

DEVELOPMENT AS NEW CREATURES IN CHRIST

"Strong meat belongeth to them who are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." – Hebrews 5:14.

THE Apostle here seems to have in mind some who are babes in Christ, some who have immature conceptions of God and His Plan, who lack spiritual development, contrasting them with others who are more developed, who have become men in Christ Jesus – who are "of full age," as St. Paul expresses it, mature in Christian attainment. "Strong meat" belongs to these. The Apostle has given a reproof to some who, considering the length of time they have been in Christ, should have been strong in the faith, in doctrine, in spiritual life, and should be qualified to teach others. Yet still they were children, needing others to teach them again the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, needing still to be fed on milk, even yet not able to assimilate "strong meat."

Beginners who have not long known Christ, who are new in respect to the truths of God's Plan, are not to be choked with strong meat. These may be fed upon the simpler truths, which they can assimilate. They need "the sincere milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby." Some of the Lord's people, who have been longer in the way, in talking with the newly consecrated unwisely begin to tell them the truths regarding immortality, trinity, etc., before they are able to digest them. These are giving strong meat to babes, and are liable to drive them away from the table of the Lord, giving them spiritual dyspepsia, so that they are unable longer to eat even of the simpler food furnished by the Lord.

For those who are only beginners in the good way, there is plenty of food in God's Word of the more easily digestible sort; food which should be helpful to New Creatures in Christ who are just

beginning to walk in the narrow path. We are not to understand, however, that they are to continue for quite a period of time to live exclusively on milk. As they begin to grow and develop on a milk diet, they may be given somewhat stronger food, until after a time they will be able to digest the strongest features of the Truth, and to draw nourishment from them. Some develop and are able to digest the strong meat much more rapidly than others. Those who have not been falsely taught regarding Scriptural doctrines, who have not been steeped for many years in the errors brought into the Church during the Dark Ages, are often much more ready and able to grasp the truth on these subjects than are those who have been long under the blinding influence of error along these lines.

SYSTEMATIC STUDY NECESSARY

Those who are of humble, teachable mind, seeking a "thus saith the Lord" for all they accept, not trying to uphold any theories of their own, but to follow only the Lord, can generally, by taking the STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES and their Bible, and taking up the Plan step by step, in a systematic, orderly manner, as it is presented, proving every statement by the sure Word of God, see the truth regarding these fundamental doctrines with little difficulty. In this way they gain a comprehensive view of the whole Plan of God, and can see how its various features fit and dovetail into one another; this would be impossible if they heard first only a portion of the Plan, disassociated from the rest. **[R5689 : page 151]**

For this reason it is well to urge the newly interested one to read and prove for himself, and not endeavor to explain too much through conversation. Much harm is often done thus by well-meaning friends, in their zeal to have the beginner grasp it all at once, which is impossible; and often their efforts result in confusing the mind of the one seeking the Truth.

SPIRITUAL EYESIGHT A MATTER OF GROWTH

As we look at a little babe, we see that it can crawl, can kick a little, can cry somewhat, and to a certain extent can see objects. It has a certain amount of appreciation of things beautiful, of things terrorizing, of things happyifying. But it does not see things very clearly nor comprehend them. If we pass our hand before its eyes, it apparently has not a focus. As with young kittens, which cannot tell what is near and what is far off, so with beginners, babes, in spiritual matters. The younger ones in their attempt to study God's Word, are apt to go tripping along through it, and think they see this or that. They cannot be entrusted with important truths at first; for they would be pretty certain to be stumbled.

But as these grow older, they can "rightly divide" the Truth, they can distinguish Truth from error, they can tell what would be hurtful and what would be helpful. Even a child that burns itself at the fire learns to look out for that which will burn, and learns to approach the fire very carefully, very judiciously. As all this is true as relates to temporal matters, and as the sense of appreciation and comprehension develops in the babe, so in babes in Christ, there is a development of the sense of appreciation and ability to comprehend the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of God's Wisdom and Love, and the fulness and grandeur of His great Plan with all its varied features.

NECESSARY FOOD ALWAYS IN "DUE SEASON"

To gain this appreciation, it is necessary, not only to read the Truth, but to think upon it, to make it our own, to strive earnestly to conform our lives to it. It is better, of course, for one to merely read so many pages or chapters of the Bible than to read some worthless thing; but to simply read a certain amount in the Bible without understanding accomplishes little. The Bible needs to be studied; and the Lord has never left His people without teachers of His own choosing, who were able to lead the dear sheep of the great

Shepherd's Fold into the green pastures where they could obtain whatever food was needed at that time. As the gradual unfolding of Truth in its times and seasons has added to the quantity and variety of food required by the flock of God for their proper nourishment, it has been supplied by Him through instrumentalities which he has raised up for the purpose in due season.

The real saints of God have never been left without all needed supplies in every age. In our own day more Truth has unfolded than at any previous period of the Church's history. More and richer food is now necessary, [R5689 : page 152] to strengthen the Church for the peculiar conditions and testings of this day; and more has been supplied. But as we have stated, and as the Apostle in our text shows, there are various degrees of development in the Church of Christ; and some have been accepted from the world in these latter days to take the places of some who have through unfaithfulness lost their crowns. Hence the wisdom that cometh from above is required to feed and nourish these weaker ones properly.

FIRST LESSONS IN SCHOOL

In a school there are lessons arranged according to the ability and comprehension of the pupils. When the primary lessons in spelling are given, the teacher begins with small, simple words, instead of long words. Such words as c-o-w, cow; c-a-t, cat, are given first. A teacher who is wise and understands her business would not think of starting little children out with such a word as "prognostication," or "hippopotamus." The pupil would first be given more simple and easily comprehensible words. Object lessons, by pictures, etc., are also used at first to attract the eye, and thus to assist the child mind.

And so with religious matters. Those who would give proper instructions to others must be qualified to teach. The Lord has placed the various members in the Body of Christ "as it hath pleased Him." To some He has given Apostles and workers of miracles; to

others evangelists and teachers and pastors. In the early history of the Church, in its infantile condition, miracles – object lessons and proofs to the eye, to the ear, the outward physical senses – were necessary, and hence were supplied. As the Church became established, these outward evidences in connection with the Truth passed away.

The Apostle Paul says, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things." (1 Corinthians 13:11). And so with every true follower of Christ. As he grows and develops, step by step, as his senses become exercised to discern good and evil – what is true, what is right, what is profitable, what is comprehended in the glorious High Calling of the Church, what is included in full consecration to Christ – he more and more puts away his childish views, his immature conceptions, and becomes educated and advanced in the things of God – the deep things. A beginner, who had not learned to study the Word of God, could take it and get out of it things that would be really harmful to him. One must learn to take Bible truths *in their setting* – to see what they *mean*, *how* they *apply*, to *whom* they apply, etc. – or all will be confusion and contradiction. One can bring sweet music from an instrument only when he learns how to manipulate the keys, how to combine the various chords; otherwise only discord is the result.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THOSE LONG IN THE WAY

There are certain principles laid down in the Bible. We need to get a grasp on these principles and apply them in our daily lives. There is the principle of *Justice* – a *foundation* principle. This principle must be recognized and practised before we are in a proper condition to build upon this foundation the principles of Love, Mercy, Gentleness, etc., all of which must be incorporated into our lives, our characters, as children of God. We need to learn what *justice* means, what *true love* means. The standards of the

world along these lines have become much perverted, and we need to be properly taught from the only authoritative source – the Word of God. We must learn *how* to apply these principles.

Those who have been for some time drinking from the Fountain of Truth, and feeding at the table of the Lord, where the food is pure, unadulterated, nourishing, should be fully established in the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. Much of the superstructure of "gold, silver and precious stones" should be already erected, and the good work of character-building should be progressing steadily day by day. We should be firmly rooted and grounded in Christ, so that nothing can move us. We should be able to discern clearly between truth and error on every important point. We should be so loyal to the Lord and His Word that we shall rejoice in the glorious privilege of proclaiming it at every suitable opportunity. We should know *what* we believe and *why* we believe it, and be courageous and uncompromising in declaring the Truth which has so blessed our own hearts and lives.

