

the name of Christ are stumbling blocks and bring condemnation upon themselves therefor, is no excuse to him who stumbles. For did he honestly look into the record which God gave of His Son, he would find that these very stumbling-blocks would be transformed into testimonies to the truth of God's revelation. If he only knew it, God has destroyed already all his wise deductions from the failings and weakness, in outward appearance, of the Church. Should this wise man of the world read but a few verses from God's Word and the recorded sayings of the Son of God, he would see, in the very things he criticizes, the fulfilment of that Word, and, therefore, his adverse conclusion would utterly fail of any weight.

Our wise man of this world, for example, may be heard to say:

"Look at these Christians," referring to some particular individuals or body of people, "they are as bad or worse than numbers who profess no religion. They are always doing things that even respectable people would not do. They are untruthful and dishonest. With all their profession of being so pious, they take no more interest in advancing morality in their own families or in the world at large than the infidel and the heathen. That settles me as to being a Christian." Very logical that sounds, yet what did the Founder of Christianity say to His first little band of disciples, and in regard to His own followers, by profession at least, in later times: "Iniquity shall abound," yes, among members of the Church, and "Because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold." (Matt. xxiv. 12.) At the very foundation of Christianity its great head knew and declared that the above criticism would be only too true in regard to "many," so that it proves nothing except the truth of the words of Him who said at the same time:

"He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved," and also at the same time: "Take heed that no man deceive you."

Again our wise man says: "Your preachers can't agree among themselves, and if any take up a new fad, however absurd, he can always

draw a following. What is the use of joining a body, some of whose leaders are disputing obstinately of what should be its fundamental teaching, and numbers of others cannot be depended upon to resist the first plausible exponent of some new theory who may come along?" Having said which, self-satisfaction again beams on his countenance. My dear worldly-wise man, you are, indeed, a preacher. You declare to us again the literal fulfilment of the word of the Lord. He said to His disciples, still speaking of His own followers:

"Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many," (Matt. 24: 11.)

He knew, at the outset, that there would not be simply "differences of opinion," but actually false teachers, professing to be the ambassadors of God. He also knew that, not only would "fads" draw people aside, but that actual false teaching would "deceive many."

Again, "Take heed that no man deceive you. . . . He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

"Yes, but worse even than that," says the wise man, "look at the history of the Christian Church. See how Christians have persecuted each other. Romanist has burnt Protestant at the stake, and Protestant has burnt Romanist. Is it the religion of persecution you would have me accept? The tales of these doings in the name of Christianity fill me with horror."

And think you such tales do not have the same effect on your Christian acquaintances to-day? Listen once more to the word our Master spoke.

"Then shall many be offended and shall betray one another and shall hate one another," (Matt. 24: 10.) "The time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service," (Jno. 16: 2.)

Literally true this became. Ah! there is a wisdom, a divine depth to the great scheme to the world's redemption that you have not begun to realize. The Great Redeemer foresaw all the conditions you have been observing. He looked with far, far greater disapproval at them than you or any other man can experience. Yet

He knew that a multitude whom no man could number would stand around His throne at the last. He does not excuse those who do not continue faithful. He says, "he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

He does not say the deceiver or deceived are in the way of life and safety. He says, "Take heed that no man deceive you." He knew what was in man and He knew the necessity of warning even a Peter, who concerned himself too much as to the affairs of a fellow apostle, "what is that to thee, follow thou me." You, O wise man, are a stumbling block to others, likewise. Do not forget that. And "woe to that man," which may be yourself, "by whom the offence cometh."

What need of the Blessed One's warning to the wisest of His true followers: "Take heed that no man deceive you."

What a word of encouragement to the weakest of His servants—yes, encouragement strengthened even by the fulfilment of the sad prophecies just dealt with—"He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

R. A. ROBINSON.

OBEDIENCE—NOT HYPOCRISY.

By HARRIET ELLIOT in *Parish Visitor*.

"I don't pretend to be any better than I am. I suppose if I were good like Mary, I should love to read the Bible; but I don't love it, and I won't be a hypocrite."

The speaker was an impetuous girl of sixteen, whom nobody would accuse of being a hypocrite, but like many conscientious people she believed that reading the Bible or performing outward acts of devotion without the spirit must be hypocrisy.

Now this is a great mistake, for God does not anywhere tell us that we are not to read His word until we have attained a certain degree of spirituality, but He has ordained the use of means by which we may expect to grow in grace, and foremost among them are daily Bible reading and prayer, which we must not omit, even though they seem but an empty form or an irksome task. The promise is sure: "My word shall not return unto Me void" (Isa. lv. 11).