The Present Truth, Vol. 5 (1889)

January 17, 1889

E. J. Waggoner

"It is claimed that the ' Fathers ' must be competent guides, since they lived so near the days of Christ and the apostles. This is a tacit admission that the gospel which was preached by Christ and the apostles is the true standard. But that has been recorded in the New Testament ; and therefore, instead of being obliged to depend on the testimony of any who lived this side of their time, we can go direct to the fountain-head, and can draw therefrom the gospel in as pure a state as though we had listened in person to the teaching of inspired men. The cases of De- mas, of Hymenieus and Philetus, of Diotre plies, and others, should be sufficient to teach anybody that mere proximity to the apostles did not fill people with the light of divine truth. Those men are proofs that the light may shine in darkness, and the darkness may not comprehend it. Therefore we must judge of the so-called Fathers, not by the time in which they lived, but by what they did and said."—From " Fathers of the Catholic Church," by Dr. E. J. Waggoner, Price, post-paid, 4s. 6d.

February 28, 1889

“Fathers Of The Catholic Church.” The Present Truth, 5, 5.

E. J. Waggoner

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF,

Because human nature is the same in all ages of the world. Hence, he who would know how to avoid error in the future, must know how errors have developed in the past. The " Fathers of the Catholic Church " shows the condition of the heathen world at the time of Christ, briefly states the principles of ancient heathen philoso phy, which was largely responsible for the im morality of that time, and shows how the adoption of these principles by prominent men in the church, and the incautious lowering of the standard of pure Christianity to accomodate the heathen element, developed the Papacy, which was simply a new phase of paganism. It shows that by the time of Constantine every phase of the Papacy was fully developed, and was only waiting for supreme power. The chapter on

SUN-WORSHIP AND SUNDAY

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March 14, 1889

“Unprofitable Servants” The Present Truth, 5, 6.

E. J. Waggoner

A VERY important lesson is conveyed by our Lord's illustration in Luke 17: 7-10. It is not among Catholics alone that it is considered possible to perform works of supererogation. There are very many who, by their actions at least, hold that they can place God under obligations to them. Love of approbation, and the overvaluing of one's own deeds, are so universal that there are very few who do not at times have some traces of that disposition. With some the idea obtains that God keeps a debit and credit account, charging each individual with his evil deeds, and giving him credit for all his good deeds, and that if the good overbalance the evil, then God owes him a reward. With this idea, more or less clearly defined, most worldlings flatter themselves that their case will be all right at the last.

Many professors often imagine that God is under some obligation to them, and they manifest it in various ways. If they have given somewhat liberally to the cause of God, and have not been prospered as they think they should be, they withhold their gifts. They do not propose to work for the Lord unless they can receive at once large returns on the investment. Others find it difficult when times are hard to make as good a living for their families as they desire, and so they say, "We cannot afford to keep the Sabbath." As much as to say, "If God does not furnish me with everything I want, he need not expect my services." Still others look for their reward in appreciation of their work by their brethren. If their efforts are not estimated at their true value, they become discouraged, and refuse to work because they are not appreciated.

Now against all feeling of this kind, our Lord utters a rebuke. Summing up the case, he says : "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants ; we have done that which was our duty to do." The truth is that the obligation is all on the side of man. The fact that God created us and preserves us alive, places man under obligation to give his whole service to God. Jeremiah says, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." Every moment of man's life places him under greater obligation to God than he can ever hope to fulfil. And as this mercy is extended to all, it is not alone the professed Christian who owes service to God. Sinners are under as much obligation to God as though they had made a profession to serve him. But if we repent, and obey the commandments of God in every particular, how does the case stand then ? We are still unprofitable servants. God is none the richer for our service. There is a vast amount of sin that we have committed in the past, and as we can do no more than our duty from day to day, we are still largely in debt. Were it not that Christ has been set forth "for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God," the best of men would fail to obtain Heaven.

And so after all that has been done, eternal life must be " the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord." A proper appreciation of this would serve to keep us humble, and prevent many mistakes made on account of our self sufficiency. Let us be careful lest we become lifted up because of the faith that we have, and so lose the grace of God which is promised to the humble. The more real faith we have is Christ the more will we acknowledge our entire dependence upon him, and our own utter weakness. Let us heed these words of the apostle : " For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think ; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Rom. 12:3.

March 14, 1889

“Will Earth or Heaven Be Our Final Home?” The Present Truth, 5, 6.

E. J. Waggoner

It was intimated that the next paper would be on the above subject. This subject is such a wide one that we might well take up with it many chapters instead of one ; but want of space will compel us to be very brief even with the one.

It has been shown that the saints of God do not go to Heaven at death ; it has been also shown that they will be privileged to stand before the throne of God after resurrection ; and now the question is narrowed down to this, Will earth or Heaven be our final home ?

In this, as in all other questions referring to the work of God or the salvation of man, we must go for information to the law and to the testimony. When we do so with a spirit of meekness and candour, we grow in the knowledge of divine things; and when we neglect this source of instruction we are liable to fall into all kinds of error and mistakes. Our enquiry then should be, What saith the Scriptures ?

But while it is of primary importance to know what the Scriptures say on every subject connected with our faith, it is sometimes suggestive to notice what the Scriptures do not say. Now, do they ever tell us that Heaven will be our home ? If they do, where is the testimony ? The kingdom of Heaven is promised us as our home, and we are taught to seek after it with all earnestness and diligence : but the kingdom of Heaven is not necessarily Heaven itself. Heaven is a place, but the kingdom is a state. Heaven was a place to which Christ went after his resurrection ; but the kingdom of God is to be set up after the four great kingdoms of men are destroyed. See Dan. 2 : 44. The question is, where is the locality of this kingdom? The Lord taught his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven." Then the kingdom has to come here on earth if ever this prayer has to be answered ; and it is not likely that Jesus would teach

us to pray for something which would never be granted, is it ? But the question is answered for us directly in the prophecy of Dan. 7 : 27. "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." If, therefore, the kingdom is to be "under the whole heaven" it will not be in Heaven, will it ? but it must be on the earth, as the Lord's prayer intimates ; for as the law informs us, Heaven is above, and the earth beneath. The prophet Micah says that "the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem" (4 : 8) ; and the prophet Jeremiah declares that "a king [the Righteous Branch] shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth." Jer. 23 : 5.

When the Lord Jesus Christ would encourage his humble and tried disciples to follow after righteousness and peace, he promised them that they "shall inherit the earth." Matt. 5 : 5. Surely no one will affirm that the meek inherit the earth now. Generally in proportion to our meekness here we have less and less of this world's goods ; and those who hold possession of the earth now are to be destroyed when the kingdom of God is established. See Rev. 11 : 15, 18. But the meek "shall inherit the earth." "Shall" does not mean "do." Besides, when those who are to inherit the earth do inherit it the wicked are cut off. Psa. 37 : 9. The righteous will then enjoy abundance of peace, and be immortal ; for it is written, "The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever." Verse 29. According, therefore, to this testimony, the earth, and not Heaven, will be the final and eternal home of the saved ! We are assured of this no less than seven times in this one psalm ! But where in the whole of the Bible is it distinctly said that the righteous shall inherit Heaven, or that their everlasting home shall be there ? The word of God never really contradicts itself; but if such a text could be found there would be flat contradiction. Our testimonies may be contradictory, but God's cannot be. Therefore one plain text saying that we shall inherit the earth for ever, clearly demonstrates where our eternal home shall be. This text has been given.

But suppose a man says, I don't want anything more to do with the earth when I have done with this life : I have had enough of it ! Well, friend, will God alter his plan because you do not appreciate it ? Never ! Besides, I never knew a man yet who had had enough of the earth. We get weary with the trials of life, so that few would care to live this life over again ; but these trials are often due to the fact that we have not here our fair share of the earth. Give a man land, good land, even in this world of sin, and, if he is not an idle vagabond, he will soon be a happy man in its cultivation. What then will it be when the world is under a righteous Ruler, when a King reigns and prospers in his execution of judgment and justice in the earth ? God says that he will make all things new, new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. 2 Pet. 3 : 13. He promises that sin and suffering, sighing and sorrow, pain and death, shall be done away. Rev. 21 : 4 ; that "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord

as the waters cover the sea." Hab. 2 : 14 ; that a great and a holy city, the New Jerusalem, shall come down from God out of Heaven, to be the metropolis of the renewed earth ; and that the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into it. Rev. 21 : 2, 24. Oh ! what a happy abode this earth will then become. Paradise will be restored, peace will reign, plenty will abound, and the whole creation, groaning at present, will rejoice in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Well might the Saviour say, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." May we, dear reader, be led to cultivate this grace of meekness more and more, and so gain a place in the kingdom of God and on the earth made new.

June 20, 1889

“Faith Healing” The Present Truth, 5, 13.

E. J. Waggoner

The question as to the propriety of praying for the recovery of the sick, and of depending on the prayer of faith for the healing of disease, has of late been discussed very much, by both the secular and the religious press. On the one hand, the infidel and the worldling scoff at the idea of expecting the recovery of those whose diseases will not respond to the action of the medicinal agents known to science. To them such a thing seems an impossibility, an absurdity. The cause of this incredulity is found in 1 Cor. 2 : 14. On the other hand there are those who read James 5 : 13-15, and claim that all the remedial agents known to the medical profession should be thrown aside, and that in every disease the patient should rely on prayer alone for his recovery.

These are the two extremes; the first was well represented by Mr. Tyndall, who several years ago proposed to test the efficacy of prayer by an experiment. He proposed to set apart two wards in a hospital; the patients in one to be treated by the ordinary remedies, and those in the other to be prayed for. This impious and foolish proposal was, for obvious reasons, declined by the Christian world. As an instance of the other extreme, we may cite the case of the young man belonging to the missionary company that Bishop Wm. Taylor some years since conducted to Africa. Being taken with one of the fevers incident to that climate, he utterly refused to make use of any means for his recovery, but, as he said, trusted himself entirely in the hands of the Lord, believing that his faith would insure his restoration to health. In vain the Bishop urged him to adopt the simple remedies which proved successful in other cases similarly afflicted, and the young man died.

We most heartily believe in the power of God to heal the sick, that he has often done so in answer to the prayer of faith, and that he does so still ; but at the same time we believe that those who discard all remedial agents, and establish what they term "faith cures," i. e., places where all the sick who have faith may

come to be healed by prayer alone, entirely misapprehend the Scriptures, and tend to bring the cause of religion into disrepute. The position of the modern "faith cure" advocates may be summed up about as follows: 1. Disease of the body corresponds to disease of the soul, and if cured at all, must be cured in the same manner that sins are forgiven, viz., by faith alone ; 2. All disease may be cured if we but have faith ; 3. We must trust the Lord for the healing of all our ailments, without using any material remedies. And therefore, (1) The use of any remedial agency is a manifestation of a lack of faith ; and (2) If we call on the Lord in faith, without having first employed remedies, we have a right in every instance to expect, and even to demand a cure. The folly of such a position may be readily seen by a consideration of the Scriptural position, to which we will now proceed.

We will first cite as a parallel the instruction found in the Bible concerning the provision for the nourishment of our bodies when in health. In the sermon on the mount, Christ said: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Matt. 6 : 25, 31, 32. Now an extremist might say, "It is wrong for me to work for my living; God knows what I need, and he will see that I am provided for, if I only exercise faith, and do not try to do anything for myself." So he folds his hands in idleness, and perhaps starves to death. Why is this? What is there wrong in his interpretation of Scripture? Simply this: He has been too hasty in his conclusion, and has not taken into the account that other declaration of inspired scripture, "that if any would not work, neither should he eat." 2 Thess. 3: 10.

A proper interpretation of Scripture takes into the account the various texts bearing on a given point, and then draws a legitimate conclusion from the whole. As bearing on the question of living, we quote the following: "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Eph. 4 : 28. "We beseech you, brethren, . . . that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you ; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing." 1 Thess. 4 : 10-12. A very plain intimation that if they do not work they will lack the necessaries of life. Again Paul says : "But if any provide not for his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." 1 Tim. 5: 8.

Now is there any lack of harmony between these texts and Matt. 6 : 25? Not a particle. Read Deut. 8 : 18 : "But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth." Read the context, from the 10th verse onward, and you will see that all the texts which we have quoted are bound together. Men are to work with their hands for their support; but they are still to give the credit to God, because he gives them the power and the opportunity to

labour. If God gives a man the ability to work, and then orders circumstances so that he has an opportunity to work, the honour belongs to God. Thus it is that God supports us. And knowing that "the Lord will provide," we are not to worry and fret over the future, as though the Lord had no interest in us.

There are cases, however, in which it is beyond the power of man to secure provision by his own labour. In such cases the Lord has worked a direct miracle, as in the case of the Israelites in the wilderness, and Elijah by the brook Cherith and in the desert. What God has done for the support of his people, we may be sure he will do again under similar circumstances, for his promise cannot fail; but from a careful examination of Scripture it certainly appears that we are not warranted in expecting the Lord to work a direct miracle for our support, so long as it is possible for us to provide for ourselves by using the means which he has ordained. Such an expectation is not in accordance with God's word, and hence is not faith.

(To be continued.)

July 4, 1889

“Faith Healing (Concluded)” The Present Truth, 5, 14.

E. J. Waggoner

(Continued.)

Now it seems to us that the same principle that governs the support of the body when in health must be acted upon in seeking a restoration of it to health, when it is diseased. This can best be proved by citing typical instances of healing, as recorded in the Bible. By so doing we shall find that the cases where God has directly interposed to heal people by a miracle, were cases that were beyond the reach of human skill.

In the first place we have the record of many who were raised from the dead. Here, of course, human agency was of no avail.

Entering into particulars, we note the case of the young man who was born blind. John 9. In his case it was not thought worth while even to seek for a cure; for, as the young man said, "Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man [Christ] were not of God, he could do nothing." John 9 : 32, 33.

Again, we read of the woman with the issue of blood, who was healed by touching the hem of Christ's garment. She had been afflicted for twelve years, and "had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse." Mark 5 : 26. The "beloved physician" says that she "had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any." Luke 8 : 43.

Take the case of the nobleman's son. He was "at the point of death." The case was very urgent ; for when Jesus was testing the man's faith, the father cried out, "Sir, come down ere my child die." John 4 : 49. He felt that Jesus alone had power to check the fever.

The man at the pool of Bethesda had been unable to walk for thirty-eight years. John 5 : 2-9. He was unable even to make the attempt to make use of the remedy that was supposed to be able to reach his case. He was healed by the word of the Lord.

Again we notice that in many cases where miracles of healing were performed, the sufferers were required to do something before their cure was effected. Naaman the Syrian was required to wash seven times in the Jordan. 2 Kings 5 : 1-14. The blind man of whom John writes, after having his eyes anointed with clay and spittle, was told to go and wash in the pool of Siloam, and then he received his sight. Now whatever effect these washings had, it is safe to say that if those individuals had not employed the means that were provided they would not have been healed. Thus we see that God has provided remedies that will with his blessing accomplish the restoration of the sick to health, and he has made it possible for man to obtain a limited knowledge of those remedies. Now when those Heaven-ordained remedies are within our reach, for us to expect to get well when we refuse to make use of them, is a manifestation not of faith, but of presumption. The case is exactly parallel to one who, having health and strength, should fold his hands and expect the Lord to feed him.

But the worst presumption comes in when men establish what they call "faith cures," where, as they advertise, all people may come to be prayed for and healed. This is reversing the true order of things. Instead of being content to be instruments in the hands of God, such ones presume to make God an instrument in their hands, and to manipulate him to suit their own interests.

It is entirely a mistake to try to make a strict parallel between sickness, disease of the body, and sin, disease of the soul. Man can do nothing whatever to secure the forgiveness of sin, except to believe in the merits of Christ. There are no means provided, no works, by which a man may cleanse himself from sin. But there are means provided by which he can remove certain forms of disease. Again, God has not promised to instantly heal all cases of disease; but he will at once forgive the sins of any who come to him in faith. But in every case of healing, whether of the body or of the soul, the praise rightfully belongs to God. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." Lam. 3 : 22.

If the position of many so-called "holiness" people and of the modern "faith cure" advocates were true, that we may at once be healed of all disease if we will but exercise faith, then Christians would now all be practically immortal. There would be no death. But immortality is not promised to any one until the coming of the Lord and the resurrection. See Luke 20 : 35, 36 ; 1 Cor. 15 : 51-54, etc. At

that time "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." Isa. 35 : 5, 6. Of the new earth it is said, "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick ; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Isa. 33 : 24. And then, when all things shall have been made new, and the people of God have been redeemed from destruction, will we find the complete fulfilment of Psa. 103 : 2-4 : "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits ; who forgiveth all thine iniquities ; who healeth all thy diseases ; who redeemeth thy life from destruction ; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." Compare this with Isa. 33 : 24.

(Concluded in our next.)