

## **TRUTH—WOUNDED IN THE HOUSE OF ITS FRIENDS**

(The item directly below is as reported in Bible Students Monthly-1916, V. 8. No.12. There titled: “Workmen That Need Not Be Ashamed”. Here recomposed in a 1981 witness tract.)

*“Study to Show Thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.”—2 Tim. 2:15.*

Although the world is full of denominations, each claiming to be the Church of Christ, we all admit that there is but the one “Church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven” (Hebrews 12:23). This conviction is being borne in upon us more and more as the days go by, and as the eyes of our understanding open more widely to the teachings of God’s Word. We realize increasingly that our division means our shame in the eyes of the world, and that our Creedal contradictions imply that we are not all led in all things by the Holy Spirit, the teachings of which cannot be Yea and Nay upon the same subject. It is this sentiment which is taking hold of the ministry of all denominations and making them anxious for an outward show of Unity in Church Federation, which will shortly be effected. The Christian public, however, and especially Bible Students, are not deeply sympathetic with the Federation idea. They realize that at most it would be a gloss of deception so far as doctrinal oneness is concerned; and that otherwise it is but a business or worldly combination.

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

**“Workmen Not Ashamed”**

Let us consider the latter part of our text first: The Apostle's suggestion is that Timothy and all the ministers of the Gospel of Christ are professedly workmen, laboring under the guidance of God's Word. In the larger sense every Christian is a minister of the Gospel, or, as St. Peter declares of all the consecrated, "Ye are a Royal Priesthood, a Holy People, a Peculiar Treasure." In the end of the age will come a reckoning time, a showing of results, "Every man's work that he hath wrought shall be made manifest" (1 Corinthians 3:13).

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

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

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

Many of our dear Christian friends say, What lack we yet? Have we not really attained the goal of our Church ambition? Should we build finer edifices or pay larger salaries? Are we not straining ourselves with collections at every turn? What more could God ask of us? "We are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing" (Revelation 3:16-19).

In reply we may suppose the Lord to ask, Where did I give you instruction respecting these things? Where in my Word did you find the suggestion that what I desired you to do in the world was to erect great church edifices, piles of stone and iron and mortar, polished woods and stained glass? You are not rightly reading my Word. However good in intention, you have failed to "rightly divide the Word of Truth!" The Temple respecting which I gave instruction is the spiritual one, the Temple of the Holy Spirit—the Body of Christ which is the Church. I fear that you have forgotten the true temple of

God while rearing so many temples of earthly materials. Concerning the true Temple I instructed you that “the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are”—“living stones,” being shaped and polished “for the habitation of God through the Spirit.” Show me what you have accomplished in this way. Show me to what extent you have rightly divided my Word, and properly instructed mankind respecting my glorious character and my great Divine Plan of the Ages! Show me fruitage of the glorious message!

### **Who Authorized the Creedal Fences?**

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

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

With shame of face we must all acknowledge that “We have done those things which we ought not to have done and have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and there is no help in us.” The proper thing for us to do, dear Christian friends, is to get down upon our knees before the Lord and in contrition of heart acknowledge that we have wrought no deliverance in the earth (Isaiah 26:18); that our sectarian differences are our shame; that the ignorance that we have all been in, respecting the Word of God is humiliating. Now that our eyes are open so that we can comprehend as never before the harmony of God’s message from Genesis to Revelation, it means a rich feast and blessing to our souls. The Word of God becomes more precious to us daily as we become able to comprehend it. Our duty is to fly to the assistance of our dear brethren and sisters in Christ, of all denominations, and to call upon them to join with us in a determined stand for righteousness, for Truth, for God and for his Word.

We must show them that ignorantly we and they have dishonored our God by misrepresentation of his character and misrepresentations of the real teachings of the Bible. We must point them to the fact that the Bible does not teach that all mankind

except the “elect” saints will be consigned to an eternity of torture at the hands of fireproof demons. We must show them that the election of the Church during this age—a saintly little flock does not mean injury to the non-elect. That, on the contrary, it is the Divine purpose that the elect saints with their great Redeemer in glory shall constitute God’s Kingdom; that his Kingdom when established will bind Satan, put down sin, banish ignorance, error and superstition and uplift mankind by “restitution,” by resurrection processes, up, up, up, to all that was lost in Eden by disobedience and to all secured for Adam and his race through the great transaction at Calvary (Acts 3:19-21).

### **“Rightly Dividing The Word of Truth”**

Alas, how many intelligent people have turned aside from following Christ and from hearing the voice of God through the Bible! Alas, how many are looking to Theosophy to Spiritism, to Christian Science, to Higher Criticism, to Evolution—wandering farther and farther daily from the “faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). We fault them no more than we fault ourselves. As a whole we have been workmen who need to be ashamed. We have dishonored God through misunderstanding and misrepresenting his Word and his Character. We have driven away from God and the Bible some of the most intelligent of our fellows, by reason of the contradictory nonsense of our creeds.

The Apostle urges, “Study to show thyself approved unto God.” We are not to suppose, therefore, that the highest of all science, that which pertains to the Divine purpose and the Divine plan, can be acquired without study. We are not in this claiming that study alone would bring the desired results of proper knowledge. We heartily agree in the Scriptural proposition that “the world by wisdom knows not God.” We are not therefore to study along the lines of worldly wisdom, but along the lines of “that wisdom that cometh from above”—along the lines of the inspired Scriptures. We must study! Whoever will not study will not know, “The secret of the Lord is with them that reverence him.” And reverencing him means the giving of our best thoughts and talents to the study of his Word, that we may “know the things freely given to us of God” (1 Corinthians 2:12).

We should note further as Bible students that we must not study to be approved of men, but to have the Divine approval. This will bring to us, as it did to the Master and his apostles, the disapprobation of the worldly-wise and nominally religious. It was the Chief Priests and Scribes and Pharisees, and not the common people of the Jews, nor the Roman soldiers who instigated the crucifixion of our Lord. And we must expect similar conditions, because, as the Apostle says, “As he was so are we in this world.” The class who called the Master Beelzebub is the same class which will oppose his footstep followers.

It is those few, that “little flock” zealous for God, for his Word, for righteousness, that he is now marking out as the prospective joint-heirs with Jesus in his glorious Kingdom,

which is to bless the world with full opportunities for earthly salvation—“restitution.” The trials of the faith, the patience, the love, the devotion of this “little flock” are all designed and not accidental. Satan and his hosts may think to thwart the Divine Plan and may mislead and use humanity as their tools, but it shall yet be seen that all of the Divine purposes shall be accomplished.

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

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