

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP

**"The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying."
– Romans 13:12,13.**

THE SCRIPTURES call attention to the fact that there is a night of weeping in contrast with a day of joy. (Psa. 30:5.) The "night" is that period of darkness which set in after Adam fell. By one man's disobedience sin entered into the world, and death as the result of sin. (Romans 5:12,19.) Evil has brought sorrow and the darkness of ignorance and superstition among mankind until human affairs have become demoralized. As the Prophet Isaiah says, "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." – Isa. 60:2.

There is however a morning promised. That morning is to be ushered in by the Sun of Righteousness, rising with healing in His beams. (Mal. 4:2.) That Sun of Righteousness is Christ and the Church with Him. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43) – Christ as the Head and the Church, which is His Body.

Another Scripture speaks of the present as daytime: "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work." (John 9:4.) While for many centuries there has been a period of darkness, nevertheless since the First Advent of our Lord the glorious light of Truth has had more effect upon the world than at any previous time; for with the coming of our Lord Jesus a blessing came upon the world. At that time so much light came in, that the Gospel Age may be called *day* in contrast with previous experiences. This day, in turn, gave place to a long period known as the Dark Ages. Then, since the Reformation, a measure of light came in again, through certain influences which have brought blessings to the Lord's people.

Now it is time for the Sun of Righteousness to rise with healing in His beams.

"THE MORNING COMETH"

We believe that the day is actually at hand; that we are living in the early dawn of a New Dispensation, and that as soon as the Harvest of the Gospel Age shall have been garnered, "the kingdoms of this world" shall, during a great time of trouble, "become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ." – Rev. 11:15.

The Scriptures inform us that the period of time during which the present dominion of Satan shall become the Kingdom of God's dear Son, will be a specially evil day. It will be a season in which all the children of light shall be crucially tested; a day that will try every man's faith and work; a day of fiery trial through which only "the gold, the silver and the precious stones" will pass unharmed and in which all the "wood, hay and stubble" of error, sin and human tradition will be entirely consumed. – I Cor. 3:12,13; I Pet. 4:12.

"AND ALSO THE NIGHT"

While we observe the glorious dawn of the New Dispensation, we notice clouds also. The Bible forewarns us that before the Kingdom of Heaven shall have been set up fully there will be a very dark hour for the world – a period in which sin will have great liberty in its operation, and during which the saints of God will suffer persecution. At the same time we can see the reflection from the "Sun," although it has not yet arisen; we are now in the early dawn. But the coming darkness will make matters appear as though the morning will not come, as though the night had again set in, as though the Divine recognition of all things had ceased.

There is, however, a silver lining to the clouds. Soon the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His beams. The Church in glory with her Lord will put down sin, will dispel the superstition and

evil which now becloud the minds of men and will give clear light to the people respecting God and His Word. "I will turn a pure language [Message] to the people, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent." (Zeph. 3:9.) The Message was originally given in its purity, but this freedom from adulteration it did not retain. It has been more or less obscured by ignorance and superstition. When through Messiah's Kingdom the Lord shall make His Message pure and plain to mankind, then every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. Those who refuse, however, to develop *heart-loyalty* to the Kingdom shall die the Second Death. – Isa. 45:23; Acts 3:23.

While the day has not yet come, there are those who Scripturally are called children of the light (I Thess. 5:5), and who do not belong to the realm of sin. We who are of this class have laid down our lives in consecration for the purpose of becoming servants of righteousness. We are in harmony with God and are enemies of sin. We have been begotten of the Holy Spirit to the new nature and are promised joint-heirship with our Lord in the future. Let us, then, who are of the day, **[R5098 : page 288]** cast off superstition and ignorance – the works of darkness – and put on the armor of light. – Rom. 13:12.

ARISE AND SHINE IN LIGHT ETERNAL

What, then, is the Christian's duty throughout this period of darkness? Shall we live in sin while our hearts are in harmony with righteousness? The Apostle says we must not live in sin. (Rom. 6:15.) Let us put off everything which we think will be displeasing to the Lord, everything that is contrary to the light of the New Day – the light which *we* have seen, but which the world has not seen. Let us put on the full "armor of light," the "whole armor of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day." And putting it on let us remember that it is not a useless *weight*, but a necessary *protection* in *battle*. – Rom. 13:12; Eph. 6:13.

No man ever puts on *armor* unless he expects to *fight*. If he is a soldier of the Cross, the "Sword of the Spirit" is the great weapon with which he will prove his loyalty and strength. The brethren should build each other up in the most holy faith, fighting the good fight and showing their loyalty to the Lord and to the Truth. (Jude 20; I Tim. 6:12.) Those who succumb to the influences of darkness show themselves unworthy of the new order of things, and they may not expect to be sharers with Christ in His Kingdom, but to be amongst those rejected of the Lord as unworthy.

Let us remember that we are well along in *the hour of temptation* which was promised to come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth. (Rev. 3:10.) Higher Criticism, Evolution, Christian Science, Hypnotism, New Thought, Mind Cures and other works of darkness are casting a deep shadow over all who are not fully consecrated to the Lord and who therefore are not kept by His power, through His Word and His providences.

"WALK HONESTLY AS IN THE DAY"

While we are not yet fully in the Day, yet we belong to the New Dispensation, and therefore should live as nearly as possible in accordance with the *perfect standard* of the future. So to live will imply that we shall be misunderstood by the world; that we shall be thought foolish; and that we shall be considered enemies, not only by those in gross darkness, but particularly by those who, professing to be the Lord's people, really prefer darkness to light, error to truth.

We are inclined to lay special stress upon the word *honestly*, for we believe that the Apostle used it advisedly and in a special sense. As we look about us we find that dishonesty is very prevalent, not only in the world, where we expect a certain amount of duplicity, misrepresentation, deception and hypocrisy, but even among professing Christians.

Every true child of God should see to it that he is honest, not only in money matters, but in his treatment of his neighbors and his brethren in the Church, and above all, in his confessions respecting his faith. The test is being made along this line, and those who love the favor of men rather than the favor of God will be given opportunity to prove that they are unfit for the Kingdom, whatever else they may be fit for. The Apostle tells us (2 Thess. 2:11) when speaking of this evil day, that God will send strong delusions that a certain class may believe a lie, because they were not honest, but acted deceptively, hypocritically.

HONESTY THE BASIS OF CHARACTER

Probably the most valuable trait of character is *honesty*. Where there is little honesty, there is little character; where there is great honesty, there is great character. We mean not merely honesty as to dollars and cents, pounds and shillings, but as to the very thoughts and intents of our hearts, as well as to our words.

We should always endeavor to do to others as we would that they should do to us, and not to retaliate. At the First Advent the principal charge which our Lord made against the religious teachers of His day was that they made great professions of holiness, when, as a matter of fact, they were not holy. He said that they devoured widows' houses – not that they literally ate the houses, but that they tried to get possession of the property because of the more or less defenseless position of widows. At that time widows and orphans were not protected as in our day. Consequently they fell an easy prey to the greed of those whose professions of godliness should have protected the weak and helpless.

Probably our Lord would denounce a great deal of the wisdom of today as He did of that day. But we have not the ability to read the heart and therefore cannot speak as positively as He did. In respect to the great ministers of today, however, we readily see that some of them hold their positions under false pretenses. They profess to receive their

salaries as ministers of Christ, when they do not believe in the Bible at all. Some of them have written to us that they are in great trouble; that, realizing their position, they would like to get out of it, but they cannot easily get another position as desirable as their present one; and so they are dishonest enough to keep their charges.

The Apostle says, "Let us walk honestly." Let us take our proper stand for the Truth. While we should always speak the Truth in love, whether to our enemies or to our friends, while we should always have consideration for the opinion of others, yet we should take our stand firmly. We doubt that the Lord would care to take into the Kingdom any who are not honest. We fear, therefore, that those who have high positions are "deceiving and being deceived." (2 Tim. 3:13.) There is such a thing as deceiving one's self by repeating a sentiment until one believes it.

The lesson to us is that, however others may walk, we must see to it that we "walk honestly as in the day" (Rom. 13:13), as though we were living in the broad daylight, so that if the world understood all about any transaction of ours they would realize that we are honest – even as the Lord understands all about it. Any other course is dangerous and is not "walking as in the day." – John 11:9.

QUALITIES INJURIOUS TO THE BODY OF CHRIST

The translators of the Bible seemed to forget that the Epistles were written "to the saints" (see dedication of the various Epistles), and not to the world; hence when mentioning certain sins they used English words which are applicable to the crimes of the most depraved class of people, instead of using such language as would properly represent the misdemeanors that might be expected amongst saints. In urging the Lord's people to avoid chambering and wantonness, etc., we are not to understand the Apostle to mean the wickedness practised by the most depraved and benighted of the children of the world. Rather, we understand him to address the words to saints, urging them

to continence in their social relations, that the thoughts of the Kingdom should lift their minds to a large extent from the earthly affections.

By the general rules of language St. Paul would not *begin* his argument with the grosser sins and end with the [R5098 : page 289] less, but reversely he would *conclude* with the stronger, as evidently he does in enumerating the list of sins given in verse 13 of our text. Here he concludes with the exhortation that the saints, in walking as in the day, should avoid *strife* and *envy*. The other difficulties would be comparatively their own affair and might do no injury to others. But strife and envy are two qualities that indicate a wrong condition of heart on the part of the transgressor that would eventually bar him from the Kingdom.

Be it noted carefully that the various dispositions mentioned in verse 13 – rioting, drunkenness, chambering, wantonness, strife and envy – result from being intoxicated with the spirit of the world. Carelessness of life in any of the earthly affairs, and lack of self-restraint in the connubial relationship are very liable to go hand in hand with a wrong spirit in the Church – a spirit of strife, contention, wilfulness, not submitting to the Divine Word and providence, but on the contrary, arousing jealousy and ambition on behalf of self or others, for prominence in the Body.

SOBRIETY COMMENDABLE

We yield to none in our opposition to intoxicating beverages and in abhorrence of the terrible results which they entail. No saint should ever be intoxicated. The Word of God says that no drunkard shall inherit the Kingdom of God. (I Cor. 6:10.) The Scriptures do not say that a moderate use of liquor brings woe, sorrow, redness of eyes, etc., and we are not to add to their words. But we do well to remember that "They that tarry long at the wine" probably reached that condition through *habit*, and that most of such began the use of liquor with the intention of becoming moderate drinkers only. – Prov. 23:30. [R5099 : page 289]

Beware of the slavery of habit! Even the force of the "exceeding great and precious promises" is not sufficient to hold in check our fallen appetites when they are constantly being fed and the chains of habit are being forged. Surely the new nature cannot thrive under conditions which deprave even the old nature! Let every New Creature resist faithfully the seductive influences of evil, if he would make his calling and election sure to the Kingdom.

There is a marked contrast between the spirit and sentiment of the world and that of a true Christian. With the world there is a general tendency to indulge at times in a little revelry, and with many of them there is a decided inclination toward drunkenness. Even among the abstemious there is a feeling that an occasional drink is not only permissible, but quite necessary.

The Christian, however, has set before him the high standard of a sound mind, with meekness, gentleness, patience, brotherly-kindness, love. The more a Christian possesses the spirit of righteousness, the Holy Spirit, the more he realizes that he has passed from darkness into light. The Divine standard is to be his viewpoint always. Instead of looking forward to revelry, he is rather to turn away with regret that any such conditions prevail among mankind. The world considers the use of liquor to be proper if not too frequently indulged in. The Christian, on the contrary, considers drunkenness and revelry to be improper and to be resisted so far as he and his influence are concerned.

The Christian is to display increasingly the spirit of true holiness. The Apostle says, "Let your moderation be known of all men." (Phil. 4:5.) The very promises made to us in the Scriptures tend to make us sober. Our God is most gracious!

"What more can He say than to you He hath said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

Hence anything that might lead our steps away from the spirit of

holiness is to be regarded as something pernicious, for it might cost us Divine favor, our eternal life and a share in the Kingdom.

The world, on the contrary, have no such incentive to influence them. It is their custom to indulge in just as much revelry as would not be too seriously disapproved by society. Banquets are given for the very purpose of having a so-called "good time." When worldly people get together there is a general tendency to revelry and a certain amount of looseness. All this has a demoralizing effect upon society.

THE TRUTH A RESTRAINING INFLUENCE

The Christian has a restraining influence which is unknown to the world. Not only does he wish to have the approval of his neighbors, but more than all he desires the still higher standard of Divine approval; for he is on trial before the Lord Himself as to his manner of life. Hence, with him there is a principle to help him to shun rioting, drunkenness, reveling or similar conditions. The Apostle Paul admonishes the Christian to make straight paths for his feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way. (Heb. 12:13.) For instance, if a man have an appetite for liquor, he should avoid everything that would tend to arouse that appetite. Thus he would make "straight paths for his feet," that he might walk pleasing to the Lord.

The Lord does not deal with His people along the lines of commands. In His Word He sets the standard of a sound mind, not only in respect to revelry and the use of liquor, but to all manner of conduct. Those who love Him will strive to attain that standard. Whether therefore we eat or drink or whatsoever we do, we should do all to the glory of God. (I Cor. 10:31.) But we find that Christians called out from the world need to learn and to develop true character. At *first* they think nothing of what *subsequently* they would consider grievous error. As the Christian grows in knowledge and in love toward his fellow-men, he learns to measure things more carefully by the Divine standard. So we find that those who have been Christians for a long time show good judgment in respect to everything in life.

They use the spirit of a sound mind, which is the most desirable thing in the world. – 2 Tim. 1:7.

The Christian has before him high standards and the hope of the high reward of association with Christ in the Kingdom. We are glad to note that with the centuries there has developed a tendency toward morality and all the good things of life. And although there is much corruption below the surface of society, yet there is something which keeps that surface comparatively smooth, whatever may be below it.

When we compare civilization with heathendom, we do not find much more evidence of self-control in the former than in the latter. The heathen live as have their ancestors for centuries, with very little rioting and drunkenness of any kind. In a journey around the world we saw only two intoxicated men, except in what we call civilized, or Christian lands. The vast majority of heathen are temperate. Mohammedanism has done a great deal for mankind in respect to temperance. So has Buddhism. In one city we met a Christian brother who told us that he was a *temperance* missionary. When questioned as to his mission, he replied, "Oh, amongst those who accept Christianity there is much more need [R5099 : page 290] for temperance work than amongst others! I am spending my life in this way."

PLAIN LIVING AND HIGH THINKING

In all parts of the world it is customary to use liquor in the so-called "upper strata" of society. At hotels abroad nearly every person at the table is supplied with liquor. On the steamers the use of liquor is so customary that to ask for water is enough to create a sensation among the waiters. We are greatly blessed in America in that alcoholic beverages are held in disapprobation, although a great deal is used here in social circles. Liquor is justly regarded with opprobrium, for it is doing a great deal of harm and should be frowned down.

Christians are not to walk in reveling, nor in drunkenness, nor in rioting, but are to live on a high intellectual and moral plane. We are not to take pleasure merely in the animal appetites – in food, drink, etc. – but we are to live the higher life from our knowledge of God and His Plan and of all things that pertain to our welfare. This course should include also a sanity and sobriety of mind in regard to religious matters.

The great "harlot" pictured in the Revelation (17:4,5), has in her hand a cup, in which there is the wine of false doctrine, intoxicating the people who drink it. This drunkenness is upon all; but we are gradually emerging from its intoxicating effects. The hobgoblins that we saw when we were under its influence are disappearing, and sanity is returning to us. Now we have more pleasure in the Lord, more of the spirit of a sound mind. The Lord's people should be moderate, not only in respect to the temporal food and drink, but also the spiritual. Whoever finds it wise to be careful in the one, finds it best to be careful in the other. Whatever doctrine is not based upon the Word of God is to be rejected. "To the Law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." – Isa. 8:20.

WORLDLY WISDOM NOT LIGHT

From the Divine standpoint there are two great principles in operation – right and wrong, light and darkness. All the children of God, so far as they have received the Holy Spirit of begetting, are children of light. The world's condition is not that of light, but of darkness. (Eph. 5:8; I Thess. 5:5.) There are different shades of darkness, however. The Scriptures declare that "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people"; "The darkness hateth the light"; "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own"; "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." – Isa. 60:2; John 15:19; Matt. 5:16.

Neither the philosophies of men nor their moral sentiments are light. The true light cometh down from above; and only those who are begotten of the Spirit of the Lord have that light. To these, old things have passed away and all things have become new. (2 Cor. 5:17.) The elements of darkness that reign in our mortal bodies are to be discouraged and to be expelled therefrom. The clause, "If the light that is in thee become darkness," refers only to the Church class and means, If the light of the Holy Spirit of our begetting become extinguished, how great will be that darkness! – Matt. 6:23.

When the Apostle says, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30), he evidently is warning us against losing the light that has illumined us – the Spirit of our adoption. The caution, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit," implies that it will not leave suddenly without being grieved. We can readily see that little things may be the entering wedge in the displacement of the Spirit.

SELFISHNESS LEADS INTO DARKNESS

"Love is the fulfilling of the Law." (Rom. 13:10.) We who are in Christ Jesus have the righteousness of the Law fulfilled in us, because we are walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Rom. 8:4.) The fulfilment of the Law is love supreme for God and love for our neighbor as for ourselves. Everything in the nature of selfishness tends to displace love. Selfishness in its various forms is the work of the Devil. Selfish ambitions have a distracting influence and in time will remove **[R5100 : page 290]** us from the Lord. The Apostle mentions as branches coming out of this root of selfishness, anger, malice, hatred, envy, strife – all of which are works of the flesh and the Devil, in contrast to the fruits of the Spirit, which are meekness, patience, gentleness, brotherly-kindness, and love. – Gal. 5:22,23.

To whatever extent those begotten of the Holy Spirit as dear children of God allow that Spirit to be displaced in their hearts by an evil spirit, to that extent darkness comes in. A little anger dispossesses

a proportionate amount of love; a little envy, jealousy or contention is very injurious. Love cannot dwell where strife is found. Whoever, therefore, having received the Spirit of the Lord, allows a wrong spirit of the flesh to return and to displace the Spirit of the New Creature, will in that proportion go into darkness.

This darkness will not only cause the person to become more quarrelsome in disposition, but will affect him also in respect to his spiritual vision. As the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit gives him a better knowledge of the deep things of God, so, in proportion as this Spirit is lost, the knowledge of the deep things will vanish, until there will be gross darkness. The individual will then be in the same condition as the world in respect to spiritual things. No matter what he once knew and saw, he will not henceforth be able to understand these things; for "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." – reverence Him. (Psa. 25:14.) To whatever extent we lose the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of love, loyalty and obedience, to that extent we lose its illumination.

The Apostle Paul speaks of the "Mystery," which is explained as the peculiar relationship existing between Christ and the Church. (Eph. 3:3-6.) No one can appreciate this Mystery unless he is begotten of the Holy Spirit. If one loses the Spirit of his begetting and goes into darkness, how great is that darkness! He loses all knowledge of that Mystery. – Matt. 6:23.

Perhaps all have noticed that we may sit in a room dimly lighted and not particularly heed the darkness. But if we go to an adjoining room which is brilliantly lighted, and then re-enter the dimly lighted room, it will seem darker than when we left it. For a time at least we cannot see anything. The eye must become accustomed to darkness gradually. So it is with those who receive the light of Truth and afterwards lose it. They seem to go into grosser darkness than before they had the light.

CHRISTIAN STANDARD VERY HIGH

In the heathen world there is gross darkness. With every step of civilization comes a clearer view of the difference between right and wrong, and a general progress toward the right. Sometimes we find people in the world who have not been begotten of the Holy Spirit and who, not having the light in them, are still in darkness, but who try to regulate their conduct by certain principles. They say, "This is right and that is wrong. We [R5100 : page 291] will do this, but not that." They make rules of righteousness for themselves, although they are not willing to live up to the drastic laws which the Lord has established as His standard. They say, "We will do what the majority of people think is right." These people form a moral code of their own, based upon what others think. They have no standard other than public opinion. Wherever they go they practise what the majority of their neighbors think to be right.

But the Christian takes the extreme view which God sets before him – full consecration unto death. He is considered an extremist, a fanatic, by the world who hate his course and think it foolish. They say, "You Christians raise the standard too high. We are willing to live up to the standard of the majority in our community, but not to yours. You have such peculiar views."

The Lord's people gauge their views, not by what others think, but by what the Word of God teaches. They say, "To my Lord I must be true." To everything else they decline to conform. Thus they are led by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Love, which actuates them. But if this Spirit be extinguished, a mind once under its control will be in a worse condition than that of a worldly mind; for the latter, not having the special direction of the Lord's Spirit, has for its standard the opinion of others. The Lord's people have lost the fear of man, and if they lose also the mind of the Lord, they have no fixed principle to govern their course. Then their natural disposition will

assert itself; and the light in them having become darkness, "how great is that darkness!"

St. Paul tells us (Heb. 6:4-6), that "It is impossible ...to renew again to repentance" any who are wilful sinners against full light and knowledge. These have committed the "sin unto death" – the Second Death – from which there will be no recovery. – I John 5:16.

Let us then, while rejoicing in Divine favor, see to it that we act circumspectly. Our walk in life is not to be "after the flesh," which leads more or less directly to death, but "after the Spirit," which leads to everlasting life with our Great Redeemer. "This is the will of God, even *your* sanctification." – I Thess. 4:3.

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