

Vol. 1 Timely Greetings Nos. 51, 52

THE ONLY PEACE OF MIND

Volume 1  
Numbers 51, 52

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IS RELIGION SOMETHING LIVING AND GROWING?  
OR IS IT SOMETHING DEAD AND WANING?

FIVE MEN SLAY AFTER ONE SETS A MARK

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TEXT FOR PRAYER  
Take No Thought For The Morrow

I shall read from "Christ's Object Lessons," beginning on page 18.

"Christ sought to remove that which obscured the truth.... His words placed the teachings of nature as well as of the Bible in a new aspect, and made them a new revelation.... He gave the lesson, 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow [in the simplicity of natural beauty]; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.' Then followed the sweet assurance and the important lesson, 'Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?' In the sermon on the mount these words...were spoken to the multitude, among whom were men and women full of worries and perplexities, and sore with disappointment and sorrow. Jesus continued: 'Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek;) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.'..."

We are now to pray that as Christ's servants, we do all we can to remove that which obscures the Truth of today; that we find light through nature and the Bible; that we realize that the Lord cares for us more than He cares for the lilies; that we learn to trust in Him and to do His bidding,

and be no longer like the Gentiles who worry about the things of this world;  
that we know He will  
see that we have all our needs if our chief business is to advance His Kingdom.

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IS RELIGION SOMETHING LIVING AND GROWING? OR IS IT SOMETHING DEAD  
AND WANING?

TEXT OF ADDRESS BY V.T. HOUTEFF,  
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SABBATH, JULY 26, 1947  
MT. CARMEL CHAPEL  
WACO, TEXAS

Is religion something that grows and expands, or is it something that stands  
still? Just the other  
day we heard on the radio a certain minister boast that his denomination has not  
added or  
discarded a doctrine ever since it was organized. Is this something to brag  
about? or is it  
something to bemoan? This is a question to which we now wish to find the  
answer.

If the world does not stand still, if it makes the progress it does, then why  
should the church  
stand still? Why should the church not know more of God and more of the Bible  
today than she  
did yesterday? Why should Christianity be proud of not adding Bible doctrines?  
What a world  
this would be if everything was not moving ahead as it is!

If we were to compare the world's increased knowledge and accomplishments in  
the last 50 or  
100 years with the Church's increased knowledge and accomplishments in the same  
period of  
time, we may see that there is no comparison whatsoever.

Look at the progress the world has made, and look at the stupidity which the  
Church is  
cultivating. Yes, I say cultivating, because it seems that rather than  
bemoaning

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the fact of not having added or discarded a doctrine, and rather than  
encouraging the people to be  
on the watch for God's visitations, they are making it their business to keep  
the laity from coming  
in contact with God's messengers and His progressive Truth, with "meat in due  
season," with  
God's messages for today. Anything that does not originate in their own  
conventions, the laity are  
told to have nothing to do with it. This they do simply because they themselves  
do not accept the  
Truths God sends; and because if any of their congregation came in contact with  
and accept it,

they naturally will have to join Truth wherever Truth is. So it is their chief business to keep the laity in darkness and in fear that someone is to deceive them if they expose themselves to anything that their ministers do not approve.

Such a course may hold back progress for years, but it can never succeed, -- no, not any more than did the opponents of Galileo make the earth flat by compelling him to recant his position that the earth is round, and no more than Rome succeeded against the Protestant Reformation or the priests and rabbis against Christianity. It is, therefore, high time to realize that people who must be held in ignorance of something in order to be kept loyal to the Church, are certainly not worth having; and that the only way to have them really loyal, and firmly established in the Truth, and saved in the Kingdom, is to teach the Truth and then give them freedom to choose so that they themselves might personally know what is Truth and what is error. To keep them in darkness of what the deceivers teach (if they be deceivers), is to keep them ignorant of what is in the air. It is to forever close Heaven's communication line, and to make of the people spiritual invalids and automatons. The people must for themselves know what the Truth is, and for themselves must decide what to do with It if they are ever to be granted

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admission to the Kingdom. Both those who must be fenced in, or led with a rope or driven with a club as it were into the Kingdom, and those who build the fence, pull the rope, or hold the club will find the door closed, and will hear the Master say, "Depart from Me; I never knew you." Ministers are not called to be taskmasters, nor conscience for others. They are called to be teachers of the Truth.

If the Church is not making progress with Truth, if she is not periodically adding unquestionable knowledge to knowledge, then, I am sure, she has nothing to boast about. She is inactive, her communication line with Heaven broken, is God forsaken, dead. She can never serve her members with "meat in due season" from the throne of God.

Let us for example take religion as it is in the Bible today. It did not come all at once. Rather, it took something like four thousand years to accumulate, and about two thousand more years to comprehend as much as the Church has comprehended by now.

If we should compare Abel's knowledge of religion with the Christian's knowledge of it, we should no doubt discover that there is no comparison, that Abel knew comparatively only the very first principle of the Christian's faith. If religion, therefore, is not something living, growing, and progressing, then what is it?

Abel's religion of six thousand years ago has advanced and expanded to meet the people's necessities of today. This was done only by Inspiration's adding to it, and itself unfolding it. If the Church is not commensurably growing and expanding, then how can she be a living Church? and how can she keep up

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with the signs of the times, and with the progress in the sanctuary above?

Let us read:

Eph. 4:11-14 -- "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

Inspiration makes it plain that God's plan is that the Church should ever be growing both in knowledge and perfection till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

Since the Church has not yet attained the standard set forth in this verse of Scripture, it is obvious that she needs to have greater knowledge of Bible religion than she has at the present time.

Being far from having reached such unity of faith, of knowledge, and perfection, we see the need as clear as crystal: We as Christians need to start growing, otherwise the season of such growth will pass and we shall be left but dwarfs, not having advanced far

enough to be eligible for a home in the Kingdom. Then shall it come to pass that all such unmaturing Christians shall bitterly cry out, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Jer. 8:20.

Bible knowledge you see, is Heaven's way to salvation and eternity, but the modern minister's way is to keep men ignorant of what is taught outside their own circles, so they may have men under their control.

That Truth is growing, and that we should keep pace with It, we shall now read:

Rev. 14:6-10 -- "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb."

Here are represented three messages, one following the other. Unless we keep pace with each of them progressively, we shall find ourselves trailing behind the time, as are the Jews to this day.

Those who fail to keep pace with the Truth as Inspiration unfolds It, can never, of course, come to "the unity of the faith," and to a full "knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Such will forever be "children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men,..." Eph. 4:13, 14.

Plainly, then, religion itself is something living and unfolding, but the tragedy is that not all are

keeping pace with it.

Let us look into this vital subject even more concretely. Truth, you know, kept unfolding and growing even after Moses' death. The Jews, though, killed the prophets and did not advance any further than where Moses left them. In fact, they ever retrogressed. And so they are where they are today because they failed to change their course even though prophet after prophet was sent to keep them from the pit into which they were fast falling. Even Christ Himself failed to awaken them to the dreadfulfulness of their situation. Only a comparatively few saw the red light, the danger, and returned to the Lord.

This halting and backsliding never did stop. It has continued on and on to this very day. Even the early Christian church herself eventually went to sleep, and brought on the Dark Ages of religion. Moreover, though Inspiration placed the bright light of Truth in the hand of the Reformation during the darkest hour of that day, yet the Church as a whole failed to see the light, failed to see the need of reformation. Rather than coming to the light, the church did all she could to put it out. The elect, nevertheless, walked out of the darkness and into the

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light. Thus it was that another sect, the Lutheran denomination, was organized.

But this was only the beginning of the Reformation. As one Truth after another began to unfold, and each forced the inception of a new denomination because each of the older daughters (sects), following in the footsteps of the mother, herself, refused to keep pace with the messages. Indeed, the Lutheran denomination itself, like all others before or after, was satisfied to remain where Luther left it. And so of necessity another, the Presbyterian denomination, came into being. Thus down the stream of time one denomination after another has done likewise.

This is how it has been all through the centuries. This is why not one of the churches has climbed any higher than the founders left them. And this is why Christians, rather than growing into the unity of the faith, are with each passing day, becoming more and more disunited in faith and hostile to each other's faith.

To boast, therefore, that one's denomination has never added a doctrine or laid off one, is to admit that his church is at a standstill, virtually saying, "We are rich and increased with goods, and

have need of nothing," when in fact they are "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked," but know it not.

Very obviously, religion is something which grows and unfolds, but its people as an organization have never kept pace with it.

The most astonishing part of it is that those who have led the denominations after the death of their founders, rather than teach the laity to watch and

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wait for more revealed Truth, instead are teaching that their church has all Truth and that there is need of no more.

Here we see that the "church militant" is in reality the church which is militant against advancing Truth, and that "the church triumphant" is the church which marches on with the progress of Truth.

This fact was seen at the very first step toward progress in religion: Both Cain and Abel were endeavoring to walk in the highway of progress by each offering a sacrifice. Abel worshiped according to the wisdom of God, whereas Cain worshiped according to the wisdom of man. Cain's sacrifice was merely the counterfeit of Abel's. Here we see that where Truth is, there is also a counterfeit. While there are denominations which were established on Truth, there are also counterfeits, and that is what accounts for the great multiplicity of denominations and sects.

Cain's slaying Abel for doing what the Lord would have him do, is a type of false worship, of opposition and of persecution. Thus has it been in the past, and still is: Those who are in error are ever found hostile against Truth and persecuting those who practice the Truth.

Now suppose that Abel had lived until our day and had followed the progress of Truth through each generation, what would have been his experience in religion? -- He would necessarily have joined with Enoch's movement; with Noah's; with Abraham's; with Jacob's; with Moses'; with all the prophets'; with John the Baptist's; with the Apostles'; then with the Lutherans'; with the Presbyterians'; with the Methodists'; with the First-day Adventists'; with the Seventh-day

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Adventists'; and at last he would have joined the Davidian Seventh-day Adventists. In order for him to keep up with advancing Truth, Abel would have had to leave one movement and join another at each new unfoldment of Truth, otherwise he would have remained as ignorant in the progress of religion as have the Jews.

We now see as plainly as Truth can make it, that throughout the ages, the Church triumphant was and still is made up of the Church's members who unceasingly kept climbing the ladder of Truth all along to this day.

Ezek. 36:23, 24 -- "And I will sanctify My great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land."

Here the truth is again reiterated: Those who are determined to stay down on the first rung of the ladder of Truth, will be left there to stay forever. But those who keep pace with Truth shall be brought into their own land, no longer having to sit in the pews with the Laodiceans and no longer having to tread the lands of the Gentiles.

Ezek. 36:25 -- "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you."

This thorough and final cleansing, you see, is obtained only after the Church triumphant moves into

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the Promised Land. Those who fail to keep pace with the Truth and who choose to stay with their idols, will be unable to carry out their personal desires anyway, for "they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth." Isa. 2:19.

Ezek. 36:26 -- "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

When this cleansing takes place, then it is that a new heart and a new spirit will be given to all

who are now striving to grow in the knowledge of God, and who are then found in the Kingdom.

After this heart operation takes place, to do the will of God will be but a natural thing: There will no longer be a struggle against the carnal heart.

Ezek. 36:27-29 -- "And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be My people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you."

Dan. 12:1 -- "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."

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Lo, the world is already headed for the time of trouble. And when it is reached, refuge will be found only in an up-to-date Truth, Truth that puts one's name in Michael's book of Heaven.

Dan. 12:10 -- "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand."

Who are the wise: -- They must be those who are ever searching for "golden oil," those who have their vessels full (Matt. 25:1-13). Those who are let in through the door are those who have obtained and followed an up-to-date map of Truth.

Religion, Brother, Sister, is not something dead and waning. It is something living and growing, and God's people grow with it.

And now in closing I wish to leave this question for you to ponder and to answer to yourself: Is this experience -- the experience of progressing with Truth -- your experience? If it is not, then why not? yes, why? Is it not worth everything -- money, houses, lands, friends, mothers, fathers, husbands or wives? Is it not worth all these in order to double them? (See Isaiah 61:6, 7; Mark 10:28-31.)

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