

Contributions and Comments.

Leaven.

How did the Israelites renew their leaven after each Passover, when it had all been destroyed more than a week before (Ex 12¹⁵ 13⁷, etc.)? Some commentators tell us much about the care for its complete destruction shown by modern Jews. There was no 'brewer's yeast'—and 'must' from the new vintage would not be available for some time—old dough (unbaked) was, of course, destroyed.

Perhaps some student of the Talmud, or some theologian who is also a chemist, may throw light on the problem. Even if new dough developed the bacteria after a while, it would take time, and undesirable bacterial and chemical changes would be, as likely to take place.

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John vi. 29.

'Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.'

It is interesting and instructive to compare these words with the statement in Gn 2¹⁵.

In the far-off days of prehistoric times, before Man had discovered how to record his thoughts, in those days when folk-lore sought to convey spiritual and moral truths in picture stories of metaphor, allegory, and simile, the fathers told the children that the first Man—the first Adam—was given work to do, when he was placed in the paradise (Persian for 'park') of the Eden, or plain, of the Tigris-Euphrates valley. Man was not to be idle. He was to 'dress and to keep' that creation which God had given over to him for his use and his enjoyment: manual work, or the use and exercise of the powers of the body.

As Man realized a relationship with his Creator, or the obligation of some 'attitude' towards Him, his *work* began to include religious ceremonies, thought to be pleasing to the Most High. We find these developed and applied to many departments of life in that which, amongst the Jews—a nation of religious geniuses—came to be termed The Law. It was an advance: because Man had come to realize that his activities were not to minister to the needs of Man only; but also to minister to the glory of his Creator.

Christ made the highest appeal possible to Man. He was to ally himself definitely with God by the exercise of his spiritual power—faith. St. Paul has aptly explained this by remarking that we are (called to be) 'fellow-workers with God.' Christ

said of *Himself*, 'I do the works of him that sent me.' No thoughtful Christian confuses the virtue (or spiritual power) called faith—for the exercise of which Christ appealed—with a formula of intellectual assent: yet agnostics and sceptics delight in gibing Christians with professing a faith which is nothing more than a belief in fanciful statements about events which never occurred. And, in controversy, the Romanists never tire of asserting that the reformed churches are new churches, because they have changed their 'belief.' It is deplorable that, in arguing the point, the letter should be allowed to obscure the spirit. We need some great teacher who shall call Christendom to consider afresh the statement of Jn 6²⁹. *Christians are those who respond to the call to do that greatest of all works—to exercise the spiritual power of faith, the power of ranging themselves on God's side, implicitly trusting Him and persistently seeking the guidance of His Holy Spirit.* This is done by acknowledging Christ, accepting Him as the Word Incarnate, and spiritually assimilating Him.

The early Christians realized the importance of this 'work of God,' and St. Paul, in writing to the Romans and to the Galatians, argues the necessity of (the work of) faith, as distinct from works of The Law, or ordinary 'good' works, not performed 'by the finger of God.' St. James steps in to prevent that misconception of faith which would confuse it with spiritual idleness—a life of contemplation apart from the world in which we live. He shows that faith, being an active power, or a spiritual work, must show results: the results are inseparable from the exercise of the power. His Epistle is anything but 'an epistle of straw.'

In the life of Christ upon Earth, it is noticeable that, in His works of healing, He demanded the co-operation of faith. The person could not be a beneficiary unless he, or she, became 'a fellow-worker with God' by the exercise of the virtue of faith. Where the exercise of this virtue was not to be found, He could do no works of power. And, in one striking instance, *the sufferer realized that his faith was ineffectual without the co-operation of Christ: 'If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.'* To this appeal Christ responded.

That this power of faith—or co-operation with God—has unlimited possibilities is shown by Christ's simple assertion that the exercise of the power could remove a mountain—because the power is that power by which the mountain was brought into existence. To take the remark as hyperbole is, surely, to rob faith of its power.

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