

[R1204 : page 4]

"PROVE ALL THINGS."

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." – 1 Thes. 5:21.

A wise suggestion, Paul, says one, but not altogether practicable in my case. I am a plain man with little education and many pressing cares which leave but little time or mental vigor to grapple with the theological questions which exercise the minds of many, or to prove or disprove the leading dogmas which characterize the various religious factions. Why, it seems to me it would require a life-time given exclusively to the work, to prove all things. There are the scores and hundreds of sectarian creeds of Christendom with their great and multiplied volumes of theology and fine-spun theories, each pushing its claims to the front. And in these days the new factions and theories coming up are legion. Indeed, every day's mail carries thousands of religious journals advocating the claims of some theories, claiming to be truth; and if a man were to do nothing else, he could not possibly read the thousandth part of such literature.

Now what is a plain man like me to do? I want the truth, but how shall I *find* it and prove it? I believe the Bible to be indeed the Word of God given to us through his inspired apostles and prophets. I believe in the God of the Bible and have long trusted in the salvation provided through the sacrifice of his dear Son. But while I hold these precious old doctrines and will not relinquish my interest in them, my Bible teaches me to expect an increase of light, and specially in the last days of the age, in which all Christians admit we are living. Daniel (12:4,9,10) says that in the time of the end, the wise shall understand, and that knowledge shall be increased. I am looking for this promised increase of knowledge, for the light "shining more and more unto the perfect day;" but how [R1205 : page 4] shall I prove which is advanced

truth and which the error, against which the Apostle forewarns us, saying, "In the last days perilous times shall come," etc.? Is it possible, I ask, for a plain, common sense Christian man, without any special learning, to comply with the Apostle's injunction and prove all things? and if so, how shall I go about it?

Yes, we reply, it is possible. If the desire for truth is paramount to every other desire, so that the inquirer will so bend his circumstances as to make opportunities for study and investigation of the truth, as it becomes due, he shall find and rejoice in it. And though at a cursory glance the wide field of investigation is indeed formidable, there is a short and feasible process, by which both the learned and the unlearned, if simple-hearted and sincere, may arrive at clear and positive convictions, and henceforth be able to give to every man that asketh a reason for the hope that is in them.

We find our infallible rule, for measuring and proving all things, in the Bible. By its testimony every doctrine having any claim upon our attention must be measured. If any system presented to us finds its main support outside the Bible, it must at once be labeled, *suspicious*, even though it call in occasional scripture texts to support its theories; for we well know that almost every pernicious doctrine that could be conceived of has claimed Bible support by quoting passages and perverting them.

Bear in mind that the doctrine of the Lord and the apostles clearly accepted the account in Genesis – of man's creation in the likeness of God, pure and sinless, "very good;" of his fall into sin and the consequent penalty of death, entailed not only upon himself, but also upon all his posterity, whom he represented in trial. Then it set forth the remedy for sin and its consequences, showing that the death of Christ on Calvary was the appointed means for the world's redemption. And to this fact all the Old

Testament prophets also testify, showing that without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sins.

This doctrine was first enunciated in the promise of deliverance given in Eden and typified in the clothing for Adam and Eve provided by the shedding of blood. It was foreshadowed in the sacrifices of Abel and all the early Patriarchs, and by all the blood of bulls and goats and rams that for centuries flowed around the typical altars of the typical tabernacle. It was foretold by the prophets who prophesied of the coming One as the lamb for the slaughter, and foretold all the painful circumstances of his sacrificial death. (See Isa. 53; Zech. 11:12; Psa. 27:12; 35:11; 109:2; Zech. 13:7; Psa. 22:14,17; 89:45; 102:24; 69:21; 34:20; 22:18; Isa. 53:9,12; Zech. 14:4,6; Amos 5:20.)

Then, the accomplished fact was recorded by the Evangelists who were his disciples, the companions of his ministry, and eye-witnesses of his sufferings and death. This was the grand foundation stone upon which the whole superstructure of the apostles' doctrine was systematically built up. Paul, the great builder of the Christian system, gathering the data of his arguments from the law and the prophets and the notable events of the ministry and sacrifice of the Lord in his own day, weaves the whole into a grand and logical system of faith, of which *Christ crucified* is the foundation stone, and *Christ glorified*, the hope of the world's restitution, is the crowning feature. Then, so confident is his faith in this divinely attested truth, that he adds, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other doctrine, let him be accursed;" – for he should know better in view of all the divine testimony herein furnished. – Gal. 1:9.

This foundation doctrine, therefore, is the first measure by which we must test every religious system presented to us which is at all worthy of our consideration. If it is not built squarely upon

this foundation, it is utterly unworthy of further investigation, whatever may be its claims; but if built upon this foundation, it is worthy of at least some further attention.

In applying this first rule, the work of proving all things is quickly simplified. We do not need to examine into all the intricacies of every elaborate system concocted by diseased human imaginations, which would be a worse than useless waste of time. Simply looking at the foundation will decide the matter in very many cases. If they are wrong here, further examination is unnecessary: they cannot be true, and however plausible they may appear, they can only be the efforts of thieves and robbers who attempt to show men how to climb up some other way into the sheep-fold. And only idle curiosity, to see what human ingenuity can suggest as another way of salvation, can be interested in such investigation. Bear in mind that fundamental principle of all sound reasoning, that the superstructure of any system can only be brought to the same level of credibility as the premise or foundation with which it starts, and upon which it is built. If, therefore, the foundation is wrong, the whole superstructure is erroneous; and every moment of precious time spent in studying the fine-spun theories of such a system, which you have thus already proved to be erroneous, is time taken from the study of the truth, from putting on the armor of God, and is filling the mind with the subtle sophistries of the adversary, instead of the sound logic of divine truth, and thus preparing the way for the overthrow of faith, instead of establishing it in sound doctrine.

By promptly applying this rule you can quickly determine what is of God and what of man, prompted by the seductive spirit of our great adversary. It may come to you even from the hands of an angel of light – a messenger of truth, a brother in Christ who has not discerned the sophistry of error and who therefore needs your assistance to discern it. It may come clothed in the garments of light – with smooth and pious phrases about the

wonderful *love* of God and the spirit of his word, and the glorious hope of the world; but all these are often merely the cloaks of that pernicious no-ransom, evolution doctrine, which denies that man was created in the image of God; that he fell from that high estate, and that through the fall of that representative one sentence came upon all men to condemnation, as Paul declares (Rom. 5:18); which consequently goes further and denies the necessity of a redeemer, or that Christ came for any such purpose; which claims therefore that Christ was the Savior of the world merely by setting a good example for men to copy, and not by giving his life a ransom. Then they laud this Savior of the world (who saves them by his good example only, but whose precious blood availed nothing for them); and they talk loudly of the wonderful love of God, while they kick from under his love the firm support of his justice, which the Scriptures declare could by no means clear the guilty, until the handwriting of the law, which was against us, condemning us to death, was canceled by the "precious blood of Christ." (Col. 2:14). And in their zeal to magnify his love and make their theories look plausible, they run to an excess which denies man's free agency and God's expressed purpose of destroying the wilfully disobedient ones in the second death. Thus they misrepresent the love of God as a weak and fickle element of the divine character, falsify the real spirit of his word and build up a false and delusive hope for the world – a hope founded upon a supposed weakness of the divine character.

Some who advocate these doctrines once enjoyed the clearer light of present truth, having escaped from many of the errors of the great nominal churches, and consequently they are able to weave in with the error some of the beautiful features of present truth and therefore they are all the more able ministers of error, all the more calculated to lead astray and again entangle those who had clean escaped from the errors of great Babylon.

They talk of the doctrine of Restitution (restoration), but seem not to notice its utter incompatibility with their evolution theory. If man never was perfect and in the image of God and never fell, but has been coming nearer to perfection, to restore him would only be to degrade him.

Beware of such doctrines, even though they come clothed in garments of light. They are revolutionary of the whole Christian faith: their reasoning is the subtle sophistry of the adversary, voiced by his deceived and deluded ministers, and their hope is vain and delusive. It is these stumbling-blocks and snares which constitute a large part of the peril of this evil day; but how quickly and promptly they may be dispatched if we apply the infallible Bible rule above referred to. And as you value your privilege of building up your brother in the "most holy faith," beware how you place in his way any of these stumbling-stones. Remember Paul's injunction, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracle of God." Let his words be "words of truth and soberness," and let him lead on in the pathway of light, strengthening the weak hands and confirming the feeble knees.

But, says our inquirer, are there not some systems right at the foundation and far astray from truth in the superstructure? and how shall we prove them? Yes, very true. Such is the case with the various Protestant systems. They all hold the foundation doctrine of the apostles and prophets, and they have always made prominent the vicarious atonement, but on this foundation O! how recklessly they have built. Finding them right here, we have proceeded further, only to find the buildings each and all miserably constructed of the wood and hay and stubble of human imaginations and traditions, evidently put together in a most haphazard way, without plan or design or square or **[R1206 : page 4]** compass; yet each has in it some valuable elements of truth, vaguely perceived and often greatly mixed and confounded with

errors and gross absurdities. None of them, however, present that system of truth for which our inquirer is in search.

Indeed, after nearly two centuries spent in building these various Protestant structures, though they stand as nearly complete as human ingenuity has been able to make them, propped at the corners by the great piles of theological works of Watson, Calvin, Hodge, Clarke, Benson, *et al.*, in the light of the present day of intellectual awakening, what a ludicrous spectacle they present. Indeed, they begin to look so even to those inside. The thoughtful among them are actually getting ashamed of them and talking about revision; but in all probability before they are fully waked up to the necessity for revision, the winds and the storms of the coming trouble of this day of the Lord will accomplish the work most thoroughly by razing them to the foundation.

While we see that by first examining the foundation principles, to discover if they are sound and scriptural, we dispose of a large class of this latter-day teaching quickly and promptly, and without danger of contamination, we will also see that it will be no Herculean task to dispose of the many wood, hay and stubble superstructures which reckless builders have erected on the true foundation. "To the law and to the testimony;" says the prophet, "if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isa. 8:20.) Every doctrine, therefore, which has any claims upon our faith, should, from the foundation up, (as far as it seems worthy of investigation) step by step, be brought to the test of the word and the testimony; and all for which **[R1206 : page 5]** there cannot be found a "Thus saith the Lord," must be promptly rejected, and all to which his word testifies as truth, "*held fast*" and not allowed to slip. – Heb. 4:14; 2:1; Rev. 3:11.

Thus the stones of our faith-building may be received through whatsoever channels the Lord may be pleased to send them. They must all have been quarried out of the Bible mine, but God may send one or another of his blessed angels (ministers, servants) to point them out to you or to help you to place them. He may be a very humble servant and one through whom you would least have expected the enlightenment of God's truth; but no matter if he be ever so insignificant in the estimation of men, remember that God hath chosen the things which in the world's estimation are foolish and weak to confound the things which are mighty, and the things which the world counts mean and despises as unworthy of notice, to bring to nought the things that are – the great and long established systems of error. – 1 Cor. 1:26-29.

Thus systematically built up, stone by stone, proved and carefully fitted together and founded on the solid Rock of ages, your faith will be a symmetrical, harmonious structure, strong, secure and beautiful, which the winds and the floods cannot damage or overturn. "My sheep hear my voice," said our Master, "and they follow me, and a stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." (John 10:1-5,27.) They shun all profane babblings of science, falsely so-called (2 Tim. 2:16; 1 Tim. 6:20), and being close students of the divine word – living very close to that fountain of truth and drinking deep of its spirit – they are prepared to quickly detect error, even though it lurk behind a very plausible semblance of truth. And the Lord who puts forth his sheep and goeth before them, and calleth them all by name, will not leave his obedient ones in doubt and fear. And they will ever beware of the thieves and robbers who attempt to climb into the fold in any other than the appointed way which God hath ordained.

A very great mistake which some have made, in view of the conflicting ideas as to what is truth, has been to discard every human instrumentality and expect God's guidance through the

Bible alone. Such forget that God gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ;" that we are exhorted to build one another up in the holy faith and to esteem the servants of God for their work's sake. Ever since the church has had an existence God has raised up some from its midst, as special servants of the body, some who had special teaching ability. And *blessed is that servant* who at the Master's appearing is found giving *the meat in due season* to the household of faith. (Matt. 24:46.) And no less blessed is the faithful household, who, like the "noble Bereans" of old, search the Scriptures daily to see if these things be so – who prove all things, as the apostle exhorts, and hold fast that which is good.

In both searching for truth ourselves, and in giving it to others, we need to take heed to the methods and instrumentalities which God is making use of. Thus, for instance, in the days of the early church oral teaching, with gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues, and miracles, etc., were the principle instrumentalities for the edification of the church, because books and general education were not the privileges of the masses of the people, and the New Testament Scriptures were not completed and compiled until about the close of the first century of the Christian era. In the days of the great Reformation, while oral teaching was most largely used, the newly invented printing presses came in for a large share of the work, in placing in the hands of the people, not only the Bible, but also the stirring exhortations and teachings and various helps of brethren in the faith. And in the present time by far the largest part of the work of disseminating present truth is through the agency of the press, and comparatively little oral teaching of present truth is found expedient, since God has raised up very few with the talent for public speaking; and to the few who possess it, the opportunities for using it are remarkably limited, as it is found by experience that very many more can be

induced to read than to attend public lectures on present truth. And God is honoring this method by bringing very many of his consecrated children into this line of service as traveling colporteurs and blessing their work to the awakening and sealing of his own elect, wheresoever they may be scattered.

Thus, through humble instruments, who as the angels of God quickly and quietly do their work and disappear, God himself is honored, and they await his appearing and kingdom for their exaltation and reward. The proud and unworthy ones esteem them not and will not hear their message, but those who hunger and thirst after truth and righteousness are filled. God bless his faithful messengers and all the elect who are being sealed through their ministrations.
