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"WHAT SPIRIT YE ARE OF"

THE number of the Brethren who have expressed opposition to the Vow as already stated is small, but they have ability and influence. The virulence of their opposition has amazed us. Never have we been more deeply stabbed and "wounded in the house of our friends" – by some whom we still esteem and love as dear brethren and who still declare their love for us.

One writes (A) that he perceives that the Editor has "a lying, evil spirit," because in the September 15th TOWER we said that the few brethren who had expressed to us their opposition to the Vow were all married men, while he *thinks* that one unmarried man wrote in opposition to the Vow. Our reply is, that we do not recall the letter; possibly it was couched in such terms that we did not consider it as OPPOSITION TO THE VOW, but merely a declaration of why the writer thought best not to make the Vow his own. But in any event, suppose this brother were wholly right and we wholly in error, suppose we thus demonstrated that our memory is *not infallible*, would that prove that the Editor is obsessed of a lying devil? Are all people of defective memory possessed by lying devils? We never so thought, nor do we now. This brother objects, too, that the same article urges "If in your judgment no 'evil day,' no 'hour of temptation,' no 'strange work,' no 'strong delusion' is impending, you should be wise enough and kind enough not to oppose those who do so believe and who are getting ready for the same." This statement, he insists, [R4266 : page 319] is a further evidence that we have "a lying, evil spirit." He intimates that he does believe that serious trouble is impending. Alas! that our poor brains should become so confused. Let us take an illustration. Suppose a crowd of people on and close to a railroad track, and that some realized and others did not, that an express train was almost due. Suppose that one hearing the

whistle and realizing the danger urged all to clear the track, and to go no closer than five feet to be out of danger. Suppose another like (A) took offense at the announcement and claimed that it should not have been made. Surely the one giving the alarm would be justified in adopting our very words, "If in your judgment no train is approaching and there is no danger at hand justifying our warning and advice, you should be wise enough and kind enough not to hinder those who do so believe and who are striving to get out of danger."

Another dear brother (B), denouncing the Vow, tells us that he knows that it is of the devil, etc. He then tells us that he knows he is all right, is one of the elect soon to judge the world, and that he is conscious of the Lord's favor and blessing upon him now. Finally, he threatens us that if we do not recant and contradict what we have already set forth on the Vow subject, he will do terrible things and teach us a lesson we will never forget.

We thanked the dear brother and expressed confidence in his conscientiousness, but declined to allow him to control either our conscience or the columns of the WATCH TOWER. We pointed out to him his boastful spirit and that he was attempting to judge us before the time, and without showing us any authority from God why we should accept his view of matters as God's view, and set aside our own convictions. We reminded him that he was derogating to himself the fourfold office of *accuser, judge, jury* and *executioner*, and that he would best go slowly lest lack of humility and lack of brotherly love should ultimately bar him from any share with those to whom the Lord will say, "Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord."

We do not say that these brethren have ceased to believe with us, nor that they do not grasp the situation fully, though the latter seems the more generous explanation of their course. If this is not

the true explanation of their opposition, pray what is? What feature of the Vow itself can they oppose?

Another (C) bitterly denounces not only the Vow but other things which do not *please him* in the conduct of the [R4267 : page 319] Harvest Work. He intimates that the vials of his wrath will be poured upon us speedily if we do not quickly move the reverse lever. Some of these dear friends appear to be perfectly willing that the *nominal* control of the WATCH TOWER and the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society should remain in the hands to which the Lord entrusted it, provided, Brother Russell will hearken to and follow the voice of the Lord through them; others would evidently prefer that the Harvest Work be blown to atoms that they might become more prominent. As a sample of this critical, bombastic, self-righteous and domineering spirit, we quote the closing words of C's letter; (Italics are ours): – "Unless steps are taken to correct this evil *I shall pray for the overthrow of the arrangement*, that it may come into judgment; but at present I will pray that *you* may be able to see the matter in its *true light*, and I am assured that the prayer of a righteous man availeth much, and the Apostle cites the prayer of Elias, to show how the Lord hears our petitions. With much Christian love, etc."

Thus our Lord's words are fulfilled in us over and over again from every quarter, "They shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." And as the Master was called Beelzebub we are said to have a "lying, evil spirit." We tremble not at the threat that we shall be *prayed against* as above, with its intimation that the Lord has been neglecting the Harvest Work, waiting for this dear brother to give the intimation as to what must be done. We fear none of these fears. We weep not for ourself; our sorrow is for these poor, deluded brethren. We perceive that they are being weighed by the Lord. We fear that they will be found wanting in *brotherly love* – the one important test of membership in the Body of Christ – the requirement of the *one* commandment which the Lord gave to his people. – John 13:34; 15:12.

Yes, we may well fear for these, and pray for them. We ask all who claim membership in the Anointed to join petitions with ours that these dear ones may be recovered from their present blindness.

The Apostles James and John, indignant at the refusal of the people of Samaria to sell food to our Lord and his disciples, asked our Master, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire from heaven to consume these men and their city?" Our Lord replied, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of."

So now we say to the few dear brethren so deeply exercised concerning the Vow, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of." You have been confused. At heart you surely do not mean all that you are hinting, saying, threatening and doing. We judge you not, condemn you not; but we do ask you to judge yourselves. Are you *exercising* the spirit of love which you assured us is your real heart sentiment? "By their fruits ye shall know them," said our Master. Let us each look after the fruitage of his own heart and life. "God is not mocked." Anger, malice, envy, hatred, strife, are *works* (fruits) of the flesh and of the devil.

IS THE VOW EXTREME?

We hold that the Vow is not extreme in view of the condition of things which our understanding of God's Word leads us to expect as "nigh, even at the door." We remind you of the Apostle Paul's declaration of his willingness to take a Vow, "to eat no meat while the world standeth," if such a course should seem to him *expedient*, in the interest of weaker brethren. The Vow which we advocate as now very *expedient* is far less exacting than the one the Apostle declared would be *proper* if expedient. But taking it, let us keep it in letter and in spirit. "Vow and pay unto the Lord your God." – Psa. 76:11.

Someone opposing the Vow suggests that those who take the Vow are so bound by it that should they through sickness or for other

reasons forget or neglect to daily remember in prayer the Harvest Work, etc., it would be an *unpardonable sin*. We will not call in question the sincerity of those who thus pervert the truth in their attempt to hinder others; we will suppose that they spoke out of the abundance of their ignorance.

As above set forth the Vow is a solemn engagement which should not be broken. So is our Baptismal Vow, our Consecration Vow – to be dead to the world and self and sin. Suppose that having Vowed to the Lord to walk in the footsteps of Jesus in the narrow way, and that at some unguarded moment you side-stepped – what then? Were you doomed therefore to the Second Death?

Oh no! for just such errors we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." "If any man [in Christ] sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." "Let us come boldly to the throne of the heavenly grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need."

As already elsewhere pointed out a *wilful*, deliberate violation of a Vow would bring the full sin penalty. A mixed sin, partially wilful, would be partly forgivable and partly subject to stripes or punishment. A wholly unintentional sin would be wholly forgiven upon request. We repeat, therefore, our exhortation, that the Vow be taken by all of God's consecrated children; but not without careful examination and in full determination.

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