

WELL-MEANING, BUT HINDERERS

WE FEEL sure that all of the Lord's people have only the best of motives. How could they have other than good motives and yet be recognized by the Lord? Selfishness may creep in and assert itself to some extent without being detected by the New Creature; but being detected, it is to be restrained, demeaned, put to death. The entire course of the Lord's followers is one of experience in respect to personal imperfections of mind and body, and in respect to properly understanding the words and conduct of others.

We have two items which we desire to bring to the attention of such brethren as have to do with public speaking, introductions, funeral services, etc. Our suggestions and criticisms should be understood as intended to be helpful to the brethren themselves and to the Cause we all love to serve.

(1) We are informed that, when serving at funerals, some of the brethren, anxious to tell the Good Tidings respecting death and the wages of sin upon our race, and the redemption and the resurrection as the release from the penalty, are in danger of going to extremes. Sometimes they preach too long--attempting to tell more than is proper on such an occasion. At other times they are so intent upon presenting the Gospel Message and Bible explanation respecting death, that they forget to speak a word of comfort to the bereaved members of the family of the deceased, or to make some reference to the deceased, his character, his zeal for God, his devotion to the Bible--or some other truthful eulogy comforting to the bereaved family.

We are not wishing to intimate in any sense that ordinary funeral sermons, which are wholly eulogistic and give no attention to the Bible teaching respecting death, are right. We merely wish to suggest that a [R5475 : page 169] course of moderation is a wise one, bringing in an explanation of some of the Divine Plan, and making some reference to the deceased and his family, etc.

(2) Great care should be exercised in the selection of a brother to do the introducing of a public speaker. Far better is it that there be no introduction at all, than that a wrong one be made. The person who thinks the occasion a suitable one for showing off himself, his eloquence, his knowledge of the Bible, etc., should not be entrusted with any work of introduction. The person who thinks it an opportunity to tell all he knows of the Divine Plan and to inform the audience in advance what the speaker intends to tell them, is just as much out of place as is the person who, being invited to offer an opening prayer, stretches it out into a discourse, wastes valuable time and disgusts everybody with his lack of propriety. More harm can be done in two minutes by the person who introduces the speaker than the latter could undo in two hours.

Humility, modesty and brevity are grand qualities everywhere, but are especially appropriate in those who would introduce a speaker, whether at a Class Extension Meeting, Pilgrim Meeting or any other.

On such an occasion the one leading in prayer should make it merely an invocation. The audience has not come together to hear him pray, but to hear the address. His invocation should thank God for the privileges of the hour, for the liberty granted in our day, for the desire of heart to know the Truth and for an open Bible. Requests should be made of the Lord for a Divine blessing upon the meeting--upon the audience and upon the speaker, that the Lord's name may be glorified, that the Truth be advanced and all who love righteousness be blessed.

The introduction should be brief also. It should not say, "The speaker will tell you what we believe," as though making a distinction between the audience and the small group in the audience who profess to be teachers. With greater humility, it should be something like this: "It is my privilege and honor to introduce the speaker of the afternoon. He comes to us under the auspices of the International Bible Students Association, bringing, we believe, a Message from God's Word. We trust that it will be convincing, encouraging, helpful. Let us hear candidly,

remembering the Master's words that we are to be sanctified through the Truth, and that His Word is the Truth. Let us therefore rejoice in proportion as the Word of the Lord is heard with the ears of our hearts. I now introduce to you _____, whose topic for the occasion is _____."