**“The Love of God” The Signs of the Times, 16, 47.**

E. J. Waggoner

God is love. It is not simply that he has love in large measure for his creatures, but he *is* love. He is the embodiment of love. To love is a part of his nature, and this love manifests itself in devising plans for the perfect happiness of all created beings, both in heaven and on earth. It was shown in the garden of delights, Paradise, which he planted upon the earth that was already exceedingly good, for the pleasure of the man whom he had made. And in infinite measure was his love manifested when he gave all that heaven had to bestow for the reclaiming of fallen man. {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 547.3}

But while God is love, it is a fact that between man and God there is not perfect harmony. Indeed, in man’s natural state there is not the least harmony between him and God. The apostle Paul puts this very emphatically when he says: “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Romans 8:7. It will be noticed from this that the enmity is all on the side of man; the carnal mind is enmity against God. And the cause of this enmity lies in the fact that the law of God, which is the law of love, is regarded by man as a yoke of bondage. God’s law is the verbal picture of his pure and holy character; it is an expression of the love that springs naturally from his heart. But “out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, theft, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.” Mark 7:21, 22. Hence the enmity against God. {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 547.4}

The prophet Isaiah says, in language that will apply to all men as well as to ancient Israel: “Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come forever and ever; that this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord.” Isaiah 30:8, 9. This is man’s position. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” Romans 5:8-10. {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 547.5}

Throughout the Bible it will be found that the testimony is the same: the enmity is all on the side of man. This is shown by these words of the apostle:- {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 547.6}

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” 2 Corinthians 5:19, 20. {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 547.7}

This is very emphatic. Man is the enemy of God; God is the friend of mankind, entreating them to become reconciled to him. nd the depths of God’s love for the sinful, rebellious world is shown in the next verse: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Although the offense was all on the part of man, God has made all the effort possible even to infinite power to have him become reconciled. On the part of man there is enmity; on the part of God there is an infinite tenderness, and a longing to have the rebellious children become reconciled to him. {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 547.8}

The same truth concerning the enmity of man and the love of God is brought out in Colossians 1:19-22. Speaking of Christ, the apostle says:- {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.1}

“For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight.” {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.2}

After Christ had suffered for our sins which alienated us from God, he ascended into the heavens, “there to appear in the presence of God for us,” and is now sitting upon his Father’s throne. Revelation 3:21. Of his work there the prophet Zechariah thus speaks:- {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.3}

“Thus speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” Zechariah 6:12, 13. {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.4}

This presents a wonderful scene,-the Father and the Son counseling together for the peace of mankind, the great mass of whom choose rebellion rather than peace. Instead of loving peace and happiness, they, after their hardness and impenitent hearts, not knowing that the goodness of God leads them to repentance, treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.5}

For a day of wrath will surely come. God is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, but he will not force men to repent and become reconciled. His love draws men to him; but there are many who resist the movings of the Spirit, and will not be drawn. As the same sun that melts the wax also hardens the clay, so the same love that destroys the enmity in some hearts only increases it in others. The simile is of course not perfect, for while it is natural for the clay to become hardened by the sun, it is unnatural for human hearts to be hardened by God’s grace. Hearts could not fail to be melted into tenderness by the tender, unfathomable love of God, if they did not steel themselves against it. And so when even infinite love fails to reconcile the rebellious subjects, there is nothing left but to cut them off as useless cumberers of the ground. {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.6}

In two passages of Scripture the long-suffering of God is represented by the figure of a husbandman trying to develop good fruit from his garden. Says Isaiah:- {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.7}

“Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.” Isaiah 5:1, 2. {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.8}

See also Luke 13:7-9. {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.9}

Thus is shown God’s unwillingness to cut off even the most unfruitful plant, so that he can say: “Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it.” Isaiah 5:3, 4. The gnarled, crooked natures of some will resist all the efforts of the faithful husbandman to induce them to bear good fruit, or any fruit at all, and since they bear only thorns and briers, there is nothing to do with them but to burn them. So the Lord says of his unfruitful vineyard:- {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.10}

“And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down; and I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.” Isaiah 5:5, 6. {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.11}

And of the unfruitful plants he says:- {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.12}

“Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust; because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.” Verse 24. {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.13}

At that time the counsel of peace between the Father and the Son will have ceased. The word of reconciliation will no longer be preached, because all will have become reconciled to God who could by any possibility be reconciled. Reconciliation will then give place to controversy, for that time of burning will be “the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.” {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.14}

The controversy is now between the Lord and Satan for the possession of the souls of men. In proportion as men resist the strivings of God’s Spirit, they place themselves on the side of Satan, and become actuated by his spirit. And when by continued sin, and repeated resistance of the Spirit of God, they have finally driven it from them, have blotted out every thought of good, upon which the Holy Spirit could work, then they are wholly Satan’s, actuated solely by his wicked spirit. {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.15}

Then when men shall have fully identified themselves with Satan, the Lord will have a controversy with them also. Says the prophet, speaking of that time:- {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.16}

“A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations: he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth.” Jeremiah 25:31-33. {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.17}

“For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” Malachi 4:1. {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.18}

Thus will the great controversy end. In that day those who have allied themselves fully with Satan, will find out what a hopeless thing it is to fight against God. They will realize that while God is love, his is not the love that is imbecile, but the love that protects. In love to his loyal subjects, who have placed confidence in the integrity of his government, he must blot out the incorrigibly rebellious ones. {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.19}

Says God: “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing.” “A blessing, if ye obey the commandment of the Lord your God.... and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God.” “Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.” Deuteronomy 30:19; 11:27, 28. Who will make the wise choice, and, through Christ, become reconciled to God and his law? “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” E. J. W. {SITI December 1, 1890, p. 570.20}

**“How Readest Thou?” The Signs of the Times, 16, 51.**

E. J. Waggoner

This is as pertinent a question at the present time as it was when the Saviour uttered it. Indeed, there probably was never before a time when there was so much need as now of professed Christians looking to their ground, to see where they stand. It is well understood that there is a great deal of rampant infidelity in the land, but how many realize that that infidelity is only the central portion of the stream, which indicates a strong current in that direction? It is a sad fact that infidelity is creeping-no, not creeping, but stalking boldly, into the church. That this is true, a few extracts picked up at random will suffice to show. {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 570.21}

It is doubtless well known that the great question which is agitating the Methodist Church at the present time is the admission of women as delegates to the General Conference, and their ordination as ministers, which would soon follow. With this controversy we have nothing to do, and do not care at present to express our opinion as to its merits. We simply wish to show how the Bible is regarded by many persons high in church authority and influence. The extracts given will show a general casting off of the authority of the Scriptures. {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 570.22}

Prof. L. T. Townsend, of New York (Presbyterian), contributes a chapter to Miss Frances E. Willard’s book, “Woman in the Pullpit,” and on page 153, after quoting 1 Timothy 2:11 and 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35, he says: “It must be perfectly apparent that if the prohibition in these passages is infallible, ...then Miss Willard and her friends may as well first as last retire from the controversy.” But Professor Townsend does not think that these texts affect Miss Willard’s case, therefore he does not regard them as infallible. {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 570.23}

Take another passage from the same pen, and the disregard, not to say contempt, of the Scriptures will be still more apparent:- {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 570.24}

The pastoral epistles were addressed, not to Presbyterians in America, but to two young Jews. The writer of these epistles did not have in mind a thought of American Presbyterians. Why, therefore, do Presbyterians-we include not a few Methodists-speak and act as though they must heed the admonitions of these epistles, going so far as to enforce against women the supposed injunctions of these epistles? Why are they meddling in these affairs?-*Woman in the Pulpit, pp. 146, 147*. {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 570.25}

Right glad are we that many Presbyterians and Methodists can be accused of regarding the epistles of Paul as authoritative even in these days. It shows that the spirit of the Reformation has not entirely died out. {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 570.26}

The following two statements are from Methodists, published without signature in the New York *Christian Advocate*. It should be stated that the *Advocate* strongly condemns such utterances:- {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 570.27}

Paul, who definitely believed when he wrote those scriptures that the world would not even see the second century, much less the nineteenth, was ordering the churches for his own age. {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 570.28}

So it must be remembered that Paul was a bachelor, and he was writing in the first century, in the midst of heathen surroundings, and endeavoring to be all things to all men, and not infringing upon local laws and customs more than he had to at a time when, as a rule, women had no rights that men were bound to respect. {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 570.29}

Anyone can see that the same line of argument would rule out all the epistles, as well as the words of Christ, and then what have people to guide them?-Simply their own perverse wills. But let us read another statement from the pen of Miss Willard, whose every utterance is taken as gospel by several hundred thousand professed Christian men and women. She says:- {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 570.30}

Whoever quotes to the intelligent and devout women of the American church to-day, the specific instructions given by Paul to the illiterate and immoral women of Corinth, does so at the expense of sound judgment, not to say scholarship.-*Women in the Pulpit, p. 50*. {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 570.31}

So it seems that the test of the value of any portion of Scripture is to be the intelligence of men and women, and their idea as to the necessity for it. If it suite them, it is all right; if it does not, they reject it. Of what value is the Bible to such people? Their own wills are their standard of right and wrong. {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 570.32}

One more quotation must complete the view of the picture for the present. It is from a correspondent of the *Christian Union*, of July 24, and passes in that paper unchallenged. It is as follows:- {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 570.33}

I have been interested in reading a criticism of Lyman Abbott, by his brother Edward, and I am impelled to jot down a few thoughts as they have occurred to an outsider. I could not but be surprised that, of the nineteen texts quoted by Edward Abbott, to establish an important, and one generally regarded as an essential, doctrine of Christianity, *only one is from the sayings of its Founder*, and in that one, the language is unquestionably figurative. Will not a higher and truer criticism, before long, come to regard the writings of the apostles to be just what they are, namely, the expression of their *personal* opinions? May they not have been sometimes mistakes? What warrant have we for assuming that Paul, Peter, James, or John were able to draw any truer conclusions from the contents of the four gospels than Lyman Abbott, H. W. Beecher, Dr. Channing, and a thousand others-especially if we accept the claim of Edward Abbott, that the spirit of truth is *now*, as well as has been, in the church? {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 570.34}

There you have the result to which all the others are tending if they have not already arrived. It is open infidelity of a large part of the Bible, and virtual rejection of the remainder, since it all stands on the same foundation. It is terrible to contemplate the gross deceptions into which the church will plunge when such ideas become prevalent; and they are rapidly spreading, for they are intrenched in high places. The book from which the most of these quotations are made, is indorsed in the highest terms by Dr. Joseph Parker, of London, Dr. Talmage, and Joseph Cook. Is this not evidence that the church is on the “down grade”? {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 570.35}

But we have not written this simply to expose the infidelity of these men and women. We have written in order that every reader may stop and answer carefully the question at the head of this article. Do you believe the Bible implicitly, or do doubts steal across your mind as you read? The foundation for all this infidelity exists in the mind of everyone who holds the words of Peter, Paul, James, John, Moses, David, Isaiah, or Solomon, recorded in the Scriptures, as of any less authority or truth than those uttered by Jesus in the sermon on the mount. Note the surprise of the writer last quoted, that out of nineteen texts in support of a Christian doctrine, “*only one is from the sayings of its Founder*.” Is a scripture any less the word of God if written by one of the apostles or prophets than if spoken with an audible voice by the Lord himself? Are you, dear reader, in the habit of attributing “degrees” to inspiration, and of considering one passage as more valuable than another, according as it meets *your* approbation? If so, you are in great danger. You say you believe that it is *all true*, although of varying authority and importance. Very well, we accept your statement that you believe the Scriptures, and ask you to accept the following as true: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” 2 Timothy 3:16, 17. {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 570.36}

And please remember that in this Bible, all of which you profess to believe, the apostle Paul’s epistles are classed with “the other scriptures.” 2 Peter 3:16. They were given by inspiration too. {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 603.1}

We ask you to believe the statement contained in this verse: “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” 1 Thessalonians 2:13. {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 603.2}

Here is another: “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 14:37. {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 603.3}

That is, the man who does not acknowledge Paul’s writings as the commandments of the Lord, is unspiritual. He cannot discern spiritual things. How many are putting their own unspiritual doubts in the place of the holy word of God. {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 603.4}

No one can receive from the Scriptures that living power which they are designed to give, unless when he reads them he drops from his mind all thought of the men who penned them, and of their human frailties, and hears only the voice of God. Thus did the apostles regard the Old Testament. For instance, Paul quoted Isaiah 6:9, 10 to the unbelieving Jews at Rome, introducing the text thus: “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Aesaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying,” etc. Acts 28:25. Again, in Hebrews 10:15-17 we have a quotation from Jeremiah 31:33, in which Jeremiah is not mentioned, but the words are credited to the Holy Spirit. And again, in Hebrews 1:8, 9 we have Psalm 45:6, 7 quoted, and David is not mentioned, but the words are quoted as addressed by God the Father directly to the Son, without any human agency. They are indeed just as much the word of God as those which were spoken on Mount Sinai, or the Mount of Olives, and the New Testament is not a whit behind the Old. {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 603.5}

Let us, then, avoid the beginnings of infidelity. Let us leave no room for doubt to creep into our minds, and this we can do by accepting the whole Bible, not as the word of man, but as the word of God. Then, remembering that “every word of God is pure,” let us receive it with humble reverence, and hide it within our hearts. E. J. W. {SITI December 29, 1890, p. 603.6}