

CHRIST'S GOSPEL MISREPRESENTED

Foolishness of Preaching to the Worldly-Wise.

HIGHER CRITICISM'S BLIGHT.

Why Should God's Ministers Preach and Entreat While Earthly Rulers Command?—In the Coming Age of Messiah's Kingdom It Will Be Different. The Law Shall Go Forth and the Transgressor Shall Receive Corrective Punishment, Says Pastor Russell.



Lancaster, Pa., Dec. 22. — Pastor Russell spoke here today. The text for the occasion was: "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." — 1 Corinthians, i. 21.

There is a wide difference between foolish preaching and the foolishness of preaching which our text declares is of Divine arrangement. The many topics of interest and profit to humanity all have their time and place. But the preaching of the Gospel has an exclusive right of way in the Church of Christ. If some claim that the people will no longer attend Divine service to hear Gospel preaching, we reply that there are three reasons for this.

(1) The Church lost the real Gospel during the Dark Ages, and few Christian people have yet recovered it. The word Gospel, as all agree, signifies good tidings, a message of joy; but the message handed down to humanity from the Dark Ages has been the reverse of this—bad tidings of great misery for nearly all of our race. Is it any wonder that the great majority are disgusted with the horrible misrepresentations of the creeds? Mankind have trials and difficulties enough in the present life, and need encouragement to hope for better things in the life to come.

(2) Responding to the growing sentiment of intelligence, the ministers of the various denominations of Christendom have ceased to preach bad tidings of great misery for all but "the very elect." Nearly all ministers, graduated within the last twenty years, lost all their faith in the Bible as the inspired Word of God, in the theological seminaries, where they were taught unbelief, under the name of Higher Criticism; where they also were taught to consider it honorable to stultify their unbelief by accepting ordination and salary for serving a denomination whose published creed they disown and despise. In the same seminaries they acquired the thought that it is right and honorable to receive title, honor and salary from a church, ostensibly as a Christian minister and Bible exponent, and then to use the opportunity to undermine the faith of the church and to destroy confidence in the Bible as the inspired Word of God.

Under these conditions, what shall these ministers preach instead of the Gospel of Christ, which they no longer believe? Is it any wonder that they preach those things that they ought not to preach, and leave unpreached those things that they ought to preach? Not many of their hearers care for scientific disquisitions; not many of them care to hear commonplace essays on good morals. So how can such ministers avoid foolish preaching?

(3) Not content with undermining the faith of the people who trust and honor and obey them, these ministers mix their higher critical views and evolutionary views with diluted morality, and serve this as instead of the Gospel of Christ. He who thinks that such a message will convert a man from sin to righteousness, from unbelief to faith in God, deceives himself, as who thinks that such messages will give a sanctifying power in the hearts of God's people, equally deceives himself.

No Gospel Without Redemption.
The essence of the Gospel of Christ is that He died for sinners, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring mankind back to God. But the false gospels deny that man ever fell from the likeness of God and equally deny therefore that he needed a Redeemer and that he has a Redeemer. Such spurious gospels, which leave out the very core and essence of the Divine Message, are false, by whatever honorable channel they may have come. We may be sure that they are of the Adversary himself; for they make void the Word of God, the death of Jesus and His resurrection, and His coming again to give to mankind the glorious messianic and privileges bought with His precious blood.

The True Gospel, the "good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people," contains not a single word respecting an eternity of torture at the hands of fire-proof demons. It contains not a single word which would discredit the Wisdom, Justice and Love of the Father above, whose tender mercies are over all His works and whose salvation is yet to be extended to the ends of the earth.

The True Gospel, acknowledging that humanity has come justly under a penalty or curse of death, sets before the groaning creation a glorious hope. It proclaims, as Jesus did, that the time is coming when the curse shall be re-

moved, and when God through the Messianic Kingdom "will wipe away all tears from off all faces." (Isaiah xxv, 8.) It proclaims, as Jesus did, a glorious prospect for all who desire to come into harmony with God; and a just penalty, or stripes, upon all those who sin wilfully against light and knowledge and opportunity. It proclaims that a New Day is dawning, in which the Lord will give "beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for the spirit of heaviness."

The True Gospel includes the "Gospel of the Kingdom"—that the Divine arrangement now is for the selection of the Kingdom class from amongst men, to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ in His Messianic Kingdom. It proclaims the Kingdom of God by and by, to judge, rule and bless all the families of the earth. It proclaims also that the number who will attain to this Kingdom glory is limited—a Little Flock, to whom it will be the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom. (Luke xii, 32.) It exhorts the making of "our calling and election sure" to a share in that Kingdom.

Is Gospel Preaching Logical?
Let us notice the world's viewpoint, which causes the Gospel Message to appear foolish to them. To the worldly-wise it looked very foolish, indeed, for Jesus to go about Palestine with twelve disciples, performing some miracles and inviting chiefly the poor to become His followers, leaving business and other pursuits. "Ah," says the world, "how impractical was Jesus, and how foolish was His message! A business man would have laid a good foundation for his work by making friends with the Scribes, the Pharisees and the Doctors of the Law, and utilizing their influence with their hold upon the people."

But, we ask, how then would the Scriptures have been fulfilled? Who would have crucified Christ, or have caused His death? There would have been no reconciliation possible for mankind. It is well for us that Jesus did not follow the suggestions of worldly wisdom. Truly "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God," even as the Wisdom of God is foolishness with the children of this world.

It is because worldly wisdom got its hold in the Dark Ages that the Gospel has been perverted so greatly. Great human institutions have arisen, mighty and powerful, through man's cunning, priestcraft and statecraft have made the professed Church of Christ one of the greatest business institutions on earth. Not more, but less, of human wisdom is what we need; and not less, but more, of Divine Wisdom and instruction from the Bible.

Why It Seems Foolish.
From the world's standpoint it seems foolish that God should invite any to do right and to be His servants. It seems weak for a God of all power to entreat, where He could command and enforce obedience. Earth's kings, having the power, would enforce their commands; in fact, everybody, as a rule, executes his own will. How strange, therefore, it appears to the world, that it should be otherwise with the Almighty.

The Bible, however, gives the information. God wishes to select a special class of special servants. To test their loyalty, there must be opportunity for them to resist Him and to refuse obedience. God causes His Message or invitation to pass on to others also, that thus He may find the peculiar people who prefer to do good rather than evil to such an extent that they are willing to suffer for righteousness' sake. The special work which He designs the Church to accomplish requires such loyal, faithful souls as these—men and women glad to sacrifice their lives in the service of the Lord, His cause and His brethren. The class He seeks "count not their lives dear unto themselves."

God carries the proposition still further, however, and puts this special class to peculiar and severe tests, that the trial of their faith and obedience, being more precious than that of gold, may be found acceptable unto His pleasure—eventually.

Persecutions, tribulations, attacks from the world, the flesh and the Adversary, are permitted to come against these to test their loyalty. None of these things are what the world would expect; and to tell the world of these is to relate what seems to them foolishness. They cannot see why consecrated people of God should suffer reproofs for righteousness' sake, for Truth's sake.

But all these matters are clear and plain to those who are taught of God—to those who have learned that the Church is being selected from amongst mankind for a very special work of God. This makes it appropriate that their loyalty be tested to the limit, in order that they may be counted worthy of the "glory, honor and immortality," which God has for those who love Him.

By and By It Will Be Different.
The Divine Plan outlined in the Bible is different. The procedure under Messiah's Kingdom and dealing with the world will be exactly what the world will concede to be a wise program. In that time all darkness, ignorance and superstition will speedily pass away under the advancing light of the Sun of Righteousness. The way of righteousness will no longer be narrow, secluded and rugged, as at present. God describes it through the Prophet, saying, "A highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; * * * the redeemed of the Lord shall walk there; no ravenous beast shall go up thereon."—Isaiah xlvii, 8, 9.

Faithfulness will bring the Divine reward of freedom from weakness, and of increase of strength—mental, moral and physical. Day by day the warrior, walking on the Highway of Hol-

ness, will be coming nearer to human perfection. Thus will be fulfilled, through Christ, the gracious promise that "God shall wipe away all tears from all faces," and "there shall be no more curse, neither sorrow, nor sighing, nor crying; for the former things shall have passed away."

Many Stripes and Few Stripes.
The Bible clearly indicates that the Adamic condemnation against our race will be fully offset by the merit of Christ's sacrifice. But on the other hand, it tells us that every transgression which is not purely of inherited weakness is charged to the account of the transgressor and must be met by him. Jesus emphasizes this lesson, saying, "He that knew his Master's will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew it not and yet did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." Some of these stripes, or punishments, may indeed come to the transgressor in the present life; and if so, he does well to profit by them.

But whether in the present life or in the future life, every wilful transgression will receive "a just recompense of reward." The difficulty with our theories of the Dark Ages on this subject has not been that they taught a punishment for sin; but that they taught an unjust penalty, dishonoring to the Creator and stultifying to the believer.

The Records of Wilful Sin.
It is a mistake to say that increasing sins would increase the pang of conscience and that thus each would be punished. We know to the contrary that many, as they become steeped in sin, lose all sensibility. St. Paul corroborates this thought, saying of some that their consciences become "seared"—enslaved.

God provided that each individual shall keep a record in himself of his own moral obligations. Each violation of conscience weakens the character. Character weakened, degraded, can be reconstructed only with proportionately great difficulty. Thus some, during the period of Messiah's Kingdom, will be struggling against weaknesses which they brought upon themselves, aside from those of Adamic heredity. The assistance from the Royal Priesthood will be proportionate to the Adamic weakness, contrary to the human will. Outside temptations will be gone. Full knowledge will be there; but character will be the thing of paramount importance as determining who will attain everlasting life.

Our Redeemer gave a suggestion along this line when He said to the Pharisees, "How can ye escape the condemnation of Gehenna?" (Matthew xxiii, 33.) The Valley of Hinnom (Gehenna) outside Jerusalem, where the altar was finally destroyed, symbolically represented the Second Death, as explained in Revelation xx, 14. Jesus did not condemn the Pharisees to the Second Death. His mission to the world was not to condemn men; for they were condemned already—under the Adamic condemnation. The Son of Man came "not to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." (John iii, 17.) At the time He spoke these words respecting the Pharisees, He was laying down His life on behalf of all the children of Adam. They could not forfeit their share in His resurrection until that work had been completed and they had enjoyed their share of the Redeemer's favor.

The import of the Redeemer's words, therefore, was that He perceived in them so much of dishonesty and hardness of heart that He prophesied that they would have a hard time to reform character, even under the favorable conditions of the Millennium. They had seen the Master, heard His teachings, witnessed His miracles, and must have been reasonably convinced that it was a holy power which operated in Him. When, therefore, in bitterness of spirit they declared that His miracles and teachings were inspirations of Satan, they were well nigh without excuse.

It could hardly be supposed that such perversity of spirit was the result either of ignorance or of Adamic weakness. Evidently there was great willfulness associated with it. Hence the Master declared that persons who could thus attribute to Satan things which they recognized as good, pure and holy, must have greatly perverted their consciences. They will be obliged to suffer stripes accordingly, and will have proportionately great difficulty in bringing themselves into harmony with the requirements of the Messianic Kingdom.

"Preach the Word."
All of God's people are preachers. The begetting influence of the Holy Spirit is the only ordination necessary, and without it no one has Divine authority to preach. Preaching, in its broad sense, means to declare, to make known. God's Book makes no division of His people into clergy and laity. "He that hath My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully," saith the Lord. Let us declare God's Message in its purity and simplicity, whoever hears and whoever refuses to hear. Let us not be disappointed that the worldly-wise will think it foolish, as in St. Paul's day; and let us not be surprised if the preaching of this Message shall bring odium, as it did upon the Master and the Apostles. "The world knoweth us not, even as it knew Him not."

God's Message, for all that, will accomplish its purpose. He will find the "peculiar people" whom He seeks; not one member of the fore-ordained number will be lacking. They will all be blessed and holy. As Messiah's associates in the Kingdom, they will then "declare the decree." (Psalm ii, 7.) The Law will go forth, and chastisements will follow to enforce the Law, until all shall be brought to a knowledge of the Truth, the inviolable decree, and every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, in the glory of God.

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John Hopkins 1st Div.
L. L. Hopkins & Co. Defs.

By order of the Knox Circuit Court, rendered at its January term 1913, in the case of John Hopkins against L. L. Hopkins & Co. Defendants I will, as Commissioner, on Monday, April 28th, 1913, same being first day of the April term of the Knox County Court, sell at the Court House door in Barbourville, Ky., to the highest and best bidder the following described property, to satisfy the judgment in said case and costs of about \$50.00.

A certain tract of land lying and being in Knox County Kentucky on the waters of Stinking Creek; waters of Cumberland River, and bounded as follows, to-wit:

Bounded on the South by the lands of C. B. Slusher and Willis Warren; and bounded on the East by the lands of Harrison Taylor's heirs; and on the North by lands of Isaac Taylor's heirs, on the West by lands of F. D. Sampson et al. Containing 250 acres more or less.

Said property will be sold on a credit of six months the purchaser to execute bonds with approved security, bearing interest at 6 per cent from date until paid, having the force and effect of a judgement and retaining a lien on said property until the purchase money is paid.

Witness my hand, this 5 day of March 1913.
W. W. BYRLEY, Commissioner
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