WATCH TOWER an article giving in plain and unmistakable terms *your* views of this matter, as outlined in the extract from DAWN-STUDIES, VOL. VI., pp. 489, 490, enclosed herewith. This seems to me particularly

desirable, as I understand *your* writings as well as Scripture are being twisted into a rebuke to any who dare criticise this kind of conduct, as "surmising evil," etc.

Forgive me, dear brother, if I have been over-bold in presenting this matter; I feel very deeply on the subject. With kindest Christian love, I remain, yours in the King's service,

HORACE E. HOLLISTER, – III.
PROMISCUOUS ASSOCIATION NOT IMPLIED
(EXTRACT FROM VOL. VI., DAWN-STUDIES, PP.489,
490)

"The Lord clearly teaches us, through the Apostle, that his preferences and favors are alike to all the New Creatures – according to their zeal, according to their love for him and the principles represented in him; and that conditions of sex, race, color, etc., of the mortal body have no bearing with him in his judgment of his people, in his estimation of them, and in the distribution of the final rewards. Knowing the Father's view of this matter, all of the New Creation must take a similar view of it, must esteem all New Creatures in Christ Jesus as "brethren," must be kindly affectioned toward all, must seek to serve all, must know *no partiality* amongst the brethren, except such as the Lord himself showed – in that he favored and honored those who showed the largest measure of zeal for his cause.

"But all this impartiality, this ignoring of sex, color, race, etc., belongs to us as the New Creation, and only partially affects our mortal bodies, and their relationship with each other and with the world. *Hence, the [R4191 : page 186] proprieties of conduct and relationship between the sexes must be maintained by the New Creation.*

"These, indeed, should have a larger degree of wisdom and prudence than the world, by reason of their being begotten to the spirit of a sound mind. *They accordingly should realize that as a New Creation, seeking to walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit, it would be appropriate for them to be even more careful than the worldly, the natural man, respecting the weakness of their flesh and respecting the propriety of certain metes and bounds of proper conduct, modesty, reserve, etc., as between the sexes.* In proportion as the New Creature is seeking the spiritual life, and in proportion as it realizes that sexual appetites war against the interests of the New Creation, in that same proportion should they endeavor, even more than the world in general, to make straight paths for their feet, and to erect as many barriers and as formidable ones as possible between themselves and temptations."

BROTHER RUSSELL'S REPLY

We believe it is our Lord's will that we publish the above letter with our unqualified endorsement of its sentiment and expression. Without surmising evil *intent* it calls attention to a world-wide tendency which we as specially covenanted people should oppose. We have already called attention to the fact that the Adversary may be expected to try various tactics of opposition during the last seven years of the harvest; and that the Lord may give him a comparatively free hand. While the hour of temptation, we are told, will try all that dwell upon the whole earth (Rev. 3:10), it must not surprise us if it comes with special force against the consecrated, the Temple class or "House of God." – I Pet. 4:17.

TEMPTATIONS FROM OPPOSITE QUARTERS

So far as the consecrated are concerned the testings seem to be opposites. Perfect love being recognized as the *mark* to be reached and to be maintained, the Adversary, finding that he cannot keep us from it, begins to *push us* – past the mark into such earthly loves as the foregoing letter mentions. The danger must be evident to all who will think for a moment. The *spiritual love* amongst the Lord's members is as proper as it is unavoidable. The tie that binds our hearts in Christian love is the dearest and the strongest of which we have any knowledge; because like to that above. With the love goes a *confidence* in each other's integrity of motive, which, unless guarded against, might let down some of the barriers of reserve which society has found by experience are absolutely necessary for the world. We do not mean that the Lord's people have lower standards of morality than has the world; but with higher ideals they have found a new confidence in each other – not in the flesh, but in the spirit. For the time they forget all about the flesh and are all the more in danger of being ambushed by the Adversary along that very line.

On the other hand the Adversary attempts to push others of the faithful aside from the "mark" by arousing bitterness, jealousy, envy, strife. He is too crafty to suppose that such seeds would spring spontaneously in the hearts of the consecrated. Hence, so far as we can discern, his course is to plant these seeds of evil while apparently cultivating justice and purity and truth. Ah! he is an artful enemy, and "we are not entirely ignorant of his devices," though we may little guess which will be his next move for ensnarement.

Brother Hollister, for instance, as the above letter implies, was tempted to surmise evil respecting those whose conduct he disapproves; but he gained a victory over the snare, and hence,

without judging others as of bad intention and impure motive, he sees the matter as we do and as we believe the Lord does – as a snare of the Adversary against which it is our privilege to warn the brethren in love.

How long will it require for the Lord's dear followers to learn the meaning and proper application of [R4191 : page 187] Matthew 18:15-17? Failure to note and to use properly this rule seems to us the tap-root of nearly every difficulty amongst the brethren, in every quarter. We have made the matter as plain as we know how in DAWN-STUDIES, VOL. VI., yet are surprised and grieved to note blunders along this line made by some of the most advanced of the dear members of Christ. The usual sophistry by which the "old man" sets aside this divine rule is to conclude that "it is not applicable in this instance;" or to be persuaded that he does not know how to apply it in his case and must *ask counsel of others* – the very thing he should understand is forbidden by our Lord's words, "Go to him, and between thee and him alone tell him of his fault."

Again, few seem to understand that the conference is not to reprove or rebuke or humiliate or punish the one that be in error. All that is for the Lord to attend to – "The Lord will judge his people." Our object should be merely to get the wrong thing *stopped* and thus to "gain thy brother." It is safe to suppose therefore that our Lord's counsel is generally needed – "First cast out the beam from thine own eye and then shalt thou see clearly to pluck out the mote from thy brother's eye." So then before attempting to apply Matthew 18:15-17, it would be wise to kneel down before God and get our hearts very humble and loving and very free from bitterness, etc., before making the first move. Then read afresh the Scripture and the comments in DAWN-STUDIES, VOL. VI., and then proceed very carefully – fearing to touch amiss matters which involve so much to "one of the least of these."

We quite agree with Brother Hollister, that none of the "members" of Christ could willingly and intentionally lay snares for their own spiritual feet or those of others. We quite agree that *their danger lurks* in their *good intentions* and *over-confidence* in their control of the flesh, and in their forgetting the Adversary's cunning, even while not ignorant of his devices. But while urging that there be no evil surmisings we also urge the Apostle's words, "Be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." (Phil. 2:15.) But suppose we could be confident of our own self-mastery and immunity from temptation, how could we judge for others or be sure that it would be so with them? Or, suppose that all Truth people had so progressed that they had brought every thought into captivity to obedience to Christ, should they not still let their light so shine before men as to assist them and to glorify their Father in heaven? Note the Apostle's argument – If my eating of meat cause stumbling to others, I will eat no meat. (I Cor. 8:13.) But let us not suppose our flesh to be dead. It is safer to suppose the reverse and to keep guard against every snare of the Adversary to entrap us or others.

PERFORM THY VOWS TO GOD

Realizing that because they are prominent representatives of the Truth the Adversary would lay special snares for the feet of the Pilgrims, the Editor last March sent to all engaged in continuous or occasional "Pilgrim" service under the Society's auspices, including all the brethren of the Bible House family, the following letter, which explains itself:

"Without casting the slightest reflection upon any of you, and merely having in view the fact that we are in 'the evil day' mentioned by the Apostle, and that we may be certain that the Adversary will be more than ever alert to injure the cause of truth

and its servants, we are proposing to each and all of the brethren hereby addressed that each shall bind himself by a vow to the Lord, which we believe will prove helpful, strengthening, and be in some measure a fortification or safeguarding of the interests we have pledged our lives to serve. We are not requesting that this vow be made to each other, but to the Lord; nevertheless, we shall be pleased to hear from each one who receives this letter if he should take the vow in the name and in the strength of the Lord. Furthermore, the fact that we have taken such a vow may prove helpful to others not only in the Pilgrim service, but out of it – yea, amongst all of the Lord's people with whom we are in contact – not by public profession, but wherever it would seem wise and proper by a private one.

"By way of starting the matter, by way of encouraging others to see that the vow proposed is in full harmony with our original surrender of ourselves, and all of our earthly rights to the Lord, and the service of his cause, and by way of suggesting that this is another means by which we may 'bind the sacrifice to the horns of the altar,' the writer hereby informs you all that he himself has made this vow to the Lord.

"The vow is: 'Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. May thy rule come into my heart more and more, and thy will be done in my mortal body. Relying on the assistance of thy promised grace to help in every time of need, through Jesus Christ our Lord, I register this vow. Daily will I remember at the throne of heavenly grace the general interests of the harvest work, and particularly the share which I myself am privileged to enjoy in that work, and the dear co-laborers at the Bible House, Allegheny. I vow to still more carefully, if possible, scrutinize my thoughts and words and doings, to the intent that I may be the better enabled to serve these, and thy dear flock. I vow to thee that I will be on the alert to resist everything akin to Spiritism and Occultism, and that remembering that there are but

the two masters I shall resist these snares in all reasonable ways, as being of the Adversary. I further vow that, with the exceptions below, I will at all times and at all places, conduct myself toward those of the opposite sex in private exactly as I would do with them in public – in the presence of a congregation [R4192 : page 187] of the Lord's people, and so far as reasonably possible I will avoid being in the same room with any female alone, unless the door to the room stand wide open – wife, children, mother and sisters excepted."

We have received favorable responses from the following:
– H. C. Rockwell, F. H. Robison, R. H. Hirsh, W. H. Bundy, F. Draper, G. Draper, M. L. McPhail, E. W. Brenneisen, J. F. Rutherford, Hayden Samson, J. A. Parker, F. A. Hall, M. L. Herr, J. D. Wright, C. H. Swingle, C. E. Fowler, O. L. Sullivan, John Harrison, Smith Walker, Isaac Hoskins, W. E. Van Amburgh, H. K. Blinn, J. A. Bohnet, A. E. Burgess, J. A. Bauerlein, F. L. Scheerer, A. G. Wakefield, C. W. Hek, A. E. Williamson, B. H. Barton.

We wish you all could see the precious letters received. They would do good, and abundantly prove the heart-loyalty of these noble brethren. One writes, "I am glad that you got out that mimeograph letter; I am sure that it will be a wonderful help to me and perhaps to others." Another writes, "When I read it I felt that such a vow was particularly hard for me, and also realized it would be especially helpful to me; so after deliberation, I write to assure you I shall humbly strive to fulfil this vow and am glad to take it, and want your prayers, dear brother."

ENLARGING THE SCOPE OF PROTECTION

Yesterday we received a letter from an Elder in one of the Ecclesias, saying, that one of the Pilgrims had shown him one of the *vow letters*, and that he was so much pleased therewith and felt the matter so helpful, that he had in prayer registered it as his

vow to the Lord. This, with Brother Hollister's letter, prompted both this article and the suggestion that Colporteur Brethren and all Church Elders and Deacons would no doubt be strengthened by the making of this vow. We believe that it will assist greatly in binding the sacrifice to the horns of the Lord's altar.

Do it now! and drop us a postal-card so stating, that we may rejoice with you. But remember, that the vow must be not to us but to the Lord, as a part of your Covenant with him and for the protection of the interests of his cause. **[R4192 : page 188]**

A FURTHER SUGGESTION

The foregoing is in type, but we squeeze room to insert something of quite a contrary spirit just clipped from the *Woman's Daily* as follows: –

"There is one Church in Chicago that has a wise man in charge of its affairs. He insists on having a regularly fitted-up courting room for the young people, with cozy-corners, screens, chaperones and lamps that can be turned away down. He says courtship is essential to happiness and that it is the province of the Church to do everything possible for the happiness of its members."

* * *

Now the suggestion comes to us, why not propose the **vow** above outlined to all the dear brethren, and a corresponding one to all the dear sisters? Would it not safeguard many during the days of special trial we may expect? If good for Pilgrims, Colporteurs and Elders why not apply it to ***your life?***

One dear "Pilgrim," against whose conduct there is not a breath of censure, writes us as follows: –

"It has been withal a glorious year to me, and I am indeed thankful to our dear Lord that he has permitted me to have a part in the harvest-field work. Really, dear Brother Russell, I find that the Lord is blessing me more since the vow we took recently, and I am indeed thankful that the Lord put this into your mind to suggest our taking this vow. Some new blessing has been given me almost every day. Now I am more anxious than ever to please him, and I beseech your continued prayers to this end, and that I may be given strength and wisdom from on high, and be kept in humility and love."

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In a back issue (Oct. 15, '04) we published a poem entitled, "Stepping Stones or Stumbling Stones," which we wish all would read afresh. There is in the foregoing suggestion of a vow a stepping stone or a stumbling stone possibly for *you*.

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