

TITUS.¹

III.

THE DOCTRINES HE BELIEVED.

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THE facts, or doctrines, we believe affect our whole outlook on life, and also our whole conduct in it, for our character is moulded by what we believe, and conduct is the outcome of character. The Apostles and the Early Church thought most seriously of sound doctrine; the strange apathy which is popular now regarding matters of faith has no encouragement in the Epistles or history of the primitive Church. It is usual now to applaud sincerity rather than orthodoxy, and by orthodoxy we mean sound Biblical truth—"not every kind of doctrine after the wiles of error" (Eph. iv. 14. R.V.).

The word "doctrine" is used ten times in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. iv. 6, 13, 16; v. 17; vi. 1, 3; 2 Tim. iii. 16; iv. 2; Tit. i. 9; ii. 1, 7), and this doctrine or "teaching" (see R.V.) must be sound and *healthful* (Tit. i. 9; ii. 1), that is, only scriptural doctrines will produce healthy Christian lives; many believers are spiritual invalids, unhappy and useless, because they are feeding on unwholesome fancies and theories, which are either opposed to, or perversions of divine truth. Such persons must be sharply dealt with (Tit. i. 13; cp. 2 Cor. xiii. 10). Many of these sincere religious neurotics want more firm treatment—they need surgery (Heb. iv. 22) rather than sympathy. We need to pray most earnestly, in the words of the old Collect, "that by the wholesome medicines of the doctrines delivered" by the Apostles "the diseases of our souls may be healed," and this necessity for personal soundness in the faith rests on every individual believer (Tit. ii. 1, 7). When we hear strange doctrines, *do we take the trouble to test them prayerfully* by the infallible standard of the Divine Word? (See John xvi. 13; Luke xi. 13.)

The divine idea of the Church is a lightbearer. In Revelation i. 20, we are told "the seven lampstands" (R.V.) are the seven Churches." This thought used to find expression in an interesting

¹ The first article, "The Man and his Work," appeared in the January, and the second, "The People he mixed with," in the April number of THE CHURCHMAN.

old colloquialism of East Anglia, where people walking round the parish church for a stroll used to be said to be "walking round the candlestick," most suggestively implying that the Church ought to give the light of truth to the parish, and we can only wish that now all places of worship did shed forth the clear light of scriptural truth. Let us consider what doctrines Paul, and through him, Titus, viewed as essential to healthful Christianity.

I. *That Christ is Saviour.* Salvation from sin is the foundation of all else, and it is noticeable that the word "Saviour" is used six times in the Epistle, three times of God the Father (Tit. i. 3; ii. 10; iii. 6), and three times of God the Son (Tit. i. 4; ii. 13; iii. 6). We must never lose sight of the fact that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world (1 John iv. 14).

II. *Salvation is solely of grace.* (Tit. ii. 11; iii. 7.) We have the same truth emphasized in 2 Timothy i. 9, and must never forget the foundation of salvation is free, sovereign grace. Wycliffe used to pray—"Lord save me gratis."

III. *Faith must be evidenced by good works* (Tit. ii. 12-14; iii. 8, 14; cp. i. 16). There is no contradiction between salvation by grace and the necessity of good works. Paul and James are in entire agreement, only they are viewing the same fact from opposite sides (Eph. ii. 8, 9; Jas. ii. 17, 26). "Good works are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification insomuch that by them a lively Faith may be evidently known, as a tree discerned by the fruit" (Article XII. C. of E.).

IV. *The need for equal holiness by both sexes.* (Chron. ii. 4-6.) God's grace is sufficient for all in every duty and circumstance. Woman is now seeking new social responsibilities and man more individual freedom, but these things can bring no blessing unless the divine command is obeyed—"Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. i. 15).

V. *Church organization* (Chron. i. 5, 7; iii., 5; cp. Acts xiv. 23; 2 Tim. ii. 2). The Ministry and the Sacraments (however differently we view them) were universally considered essential for a true Church. The Church of God is not to be anarchy but order (1 Cor. xiv. 33, 40), and this orderliness was to be enforced on every city or community, however small. Let us remember this fact in considering the vast problems of the mission field, and the growth and independence of the native churches.

VI. *The personal return of Christ* (Tit. ii. 13). All the Epistles abound with clear definite expectation that in God's good time this same Jesus which was taken up into heaven will return in true personality from heaven (Acts i. 11; 1 Thess. i. 10). It is the fashion now to talk of many comings of Christ in various crises of the world's history, but whether or not the Lord has drawn near at special momentous events, does not do away with the fact that He is coming again, personally, openly, majestically, and that this unshakable truth is to exercise a restraining, hallowing influence on every Christian in every Church.

We gather from the life and work of Titus and the letter Paul addressed to him that the doctrines a man believes have a profound influence on his life; that they are in fact the determining factor of everything, what he really believes regarding time and eternity govern his whole conduct. The Early Church saw this, far more clearly than we do—we look complacently at what people do, but in those far-away days they never overlooked the link between belief and action, for they knew the action would infallibly reveal the nature of the belief. Many errors early crept into the Church, and speedily led astray weak and ignorant disciples, but the Apostles did not speak "smooth things" about them—they denounced them in vigorous terms, and warned against them with ceaseless vehemence. To them sincerity was no excuse for unbelief or misbelief. The errors of the present day bear a striking resemblance to the Gnostic errors of primitive days, and the same vigilance and vigour is required in dealing with them. Titus was no "opportunist"—he had difficult tasks set before him, but he handled them with firmness as well as love; he felt, what we seem now not to feel, that to let people believe a lie, because they like it, is not kind—it is cruel.

But we can learn another very important lesson from the ministry of Titus, which is, that for a man to be enthusiastic for God he must have deep convictions. The Christian's path is no easy and comfortable one, and as Bunyan truly shows us, his compensations are elsewhere—not here. The Bible smiles for Christian workers and warriors do not portend a quiet time, but warfare, building, running, toiling, and it is only the man who has, like Titus, very strong beliefs who will attempt or accomplish great things.

We often deplore and wonder at the vehemence and bitterness

which has characterized Christian controversy, but it was the outcome of sincere conviction—it was because men felt deeply they strove earnestly. Life was then willingly laid down for dogmas believed to have eternal value, but how exceedingly few would even dream of dying for truth; but the Apostles and early and mediæval Christians gladly did so. We may well ask ourselves—what is the price I set upon my faith? Should I willingly die for the truth as it is in Jesus?

The Epistle of Paul to Titus throws a great light upon the opinions and methods of Christian leaders, while the tremendous energy of Pentecost still animated the Church.

They demanded clear definite beliefs in certain eternal truths, such as man's universal ruin through sin, salvation through the atoning Blood of Christ (Tit. ii. 11, 14; iii. 5, 7), a holy consecrated life (Tit. iii. 8), an expectant faith (Tit. ii. 13), an orderly Church life (Tit. i. 5, 9), a holy home life (Tit. ii., 2, 7).

The membership of the Church was to be carefully guarded, in contrast to the extreme laxity now observable in every denomination; personal belief and personal conduct were to be diligently inquired into and rigidly controlled. The Church was intended to be "the salt of the earth," and this short Epistle shows us how it must preserve its savour.

Titus himself stands before us as the example of a bright, active, sympathetic, self-sacrificing Christian, sound in the faith and holy in life and conversation. He moved amid the world of men, radiating hope, inspiring faith, reviving love. Christ was to him a living Person; salvation a personal possession; holy living a ceaseless, duty; the discipline of the Church a vital necessity; the return of Christ a glorious certainty.

We may prayerfully ask ourselves: are these things so with us? and pray that God will by His Holy Spirit deepen all such convictions within. Let us thank God for Titus, his life, work and example, and pray that we may follow him in his virtuous and godly living.

He whose bright faith made feeble hearts grow stronger
 And sent fresh warriors to the great campaign,
 Bade the lone convert feel estranged no longer,
 And made the sundered to be one again.

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