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SOME INTERESTING QUESTIONS ANSWERED

THE THREE PARTS

Question.—Please explain the meaning of the “three parts” of Zech. 13:8,9: “In all the land, saith the Lord, *two parts* shall be cut off and die; but the third part shall be left therein, and I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call upon my name, and I will hear them; I will say of them, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God.”

Answer.—These three parts are not stated to be thirds or equal parts; hence we are not to so interpret this passage. We understand three classes to be referred to: the two classes that will be cut off and die we understand to be the “little flock” and the “great company,” all of both classes being consecrated unto death—the one class, the little flock, going into death in a voluntary manner, sacrificing; the other class, the great company, going into death under adverse circumstances which would test their loyalty to the Lord, and prove their willingness to serve him even at the cost of life itself, even though they had not that consuming zeal which would lead them, according to their covenant, to self sacrifice.

The third part that will be brought through the fire, refined, etc., we understand to represent the world of mankind, which will pass from death conditions to life conditions as human beings during the Millennium—quite probably also a large proportion of the living nations at the time of the establishment of the Kingdom will pass over and become subjects of the Kingdom without going into the tomb. The whole human family, except the few who are vitally connected with Christ, are already reckoned dead with Adam and they all will be granted an opportunity for coming, through the divine processes of the Millennial age, back to the full perfection of human life lost by father Adam’s transgression. All such as are thus returned to harmony with God will indeed recognize him as such, and he will recognize them as his people.

PERFECT, WITH LIMITED KNOWLEDGE

Question.—A question sometimes brought up which I am a little at a loss to answer, is: If Adam was perfect how could he sin? This question is usually followed by a statement that a perfect person cannot make a mistake. I usually answer that there is a difference in perfection of being and perfection of character, but they usually reply that if Adam’s character was not perfect then he was in a state of imperfection, requiring evolution to perfect him. It is here that I feel unable to

answer, unless by saying that only omniscience could secure perfection of character even with perfection of being.

Answer.—You have answered the question well. Adam was perfect as a man, but lacked experience. We must not however, say that he was perfect in knowledge for this would be a fallacious statement, a misuse of the word perfect. The man is one thing and his knowledge is another thing. When mankind shall have reached perfection in the end of the Millennial age it will not mean that it has attained all knowledge on every subject. Quite to the contrary, we may reasonably suppose that to all eternity mankind will be privileged to progress in his knowledge of the greatness, goodness and wisdom of God. The only thing necessary to Adam's trial was that he should understand that obedience was required, and that the penalty of disobedience would be the loss of his life

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privileges. He would have this degree of knowledge, and he therefore sinned intelligently. As the Apostle declares, "Adam was not deceived."

We are to remember that the perfect Adam had a good character in the sense of having a well-balanced judgment, pre-disposed to righteousness by virtue of his organization in the image and likeness of his Creator, but he was not created a machine. If we make a perfect machine it cannot fail to do exactly the thing it was intended to do, because it is entirely without ability to do otherwise. But God made man in his own likeness, a free moral agent—free to choose his own way, whether of obedience unto life or of disobedience unto death. The very fact that he was given such a choice proves that he was perfect, that the ability for either right doing or wrong-doing was his; his reason for choosing the wrong way was, evidently, as you suggest, his lack of knowledge. Had he been omniscient, like his Creator, able to comprehend the end from the beginning, undoubtedly he would not have transgressed. But it was not God's purpose to make an omniscient being, and Adam was not omniscient, neither will the perfectly restored human family be omniscient. God's requirement of his creatures is not that they must know as well as he, but that they should have confidence in him, should trust implicitly to his judgment, and realize that thus in him they live and move and have their being. Their perfection will never be divine, but human perfection, subjected to and guided by divine wisdom and revelation.

OUR FEELINGS RE GOD'S CALL

Question.—Does the fact that I do not feel so great a craving for the gift of immortality as some others express, indicate that I have not been called to the high calling, but to the earthly calling, to restitution? My desire seems to be to live justly, righteously, rather than to live saintly and

sacrificingly. Is this a further indication along the same line as the above?

Answer.—No; our feelings or aspirations are not the call. Otherwise it would imply that we do our own calling. Speaking of our priesthood, the Apostle declares, “No man taketh this honor to himself but he that is called of God,” (Heb. 5:4), and the place to ascertain what is God’s call is not in our feelings but in God’s own Word of revelation. He declares through the inspired Apostle, “Ye are all called in one hope of your calling.” (Eph. 4:4.) This contradicts the thought that there might be two callings, an earthly and a heavenly, from which we might choose. Our feelings depend largely upon our natural constitutions, influenced by the experiences of life, and hence they are unreliable except as they are regulated or created by the inspiring and transforming influences of the Scriptures. In other words, our spiritual hopes are begotten in us by the word of grace. What we must do is to let this truth, the divine promise, dwell in our hearts more and more richly, and as the Apostle says, “Think on these things.” As you do so they will enlarge before your mental eye, and you will gradually come to see more of their richness and value.

We have heretofore pointed out that we are living in the harvest or end of the Gospel age, and that the Millennial age in some measure laps on to this harvest and has a beginning here. We have also shown that in this harvest time, and especially in the great time of trouble with which it will end, God is dealing with a restitution class. But to deal with and prepare a class for the restitution favors is a wholly different matter from extending such a call. To our understanding no such call to restitution blessings will ever be issued. In God’s due time restitution laws will prevail in the world and whoever obeys then will begin to experience actual restitution; whoever rejects will promptly receive retribution. If a restitution call were now in progress it would imply that whoever accepted it would begin at once to experience the blessings of restitution—relief from aches and pains, and from mental and physical imperfections and weaknesses—legitimate restitution work, such as we expect will progress during the Millennial age as soon as it shall be fully ushered in and the laws and judgments for that age have been promulgated.—Acts 3:25.

As for us who have now tasted of God’s grace, it is not for us to dictate to the Lord what portions of blessing we prefer, but rather to accept thankfully such favors as he shall be pleased to tender us, and he has tendered us the exceeding great and precious things, far better than the restitution privileges of the race in general.

Your desire for a life of righteousness is a proper one. This is the first lesson we are to learn as soon as we find out that we and others of our race are fallen and imperfect creatures by heredity. As soon as we have learned of our own blemishes and look to the Lord, he points us to Christ as the only way of approach to him, “the Way, the Truth, the Life.” Realizing our need of just such a Savior to justify us from sin and to help us out of its miry clay and to put our feet upon the Rock,

we gratefully accept, lay hold of the Lord by faith. We are thus justified freely from all things through faith. Then we start to live the justified life, a life of righteousness, soberness, honesty, truth, godliness. We proceed but a short time ere we learn that such a reasonable and consistent life will cost us something—that it will involve self-sacrifices, self-denials, misrepresentations, etc., because the mass of those around us know not the Lord and seek not to walk in the ways of righteousness. The darkness that is in them comes speedily into conflict with the light that has come into us, and hence our Lord's statement, "Whosoever will live godly shall suffer persecution." This means the place of turning back for quite a good many who espoused the Lord's cause. It means the time of forsaking the principles of righteousness, truth, etc., a time for compromises, with the world, the flesh and the devil, for the sake of peace and earthly prosperity, and alas! too many yield. But those who are loyal to the Lord and the principles of righteousness thus reach a crisis point, and those who decide that they will follow righteousness, follow the Lord whatever the cost, thereby take the step of full consecration—whether they realize that it is another step or not. In other words, the maintenance of justification by faith will sooner or later mean consecration, self-sacrifice. We are not to expect that we will love the experience of sacrificing, at least not in the beginning of our experience. We love the right principles and are learning to sacrifice rather than violate them, but no chastisement, no discipline, seemeth at the time joyous, but rather grievous.

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Nevertheless, in the Lord's providence, those who make such sacrifices for principle's sake are blessed by him with keener and deeper insight into the word of truth by the spirit of adoption which he bestows upon those who are thus exercised; and those clearer insights into things which God hath in reservation for them that love him, eventually outweigh the trials and difficulties of the pathway, so that with the Apostle we are enabled to say, "I count all things but as loss and dross that I may win Christ." The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glories that shall be revealed in us; but, as before stated, this is the experience only of those who have made considerable progress in the new way, and whose sacrifices of self interest have brought to them the Lord's providence, blessings of head and of heart, which none can appreciate fully except those who have experienced them.

So then, in summing up, let us say that our failure to rightly appreciate the great blessings which God has attached to the call of this Gospel age is not a sign that we have not received the call, but it is a sign that we have not clearly and fully appreciated it. We are to credit ourselves for a great deal of ignorance, and to correspondingly trust the Lord's wisdom, just as little children should realize their own inexperience to judge of values and should look to their parents to judge for them. The Scriptures point out our ignorance on this subject, saying, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things that God hath in reservation for

them that love him.”

The Lord has chosen for us the things which he is pleased to offer to us, and those who come to a clear knowledge of the Truth and who then deliberately reject the grace of God, would seem to do despite to the Lord’s favor. This the Apostle seems to imply when he says, If we neglect so great salvation how shall we escape?—what assurance would there be that we would not reject a lesser favor? We cannot appreciate either except as the Lord instructs us respecting their values.

WHO MAY PROPERLY MEMORIALIZE?

Question.—Is it correct to say that the “sacrament,” the Memorial Supper, symbolizes the appropriation of Christ’s righteousness by faith in his sacrifice? If so, has not a person who is justified by faith, but who has not yet made a consecration, a perfect right to partake of the emblems?

Answer.—The only object of justification in this present age is to fit or enable the justified one to make his consecration and whoever does not so use his justification as to obtain thereby consecration and begettal to the new nature is to that extent receiving the grace of God in vain—failing to make use of it. Just as though a wealthy friend should give a poorer one an order on his store for goods, saying: “Upon the presentation of this order by John Blank or Mary Blank at my store at any time during the year 1905, he shall be privileged to purchase such goods as he may desire at one-tenth of their actual price, ninety per cent. of all their purchases being charged to me.” If John Blank or Mary Blank failed to present this order during the year, and thus failed to buy any goods during the specified period, the order would be practically valueless to them, because they did not take advantage of its favorable terms. Just so now, any who are justified by faith have the privilege of consecrating themselves and being accepted in the Beloved, and thereby the privilege of obtaining the exceeding great and precious promises at the small cost of sacrificing present privileges; and whoever does not so use his justification during this age to obtain the high calling may be said to have profited nothing by it, for it lapses with the end of this life, and must be renewed, if at all, in the next life, upon the same conditions and terms as to all the remainder of humanity.

Applying this to the Memorial Supper: the Memorial Supper not only represents the eating of the bread, the symbol of our justification, but it also represents the partaking of the cup, fellowship in the sufferings of Christ. These two thoughts are linked together in the symbol, and may not be sundered in our application of it. It would not, therefore, be proper for any to participate in the Memorial Supper except such as have not only been justified by partaking of Christ’s righteousness, but who additionally have become joint-heirs in sacrifice with him, drinking of his

cup.

JUSTICE A PART OF CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Question.—In Proverbs 16:11 we read, “A just weight and balance are the Lord’s.” Should we not, therefore, seek to develop the characteristic of love, rather than of justice, leaving the matter of justice until such times as we shall be perfected and enthroned, and thus be enabled to act upon the principle of justice, the foundation of God’s throne?

Answer.—We should apprehend the principle of justice now without waiting until we are made perfect. We should seek to note the operation of divine justice and the operations of justice and injustice in humanity, with special notice and criticism of ourselves. He who fails to appreciate justice must of necessity proportionately fail to appreciate mercy, for mercy is merely the difference between love and justice. We are to seek to note the principle of justice in our dealings with others, and to “deal justly and keep judgment,” as the Lord directs, but we are to compensate for our own imperfection and the imperfection of others by permitting love to govern, and to cover all the multitude of faults in those with whom we have to do. Nevertheless, we are to seek to view our own conduct in the light of justice, and with as few allowances as possible for our own imperfections.

SANCTIFICATION OF THE SPIRIT

Question.—Please explain the latter part of 1 Pet. 1:2, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”

Answer.—None are to be considered of the elect who have not experienced sanctification of the spirit—of the mind, of the will; and more than this, it must be such a sanctification as will lead on to obedience—a desire to know and to do the will of the Lord to the extent of our ability. And this obedience would not be sufficient to commend us to God, because we are weak through the fall. It needs, therefore, additionally, in compensation for our blemishes, the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus—the merit or covering of his righteousness made available to us by his death and appropriated by our faith.

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