

IS PRESENT TRUTH UNREASONABLE?

THE pastor of a Baptist church writes us, saying in substance that he sees much in the teachings of the WATCH TOWER to commend; and that in general its reasonings on the Scriptures are logical, its applications of Scripture found to harmonize well with the context. He would be convinced of the entire position, but for one thing – the smallness of the movement. He says that he knows of no other publications than those from this office that present these views which we denominate "present truth," asks if he is mistaken in this, and whether it is not *unreasonable* to believe that so important truths should be committed of the Lord to so narrow, so comparatively insignificant, a channel. Admitting that the Scriptures teach that at his second coming the Lord will not find *the* faith general on the earth, but that on the contrary the Apostle declares that the close of this age will witness an increase of headiness, pride, disobedience to parents, unthankfulness, unholiness, etc., and declares that evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, he wants to know how to harmonize these things with the progress of philanthropy, gentleness, etc., in the world to-day.

Answer (a): We cannot deny the fact that ZION'S WATCH TOWER AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE is the only publication in the world teaching that we are now in the harvest of this Gospel age, that the Master is present harvesting the wheat, that it soon will be garnered, and shine forth in the Millennial Kingdom (Matt. 13:43), and that after the Lord has thus set up and glorified his "jewels" in kingdom power, the blessing of *restitution* will begin for the world of mankind in general. This, however, is no argument against the truthfulness of our position, which must be tested solely by the Scriptures.

And we are here reminded of our Lord's words at the first advent "harvest" – the type of the present "harvest," – "Judge not according

to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." (John 7:24.) The "Doctors of Divinity" of that time not only ignored our Lord's teachings, but opposed him and said all manner of evil against him and his work, falsely, and even accused him of being possessed of the prince of devils; and they warned, cajoled and hoodwinked the common people who heard him gladly, until they cried for his blood. But none of those things hindered that "harvest" work to the extent of preventing it. Likewise the present "harvest" work will go right along to completion, regardless of who shall attempt to hinder or make light of it.

It should not be forgotten that, as set forth in our September issue (reissued as an Extra on Nov. 7th), the Lord's purpose at the present time is not to arouse and startle and inform the world, but, on the contrary, to have the day of his presence come as a thief in the night – stealthily, quietly, unobservedly – in the which he will test and gather his jewels, preparatory to letting loose upon the world his corrective chastisements, retributions, and vengeance upon evil deeds and evil doers.

But you are mistaken, dear brother, in saying that ours is the only voice raised on behalf of the "present truth." On the contrary, all who hear the joyful news of heavenly grace are privileged to join in the proclamation of these "good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people." And we assure you that all who receive this "new song" into good and honest hearts are prompt to give utterance to it; and are singing it daily, as they find opportunity, to those who have ears to hear. But, as the Scriptures point out, no man is able to learn to sing that song clearly and harmoniously except such as are "taught of God" – only such as have been called to the high calling, and have accepted the call, and are in the way of obedience. Whoever leaves the way of humble faith and consecrated obedience, loses his power to sing "the song of Moses and the Lamb" harmoniously, properly. – Rev. 14:3.

You will be glad, we are sure, to know that with those of "this way" all who hear the message are preachers of it. We recognize no "clergy" and "laity" classes; for all who are in the true Church of God are, as the Apostle expresses the matter, "priests," members of the Royal Priesthood, of which our Lord is the Head or Chief Priest. Asked not long ago, "How many ministers [R2432 : page 43] are of your way of thinking?" we replied, to the astonishment of the questioner, that there are about ten thousand, who are preaching every day to the best of their ability. Then we explained that from our standpoint, the Scriptural standpoint, every member of the Body of Christ is anointed of the spirit, and is fully commissioned to make known the good tidings to everyone who has an ear to hear. Some have talents for public speaking, others find a field for usefulness as preachers in colportearing the truth, and still others for private conversation and private circulation of the good tidings in printed form.

The effect of the combined effort of these ministers of the truth is that the *sound* thereof is extending to the utmost parts of the earth. Not all, however, are able to clearly *discern* the sound now, and we believe that it is intended for only such as have "ears to hear," to whom alone it will be a special blessing in the present time. We look forward with pleasure, however, to the time promised in the Scriptures, when all "the deaf ears shall be unstopped," and all "the blind eyes shall be opened," and when, as a consequence, the true knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth, as the waters cover the great deep – the sea. – Isa. 35:5; 11:9.

Answer (b): We are living to-day under a glare of light, such as the world never before enjoyed. We are not, therefore, to expect the grossness of the past; but while there is a polished veneer upon the world in general to-day, such as it never had the opportunity of having before, this only gives a corresponding amount of responsibility, from the divine standpoint. Where much is given much will be required. The Scriptures assure us that the only proper course for those who

have the enlightenment, which we enjoy, is a recognition of our own imperfections, and of the Lord's standard of righteousness, and an acceptance of the salvation which he has provided in Christ, and a thorough change of heart, will, sentiment, – from sin to righteousness. [R2433 : page 43]

True, the numbers in Christendom, who now outwardly observe rules of propriety and decency are larger than ever before; but we doubt if the proportion of the truly consecrated, the "saints," is greater. We have frequent evidences, too, that the veneer of the present time is very thin, and that the old nature, *unconverted*, is underneath. For instance, this was shown a year or so ago, at the notable French Charity Bazaar, when the fire occurred, and when so many who were esteemed to be thoroughly polished socially gave evidence of fierceness and brutality worthy of the Dark Ages. A similar evidence that mankind, as a whole, are practically unchanged at heart, was furnished in the savagery displayed at the time of the disaster to the steamer La Bourgogne. Nor have we reason to question that in all civilized lands the spirit of discontent which prevails would, under favorable conditions, show up as horribly as in the "Reign of Terror" of the French Revolution. Indeed, the latter is set before us in the Scriptures as a picture or illustration of the conditions which will prevail throughout the entire civilized world, and in the midst of which the torch of civilization will for a short time be utterly extinguished. For further evidences along this line we refer you to MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. IV.

As an illustration of *modern* cruelty of thought take the following from the pen of a man of learning, a highly esteemed French gentleman – M. Rochefort. Assailing his political opponents, the judges in the Dreyfus case, he said: –

"To smear them over with pitch, and make live torches of them, as Nero did with the Christians, would be somewhat of an antiquated amusement. An idea has occurred to me of a punishment which might

give satisfaction even to the most exasperated. The members of the Court of Cassation having been previously drawn up in single file, an executioner duly trained to the work should cut off their eyelids, so as to leave the eyeballs denuded. Then spiders of the most venomous kind should be enclosed in nutshells, applied to the eyeballs, and properly fastened behind the culprit's heads. These spiders in a famished condition could not be expected to be very fastidious, and would slowly and gradually feed on the culprit's eyeballs until nothing but a ghastly cavity remained. This done, these hideous blind men should be chained up to a pillory erected before that Palais de Justice where their crime has been perpetrated, and on their chests a placard should be affixed, bearing these words: "Thus does France punish the traitors who attempt to sell her to the enemy."

If the veneered and polished can think such thoughts and use such language, what may we not expect of the ignorant and uncouth when frenzied and in despair, in the coming anarchy!

Answer (c): It is not for us to judge the hearts of others, and we shall not attempt to do so, but we believe that the Lord has arranged his truth so that it will do the judging. Our Lord voiced this sentiment, saying, "My words shall judge you in the last day" – the Millennial Day. This judgment of the last day is already upon us, and, as the Apostle Peter declared, so we find it, "Judgment must begin at the house of God," – the Gospel Church, nominal and real. The fact that the Scribes and Pharisees and Doctors of the Law of to-day do not accept the message and evidences of the second presence of our Lord, so far from being contrary to the teaching of the Lord's Word, is in perfect accord therewith. Has he not said to us that not many great, mighty or wise, according to the course of this world, will be worthy of a place in his Kingdom? And do not all the great ones of to-day, to whom you refer, claim to be great and wise, according to the course and judgment of this world? **[R2433 : page 44]**

Moreover, our Lord gave us a sample or foreshadowing of the present harvest, and what we may expect here: it was furnished in the Jewish nation and its harvest at his first advent. Present conditions exactly correspond to that prototype: there as here it was inquired, Have any of the Pharisees and Doctors of the Law believed on him? The answer was then, as now, No. Of course the mass of the people then followed their leaders, and so also it will be now. Of that time our Lord said that the leaders were blind leaders of the blind, and that all would fall into the ditch, and it was so: the Jewish nation as a whole was overthrown in the time of trouble with which their age ended, and their house was left wholly desolate. So we expect it to be here: the masses of "Christendom" will follow their blind teachers, blind guides, and have a confidence in them worthy of a better previous record, and will eventually be greatly surprised when the "little flock," the Lord's Jewels, have been gathered, and the time of trouble breaks forth which will engulf all present institutions, – social, financial, political, religious, and prepare the way for the fulfilment of our Redeemer's prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

Answer (d): If you want to be guided aright, dear brother, you must not look to human authorities, but to the Chief Shepherd himself, who declared, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow [obey] me." We do not set ourself as a leader of the Lord's sheep, and we neither ask nor expect any to follow us as their leader. We seek merely to be, so far as the Shepherd may be pleased to use us, his mouthpiece, to call attention to the Shepherd, and to the way in which he is leading. None should follow us, except as they discern that we are following the Master, as saith the Apostle. – 1 Pet. 5:3; Phil. 3:17.

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ASPIRATIONS OF A NEW CONVERT.

I wish I were as pure, as fair to view,
As yonder blossom, sparkling with the dew;

But then I could not wear my snowy dress,
The Savior's gift – his robe of righteousness.

I wish I were like mountains, towering high,
Strong and majestic, piercing cloud and sky;
But then I could not feel my weakness thrill
With strength to do my blessed Master's will.

I wish my life were placid as yon lake,
Unmoved by storms that o'er the ocean break;
But could I realize such rest and peace
As when the Master bids my troubles cease?

Lord, all my wishes, all my heart's desires
Find consummation when the world retires,
And Thou before my raptured gaze dost stand,
In perfectness complete, a pattern grand.

Ah! would I were, my blessed Lord, like thee!
Then should my heart thy fragrant garden be!
Then should my prayers past mountain tops ascend,
My peace be fathomless, my joy attained.

For Thee leapt high the sacrificial fire,
Let it of me my cleansed parts require!
Into Thy nostrils let the incense rise,
A token of accepted sacrifice!

– R. B. HENNINGES.
