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PRUDENT OR IMPRUDENT, WHICH?

Wisdom and prudence are good things in their place, and when not overdone or abused; but there is such a thing as being over-wise, or “wise above that which is written,” and there is, we think, such a thing as being *prudent* above that which is written.

We have been somewhat exercised upon this thought by the expressions and looks of some of our friends, when their attention has been called to the subject of Restitution.

The thought that men are to be restored to *natural* life again, to live again in the flesh as men, that they are in fact to be restored to all they lost through Adam, or because of the sin of Adam, seems to many to be the height of presumption, but they would not apply the same rule of reasoning to other matters, we think. Take Rom. 5:18-19: “As by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, *even so* by the righteousness of *one* the free gift came upon all men unto *justification of life*. For as by *one man's* disobedience, many were made sinners, so by the *obedience of one* shall many be made righteous.” Now if these words were used in the same way regarding anything other than the relation between God and man, who would think of making the second part of each statement mean *less* than the first?

Now without asserting *positively* that man will live again in the flesh, restored to Adamic perfection, let us consider our attitude in connection with the fact, (if it be a *fact*) and who would be *likely* to *know* it.

First, then, those would be most likely to know it who are in a condition to receive the truth whatever it be. Not that the truth can be anything but the truth, but it may be very different from what we had supposed it to be, owing to previous education and training; but if we are willing to receive it because it is truth, it *is* presumptive evidence that we shall be likely to recognize it when brought to view.

Again, having recognized the truth, and having become acquainted with it, we should be likely to *love* it, and of course to receive it; for we cannot suppose one would reject a thing they loved (unless indeed they love something else *more*, and that something antagonize this). Then having recognized, loved and received this truth, what more natural than that they should proclaim it?

It is hardly supposable that one could become acquainted with a truth of such a deep interest to mankind as this is, and yet say nothing about it.

The subject is one so full of comfort, and one, too, which appeals to our sense of God's wisdom, justice, and love; and one which, from every stand-point, except of settled prejudice, gives us a view of God's attributes shining forth gloriously, which so entrances us as we gaze that we are constrained to cry out with the Psalmist (107-8): "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men."

But *if* the doctrine of restitution *be true* (don't forget that there is a "*much more*" salvation), how nicely it would match with and explain this Scripture which has so long puzzled us: Ezekiel 16:53. In this chapter, God, through the prophet, is "causing Jerusalem to know her abominations," (2nd verse) and after speaking at some length upon the subject, says: "When I shall bring again the captivity, the captivity of *Sodom* and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of *thy* captives in the midst of them." But says one: "That does not prove restitution; some commentators say that God did not intend

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to bring again the captivity of either; he only says, *when* I do *one*, I will do the other, and he is speaking *not of death*."

We are not *asserting* NOW that it *does* prove restitution, only considering that *if* the doctrine *is* true, how easy you would get along with some Scriptures, and how you would not have to be so very "wise and prudent" with a *good many* passages of Scripture.

(55th verse): "When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their *former* estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, [they were *dead* and in their graves, you know,] *then* thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate."

Opposed to the thought that this was an emphatic way of saying that he would do *neither* is the statement in the 61st verse: "And I *will* give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant—(*i.e.*, the old covenant).

Again, *if it is true*, what light would be shed on the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:24, where in speaking of the privileges which Capernaum had failed to improve, he said: "But I say unto you, that it shall be *more* tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of Judgment, than for thee." And this last would harmonize with the other quoted from Ezekiel. This view would lend *some meaning* to the words of Jesus in Luke 12:32: "Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor *in the world to come*." With this view we shall not wonder so much that Peter said (Acts 3:21) of Jesus: "Whom the heaven must *receive until* the times of *restitution of all things* which God hath spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been

since the world began.”

But say some: “Do not tell the people such things; if you do they will *never* repent, but will live right on in sin.” My dear sir, who told you that?

If it *is true*, and God has been speaking of it by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began, as Peter says, shall we be prudent *above* that which is *written*? If we *should*, it would be equivalent to saying that God was very unwise to allow the prophets to utter such things, even though they *were* true, and that if he had the *prudence* of some of his *creatures*, he would never have allowed such writings as that in Ezekiel to be put before the world, together with many other careless (?) statements, lest men might *guess* that the Psalmist was right, when at the end of every verse of the 136th Psalm he says: “The mercy of the Lord endureth *forever*,” and if they were to think *that*, just as likely as not the very next thing they would think would be that the punishment of the wicked would *end some time*; and if they should get that idea, they might find an *explanation* to some texts that prudence has said taught the doctrine of “endless torment;” and if they should become convinced that God did not intend to punish the wicked *beyond the point of reformation*, they might conclude that his name (Love) was very appropriate, and love *him* too.

Now, it is a noticeable *fact*, that those who do not believe in the doctrine of restitution are the ones who think it is imprudent to teach it. Query: Are they the ones referred to in Matthew 11:25? Jesus had been telling, how much more tolerable it would be for Sodom in the day of judgement than for Capernaum, and: “At that time Jesus answered and said: ‘I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, *because* thou hast hid *these things* from the wise and *prudent*, and hast *revealed* them unto *babes*.”

And 1 Cor. 1:19: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to *nothing* the *understanding* of the *prudent*.” Is it not best, then, dear brethren, to give our whole attention to the “spirit of *truth*,” and like prattlers (babes), tell it *just as it is*, and thus insure further revelations? For:

“Blind **unbelief** is **sure** to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.”

If our Heavenly Father has not been prudent enough to guard his own character, we shall make a poor display of our wisdom to undertake to do it for him, and we cannot afford to lose the things that would be “hid” from us by so doing.

“I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid *these things* from the wise and *prudent*, and hast revealed them unto babes.” “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

J. C. S.

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