

Review and Herald, 9 de Diciembre 1884

December 9, 1884

Christmas is Coming

“Christmas is coming,” is the note that is sounded throughout our world from East to West and from North to South. With youth, those of mature age, and even the aged, it is a period of general rejoicing, of great gladness. But what is Christmas, that it should demand so much attention? This day has been made much of for centuries. It is accepted by the unbelieving world, and by the Christian world generally, as the day on which Christ was born. When the world at large celebrate the day, they show no honor to Christ. They refuse to acknowledge him as their Saviour, to honor him by willing obedience to his service. They show preference to the day, but none to the one for whom the day is celebrated, Jesus Christ. {RH December 9, 1884, par. 1}

The twenty-fifth of December is supposed to be the day of the birth of Jesus Christ, and its observance has become customary and popular. But yet there is no certainty that we are keeping the veritable day of our Saviour’s birth. History gives us no certain assurance of this. The Bible does not give us the precise time. Had the Lord deemed this knowledge essential to our salvation, he would have spoken through his prophets and apostles, that we might know all about the matter. But the silence of the Scriptures upon this point evidences to us that it is hidden from us for the wisest purposes. In his wisdom, the Lord concealed the place where he buried Moses. God buried him, and God resurrected him, and took him to heaven. This secrecy was to prevent idolatry. He against whom they rebelled while he was in active service, whom they provoked almost beyond human endurance, was almost worshiped as God after his separation from them by death. For the very same purpose he has concealed the precise day of Christ’s birth; that the day should not receive the honor that should be given to Christ as the Redeemer of the world,—one to be received, to be trusted, to be relied on as he who could save to the uttermost all who come unto him. The soul’s adoration should be given to Jesus as the Son of the infinite God. {RH December 9, 1884, par. 2}

There is no divine sanctity resting upon the twenty-fifth of December; and it is not pleasing to God that anything that concerns the salvation of man through the infinite sacrifice made for them, should be so sadly perverted from its professed design. Christ should be the supreme object; but as Christmas has been observed, the glory is turned from him to mortal man, whose sinful, defective character made it necessary for him to come to our world. Jesus, the Majesty of heaven, the royal King of heaven, laid aside his royalty, left his throne of glory, his high command, and came into our world to bring to fallen man, weakened in moral power, and corrupted by sin, aid divine. He clothed his divinity with humanity, that he might reach to the very depths of human woe and misery, to lift up fallen man. By taking upon himself man’s nature, he raised humanity in the scale of moral value with God. These great themes are almost too high, too deep, too infinite, for the comprehension of finite minds. {RH December 9, 1884, par. 3}

Parents should keep these things before their children, and instruct them, line upon line, precept upon precept, in their obligation to God,—not their obligation to each other, to honor and glorify one another by gifts and offerings. But they should be taught that Jesus is the world's Redeemer, the object of thought, of painstaking effort; that his work is the grand theme which should engage their attention; that they should bring to him their gifts and offerings. Thus did the wise men and the shepherds. {RH December 9, 1884, par. 4}

As the twenty-fifth day of December is observed to commemorate the birth of Christ, as the children have been instructed by precept and example that this was indeed a day of gladness and rejoicing, you will find it a difficult matter to pass over this period without giving it some attention. It can be made to serve a very good purpose. The youth should be treated very carefully. They should not be left on Christmas to find their own amusement in vanity and pleasure-seeking, in amusements which will be detrimental to their spirituality. Parents can control this matter by turning the minds and the offerings of their children to God and his cause and the salvation of souls. The desire for amusement, instead of being quenched and arbitrarily ruled down, should be controlled and directed by painstaking effort upon the part of the parents. Their desire to make gifts may be turned into pure and holy channels, and made to result in good to our fellow-men by supplying the treasury in the great, grand work for which Christ came into our world. Self-denial and self-sacrifice marked his course of action. Let it mark ours who profess to love Jesus; because in him is centered our hope of eternal life. {RH December 9, 1884, par. 5}

Youth cannot be made as sedate and grave as old age, the child as sober as the sire. While sinful amusements are condemned, as they should be, let parents, teachers, and guardians of youth provide in their stead innocent pleasures, which shall not taint or corrupt the morals. Do not bind down the young to rigid rules and restraints that will lead them to feel themselves oppressed and to break over and rush into paths of folly and destruction. With a firm, kindly, considerate hand, hold the lines of government, guiding and controlling their minds and purposes, yet so gently, so wisely, so lovingly, that they still will know that you have their best good in view. How many parents are lamenting the fact that they cannot keep their children at home, that they have no love for home. At an early age they have a desire for the company of strangers; and as soon as they are old enough, they break away from that which appears to them to be bondage and unreasonable restraint, and will neither heed a mother's prayers nor a father's counsels. Investigation would generally reveal that the sin lay at the door of the parents. They have not made home what it ought to be,—attractive, pleasant, radiant with the sunshine of kind words, pleasant looks, and true love. {RH December 9, 1884, par. 6}

The secret of saving your children lies in making your home lovely and attractive. Indulgence in parents will not bind the children to God nor to home; but a firm, godly influence to properly train and educate the mind would save many children from ruin. {RH December 9, 1884, par. 7} On Christmas, so soon to come, let not the parents take the position that an evergreen placed in the church for the amusement of the Sabbath-school scholars is a sin; for it may be made a great blessing. Keep before their minds benevolent objects. In no case should mere amusement be the object of these gatherings. While there may be some who will turn these occasions into seasons of careless levity, and whose minds will not receive the divine impress, to other minds and

characters these seasons will be highly beneficial. I am fully satisfied that innocent substitutes can be devised for many gatherings that demoralize. {RH December 9, 1884, par. 8}

Christmas is coming. May you all have wisdom to make it a precious season. Let the older church members unite, heart and soul, with their children in this innocent amusement and recreation, in devising ways and means to show true respect to Jesus by bringing to him gifts and offerings. Let every one remember the claims of God. His cause cannot go forward without your aid. Let the gifts you have usually bestowed upon one another be placed in the Lord's treasury. I present before you, my brethren and sisters, an object, the European mission. In every church let your smaller offerings be placed upon your Christmas tree. Let the precious emblem, "ever green," suggest the holy work of God and his beneficence to us; and the loving heart-work will be to save other souls who are in darkness. Let your works be in accordance with your faith. I heard Eld. Butler read a touching letter a few days since from Eld. Whitney, of Europe. The good work is going forward there, but it ought to have been done six years ago. Let not this work be hindered. Let it advance. If all, both old and young, will forego giving presents to one another, and forego the selfish outlay of means in these coming holidays, there would be in heaven a most precious record of self-denial for Christ's sake. {RH December 9, 1884, par. 9}

Every tree in Satan's garden hangs laden with the fruits of vanity, pride, self-importance, evil desire, extravagance,—all poisoned fruit, but very gratifying to the carnal heart. Let the several churches present to God Christmas trees in every church; and then let them hang thereon the fruits of beneficence and gratitude,—offerings coming from willing hearts and hands, fruits that God will accept as an expression of our faith and our great love to him for the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ. Let the evergreen be laden with fruit, rich, and pure, and holy, acceptable to God. Shall we not have such a Christmas as Heaven can approve? Thousands of dollars are needlessly spent every year in gifts to each other. That is means lost to God, lost to his cause. It pleases the vanity, encourages pride, creates all kinds of dissatisfaction, murmuring, and complaints, because perhaps the gifts are not just what was desired, not of the high value wanted or expected. Christmas is not observed as its name implies it should be. Man has forsaken God in almost everything, and has turned the attention to self. He has left the pure springs of living waters which flow from the throne of God, and hewn out to himself broken cisterns, which can hold no water. God gave man a probation that he might be fitted for heaven. He was to look upward to God, who was to be the soul's adoration; but talent, skill, and inventive powers are all exercised to make self the supreme object of attention. Man has withdrawn his gaze from Deity, and fastened his eyes upon the finite, the earthly, the corruptible. {RH December 9, 1884, par. 10}

Satan is in this work to put God out of the mind and interpose the world and self that the eye shall not be single to the glory of God. Satan captivates and ensnares the mind. His infernal wisdom is continually exercised to mold and fashion the material with which he has to deal, to make God the least and the last object of devotion. {RH December 9, 1884, par. 11}

The various amusements of society have been the ruin of thousands who, but for these devices of Satan, might be servants of the living God. There are wrecks of character seen everywhere who have been destroyed by gilded, fashionable pleasure; and still the work is going forward. Thousands more will go to ruin who will not open their eyes to see and sense the fact that,

although they are professed Christians, they are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. {RH December 9, 1884, par. 12}

I entreat you, my brethren and sisters, to make this coming Christmas a blessing to yourselves and others. The birth of Jesus was unhallowed by the great men of earth. He was the Majesty of heaven; yet this royal subject had no attendants. His birth was unhonored by the very men he came to our world to save. But his advent was celebrated by the heavenly host. Angels of God, in the appearance of a star, conducted the wise men on their mission in search of Jesus. They came with gifts and costly offerings of frankincense and myrrh, to pay their oblation to the infant king foretold in prophecy. They followed the brilliant messengers with assurance and great joy. The angels passed by the school of the prophets, the palaces of kings, and appeared to the humble shepherds, guarding their flocks by night, upon Bethlehem's plains. One angel first appeared, clothed with the panoply of heaven; and so surprised and so terrified were the shepherds that they could only gaze upon the wondrous glory of the heavenly visitant with unutterable amazement. The angel of the Lord came to them, and said, "Fear not, for, behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you, Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." No sooner had their eyes become accustomed to the glorious presence of the one angel, than, lo! the whole plain was lighted up with the wondrous glory of the multitude of angels that peopled the plains of Bethlehem. The angel quieted the fears of the shepherds before opening their eyes to behold the multitude of the heavenly host, all praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth, peace, good will to men." {RH December 9, 1884, par. 13}

Then was the melody of heaven heard by mortal ears, and the heavenly choir swept back to heaven as they closed their ever memorable anthem. The light faded away and the shadows of the night once more fell on the hills and plains of Bethlehem; but there remained in the hearts of the shepherds the brightest picture mortal man had ever looked upon, and the blessed promise and assurance of the advent to our world of the Saviour of men, which filled their hearts with joy and gladness, mingled with faith and wondrous love to God. In simple trust, the shepherds hastened to follow the direction of the heavenly messengers, to find the royal babe, not in a palace, not in even a common inn, but in a stable. They bowed in reverence to the infant king, committing no idolatry. But how certain is it that idolatry is committed by those who profess to be lovers of Jesus! Their attention, thought, and powers are devoted to poor, finite mortals. Relatives and friends come in for the worship which belongs to God alone. {RH December 9, 1884, par. 14}

I entreat my brethren and sisters to have a special object in view. The European mission is in great need of means to carry forward the work. In Switzerland they are building a printing office which is greatly needed; and means is wanted to carry forward this work to completion. It now seems an impossibility to supply this great need for lack of means. The missionary work must go forward. Now, brethren, let us on Christmas make special efforts to come before the Lord with gifts and grateful offerings for the gift of Jesus Christ as a Redeemer to the world. Let nothing now be spent needlessly; but let every penny that can be spared be put out to the exchangers. Satan has had his way in managing these occasions to suit himself. Now let us turn the current heavenward instead of earthward. Let us show by our offerings that we appreciate the self-denial

and sacrifice of Christ in our behalf. Let God be brought to remembrance by every child and parent; and let the offerings, both small and large, be brought to the store-house of God. {RH December 9, 1884, par. 15}

You that have means, who have been in the habit of making donations to your relatives and friends until you are at a loss to know what to invent that will be new and interesting to them, seek to put your ingenuity to the test, as well as your influence, to see how much means you may gather to advance the work of the Lord. Let your skill and your capacities be employed to make the coming Christmas one of intense interest, paying your addresses to the God of heaven in willing, grateful offerings. Follow no longer the world's customs. Make a break here, and see if this Christmas cannot show thousands of dollars flowing into the treasury, that God's store-house may not be empty. You may not be recompensed on earth, but you will be rewarded in the future life, and that abundantly. Let those who have so long planned for self now begin to plan for the cause of God, and you will certainly have increased wisdom. Let the conscience be enlightened, and the love of truth and of Christ take the place of idolatrous thoughts and love of self. Will you not arise, my Christian brethren and sisters, and gird yourselves for duty in the fear of God, so arranging this matter that it shall not be dry and uninteresting, but full of innocent enjoyment that shall bear the signet of Heaven? I know the poorer class will respond to these suggestions. The most wealthy should also show an interest, and bestow their gifts and offerings proportionate to the means with which God has intrusted them. Let there be recorded in the heavenly books such a Christmas as has never yet been seen, because of the donations which shall be given for the sustaining of the work of God and the upbuilding of his kingdom. {RH December 9, 1884, par. 16}