

Understanding The Bible

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1. The Bible

Its Inspiration and Importance

The term “Bible” (Greek, “biblos,” meaning book) is now almost universally applied to the sacred writings of the Christian church, embracing two general divisions, the Old Testament and the New Testament. Both of these divisions are divided into books, thirty-nine in the former and twenty-seven in the latter. The Old Testament Scriptures are referred to in the New Testament as “the law and the prophets,” or the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms.

The books of Moses are the first five books of the Scripture, often called the Pentateuch, a Greek word meaning the five books. After the Pentateuch come the historical books, the poetical and practical, the greater prophets, and the lesser prophets. They are classed together according to the matter they contain, and are not placed in chronological order. Job is generally considered to be the oldest book; Malachi was the last written of the Old Testament Scriptures. The book of Jonah is the oldest prophecy. It is well to bear such things in mind while studying the Scriptures. Every good reference Bible gives the supposed approximate dates. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are sometimes called the “Canon” of Scripture. “Canon” is a word signifying rod, or rule, and has been applied from the time of Origen to those Scriptures which are considered authoritative. Un-canonical books are those not recognized as authoritative, while apocryphal books are those concerning which there are grave doubts. They are useful historically, but no part of the rule of faith.

The terms “Old Testament” and “New Testament” doubtless come from the use of the synonymous term “covenant,” as used in the book of Hebrews. But these terms are not biblical as applying to the writings of the present or the past dispensations. Much of the Old Testament refers directly and as fully to the new covenant, or testament, as do the writings of the New Testament. They are terms of convenience to distinguish the Scriptures which were given before Christ from those which were given after our Lord came.

The divinity, authenticity, and inspiration of the Bible are proved by the following:

1. Purity of Teaching.

No other code of morals in the world is to be compared to that of the decalogue. It forbids nothing right, it enjoins nothing wrong. It leads man out of his selfishness by teaching him that his highest duty is to love God—a God worthy to be loved with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love his neighbor as himself. Every other religion is simply the development of some of the various characteristics, passions, or imaginations of humanity. The objects of worship were invested with the character of humanity. But the Bible presents a religion of purity—and holiness far above man, while it gives to everyone who desires that purity with his whole heart, the power to reach it. The teaching of the word of God calls man ever onward and upward. The decalogue forbids every sin, and its divine unfolding searches every motive and hidden spring of action.

2. The Unity of the Scriptures.

Its different parts were written all the way from 1500 BC to 98 AD. They were written by men in every phase of life, by the lowly herdsman Amos, the priest Ezekiel, the warrior and man of God, Moses, the royal psalmist, David, the wisest of men, Solomon, the prime minister and prophet, Daniel, the fisherman, Peter, the physician, I-Like, the learned Jew, Saul of Tarsus, the beloved John, and many others. It was written by the lonely waters of the Euphrates, in Persia’s royal city, in Jerusalem, the city of the great king, among the mountains and vales of the holy land, in the tents of the Idumean, emirs, on rock-ribbed and ocean bound Patmos,—written by all these, in all these various places, at all these different times, under different circumstances and influences, yet the same unity, the same spirit, pervades the whole. It is not many books; it is one. It addresses men as they are everywhere; it reveals the same disease, sin; it shows the one only remedy, the blood of Jesus.

3. Its Impartiality.

Had it been the work of priests, or the work of kings, or the work of any in high positions, it would have glossed, and excused, and palliated, and utterly hidden, their sins and crimes. But it does nothing of this. It reproves faithfully and fearlessly prophet and priest, king and noble, prince and peasant, soldier and citizen. The very ones reprov’d often record their own fall and reproof. Is it David the great king, or Solomon the wisest, or Moses the man of God, the reproof of God is given with even more sternness than to the humble in station. It espouses the cause of the poor, the meek, the defenseless; it knows no caste, differing in these respects from all other religions in the world, and proclaiming loudly that “God is no respecter of persons.”

4. Its Comprehensiveness

This is likewise proof of its divinity. It takes in every phase of human life -all the woes, the infirmities, the vicissitudes, the dangers, the weaknesses, the needs. It is adapted to all minds, to all grades, to all classes and conditions. There are counsel, warning, encouragement, instruction, condemnation, and approval for each one according to his needs. There is balm for every bruise, healing for every hurt, cleansing for every stain, the great store-house of all blessings. No other book can show such unity in connection with such many-sidedness and comprehensiveness. All that would minister to men's curiosity God has omitted, But in that which he has given He has stored and piled such many sided and far-reaching truths that an eternity of study upon them would not exhaust their meaning, their fullness, their richness, their power.

5. Prophecy

This is also a remarkable proof of its inspiration. In fact, God sets it forth as a proof that He is God. Says He, through the prophet: "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done." Isaiah 46:9-10.

Here is a challenge from the God and Author of the Bible. We can prove His omniscience. His prophecies and oracles are not couched in such ambiguous terms as were those of the ancient heathen prophets, priests, and oracles; but they are clear and particular. God gives the rise and fall of States and nation, before they came into existence in not less than seven lines of prophecy. He foretells the rise, overthrow, the plan of the overthrow, and the ultimate fate of great cities, before they reached the height of their power and grandeur.

The fulfillment of many of these predictions is in the past, and secular history bears faithful witness, oftentimes unwillingly, to the veracity and infallibility of the word of God. The predictions concerning the first advent of Christ prove His divine mission. Many events of the last days which are fulfilling all around us, have been, predicted in the centuries of long ago. We can see them if we will. What other religion can lay claim to such a book?

These are some of the characteristics of the Bible which prove its inspired inspiration. Men have endeavored to write books and creeds and evolve religion through all the past, but not, one book, not the excellencies of them all, can in number and fullness with the excellencies of the "Book of books."

The inspiration of the original Scriptures is expressly declared by the holy writings themselves. Says the Lord by His apostle, and through him to all Christian ministers, in 2 Timothy 3:16,17:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

"All Scripture" refers to what is held as sacred' Scripture in Paul's day, what Timothy had known from a child, "The Holy Scriptures" mentioned in the preceding verse. The New Testament was not then written.

The statement, is emphatic, "All scripture (writing) is given by inspiration of God (literally "God-breathed")." He makes no exception. He includes all of the holy writings, our now Old Testament. Of this Peter also speaks in both his first and second epistle.

In the first chapter of his first epistle, verses 10, 11, in speaking of salvation through Christ, he says: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

In his second epistle (1:21) we read:

"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," The above texts teach us this, that for the words which the prophets spoke the Holy Ghost was responsible; that divine Power being in them did testify; and that the holy prophets themselves did not understand all that the Spirit of God spoke through them, for they searched their own "God-breathed" writings. Their words were the words of the Spirit of God. And so David, "the sweet psalmist of Israel," said: "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was in my tongue." 2 Samuel 23:2.

To the above testimony from the Old Testament, the New bears abundant confirmation. Says Peter in quoting from the Old Testament: "This scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spoke before concerning Judas." Acts 1:16. Says the writer of the book of Hebrews in quoting from the Old Testament, "As the Holy Ghost said." Hebrews 3:7. And this is confirmed by the frequent expressions: "Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom" (Isaiah 1:10); "the word of the Lord came unto me." Jeremiah 1:4. See also Ezekiel 1:3; Micah 1:1; Zephaniah 1:1, and many other places. The prophets spoke their own words, but they were also the words of God. And Paul classes all the holy writings together and says that "all Scripture is God-breathed."

He also of his own writings affirms the same, classing himself with other apostles:

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” 1 Corinthians 2:13.

They spoke, they wrote, in the words of the Spirit ‘of God. Peter classes Paul’s writings among the “other scriptures.” 2 Peter 3:16.

But it is unnecessary to multiply proof. With all these Bible declarations of its divine source, it would seem as if men who professed belief in the Christ of the Bible would accept its inspiration. And yet in these days of advanced civilization and education, when the treasures of buried lore have yielded up testimony after testimony to the authenticity of the word of God, men calling themselves Christian teachers, journals calling themselves Christian journals, sit in judgment upon the word of God, reject this, cut off that, ridicule another passage, each in his own way, till among them all there is nothing left of the word of God. If with the claims which the Bible makes for itself, a part is not inspired, if it is to be subject to the judgment of fallible, mortal men, we can believe its claims concerning nothing; we should reject it all. It is either the word of God or it is not. If it is not, it is unworthy of credence; if it is, as every evidence proves, it is worthy of all credence, of all confidence.

There is no part of the Bible so often attacked by professed Christians of the higher criticism as the books of Moses.

The following question and answer from a prominent and popular religious paper of New York City, just recently, will serve as an instance to show how many professed Christians regard a part of those Scriptures which the greatest apostle of Christ said were “God-breathed,” which Peter says were written by men “moved by the Holy Ghost”:

“As the world was not created in six days, how could the Sabbath have been instituted by God on the ground that He had rested on the seventh day, as stated in the fourth commandment? Do you believe that the commandments and all the laws in the Pentateuch were given by God? or written by Moses?”

“Many of them proceeded from Moses’ successors, building onto his work, and so were only involved in, or developed from, what ‘the Lord said to Moses.’ What God said to Moses He probably communicated, as now to us, inwardly, by enlightening the mind and conscience to see truth and feel its imperativeness. The Sabbath is of divine appointment, ‘made for man,’ as Jesus says, required by the physical and moral nature which God made. That Moses should see this law written in our nature, and assign a fanciful reason for it, only shows that he was like the rest of us in being better able to see what is right than to give the reason for it.”

In reply to this, we do but need to give the words of the Great Teacher: “For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me; for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?” He who would reject the Old Testament Scriptures would, if the temptation were sufficiently great, reject the New.

In every one of the temptations brought against our Lord in the wilderness, the enemy was in each instance repulsed by a shaft from the word of God, and every scripture from the book of Deuteronomy, the last of the five books of Moses. Matthew 4:1-10. We have seen how fallible men regard the word of God; the above instance is how He in whom dwell all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, regarded the books of Moses, the Old Testament Scriptures. See also Luke 4:17-21; John 5:39; 10:35; Luke 24:44.

We know of no words which more forcibly set before us the regard which the Son of God had for the Scriptures as contrasted with religious infidelity, than the following from Prof. L. Gaussen, DD:-

“But, farther, let us turn from the apostles, prophets as they are-men sent by God for the establishment of His kingdom, the pillars of the church, the mouths of the Holy Ghost, ambassadors of Jesus Christ, and let us go to the Master. Let us inquire of Him what the Scriptures were in His view of them. Here is the grand question. The testimonies to which we have appealed are peremptory, no doubt; and the doctrine of a plenary and entire inspiration is taught as clearly in Scripture as that of the resurrection of the dead can be; that ought of itself to be enough for us; but we repeat, nevertheless, Here is an argument which for us renders all less superfluous. How did Jesus Christ appeal to the Holy Bible? What were His views of the letter of the Scriptures? What use did He make of it, He who is its object and inspirer, beginning and end, first and last; He whose Holy Spirit, says St. Peter, animated all the prophets of the Old Testament (2 Peter 1 :21)?

Among the most ardent defenders of their verbal inspiration, we know not one that ever expressed himself with more respect for the altogether divine authority and everlasting endurance of their most minute expressions, than was done by the man Jesus. And we scruple not to say, that were any modern writer to quote the Bible as Jesus Christ did, with the view of deducing from it any doctrine, he would forthwith have to be ranked among the most zealous partisans of the doctrine we defend. I am asked, What is your view of the Holy Letters? I answer, What thought my Master of them? How did He appeal to them? What use did He make of them? What were their smallest details in His eyes?

"Ah! speak to them thyself, Eternal Wisdom, Uncreated Word, Judge of judges! and as we proceed to repeat to them here the declarations of Thy mouth, show them the majesty in which the Scriptures appeared to Thee-show them the perfection Thou didst recognize in them, that everlasting endurance, above all, which Thou didst assign to their smallest iota, and which will make them outlast the universe, after the very heavens and the earth have passed away!

"We are not afraid to say it: When we hear the Son of God quote the Scriptures, everything is said, in our view, on their divine inspiration-we need no further testimony. All the declarations of the Bible are, no doubt, equally divine; but this example of the Savior of the world has settled the question for us at once."

Follow Jesus in the days of His flesh. With what serious and tender respect does He constantly hold in His hands the volume of the Book, to quote every part of it, and note its shortest verses.

See how one word, one single word whether of a psalm or of an historical book, has for Him the authority of law. Mark with what confident submission He receives the whole scriptures, without ever contesting its sacred canon. Did I say, He receives them? From His childhood to the grave, and from His rising again from the grave to His disappearance in the clouds, what does He bear always about with Him in the desert, in the temple, in the synagogue? What does He continue to quote with His resuscitated voice, just as the heavens were about to exclaim, 'Lift up your heads, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in?' It is the Bible, ever the Bible; it is Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets; He quotes them, He explains them, but how? Why, verse by verse, and word by word.

"In what alarming and melancholy contrast, after beholding all this, do we see those misguided men present themselves in our days who dare to judge, contradict, cull, and mutilate the Scriptures, Who does not tremble, after following with his eyes the Son of man as He commands the elements, stills the storms, and opens the graves, while, filled with so profound a respect for the Sacred Volume, He declares that He is one day to judge by that Book the quick and the dead? Who does not shudder, whose heart does not bleed, when, after observing this, we venture to step into a Rationalist academy, and see the professor's chair occupied by a poor mortal, learned, miserable, a sinner, responsible, yet handling God's word irreverently; when we follow him as he goes through this deplorable task before a body of youths, destined to be the guides of a whole people-youths capable of doing so much good if guided to the heights of the faith, and so much mischief if tutored in disrespect for those Scriptures which they are one day to preach? With what peremptory decision do such men display the phantasmagoria of their hypotheses ; they retrench, they add, they praise, they blame, and pity the simplicity which, reading the Bible as it was read by Jesus Christ, like Him clings to every syllable, and never dreams of finding error in the Word of God! They pronounce on the intercalations and retrenchments that the Holy Scriptures must have undergone-intercalations and retrenchments never suspected by Jesus Christ; they lop off the chapters they do not understand, and point out blunders, ill-sustained or ill-concluded reasoning, prejudices, imprudence, and instances of vulgar ignorance.

"May God forgive my being compelled to put this frightful dilemma into words, but the alternative is inevitable! Either Jesus Christ exaggerated and spoke incoherently when He quoted the Scriptures thus, or these rash, wretched men unwittingly blaspheme their divine Majesty. It pains us to write these lines. God is our witness that we could have wished to re-call, and then to efface them; but we venture to say, with profound feeling, that it is in obedience, it is in charity, that they have been penned. Alas! in a few short years both the doctors and the disciples will be laid in the tomb, they shall wither as the grass; but not one jot or tittle of that divine Book will even have passed away; and as certainly as the Bible is the truth, and that it has changed the face of the world, as certainly shall we see the Son come in the clouds Of heaven, and judge, by His eternal word, the secret thoughts of all men!"

"What is the chaff to the wheat?"

Of course this inspiration refers to the original Scriptures. The translations and versions are so many multiplied copies and photographs, executed under such varied circumstances, and by so many, that room for doubting the identity of the Scriptures in this direction is infinitesimal. Those who copied that word were very careful and exact. The very jots and tittles were important. It is not too much to say that greater care has been taken in the copying and translating of the Scriptures than of any other book in the world. They have been copied by men who believed them to be the words of God. They have been translated by men who believed the same thing, and who wished to spread the exact knowledge of them to the world.

They have been translated by different schools and scholars who were jealous of their scholarship, and who were therefore painstaking to give every Hebrew, and Aramaic, and Greek word its exact meaning. The photographs are so many and agree so fully that we need not question in this respect. Our English versions are good photographs, in all great and essential particulars, of the word of our God. The inspiration of that word proves its importance. That it might be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," God gave it by inspiration. 'Man needed infallible, unchangeable doctrine, which the ages, nor the tempers of men, nor various sects, nor the influence of infidelity, could not mould; therefore He gave a "God-breathed" rule of doctrine. "It is not in man that walks to direct his steps; conscience is a creature of education, sometimes "evil," sometimes "defiled;" but God's word is truth; its doctrines are pure.

Man cannot always give wise reproof, nor can he correct the wrongs he reproves in others. The reprover also often needs reproof. And God has given reproof for every sin, for every wrong way in His holy word. With that reproof there is connected the way in which sin may be put away, the way the wrong may be corrected. It is an inspired reproof, it is God-breathed correction. Can we afford to ignore it? Shall not our prayer rather be, "O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing." Jeremiah 10:24.

And the correction of God is always "instruction in righteousness." God's word alone reveals how we may become righteous through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; how God's righteousness may be imputed to us through faith for all past transgressions; how the evil heart may be changed; how power will be given us to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus our Lord; and how at last a life that measures with the life of God will be given to those who believe and do His word. There is no other way than the way of God's word. Nowhere else can we obtain these priceless riches. The words of God are spirit and life. John 6:63. He who uses God's law as a lamp to his moral life (Psalm 119:105); its prophetic revelations as a light for present warning and present duty (2 Peter 1:21), who uses the gospel of Christ as it really is, the glad tidings of a Savior (Luke 2:10, 11), "the power of, God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16), will be truly perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Dear reader, what will you do with this word which is given to you? Will you heed it or reject it? God has magnified that word above all His name. Psalm 138:2. Will you belittle it? He has made precious promises to those who will tremble at that word. Isaiah 66:2. Will you regard it? It will judge you at the last day. Are you prepared to meet the sentence? Are you walking in the way of that word, or in the way and traditions of men? God's promises are based on conditions; the conditions are as much a part of the truth as are the promises. Do you hope to receive that which is promised without complying with the conditions? Such hope is vain. True faith rests on the word of God; good hope, on God's promise; and God's promises to be effectual to us are based on conditions. If you are not complying with the conditions, turn from the words and traditions of men to the truth of God. The Spirit that gave it will enlighten your understanding. You will find in that the Incarnate Word, who will give You of His fullness and satisfy your soul. God help you to decide for truth.

"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away; but the word of the Lord endures for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." 1 Peter 1:24, 25.

"This Book, this holy Book, on every line Marked with the seal of high divinity, On every leaf bedewed with drops of love Divine, and with the eternal heraldry And signature of God Almighty stamped

From first to last, this ray of sacred light, This lamp, from off the everlasting throne, Mercy brought down, and in the night of time Stands, casting on the dark her gracious bow, And evermore beseeching men, with tears And earnest sighs, to read, believe, and live."

-Pollock.

2. The Benefits Of Bible Study

MRS. ELLEN G. WHITE.

"ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and Is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." In the Word of God is contained everything essential to the perfecting of the man of God. It is like a treasure-house, full of valuable and precious stores.

"Given by inspiration of God," "able to make us wise unto salvation," rendering the man of God "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," the Book of books has the highest claims to our reverent attention. Superficial study cannot meet the claims it has upon us, nor furnish us with the benefit that is promised. We should seek to learn the full meaning of the words of truth, and to drink deep the spirit of the holy oracles. To read daily a certain number of chapters, or to commit to memory a stipulated amount of Scripture, without careful thought as to the meaning of the text, will profit little. To study one passage until its significance is clear to the mind, and its relation to the plan of salvation is evident, is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view and no positive instruction gained. We cannot obtain wisdom from the Word of God without giving earnest and prayerful attention to its study.

It is true that some portions of Scripture are too plain to be misunderstood; but there are many others whose meaning cannot be seen at a glance, for the truth does not lie upon the surface.

In order to understand the meaning of such passages, scripture must be compared with scripture; there must be careful research and prayerful reflection. Such study will be richly repaid. As the miner discovers precious veins of metal concealed beneath the surface of the earth, so will he who perseveringly searches the Word of God as for hid treasure, find truths of the greatest value, which are concealed from the careless seeker.

But if you do not make the sacred teachings of God's Word the rule and guide of your life, the truth will be nothing to you. Truth is efficient only as it is carried out in practical life. If the Word of God condemns some habit you have indulged, a feeling you have cherished, a spirit you have manifested, turn not from the sacred monitor, but turn away from the evil of your doings, and let Jesus cleanse and sanctify your heart. Confess your faults, and forsake them wholly and determinedly, believing the promises of God, and showing your faith by your works. If the truths of the Bible are woven into practical life, they will bring the mind up from its earthliness and debasement. Those who are conversant with the Scriptures will be men and women who exert an elevating influence. In searching for Heaven-revealed truths, the Spirit of God is brought into close connection with the heart. An understanding of the revealed will of God enlarges the mind, expands, elevates, and endows it with new vigor, by bringing its faculties into contact with stupendous truth. To study is better to give energy to the mind, strengthen the intellect, than the study of the Word of God. No other book is so potent in elevating the thoughts, in giving vigor to the faculties, as is the Bible, which contains the most ennobling truths. If God's Word were studied as it should be, we should see breadth of mind, stability of purpose, nobility of character, such as is rarely seen in these times.

But Bible study is made a secondary consideration, and a great loss is sustained thereby. The understanding takes the level of the things with which it becomes familiar. If all would make the Bible their study, we should see a people who were better developed, who were capable of thinking more deeply, who would manifest greater intelligence, than those who have earnestly studied the sciences and histories of the world, apart from the Bible. The Bible gives the seeker for truth an advanced mental discipline, and he comes from contemplation of divine things with his faculties enriched; self is humbled, while God and his revealed truth are exalted. It is because men are unacquainted with the precious Bible histories, that there is so much lifting up of man, and so little honor given to God.

The Bible contains that which will make the Christian strong in spirit and intellect. The psalmist says, "The entrance of thy words gives light; it gives understanding unto the simple." The Bible is a wonderful book. It is a history that opens up to us the past centuries. Without the Bible we should have been left to conjectures and fables in regard to the occurrences of past ages. It is a prophecy that unveils the future. It is the Word of God, unfolding to us the plan of salvation, pointing out the way by which we may escape eternal death and gain eternal life. Of all the books that flood the world, however valuable, the Bible is the Book of books, most deserving of our study and admiration. It gives not only the history of this world, but a description of the world to come. It contains instruction concerning the wonders of the universe; it reveals to our understanding the character of the Author of the heavens and the earth. In it is the revelation of God to man.

The searching of books of philosophy and science cannot do for the mind and morals what Bible study can do, if it is made practical. He who studies the Bible holds converse with patriarchs and prophets. He comes in contact with truth clothed in elevated language, which exerts a fascinating power over the mind, and lifts the thoughts from the things of earth to the glory of the future, immortal life. What wisdom of man can compare with the revelation of the glory of God? Finite man, who knows not God, seeks to lessen the value of the Scriptures, claiming that his supposed knowledge of science will not harmonize with the Word of God; but the divine Word is, a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path.

Those who boast of wisdom beyond the teaching of the Word of God, need to drink deeper of the fountain of knowledge, that they may learn their real ignorance. Men boast of their wisdom, when it is but foolishness. Let no man deceive himself. "If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, any him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; for it is written, He takes the wise in their own craftiness." The greatest ignorance that now curses the human race is ignorance of the binding claims of the law of God; and this ignorance is the result of neglecting the study of the Word of God. It is Satan's plan to so engage the mind that men shall neglect the great Guide Book, and thus be led into the path of transgression and destruction.

The Bible is not exalted to its rightful place among the books of the world, although its study is of infinite importance to the souls of men. In searching its pages, the imagination beholds scenes majestic and eternal. We behold Jesus, the Son of God, coming to our world, and engaging in the mysterious conflict that discomfited the powers of darkness. O, how wonderful, how almost incredible it is, that the infinite God would consent to the humiliation of his own Son that we might be elevated to a place with Him upon his throne! Let every student of the Scriptures contemplate this great fact, and he will not come from a study of the Bible without being purified, elevated, and ennobled. The truth will be opened to the mind, and applied to the heart by the Spirit of God. Through connection with God, the Christian will have clearer and broader views, unbiased by his own preconceived opinions. His discernment will be more penetrating, his faculties better balanced. His mind, exercised in contemplation of exalted truths, will be expanded, and in obtaining heavenly knowledge he will better understand his own weakness, and will grow in faith and humility. When there is little attention given to the Word of God, divine counsels are not heeded, admonitions are in vain, grace and heavenly wisdom are not sought that past sins may be avoided, and every taint of corruption cleansed from the character. David prayed, "Make me to understand the way of thy precepts. Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

There is a great work to be done by the earnest Bible student; for gems of truth are to be gathered up, and separated from the companionship of error. Though the Bible is a revelation from heaven, yet many do not comprehend its divine teaching. We are to discover new aspects of truth in both the Old and the New Testament, to behold the exceeding depth and compass of truths which we imagine we understand, but of which we have only a superficial knowledge. He who earnestly searches the Scriptures will see that harmony exists between the various parts of the Bible, he will discover the bearing of one passage upon another, and the reward of his toil will be exceedingly precious.

All over the field of revelation are scattered glad springs of heavenly truth, peace, and joy. These fountains of joy are within the reach of every seeker. The words of Inspiration, pondered in the heart, will be as streams flowing from the river of the water of life. Our Savior prayed that the minds of his followers might be opened to understand the Scriptures. Whenever we study the Bible with a prayerful heart, the Holy Spirit is near to open to us the meaning of the words we read. The man whose mind is enlightened by the opening of God's Word, will not only feel that he must more diligently seek to understand that Word, but that he must have a better understanding of the sciences. He will feel that he is called to a high calling in Christ Jesus. The more closely connected man is with the Source of all knowledge and wisdom, the more he will feel that he must advance in intellectual and spiritual attainments. The Holy Spirit, through the truth of God, quickens the lifeless spiritual faculties, and attracts the, soul heavenward.

Then take your Bible and present yourself before your Heavenly Father, saying, "Enlighten me; teach me what is truth." The Lord will regard your prayer, and the Holy Spirit will impress the truth upon your soul. In searching the Scriptures for yourself, you will become established in the faith. It is of the greatest importance that you store the mind with the truths of God. You may be placed where you will not have the privilege of meeting with the children of God. You need the treasures of God's Word hidden in your heart, that when opposition comes upon you, you may- bring everything to the test of the Scriptures.

Truth is eternal, and conflict with error will only make manifest its strength. We should never refuse to examine the Scriptures with those who, we have reason to believe, desire to know what is truth. Suppose a brother holds a view that differs from yours, and he comes to you, proposing that you sit down with him, and investigate that point in the light of the Scriptures; should you rise up filled with prejudice, and condemn his ideas while refusing to give him a candid hearing? The only right way would be as Christians to investigate the position presented, in the light of God's Word, which will reveal truth and unmask error. To ridicule his ideas would not weaken his position, though it were false, nor strengthen your position, though it were true. If the pillars of our faith will not stand the test of investigation, it is time that we knew it. Let everything be brought to the Bible; for it is the only rule of faith and doctrine.

We must study the truth for ourselves; no man should be relied upon to think for us, no matter who he may be or in what position we may be placed. We are not to look upon any man as a perfect guide for us. We are to counsel together, and be subject one to another; but at the same time we are to exercise the ability God has given us to learn what is truth. Each one of us must look to God for divine enlightenment, that we may individually develop a character that will stand the test of the great day.

We are living in the last days, when error of a most deceptive character is accepted and believed, while truth is discarded. Many are drifting into darkness and infidelity, picking flaws with the Bible, bringing up superstitious inventions, unscriptural theories, and speculations of vain philosophy; but it is the duty of every one to seek a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. The importance and benefit of Bible study cannot be over-estimated. In searching the Scriptures, our minds are led to dwell upon the infinite sacrifice of Christ, on his mediation in our behalf. As we see his love, as we meditate upon his humiliation and sufferings, the same spirit of self-denial and sacrifice for the good of others will be kindled in our hearts. As we behold Jesus by the eye of faith, we shall be "changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

3. The Bible Before Church Or Creed

"Imposture shrinks from light, and dreads the curious eye;
But sacred truths the test invite; they bid us search and try."

He who accepts truth stands with God. He who fights against truth fights against God, for God is the "God of Truth." Isaiah 65:15.

And what is truth? Christ says, it Thy word is truth." John 17:17. The Psalmist, "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Thy law is the truth." Psalm 119:142. The word and law of God, then, are truth.

Moreover, it is our duty to love truth, and a wicked and dangerous thing to reject it. "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12. It is of some consequence, then, whether we believe and love the truth or not.

Truth comes first; then organization. It is the preaching of the word that makes believers (Romans 10:13-17); and believers associated together constitute the church. The Bible, therefore, comes before the church. The true church stands as “the pillar and ground of the truth.” 1 Timothy 3:15.

God has always had a people in the earth; but He has not always revealed new truths to the leaders of old organizations. The joyful news of Christ’s first advent was not revealed to the dignitaries of the Jewish church, but to humble shepherds abiding in the field. His star appeared, not to high priest or ruler, but to the wise men of the East, who, though not Jews, had studied the prophecies, and believed the word of God. The church guides had become haughty and proud, knew little of the Scriptures, and were not prepared, therefore, to receive and proclaim the heaven-sent truth so appropriate and essential for the time. Though God is high and lofty, He dwells with those of humble and contrite spirit, and reveals His secret to those who fear Him. Isaiah 57:15; Psalm 25:14. New wine He puts into new bottles.

Placing the Church before the Truth

As of old, there are those who think more of what they style “their church” than they do of God’s truth. They not only refuse to walk in the advancing light themselves, but seek to prevent others doing so. They ask their friends, “In what church were you and your parents brought up?” and “Is not the religion of your father and mother good enough for you?”

Had the disciples of Christ, when called to leave all and follow Him, listened to such reasoning, they would never have become the apostles and founders of the glorious Christian Church. Had Luther listened to such arguments, there never would have been the revival of true religion there was in the sixteenth century. Had Wesley given heed to such logic there would never have been a Wesleyan Church, or the great spiritual awakening in England and America of a century and a half ago. Such reasoning, therefore, is unworthy of any Christian or lover of truth. It would block all progress. It places the church before the truth, and tradition before the word of God.

Where Truth Leads

Accepting the truth led Abraham away from both country and kinsmen. For preaching the most glorious truth Christ was expelled from His home-church and town. Luke 4:16-30. Accepting the truth in Christ’s time meant separation from the church. “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” John 12: 42, 43. It led Paul, Luther, and Wesley out of the church of their forefathers. And why?—Because the church of their time had become bigoted, proud, stereotyped, dead, and formal. It would not receive God’s truth for the time; it would not advance; it would not reform.

With sorrow and reluctance Christ left the Jewish church. But when it refused to hear and obey, He said, “Your house is left unto you desolate.” “The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” Matthew 23:38; 21:43. It still exists in form, but is a dead and lifeless church.

So also with Paul, Luther, and Wesley. They all with reluctance left the church of their fathers. But the leaders of the church, rejecting the truth God had committed to these men, drove them out.

Says Richard Watson, in his “Life of Wesley”: Had the clergy been disposed to co-operate in this evident revival and spread of true religion, and had the heads of the church been willing to sanction itinerant labors among the serious part of the people for mutual edification, the great body of Methodists might have been retained in the communion with the Church of England. On this matter, which was often brought before the leading and influential clergy, they made their own election, They refused to co-operate. Page 134.

The Old Story Over Again

This is the story of the church over and over again. The leaders of old organizations have almost invariably opposed the advancement of new truth, and treated its advocates and adherents as heretics, schismatics, and outlaws.

“History’s pages but record
One death grapple in the darkness
‘Twixt old systems and the Word.”

Christ was charged with blasphemy, of working miracles by the prince of devils, of deceiving the people, and being a menace to both church and state. Matthew 9:3; 12:24; John 6:12; 11:47-50. His accusers said: We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ a King.... He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. Luke 23:1-5.

Paul was accused of being a “pestilent fellow,” of teaching “heresy,” and turning the world “upside down.” Acts 24:5, 14; 17:6. Luther of putting forth “most horrid blasphemy against God,” of being “a most excessive drunkard,” and holding “intimate familiarity with devils.” (“Sure Way,” page 53.) And Wesley, in 1745, gives his own experience thus: About seven years since, we began preaching inward, present salvation, as obtainable by faith alone. For preaching this doctrine we were forbidden to preach in the churches. We then preached in private houses, as occasion offered; and, when houses could not contain the people, in the open air.

For this many of the clergy preached against us, as both heretics and schismatics. Persons who were convinced of sin begged us to advise them more particularly how to flee from the wrath to come. We replied, if they would all come at one time we would endeavor it. For this we were represented both from the pulpit and the press, as introducing popery, raising sedition, practicing both against church and state; and all manner of evil was publicly said both of us and those who were accustomed to meet with us. Several of the bishops began to speak against us, either in conversation or in public. On this encouragement, several of the clergy stirred up the people to treat us as outlaws or mad dogs.” Life of Wesley, pages 190, 191.

And so it is to-day. God sends a message warning the people to flee from the judgments soon to fall; to, repent, turn their feet into the path of obedience, prepare for the judgment, Christ’s second coming, and the end of the world. And what is the result? The same as of old. The leaders of old organizations rise up against it, call it a “delusion,” style those who preach it “a heretical sect,” their teaching, as “extremely presumptuous,” and their work an “impertinent interference “ with their people.

Is it a Delusion?

Seventh-day Adventist’s teach that the ten commandments are the law of God; that this law is unchangeable, unchanged, and binding upon all men. Is this a new or strange doctrine? Let us see. The Catholic Church says: These commandments are themselves always binding under pain of sin. They teach us our morals, or what we must do to be saved. They can never be altered. Explanatory Catechism, p. 29.

The Church of England teaches: Although the law given from God by Moses, as touching ceremonies and rites, does not bind Christian men, nor the civil precepts thereof, ought of necessity to be received by any commonwealth; yet, notwithstanding, no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called Moral. -Article VII.

And after the repetition of each of the ten commandments, the people are taught to say, “Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.”-Prayer Book.

The Presbyterian Church affirms: “The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others.” “Neither doth Christ in the gospel in any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.” - Confession of Faith, Article V.

The Baptist Church asserts: “We believe that the law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of His moral government.” Baptist Church Manual, Article XII.

The Wesleyan Church says:
Q. What is the rule of our obedience?
A. The moral law.
Q. Where is the moral law given?
A. In the ten commandments.
Catechism Number 2, Chapter VI.

This law is spiritual and perfect, extending to all the inward creations and outward actions of men, and can never be changed or annulled.-Binney’s Theological Compendium, p. 153.

This is just what Seventh-day Adventists teach. What, then, is the trouble? This: Seventh-day Adventists endeavor to keep it as it reads, fourth commandment and all. They are simply putting into practice what these churches for hundreds of years have been preaching. And for this they are styled “a heretical sect.” Very well; after the way some call heresy so worship we the God of our fathers. If it is right to teach that the law of God is unchanged and unrepealed, it is certainly right to keep it as God’ gave it. This is our offence.

That His law is unchanged and unchanged God Himself declares. He says: “I will not alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Psalm 89:34. “My righteousness shall not be abolished. Hearken unto Me, ye that know righteousness; the people in whose heart is My law.” Isaiah 51:6, 7. “All Thy commandments are righteousness.” Psalm 119:172.

Christ says: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. Matthew 5:17. And Paul declares: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God Forbid. Yea, we establish the law." Romans 3:31. Godly men of later times have taught the same. Says Luther I never rejected the law. Spiritual Antichrist, p. 71. "He who pulls down the law, pulls down at the same time the whole framework of human polity and society." Life of Luther, p. 217

Calvin says: "The law has suffered no diminution of authority, but ought always to receive from us the same obedience." Institutes, book 2, chapter 7.

Wesley affirms: "The moral law contained in the ten commandments, and enforced by the prophets, He [Christ] did not take away. This is a law which never can be broken. Every part of this law must remain in force upon all mankind and in all ages." Sermon 25. Beware of antinomianism, making void the law, or any part of it, through faith." Christian Perfection, page 45. In the highest ranks of the enemies of the gospel of Christ are they who openly and explicitly "judge the law." itself; who teach without any cover in so many words. "What did our Lord do with the law? He abolished it." Sermon 25.

Adam Clarke declares; "A man cannot have a true notion of sin but by means of the law of God. Nor do we find that true repentance takes place where the moral law is not preached and enforced." Comments On Romans 7:13.

Albert Barnes testifies: "Moral laws are such as grow out of the nature of things. These cannot be abolished. Of this kind are the ten commandments." Notes on Matthew 5:18.

Spurgeon bears this testimony: "The law of God is a divine law, holy, heavenly, perfect. There is not a command too many; there is not one too few. Sermons, page 280.

In view of all this, what shall be said of the doctrine beginning to be taught by some that the law of God has been abolished, cannot be kept, and is not binding upon Christians? Is not this a new doctrine, an insult to God, and a most terrible heresy?

And why is this position taken? Simply to get rid of keeping the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. As the Sabbath truth extends, we find this position, so contrary to the Bible and the past teaching of the church, coming to be generally taken. And this shows that.

The Last Great Controversy

The Last Great Controversy between truth and error is coming over the commandments of God; and that the special point in the controversy will be over the fourth or Sabbath commandment. This is clear also from the Scriptures.

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 12 :17.

Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples. Isaiah 8:16. The sealing work is a closing work. Revelation 7:1-4; Ezekiel 9:1-6. And the seal of the law is in the fourth commandment. A true seal must show (1) Who the law-giver is; (2) his right to rule; and (3) the extent of his jurisdiction. The Sabbath commandment is the only one of the ten which does this. Read them over and see.

Hallow My Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God. Ezekiel 20:20. When God's salvation is "near to come," He' says: "Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that lays hold of it; that keeps the Sabbath from polluting it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil. Isaiah 56:1, 2.

Opposed to the true Sabbath, or seal of God, stands the false Sabbath, or mark of apostasy, which, according to Revelation 13:118, is to be enforced by oppressive measures. And, true to the prophecy, we see a spirit rising, and a world-wide movement on foot, to enforce the Sunday Sabbath by the stern and vigorous hand of law. Behind this movement is the spirit of religious persecution. This will be manifest against commandment keepers more and more as time goes on.

Why not Found Out Before?

"If the seventh day is the true Sabbath, why was it not found out before?" is asked by many. If we could not tell why, that would excuse no one from obedience after it has been found out. But those who will take the trouble to study out Daniel 7:25; 8:13, 14, and kindred passages, will know why. God's people and law were to be given into the hands of oppression and apostasy for a certain time. But that time is past.

“But if there is no divine authority for the change of the Sabbath, why have not our great men found this out?” is further asked. They have. Read the following Confessions of Eminent Men

Confessions of Eminent Men

MR. GLADSTONE: The seventh day of the week has been deposed from its title to obligatory religious observance, and its prerogative has been carried over, under no direct precept of Scripture. Church Monthly, March, 1895.

CANON EYTON: “There is no word, no hint, in the New Testament about abstaining from work on Sunday.” “No commandment of God bids us do this or not do that on Sunday; we are absolutely free as far as His law goes.” “The observance of Ash Wednesday or Lent stands on exactly the same footing as the observance of Sunday.” “Into the rest of Sunday no divine law enters.” The Ten Commandments.

SIR WILLIAM DOMVILLE: Centuries of the Christian era passed away before the Sunday was observed as a Sabbath. Examination of Six Texts.

DR. R. W. DALE: “It is quite clear that however rigidly or devoutly we may spend Sunday we are not keeping the Sabbath.” “The Sabbath was founded on a specific divine command. We can plead no such command for the observance of Sunday.” “There is not a single sentence in the New Testament to suggest that we incur any penalty by violating the supposed sanctity of Sunday.” The Ten Commandments.

EDITOR HOBART CHURCH NEWS: We should emphasize the fact that the observance of the first instead of the seventh day rests on the testimony of the church, and the church alone. . There is less scriptural authority for it than there is for confirmation or infant baptism. July 2, 1894.

DR. LYMON ABBOTT: The current notion that Christ and His apostles authoritatively substituted the first day of the week for the seventh is absolutely without any authority in the New Testament. Christian Union, June 26, 1890.

AMOS BINNEY: It is true there is no positive command for infant baptism; nor is there any for keeping holy the first day of the week.-Theological Compendium, pages 180, 181.

CARDINAL GIBBONS: You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. Faith of our Fathers, p. iii.

ARCHDEACON FARRAR: The Sabbath is Saturday, the seventh day of the week: The Voice of Sinai, p. 163

“Why, then, have they not kept the true Sabbath?” That is another question. Some give one excuse, some another, but they are only excuses. Many have not seen, and many do not yet see, the matter in its true light and importance.

But as the light shines, many seek for excuses for remaining in disobedience rather than to learn and obey the truth. Such need not more argument, but a genuine conversion. The same God who shows mercy to sinners, expects obedience from believers. We are saved by grace through faith. Ephesians 2:8.

Grace is from God; faith is ours to exercise. But genuine faith works. James 2:14-26. And it works by love. Galatians 5: 6. And love fulfils the law. Romans 13:8-10. Therefore the salvation of God leads men to keep the law of God.

Conclusion

When God sends light and truth, it is the duty of ministers and people to search the Scriptures to see if these things are so. It is a dangerous business for any one to turn away the flock of God from the truth.

“Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:19. See Jeremiah 25:30-38.

God is sending a message to His people, warning them not to be found among the transgressors of His law. If we love God we will keep His commandments. “For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous.” 1 John 5: 3.

God's judgments are already in the land; these will increase, and soon His unmingled wrath in the seven last plagues will fall upon the shelterless heads of the ungodly. Therefore, "Let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 2 Timothy 2:19.

"Courage, brother, do not stumble, Though thy path is dark as night;
There's a star to guide the humble, Trust in God and do the right.

"Let the road be long and dreary, And its ending out of sight,
Foot it bravely, strong or weary; Trust in God and do the right.

"Perish 'policy' and cunning, Perish all that fears the light
Whether losing, whether winning, Trust in God and do the right."

4. An Appeal For Home Missionary Work

To Our Churches in Behalf of Home Missionary Work

By MRS. ELLEN G. WHITE

It is the Duty of the Church to Let Light Shine

CHRIST, The true Witness, addresses the church at Ephesus, saying: "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

Oh, how few know the day of their visitation! How few, even among those who claim to believe in present truth, understand the signs of the times, or what they are to experience before the end. We are under divine forbearance to-day; but how long will the angels of God continue to hold the winds, that they shall not blow? Among the people of God there is blindness of mind and hardness of heart, although God has manifested inexpressible mercy toward us. How few there are who are truly humble, devoted, God-fearing servants in the cause of Christ, whose hearts are full of gratitude and thanks giving because they are called to act a part in the work of God, being co-laborers with Jesus Christ, partakers with Christ of His sufferings.

Dead in Trespasses and Sins

To-day there are few who are heartily serving God. The most of those who compose our congregations are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. They come and go like the door upon its hinges. For years they have complacently listened to the most solemn, soul-stirring truths, but they have not practiced them. They are less and less sensible of the preciousness and value of the truth, because they neglect the practice of those things which are pleasing in the sight of God. The stirring testimonies of reproof and warning do not arouse them. The sweetest melodies that come from God through human lips-justification by faith, and the righteousness of Christ-do not bring forth from them a response of love and gratitude. Though the heavenly Merchantman displays before them the richest jewels of faith and love; though His voice invites them to buy of Him "gold tried in the fire," and "white raiment that they might be clothed," and "eye salve that they may see," they steel their hearts against Him, and fail to exchange their half warmth for love and zeal; but fold their hands in complacency, make a profession but deny the power of true godliness. If they continue in this state, God will reject them with abhorrence. To praise the world and God at the same time, is in no way acceptable to God. Awake, awake, before it is everlastingly too late!

No One is to be an Idler in the Vineyard

Brethren and sisters who have long claimed to believe the truth, I would ask you, Have your practices been in harmony with your light? With your privileges? With the opportunities granted of Heaven? This is a serious question. Why is it there is so little faith? So little spiritual power? Why are there so few who bear the yoke and carry the burden of Christ? Why do persons have to be urged to take up their work for the Master? Why are there so few who can unveil the mysteries of redemption? Why is it that the imputed righteousness of Christ does not shine through His professed followers as a light to the world?

The Sun of Righteousness has risen upon the church, and it is the duty of the church to shine. Those who are connected with Christ will grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, to the full stature of men and women. It is the privilege of every soul to make advancement. No one is to be an idler in the vineyard. If all who claim to believe the truth had made the most of their opportunities and ability to learn all that they were privileged to learn, they would have become strong in Christ. No matter what may have been their occupation, if farmers, mechanics, teachers, or Pastors, if they had wholly consecrated themselves to God, they would have been efficient agents to work for the heavenly Master.

Laborers Together with God

Those who are united to the church should be living, working agents to impart light to those who are in darkness. They should declare the truth of God, revealing His love and faithfulness. When men use their powers as God directs them to, their talents will increase, their ability will enlarge, and they will have heavenly wisdom in seeking to save those who are lost. But while the church members are listless, and neglectful of their God-given responsibility, how can they expect to receive the treasure of heaven to impart to others? When professed Christians feel no burden to enlighten the minds of those who are in darkness, when they fail to make use of the rich grace of Christ, and cease to impart the knowledge they have received, they become less discerning, lose their appreciation of the richness of the heavenly endowment, and, failing to value it themselves, they fail to present it to others. It is only as God sees His professed people eager to be laborers together with Him, that He can impart to them light and grace; for then they will make every interest secondary to the interest of His work and cause. With such workers the heavenly intelligences will co-operate.

Diligence in the Master's Work

Are we endowed with the Holy Spirit, so that with heavenly wisdom we may meet the emergencies of this age, and counteract, as far as possible, the movements of this world? It is no time now for the watchman to become sleepy, and cease to be a sentinel upon the walls of Zion. Peculiar and rapid changes will soon take place; and if the church is not asleep, if the followers of Christ watch and pray, they may have light to comprehend and appreciate the movements of the enemy.

Winning Souls to Christ our Chief Aim

God has given to every man a work to do in connection with His kingdom. Each one professing the name of Christ is to be an interested worker, ready to defend the principles of righteousness. The work of the gospel is not to depend solely upon the minister; every soul should take an active part in advancing the cause of God. But, instead of this how many of our large churches come and go like a door on its hinges, feeling no responsibility for the progress of the work, no interest in the salvation of souls for whom Christ died. They do not dream of caving their religion into their business. They say, Religion is religion, and business is business; they believe each has a proper sphere, but let them be separated. But in whatever calling a Christian is found, he has his work to do for the Lord in representing Christ to the world. Whatever may be our occupation, we are to be missionaries, having our chief aim the winning of souls to Christ. If this is not our interest, we rob God of influence, of time, of money and effort. In withholding our heart's service from the Lord, we fail to benefit our fellowman, and thus rob God of the glory that would flow to Him through the conversion of others.

Training the Children

What excuse can the professed followers of Christ offer for neglecting to train their children in such a way that they will, for the sake of advancing the work of Christ, bind about their wants in dress, and avoid all extravagance and display? The children should be educated in such a way that they will have sympathy for the aged and afflicted, and lend all the help in their power to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and distressed. They should be taught to be diligent in the missionary work; and from their earliest years, principles of self-denial and sacrifice for the good of others should be inculcated, that they may be laborers together with God.

Oh, that parents would look carefully and prayerfully after their children's eternal welfare! Let them ask themselves: Have we been careless? Have we neglected this solemn work? Have we allowed our children to become the sport of Satan's temptations? Have we a solemn account to settle with God because we have permitted our children to use their talents, their time, and influence in working against the truth? Against Jesus Christ? Have we neglected our duty as parents, and increased the subjects of Satan's kingdom?

A Transformation Needed

This home missionary work, this home field, has been shamefully neglected, and it is time that divine resources and remedies were presented that this state of evil may be healed. If parents would see a different state of things in their family, let them consecrate themselves wholly to God, and the Lord will devise ways and means whereby a transformation may take place in their households. Let the church awake, let every member take up his individual work and vindicate the name of the Lord by which he is called. Let sound faith and earnest piety take the place of slothfulness and unbelief. When faith lays hold upon Christ, the truth will bring delight to your soul, and religion will not be a dull, uninteresting enterprise. Your social meetings, now tame and spiritless, will be vitalized by the Holy Spirit, and your daily experiences will become rich as you practice the Christianity you profess.

In the face of what might be done, will the church sleep on, or will they feel the responsibility and the honor that is conferred upon them through the merciful providence of God, and gather up their hereditary trusts and the advantages of present light, and feel the necessity of rising to the urgent emergency that now presents itself before us? Oh, that all may arouse and manifest to the world that this is a living faith, that a vital issue is before the world, that Jesus will soon come! Let men see that we believe we are on the borders of the eternal world.

Practical Missionary Work

“Watchman, what of the night?” Are the watchmen to whom comes this cry able to give the trumpet a certain sound? Are the shepherds faithfully caring for the flock as those who must give an account? Are the ministers of God watching for souls, realizing that those under their care are the purchase of the blood of Christ? A great work is to be done in the world, and what efforts are we putting forth that it may be accomplished? The people have listened to too much sermonizing; but have they been instructed as to how to labor for those for whom Christ died? Has there been a line of work devised and laid out before the people in such a way that each one saw the necessity of taking part in the work?

It is evident that all the sermons that have been preached have not brought up this kind of labor, and the churches are withering up because they have failed to use their talents in diffusing the light of truth to others. Careful instruction should be given that will be as lessons from the Master, that all may put their light to practical use in benefiting others. Those who have the oversight of the churches should select members who have ability, and place them under responsibilities, at the same time giving them instruction as to how they may best serve and bless others.

Years Behind

Every means should be used to get the knowledge of the truth before the thousands who will discern the evidence, who will appreciate the likeness of Christ in His people, if they can have an opportunity to see it. There are those among us who, if they should take time to consider, would regard their do-nothing Position as a sinful neglect to use the talents which God has given them.

God has given His messengers the truth to proclaim. Then the churches are to voice the truth from the lips of the messengers, and use their talents in every way possible to make the ministry a power to communicate truth by their catching the first rays of light, and diffusing the same. Here is our great sin. We are years behind. The ministers have been seeking the hidden treasures, and have been opening up the casket, and letting the jewels of truth shine forth, but not one-hundredth part has been done, or is being done, by the members of the church that God requires of them. They will, in that great day, be self convicted and self-condemned for their slothfulness. May the Lord lead them to self-penitence, and to now see themselves and exclaim, “Lord I am that fruitless fig-tree.” May the Lord forgive His people who are not doing the work in His vineyard that He has given them to do.

Evils of Inaction

What can we expect but deterioration in religious life when the people listen to sermon after sermon, and do not put into practice the instruction given? The ability God has given, if not exercised, will degenerate, and men and women unemployed will become as tools that rust from inaction. Let the missionary meeting be turned to account in teaching the people how to do missionary work. Put work into their hands, and let not the youth be ignored, but let them come in to share in the labor and responsibility. Let them feel that they have a part to act in helping and blessing others. Even the children should be taught to do some little errand of love and mercy for those less fortunate than themselves.

The very simplest modes of work should be devised, and set in operation among the churches. If members will co-operate with such a plan, and perseveringly carry it out, they will reap a rich reward, for their experience will grow brighter, their ability will increase through exercise, and souls will be saved through their efforts. But if, on the other hand, the churches are left to their inactivity, Satan will see that they are employed. He will pre-occupy the field, and give the members lines of work to do that will engage their energies, kill spirituality, and make them fall as dead weights upon the church.

Set the Members to Work

There are scores who have real ability who are rusting from inaction, and yet many of these do not know how to set themselves at work for the Master. But let someone who has ability to devise ways whereby this talent may be utilized, lay out before these inactive ones the line of work that they could do, and let them understand that this is expected from them, and many who are now unemployed will become true laborers.

The parable of the talents should be explained to all. The members of the churches should be made to understand that they are the light of the world, and, according to their several ability, the Lord expects that His professed followers will enlighten and bless those around them. Those who have heard so much preaching ought certainly to know that if they undertake to work for the Lord, they will have divine aid.

Do not pass by the little things and look for a large work. You might do successfully the small work, but fail utterly in attempting a large work, and fall into discouragement. Take hold wherever you see that there is work to be done whether you are rich or poor, great or humble, God calls you into active service for Him. It will be by doing with your might what your hands find to do that you will

develop talents and aptitude for the work, and it is by neglecting your daily opportunities that you become fruitless and withered. This is why there are so many fruitless trees in the garden of the Lord.

Angels Waiting to Co-Operate with us

All heaven is in activity, and the angels of God are waiting to co-operate with the human agent who will devise plans whereby souls for whom Christ died may hear the glad tidings of salvation. Every soul has an influence for good or evil. If the soul is sanctified to the service of God, and devoted to the work of Christ, the influence will be to gather with Christ. God depends upon the church for the forwarding of His work, and He expects that His professed followers will do their duty as intelligent beings. There is great need that every trained mind, every disciplined intellect, every jot of ability, shall be brought to the work of saving souls. There will be no idler, no slothful one who neglects the work of the Lord, found inside of the kingdom of heaven.

God expects His church to discipline and fit its members for the work of enlightening the world. But let no one feel that because he is not educated he cannot be expected to take part in the work. God has a work for you to do. He has given to every man his work. You can search the scriptures for yourself. "The entrance of Thy words gives light; it gives understanding unto the simple." The prayer of the sincere heart, offered in faith, will be heard in heaven.

Ministering to Others

Souls are perishing out of Christ, and those who profess to be the disciples of Christ are letting them die. Our brethren have talents entrusted for this very work; but they have bound them up in a napkin and buried them in the earth. What manner of entreaty can be brought to bear upon the idlers in market places that will arouse them to go and work in the Master's vineyard? What can we say to the slothful church-member to make him realize the necessity of unearthing his talent and putting it out to the exchangers? Oh, that God would set this matter in all its importance before the sleeping churches! Oh that Zion would arouse and put on her beautiful garments! Oh that she would shine.

This work of enlightening others is not the work of the minister only, but it is the work of all who profess the truth of God. God has given to every man his work in making Christ known to the world. We must teach the members of the church how they may effectually minister to others. There are many who are ordained ministers, who have never yet exercised a shepherd's care over the flock of God, who have never yet watched for souls as they that must give an account. Were the kind of labor of which it stands in need bestowed upon the church, many who are doing nothing would be educated to become diligent laborers in the harvest field. An education should be given to the people of God that would result in furnishing hundreds who would put out to the exchangers valuable talents, whose use would develop men for positions of trust and influence, and great good would be accomplished for the Master.

Scores of Slothful Servants

But instead of thus developing, the church is left to be a weak, dependent, inefficient body. The members of the church are trained to rely upon preaching, and they do little for Christ.

They bear no fruit, but rather increase in selfishness and unfaithfulness. They put their hope in the preacher, and depend on his efforts to keep alive their weak faith. Because of the lack of proper instruction among the church members by those whom God has placed as overseers, there is not one merely, but scores, who are slothful, and who are hiding their talents in the earth, and still complaining of the Lord's dealings toward them. They need to be tended as do sick children. This condition of weakness must not continue. Well organized work must be done in the church, that its members may understand the manner in which they may impart light to others, and thus strengthen their own faith and increase their knowledge.

As they impart the light which God graciously bestows upon them to those in darkness, they will be confirmed in the faith. A working church is a living church. We are built up as living stones, and every stone is to emit light; for every one is compared to a precious stone that catches the glory of God and reflects it to others.

The idea that the minister must carry all the burdens, and to do all the work, is a great mistake. Overworked and broken down, he may go into the grave, when, had the burden been shared as the Lord designed, he might have lived. That the burden may be distributed, an education must be given to the church by those who can instruct the workers to follow Christ, and to work as He worked.

Let the Overseers Devise Plans

Why do not the overseers of the church have councils to devise ways whereby young men and women may be trained to put to use their entrusted talents? Why do not the older members of the church seek to do good, earnest compassionate work for the children and youth? Many have embraced the truth, and yet they have not been educated as to how they may serve the cause of God and thereby grow in spiritual muscle and sinew. Let the ministers put to use all their ingenuity, that plans may be devised whereby the youthful members of the church may be enlisted in the cause of God. Why should they not be interested in the great work that there is to be done? But do not imagine that this interest can be aroused by going to the missionary meeting and presenting a long sermon; plan ways whereby a live interest may be kindled, and train up the young to do what is appointed them.

Let them have a part to act, and from week to week let them bring in their reports, telling what they have experienced, and, through the grace of Christ, what success has been theirs. If the missionary meeting were a meeting where such reports were brought in by consecrated workers, it would not be dull, tedious, and uninteresting. It would be full of intense interest, and there would be no lack in attendance.

In every church the members should be trained so that they will devote time to the work and win souls to Christ. How can it be said of the church, "Ye are the light of the world," unless the members of the church actually impart light to others? In seeking to point sinners to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, their own love will be kindled, and by beholding Him they, too, will become changed into His likeness. Will those who have charge of the flock of God awaken to their duty?

The Need of Home Missionaries

Some who have long professed to be Christians, and yet have felt no responsibility for the souls of those who are perishing right around them, within the shadow of their own homes, may feel a burden to go to foreign lands to take hold of work far off; but where is the evidence of their fitness for such a work? Wherein have they manifested a burden for souls? Let such begin the work at home, in their own household, in their own neighborhood, among their own friends. Here they will find a favorable missionary field. This home missionary work is a test revealing their ability or inability for service in a wider field.

An Example

In the case of Philip and Nathanael we have an example of true home missionary work. Philip had seen Jesus, and was convinced that He was the Messiah. The knowledge he had received was so blessed to him that he wished his friends also to know the good news. He was desirous that the light and truth which had brought him such comfort and joy should be shared by Nathanael. True grace in the heart will always reveal its existence by diffusing itself. Philip went in search of Nathanael, and as he called, Nathanael answered from his place of prayer under the fig tree. Nathanael had not had the privilege of listening to the words of Jesus, but he was being drawn toward Him in spirit. He longed for light and truth, and was at that moment sincerely praying for them. Philip with joy exclaimed, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth." This is the way light is to be communicated-by private, personal effort. In the home circle, at your neighbor's fireside, at the bedside of the sick, in a quiet way you may read the Scriptures, and speak a word for Jesus and the truth. Precious seed may thus be sown that will spring up and bring forth fruit after many days.

Neglected Opportunities

We see large churches gathered in different localities. Their members have a knowledge of the truth; but they are content to hear and partake of the Word of life themselves, and do not seek to impart light to those who are without. Because of these neglected opportunities, this abuse of privileges, they themselves are not growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Thus the members of our churches are weak in faith, deficient in knowledge, and children inexperience. They are not rooted and grounded in the truth. If they remain thus, the many delusions of the last days will surely deceive them; for they will have no spiritual eyesight to discern truth from error.

The end is near! God calls upon the church to set in order the things that remain. Workers together with God, you are empowered by the Lord to take others with you into the kingdom. You are to be God's living agents, channels of light to the world, and around about you are angels of heaven with their commission from Christ to sustain, strengthen, and uphold you in working for the salvation of souls.

I appeal to the churches in every conference: Stand out separate and distinct from the world, in the world but not of it, reflecting the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness, being pure, holy, and undefiled, and in faith carrying light into all the highways and byways of the earth. To His church God has committed the work of diffusing light and bearing the message of His love. Our work is not to condemn, not to denounce, but to beseech men to be reconciled to God. We are to encourage souls, to attract them, and thus win them to Jesus.

Give the Trumpet a Certain Sound

We are pressing on to the final conflict, and this is no time to compromise; it is no time to hide your colors. When the battle rages sore, let no one turn traitor. It is no time to lay down or conceal our weapons, and give Satan the advantage in the warfare; but unless you watch, and keep your garments unspotted from the world, you will not stand true to your Captain. It is no time for watchmen to slumber on the walls of Zion. Let them be wide awake. Call to your fellow watchmen, crying, "The morning comes, and also the night." It is no time now to relax our efforts, to become tame and spiritless; no time to hide our light under a bushel, to speak smooth things, to prophesy deceit. Every power is to be employed for God. You are to maintain your allegiance, bearing testimony for God and for truth. Be not turned aside by any suggestion the world can make. We cannot afford to compromise.

There is a living issue before us, of vital importance to the remnant people of God, to the very close of this Earth's history; for eternal interests are involved. On the very eve of the crisis, it is no time to be found with an evil heart of unbelief, departing from the living God.

The original apostasy began in disbelief and denial of the truth; but if we would triumph, we must fix the eye of faith steadfastly upon Jesus, the Captain of our salvation. We are to follow the example of Christ, and in all that Jesus did on earth, He had an eye single to the glory of God. He says, "As the Father gave Me commandment, even so do I." Divinity and humanity were united in Christ, that He might reveal to us God's purpose, and bring man into close union with Himself. This union will enable us to overcome the enemy; for through faith in Christ we shall have divine power.

Our numbers are increasing, our facilities are enlarging, and all this calls for union among the workers, for entire consecration and thorough devotion to the cause of God. There is no place in the work of God for halfhearted workers, for those who are neither cold nor hot.

Watchmen on the walls of Zion are to be vigilant, and sleep not day nor night. But if they have not received the message from the lips of Christ, their trumpets will give an uncertain sound. Brethren, God calls upon you, both ministers and laymen, to listen to His voice speaking to you in His Word. Let His truth be received into the heart, that you may be spiritualized by its living sanctifying power. Then let the distinct message for this time be sent from watchman to watchman on the walls of Zion.

The Lord Jesus Our Sufficiency

The members of the church of Christ are to be faithful workers in the great harvest field. They are to be diligently working and earnestly praying, making progress, and diffusing light amid the moral darkness of the world; for are not the angels of heaven imparting to them divine inspiration? They are never to think of, and much less to speak of, failure in their work. They are to be filled with hopes, knowing that they do not rely upon human ability, or upon finite resources, but upon the promised divine aid, the ministry of heavenly agencies, who are pledged to open the way before them. The promise is given them, "Thy righteousness shall go before them." We, of ourselves, have no righteousness; we have only that righteousness which is imparted from Christ, the Fountain of righteousness. He is "the Lord our righteousness." Angels of God will break the way before us, preparing hearts for the gospel message.

The Lord Jesus is our efficiency in all things; His Spirit is to be our inspiration; and as we place ourselves in His hands, to be channels of light, our means of doing good will never be exhausted; for the resources of the power of Jesus Christ are to be at our command. We may draw upon His fullness, and receive of that grace which has no limit.

Listen to the voice of Jesus, as it comes sounding down along the lines to our time, addressing the professed Christian who stands idle in the market place: "Why stand ye here all the day idle? Go ye also into the vineyard." Work while it is day; for the night cometh, in which no man can work.

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