

THE KEEPING OF THE COMMANDMENTS.

"The Worship of Mammon."

"I AM the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Ex. 20:2, 3.

Yet another phase of the worship of "the god of this world," included in "the pride of life," is the worship of Mammon, or riches. And this is not by any means least, though it is the last one in the list. For is it not written, "The love of money is the root of all evil"?

This is so wrapped up with that phase of "the pride of life" which was noticed last week,—ambition, self-exaltation, self aggrandizement, *gloriosus*,—that it is, in great measure, inseparable from it. For there is nothing that gives worldly glory so quickly, so easily, and so abundantly as money; and there is nothing that gives power so quickly and so easily as does money. All this, simply because Mammon is such a familiar deity to mankind, because mankind is naturally so worshipful of Mammon. And yet it is all idolatry; it is all a denial of the true God; it is a breaking of the First Commandment, which says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." For, says Jesus: "Ye can not,"—not, Ye ought not; not, Ye should not; but,—"*Ye can not* serve God and Mammon."

Since the true worship of God is to love God with all the heart, and all the soul, and all the mind, and all the strength; and anything that draw away either the heart, soul, mind, or strength to it, and comes between man and the true worship of God, is another god; so the allowing of money, the desire for money, the love of money, to come between a man and his true service to God, is the worship of Mammon. And to allow the desire for money, the love of money, to separate a man from true Christian thoughtfulness, and care of mankind temporally and eternally, is the worship of Mammon; it is to have another god than the Lord; it is to break the First Commandment.

The distinction may be clearly drawn by saying that the keeping of the First Commandment is the being right, and doing right, with no thought whatever, at any time, as to what it will cost. No amount of money can ever have any consideration whatever in any question of serving God; in any question of loving God with all the heart, or our neighbor as ourself. And yet everybody knows that "What will it cost?" does have a positive bearing with the vast majority, even of professed Christian people, upon the exercise of their love to God with all the heart, and their neighbor as themselves.

But to allow this question to have any bearing whatever is the worldly way. It is not of the Father, but of the world. For with the world the first question is always, "What will it cost?" "How much can I make?" In all the dealing, all the traffic of business relationship, in the world, the way of the world, and the inquiry of the world, is only, "How much can I make?" And if more can be made by oppressing the neighbor, the oppression takes precedence of the love of the neighbor; and the neighbor is deliberately robbed.

If a neighbor begins business of the same order as that of a man who has already begun, he is deliberately underbitten, undersold, that, if possible, he may be crowded completely out of the business, in order that the first one may be left alone, to have all, in order that he alone may be rich, and have the worldly glory of his little kingdom of the crossroads. And those that have succeeded most fully at this, form gigantic combinations to crush out, or absorb, all lesser ones, until there remains but one vast combination drawing tribute from all the people in the nations, and even of the whole world.

But God has written of it all that "he is a proud man" "who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and can not be satisfied, but gathered unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people;" "that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil." But "shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his? how long?" "Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them? Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee." Hab. 2:5-9.

This is all "the pride of life," which is not of the Father, but is of the world. It is all Mammon worship. And since the literal, original meaning of the word "mammon" is "that in which one trusts," it is particularly appropriate that these various combinations, which crush out all individuality and demand tribute of all peoples, should be called "trusts."

Yet the most gigantic of the "trusts" is but the extreme of that trick of trade held by the individual, by which, to get the trade, he undersells and crowds out the man across the way.

The most gigantic "trust" is but the extreme of that trick in trade by which the individual or the little partnership or corporation asks more for a thing when there is no competition than would be asked if there were competition. Whosoever, without competition, demands a greater price than he knows that he would take if there were competition, is an exactor of unjust gain. And "he that by usury and unjust gain increases his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor." Prov. 28:8.

The most gigantic "trust" is but the extreme of that trick in trade on the part of the individual, by which, through his beating down, or "jewling," he tries his best to get a thing for less than he knows that it is worth. "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth." Prov. 20:14.

The organizer or the president of the "trust" who boasts in his enormous gains is no more an idolater and a sinner in this thing than is the *individual* who, in his degree, and to the extent of *his* power, does the same thing precisely. If *he* had the ability, or the power, of the organizer or the president of the "trust," he would be doing precisely the same things that he is doing *now*, only in the larger measure that would be his, as the head of a mighty corporation. And so certainly is it true, as written, "In the world, the god of traffic is the god of fraud."

All such is but the worship of Mammon; it is idolatry; it is to have another god before the Lord; it is not of the Father, but is of the world; it is neither loving God with all the heart nor the neighbor as the self. "If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; if I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much; . . . this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above." And this equally and as really as if I were a worshiper of the sun and the moon. Job 31:24-29.

There is a better way: it is the way of the keeping of the commandments of God: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." It is the way of Christianity: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." You know that you do not like to have a man work a scheme upon you, by which he requires you to pay for a thing more than he would take for it if there were competition. You know that you would not like to have people "jew" you down to take for a thing less than you know that it is worth. Put yourself in the other man's place—and stay there. Look at things from his side, and continue to do so. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." This is Christianity; it is the keeping of the First Commandment. Yea, it is the keeping of all "the law and the prophets."

Nor is it hard to do this. It is the easiest thing in the world for him who has the *heart* to do it. And *God gives the heart* to do it; as it is written: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."

"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." "Our of Egypt have I called my Son." "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

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