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The One True Church.

(This article is published by request).

THIS subject we feel is one of the most important presented to us in God's Word. Many sincere people wish to know which is God's true Church, and the words of the lovely hymn—"The Church's One Foundation"—express much truth respecting our subject, the first verse of which states

"The Church's one foundation,
Is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
She is His new creation,
By water and the Word.
From heav'n He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her,
And for her life He died."

In Eph. 1:3-7 the Apostle Paul made reference to a time long before the Church's foundation—Jesus Christ— came to earth to seek His holy bride. "According as he (God) hath chosen us in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love ; having predestinated us unto sonship by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." What a wonderful and amazing thought that is, that God had predetermined to select a Church from the fallen human family, by Jesus Christ to Himself because this was His good pleasure to do so, and this was formulated in God's mind, "before the foundation of the world." This predestination was of a class that would be "conformed to the image of his Son," (Rom. 8:29), and not individuals being predestinated in God's plan.

Does this make us feel important—we who are striving to be true and faithful members of this Church of God today? No, indeed! It gives us a feeling of humiliation in the sight of the great Eternal One who condescended thus to favor the children of men, without any attractiveness on our part, as fallen human beings. Sometimes we may wonder why God passed by the glorious holy angels in the heavens who had not sinned, in His choice of a Bride for His beloved Son—"the beginning of the creation of God." (Rev. 3:14.) But this was God's good pleasure, and the fact that He is able to transform such poor material into beings fit to be joint-heirs with Christ will demonstrate to all intelligent creatures the mighty power of our loving Heavenly Father to all eternity.

Let us now review to some extent the lines of the hymn already mentioned—"The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord." Christians generally are agreed on this point, but Scriptural references should also prove helpful. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians we read—"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ"—and this was most essential to be established seeing that the Apostle had also declared in this connection—"We are labourers together with God; ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." (1 Cor. 3:9-11.)

In Matt. 16:13-18 we read of a discussion between Jesus and His disciples which is of much interest. After asking about the opinion of men generally as to whom He was, the Lord put this vital question to His disciples—"But whom say ye that I am?" Peter, being the spokesman, immediately declared—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus was very pleased with this answer, and after stating that the Father had really revealed this to Peter, declared—"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church; and the gates of hell (hades) shall not prevail against it." It is of interest to know that the word "Peter" comes from a Greek word meaning "a piece of stone," while

the Greek word from which the word “rock” is translated means “a mass of rock or great boulder.” So, our Lord was saying — Upon this massive, foundation truth which Peter had declared, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” He would build His church.

“And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”—against the Church. What could this mean? Well, Jesus Himself entered into the hell condition to ransom mankind, including His Church, but the gates of hell (hades), or death, could not prevail against Him, because God raised Him from the dead, from the hell condition, on the third day, commemorated on Easter Sunday. The risen Lord Himself declared—“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” (Rev. 1:18.) Likewise, Jesus told Peter that the hell or hades condition could not prevail against His Church either, because the same power of God would operate on behalf of the members of the Church, at the time of the first resurrection. (See 1 Cor. 15:55-57.)

The third and fourth lines of our hymn, state respecting the Church—“She is His new creation, by water and the Word.” This wonderful truth that the Church is a New Creation of God of this Gospel Age is shown by the words of Jesus in John 14:2, 3,—“In my Father’s house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you.” Even though there were already many mansions in His Father’s house, it was still necessary for Jesus to prepare a place for His Church, because it is a New Creation —additional to all other creations even in the spiritual realm. (See 2 Cor. 5:14-17.)

Is it Scriptural to say that the Church is the New Creation, “By water and the word”? Turning to John 3:5 we have our Lord’s words to Nicodemus as a guide—“Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Jesus’ reference to the water seems to apply to the baptism of John the Baptist for the Jews, picturing repentance and returning to harmony with God, and thus gaining justification, in readiness to receive Jesus as their Messiah and Saviour. Grasping the privilege of justification, through faith in the sacrifice of Christ, “the Word” gives instruction for the next step, which is full consecration (Rom. 12:1), resulting in the begetting of the spirit, and finally spirit birth—to enter into the Kingdom of God. In James 1:18, we read—“Of his own will (God’s will) begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”

The fact, then, that the Lord’s Church is a New Creation fits the meaning of the Greek word “ecclesia” from which our English word “Church” is translated, for it means—“A calling out.” How fitting are the words of our Lord in His prayer to the Father in John 17:6 —“I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gayest me *out of the world.*” (See also verses 9, 14-16, 20.)

At this time when our Lord was commending His little band of disciples to the Father in prayer, He was preparing them for the time—within a few hours—when He would be put to death, and leave them in an unfriendly world, so that they may continue to be free from the systems of religion of the day, and thus form the beginning of God’s True Church when the day of Pentecost arrived. So Jesus gave them a parting message of comfort in the words of John 14:27-29,—“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid . . . If you loved me (fully), ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father ; for my Father is greater than I.”

Even though these lovely messages of comfort were conveyed to the disciples, they could not but be shocked when the Lord was actually crucified, but with His resurrection and periodical visits to them during the forty days prior to His ascension, they gained confidence, and with the coming of Pentecost they were furnished with the enlightenment and guidance of the spirit in their hearts and minds, and were able to commence their ministry as God’s True Church.

After the recording of 3,000 being added to the number of the disciples in one day, we read in Acts 2:47 — “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” No doubt “such as should be saved” for the heavenly calling; not implying that all others were lost forever. Rather, such as were being saved by the enlightenment of the ministry of the apostles, in addition to our Lord’s own ministry in Israel for 3½ years, the results of which were then manifest in the days of the early church.

From the Acts of the Apostles we find many stirring and outstanding events which thrill our hearts as we contemplate the Lord’s overruling providence in connection with His Church at that time, called out from the world. The Lord’s deliverance of Peter from prison, and the conversion of Paul are inspiring happenings, but as time passed on, we find God’s True Church being assailed by the great Adversary, with the Lord’s permission, for the necessary testing and proving of each member in this select company of the followers of the Master. Thus, we find that the Churches needed “confirming” and “establishing in the faith” by the apostles as they journeyed from place to place. (See Acts 15:40, 41; 16:5.) This reminds us of the privileges we enjoy today in our Conventions and regular weekly meetings, for undoubtedly these are the Lord’s means of “confirming” His true people today, and those who neglect these provisions from the Lord’s hand, when available, are likely to suffer loss. On the other hand, the confirmation ceremonies in

some church systems today are of little avail, and have nothing to recommend them from the Word of God.

A most notable exhortation in those days of the early Church was that given by Paul to the elders of the Church at Ephesus,—“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the holy spirit hath made you overseers, *to feed the church of God*. . . . For after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch” (See Acts 20:17-38.) The faithful Apostle was seeking to warn the members of the Church against the attacks of the Adversary through various agents. Someone may ask, Why did God permit the Evil One to attack and deceive some in the Church? Undoubtedly, to prove the loyalty and obedience of those who had promised to walk faithfully in the steps of the Master, and doesn’t the same apply today? Yes, indeed ! This makes Paul’s words most appropriate to us, as well as to those entrusted with the care and oversight of the Church in his day.

As time progressed the Church of God comprised many sections in various places, just as it does today. It is encouraging to read Paul’s messages to the brethren in Rome, such as in Romans 16:1-5, with his exhortation—“Likewise greet the church that is in their house.” We may ask, What is very noticeable in these records of the early church? Even when there were 3,000 added, and later 5,000 mentioned in Acts 4:4, do we find these true Christians erecting churches or cathedrals for their worship of God? No, not once in the whole of the New Testament do we find a record of such; they were too busy and active preaching the word, and any money they had was much better spent in the Lord’s cause than on buildings of earthly materials. So it was — “Greet the church that is in their house.”

Much to the point in this respect is Paul’s wonderful sermon on Mars’ Hill, found in Acts 17. “The Lord of heaven and earth dwelleth not in temples made with hands ; neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.” (Acts 17:22-25.) Some time later Paul wrote to Timothy concerning — “The house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” (1 Tim. 3:15.) Here we see that the real house of God is “the Church of the living God.” How small, how futile is the building of material churches, temples and cathedrals, and thinking of them as the house of God! No, indeed — “The Lord dwelleth not in temples made with hands.” (See also John 4:20-24.)

Let us hear the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 6:19, 20—“Know ye not that your body is the temple of the holy spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify **God in** your body.” And again—“Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I Will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (2 Cor. 6:16-18.) Here, then, is the one True Church, the House of God, composed of many members right down the Gospel Age, and scattered throughout many nations — the Church of the Living God, whose names are written in heaven. (Heb. 12:23.) It is not of much account to have one’s name written on an earthly church roll; but when God dwells in each member of the One True Church, then, indeed, their names are written in heaven—in the Lamb’s book of life. (Rev. 13:8.)

We note, also, that the Church of the Living God, is the pillar and ground (or stay) of the truth. A few lines on this point by a dear Christian read—“The Lord’s Church, the only one to which the name ecclesia, body, or church, is properly applicable, is so insignificant, so unostentatious, and comparatively so poor in this world’s riches, that it is not recognised nor recognisable from the worldly standpoint. It is neither man-made nor man-ruled; nor are its members enrolled on earth, but in heaven. Its head and bishop is the Lord, its law is His Word; it has but one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism; and it is built upon the testimonies of the holy apostles and prophets — Jesus Christ Himself being its chief corner-stone.”

Referring again to Paul’s message of exhortation to the elders at Ephesus, we call to mind Christ’s words to the Church at Ephesus, as recorded in Rev. 2:1-4, particularly verse 4. “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” What is implied by the “first love”? It means the unreserved yielding up of the heart, the affections, to God, when full consecration is made to follow Christ, even unto death. All true Christians have surely realised the thrill, the experience, of “tasting that the Lord is gracious” and yielding up their whole beings to Him. As prospective members of God’s true Church all such must zealously maintain their “first love” right throughout their Christian life, so that their names may not only be written in heaven, but also confessed before the Father, and before His angels. (Rev. 3:5.)

As the period of the Church’s history progressed throughout the Gospel Age, we find other shortcomings revealed by our Lord in His messages to the Churches. However, His words to the Church at Philadelphia, in Rev. 3:7-13, are encouraging, covering, historically, the period of the Reformation, when the Lord gave courage to His faithful servants to resist the assaults upon the True Church following the “dark ages” of persecution. No doubt the words—“These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth; I know thy works : behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut

it,”—meant volumes to those dear, persecuted saints of the Reformation period, and they endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

But the message to the Church at Laodicea, covering the last period of the Church’s history at the close of the Gospel Age in which we have been living for some time, is one of reproof and rejection by the Lord, as shown in Rev. 3:14-17.—”These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that ‘thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” This shows the condition of Christendom as a whole, and God’s true people, the members of God’s True Church, are being “called out” unto the Lord

Himself, as further revealed in Rev. 18:1-4.-- “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” All worthy of this name—”My people”—will hear the Lord’s call, sooner or’ later, and come unto the Lord Himself, even all whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. (Rev. 13:8.)

Our Lord’s call to His people to come out of the confused teachings and worldliness of the Babylonian church systems is well described in Luke 17, by Jesus “I tell you there shall be two in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two shall be in the field ; one shall be taken and the other left. And they answered and said unto Him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.” (Luke 17:34-37.) Here we have the harvest work described at the end of this Gospel Age. “Two shall be in one bed” —the creed bed in which many slumber. “One shall be taken, and the other shall be left”—one is attracted by the truth message, the other slumbers on, not worthy of the truth at this time for the heavenly kingdom. Also those “grinding together” or “in the field”, —preparing food for sections of the nominal church, or in the mission field — of these “one shall be taken, and the other left.” “Where, Lord?”—’Wheresoever the body (the food, the truth) is thither will the eagles (sharp-eyed Christians, alert and anxious to know the Lord’s truth and His will for them) be gathered together.”

So, God’s True Church members are found amongst the alert, appreciative, household of faith, scattered here and there throughout the world, without any denominational name or standing, but with their faith and hope based on the foundation of Jesus Christ, and rejoicing in His teachings and those of His faithful apostles. This is the happy and blessed condition of all these members comprising the One True Church of God in readiness for their gathering Home beyond the veil — the Great Church Victorious—to reign with Christ for the blessing of all the families of the earth in the grand Millennial Kingdom now near at hand.

Though, with a scornful wonder,
Men see her sore opprest
By foes too great in number,
By trials sore distrest,

Yet saints their watch are keeping;
Their cry goes up, “How long?”
And soon the night of weeping
Shall change to morn of song.

’Mid toil and tribulation,
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace for evermore;

Till with the vision glorious,
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious
Shall be the Church at rest.

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The Test of Endurance.

“Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.” — 1 Kings 20:11.

THE test of endurance is certainly one of the severest tests of faithfulness to which the elect Church, the Body of Christ, is subjected. It is the test which gauges and registers the strength of every other virtue and grace, and no soldier of the cross will be crowned with the laurels of victory who has not stood this test. The Christian life is a warfare, and the above words of one of the kings of Israel to a boastful enemy of the Lord’s people are applicable, not only to every new recruit in the Lord’s army, but, similarly, to all who have not yet finished the good fight of faith.

The first gush of enthusiasm in the Lord’s service, much as we may and do appreciate it, may be but the hasty production of the shallow soil of a heart which immediately receives the truth with gladness, but, having no root in itself, endures but for a time, and afterward, when affliction and persecution arise, immediately is offended. (Mark 4:16, 17.) Such characters cannot stand the fiery tests of this “evil day,” whereof it is written : “The fire (of that day) shall try every man’s work, of what sort it is.” (1 Cor. 3:13.)

Therefore, says the Apostle Peter, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” (1 Peter 4:12.) All of the elect Church must be so tried ; and blessed is he that shall endure unto the end. The sure Word of prophecy points to severe conflicts and great trials in the closing scenes of the Church’s history. Elijah, a type of the Body of Christ, finished his earthly career and went up by a whirlwind in a chariot of fire—strong symbols of storms and great afflictions. John, another type of the Church, was cast into prison and then beheaded. And we are forewarned of the great necessity of the whole armour of God, if we would stand in this “evil day.”

It therefore behoves every one who aspires to the prize of our high calling to brace himself for the severer conflicts and trials of faith and patience that may suddenly and without a moment’s warning be sprung upon him. In the battle of this day, as in all other battles, the effort of the Enemy is to surprise and suddenly attack and overwhelm the Lord’s people; and the only preparation, therefore, that can be made for such emergencies is constant vigilance and prayer and the putting on of the whole armour of God—the Truth and the spirit of the Truth.

“In your patience possess ye your souls.” No other grace will be more needed than this in the fiery ordeals of this “evil day” ; for without great patience no man can endure to the end. All along the Christian’s pathway, ever and anon, he comes to a new crisis ; perhaps these are often seemingly of trivial importance, yet he realises that they may be turning points in his Christian course. Who has not realised them? There comes a temptation in weariness in well-doing, together with the suggestion of an easier way ; or there springs up a little root of pride or ambition with suggestions of ways and means for feeding and gratifying it. Then there comes, by and by, the decisive moment when you must choose this course or that ; and lo, you have reached a crisis!

Which way will you turn? Most likely you will turn in the direction to which the sentiments you have cultivated have been tending, whether that be the right way or the wrong way. If it be the wrong way, most likely you will be unable to discern it clearly ; for your long cultivated sentiments will sway your judgment. “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the way of death.” (Prey. 14:12.) How necessary, therefore, is prayer, that in every crisis we may pass the test successfully ! Nor can we safely delay to watch and pray until the crisis is upon us ; but such should be our constant attitude.

The life of a soldier, ever on the alert and on duty, is by no means an easy life ; nor do the Scriptures warrant any such expectation. On the contrary, they say, “Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” ; “Fight the good fight of faith,” etc. And yet many Christian people seem to have the very opposite idea. Their ideal Christian life is one without a breeze or a storm ; it must be one continuous calm. Such a life was indeed more possible in former days than now, though the world, the flesh and the Devil always have opposed them, and always have had to be resisted by every loyal soldier of the cross. But now the opposition is daily becoming more and more intense ; for Satan realises that his time is short, and he is determined by any and every means to exert his power against the consummation of the Lord’s plan for the exaltation of the Church.

Consequently, we have had within this Harvest period many and severe storms of opposition; and still there are, doubtless, more severe trials to follow. But those who, with overcoming faith, outride them all—who patiently endure, who cultivate the spirit of Christ with its fruits and graces, and who valiantly fight the good fight of faith, rather than withdraw from the field—such will be the “overcomers” to whom the laurels of victory will be given when the crowning day has come.

Sorrow Turned to Joy.

(Convention Address)

CONSIDERING such a topic at this Easter season it would be natural that our first thoughts would revolve around the disciples' reactions to the death and resurrection of our Lord. We need not itemize the many sorrowful experiences of the last days of their Master's life upon earth, for we have read them many times. Then followed the resurrection, the intermingled fear, amazement, doubt, hope, and ultimate joy in connection with that. The 24th chapter of Luke, carefully read, reveals all this.

The suggestion that the Lord whom they had loved so dearly, from whom they had expected so much, whom they had seen brutally put to death, was alive again, filled them with fear and perplexity, first of all, for had they not seen His lifeless body placed in the tomb? It must have been an eerie experience to hear unnatural beings addressing them—"Why seek ye the LIVING among the dead?" Yet the massive stone that sealed the sepulchre had been rolled back. Who had done that?

Doubt continued as the risen Lord demonstrated in various ways that He was really alive again, and so real and sustained were these that at last they began to *hope* that it was real and not fantasy. When at last it was proved beyond doubt, and THE SCRIPTURES HAD BEEN OPENED to show them why all these things had to happen, then we read that "they returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." (Luke 24:52.)

We can note, too, the numerous instances in the Old Testament where sorrow was turned to happier experiences.

Job, Joseph, David and others met with hard experiences at the hands of jealous opponents and other calamities, yet they were richly blessed later. We might be surprised at the number of the ancients who received blessings AFTER great trials and suffering; further, we know that their richest blessings lie still future. They were stoned, sawn asunder, made destitute, afflicted, tormented, mocked and imprisoned, etc., showing a wonderful faith in their God, yet they have not received the fulfilment of the promises made to them. (Heb. 11:36-39.) The verse that closes this chapter tells us they await full reward, because, firstly, God has provided some better things for US.

Do these "better things" laid up for us (the Gospel Age church) involve, firstly, some suffering too? In answer, let us review, briefly, the experiences of Him whom we are called to follow, and note what sufferings were prerequisite to His glory. He suffered "for righteousness' sake"—never did He suffer for imperfections or wrongdoing. This immediately creates a gulf between Him and His followers which it is impossible to bridge; yet we need not be discouraged.

When the famous Persian carpets are being made we are told that mistakes are made by apprentices who are allowed to assist in the work. The master-artist in control does not attempt to undo these mistakes but cleverly weaves them into the pattern. It is said that in so doing he often achieves new and enhanced heights of design and craftsmanship. We, too, are apprentices, in the school of Christ, making many mistakes, and the Lord manifests great patience with us if we are properly exercised by them. The many mercies and forgivenesses realised are helping us toward that time when, as Christ's associates in the Kingdom, we will be required to show the same patience to those going up over the great highway towards Edenic perfection. "If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him." It seems evident that we cannot suffer WITH Christ through sufferings in which we become involved because of wrongdoing; therefore, they must be other than those which we share with Him.

God said of Jesus that He would make His soul (His earthly life) an "offering for sin," and we learn that the purpose of this was to redeem mankind and return them to the life enjoyed by Adam before he transgressed. The Bible makes it plain that Christians are to share or taste of Christ's sufferings; therefore, they must be sufferings for righteousness' sake, else they could not be termed His. The Bible does not lead us to believe that there is any merit in our sufferings to redeem anyone, but we believe it does show that Christ will not make the value of His sacrifice available to the world until His followers of this age (the church) have all tasted or sampled His sufferings. It is quite necessary for us to experience these things if we are to become His helpers during His reign of glory. If we suffer with Him (now) we shall share His glory (later). If we wrest ourselves away from the sufferings, if after putting our hands to the plow we look back (desire again the flesh, the world and its ways), we are not worthy of Him—it would stand clearly revealed to our Lord (if to no other) that we are not the kind of co-heirs for whom He is looking.

Our Lord experienced the extreme of fallen humanity's moods. The gracious words that fell from His lips, and the kindly deeds He performed, caused men to hail Him as a great teacher and benefactor; but as soon as He began to reveal His doctrines and the people discerned that He was not in full sympathy with the popular recognised religions of

the time, hatred was soon manifest.

We sometimes hear it said of a man at his death that he was loved by all who knew him. We often read newspaper reports of the death of great religious leaders that they had no foes, that even those who differed with them in their belief or practice respected them highly—such eulogies are accepted as evidence of a man's worth. But what of Jesus at His death? Was He loved by all who knew Him? Did the religious element that differed with His teachings afford Him any leniency? No, they hated Him with intense, bitter hatred, and without any cause, except that He lived and taught the TRUTH. This is surely one of the sufferings for righteousness' sake that all the Lord's true people share or experience. But by the subtle cunning of the Adversary many are led to misunderstand and misinterpret the pure truth of God's Word and are caused to persecute those who point it out.

There are many who know something about the promised Kingdom of God, yet do not know THE TRUTH. In Christ's day even the devils knew something about the plan of God, evidenced by their words on one or two occasions when He interfered with their operations,—”What hast thou to do with us, Art thou come to judge us before the time?” They knew they were out of harmony with the great Creator, and that He would not always suffer them to pursue their evil course, but would one day bring them to judgment when they would be compelled to either change their ways or else suffer annihilation.

Many good people also share in a superficial knowledge. The founding and maintaining of hospitals, asylums, clubs, lodges, etc., that contribute to improved standards of society and serve to alleviate the sorrows and misfortunes of the groaning creation are often contributed to in a major way by professing Christians, who, nevertheless, do not know the truth. Many good church goers believe in God and in Jesus Christ, and also know something about the glad tidings of the Kingdom—that some day, some where and in some way a time of joy and happiness is to supersede this present life with its alternating joys and sorrows, but they still do not know the TRUTH.

Read Col. 1:1-6. This and other passages suggest that only the truth in its FULLNESS. can change men in heart and life; more than a mere superficial knowledge about the coming Kingdom is required. It is the truth that performs the separating work of this harvest time in the end of the Gospel Age. We can appreciate the goodwill, to a limited extent it may be termed fellowship, of many a one who knows something about the gospel, yet a barrier exists of which we are conscious, and of which our friend is also conscious, which makes it impossible to enjoy fullest communion together. The barrier is the TRUTH.

The truth explains, gives knowledge of when and how the glad tidings of the kingdom will operate; it reveals the work that God is especially interested in during the present time. It sets forth the only principles by which immortality can be attained, also the principles by which everlasting life may be enjoyed when the Kingdom does begin to operate. It shows that there is no hell-fire such as traditional theology has taught, no purgatory, and no trinity—no God in three persons. This knowledge is not sought by the majority of professing Christians, indeed it is often bitterly opposed and has led to the persecution of those who point these things out from the Scriptures.

Contrary to the thought of many there are essential doctrines and principles of truth which are not to be GUESSED at. The truth does not allow the thought that it does not matter what we believe so long as we live good moral lives and do our best to practise the golden rule, that we will all some day become spiritual beings in a heavenly kingdom irrespective of our differing beliefs. Taking a stand for the TRUTH, knowing it and teaching it, often ostracizes us; in other words, we appear such peculiar people that others do not seek our company, nor do they desire to hear us express our opinion, and sometimes even leads to severer forms of persecution. These are some of the sufferings for righteousness' sake that the Lord's people are often called upon to endure.

The more accurate we become in the knowledge of the TRUTH the better we know God and the better able we become to walk in those ways that really please Him. (Read Col. 1:9-12.) Note particularly verse 11, revealing the need for increasing patience and long-sufferings with joyfulness. Only the truth can produce this. What we may term “the wearing down processes of life” tend, without the truth, to embitter the soul; but with the truth they produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness. We do not find it hi our heart to bear hatred toward any, not even those who are causing us our present sufferings. More and more we find it easier to sink into the Lord's will. As another has expressed it—”It is only by an understanding of God's purpose and His dealings with us that we can rest in the circumstances of life which are very unrestful, painful and extremely depressing in many cases. . . . Unless we have contact and fellowship with God we could never arrive at the position of joyfulness in affliction. IT TAKES A LONG TIME to have the apostle's words worked out in us, 'Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness.’ “

But this is the point where our sorrow can be turned into joy, just as with the disciples at the first advent. Once knowledge and understanding became theirs, their sorrow was turned -to joy; once the Scriptures were opened to reveal

the MEANING and reason for the sufferings of their Lord the weight was measurably removed.

We are apt to form the impression that since the Scriptures so clearly point out that Christians have first to suffer with Christ before they can reign with Him, and since we have already found out something in experience just how difficult and straight the narrow way is, then we must wait until our earthly course is finished in death and we are raised in resurrection glory before we can experience the joyous part of the Christian life. However, an accurate knowledge of the truth and the conforming of our lives to it, by the grace of God provided through Christ, will bring us even in this life to a position where sorrow is turned to joy. Sorrowful experiences still being endured, yes, but as Paul expressed it—"Sorrowful yet always rejoicing."

When we can *maintain* this spirit (not merely for an hour or a day) we realise that our apprenticeship is doing something for us in our education; now we are learning something about the peace and joy that Jesus promised all His followers and which nothing in this world can take away; and like Paul we will be able to continue in the faith grounded and scaled and not be moved away from the hope of the gospel because of hard experiences. We -will be able to rejoice in the sufferings which are "filling up the afflictions of Christ." (Col. 1:23, 24.)

Another has said—"There is no vital value in our afflictions for covering sin, but the deeds and teachings that brought the afflictions which Paul suffered WERE EXCEEDING POWERFUL for encouraging other Christians (the body of Christ). If one stands against sin, especially false doctrine and teaching, the affliction must come from those who are sinners. Christ suffered in that way. Paul suffered in that way."

Sufferings which come to us because of our ministry to other members of the Body of Christ are surely very especially "sufferings for righteousness' sake" which are filling up or completing the sufferings of Christ, and in these may the Lord help us more and more to rejoice.

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