

THE EVERLASTING ARMS

(Newspaper article, June 14, 1908, Weekly Press, Greensburg, Pa. “Pastor Russell’s Text at Waynesburg, Pa., Sunday, a Beautiful Poetic Sentiment Skillfully Adapted to Interests of Fallen Race.” “Pastor Russell delivered his anti-infidel discourse, ‘To Hell and Back,’ at the Opera House here today to a large audience. We report his evening discourse from the text, ‘The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.’—Deut. 33:27—We report his discourse as follows:”)

Whoever delves sufficiently into the Word of God, and, with an honest mind weighs its precepts and promises, will be fortified against the growing spirit of Higher Criticism, New Theology and Evolution. Such will see in our text a beautiful poetic sentiment skillfully adapted to our interests as a fallen race. And so far from ascribing these words of golden sentiment to a member of our race only a short remove from a monkey, he will on the contrary discern that such a noble sentiment and lofty expression could not be improved by the loftiest intellects of this, our boasted brain age. Indeed, the peculiarity of the poetry of the Bible is this wonderful adaptation to the heart interests of every class to which it is addressed. The merit of Shakespeare’s poetry lies in the fact that it faithfully interprets human nature; yet Shakespeare had the Bible for one of his text books; and that he used it to a considerable degree is evidenced by his copying sometimes its style and sometimes its phraseology.

Many, indeed, admire Shakespeare’s writings, who do not admire the Scriptures; partly because they are ignorant of the latter and partly because they have not yet come to that condition of mentality, ripeness and experience which would enable them to partly appreciate the beauty and poetry of the Bible. Ignorance of the Bible is largely the result of its misrepresentation through false doctrines and creeds, formulated during the “dark ages,” and since under the same influences. Our Adversary had much to do with the blinding of the minds of those who formulated those errors, as is abundantly proved by the records of their wicked persecutions committed in the name of God and religion and Christian love. Since the Bible is the handbook of Christianity every reflection against the latter attaches to the former; and hence we may see that the world’s failure to be interested in Bible study is largely owing to misrepresentations of God’s character and plan, erroneously supposed to have proceeded from the Word of God.

Bind Up the Broken Hearted

We remarked a moment ago that the majority of mankind never reached that degree of development in life experience which would enable them fully to appreciate the grandeur of some of the expressions of the Bible; as for instance, of our text. By this we do not mean that such lack intelligence and education. On the contrary, some of the best educated are undeveloped in this direction, and some of the most illiterate are highly

developed in the power of such an appreciation. The Apostle Paul tells us that mankind as a whole is a groaning creation, travailing in pain together and waiting for deliverance at the second coming of Christ and the establishment of his Millennial Kingdom.—(Rom. 8:19-22)

But this groaning creation understands very imperfectly its real situation: recognizes that something is wrong—that the world is and for centuries has been under the “reign of sin and death.” It perceives that with “longings infinite” the course of human life is short; that its environment is unfavorable for happiness, mental or physical; and it determines that time must not be lost in speculating respecting the why and wherefore of the situation; but that if any pleasure is to be gained no time is to be lost in starting in its pursuit, some by one way and some by another.

Hence we see the whole world thinking, planning and chasing after happiness, some by one road and some by another, but all with the one end in view—the attainment of something of so called pleasure which will be an offset to and an antidote for aches and pains, sorrow, trials and disappointments common to the world in general.

Remarkably few people are philosophical. Scarcely any sit down to count the cost of pleasure, of wealth, otherwise they would quickly discern with the wise man of old that “all is vanity.” They would see that the battle for wealth brings victory for any but the few; and that by the time victory is gained, health and energy are largely gone and one foot is partly in the grave. They would perceive that a race for name and for fame is sure to bring more or less of opposition from others running the same race; and that even the few who attain find the object but a gorgeous bubble which perishes in the grasping. Even the more humble ambitions for home and peace and love and happiness in the vast majority of cases result disastrously. And sometimes a second or third repetition of the endeavor proves equally unfruitful.

The Bible presents a philosophy respecting the present life and the one that is to come, which only the few are willing to accept without first “trying their luck,” as already set forth and proving to themselves the truth of the Scriptural statement that all ambitions are vanity. The formation of hopes and aims are vanity and bring no satisfying reward; or if the reward be gained, it is usually an equivalent or greater cost. Only by such as have learned to philosophize may the voice of the Lord through the Bible be heard to heal the broken heart with a heavenly balm.

The Weary and Heavy Laden Are Called

It was our Lord who declared that it was His mission to bind up the broken hearted, and not to break the hearts of men. In harmony with this he said: “Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest;” Come unto me, all ye who have been

vainly striving for a rest, for happiness for peace, for love, for joy; and “I will give you rest.” “Ye shall find rest unto your souls;” “My peace I give unto you, yet not as the world giveth peace; Let not your hearts be troubled neither let them be afraid”; “Let the peace of God which passeth all understanding rule in your hearts.”—Matt. 11:28; John 14:1, 27; Phil 4:7.

To the few of philosophical mind who can learn by observation and to the many who by experience with sorrow and trouble and heartache and tears are broken hearted—to these the teaching of God’s Word is precious—different from the teachings of all the heathen Bibles. In none other is divine sympathy divinely portrayed, in none other is a God of love and compassion revealed, as expressed briefly in the declaration, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life” as the holy angels possessed and enjoyed in harmony with God and all his gracious provisions for those who come into a knowledge of his goodness and love, and who obey him.

Note the contrast between the erroneous teachings of the “dark ages” respecting an angry God viciously delighting in the torture of nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of his creatures and the compassionate, loving, tender, gracious caressing expressions of the Bible itself in which we read, “For he hath, looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoners, to loose them that are appointed to death.”—(Psalm 102:19, 20)

How true to the facts! the prisoners are not in some unknown place of torture prepared for them before the creation of father Adam, but are in the great prison house of death, the tomb, sheol, hades. As the Scriptures assure us, “The dead know not anything” (Eccl. 9:5), they may be said to be waiting; however for the divine promise has already declared not only their redemption from the power of the grave, but also in due time their deliverance—their setting free from the power of sin and death, from the “bondage of corruption” by a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. What a poetic picture this is of the great Creator bowing his ear to hear the groanings of Adam’s dying race and looking down upon us with compassionate eyes. Nor did the divine compassion end here for we read that Jehovah beheld that there was no eye to pity and no arm to save and that his own arm brought salvation.

There was no eye whose pity would be of value under the circumstances. There was no arm that was sufficient for the great transaction of uplifting a single life fallen into degradation, sickness and death. There was but one equal to the emergency in power, in wisdom, and everything depended upon the sufficiency of his love. And the love was not wanting for we are informed that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son to die as its ransom price, as the substitute for father Adam, who sinned. Thus we see that in the poetic language of the Bible our Lord Jesus Christ was the Arm of Jehovah stretched

forth for the uplift of the sin-cursed world. The story of how the same spirit of the Father prevailed in our Lord Jesus is graphically told in the Scriptures. He delighted to do the Father's will. (Psa. 40:8) He came into the world to give himself a ransom for all. As Adam's soul was condemned to death so Jesus "poured out his soul unto death," he made his "soul an offering for sin." (Isa. 53:10) And we have the Scriptural assurance that ultimately when the great plan of God shall have been fully accomplished he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied—Isa. 53:11.

The Redeemer to be the Deliverer

The travail of his soul is not yet ended, hence the blessing of the world must wait. In the divine plan the great Redeemer, before delivering the groaning creation from its corruption of sin and death by restitution processes which will uplift all the families of the earth, has another work, namely, he must first select from the groaning creation a "little flock" the "elect church" to be the "Bride" and joint heirs in the Kingdom of glory. But preparatory to such a high exaltation to the divine nature the members of this Bride class must be proved, must be tested, must be demonstrated to have the same character as their Lord—to be copies of God's dear Son. (Rom. 8:29) This means more suffering, more sacrifice, more pouring out of soul unto death, for all of this class are required to walk in the footsteps of their Lord and Redeemer.

Another figure represents the Messiah as "one new man" of which the Lord Jesus is the Head and the faithful ones "members in particular of his Body" which is the church. The entire Body must suffer even unto death, as living sacrifices "holy and acceptable to God." (Rom. 12:1) Shortly this part of the divine plan will be ended; and then the great work of blessing and uplifting and restoring the human family as a whole will begin with the binding of Satan, in the midst of a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation.—Dan. 12:1.

"The Everlasting Arms"

While the Scriptures most explicitly tell us of the times of refreshing which shall come to the world in general at the second advent of our Lord and of the times of restitution which shall then be inaugurated; and while these have in a large measure been the theme of all the holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3;19, 21), nevertheless the great majority of the Scriptures, especially of the New Testament are addressed to the Elect Church—the Christ, the Seed of Abraham, which is now being selected. These alone now have the ear to hear and the divine message. The remainder of the world must wait for the dawning of the new dispensation, in which the Lord assures us that all the blind eyes will be opened and all the deaf ears be unstopped. (Isa. 35:5) But as our Lord said to some in his day, so it is still true that a special blessing has been provided in connection with this election for all who have the ear to hear. "Blessed are your ears for

they hear and your eyes for they see.” (Matt. 13:16) True, our responsibility is increased in proportion as we see and hear, likewise our joys, our pleasures and our possibilities as respecting the glorious things to which we are now being called by divine grace.

It is this spiritual Seed of Abraham—the Elect, the Anointed Messiah class (Gal. 3:29), that our text has special application. It is pleasant indeed for us to know of God’s sympathetic love for the world, and of the attestation of his provision that ultimately every knee shall bow and every tongue confess and every member of the race have the fullest opportunity of coming to a clear knowledge of the truth and to a full harmony with God. (Rom. 14:11; 1 Tim. 2:3, 4)

But in the meantime while Satan is not bound, while sin still prevails, while the Church is still being presented as living sacrifices, and while faith is still requisite, how precious to these is the divine promise of our text and many others like it! The everlasting God is their refuge: and underneath them are the everlasting arms. Well has the poet said, “Ah, whither could we flee for aid when tempted, desolate, dismayed!” How wonderful that these who were children of wrath even as others—underneath a death sentence with the remainder of the world, how wonderful that the eternal God has adopted these into his family, made them partakers of his holy Spirit, crowned them with his loving kindnesses prepared for them joint-heirship with Jesus in his Kingdom and sent them the message of his love and grace. Well has the poet said:

*“God is the refuge of his saints
When storms of sharp distress invade,
Before we enter our complaints,
We behold him present with his aid.”*

This thought is prominent in our text; God is a refuge, a Father, a Stronghold for his people in every time of trouble. They have his assurance of his love and his sympathy, and that when they are tempted, desolate or dismayed, they may flee to him assured of the necessary succor. But owing to the false theologies of the Dark Ages many are hindered from approaching the Lord even in the condition of direst need. In how many hearts does the fear of God, “taught by the precepts of men,” hinder the proper approach which God invites? On the contrary the Scriptures tell us that so far from God being an enemy who before our creation planned the eternal torment of the majority, they teach us that God is loving, full of compassion and sympathy, and that he hearkens to the cries of those who trust him and who flee to him—not only preparing, as we have seen, a coming time of blessing for all, but preparing a refuge in the present time while sin and death prevail, while Satan is the “Prince of this world.” It is only in proportion as God’s people learn the truth respecting his character, only in proportion as they get rid of the smoke of the Dark Ages, which blinds their eyes of understanding in the reading of His Word, only then can they flee to this great refuge—to the Almighty God, and put their trust in Him.

The Scriptures present the thought that the Lord's people are surrounded by enemies of every kind—the Adversary himself, and fallen humanity, considerably under his domination and spirit—including often those who are dear to us according to the flesh. All these are represented as being unreliable, unworthy of full confidence, because they are out of accord with God; because under the delusions of error they have a wrong spirit and often mistake light for darkness and darkness for light, righteousness for sin and sin for righteousness; yea, the Lord's people even are admonished to be on guard lest their subtle adversary Satan, should beguile them from the right attitude of heart and conduct, and under some specious form of temptation, should lead them to do those things which are contrary to the light and to the spirit of the Divine Word—the law of love.

Hence the Scriptures warn us to have no confidence in the flesh, and to keep our hearts, because out of them are the issues of life. If we fail to keep our hearts in the right attitude of love for God, for the brethren, yea, for enemies, we might soon be entrapped by the adversary and made servants of sin—contrary to the real intention of our hearts. Hence while fleeing ourselves for refuge to the Almighty God, and remembering his love, and trusting therein, we should see to it that we are full of a similar love towards all others especially towards those of the Household of Faith. We should measure our love not by the world's standard, not by any selfish standard, but the Lord's standard—

*“The love that is perfect, the love that is pure,
That we may with patience all things well endure.”*

This love is essential to all who are the Lord's. If we have fled to the refuge, and then fail to develop love, we will be cast out, as our Lord taught in the parable of the two debtors. The one owed his master a large sum, had nothing to pay, and was freely released, but when he found someone owing him a small amount, he was uncharitable, ungracious, and as a result, his master was wroth with him and withdrew his pardon. Our Lord's comment is that if we do not from the heart forgive our enemies, neither will our heavenly Father forgive our trespasses, and with what measure of strictness we judge others, with similar strictness will we be dealt in the final determining of our case as worthy or unworthy of a share in the Kingdom.

The Apostle says, “He that dwelleth in God and God in him.” This implies that whoever ceases to dwell in love ceases to dwell in God—ceases to abide in the refuge—has no refuge. How important then, that we who have found the refuge, and know the terms and conditions upon which we may abide therein, should give heed and diligence that our peace and love and joy may abound, and that thus we may be granted ultimately an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, for if we do these things—if we develop the character of the holy Spirit of love in our hearts—we shall never fall.—2 Pet. 1:10.

The Everlasting Arms Underneath

What a beautiful word-picture we have here—an infant tenderly cared for. This is God’s picture of those who are his and of how they are in his care. We hear his assurance, “Nothing shall by any means hurt you.” We listen further and hear, “All things shall work together for good to those who love the Lord, the called ones according to his purposes.” These gracious promises represent to us the heavenly Father’s arms, which encircle all those who are fully his. No wonder that they have peace amidst earth’s alarms! No wonder that it is written of these, “Let the peace of God that passeth all understanding rule in your hearts, and be thankful.” How could such be otherwise than peaceful? How could such be otherwise than happy? Those who understand the situation and enjoy these blessings can appreciate the Apostle’s sentiment when he declared that he was able by the grace of God to rejoice even in tribulation, worketh patience and patience experience, and experience hope, and that through these the love of God is more and more scattered abroad in our hearts so that we are enabled the better to rejoice in him—in his loving provision for the future, and his wonderful, loving care for the present.

So then, for the present it is our privilege continually to call to the world’s attention the blessed rest and peace which God has provided in Christ, and that this is a worldwide provision, that only a certain class may enjoy its blessings and provisions in the present time. How simple are the terms by which we can thus come into this blessed relationship with the Lord! (1) We must renounce sin, which we should be glad to do, the more we learn of its real character and injurious qualities. (2) Having heard of the redemption accomplished through Jesus, we must believe in the same fully according to the record, and must accept our share, realizing that without the imputation of righteousness we could have no standing whatever with the free. (3) We must consecrate our little all to the service of the Lord, the truth and the brethren, and to do so acceptably we must realize that our very best, our very most is an offering for too small, and again very humbly to accept the Lord’s grace. By this door of faith, obedience, consecration, we enter the precincts of the heavenly family, become heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord—we enter into the refuge, and feel about us the Everlasting Arms.

I want to tell you a few things about that Prophet mentioned in Ezekiel 2:5, and to have you realize that when we join in the work, we are a part of that great Prophet. At Niagara Falls he was telling us not to overwork ourselves—four or five hours would be about all we could stand. I want to tell you the example he sets—I could not tell it properly if he were here, but he is not, so I am going to tell you a few things, and I am in a position to know a few things about him and I am glad I do. It was my inestimable privilege to be at the Bible House about six months a year ago, and have the pleasure of sharing Bro. Russell’s room for that time. I know him pretty well; you know you like some people

pretty well, but after living with them for a while, you do not like them so well, but the more you live with this prophet the better you will like him.

About forty years ago a merchant in Pittsburgh refused to rent Bro. Russell a store room for a year, the reason being that Bro. Russell was so weak and sickly that he would not live the lease out; that was forty years ago. Even now he does not enjoy much better health. Sunday, when he was speaking for two hours, there was not a second that he was not going through pain on account of a headache. He has a headache at least half the time; he has headaches so severe that his eyes will swell up, but he has not been in a bed a day of his life. He would get up, I should judge, about half past six in the morning—I do not know how long he was laying awake before that, thinking of plans, etc. He never went to bed before eleven o'clock; then to think of two-fifths of his time at night is spent on railroad trains. That is the way he works continually from morning until night. He begins after breakfast in his study dictating to stenographers until noon; after dinner he continues his work until supper time, then goes down to the office on the first floor and signs letters, etc., eats supper and then works again until 10 or later, never stopping before ten. That's the way he puts in time! That is a noble example of the way he is laying down his life. That is what Ezekiel tells us about. As far as money goes, he would have been a millionaire if he had followed that inclination; he has not a cent of his own—everything is in the Bible House name.

(By Brother J. A. Cole, colporteur. 1907 Convention Report, Part II, page 131, column two, paragraphs 1 and 2.)