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The Present Truth.

“Holdfast that which thou bast.” (Rev. 3:11.)

THE beginning of a New Year is always a good time for considering progress and prospects, and to review conditions. We are not concerned so much with things social, political or national, excepting as we can recognise in these connections the fulfilment of Prophecy. It requires no great power of discernment to those acquainted with the Scriptures to note how perfectly, the present-day conditions fulfil what has been foretold by the Lord, His Apostles and the Prophets nearly and over 2000 years ago. We may say in the words of the Historian Rollins, who viewed the fulfilment of Daniel’s prophecy in the events he was recording:—”Can any reasonable man who makes use of his understanding ascribe such a prediction either to mere chance or to the conjectures of human prudence and sagacity? Can any light but that which proceeds from God Himself penetrate, in this manner, into the darkness of futurity and point out the events of it in so exact and circumstantial a manner?” In this connection we need only mention one or two passages as instances: Daniel 12:4; 2 Pet. 3:2-4; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; Luke 17:26-30, etc. The state of the world to-day becomes more and more “as it was in the days of Lot” in Sodom, and as it was in the days of Noah before the flood, and there can be no doubt that a greater calamity on the human race is impending.

Our particular thought, however,, is in connection with the present truth and the privileges, prospects and dangers which exist at this time.

There is quite prevalent a notion that it matters little what one believes, and that there should be no divisions on account of differences in faith. There are even those who have understood present truth, who underestimate the value of “the things we have received and know of whom we have received them,” and seem ready to compromise for the sake of preserving unity.

In the past our fathers so valued their convictions of truth that they preferred death rather than betray their faith. The question arises who is right, who is the more pleasing in the sight of God—those who love unity by compromising truth, or those who in Christian spirit must stand firm for truth at the expense of unity?

We readily concede that quite often differences are magnified and extremes are taken and bitter separations have taken place which were quite unnecessary, and indeed even when divisions are unavoidable, bitterness can never be excused. However, we may differ even on the most fundamental principles of Christian faith, Christian love should so prevail that there could be no unkindness, but simply a committing the whole matter to the Lord with the prayer that He may open the blind eyes and, if He will, lead us again into the unity of the faith and happy bonds of fellowship.

We need, however, to remember that the Christian religion is not a flexible, compromising one. Systems established and governed by men may make changes to meet circumstances, both in their principles and methods, but the principles of Christ established at Pentecost are fixed, and no authority on earth can change them. Many authorities have, however, sought to accommodate Christianity to times and circumstances, and have brought in many anti-Christian teachings so that- the creeds and dogmas of the churches to-day very greatly misrepresent God and His great plan of salvation. The downfall of the church was not through faithful men and women maintaining an attitude of loyalty to truth and righteousness, though history records many such noble characters. The downfall of the church came about because there were not sufficient unflinching defenders of the faith once delivered to the saints, and because the majority sought conformity with the world and undervalued the truth.

Particularly in this day is the spirit of compromise abounding. It is the Laodicean spirit that is neither hot nor cold, and says, do not trouble about doctrine, only let us join together in one great confederacy.

There is a spirit which is quite prevalent, to let down the standards of truth and ethics. It has indeed wrought havoc in

the churches, so that they have become altogether worldly and indifferent to the true spirit of the truth and consecration, as taught by the Lord and His Apostles. The adversary would seek in the same way to “quench the spirit” among those who have become awake to the “present truth” (those things which have been revealed by the opening up of the Scriptures as “meat in due season” or truths specially applicable to our day. It is no doubt these matters pertaining to our Lord’s Second Presence, the harvest work, the closing down of the present age, etc., that we are exhorted to “Hold fast that no man take thy crown.”

The questions arise as to what does a true Christian really need to believe? What are the essentials of our faith?

What is it that we must “Hold fast?” Does it mean only that we preserve a clear knowledge of truth, or does it not imply “walking in the light?”

What then constitutes a Christian? The Bible shows how in due time “God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.” and how under the New Covenant and its great Mediator all the willing and obedient will be assisted to work out their justification to life by works of obedience and righteousness. The New Testament just as clearly shows that the Divine purpose for this Gospel Age, or “The Kingdom of Heaven” Age as the Lord designated it, is to select a spiritual class to be joint heirs with Christ, to reign with him in the coming Kingdom Age, when the wider opportunity will come to all mankind. That will be when the Church or Bride of Christ will be complete, and “the Spirit and the Bride will say come and whosoever will let him come and take of the water of life freely.”

This class of “Priests and Kings”—the Church—is dealt with quite differently, in its selection, from the way the rest of mankind will be in the next age. That will be an age of works, justification by works. This is an age of faith, justification by faith, and that faith is the gift of God. (Ephes. 2:8.) Our Lord declared, “No man cometh unto Me except it be given him of My Father”; “No man cometh unto the Son except the Father draw him.”

The first essential then is that we be invited. How are we invited or drawn? It is through the Word, as the Lord intimated in His prayer, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe through their word.” (John 17:20.) So it is God who invites those who may be joint heirs with His Son, by bringing His Word to their attention, and by His Holy Spirit He grants the faculty of faith. There is the conviction of sin, and the longing to be at peace with God and to be righteous. Then in true penitence, faith in Calvary’s atoning sacrifice lifts the load of sin and we find peace and rest. What a great favour this is, first to be called of God and then instead of being slowly justified by works under the New Covenant of the next age, to be at once “Justified by faith and at peace with God.” This particular arrangement of grace is in order that we may be able, through the merit of our Redeemer, “to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.” This is the second step of Romans 5:1-2, after being justified by faith through our Lord Jesus Christ, “By whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand, and now rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”

Following this step of consecration, we receive the begetting of the Holy Spirit—the spirit of adoption—and God calls us His sons. This Holy Spirit becomes in us a new mind, a new heart, a new creation, so that though the human being is laid upon the altar of sacrifice to be done to death, for as many as have been baptised into Christ have been baptised into His death (Rom. 6:3); yet a new life is begun, a spiritual life, and as new creatures we have become Christians in the full sense.

As Christians then we have so far these essentials:— The favour of having been called of God. The gift of faith. Justification through the exercise of that faith. The Holy Spirit of adoption through the further step of faith—consecration. The wonderful hope of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Having reached to these things are there no other essentials for the Christian? We would answer that the new creature, like the old creature, needs nourishing. If we fail to feed upon the Lord’s word, if we fail to drink of that water of life which is provided for us, we shall fail to develop and probably soon lose our faith and our hope. We must go on from these first principles and learn to appreciate the deep things of the Word. We remember how St. Paul felt that it was useless to try and explain the deeper things to the Hebrews because they had not exercised their minds along the lines of truth. They had stunted their growth, they were still babes feeding on milk, when they ought to have been able to teach others.

How essential is the present truth as it is revealed from God’s Word. The Word of God is the instrument not only for calling the saints, but also for supplying grace and strength and enabling them to meet the difficulties of the way. It unfolds its precious truths as “meat in due season” to meet the needs of the Christian in his own day. It is then very essential that we understand present truth—the Word of God—as it opens up, in order that our “Shield” is bright and strong, our Helmet of hope is firmly fixed, the Breastplate of righteousness properly adjusted, that our feet be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, our loins be girt about with truth and that we may be able to wield the Sword of the Spirit, and be overcomers in the “good fight of faith.”

How important is the truth. It is the means by which we are sanctified and strengthened to run our course. Just as truth helps so error hinders.

How far may we differ from one another in respect to truth without interfering with our fellowship? The fact of differing on what we may call non-essentials provides opportunities for the exercise of brotherlikindness in respecting the opinions of others though not endorsing them.

It is quite a different matter when we come to deal with the clear lines of faith and hope, or truths which are Divinely revealed for the purpose of accomplishing some particular feature of work in connection with God's great plan. It would indeed be presumptuous to say that such truths were of so little importance that it did not matter whether or not we believed them. We would also find it impossible to enjoy the same helpful fellowship with those who denied or belittled these things as we could with those who appreciated them, and who were seeking to faithfully sound forth the message and conform their lives to it.

It is quite understandable that those who do not know present truth, who do not recognise that we are living in "the days of the Son of Man," and the harvest time of the age, etc., should think such things are non-essentials. They cannot see the present truth to be essentials if they do not recognise that the harvest work is in progress, and that the separating of the "wheat" from the "tares" is taking place. They cannot value the truths now revealed as we do, who realise the presence of the Lord as "Reaper," and that He is now reckoning with His people respecting the use of their talents and their structure building of character and teachings. and that the present truth is indeed the feast which He promised to the faithful watchers in Luke 12:37 and Rev. 3:20. What may seem non-essential to some may be very essential to others, for it is the "present truth" which is doing the harvest work. On the one hand it sanctifies and prepares the Bride class for the great consummation of her hopes, and on the other hand it separates those who from some cause or other seem unable to understand it.

The "present truth," or "meat in due season," or the unfoldings of truths respecting the Divine Plan, the second presence of Christ, the Harvest, the gathering of the saints and the consummation of the age, etc., appear to be essential to those to whom they have been revealed, if they will make their calling and election sure. Those who lightly esteem such things will surely fail in the use of their talents.

Similar conditions existed at the first advent of our Lord. New truths were sent forth. Many were inclined to say such matters were all right and might be true, but they should not be carried too far, they were not essential, they could still hold on to the Law ceremonies and synagogue gatherings. The then "present truth" was, however, essential to such as the Lord was calling, and it did its work of separating the "wheat" from the "chaff."

Let us not undervalue the things which God has revealed to us, which have opened our eyes to see the wideness of His purposes and shown us that we are at the end of the age and living in "the days of the Son of Man," and that "as in the days of Noah" preceding the deluge, so now a great calamity is pending. which will end this dispensation, after which the new age will commence when Christ shall be King over all the earth.

These things we are exhorted to "hold fast" in the message to the Philadelphian Church. (Rev. 3:10-11.) "Because thou has kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold I come quickly, hold fast that which thou hast that no man take thy crown."

We are living in a day of such a variety of confused teachings. We are forewarned of the many deceptions that were to come, so that even if it were possible the very elect would be deceived. Peter says that there should be false teachers and that many would follow their pernicious ways, by reason of which the way of truth should be evil spoken of. Paul admonishes. "Be not carried about by strange doctrines, for it is good that the heart be established with grace." The church is called "the pillar and ground of the truth." It is her responsibility to preserve the truth in its purity, to guard it and to let it shine. Our Lord declared "To this end came into the world that I should bear witness to the truth," and it is for those who will follow him to do his work. and to be among those who are "beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God."

Many are the injunctions of the Apostles respecting this matter of "Holding fast the form of sound words" and the truths which God has revealed in His Word. The following are some texts showing our responsibility regarding knowledge 2 Tim. 1:13; 2 Tim. 2:14-18.; 2 Tim. 2:23-26; 2 Tim. 3:13-14; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 1 John 2:20-24; 1 John 4:1-3; 2 John 7-11; 1 Tim. 1:3-6; 1 Tim. 4:16; 1 Tim. 4:20-21 (Diaglott).

That, however is not all we must "hold fast." There is the possibility of holding fast the form of sound words, and having a correct understanding of the main features of the truth, even of being "Virgins" (justified by faith) and of

understanding “present truth” to the extent of expecting the Lord soon to come and take His people home. and yet to fail to be prepared. and so fail to enter the marriage chamber.

A clear head is a good thing to have. but if the knowledge does not go down to the understanding heart, it fails in its intended purpose of sanctification. and we should prove to be but sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. The trials of our clay will not only try the doctrines, but will test our faith, our hope, our love and our loyalty to God and to one another as members in Christ.

Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid in Christ Jesus. There is no standing before God apart from His Son. our Saviour, but having this foundation we must build thereon. What must we build?

We must build our doctrine and see that all our teachings are in line with the foundation; we must also build character. We must hold fast our foundation; we must hold fast our faith in the great Ransom for all. We must hold fast our consecration, our love to God in operation; we must bind the sacrifice with cords to the altar. We must “hold fast the confidence of our hope firm to the end.” We must keep on the whole armour of God and continue the good fight of faith. We must preserve our zeal for the Lord’s cause.

There is everything in this day to discourage us. Some have trials and temptations in one way, some in another. Maybe the failure of brethren whom we had highly esteemed in the Lord apt to discourage us. Sometimes in contact with the world we meet plausible arguments against the truth by agnostics or scientists, and if we trusted to our own wisdom and strength to save us, we might go down, but let us hold fast the Word of God. if we cannot understand everything, we do not understand enough of God’s wisdom, justice, love and power, which we have exemplified in His dealings with Israel and explained in His Word and experienced in our own lives, so that we can reasonably trust where we cannot quite understand. Even our Lord Jesus was tested in this way. He could not understand why the light of the Father’s countenance should be withdrawn just at the moment when, more than any other, He needed the assurance of His favour and presence. We must nerve ourselves and seek to grow in grace that we too may reach that condition of heart that can say “Yea, though He slay me yet will I trust Him.”

Conditions in our home circles are sometimes such as would crush our religious life and quench the spirit. It puts us on our mettle to so conduct ourselves as to bring honour to the cause we love and preserve our faith, hope and spiritual life. We have no doubt been in many very trying circumstances, and have failed under the trial, at least to some extent, yet we may depend upon it that there are no circumstances into which we may come, but that we may by God’s grace conduct ourselves to His glory, and come out the better for the experience. “No trial shall overtake you but such as ye are able to bear,” and God, who permits the trial, is faithful to provide a way of escape from anything too hard.

Probably all can look back upon trials and temptations and trace the kind hand that has overruled for our protection, guidance and provision, and thus tracing the way God has led us shall we not hold fast the confidence of our faith firm to the end?

Then sometimes there are conditions in our circles of Christian fellowship which try us. We may be much misunderstood, or perhaps we misunderstand others, and so difficulties arise, and sometimes anything but the spirit of love and of a sound mind seems to prevail. Then things are said and done which cause so much pain and heartaches, and the bond of Christian love is greatly strained. Nearly all these things come through misunderstandings, lack of patience, lack of waiting upon the Lord for grace to act and speak aright, and to enquire of His word for instruction. What a lot of sorrow has thus been caused, maybe a root of bitterness has been engendered, and many have been defiled. Have we injured one of the Lord’s children, have we spoken against our own mother’s son, have we hindered the whole church and the Lord’s cause of truth? Has it not been because we failed to hold fast our faith in God, in His Word, and our love to Him and His. For the time self-made claims and the Lord’s interest seemed almost forgotten, and so there came suffering and division.

Let us hold fast our love to the Lord. if we love God we will also love those begotten of Him, and it will be painful indeed to us to even think evil of a fellow member. We would shun listening to reproaches against brethren, we would be loyal to God and defend His children and each member in the body of Christ would be loyal to one another.

That loyalty, however, will be secondary to our loyalty to God and His Word and the doctrine we have proved to be true. It may be necessary for us to withdraw even from those we love in Christ, if they teach things which we believe to be contrary to the truths that we have been by God’s grace entrusted with, to preserve and to proclaim.

While we may thus sometimes find separations unavoidable, there is never any occasion to lie unkind. We may have to speak plainly against wrong teachings or practices, but we are not to condemn nor cease to love those who think differently. As long as they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of mankind, by His own blood, and profess consecration to God, we may still think of them as brethren, though they may be erring brethren.

Let us hold fast our faith, our hope, our love, our doctrine, which includes “present truth.” “Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of knowing of whom thou hast learned them.” How important it is that we hold fast that which we have proved to be an unfolding of God’s Word “Meat in due season.” If we begin to let slip this or that truth, other truths will likely soon be lost, and “if the light that is in thee become darkness how great is that darkness. “Hold fast that which thou hast that no man take thy crown.” (Rev. 3:11.)

JUST WHEN THOU WILT.

Just when Thou wilt, O Master, call!
Or at the noon, or evening fall,
Or in the dark, or in the light,
Just when Thou wilt, it must be right.

Just when Thou wilt, O Saviour, come,
Take me to dwell in Thy bright home!
Or when the snows have crowned my head,
Or ere it bath one silver thread.

Just when Thou wilt, O Bridegroom, say,
“Rise up my love, and come away!”
Open to me Thy golden gate,
Just when Thou wilt, or soon, or late.

Just when Thou wilt--Thy time is best—
Thou shalt appoint my hour of rest,
Marked by the sun of perfect love,
Shining unchangeably above.

Just when Thou wilt!—no choice for me!
Life is a gift to use for Thee;
Death is a hushed and glorious tryst,
With Thee my King, my Saviour, Christ!

--F. R. Havergal.

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RE ANGLO ISRAELISM.

Regarding the return of Israel from the captivity in Babylon and Assyria. the following. culled from Dr. Angus'

Bible Hind Book, corroborates the fact that our Lord and the Apostles correctly recognised the inhabitants of Judea in their day as "the twelve tribes of Israel," "The lost sheep of the House of Israel." It will be noticed that at the return under Ezra and Nehemiah one-fourth of all who returned belonged to some tribe other than Judah and Beniamine.

Dr. Angus says (pp. 218):—"Comparing Ezra 2 and 7. we find that 42,360 persons returned from Babylon. of whom the numbers of the tribes of Benjamine and Judah and of the Priests are given. The numbers in Nehemiah amount to 31,089 in Ezra to 29,818. Add to Nehemiah's number 494 names mentioned only in Ezra, and to Ezra's 1765 names mentioned only in Nehemiah, the results agree-31,583. The difference, 10,777. represents the number of persons belonging to other tribes. This apparent discrepancy was long held as an objection to the narrative.

In reference to these apparent contradictions, it becomes us rather to suspect our own ignorance than the writer's accuracy. No passage can appear more contradictory than Ezekiel 12:13, and yet it was literally fulfilled. Zedekiali did not see Babylon though he died there."

Correspondence

N.S.W., Oct. 22, 1928.

Berean Biblical Institute. Melbourne.

Dear Christian Friends,—

I thank you so much for sending me the book "Fore-gleams of the Golden Age." It is a 'beautiful book; it has -been a great help to me, and has enlightened me on subjects in the Bible that I never understood before. I also thank you for sending the People's Papers, they are very interesting to read, especially to a person like myself. I have very bad health. My doctor thinks I will have to go into a hospital, so please, dear friends, do not forget me in your prayers. If the Lord spares me to get better I will send for some of your interesting booklets. With Christian regards,

Yours very sincerely,

J.E.

Question Box.

Question.—I would like you to express your understanding to the Apostle's words in 1 Tiles. 4:14.

Answer.—While there are those who think that this verse refers to the resurrection of mankind generally, for in one sense, as the Lord by His death and resurrection purchased the human family (Rom. 14:9), all may be said to fall asleep in Jesus. yet our thought is that the Apostle was speaking here particularly of the Church. Regarding the world generally, they are to be called forth from the tomb by Christ during His Messianic reign. "All that are in their graves shall hear His voice (of the Son of Man) and shall come forth." (John 5:27-29). The Apostle, however, is here referring to a class that will precede the remaining members of the body of Christ when Christ should come again.

It was God who raised up Christ from the tomb (Ephes. 1:20; Gal. 1:1; Acts 2:24, etc.), and that same power is to be exerted on behalf of the body of Christ, the members of "the Church of the First-born," those who are to have part in the first resurrection." This same power has already been exerted on behalf of the Church in begetting to the Divine nature and making us sit "in heavenly places." "The exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe according to His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead." (Ephes. 1:19-20). The connection is where the Apostle is showing that when Christ would return those who had fallen asleep would be first awakened and be with him in the air, and then the living remaining on the earth would be gradually called away to be together with the Lord and those who had been called from the tomb. These remaining ones would not need to sleep as others all down the age, but should be "changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Though dying like others they would be at once clothed upon with the spiritual body and be "present with the Lord."

Question.—AB will you please explain the passage in which our Lord says "Let the dead bury the dead." (Matthew 8:21, 22.) ?

Answer. We do not understand that the disciple concerned meant that his father was lying dead and he wished to do was to go and have him interred. Our Lord had explained to another, a Scribe, who had said he would follow Him, that it was a way of sacrifice and privation. "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have their nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Then this man who had evidently been following the Lord and observing His gracious words and acts declared that he wished to be one of His followers, only he would like just to wait until his aged father should pass away, then he would be free and would take up the cross and follow Him. Probably the Lord knew that there was really no reason for the delay, that there were others who were well able to look after the aged parent quite well. Maybe the real reason was that the son thought that if he did not stay by and pay attention to the father he might not participate in any legacy. It may have been this earthly consideration which was in the way. Our Lord's answer seems to favour such a view. "Let the dead bury the dead." The whole world is dead in trespasses and sins. It was only the few who were alive towards God and able, then, to appreciate the work of Christ and become true followers of the Lamb. Then leave those relatives who are not at present attracted by the living Word, but are just good naturally minded people, and well able to look after the aged father, to do so. Never mind troubling about any legacy, whether anything or nothing may come to you; seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto You." "Follow Me, let the dead bury the dead."

Foundation of Christian Character.

“Fight the good fight of faith: lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.—I. Tim. 6:12.

THE sins of those who during this Gospel Age leave the world to follow our Lord Jesus Christ are covered by the imputation of the merit of His sacrifice in order that they may join Him in sacrifice, and thus be accounted worthy to reign with Him in the coming time of blessing for the world. This covering of sins is to permit the Church of Christ to become New Creatures, of a different order, from humanity—a distinctly new creation. It lasts from the time when they become Christians to the very end of their journey here below. Throughout this period each one thus covered will have to battle against the downward tendencies of his flesh. Each will thus have a severe conflict, and by the close of his life will have demonstrated to the Lord to what extent he has been loyal to the principles of righteousness.

It is not merely the fight against error that constitutes our battle as soldiers of the Cross of Christ. In times past we have all been under a cloud of error, as now we can see. It is important, indeed, that we have recognised this condition, and have come out into the light of God's Truth. We are not to minimise the value of correct doctrine; but it is only a means to an end: The most important matter is to get rid of sin.

God wishes His people to be free from doctrinal errors; but especially does He wish them to be free from any sympathy with sin, unrighteousness, iniquity, injustice.

In other words, God wishes His people to be very loyal to the Golden Rule. Often it requires the experience of years to teach this lesson. Very many have never ‘practised Justice in their lives. They are unjust in their dealings with their families. Husbands deal unjustly with their wives, wives with husbands, parents with children, and children with parents. With some people injustice seems to be the rule.

From the time we become followers of our Lord Jesus, and see how justice is written in the Law of God, we begin to perceive that God expects us to observe the Golden Rule. When we should begin to do so in our own families—with our parents, our children, our companion in life. The Golden Rule will affect our conduct and all the affairs of our life; in fact, everything that we do or say or think. It applies everywhere and in everything. “Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you.”

GREAT DILIGENCE NECESSARY.

If the Lord's people could work this Golden Rule down into their hearts and lives, it would prove to be one of the greatest possible blessings not only to the individual himself, but to others. There are brethren in Christ who from outward appearances are seemingly not so far advanced as they might be in this respect. We are not to measure ourselves by the world; for the world does not practise the Golden Rule. Nor are we to measure the world as we measure ourselves. We are not to expect as much from them as we should expect from ourselves.

Neither should we measure ourselves by other Christians; for some who are called Christians are only morally inclined people, who have never been begotten of the Holy Spirit, and who have never come into the School of Christ. Although we appreciate their characters, yet we do not measure ourselves by them. We should measure ourselves only by the Word of God, which asks, “What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness (II. Pet. 3:1 1.) This pointed question implies that the Church of Christ is a special class, different from all other people—a peculiar people, Paul declares zealous of good works, zealous for everything that is right, laying down their lives for the Truth, in the service of others. (Titus 2:14.)

The Golden Rule is a principle which should govern our dealings with all. First and always, let us treat others as we would wish them to treat us. Afterwards we may do a little more, but let us strive never to come short on this fundamental principle. In practising it become more and more like our Heavenly Father in character. He always does to others only what He would wish them to do to Him.

NATURAL TRAITS REQUIRING ATTENTION.

Amongst the Lord's people there is a tendency to violate unintentionally the fundamental principles of Justice and love as existent in the Divine character and manifested in His dealings with His people. Those who naturally have little self-esteem are easily discouraged. When opportunities for service are offered these are inclined to think, “I do not seem able to do anything right. What is the use of my trying?” They need to be assured that God knows of their endeavours to do their best, and that He will not exact any more than they are able to do.

On the other hand, there are those who have plenty of self-esteem. They are inclined to say, “God will not expect too much from me. Christ died for my sins. God's grace is very wonderful.” Although this class live a pure life and do

reasonably well, yet they do not live up to the highest standard of their ability and comprehension.

But “the Lord will judge His people,” and will do according to His knowledge of their ability. Mercy will be granted for every unintentional defect, but no mercy will be extended towards what we could avoid. God will hold us responsible if we do not do our best with whatever ability we possess. So there is danger that some will not attain the best which God has to give. Those who are living up to their opportunities and privileges should go on with courage, doing the best they can, exercising full faith, having full confidence in the Lord, for He has promised a sufficiency of grace to cover every imperfection. Thus they will receive a rich blessing; but there is no excuse for anyone to live carelessly, in neglect of his duties and responsibilities. Such are not fighting the good fight of faith.

Although all are imperfect in the flesh, nevertheless the New Creature will be held responsible for not doing his best. It is the New Creature, also, who will fail to hear the Master’s “Well done,” unless he exercise great care in these important matters.

During the incoming Age the Church of Christ will judge the World. (I. Cor. 6:2.) Whoever would be of that exalted company must be fully qualified to be just judge. Therefore, he must pass through the School of Christ, that he may be fitted for his future work. Let us, then, do the best of which we are capable; for this is what God expects of us—nothing more, but that ! Let us rejoice in His wonderful provisions of grace Divine, sufficient for our every need, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

True Discipleship Defined.

Matthew 7:13-29.

“Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.”

THE advance of the world in civilisation, coupled with a general lowering of Christian standards in neglect of the Bible, has drawn the civilised world and the nominal church very close together. Never more necessary than now are the Master’s words of this Bible study, “Enter ye in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that enter thereby; for narrow is the gate and straitened the way that leads unto life, and few there be that find it.”

The teaching of the dark ages handed down to us was that the many walking on the broad road are being swept by millions into eternal torture. The general revulsion from this interpretation of the Bible has shaken confidence in the Bible itself and turned many completely away from it to a mild form of Universalism—to the hope that nearly everybody at death goes immediately to glory, regardless of whether he walks in the narrow way of discipleship or in the broad, easy way of worldliness. In every sense of the word the effect of this misinterpretation has been injurious.

Now we perceive that the Master said not that the broad, easy road leads to eternal torture, but to destruction—death. Now we see that father Adam, by disobedience, was cut off from fellowship with his Creator under death sentence, and that his children were all born in a sinful and alienated condition, and that their perverted appetites and the influences bearing upon them constitute a broad road of self-gratification down which they are speeding to the tomb.

Our Lord came as the world’s Redeemer, but before dealing with the race as a whole he selects the Church class.

The love and loyalty of these is tested by their call to walk contrary to the general tendencies of the world—upward along the narrow way, at the end of which they are promised eternal life—glory, honor, and immortality, and association with the Redeemer in His great work of the coming Kingdom. Then He will deal with humanity now going down on the broad road to death, recovering them, and giving them glorious opportunities secured by His sacrifice.

The present call to discipleship is through the narrow-gate of full consecration, even unto death, in the footsteps of the Master, and few there be who find and willingly walk this way. Thank God that the masses of humanity on the broad road were redeemed and will yet be blessed, though they will miss the great “prize” now offered to the “elect” who walk the narrow way. Eventually only the wilfully wicked will be destroyed in the second death.

The Lord’s disciples are to beware of false teachers who pretend to be shepherds, but really they are unlike the Great Shepherd. “They are self-seekers, ravenous, wolfish. They do not lay down their lives for the sheep, but feed upon the sheep.”

It is forbidden us to judge the heart. “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” (Matt, 7: 1.) The Master here illustrates that we shall judge those professing to be His disciples by the general fruits of their lives. Are they sharp, thorny, injurious, poisonous, in their influence upon others, or are they helpful, strengthening, uplifting? As a tree may be known and

graded by fruitage. so also may a man be known—and especially such as profess discipleship, such as profess to be followers of Christ and taught of Him.

Nor will it do to make professions and offer prayers, saying, “Lord. Lord.” Not all such will enter the Kingdom and become joint-heirs with Christ. Only such will be acceptable as will do the will of the Father. Not, however, that any can live up to the height of the Divine standard in every word and act. But the heart, the will, must be right, sincere, true, pure, loyal to God and to the principles of His Government. And this being the case every shortcoming will be a cause of regret, and the whole life will gradually become changed- “transformed.”

When at the close of this age the Heavenly King shall return, before establishing His Kingdom to deal with the world He will reckon with His Church that He may first reward the faithful with a share in His Kingdom. Then, he declares, it will be seen that not a few, but many who prophesied or taught in His name and did many wonderful works, and even cast out devils, will be found unworthy of the Kingdom, because of not having developed characters in harmony with the Father’s law—the Golden Rule. The King will say to such, I do not recognise you and cannot receive you as my elect bride. Your work on the whole is unacceptable, iniquitous. out of harmony with the principles of my teaching. Such, instead of entering the glories of the Kingdom, will be obliged to pass through tribulations with the world, losing their share of the great prize of this Gospel Age.

Whoever is now blessed with the hearing ear, whoever now hears the call of discipleship, whoever now accepts the call and becomes by consecration a follower of Christ, has the opportunity of erecting a faith structure which will stand all the storms of life. because built upon the Rock. Christ is this Rock of Ages. He is not only the great Redeemer. but to those now called He is the great Exemplar, in whose footsteps all shall follow who desire to become

joint-heirs with Him in His Heavenly Kingdom. Those who essay to become His disciples and who, nevertheless, neglect a careful following of His instructions, are building false hopes, building upon a foundation which will not stand the storms and trials of life. which are specially permitted as tests of character, upon those favoured with the call of this Gospel Age.

The Apostle, describing the testing of the Church and the proving of our discipleship, likens the testing to a fire, saying (not of the world, but of the Church), “Every man’s work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s Work shall lie burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” (1 Cor. 3:13-15.) The Apostle here describes the testings of those who build upon the Rock. Those who build upon the sand will suffer the loss of everything, and at the beginning of the earthly kingdom will be no better off than the world in general.

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HISTORICAL EXCERPT

(Milner.)

GREGORY THE FIRST, BISHOP OF ROME.

GREGORY was a Roman by birth and of a noble family, but being religiously disposed he assumed the monastic habit, and it was not till after he was drawn back, in a degree, to a secular life by his employments in the church that he became thoroughly sensible what advantage he had enjoyed for his own soul from religious retirement.

If his lot had been cast in the earlier and purer days of Christianity he would neither have been a monk nor a bishop charged with such extensive secular concerns of which he complains.

Being drawn from the monastery and ordained to the ministry he was sent from Rome to Constantinople to transact ecclesiastical affairs. After his return to Rome he was appointed to the episcopal office; this he wished to avoid, and found means to be conveyed out of the city in a wicker basket, but he was discovered in three days and obliged to enter upon his bishopric. This he opened in the year 590.

The whole period of his episcopacy, which was thirteen years and a half, was disastrous beyond measure, because of the ferocious Lombards, and Gregory was firmly persuaded that the end of the world was near. Gregory continually implored God's grace and mercy, relying on the promises of His word. beholding the scourge as really sent from God. Humility and the fear of God were his ruling dispositions, and it is evident that he exerted authority in full consistency with these. Moreover, he found time to expound the Scriptures, perform the office of a sedulous pastor, and to write much for the instruction of mankind.

In his letters to other bishops he exhorted them to consistent living, to be moderate and just in all their dealings. In all his own affairs he was upright, disinterested and merciful.

At that time several of the bishops had consented to a species of persecution of the Jews. Gregory wrote to condemn the practice, that the Jews should not be in the least molested.

Natalis, Bishop of Salonae, had written to Gregory in defence of the entertainments given by the clergy. The Bishop of Rome allows his assertions, but under these important restrictions, "That no absent person be slandered at these meetings, that none be made an object of ridicule, that the empty discourse of secular business be avoided, that the word of God be read in them, that no more meat and drink be used than is needful for the refreshment of the body and to fit it for the discharge of duty." But it seems that Gregory's objections to the feasting of the Salonian clergy had given offence, for he adds, "You take it ill to be reprehended .by me, who, though I am your superior in church dignity (I do not mean as a man), am willing to be corrected and reproved by all. I thank that man as a friend through whose advice I am enabled to wipe off the blemishes of my soul before the appearance of the awful Judge."

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