

INDEPENDENT BIBLE STUDY

A BROTHER WRITES for our opinion respecting the wisdom and propriety of the different classes having "independent Bible study."

We cannot be sure just what force or significance the Brother gives to the word *independent*. Just so sure as each individual has a full right to study the Bible without hindrance from anybody, so has every class this right or liberty. But in using our liberties it behooves us to exercise as much "wisdom from above" as possible. For four centuries Protestantism has been contending the right of private judgment for interpretation of God's Word and has exercised this right, and we would be the last to dispute it. At the same time two things are worthy of remembrance:--

(1) There has been very little independent Bible study all this time.

(2) No very clear understanding of the Bible was reached during all these centuries. We account for this by supposing that the Lord's due time for opening His Word to our understanding has only now come. If now the Lord has blessed us with clearer views of His Word, it behooves us to remember that we did not get it because of the four hundred years of independent Bible study, but by His specially calling it to our attention in His own peculiar way in recent years. Wisdom no less than humility should teach us to be neither too boastful nor too reckless in our use of the word *independent* in connection with this question. While we have the same right to independence that our forefathers had it might do us no more good than it did them. Rather we should seek for dependent Bible study, rather than for independent Bible study. Our dependance should not be upon man, but upon the Lord; yet we should expect the Lord to use human instrumentality in the present, as in the past.

The matter is for each individual Christian and each class of students to decide. The Lord has laid down no law on the subject. His children are to use the "wisdom which comes from above" in respect to these and all matters.

The questioner may mean to distinguish between the use of Berean Studies or topics from the topical index of our new Bibles and the taking up of a chapter or an Epistle without any guide or help, except such as would be given by the leader of the class and its members. If so, much would depend on the personnel of the class and their development in the knowledge of the Truth. It is for the class to decide for itself every particular respecting its meetings. And should a class so decide they would have a perfect right to try different methods and to judge which proved the most helpful.

In any event those possessed of the new Bible study helps could follow nearly any lesson in the New Testament by noting the references and studying them and, if desirable, bringing them into the class. Any class leader who would make objection to a reference being made to THE WATCH TOWER or to STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES in connection with the discussion of any topic should properly be viewed with suspicion as a teacher. Why should he be afraid of any comment, from any quarter? And, especially, why should he fear or avoid or desire others to avoid any reference to the writings which God has used in giving him and the others instruction in the Scriptures?

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