

Love Shall Wax Cold

“Because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold”
(Matt. 24:12 R.V.).

The latter days are to be days of unbelief. This is the testimony of prophecy. This is one of the great signs of the time of the end in the world *and in the brotherhood*.

For over one hundred years—just about the period since the revival of the Truth by brother Thomas—the churches of the world have been undermining the foundations of belief. The pretension of science, the speculations of evolution, the theories of the higher critics attempting to reduce the Bible to folklore, have all been directed against the authority of God and His Word.

The whole trend of current thought is to glorify man, and dim and discredit the creatorship and supremacy of God. There is an increasing worship of, and dependence upon, “science” and the human mind, which is still—at its highest and best—but the *mind of the flesh*, utterly incapable of reasoning correctly without specific divine instruction, as the Scriptures so plainly declare—

“The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps”
(Jer. 10:23).

“Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise . . . that no flesh should glory in His presence.”

The danger to ourselves is that it is so easy—yea, almost inevitable—to be unconsciously influenced by the world, in relation to these things.

Modern man seems so accomplished and learned—modern inventions and discovery so marvelous. But we must keep ever before us the simple scriptural picture—

“It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.”

We must distinguish between natural and spiritual things. Brilliance in one means absolutely nothing in the other. The mind of the flesh, however brilliant or well-educated, knows only the things of the flesh.

The issue is between darkness and light—let us keep this clear. The mind of the flesh at its best is but darkness—brilliantly clever darkness, but still only darkness and leading to death, *utterly incapable of reasoning about the real, spiritual facts of the universe* (1 Cor. 2:14)—

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

This is a pressing problem before us today. A large section of those using the name Christadelphian who once stood on the old basis have been led down the same path that led to the apostasy in the first centuries—over emphasis and glorification of worldly wisdom and learning.

Our pioneer brethren drew a sharp line between the true wisdom of God, and the “wisdom” of the world. Many think that brother Thomas was too severe in his remarks about the world’s religious and scientific leaders, but the more we see this subtle danger invading the brotherhood, the more we realize that *he spoke strongly because he clearly discerned the danger that has, in time, destroyed every past revival of truth*.

His words were strong, but he was on the safe, true side, and the more we see and hear of current trends in the brotherhood, the more we are impressed with this fact.

“The fear of the Lord”—as we have been so beautifully and impressively reminded in our readings lately—*“is the beginning of wisdom.”*

Nothing short of that is wisdom at all. How well and conclusively this sums up the futility of all the “wisdom” and activity of natural man!

“If thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding. If thou seekest for her as for hid treasures—THEN shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

“For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding” (Prov. 1:3-6).

The unbelief of the world in a disguised form finds its reflection in the brotherhood. It is inevitable that this should be so. The pull of the flesh is strong, and unless the attraction of the Spirit is very powerful, brethren and sisters will naturally reflect the current views and outlook of the world. Baptism of itself is no insulation against the glitter of the world and the self-deception of the mind of the flesh. Jesus said (Matt. 24:12)—

“Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”

The urgency of the warning is much clearer in the Revised Version:

“The love of THE many shall wax cold.”

And the New Revised—

“Most men’s love will grow cold.”

The literal meaning is not just an indefinite “many,” as we might take from the Authorised Version, but *“the many,”*—that is, most, the majority.

“Because iniquity shall abound.” Why would iniquity abounding make believers’ love get less? Is it their own iniquity that is meant, or the prevalence of iniquity around them? Are they gradually and unconsciously tinged with the surrounding unbelief, or are they weakened and disheartened by the fewness of believers and the apparent prosperity of sin?

In considering these questions, and endeavoring to extract guidance and comfort from what is rather a sad subject, we must consider the meaning of “iniquity,” and of “love.”

The word here translated “iniquity” is *anomia*, which means “lawlessness.” It is the word translated “without law” three times in 1 Cor. 9-21, twice in Rom. 2:12, and “lawless” in 1 Tim. 1:9.

The first epistle of John is a deep spiritual textbook on Love and Sin, the two great powers that contend for the mastery of the earth. All mankind are arrayed on one side or the other. We know that the final victory will go to Love, and to all who have faithfully arrayed themselves under its banner—

“His banner over me was Love” (Song 2:4).

John says (3:4), “Sin is *anomia*—lawlessness”—this same word. Sin is everything that is natural—all this is outside the direct guidance and control of the law of God.

Lawlessness—lack of interest in God’s Law—ignorance of God’s Law—a deliberate ignoring of God’s Law—lack of love for God’s Law—lack of perception of the necessity and beauty and beneficence and blessing of God’s Law.

God’s Law is life and love. God’s Law is the law of the Spirit of Life—the shining light leading from death to life. Sin is *lawlessness*—living according to blind selfishness and desire, like a natural, lawless, wild beast.

“The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul” (Psa. 19:7).

On this, the Psalmist further says (23:3)—

“He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His Name’s sake.”

The Psalmist knew and rejoiced that God’s Law was lovingly designed to restore the soul from the selfish ways of sadness and death, and to lead through the path of peace and righteousness to everlasting life and joy.

*“Because iniquity—*anomia*—lawlessness—shall abound, the love to the many shall wax cold.”*

We are concerned particularly with the positive aspect of the problem of the diminishing of love because of the increase of lawlessness—how to guard against the dangers involved.

The first step is to clearly discern the difference between natural and spiritual things, and to fix our minds and allegiances on the spiritual.

What is the purpose of our life? What is our goal? The things of the Spirit are concerned with life and joy; the things of the flesh are related to sorrow and death. The things of the Spirit are the things of the Law of God; the things of the flesh are the things of natural darkness and lawlessness.

Increase of unbelief frequently, almost always, takes the form of an assumed increase of knowledge—a knowing better, a feeling of being cleverer than the instruction of God's Word.

There is one scriptural fact that will give us a clearer and more living picture of the issues before us. That is that, scripturally speaking, *belief is faith and faith is belief*. They are not two things, but one. There is only one word for both in the New Testament, and the different translations are just translators' whims. To believe is to have faith; to have faith is to believe, and—

“Faith is the basis of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”

(Heb. 1:1).

Faith, or belief, as the apostle goes to great lengths to illustrate in Heb. 11, is a vital, living force, a way of life, a power that made men stand alone in the face of the most violent enmity and persecution, and that led them onward to every form of accomplishment and heroism—

“These all died IN FAITH.”

So when the Scriptures speak of belief, let us not get a cold, flat, dead, powerless, insipid picture of mere passive mental assent. It is not a saving or pleasing belief in God's sight unless it completely dominates and transforms our lives. John says, as he begins his first epistle (1:4)—

“These things write we unto you that your joy may be full.”

This is the key— *“That your joy may be full.”* God's great purpose is the manifestation of His glory through the joyful love of a redeemed multitude. The love of many shall wax cold.

The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy and peace. John wrote, God spoke, Christ came— *“that your joy may be full.”* The law of God is not a penal code, but “good tidings of great joy.”

There is no joy like the deep and abiding joy of the Spirit—the beauty of holiness—the glory of the divine nature. Love *cannot* grow cold as long as this picture is kept fresh and clear. If we keep reading and rereading what John wrote, seeking to constantly live in its atmosphere of divine love, our hearts and minds will be drawn upward in the joy of the Spirit. *If we are not constantly filled with an overwhelming joy, we have not yet found the truth in its fullness and beauty.*

The love of the many shall wax cold because the shadows grow thicker—the sadness and instability of natural things deepens. All things today—industrial, economic, national and international—are at a constant crisis, a constant tension. No one is happy, no one is satisfied—and we are in great danger of absorbing this atmosphere of tension and stress.

“These things I write unto you THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL.”

And he continues (1 John 1:5)—

“This is the message that we have heard of him, and declare unto you—

“That God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all.”

This is the great message: “*God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.*” God is perfection in all goodness, and everything to do with God is on the basis of perfection. All that is out of harmony with God, is but darkness and sorrow in the end.

A joyful acceptance of this message in its fullness and depth is the first step in assuring a love that will never grow cold—a clear recognition of the great issue between good and evil, light and darkness, life and death—two way, two camps, two services. We must decide which side we wish to be on, and bring all our life into harmony with that decision, testing all things by this rule. There are no neutrals, no middle ground, for—

“*Whatsoever is not of faith is sin*” (Rom. 14:23).

“*The thought of foolishness is sin,*” and all outside God’s way is foolishness. In v. 6 the apostle applies this principle of the infinite goodness and perfection and purity of God—

“*If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.*”

Fellowship is *unity, communion, likeness, oneness of mind and purpose, a walking together in harmony*. So to have fellowship with God, and with those who are in fellowship with God, we must walk in the light—our walk, our whole way of life, all our thoughts and actions, must be on the high plane of harmony with the divine light and perfection.

Those who attain the Kingdom of God will be those alone who have constantly examined themselves in the light of these things. John says (v. 8)—

“*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*”

Later he declares (3:9)—

“*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for His (God’s) seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*”

To the natural mind this is contradiction, but by the mind of the Spirit we are led to see the deep wisdom and lesson of these words.

First, as John points out, perfection is the standard, and *must be the standard*.

God is *all* light. There can be no fellowship with Him except on the recognized basis of absolute perfection. The essential perfection of the sacrifice of Christ proves this.

But the more a man comprehends the beauty of holiness and the mind of the Spirit, the more he realizes the utter evilness of his own natural flesh and mind, and perfection constantly seems farther and farther away.

Any who say, or—as is much more common—who *act* on the basis, that they have no sin to worry about—that they are “doing all right”—who consider themselves quite acceptable to God—who do not realize the necessity of constant effort and constant self-examination—utterly fail to comprehend the standards of godliness and perfection that John is describing. Our highest attainments fall miserably short of the divine perfection of the beauty of holiness.

But still, “He that is born of God *cannot* sin.” The thought of sin is abhorrent to him. He lives in love, in closeness to God.

Though he continually falls short of divine perfection, he continually strives toward it. His choice and desire are always in the way of Christlike gentleness and purity and love. He never condones or is satisfied with imperfection. He knows that *to ever deliberately choose the way of the flesh in anything is to wound Christ afresh, who loved him, and died for him*.

Any failure, any weakness of the flesh, immediately fills him with sorrow and remorse, and renewed determination to overcome. “He *cannot* sin.”

The way of godliness is an all-pervading thing. It must continuously control and motivate the whole life, or it means nothing. It is so easy to deceive ourselves by putting on a self-gratifying front of godliness and interest in spiritual things on some occasions, and relaxing into natural fleshliness at others.

But “God is light, and in Him is *no darkness at all*.” To be godly is to be like God—the *same all the time*— a steady, consistent, spiritual shining, from hour to hour and day to day. Until it is *consistent*, our godliness is neither sound nor deep.

If we go through a normal day’s natural activities, we are inclined to consider that we have not particularly sinned. And we are inclined, if we have accomplished a full day’s work related to the Truth, to feel a flush of self-satisfaction, and our prayers tends to unconsciously take the pharisaical form of—

“I thank Thee, God, that I am not as other men are.”

But the whole issue of life depends on going *deeper*—getting the true, full picture of good and evil, light and darkness. We know that the whole world lieth in darkness—wickedness. But do we realize in what way, and to what extent, this applies *to our own inner selves*? Because iniquity—lawlessness—shall abound, the love of the majority shall wax cold. What iniquity? What lawlessness? *The basic danger is the natural inner lawlessness of our own flesh.*

Very few go right down to the heart of things—few get the full, true, picture of the divine beauty of holiness and distinguish it clearly from the natural motions of the flesh.

As long as we find ourselves subject to annoyances and irritations, we have not learned the way of godliness. This is one searching test. The flesh is very adept at making excuses for its evilness, many of them quite “scientific.” Books are filled with apologies for the flesh, and excuses for its viciousness. *But it is all the flesh*, and we cannot hide behind it, but rather must *overcome it* and put it to death by the power of God. Only God’s Word gives a true picture of man. Let us get our information there.

The way of godliness consists of *making love the motive of all action*. Here is one test of how close we have attained to godliness. *No one who loves fully and scripturally gets annoyed or irritated at anyone or anything—“nothing shall offend them.”*

Their basic motive of life is to bless and help. They react to every situation with kindness and sympathy and the deep desire to do good. This does not come naturally but as the result of intelligent self-discipline under the guidance of the Spirit-Word.

When we react with annoyance, or anger, or impatience, or harshness, it is one more shameful victory for the evil motions of the flesh within us.

It is a failure and a stumbling on the way of godliness. It is a break in the pattern of love that unites us with God. We step out of the divine light into the darkness.

“If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves.”

The Spirit speaking through Paul to the Corinthians and John to the ecclesia at Ephesus, shows how the deceptiveness of iniquity can cause love to grow cold without any sign of outward change and without those concerned realizing it. Paul says,

“Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing” (1 Cor. 13:3).

And the Son of Man to the Ephesian lightstand (Rev. 2:2-5)—

“I know thy works, labor, patience, how thou canst not bear them that are evil and hast borne, and hast patience, and FOR MY NAME’S SAKE hast labored and hast not fainted . . .

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast LEFT THY FIRST LOVE . . .

“Remember whence thou hast fallen, repent, do the first works, or I will come quickly and REMOVE THY CANDLESTICK.”

Here was a case perfectly illustrating Paul’s words about the most faithful of works being meaningless if the motive for which they are done is not love of God and love of man. To all *outward* appearances the Ephesians were exemplary. Consider all the things the Son of

Man gives them credit for doing “*for his Name's sake.*” But still he threatens quick destruction if they do not reawake to their *first love*.

They had gradually lost sight of their original foundation. Iniquity, the robust offspring of the flesh, had gradually increased its foothold in the form of pride, or self-satisfaction, or ambition, or combativeness, or some other fleshly motive for doing spiritual things, or just plain thoughtless habit, and had choked out love, the delicate fruit of the Spirit. Satan, masking as an angel of light, had deceived the very elect. But the Son of Man, who reads the innermost hearts, was not deceived.

The solemn lesson is that we must constantly examine our own motives, for just *doing* is not enough. On every occasion we must honestly ask ourselves *why* we do what we do—examine our hearts as to whether a Christlike love, kindness and gentleness is our motive and the Spirit is our instructor and guide. Often, if we truly search our hearts, we shall find that our supposed good actions have purely fleshly roots. In fact, this will *always* be so except where there is a conscious reining in of the flesh and a deliberate applying of the law of the Spirit, for “*In the flesh dwells no good thing*” (Rom. 7:18).

We must, guided by the instruction of the Spirit, devise tests to expose the deception. If we are self-willed in our good deeds, impatient of criticism or opposition, if we insist on it being done *our way*, if we self-righteously regard ourselves as carrying the burden for others, if any anger or bitterness enters our mind, if our basic approach to others’ views is not patience and a sympathetic desire to understand, *then love is not our motive*. We do not have the spiritual picture. We are yet carnal.

It is so easy to gratify our pride and increase our self-esteem by doing things for others and for the Truth. But the great and essential work is *within*—overcoming our *own flesh*.

So often it sadly works the other way—the more a man does for others and *supposedly* for God, the less godly he becomes in the all-important matter of inner self-control and the true, yielding gentleness of humility.

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At the end of Matthew 24, the chapter in which he speaks of love waxing cold because of iniquity, Jesus gives some details of the manifestation of this cold love condition.

He speaks particularly of the time of the end, of the time of the Master of the Household returning, and the conditions he finds in his household.

He mentions three specific aspects of love growing cold, in the attitude he presents of the unfaithful servant class—

“*My Lord delayeth his coming.*”

Smiting the fellow-servants.

Eating and drinking with the drunken.

These then are three trends to be particularly watched for and guarded against in the last days.

“*My Lord delayeth his coming.*”

Right from the days of bro. Thomas, the Christadelphian body has been on the verge of expectancy, eager for the Lord’s return. And the gradual development of the prophetic picture toward Armageddon has heightened that expectancy. This has been a distinguishing mark of Christadelphians, quite amusing to the world.

But today we increasingly hear it said, almost apologetically, as if ashamed of the former simple enthusiasm, “It cannot be for some time yet, there is more prophecy to be fulfilled first, things are not ready—” “*My Lord delayeth his coming.*” This is becoming the fashionable viewpoint among the “many.” Surely this in itself is one of the most striking signs of the end!

* * *

“And shall begin to smite his fellowservants.”

What are we to look for here? To smite is to injure and abuse, to harm. The Ecclesia of Christ is intended, above all things, to manifest an unearthly, mutual love. Jesus says—

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”
(John 13:35).

Here is the one great distinguishing mark of discipleship. This is a matter of vital importance. There is far too much pettiness and criticism and touchiness and coldness and childishness and self-justification among those claiming the Name of Christ. *Such conditions do not exist among his true disciples.* They are the mark of the unfaithful servant. Christ’s brethren are large-hearted—*nothing* offends them.

It is often those who speak most loudly of “love” who are the most harsh and bitter toward those who do not agree with them. Let us make sure that we few separated ones at least clearly manifest this beautiful mark of discipleship among ourselves!

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“And to eat and drink with the drunken.”

Generally, this means an indulging in, and joining in, things outside the associations and principles of the Truth.

It speaks of joining with false doctrine, for that is often represented under the figure of wine and drunkenness.

It speaks of joining in the activities and amusements of the world, for these, too, come under the scriptural heading of drunkenness and revelry.

It is so easy in these prosperous days to be carried away by the intoxication of the present—to eat and drink with the drunken—not only by the world’s endlessly increasing pleasures and entertainments, but also by the pressure of daily work and the endless complications of modern life.

Above all, perhaps, it speaks of a state of confusion and intoxication of the present—to eat and drink with the drunken—not only by the world’s endlessly increasing pleasures and entertainments, but also by the pressure of daily work and the endless complications of modern life.

Above all, perhaps, it speaks of a state of confusion and intoxication—having the senses dulled and blurred—losing the clear distinction of the Truth—the fading of the recognition of the urgency of a clear, firm stand—a general lowering of the standards and burial of differences and general amalgamation—*loss of the sense of the importance of clear separation from error.*

“They that sleep sleep in the night, and they that be drunken are drunken in the night .

..

“But ye are all children of the light, and of the day . . . Let us watch and be sober.”

“God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all.”

The days are evil, but there will be a faithful remnant found awake to meet the Lord—a strange, holy, separate few—perfected in patience and love—sober, grave and diligent in the midst of the general intoxication of the night, for Jesus says—

“Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.”

(Taken from “Be Ye Transformed” Volume 1 pages 287-297 by Bro. G. Growcott)