



PRINCIPLES
OR
COMPROMISE.

THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY.

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Thoughts for the Day.

During the seven years after the death of Saul in Gilboa, and the anointing of David in Hebron as King over Judah, there was a time of great conflict and confusion throughout Israel, and, when at length all Israel gathered to David, it is written of the men of Issacher that they were men who had "understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1. Chron. xii, 32). One would desire for oneself, and for all the gathered saints, that this understanding—divine wisdom, which is "first pure, then peaceable" (James iii, 17) might be known and practised; that we might be those who by reason of use, have our senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. v, 14). It is a day

such as that depicted by the prophet, "truth is fallen in the streets. . . . Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey (or is accounted mad), and the Lord saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no judgment" (Isa. lix. 14-15). But as the Lord said to Jeremiah in his affliction, "If thou shalt take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth: let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them" (Jer. xv, 19). The principle of separation from evil to God must be maintained, even if one has to walk alone. So we have to learn the wisdom of the words, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John vii, 24), for "the things that are highly esteemed among men are abomination in the sight of God" (Luke xvi, 15).

For well nigh a generation the reunion of Christendom has been in the

air, and we have seen the adversary become bolder and bolder in urging Christians on to compromise after compromise, until we find to-day that the very citadel of the Protestant faith is being sold to Rome. The moment we dally with, and then palliate evil, the senses become blunted as to what is due to the Lord, so that we have the melancholy spectacle of Protestants reaffirming doctrines for which their fathers went to the stake. Let us consider this and be wise. A little leaven leavens the whole lump (1. Cor. v. 6). Christendom bids fair to become in a shorter time than we think, that "leavened lump" of which the Lord foretold, when He spoke of the mysterious woman who introduced the leaven into the three measures of meal till the whole was leavened (Matt. xiii, 33). This will occur, doubtless, in the full sense of the passage, when the Church has been taken away by the Lord at His coming for His own (John xiv, 3; 1. Cor. xv, 51-52;

1. Thess. iv, 16-17); but the spirit of iniquity is already at work, and it is only the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church which hinders the full manifestation of the mystery of iniquity. Then the false Church will come out in her true colours, and as Babylon the Great, will receive her doom from the Lord God who will judge her (Rev. xvii).

We find from the Word that the godly remnant of Israel were tempted by the pressure of things to an abandonment of their separation, and the prophet warns them against the spirit of confederacy (Isa. viii, 12). So to-day the enemy is seeking by every means to tempt those on the one ground of separation from evil, to take a ground of compromise, urging all kinds of human reasons, brotherly love, fewness of numbers, and the discouragement of the young; also a hindrance to the work of the Lord, because saints remain apart from those

from whom they have had to separate for reasons of faith and conscience. The Word is, "Let them return unto thee: but return not thou unto them" (Jer. xv, 19). It matters not, if this appear to be unkind, or even pharisaical in the eyes of men ; it is God's Word, and a divine principle for faith. The Word of our God endureth for ever, and as Saul had to learn to his cost in the loss of the kingdom, "To obey is better than sacrifice" (1. Sam. xv, 22) No union of the Lord's people is of any value unless it is to the divine centre, and on the principles of truth and holiness. "The Lord had to say to Israel, "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces" (Isa. viii, 9). This was doubtless as to the Gentiles; but the principle still remains. "Unity is strength" is the world's proverb, but is the contrary of truth in divine things. As a devoted servant of the Lord could say in days gone by, "I would rather walk alone in the pathway

of obedience than occupy the most exalted position at the expense of the smallest portion of the Word of God.”

There is a principle in the Word, that in His government God does not reinstate what has failed, though there is forgiveness with Him and blessing: and His ways always lead to the development of His counsels, so that there is something new brought in. This is seen very clearly in Eden; but it is no less true as we trace His ways through man's history down the ages. To refer to a few instances of that, which is a very serious and profitable study from the Word:—On the decline of the Patriarch, Jacob and His sons, in the walk of faith, He provides through the carrying of Joseph into Egypt (and later of Jacob himself and his sons) for a new revelation to Moses, and for the wondrous truth of redemption. Moses fails and loses the land: but in Joshua God brings in

fresh power and grace to carry over Jordan and enter the promised inheritance. With the failure of the priesthood and people under the theocracy, God granted their desire for a king like the nations, but intimated through Samuel that a blessed page of their history was gone for ever (1. Sam. viii.), David failed in the matter of Uriah ; and his child is not spared. In his son, Absalom, he suffers during his life-time, while he is given Solomon, an earnest of that Son of David, with Whom are all His sure mercies. Solomon, endued as he had been with such great wisdom and blessing from God, went far astray, doing great evil in the sight of the Lord, in going after other gods, and forfeits for his seed the blessing of God and the Kingdom over all Israel. God's judgment was fulfilled in his son Rehoboam, whose folly gave occasion to the ambition of Jero-boam, under whom the ten tribes revolted, and so rejected the Son of David. This

disaster is connected with the failure of the kingly line, and never was healed : for although Jehoshaphat tried it, by joining affinity with Ahab, God blew on it, and on the failure of the last of the royal line in Zedekiah, the two tribes are carried away captive, and the king with most of them never returned.

The Church of God, though not the subject of prophecy, is, during her passage through this world, equally the subject of His government. And in this connection it is instructive to note that, that though with Israel there is a glorious restoration (her blessings are earthly) for Christendom there is no remedy. The subject is treated in a very interesting passage in the Epistle to the Romans (Chapter 11). Speaking of Israel the Apostle says :—“ If they abide not still in unbelief, (they) shall be graffed in : for God is able to graff them in again ” (v. 23).

He is speaking of the olive tree of blessing, and Israel's future blessing is assured, because "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." God is now able (blessed word) righteously to perform all the promises made to the fathers, because He has been perfectly glorified, in the work of Christ. But, as regards the Gentiles, He says (v. 22) : "Toward thee goodness, if thou continue in His goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." Here there is no remedy nor hope for the Gentiles, if they fail of the grace of God. In His wondrous patience He has waited many centuries, and it seems difficult to conceive that the excision can be much longer delayed. And what is true of the whole profession, one finds has been true also in the Church's history in detail. With each failure God has dealt in grace, but never to restore the primitive character to the Church, so as to accredit it in the eyes of the world.

As there are some who appear to think otherwise, it may be profitable to examine the Scriptures adduced, to see if they show either a general revival, or that in God's ways we have warrant to assume that He will reinstate that which has failed (more inexcusably perhaps than those called in any other period of the Church's history). It is thought by some that John xvii, 20-21 refers to this subject, and that the oneness spoken of there is the corporate unity of believers, as members of the one body, manifested before the world. A little attention to the words will shew that it is not of this character of unity that the Lord speaks, but of the oneness of the family, the oneness of life and nature, and the divine fellowship into which the children were to be brought; "That they all may be one as Thou Father art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." To make this merely a holy unity does not explain

this. Israel were a holy people, that is a separated people, sanctified to God, not indeed in the absolute sense of the New Testament, but relatively; yet, even with those in Israel who were born again, nothing like the truth in this passage could ever have been known. It awaited the time of the glorifying of the Father, and the revelation of His name to those who were truly His children—believers brought to God in Christ,—“holy and without blame before Him in love.” For the enjoyment of this the Holy Spirit is given, and though no doubt the Lord speaks from the height of His own thoughts, this prayer has been answered, and is true of all that the Father has given Him in the world. Few possibly are in the full power of it, but it is only so that the passage can be explained, as otherwise we are assuming that here is a prayer to the Father by the Son, Who was always in the secret of His counsels, and always

asked according to His will, which has not been answered. It is a mistake to confound this oneness of life and fellowship, with the unity formed by the Spirit of God, and which we are exhorted to maintain. If all saints in this the Spirit's day were walking in the full power of this relationship and communion with the Father and the Son, the unity of the Spirit would be manifested also.

The promises made to Israel as to their revival in the last days do not apply to the Church, save as a principle, with the condition that no general revival of the Church is contemplated. In Ezekiel xxxiv, the shepherds are those of Israel, and we shall surely go astray, if we apply literally what is found there to ourselves, though there is always healing and blessing with God for the soul or the company that turns to Him with a true heart. Likewise Hosea

vi, though most sweet for Israel in the last days, is not applicable surely to the Church. Has the Lord torn us? Has He smitten us? Are we then governmentally under the wrath of God, as Israel will be in the day that is coming? By all means let us humble ourselves as a company under the mighty hand of God, Who has allowed us thus in weakness and scattering to taste the fruit of our ways, but do not let us wrest Old Testament Scriptures to warrant hopes, that can only be doomed to disappointment.

Surely blessing would follow a general meeting of the gathered saints for whole hearted prayer and confession of failure to glorify God, but a meeting with those who have turned aside and still refuse to own the truth, could only be on the ground of a compromise, and not of God. So too, a re-union with those separated through the strife and division of past years, on the basis

of ignoring the departure from Scriptural principles would not be "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit," neither would it be the oneness of John xvii.

The lapse of years does not make a wrong thing right, and if the assembly actions in painful years that are gone, were of God, can we now say, that the judgments then given were of men? "Who hath despised the day of small things?" (Zech. iv, 10) was the challenge of the Spirit of God to the remnant of Judah in a day of testing, having many features similar to that found among the gathered saints to-day. It is a testing thing to see large numbers of saints associated together and to hear of blessing, connected with other companies: but God is sovereign in grace, and in a scene of ruin, such as the Church presents at the present time, that God may bless either an individual or a company is not, of itself, evidence that

they are on divine ground. What was a denial of the truth, whether as to the Person of Christ, or as to the discipline of the assembly, eighty or ten years ago remains the same to-day, and the binding of the act in heaven does not cease for the reason that those guilty of the wrong, or those who have identified themselves with them, are sorry for the results. The root must be judged,—both the state that was brought to light by the strife and division, as well as the departure from the plain teaching of the Scriptures,—before fellowship can be restored.

“Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord. (Zech. iv, 6) This is our resource to-day. If the might of a merely human arrangement, or the power of organisation or numbers be offered us, in connection with any compromise of the truth, we may be sure it is not of the Spirit

and will come to nought. The evil or self-will that is unjudged will recur, and if there be not a divine remedy, the last state will be worse than the first. Let us then with purpose of heart continue in the things which we have learnt and been assured of, and be not weary in well-doing. Much self-judgment and confession become us for the way we have failed to maintain in power the truth of separation from evil to God, which has been committed to us. The remedy is, not in seeking an easier path, but in keeping that good thing committed to us (2 Tim. i, 14) May the Lord Himself keep the feet of His saints in these last days, directing our hearts into the love of God and the patient waiting for Christ.

“ Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” (Rev. iii, 11). F.L.

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