

THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light....Ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." – 1 Pet. 2:9,3-5.

At no time in the Church's history has our great adversary been so active in multiplying false doctrines and in diverting attention from the truth by introducing unprofitable and irrelevant questions as at present. Just when the exaltation and glory of the Church are soon to be accomplished, and when the faithful are about to be received into the joy of their Lord, every device is resorted to to beguile them of their reward and to frustrate this feature of the divine plan. To really frustrate any part of the divine plan is impossible: God has purposed to take out from among men a "little flock," "a people for his name," a royal priesthood; and such a company is assuredly being gathered; but whether all those now in the race for the prize will surely be of that company, is still an open question. Take heed, beloved, that no man take thy crown. (Rev. 3:11.) If any come short of their privileges and prove unworthy of the rich inheritance, there are others who will quickly fill their places.

We beseech you, brethren, as you value the glorious hope set before you in the gospel, that you give no heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, as the Apostle terms them (1 Tim. 4:1), but that, with fixedness of purpose, you apply yourselves to the one thing which you are called and privileged to do as

members prospectively of that Royal Priesthood. Let us never forget that we are a "peculiar people," separate from the great body of nominal Christians as well as from the world, having higher hopes, aims and ambitions and favored with a clearer insight into the deep things of God, having been called out of our former darkness into his marvelous light. And if thus separate from the world and from Christians who partake largely of the worldly spirit, what wonder if we find them all out of harmony with us and either ignoring or opposing us.

Such opposition is to be expected and will doubtless continue until we finish our course in death. To submit patiently to this opposition is to sacrifice our own *natural* preferences for the friendship and the pleasures of the present life and to endure hardness as good soldiers for the truth's sake, in whatever shape that hardness may come, in our effort to do the Lord's will and work of advancing the interests of his Kingdom. This is what is meant by the presenting of our bodies living sacrifices in the divine service. To be really in this service involves first, the careful and continual study of God's plan; second, the imbibing of its spirit; leading, thirdly, to an enthusiastic zeal for its accomplishment, and to activity to the extent [R1432 : page 231] of ability in its service, at whatever cost or sacrifice it may require.

If we are faithful in this service we have no time, nor have we the disposition, to give heed either to false doctrines or to other themes which have no bearing on the *one thing* to which we have solemnly dedicated our lives. Our time is not our own if we have consecrated all to God; and consequently we have none to spare for the investigation of fanciful false theories, built upon other foundations than that laid down in the Scriptures; nor have we time to devote to the ideas and pursuits which engross the world's attention, many of which are harmless in themselves, but would be harmful to us if we were to allow them to occupy

consecrated time and to divert our attention from the *one thing* we ought to be doing. The Apostle warns us "to shun profane babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness;" but adds, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth." "Teach no other doctrine: neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith." – 2 Tim. 2:16; 1 Tim. 1:3,4.

Each consecrated believer should ask himself, How carefully have I studied that which I have clearly recognized as divine truth? and how fully capable am I, therefore, of handling the sword of the spirit? Few indeed are those who can say they have fully digested and assimilated all they have received; that they have let none of these things slip from memory; that they have so treasured it up in their hearts that it is their meditation by day and by night; that they have a ready answer – a "Thus saith the Lord" – for every man that asks them a reason for the hope that is in them, concerning any point of doctrine; that they can clearly and intelligently portray the divine plan, quote the divine authority for each successive step of it, and, if need be, point out its place in the divine system of types. To gain such proficiency in the Word is indeed the work of a lifetime, but every day should see a closer approximation to that proficiency, and will, indeed, if we are faithful students and faithful servants of the truth.

If all the consecrated were thus busily engaged putting on the armor of God, and in proving it by actual use in zealous endeavors to herald the truth and to help others to stand, there would indeed be no time left for disputings on the Anglo-Israel question, or whether the earth is a plane instead of a globe, or whether the principles of socialism would be advisable among Christians in their management of their temporal affairs. Nor

would there be time for politics, nor even for the good temperance-reform work, nor the work among fallen women, nor among the slums of the great cities, nor even for preaching the doctrine of divine healing. All this is work which can and will be effectually accomplished in "the Times of Restitution," now in the near future; and, besides, there are others interested in these works (and we are glad of it and bid them God-speed) while we recognize and seek to accomplish the work set before us in the divine plan. And if indeed we have no consecrated time for these things, which are only side issues and not harmful in themselves, except as they divert attention and consume valuable time which has been consecrated to another and higher use, surely there is none whatever for giving heed to false doctrines such as so-called Christian Science, and the various no-ransom or Evolution theories, all of which are attempts to show men how to climb up to everlasting life by some other way than that which the Scriptures point out, viz.: by faith in the precious blood of Christ shed on Calvary for our redemption. He that climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber (John 10:1); and we are commanded to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them. – Eph. 5:11.

How narrow this way! say some contemptuously of those who, like Paul, devote their energies to the *one thing* – the service of the truth. Yes, that will be the verdict against you, of all except the few who, like yourself, have carefully sought out this "narrow way," and who are determined to walk in it regardless of the reproach it brings. The way to the prize of our high calling is not wide enough to admit all the vain philosophies and foolish [R1432 : page 232] questions and babblings and speculations of science, falsely so called. It is only wide enough to admit the Lord's plan and those who are willing to discard all other plans and projects and questionings and to devote themselves fully and entirely to its service, and who are quite willing to bear any reproach it may bring.

Consider your calling, brethren, for ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood to offer sacrifices acceptable to God; a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. The very object of our being called into this light is that we may let it shine. If we do not let it shine we are unworthy of it, and the treasure will be taken away and we will be left in darkness. If indeed we have received the light and have consecrated ourselves fully to God, let us ask ourselves, What am I doing to show forth the praises of him who hath called me out of darkness? Am I going forth with these tidings to my neighbors near and far? am I busy from day to day in seeking to vindicate the divine character, and to make known God's righteous ways? am I economizing time and means, and so arranging my temporal affairs as to give as much time as possible to the work? and, then, am I diligently studying to make myself thoroughly familiar with the truth, so that I may indeed be a living epistle known and read of all men within the circle of my influence? – a workman indeed that needeth not be ashamed? Can I truly affirm that I am

"All for Jesus, all for Jesus –
All my being's ransomed powers;
All my thoughts, and words, and doings,
All my days, and all my hours?"

If so, then we are just narrow minded enough to say, This one thing I do; and I make every thing else bend to this one thing of showing forth God's praises and helping others into his marvelous light. And to this end I cultivate and use what talents I possess, as a wise steward of my heavenly Master.

Dearly beloved, we impose no vows or bondage upon each other, but the call has its own limitations: the Master has directed us, saying, "Go ye and teach all nations [for the gospel is no

longer confined to the Jewish nation], baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all things" – concerning our (questionable) Anglo-Israelitish origin? No. – All things concerning the shape of the earth? No. – All the vain philosophies of men who have erred from the truth, and all the subtle sophistries by which they made void the Word of God? No; preach "*all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" – Matt. 28:19,20.

This is just what the apostles did. There were plenty of errors and side issues in their day; but, ignoring them, they resolutely devoted themselves to the promulgation of the truth. Paul paid no attention to his fleshly genealogy, because he recognized himself as a new creature in Christ Jesus. It was easier for him to prove his fleshly origin as an Israelite than for any of us to do it; but he cared nothing for that. He did not care whether he was of the ten tribes or of the two tribes; for he had on none of the tribal righteousness of the law. His only ambition was to be found "in Christ, not having on his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ – the righteousness which is of God by faith." (Phil. 3:9.) He says (verses 3-7), "We [new creatures in Christ] are the [real] circumcision, which worship God in spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh [or the fleshly relationships], though indeed I have had confidence also in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I had more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church; touching the righteousness which is of the law, *blameless*. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."

Hear him again in his zeal for this *one thing* to which he had devoted his life: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came

not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the mystery of God; for I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified. [I *riveted* your attention [R1432 : page 233] on this *one thing!* I kept this *one thing* continually before you]. And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and power [of the truth], that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." – 1 Cor. 2:1-5.

Paul was a plain, uncompromising teacher. When he knew he had the truth, he spoke it with confidence, and boldly declared that everything contrary to it was false doctrine; and he taught his disciples that it was not only their privilege, but their duty also, to be *established* in the faith and to know, on the evidence of God's Word, why they believed, and to be able to give to every man that inquired for it a reason for the hope that was in them.

There is among Christians to-day a great lack of established faith on any point of doctrine. They say, "I think, I hope," or "Perhaps it may be so; but this is only my opinion, and it may be right or it may be wrong. I have charity, however, for your opposing opinion and for every man's opinion; for who knows which is right? I'm sure I cannot say; but, nevertheless, I have *great faith* and charity (?). I shake hands with every body and call him brother if he claims to be a Christian, no matter what he believes and teaches, whether he is pointing to Christ as the door to the sheepfold, or whether he is trying to teach men how to climb up some other way. In Christian love I bid them all God-speed and pray for the success of all their teachings, no matter how antagonistic they may be to each other or to the Scriptures as I read them."

All this passes among Christians generally for large-hearted benevolence and personal humility, while in fact it is an ignoble,

compromising spirit that is unwilling to forego the friendship of those who oppose the Lord by opposing the truth; and which would rather see the truth suffer, and those weak in the faith stumbled, than that they should bear the reproach of Christ. Those who have real and sincere faith in God are willing to take him at his word; and with these the first principles of the doctrine should long ago have been established, much of the superstructure of gold and silver and precious stones should already be erected, and the work steadily progressing. Such are able, if they are loyal and true to God, to discern between truth and error. The Apostle John, recognizing this ability, says, "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed; for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 10.) We ought to *know* what we believe and why we believe it, and then should be bold and uncompromising in declaring it; "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

Again, says the Apostle (1 Cor. 2:6-10), "However we speak wisdom among them that are perfect [developed – We are not to cast our pearls before swine]; yet not the wisdom of the world, nor of the princes [the popular leaders and teachers] of this world that come to naught. But we speak the wisdom of God, which was hidden in a mystery, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew....Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit; for the spirit [or mind of God in us, is so anxious to know his truth, that it] searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God."

The princes of this world do know something of Astronomy and Geology, and have their ideas of the shape of the earth, etc.,

but they have not known this hidden wisdom of the divine plan, which maps out a destiny so glorious to the faithful saints who will constitute the royalty of the age to come. Let the world speculate as it may about its own themes of interest, but let us devote ourselves to the one thing in hand, avoiding foolish questions and genealogies and contentions,...for they are unprofitable and vain. (Titus 3:9.) Let us be faithful to our commission to preach this gospel to the meek who are ready to hear it (Isa. 61:1). Let the bride of Christ be diligent in making herself ready (Rev. 19:7), for the marriage of the Lamb is the event of the very near future.
