IN THE CHURCHES

What About the Hypocrite?

The International Sunday School Lesson for June 26 Is, "The Parable of the Tares." Matthew 13:24-30; 36143.

BY WILLIAM T. ELLIS.

THERE are hypocrites. Plenty of them. The world abounds in hypocrites — hypocrite butterflies, hypocrite bugs, hypocrite worms, hypocrite birds, hypocrite reptiles, hypocrite beasts. Nor has the realm of lower life a monopoly; there are hypocrite statesmen, hypocrite business men, hypocrite lawyers, hypocrite doctors, hypocrite editors, hypocrite authors, hypocrite Christians—all pretending to be what they are not. There are even hypocrite sinners: persons pretending to be worse than they are. So long as human sight and understanding continue poor, hypocrisy will remain a factor in life. It may as well be admitted as such and dealt with frankly.

No Hypocrite Worries About It.

Some folk are troubled over this question of hypocrites. There always have been such anxious ones. People outside the church profess to be ve-- much concerned over the hypocrites who wear the cloak of religion—although often, it may feared, this attitude itself is hypocritical. That many church members are church members for appearance's sake is probably true, although the evidence would be hard for mortal to collect. That it may be true, is a source of worry and weakness to the church. Yet after all perhaps it should not be worried about.

There is a pointed story told by Jesus on this subject and the application of it seems to be that hypocrites should not be fretted over by the servants of the Kingdom. Indeed, there is no need for anybody to worry about the hypocrites. Some tender consciences are disturbed lest they should belong to this category. No one who is so troubled is in any danger of hypocrisy. Those who are afraid of being hypocrites have the least need of being afraid. Herein hypocrisy is like the "unpardonable sin:" no one who is concerned over it is in any danger from it. One may be a weak, bungling Christian, but that is a far different matter from being a hypocrite. The hypocrite is one who deliberately serves the enemy in the guise of a friend. He is designedly making use of the outward appearance of religion in order to serve his own base purposes.

The Wheat and the Tares.

This great teaching Jesus put in story form. "The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto the man who sowed good seed in his field, but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat and went away. But when the blade sprang up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. And the servants of the household came and said unto him: Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? Whence, then, hath it tares? And he said then unto them, An enemy hath done this. And the servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? And he said, Nay: lest haply while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say first to the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn."

Worrying Over the Lord's Business.

In this graphic story which is the clearest picture of hypocrites drawn by Jesus, we find old Satan at his planting. Some people would eliminate the devil; but that does not get rid of his work. No man who knows very much about real life holds pretty little theories which have no place for old Satan. If anybody's faith in the existence of the devil needs strengthening, he has but to read the day's newspaper. If there he does not find him, he will find that some other power which might as well bear his name is doing devilish work in the world. All good must reckon with evil. The boy or girl who is sent out into life with no knowledge of this darker side of existence is unarmed for a real conflict. Let us face the fact of active, ceaseless and ingenious labor by the forces of sin.

The subtlety of the enemy in the story consisted of the fact that the tares, or darnel, as they are called, look quite like wheat at the beginning. It is not until the wheat begins to ripen that the darnel shows its true nature. There is an optimistic note in the point that the tares were sown in the grain field and not the grain in the field of tares. The good predominates despite the existence of the bad. Life is not all ill. While it is unwise to ignore the malign, it is greater unwisdom to think only the things that are evil. The distrustful, suspicious person who regards his fellow beings with an eye that attributes to them the worst, is just about the unhappiest mortal that encumbers this old earth.

The Test of the Harvest.

An impatient host of high minded people want to reform the world over night. They have a detailed program for making over the human race, and they want it all put into operation at once. They overlook the many thousands of years during which man has been on the upgrade. Their motto is "Do it now." They would legislate the old Adam out of human nature. In this they resemble the fussy servants of the householder in the parable.

But God has more patience. He knows how to wait. There are few more interesting studies in the field of theology than the patience of God. Why has he waited so long and endured so much? Why has he let man come to his present estate, which is none too high, by slow degrees? Why not enact a state of society wherein all men would be as the angels? Somehow we know that it belongs to the God nature to be strong and to be patient. A child wants what he wants when he wants it. A mature person can wait and work through the years for a coveted prize. Said a father in self-confession, having in mind his own wandering son: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it"—when he is young he may wander, but he will come back when he is old."

"He that believeth shall not make haste." It is part of ripeness of judgment to take the years into consideration. Young people wonder that political managers should be planning two and three years ahead for a presidential campaign. Already the newspapers of the United States are full of conjecture concerning the candidate for 1912. The long look is the mark of the big and the wise. Harvest is coming some day. That is the comfort of all who seek the world's weal. The grain is bound for the garner, and the tares for the fire. The tares know that they are tares; so does the Lord of the harvest. So what is the use of worrying about hypocrites in the church?

The Proof at the End.

Gaunt visaged reformers in their zeal try to remedy age long ills over night. The sad fact about reform movements is that they usually have to be done all over again. Not that such effort has not a place in life; but it is not the normal place. The Sunday school way is the better way; keep on cultivating the wheat; don't worry about the tares; they are God's business. Seek the good and do not fret overmuch about the bad. A constructive program of life and labor has the support of this parable, and of all the accumulated wisdom of the race. It is better for a person to express his powers positively, as by teaching a Sunday school class that lasts through the years, rather than to spend himself in hypocritical denunciation of evil.

The end proves all. It is rather unfashionable in these days to talk about the conclusion of the whole matter. Our modern cocksure state of mind, which conveniently forgets its wild guesses about the comet's tail and the million lesser matters, is certain that all the questions of eternity are settled here on this little sphere called the earth. A few questions this self-confident attitude. The older faith of a judgment day when accounts are evenly balanced is surely more reasonable, as the parable points out. Kipling is reported to have said one time: "There is surely sombody somewhere who gives us our licks sometime."

The Inevitable Reaping.

The field of the wheat and the darnel points forward to the inevitable harvest. The grain cannot escape the garner. None of God's own fall out of his hand. And the tares cannot escape destruction. There may be hypocrites in the church, but there are none in Heaven. The old, old struggle between the contending forces of light and darkness on this earth is going to be ended some day. Then there will be no doubt as to which side one is on.

In the terrific picture painted by the Master himself it is set forth that "the Son of man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that cause stumbling and they that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. He that has ears to hear, let him hear."

The Extended Life.

Terse Comments for June 26, "Money, Men and Prayers: the Three Great Missionary Needs." II Cor. 8:1-9; Matt. 9:35-38.

BY WILLIAM T. ELLIS.

There are various ways of coming into contact with the mission field. Some of us may touch it with our hands, gathering the ripe grain for the King of garners; others of us can touch it only through the contribution box; the point of contact is our gifts; still others reach the regions beyond by way of the Mercy Seat; they are the Christians whose prayers constantly ascend for the cause of missions. The first of these means is a privilege granted only to a few; the other two rest as a duty upon every follower of the Savior of the world.

We may go by sending. Our gifts may represent us on the foreign fields.

Who is the missionary? Is it alone the person who journeys to foreign lands, turning his back upon home and loved ones for the gospel's sake? Such a definition excludes those who, perhaps at great sacrifice, surrender son or brother or friend. It shuts out, also those whose gifts and prayers and labors at home make possible the departure of the workers for foreign fields. Surely it is not God's plan that a few individuals should be chosen out of the ranks of all of God's faithful ones and to them be given the high name of missionaries. Whoever labors, in whatever manner or in whatever place, for the extension of God's kingdom on earth is a missionary. There is hope and cheer and glory for all of Christ's friends in the truth that to his eye there is no difference between those who go and those who stay that others may go. Every true Christian is a missionary.

We may shut the Spirit of God from our hearts by shutting our purse to the world's needs.

There are many routes to the mission field. One is the prayer route. By it some of the world's best missionaries have entered the field. Another is the intelligence and sympathy route. Another is the gift route. Another is the preach in person route. These are all divinely appointed, and at least one is open to every disciple.

The missionary church is a praying church, a reading church, and a giving church.

If men gave as much heed to their personalities as they do to their purses, they would be richer for two worlds.

A familiar saying, as true as it is pointed, declares that the main reliance of the cause of foreign missions has been "dead men and living women."

"Send me!" one exclaims. "Why not my brother?" Simply because the voice has come to you. If God has called your brother, the honor of giving up his life to the proclamation of the gospel would have been his. Now it is yours. The call is a commission. They who hear God's summons are they whom he would send.

All the church is needed to save all the world.

The work of evangelizing this world, for every man, is a matter of personal, inalienable obligation. — Robert E. Speer.

What is the great missionary problem of the hour? Has it to do with China, or Turkey, or India? Is it a matter of money, or methods, or men? No, a hundred times no; the one great problem that weighs upon every missionary board and upon every lover of the kingdom is this: How to arouse the church to an intelligent purpose to carry the gospel to the world's unevangelized millions. Once let the great body of Christians become possessed of the conviction that it is their immediate and imperative duty to spread the gospel news of Jesus everywhere, and in a twinkling all problems will disappear. If the church resolves to do her whole duty in preaching the gospel, the ends of the earth will hear the sweet sound of salvation within a decade.

Electricians are seeking ways of transmitting power by means of wireless telegraphy. Prayer for the missionaries accomplishes this result. —Amos R. Wells.

NEWS AND NOTES.

The organization of a second Laymen's Missionary Movement is proposed to advance the interests of Home Missions.

A higher standard of admittance to the ranks of the lay preachers of the Methodist Church South, recently caused a loss of about two thousand local preachers.

A church of deaf mutes has recently been established in Boston with a possible membership of twelve hundred.

By the will of a Jewish resident of Pittsburg who recently died, forty benevolent causes were benefited, fifteen of which were other than Jewish.

A company of 1,200 Hungarians is soon to make a pilgrimage to Rome to be present at the unveiling of a monument to Pope Sylvester II, from whose hands the first king of Hungary received his crown.

An Episcopal rector of New York, who has for some years been experimenting on confirmed inebriates through hypnotism, claims a list of fifty cures with no "backsliders."

The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, which includes practically all Protestant bodies with a membership of about 18,000,000, has just established two new districts, with headquarters in Chicago and Washington. One of the new secretaries is the pastor of a Methodist church, while the other has been a Presbyterian pastor in Toronto.

A total of more than 100,000 men have been in attendance upon the seventy-five conventions of the Laymen's Missionary Movement held during the past year. At its recent session in Chicago every state in the Union and every Protestant church in the United States was represented.

Pilgrim church in East London, being in financial straits, is about to sell its ancient communion cups to help pay off a mortgage of $500. These cups date back to the seventeenth century, and are said to be the only remaining tangible evidence connecting the church with the Pilgrim Fathers.

The Catholic Board for Missionary Work Among Colored People is the official name under which work for the negroes of Maryland and Louisiana is being carried on. To secure the necessary funds for this work, white priests are taxed $5 a year, white Sisters of all orders are asked for a similar sum, and laymen for one dollar each, the latter to establish a yearly fund of $100,000.

During the ten days that the World's Missionary Conference is in session in Edinburgh, Scotland, the managing staff of particularly every Protestant foreign mission organization in the world will be found in that city, as well as almost all of the leaders in this great enterprise at home and abroad. It is estimated that at least 1,500 Americans will be in attendance.

More than twenty-seven million members of the World's Sunday schools were represented at the recent Washington convention.

SEVEN SENTENCE SERMONS.

Best men are molded out of faults.
—Shakespeare.

* * *

Go put your creed into your deed,
Nor speak with double tongue.
—Emerson.

* * *

And I smiled to think God's greatness
flowed around our incompleteness,
Round our restlessness His rest.
—Elizabeth B. Browning.

* * *

By the faithful plying of the shuttle
of daily duty we weave white raiment
for the soul.—Mary A. Stafford.

* * *

Endurance is the crowning quality,
And patience all the passion of great
hearts.
—Lowell.

* * *

We have not wings, we cannot soar,
But we have feet to scale and climb
By slow degrees, but more and more,
The cloudy summits of our time.
—Longfellow.

* * *

There is in every man's heart, as in a desk, a secret drawer; the only thing is to find the spring and open it.—Anon.

RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.

Gems Gleaned From the Teachings of All Denominations.

Marriage is a divine plan of establishing homes for the highest beings of creation.—Rev. J. L. Thompson, Christian Church, Kansas City.

HOPE FOR THE FALLEN.

No matter how low a man may fall, if the rebound is toward God the man is blessed.—Rev. B. F. Riley, Baptist, Houston, Tex.

LAW OF NATURE.

The law of nature holds good in the law of God. Man or his children are apt to reap according to the sowing.—Rev. L. M. Zimmerman, Lutheran, Baltimore.

SUCCESS IN GOD'S WORK.

Success in Christian work does not always depend upon superior mental attainments, but upon the power of adaptation.—Rev. G. Adams, Methodist, Brooklyn.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR CREEDS.

A broad creed will produce a broad life, a narrow creed a narrow life, a lofty creed a lofty life, a false creed a false life.—Rev. M. McLeod, Presbyterian, Tacoma, Wash.

LOYALTY.

The noblest word in the catalogue of social virtue is "loyalty." That involves obedience, and Christian obedience means doing the common necessary tasks of life in the spirit of Christ, which is the spirit of love and sacrifice.—Rev. H. G. Hale, Congregationalist, Brookline, Mass.

PRAYING PERSONS.

Every earnest sincere person is a praying person whether he knows it or not, whether he have any theological convictions or not. There are times when something wells up within him and goes out in search of the universal life, deep answereth unto deep. —Rev. E. Stanton Hodgin, Unitarian, Los Angeles, Cal.

WISDOM.

True wisdom does not necessarily come with length of years, but it does come from close observation and carereading and deep thinking. "Man cannot live by bread alone." These words were uttered by Christ after men had tried to live for several thousand years and had failed. By sleeping and drinking and supping a man can stay, but he cannot live.—Rev. Dr. Thomas C. Hinkle, Methodist Episcopal, Omaha.

PRAYER'S ACCEPTABLE FORM.

Gratitude is the most acceptable form of prayer. It has been called the respiration of the soul. As in every human breast there are two movements—the one that inhales the air, the other that exhales it after it has enriched the blood—so should there be in every soul two movements—the one receiving gifts from the holy spirit, which invigorates our inner life, the other pouring forth those gifts in the form of thanksgiving. Every blessing we enjoy in the order of nature or grace is a gratuitous bounty of our Creator.—Cardinal Gibbons, Roman Catholic, Baltimore.

PRAYER'S EFFICACY.

Efficacy of prayer is not limited to its effect on the one who prays. A true prayer has its effect of courage, faith, strength and healing not only on him who speaks and on him who hears with the ear, but on the absent as well. The operation of the spirit is not bound by the limitations of physical things. "Spirit with spirit can meet." On every ground save that of pure materialism it seems to me that there is reason to believe in prayer for the sick, the tempted and those in peril. We are justified in praying for the absent as for the present, and we need not be ashamed to confess that a prayer that presents God's purpose of health to the mind of a patient may check the progress of disease.—Rev. Lewis T. Reed, Congregationalist, Brooklyn.

JOY OF FRIENDSHIP.

The best friendships as a rule are those that begin young. Life's iron is then fire hot, and we weld easily. And the special happiness here is that, properly managed, these unions are often for all the years. In the college common room you stumble upon a brother soul which vibrates responsive to your own, and then after three or four decades and when you are almost at the end of the journey the music is still going on. Your careers have been wide apart, your fortunes different, your meetings perhaps infrequent, and yet the mere sense that your friend is yonder, thinking his thoughts and doing his work, is a strength and a companionship to you. How much so you will know when he has gone. A soulful intimacy of this kind acquires an ever better flavor with the years. Cannot many a man point to some long friendship, a continuous source of interest and ease of mind which went on without much reflection till one day he woke up and found himself another man, remade by another's personality, in the ordinary round of life, in work and play and talk, in talk of books and business, of neighbors and old memories? Slowly one has reached the other's point of view. His life has been learned piecemeal as he tells of its crises and how he felt at this great moment and that; how he was disappointed at first, but soon came to another mind; how after that he found a great joy and lived on it for years, and then how it was taken away, but nothing could keep him from living on it still. Stage by stage, by unconscious and freely given sympathy, one has lived the other man's life; one has seen things and felt them as he saw and felt them; one has slipped unawares into his language and by degrees into his thoughts. There's the joy of friendship—"we live each other's life."—Rev. Caleb S. S. Dutton, Unitarian, Brooklyn.

THE PEOPLE'S PULPIT

Sermon by CHARLES T. RUSSELL, Pastor Brooklyn

Workmen Needing Not to Be Ashamed

"Study to Show Thyself Approved Unto God, a Workman That Needeth Not to Be Ashamed, Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth" (II Timothy ii, 15).

LOUISVILLE, Ky., June 19.—Pastor Russell, of Brooklyn, N. Y., today addressed the International Bible Students' association here, using the above text. He also gave a public address under the auspices of the association. He had crowded houses and earnest attention. On the above text he said in part:

I address you, dear friends, as Christians, students of God's word, and not as sectarians. Although the world is full of denominations, each claiming to be the church of Christ, we all admit that there is but the one "Church of the firstborns whose names are written in heaven" (Hebrews xii, 23). This conviction is being borne in upon us more and more as the days go by, and as the eyes of our understanding open more widely to the teachings of God's word. We realize increasingly that our division means our shame in the eyes of the world, and that our credal contradictions imply that we are not all led in all things by the Holy Spirit, the teachings of which cannot be Yea and Nay upon the same subject. It is this sentiment which is taking hold of the ministry of all denominations and making them anxious for an outward show of unity in church federation, which will shortly be effected. The Christian public, however, and especially Bible students, are not deeply sympathetic with the federation idea. They realize that at most it would be a gloss of deception so far as doctrinal oneness is concerned; and that otherwise it is but a business or worldly combination.

Bible students are more and more coming to prefer the Lord's way—the scriptural way. They are coming to realize that what God's people need is not more organization but less organization, not more explicit creeds but the one standard of fellowship which the Bible sets up. They are learning that this simple creed is:—a turning from sin and acceptance of the Lord Jesus as the Redeemer from sin and death and the full consecration of the believer, mind and body, to know and to do the Lord's will to the best of his ability, under the Lord's providential guidance. We all see that this simple bond of fellowship is the only one laid down in God's word, and that whatsoever is more than this is injurious—bondage to men and to systems. We all see that "the Church of the Living God whose names are written in heaven" is composed exclusively of such as conform to the terms of this simple creed—that these alone will constitute "the Body of Christ which is the Church" — "the Bride, the Lamb's wife," whom he will accept and unite to himself in the end of this age. We all see that this class alone is referred to in the scripture as "the elect," who are to be associated with the Savior in his glorious spiritual kingdom, which, invisible to men, is shortly to be established in power and great glory for the blessing of natural Israel and through her for the blessing of all the families of the earth—living and dead.

"Workmen Not Ashamed."

Let us consider the latter part of our text first: The apostle's suggestion is that Timothy and all the ministers of the gospel of Christ are professedly workmen laboring under the guidance of God's word. In the larger sense every Christian is a minister of the gospel, or, as St. Peter declares of all the consecrated, "Ye are a Royal Priesthood, a Holy People, a Peculiar Treasure." In the end of the age will come a reckoning time, a showing of results, "Every man's work that he hath wrought shall be made manifest" (I Corinthians iii, 13).

Our text urges that Timothy, and every faithful servant of God should be so loyal to God and his message that in the great time of examination in the end of this age preparatory to the introduction of the kingdom the showing shall be one of which we need not be ashamed. Let us, then, as Christian Bible students of all denominations gathered here today, ask ourselves respecting our own work in the world, and now it must appear to God, to ourselves, and to our fellowmen—yea, how it must shortly be made manifest to all!

Let us call the roll. Baptist brethren, what have you to show as workmen who need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth? Methodist brethren, what say you? Presbyterians next. Congregationalists. Lutherans, Catholics—all!

The answer of one is practically the answer of all: "We have—so many hundred churches. They cost—so many millions of dollars. Their steeples are—so high. Their cost of maintenance is—so much. The number of ministers is—so many. The church collections amount to so much. The amount collected for foreign missions is—so much. The amount expended on fine choirs and elegant organs is—our churches is—so much. The unpaid interest on many of these debts is—so much. The time and energy expended in fairs, bazaars, etc., to help pay the expenditures is—so much. The number of church membership is—so many. The number in Sunday schools is—so many."

Many of our dear Christian friends say, What lack we yet? Have we not really attained the goal of our church ambition? Should we build finer edifices or pay larger salaries? Are we not straining ourselves with collections at every turn? What more could God ask of us? "We are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing" (Revelation iii, 16-19).

In reply we may suppose the Lord to ask, Where did I give you instruction respecting these things? Where in my word did you find the suggestion that what I desired you to do in the world was to erect great church edifices, piles of stone and iron and mortar, polished woods and stained glass? You are not rightly reading my word. However good in intention, you have failed to "rightly divide the word of truth!" The temple respecting which I gave instruction is the spiritual one, the temple of the holy spirit—the body of Christ which is the church. I fear that you have forgotten the true temple of God while rearing so many temples of earthly materials. Concerning the true temple I instructed you that "the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are"—"living stones" being shaped and polished "for the habitation of God through the spirit." Show me what you have accomplished in this way. Show me to what extent you have rightly divided my word, and properly instructed mankind respecting my glorious character and my great divine plan of the ages! Show me fruitage of the glorious message!

How many in all the millions that you report are "New Creatures in Christ Jesus," who "walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit?" Let me hear the message of my love and grace in Christ as you are proclaiming it! What mean these sectarian divisions amongst you? Why are there so many church edifices and so few saintly worshipers? Who authorized you to put these creedal fences between my people to divide the flock? Know ye not that I said, there is one flock and one Shepherd? Why have you so neglected the spiritual interests of my flock and their instruction in righteousness? Why are you so unable to rightly divide my word?

Instead of coming together as one Church of the Living God whose names are written in heaven you have divided into hundreds of sects and parties! Instead of taking my word as a whole and rightly dividing its teachings as between the different ages and dispensations of my work, you have divided my word in a sectarian manner. One sect has made one selection from my word and another sect has made another selection. Thus ye array one part of my word against another part of it, and hence get into confusion and conflict. What have you to answer for these things?

With shame of face we must all acknowledge that "We have done those things which we ought not to have done and have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and there is no help in us." The proper thing for us to do, dear Christian friends, is to get down upon our knees before the Lord and in contrition of heart to acknowledge that we have wrought no deliverance in the earth (Isaiah xxvi, 18); that our sectarian differences are our shame; that the ignorance that we have all been in respecting the word of God is humiliating. Now that our eyes are open so that we can comprehend as never before the harmony of God's message from Genesis to Revelation, it means a rich feast and blessing to our souls. The word of God becomes more precious to us daily as we become able to comprehend it. Our duty is to fly to the assistance of our dear brethren and sisters in Christ, of all denominations, and to call upon them to join with us in a determined stand for righteousness, for truth, for God and for his word.

We must show them that ignorantly we and they have dishonored our God by misrepresentation of his character and misrepresentations of the real teachings of the Bible. We must point them to the fact that the Bible does not teach that all mankind except the "elect" saints will be consigned to an eternity of torture at the hands of fireproof demons. We must show them that the election of the church during this age—a saintly little flock—does not mean injury to the non-elect. That, on the contrary, it is the divine purpose that the elect saints with their great Redeemer in glory shall constitute God's kingdom. That his kingdom when established will bind Satan, put down sin, banish ignorance, error and superstition and uplift mankind by "restitution," by resurrection processes, up, up, up, to all that was lost in Eden by disobedience and to all secured for Adam and his race through the great transaction of Calvary (Acts iii, 19-21).

"Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth."

Alas, how many intelligent people have turned aside from following Christ and from hearing the voice of God through the Bible! Alas, how many are looking to Theosophy, to Spiritism, to Christian Science, to Higher Criticism, to Evolution—wandering farther and farther daily from the "faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude iii). We fault them no more than we fault ourselves. As a whole we have been workmen who need to be ashamed. We have dishonored God through misunderstanding and misrepresenting his word and his character. We have driven away from God and the Bible some of the most intelligent of our fellows, by reason of the contradictory nonsense of our creeds.

The apostle urges, "Study to show thyself approved unto God." We are not to suppose, therefore, that the highest of all sciences, that which pertains to the divine purpose and the divine plan, can be acquired without study. We are not in this claiming that study alone would bring the desired results of proper knowledge. We heartily agree in the scriptural proposition that "the world by wisdom knows not God." We are not therefore to study along the lines of "that wisdom that cometh from above"—along the lines of the inspired scriptures. We must study! Whoever will not study will not know. "The secret of the Lord is with them that reverence him." And reverencing him means the giving of our best thoughts and talents to the study of his word, that we may know "the things freely given to us of God" (I Corinthians ii, 12).

We should note further as Bible students that we must not study to be approved of men, but to have the divine approval. This will bring to us, as it did to the Master and his apostles, the disapprobation of the worldly wise and nominally religious. It was the chief priests and scribes and pharisees, and not the common people of the Jews, nor the Roman soldiers, who were guilty of the crucifixion of our Lord. And we must expect similar conditions, because, as the apostle says, "As he was so are we in this world." The class who called the Master Beelzebub is the same class which will oppose his footstep followers.

God permits all this with wise and loving foreintention. Nothing connected with the opposing forces is in any sense of the word interfering with his great program. He set apart with divine wisdom this gospel age of nearly nineteen centuries for the sole purpose of selecting from the world "the Church of the firstborns"—the restriction of his message, the darkening of counsel, the clashing of creeds, the opposition of the world, the flesh and the devil, are all wisely permitted with the foreintention on God's part that thus all through the age the way of the cross—in the footsteps of Jesus—should be a "narrow way," so that comparatively few finding it would care to walk in it.

It is those few, that "little flock" zealous for God, for his word, for righteousness, that he is now marking out as the prospective joint heirs with Jesus in his glorious kingdom, which is to bless the world with full opportunities for earthly salvation—"retribution." The trials of the faith, the patience, the love, the devotion of this "little flock" are all designed and not accidental. Satan and his hosts may think to thwart the divine plan and may mislead and use humanity as their tools, but it shall yet be seen that all of the divine purposes shall be accomplished. The word that has gone forth out of Jehovah's mouth shall prosper in the thing whereto he sent it.

St. Paul declared of earthly Israel that they enjoyed "much advantage every way, because to them were committed the oracles of God." So now, dear friends, it seems to me that you and I and all sincere Christians the world around enjoy much advantage every way. Looking to the past we find great excuse for our dear forefathers who, with sincerity of heart, so misunderstood the divine word and so misinterpreted the spirit of the Master that they burned one another at the stake. We should not think so harshly of them for this—as though they lived today under the greater advantages which we possess. We should consider them as blinded by the great adversary as was Saul of Tarsus, when he, as a member of the Sanhedrin, authorized the stoning of St Stephen. We should think of them sympathetically—as St. Peter spoke of the Jews who crucified the Lord. He said, "I wot, brethren, that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." So, also, we should kindly, lovingly cast a mantle of benevolence over similar conduct on the part of John Calvin and others of our forefathers. But as we would not go to the Jewish rulers, nor to Saul of Tarsus for religious instruction, neither should we go to Brother Calvin or others of our forefathers who were blinded, as he was, respecting the true character of God and the true spirit of his word.

Only within the past century have the masses of God's people been able even to read the Bible, if they had possessed it. And only within the same time have they had the Bible to read. Our great hindrance has been that with Bibles in our hands and with ability to use them, we looked for instruction to our well meaning fathers instead of going to God's word itself. Now by God's grace the eyes of our understanding are opened. The wonderful Bibles of our day with their marginal references, their concordances, etc., and other assistances in Bible study are bringing us in touch with the whole message of God's word. Now one passage of scripture throws light upon another and thus with increasing brightness the word of the Lord as a lamp gives light upon the pathway of his church.

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