

MISTAKEN EXPEDIENCY.

Among Romanists there is a recognized principle, which might be termed the law of expediency; which, briefly expressed, is--"The end justifies the means." The all important end is the glory of the Church, let the means be what they may; and every reader of history knows how vile the means have been. And while Protestants do not admit this principle openly, and are scarcely aware that they admit it to any extent, the question of *expediency* is often raised, and sometimes with considerable bitterness, against the truth--the old theology of the Lord and the apostles and prophets.

Very many of God's children who long since got their eyes open to the fallacy of the doctrine of everlasting torment, and who realize it to be a horrible blasphemy against God's character, permit Satan to seal their lips, and to destroy their influence as children of the light, by getting them to cover their light with the bushel of expediency. He raises before their minds dreadful pictures of what would result if this truth, which so much relieved their minds and refreshed their hearts, and which lifted them into a new atmosphere of joy and peace and love, should become generally known. He points out that they first approached the Lord through fear and under the influence of this error, --without pointing out that they might have received the Lord much sooner under the presentation of the truth, and under the constraining power of love. He points out that they themselves had finally found *peace* while holding this error, but does not mention how unsatisfactory a peace it was, which continually had unrest for fear of a final slip into eternal torment, either of themselves or their loved ones. Nor does the adversary point out that the proportion in which any obtained *peace* was to the degree that they forgot or disbelieved the horrible error.

The adversary, furthermore, urges the *inexpediency* of proclaiming this and other truths on still other grounds; he reminds his victim that though neither reason nor the Bible endorses the doctrine, yet upon it all the creeds and sects of Christendom are built; and that to attack that error is to attack the entire nominal church and to gain the opposition in every way of the most powerful human institution; and that he has no chance for success; and that if he should succeed in overthrowing the error, it would shake and break sectarianism entirely, create a great commotion, and paralyze sectarian efforts at home and in foreign lands.

He does not suggest, however, that the breaking of false creeds, confessions, and of the sects which hold them, would be a great blessing to all the true "wheat," the true church, and would result in bringing them into true unity upon the basis of God's Word and under the bonds of love; and that the only evil would be to the "tare" class, who have no knowledge of God's true church whose names are written in heaven, and who recognize only sectarian systems and memberships whose names are written on earth; and who worship and serve the institutions of their own organizing.

Alas! How many are bound by mistaken expediency, almost as firmly as they [R1122 : page 1] were formerly by errors, from which these truths, which they are ashamed or afraid to acknowledge, set them free.

To stimulate this mistaken idea of expediency, the adversary emboldens some of the shallowest minds and hearts to unreasoningly cry aloud, "Awful heresy!" "Infidelity!" etc.

This he does to draw attention away from the fact that it is the error that is "awful," "blasphemous," "heresy," and veritable infidelity to God's Word.

This cry comes with greatest emphasis from those whose earthly interests of bread and butter, and ease, and comfort, and reputation, and honor, and pride are bound up with this long admitted and established doctrine of fear. And every zealous supporter of so-called Orthodoxy re-echoes the cry of alarm; and as the message of truth, "the good tidings of great joy to all people," goes forth, it is everywhere confronted by the zealous

heralds of the bad tidings--of eternal misery to all people, except a holy few who expect to become so God-like that they will praise God the louder when they witness the wretched despair and hopeless eternal torment of their fellow-creatures, who were so unfortunate as never to have received as good a chance as themselves to escape the awful ruin.

These notes of alarm from Babylon, probably hinder many of the Lord's sheep from apprehending his truth. Having trusted too implicitly to the teachings of a self-exalted clergy, and failed to search the Scriptures for themselves, like the "noble Bereans," that their faith might stand in the wisdom of God and not in the wisdom which this world teacheth, they are afraid to disregard their commands now,--afraid to believe their own senses in the study of God's Word.

Let us remind such of the words of the Prophet Isaiah--"Their fear toward me is taught by the precepts of men;" and again, of the Apostle Paul--"For God hath not given to us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." ([Isa. 29:13](#); [2 Tim. 1:7](#).) That the spirit of love and of a sound mind is a power, "Orthodoxy" fails to see. The scourge of torment, the mean incentive of fear, is held to be a necessity, to restrain men from vice and to inspire them to morality and virtue and secure their admission to heaven when they die.

Before considering the wisdom of God's course, let us first inquire, Has the doctrine of fear accomplished the end which it claims to have in view? No, we answer. The result of this error have only been bad, and that continually; and any good which has been accomplished is due, not to the error, but to the all-powerful truth, --withstanding the friction of error which everywhere opposed its progress. As the result of this error, what do we see, after centuries of effort ostensibly to convert the world, to turn men to God and righteousness? We see just what we should expect to be the miserable fruitage of such doctrine--that it has not only failed to accomplish the world's conversion, which Orthodoxy claims to be its mission, but that it has accomplished the demoralization of the church (nominal) and of all influenced to any extent by it.

Under its influence and misrepresentation of the character of God, every device of tyranny and persecution and torture, in the name of God and religion, has flourished, and largely accomplished its diabolical mission of stamping out truth and righteousness. And as a consequence, we see to-day great antichristian systems of error, built up by centuries [**R1122 : page 2**] of false teaching and so subtle in their influence as to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect. Their form of godliness draws one class which desires to live godly; but their lack of the power of godliness, truth, soon deadens every real spiritual aspiration. They also draw and encourage a mean hypocritical class of those who assume the garb of Christianity for mercenary and base purposes. And amid an overwhelming host of deceived and hypocritical pretenders, those possessing the genuine article of living faith in the true Word of God, and vital godliness, are to-day at an immense discount among the loudest professors of Christianity. And thinking men of the world--and the thinkers are fast multiplying--are beginning to see, in the light of a better civilization, that this monstrous blasphemy of eternal torment has no foundation in common sense and that it can in no sense be compatible with their natural ideas of morality and virtue and godliness: and, say such, if the Bible teaches this doctrine, as all branches of the church claim, the Bible must be a bad book, and the God of the Bible, if there be such a God, is unworthy of love or worship, or even respect. And some to whom nature and reason whisper, There must be a God, conclude that nature and reason are the only channels through which he may be known or traced. And thus the thinking and nobler minded of the world are driven to Infidelity and Atheism; and the ignorant and the credulous, while they still fear that eternal torment may be a reality, are generally willing to incur the unlikely risk of realizing it, that they may enjoy the pleasures of sin while the opportunity lasts. And the heathen nations never have been and never will be influenced by it.

Such, in brief, have been the results of the doctrine of fear. It has repelled the world from God, and reduced (nominal) Christianity to sham and hypocrisy, and stimulated vice and immorality to the crimes of treason against God and persecution of truth and virtue.

But let us now consider, on the other hand, what power there is in the spirit of love and of a sound mind. A sound mind is a reasonable mind, a mind governed, neither by fickle impulse, nor by superstition, fear, prejudice, nor any other than the noblest faculty which God has given it, namely reason. And reason, if not perverted by pride, or prejudiced by false teaching, leads directly to the fountain of truth in God's inspired Revelation (See, M. DAWN, Vol. I., Chap. iii.); and to one so led, faith in the inspired revelation of the omnipotent God is a most reasonable thing. This reasonable faith, rooted and grounded in the divine testimonies and promises, calls into exercise all the noblest faculties of our moral nature and centers the affections upon the great Author of all truth, whom to know is to love and worship and adore. And this faith, working by love, purifies the heart and transforms the character into the glorious likeness of the blessed God.

Such is the power of love and of a sound mind. It serves God from purest filial love and gratitude, and the only fear it knows is that filial fear of failure to fully manifest love and thankfulness, which is the fear mentioned by the [*Psalmist \(111:10\)*](#) as the beginning of wisdom. Perfect love casts out all servile fear, and brings the studious and devoted servants of God into active co-operation with all his benevolent plans for the blessing of all his creatures. This is the kind of service God accepts: Those who worship him acceptably must worship him in spirit and in truth--in love and verity, and not hypocritically through fear.

Such results never have been and never can be produced by the "orthodox" doctrine of fear. Why, then, should it be deemed expedient to suppress the true plan of God and still advocate the blasphemous error of eternal torment?

The earnest, sound-minded Christian sees no sufficient reason; though the supporters of Orthodoxy see very grave and weighty ones. They see at once that to renounce this doctrine would be to destroy their systems of theology and completely disintegrate their various organizations, to give the lie to their false teachings, to expose a vast amount of hypocrisy and deceit in high places, to discontinue the gains of oppression, and to humble their pride and assumed dignities and honors in the dust. And truly, before this spirit of fear could be supplanted by the spirit of love and of a sound mind among the great masses of men, these, released from the bondage of fear and not yet restrained and constrained by the power of love and of a sound mind, would suddenly become a dangerous element in the world.

And just this, which "Orthodoxy" fears, the Scriptures declare shall actually come to pass--a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation--a fearful recompense to great Babylon for her blasphemous misrepresentation of the character and plan of God. Fearful plagues are to be visited upon Babylon, and no wonder she raises the cry of alarm when she sees them coming. To preach the truth is not expedient, she declares,-- "The end (the preservation of the old order of things) justifies the means;"-- the perversion and suppression of truth.

Had the truth been preached by the church from the days of the apostles to the present time, the centuries past would have so fully accomplished the development of true Christian character that the present time, we might safely say, would witness a truly "Christian world." But as it is, when the old errors are overthrown, it would be unreasonable to expect to see a sudden conversion of the world to truth and righteousness. Time is an important element in the arrangements for the world's conversion. It will require a thousand years to accomplish it under the reign of Christ, and since the church (nominal) has frittered away nearly two thousand years and accomplished worse than nothing in this direction, she must reap the reward of her doings--the punishment due her misarranged systems.

God's time to speak has come; and let the prayer of every loyal son of God be, O send forth thy light and thy truth! God will send it forth and is sending it forth: he will vindicate his character and **[R1123 : page 2]** his cause before an astonished world, and the glorious end will be the peaceable fruits of righteousness in all the earth, when the truth is fully known and its blessed influences have had sufficient time to accomplish the great work of transformation.

If we would be in harmony, and co-workers together with God, therefore, our chief business in life must be the vindication of his character by the preaching of his truth. And so far as our testimony can reach, let the message of his gracious designs be coupled with the wholesome restraints which his justice insures. There shall be a *just recompense* of reward to every man. The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good, and every work shall be brought into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Not the benevolent gift of a cup of cold water shall lose its reward; nor shall any wilful sin against light and opportunity escape its deserved punishment.

It is our business to declare these truths, to preach the gospel without any mixture with the traditions of men, to declare the whole counsel of God, as the church should have done since the days of the apostles, and the results God will take care of, and out of the confusion of the great time of trouble he will bring order and harmony and a grateful recognition of and submission to his righteous authority, based upon the principles of truth and justice. Our effort should always be, however, to accomplish a conversion so complete that it will not only turn men away in disgust from the old errors, but also turn them fully to righteousness. And such conversions there are, when the truth is wisely presented by those who are imbued with its blessed spirit. It is only by the presentation of a measure of truth sufficient to turn men away from doctrinal errors, and yet leave them in their sins, that violence and confusion shall be brought about.

We may not teach men that God is so loving that justice can never exert its power, but, on the other hand, that his justice is so unswerving that his love can in no degree conflict with it, or act contrary to it, and that so important was it that his justice should stand inviolate, that only through the sacrifice of his only begotten Son did his love accomplish his purpose for man's redemption and restitution: "For God *so* loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth in him* might not perish, but have everlasting life."

Through Christ alone, therefore, is the great salvation attainable--"through faith in his blood." Without faith in his blood, we can only be judged by God by the rule of strict justice, and it is a fearful thing to fall thus into the hands of the living God; for outside of God's plan for our redemption through Christ, his justice can only condemn us as unworthy of life. Nor do we teach that having once come to a clear knowledge of the truth, we may reject it and sin against it with impunity, or postpone our personal submission and conformity to it, without receiving the penalty for so doing;--the penalty for rejection of *full* light and opportunity being the second death, from which there is no recovery. By *one offering* he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified by the truth; but that offering intelligently rejected, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sin, but a certain looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall *devour* the adversary. But having come to the knowledge of the truth--to which God purposes to bring all men--and to obedience, and to faith in God's appointed way of salvation, not attempting to climb up like a thief or a robber by some other way, the end of such faith and obedience will be everlasting life.

It is expedient, therefore, from God's standpoint of view, that the truth should be fully and clearly proclaimed without regard to the cry of alarm from Babylon, and equally without regard to the disastrous consequences to that system, against which the fiat of destruction has gone forth from Jehovah. "This is the will of God, who will have all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

So far as our knowledge and observation have gone, a knowledge, even of the general outlines of God's plan, does not produce carelessness or indifference or a desire to procrastinate coming into conformity with it. On the other hand, we do know of hundreds of sound conversions from sin and infidelity and from every evil course. At the present time there are on our list of subscribers to the TOWER five names of criminals in various prisons who have received the truth, and who have been converted by it. And another whose term expired a few months ago, having been imprisoned for highway robbery, was soundly converted through the reading of The Plan of The Ages and the TOWER while in prison, and has now become an active minister of the gospel, and in the past two months has sold 800 copies of DAWN, Vol. I. Raised in the Methodist church

under the influence and fear of the doctrine of eternal torment, he became a highway robber, while under the influence of the truth he became a minister of the gospel. Yes, praise the Lord! it is expedient to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and we rejoice to know that God will continue to send forth his light and his truth until the earth is filled with his glory, and blessed is every man who is privileged to bear the message.

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