

## QUESTIONS OF GENERAL INTEREST.

*Question.* – Some define *gnosis*, rendered "knowledge" in 2 Pet. 1:5, as "the spirit of judicial investigation and inquiry." If we are always willing to add to our faith the *gnosis*, the spirit of judicial investigation and inquiry, the *epignosis*, the exact, sufficient knowledge, will certainly be the reward. Do you consider this the Apostle's meaning?

*Answer.* – Reference to other passages in which the word *gnosis* occurs shows that the above definition is not adequate. See 1 Cor. 8:1; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 3:19; 2 Pet. 3:18; etc.

To our understanding the Apostle's meaning is not, "Add to your faith an investigating disposition," but as follows:

Beginning with those who already have some knowledge, enough to be a basis for *faith*, he exhorts [R2037 : page 222] them to add to their faith fortitude (common version, "virtue"); that is to say, he implies that if they hold to their faith against the attacks of the enemy it will develop *fortitude*, an added grace of character. And when he says, "Add to your fortitude knowledge," we understand him to mean that if faith be held firmly, and fortitude of character result, this, under the Spirit's guidance, will bring the faithful one to deeper and wider expanses of *knowledge*; or, as the same Apostle suggests (2 Pet. 3:18), the faithful one will *grow* in both grace *and* knowledge, and the holy Spirit, through its begetting, will enable such to know (appreciate) the deep things of God, the things freely given unto such by God, the knowledge of God resulting from our experience in the school of Christ. It is concerning this knowledge, not merely concerning the intricacies of doctrinal matters, but the heart sympathy and communion with the Lord himself, that the Apostle Paul exclaimed, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge *of Christ Jesus my Lord.*" – Phil. 3:8.

This knowledge, received into a good and honest heart, will bring forth the fruitage or grace of character here termed "*self-control*" (common version, "temperance"). As is elsewhere stated, "He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself," controls himself, purges out more and more of the old leaven. Following and connected with the attainment of such self-control would come *patience*: for the self-mastery would teach the necessity for sympathy with and patience toward others. This patience in turn would lead to and develop the next grace mentioned; namely, *piety* – a condition in which the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, influencing all the thoughts and words and deeds. This condition in turn develops *brotherly kindness* – a love for all who are brethren and yoke fellows in the cause of righteousness and truth, the cause of God. And brotherly kindness in turn leads to that still broader and deeper experience designated the chief of all graces; namely, *love*, love for God, love for the brethren, love deep and pure and true, which thinketh no evil and doth not puff itself up, and is not easily offended, rejoices always in the truth and never in iniquity, the climax of Christian attainment in the present life; the grace of all graces, which never fadeth, and which will but be perfected when we receive the new resurrection body.

*Question.* – If our Lord had power to *take his life again* after having laid it down (John 10:18), would not this indicate (1) that his covenant to give his life a ransom was not binding and (2) that he possessed knowledge and power in *hades*?

*Answer.* – This passage should read, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power [or privilege] to *receive* it again." We understand our Lord to have meant that he was commissioned or authorized by the Father so to do.

Our Lord, born under the Law, was subject to its conditions, and additionally he took fresh responsibilities upon himself at the time of his baptism, specifically consecrating his all to the Father's service, in harmony with the Father's provision for him. But, while his life was

consecrated, it was still in his own hand, it could not be taken from him. To be *his* sacrifice it must be his own offering in every sense of the word. Hence when he said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legion of angels?" he undoubtedly spoke the truth. (Matt. 26:53.) His request would have been honored. Having violated no law, his life was not forfeited, and we believe could not have been taken from him. But having consecrated his life, and realizing that it was the Father's will that he should attest his obedience by the death of the cross, he kept his covenant with the Father and would not ask for protection, but freely delivered himself up on our behalf. He does not indicate by his language that he could ask for angelic protection and yet retain the full measure of the Father's approval; but, choosing the latter, he refrained from making the request. We remember in this connection his previous prayer, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me – nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matt. 26:39.) What our Lord did, and what he refrained from doing, we know was the Father's will. To what extent he could have done contrary to the Father's will, or what would have been the consequences to himself, it is not necessary for us to know, and what would have been the results of such improbabilities have not been revealed.

The substitution of the word "receive," a better translation, clears away the difficulty from the word "take." It is distinctly stated that he was raised up by "the glory of the Father." – Compare Rom. 6:4; 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 13:4.

**Question.** – Several of the brethren here, myself among them, are railroad employees. We have intimation that we will be expected to vote at the coming election, and that for the gold party. What is our duty? Does Colossians 3:22 bear upon this question?

**Answer.** – The Scripture you quote does not apply to your voting privileges. The "servants" there addressed by the Apostle were bond-servants or slaves; but even in their case he cannot have meant that they

should violate their consciences in obedience to the commands of their masters.

The safe plan is to take no part in politics; and to tell inquirers with whom you are intimate that, although an ardent admirer of this as the highest type of human government, you are, as Cromwell expressed it, "a fifth monarchy man" – waiting for and talking for "the Kingdom of God's dear Son;" for which we pray, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

The Quakers take note of the fact that God's people are not to engage in carnal warfare, but they overlook the fact that when they vote for a government they ought to support it by words and deeds. Thus our Lord said, "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight."

Of course if "the powers that be" should ever compel us to vote or to fight, it would be our duty to act [R2037 : page 223] with the side most nearly approved by our consciences.

Some will take knowledge of you – especially if your daily conduct support well your profession; others will ridicule you; but few will injure you, "if you be followers of that which is good," and faithful to your duties. And if you should sustain injury, God is able to make it work for your good. But, whatever your conscience may dictate, obey it. [R2038 : page 223]

*Question.* – In the May 15 issue, page 116, you refer to the withdrawal of the Roman army under Vespasian from the siege of Jerusalem, A.D. 69. It is claimed by some that this retirement was by Cestius in 65. Will you please explain?

*Answer.* – Both statements are correct. Cestius Gallus with a Roman army first undertook the subjection of the rebellious Jews. He was defeated in 65 A.D., and Vespasian was sent to conquer them. The latter having reduced the principal fortresses was just ready to attack

Jerusalem when the death of Nero stopped him until he should get orders from the succeeding emperor. Disorders at Rome and his own proclamation as Emperor hindered the war for about a year, when the army returned under Titus, and Jerusalem fell. It is quite probable that the majority of those who recognized the Lord's prediction and escaped availed themselves of the first of these two opportunities.

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