

FROM MAX HEINDEL'S WRITINGS

Practical Precepts



for Practical People

IF I WERE TO DO BUSINESS on the principles laid down in the Sermon on the Mount I would be down and out in less than a year," said a critic recently. "Why, the Bible is utterly impracticable under our present economic conditions; it is impossible to live according to it."

If that is true there is a good reason for the unbelief of the world, but in a court the accused is always allowed a fair trial, and let us examine the Bible thoroughly before we judge. What are the specific charges? "Why, they are countless," answered the critic, "but to mention only a few, let us take such passages as, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven'; 'Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth'; 'Take no thought for the morrow, what ye shall eat or what Ye shall drink.' Such ideas point the way to the poorhouse."

"Very well," says the apologist, "let us take the last charge first. The King James version says 'No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon, therefore I say unto you, 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 food and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they f Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they

spin. And yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven,

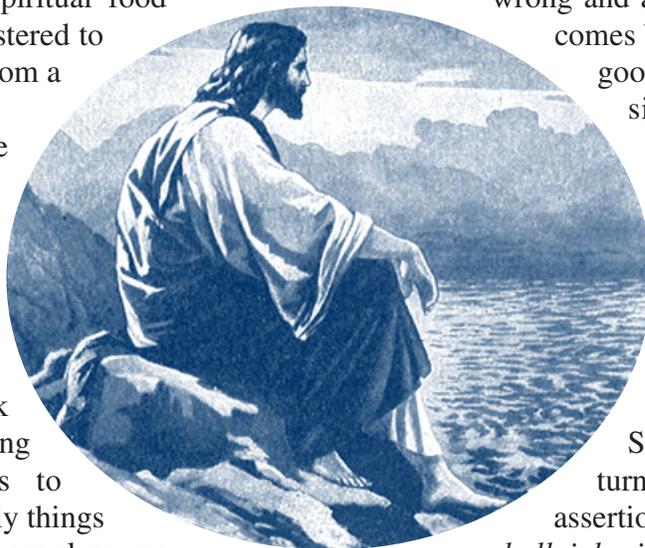
shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? for after all these things do the Gentiles seek; your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

If this is intended to mean that we should wastefully squander all we have in prodigal or riotous living, then it is of course not only impractical but demoralizing. Such an interpretation is, however, out of keeping with the tenor and teaching of the whole Book, and it does not say so. The Greek word *merimnon* means being overly careful or anxious, and if we read the passage with this alteration we shall find that it teaches a different lesson which is entirely practical. Mammon is the Syriac word for riches, desired by foolish people. In the preceding paragraph Christ exhorted them not to become servants or slaves to riches, which they must leave behind when the silver cord is broken and the spirit returns to God, but seek rather to live lives of love and service and lay up treasures of good deeds, which they might take with them into the Kingdom of Heaven. In the meantime, He exhorted, be not overly anxious regarding what you shall eat and drink and clothe yourself with.

Why worry? you cannot add a hairbreadth to your height or a hair to your head by worrying. Worry is the most wasteful and depleting of all our emotions, and it does no good whatever. Your heavenly Father knows you need material things, therefore seek first His kingdom and righteousness and all else needed will be added. On at least two occasions when multitudes came to Christ in places far from their homes and distant from towns where refreshment was obtainable, He demonstrated this; He gave them first the spiritual food they sought and then ministered to their bodily needs direct from a spiritual source of supply.

Does it work out in these modern days? Surely there have been so many demonstrations of this that it is not at all necessary to recount any special one. When we work and pray, pray and work and make our lives a living prayer for opportunities to serve others, then all earthly things will come of their own accord as we need them, and they will keep coming in larger measure according to the degree to which they are used in the service of God. If we regard ourselves only as stewards and custodians of whatever earthly good we possess, then we are really "*poor in spirit*" so far as the evanescent earthly treasures are concerned, but rich in the more lasting treasures of the Kingdom of Heaven; and if we are not out and out materialists, surely this is a practical attitude.

It is not so long ago that "*caveat emptor*," "Let the buyer beware," was the slogan of the merchants who sought after earthly treasures and regarded the buyer as their legitimate prey. When they had sold their wares and received the money, it did not matter to them whether the buyer was satisfied or not. They even prided themselves on selling an inferior article which would soon wear out, as evident in the shortsighted motto, "The weakness of the goods is the strength of the trade." Gradually even people who would scorn the idea of introducing religion into their business are discarding this *caveat emp-*



After A. Bida

tor as a motto, and are unconsciously adopting the precept of Christ, "*He that would be the greatest among you, let him be the servant of all.*" Everywhere the best business men are insistent in their claim to patronage on the ground of the service they give to the buyer, because it is a policy that pays, and may therefore be classed as another of the practical precepts of the Bible.

But it sometimes happens that in spite of their desire to serve their customers, something goes wrong and an angry, dissatisfied buyer comes blustering in, decrying their goods. Under the old shortsighted regime of *caveat emptor* the merchant would have merely laughed or thrown the buyer out of the door. Not so the modern merchant, who takes his Bible into business. He remembers the wisdom of Solomon that "a soft answer turneth away wrath," and the assertion of Christ that "*the meek shall inherit the earth,*" so he apologizes for the fault in the goods, offers restitution, and sends the erstwhile dissatisfied customer away smiling and eager to sing the praises of the concern that treats him so nicely. Thus by obeying the practical precept of the Bible, keeping his temper in meekness, the business man gains additional customers who come to him in full faith of fair treatment, and the added profit in sales made to them soon overbalances the loss on goods which may have caused the dissatisfaction of other customers.

It pays dividends in dollars and cents to keep one's temper and be meek; it pays greater dividends from the moral and spiritual standpoints. What better business motto can be found than in Ecclesiastes: "Wisdom is better than weapons of war. Be not rash in thy mouth, be not hasty in thy speech to be angry, for anger resteth in the bosom of fools." Tact and diplomacy are always better than force; as the Good Book says: "If the iron be blunt we must use more strength, but wisdom is profitable to direct." The line of least resistance, so

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long as it is clean and honorable, is always the best. Therefore, "Love your enemies, do good to them that despitefully use you."

It is good practical business policy to try to reconcile those who do us harm lest they do more; and it is better for us to get over our ill feeling than to nurse it, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap, and if we sow spite and meanness, we breed and beget in others the same feelings. Furthermore, all these things will apply in private life and in social intercourse just as in ordinary business. How many quarrels could be avoided if we cultivated the virtue of meekness in our homes; how much pleasure would be gained; how much happiness would come into our lives if in our social and business relations we learned to *do unto others as we would that they should do unto us!*

There is no need for the great mental strain that so many of us are working under concerning what we shall eat and what we shall drink. Our Father in Heaven does own the earth and the fullness thereof; the cattle on a thousand hills are His. If we

learn truly to cast our cares upon Him, there is no doubt that the way out of our difficulties will be provided.

It is a fact, acknowledged by all authorities who have investigated the subject, that comparatively few people die from lack of necessities of life, but a great many die because of overindulgence of the appetites. It is the practical experience of the writer and numerous others that if we do our work day by day as it appears before us, faithfully and to the best of our ability, the wherewithal for the morrow will always be provided. If we go according to the instruction of the Bible, doing all "as unto the Lord," it does not matter what line of honest work we follow; we are then at the same time seeking the Kingdom of God. But if we are only time servers, working for fear or favor, we cannot expect to succeed in the long run. Health, wealth, and happiness may attend us for a little while, but outside the solid foundation of the Bible there can be no lasting joy in life and no real prosperity in business. □

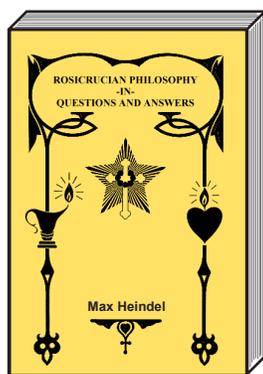
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