

Spiritual Death.

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III. Manifestations of the State of the Heart.

In the second chapter spiritual death was discussed as a state of man's heart. Since the primary seat of spiritual death is the heart, spiritual death in itself is invisible, and it is so subtle that even the trained eye of a scientist cannot detect it. But He that formed the eye, shall He not see? God weighs the spirit; He searches heart and reins; He need not be told what is in man. Mortals, however, pass their judgment on men according to outward appearances. The nature of men's judgment is determined by the mere accidents of place and time.

Now, Scripture repeatedly asserts the intimate connection existing between heart and hand. The heart is the fountainhead of all actions. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders," etc. Matt. 15, 19. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Prov. 23, 7. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Matt. 12, 34. Knowing that the state of the heart cannot but have an effect upon the members of the body, Solomon says: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Prov. 4, 23.

While the heart by nature is dead to genuine righteousness, it is alive to "trespasses and sins." As carrion teems with maggots, so man's heart is teeming with carnal and sinful vitality. This sinful vitality conceives and brings forth offspring after its kind, namely, according to Heb. 6, 1, "dead works." Paul, therefore, does not state the former plight of the Ephesians merely in the abstract, but he also presents the case concretely; he gives specific symptoms of the former state of their hearts. He writes: vv. 2. 3 a. All outcroppings of the dead heart may be grouped under the three headings given in vv. 2. 3 a.

1. Paul says: "*In time past ye walked according to the course of this world.*" The expression "course of this world" denotes the time granted this sin-burdened world in which the commission of trespasses is suffered, and in which the devil has his work in the children of disobedience. In 2 Cor. 4, 4 Satan is called "the god of this world." In Luke 16, 8 the wicked are called "children of this world." And according to Gal. 1, 4 the world is "evil." (Stoeckhardt, *Roemerbrief*, p. 558.) A free translation of the expression "the course of this world" which preserves its full meaning is "public opinion." In other words, the accepted criterion of the Ephesians' conduct was public opinion. Since the whole world lay in wickedness, public opinion regarding righteousness and true holiness was contrary to God. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul enumerates a few works which, while entirely corrupt, were not branded as such by public opinion, at least not in their finer forms. These works are: lying, stealing, anger, drunkenness, evil speaking, disobedience of servants and children, and the like. Since public opinion tacitly gave its sanction to such works, the Ephesians had no desire for anything nobler and more elevating.

2. Furthermore, while the Ephesians were dead to the Triune God, universal fashion demanded a Deity and some form of worship. The existence of a Supreme Being is "clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made." Turning to the Book of Acts, we find that the Ephesians were worshipers of the goddess Diana, or Artemis, and of her image, which was believed to have fallen from Jupiter. However, when Paul preached "the Word of the Lord Jesus," public opinion was aroused and soon solidified against genuine Christianity. Acts 19.

The Ephesians' service of Satan was a second outward evidence of the deadness of the heart. We read: "*In time past ye walked*

... according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Again turning to Acts, we find that the reference is primarily to Spiritism. Ephesus apparently had a seminary of Spiritism. With what misdirected devotion people clung to this work of the devil may be estimated from the fact that about \$30,000 worth of books dealing with black arts were consigned to the flames by the converts to Christianity.

3. Thirdly, the Ephesians exhibited their state of heart by the works of their flesh. Paul says: "*We all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.*" The Ephesians indulged their passions. "Desires of the flesh" are the "grosser and more carnal propensities." Undoubtedly Paul thought of the licentiousness said to have been regarded as an integral part of the worship of the goddess. "Desires of the mind" are "desires of the objects that" the Ephesians "thought about. The random roamings of the mind, hither and thither, towards this pleasure and that, . . . but all marked by the absence of any controlling regard to the will of God" seem to be denoted. (Dau, *Lectures on Doctrinal Theology.*)

Since the days of the Ephesians almost twenty centuries have dragged their slow length along. The Ephesians have been resolved into a name; their city has crumbled into dust. But man's heart has not undergone a change. It is still by nature dead in sins, and natural man still lives in obedience to the triple alliance: world, flesh, and the devil.

However, on all sides modern optimists are shouting with the voice of rejoicing, "The world is growing better!" We are told that, with the advent of modern educational facilities, the barbarism of former ages is rapidly giving way to a higher degree of culture. And while it is admitted that some individuals do occasionally dip into gross sins, still, it is said, people now live, think, and act differently.

We admit that especially during the last century rapid forward strides have been made. In no other period of history has so much progress been made in all lines of science and industry. Modern wizards have achieved practically everything but the harnessing of a bolt of lightning.

But do culture and worldly wisdom argue godliness? Never. From Genesis we learn that many inventions were conceived by spiritual corpses. Jubal, a descendant of Cain, was "the father

of all such as handle the harp and organ." Gen. 4, 21. The steel industry may be said to date from the time of Tubalcain, who was an "instructor of every artificer in brass and iron." Gen. 4, 22. Of the counsel of wicked Ahithophel it is said that it was "as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God." 2 Sam. 16, 23. Greece, the fatherland of many Ephesians, was the first home of culture in Europe. The temple of Diana in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Ephesus boasted a government which gave offenders a fair and an impartial trial. Acts 19, 38. Still all culture and knowledge did not keep the Ephesians from worshipping an image.

What are the great men to-day? Are they supermen? demi-gods? heroes of faith? Many of the acknowledged leaders, even those who outrank others of their class, are spiritually dead. Thomas Edison, an exponent of scientists, was asked, "Which are the greatest safeguards against temptation?" Edison replied in writing: "I never had any experience in such matters. I have never had time, not even five minutes, to be tempted to do anything against the Moral Law, civil law, or any law whatever." (*Lehre und Wehre*, Vol. 63, 79.) Many of the wise, mighty, and noble after the flesh are spiritual corpses.

The heart of man remains untouched by culture and education. Whenever the thoughts of men's spiritually dead hearts are revealed, we find that there is no essential difference between a refined prince and an ignorant pauper. The death of Christ has revealed that there is no difference among men. The Jews are the murderers of Christ. But Pilate condemned Him. Roman soldiers executed Him. The high and the low, noblemen and rabble, gathered together against the holy Child Jesus.

Spiritually the world is not growing better. Superficial, but no radical, changes have been made. Men have been whitewashed, but not washed white. Men have been veneered with snow-white enamel. "Save the surface, and you save all," is the slogan of paint manufacturers. But scratch your cultured modern men, and a savage bleeds. As much savage brutality was practised in East St. Louis and in Tulsa, Okla., as when the Indians massacred a village. Last summer a woman with a baby in her arms placed her foot on the gory and mangled body of a strike-breaker and denied the dying miner a cooling draught of water with the words, "I'll see you in hell before you get any water." Hundreds of spectators laughed at the poor man's pleas for a cup of cold water.

While this is an abnormal case, press dispatches inform us that five thousand persons were either active or silent partners in that orgy at Herrin, Ill.

Crimes committed in the coal-fields are by no means isolated manifestations of spiritually dead hearts. According to statistics 3,224 lynchings have taken place in our country from 1885 to 1918, some under circumstances so terrible and so revolting as to be unfit for publication. What a scarlet stain upon our civilization! The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* said editorially that on one occasion an old Chickasaw Indian was invited to participate in the burning of a negro at a stake. In declining the invitation, the Indian said, "Our forefathers burned people at stakes; but they were not civilized. We are!" Moreover, during the unspeakable carnage in Europe — another manifestation of the corrupt heart on a colossal scale — America stood before the world as the champion of the weak and the oppressed. But up to 1918 in only three cases have lynchers been brought to justice. "Evidently those victims of that Herrin mob committed suicide."

Were we, on the basis of newspaper reports, to continue the enumeration of sins and crimes abetted by Satan, enjoyed by the flesh, and sanctioned by public opinion, we should have a roll like the one spread before the prophet Ezekiel "written within and without with lamentations and mourning and woe." Ezek. 2, 10. Nearly twenty centuries ago Paul said of the spiritually dead: They are "filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." Rom. 1, 29—31. Who will deny that these passages contain photographic reports on modern spiritually dead men?

How do those men view matters who deny that the heart of natural man is spiritually dead? Some sink into the Slough of Despond. It is said that Carnegie's death was hastened by the late war.

Others again persistently cling to the theory that man's heart has undergone a change, in spite of the fact that the evidence to the contrary is as plain as the sun at noonday. Says a Unitarian:

"It is quite probable also that the Great War has given a shock to the simple faith of many liberals themselves in the divinity of human nature. . . . We have seen human cruelty, human selfish-

ness, human egotism, human lust, human vindictiveness, human hatred, display themselves on a more colossal scale than ever before. Instincts that we had supposed almost dead or at least half atrophied sprang to life again with marvelous rapidity. . . . Has the war demonstrated the essential wickedness of human nature? . . . There are many considerations that must be taken into account. . . . For one thing, the good and the evil were mixed in the war just as they are in peace. The Red Cross was as much a human fact as the submarine. . . . The medical man was almost as ingenious in saving life as the inventor was in taking it. The nurse was just as faithful in the hospital as the soldier in the trenches. The hatred of the enemy was balanced by a new devotion to country. . . . If you were to write the history of the war by connecting in one narrative all the most dreadful instances of cruelty, greed, hatred, and egotism that you could find, you could make your story so horrible that no one could read it. Or if you were to write your history by gathering together all the heroic, self-sacrificing, and courageous deeds that you could discover, you might make your story so wonderful that the uninstructed reader might infer that human nature is at its highest and best only when man is at war with his fellow-man. Neither picture would be correct. . . . The whole fact is two-sided, and by looking at both sides, we may succeed in still clinging honestly to our conception of the divinity of man.

"In the second place, we must not regard the cruelty which men show under stress of certain circumstances as the most *real* thing in their nature. . . . He [man] does show by such conduct that he is morally undeveloped, that the good in him has not yet completely overthrown or put under lock and key the antisocial tendencies. . . . I think we have a right to set before every man as his moral goal the ethical ideal of Jesus: 'Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect'; but we have no right to condemn men utterly because they do not reach that goal. . . . The lesson to be drawn from the cruelty and lust and recklessness of young men in war is not the innate depravity of human nature, . . . but the necessity of doing everything humanly possible to avoid war.

"In the third place, we may avoid pessimism by remembering that war, for a large part at least, is a great crowd or herd movement, and human nature shows itself far better in the small group than in the crowd or herd. . . . All investigators agree that in the crowd man is at the lowest level of his being. . . . The lesson surely

is that we must put an end to the crowd. . . . So long as the crowd-mind exists, that is, so long as imitation and suggestion play the chief rôle in our social life, so long will human nature remain on a low level and fail to achieve its divine possibilities. . . . We know the evil in man better than we ever did before, but after looking at it in all its blackness, I think we may honestly cling to our optimism." (*Christian Register*, Nov. 24, 1921.)

In addition to other considerations, the author just quoted urges men to weigh in the balances also the good deeds of their fellow-men. Christians readily admit that many works performed by the spiritually dead have the appearance of deeds done by the spiritually living. Civilized countries have legions of public hospitals, orphanages, homes for the aged, and other charitable institutions. We may search the chronicles of the ancient Greeks and Romans; but we shall find nothing similar. Edersheim says of the Rome of Caesar Augustus: "There were neither hospitals nor provision for the poor; charity and brotherly love in their every manifestation are purely Old and New Testament ideas. But even the bestowal of the smallest alms on the needy was regarded as very questionable; best not to afford them the means of protracting a useless existence." (*Life and Times*, etc., Vol. I, 259.)

Lately the labor problem has been agitating the minds of millions. In ancient times the faces of the poor were ground; laborers were mercilessly exploited. Concerning the building of the pyramid of Khufu, Banks writes: "It is said that there were 300,000 strong men in Egypt, and that every man, as if he were a slave, was forced to labor for the king. . . . Their only recompense was their food and clothing, and that was scanty enough. Taskmasters, with whips in hand, stood by to urge them on." (*The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World*, p. 8.) But we need not hark back thousands of years for examples of shameless injustice regarding compensation of the laboring classes. In an address at Evanston, Ill., June 17, 1922, Judge Gary stated that "not many years ago, perhaps not much more than a score, . . . moral principles were ignored" in some business corporations. "In business the Golden Rule was given no thought." Gary continues: "There has been a decided change in the standards and conduct of business. . . . Business throughout the United States is to-day transacted on a higher plane than ever before. . . . The large majority of business men now conduct their affairs in accordance with the

avowed belief that . . . employees are associates rather than servants and should be treated accordingly."

In reply to the above examples of progress we may — without presuming to sit in judgment on the state of heart of any individual, Rom. 14, 4 — say in general that "rotting wood has the property to shine in the dark, but it is a deceptive luster." If some modern charity were subjected to a rigid examination in the light of God's Word, we should find legions of faults and flaws. For the charity of the spiritually dead is an ingenious counterfeit of the charity of the spiritually living. Christians are the salt of the earth. And their conduct towards their needy friend or foe has in the course of many centuries, to a great extent, overcome the spiritually dead's heartlessness towards the poor and afflicted. As regards works of charity, the spiritually dead may indeed have the form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof. The God-pleasing motive is lacking: "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another." John 13, 34. At best, natural pity impels the spiritually dead to lend the stricken a helping hand, even as natural pity induced the Egyptian princess to spare the life of the infant Moses. Ex. 2, 6.

Sometimes the endowing of charitable institutions is actuated by self-aggrandizement. To make themselves a name, men built the Tower of Babel, Herod reared the glorious Temple in Jerusalem, the Ephesians built a magnificent house of worship for Diana. "Justice rather than philanthropy should be the first thought of the business man whose earnings have provided him with the opportunity of doing his bit toward settling the present industrial unrest and alleviating the conditions which lead to strikes. This is the opinion of Edward A. Filene, student of sociology and successful Boston merchant. . . . One of the tragedies of modern life, we are told, is that when financial success at last gives employers the opportunity to cooperate in solving the problems of the employees, they fail to use their new-found freedom to this end. Instead, they often begin to use their money for ostentatious ends or for charity rather than justice." In this quotation from the *Literary Digest* for August 12, 1922, readers are told that some philanthropists are carnally minded, that they harbor sentiments similar to those of Nebuchadnezzar in their hearts: "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?" Dan. 4, 30.

As regards the application of the Golden Rule instead of the Rule of Gold in business, we know that, when captains of industry who are spiritually dead do make an honest effort to live up to the Golden Rule, they are yielding to pressure from without, or they do it voluntarily because "fair dealing has a business asset of great pecuniary value," or, more often, these captains, like the town clerk of Ephesus, by nature have a finer sense of justice than others. When justice is the motive, real regard for the rights of others receives unstinted praise from mortals. But *God* says that all works proceeding out of a heart "dead in trespasses and sins" are "dead works." In His nostrils such works have the stench of carrion. Solomon says: "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor." Eccl. 10, 1.

Since the spiritually dead do not truly love their fellow-men, it follows that they cannot love God. "He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" 1 John 4, 20. Most twentieth-century religion is an emanation of spiritually dead hearts.

Modern man must have a religion. Atheism is out of fashion. When Paul preached Christ and Him crucified in Ephesus, he was reviled and persecuted. Now the Church is considered a great institution. Now it is a mark of distinction to be a Christian. The most glowing tribute one can pay a man is to call him a Christian. To be a son of Belial is considered a disgrace. Several years ago a pastor officiating at the funeral of a multimillionaire very thoughtfully forgot that this man, according to his own confession, had not spoken the Lord's Prayer for many years. Yes, it is a disgrace not to die the death of a Christian.

However, much modern Christianity is fine idolatry. The superstitious Ephesians bowed their knees to an image made with hands. Some cultured Americans worship a wafer; many worship a mental mummy. In collaboration with half-baked scientists some men employ the penknife of their "illuminated soul" and, like Jehudi, cut pages after pages out of the Sacred Volume and then, after destroying every jot and tittle offensive to a spiritually dead heart, build up a system of theology with the residue, *viz.*, with the Golden Rule, the Beatitudes, and the parables of Jesus. Says a modern religious leader: "On these our emphasis must fall, not on the paganisms of sacrificial blood."

(To be concluded.)
