

and enjoyed while on the earth. It must be earned by industry, prudence, thoughtfulness and perseverance before it could be deserved. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." It is evident he believed the kingdom of heaven was to be found and experienced here, or he would not have asked and urged his hearers to engage in the search for it. There is nothing in the text or context to even intimate that they were to scale the aerial heavens in pursuit of it, with the expectation of finding it, and then keep it in readiness to enter after they left this material world. And the Gospel authors tell us he said, "The kingdom of heaven does not come with observation, neither shall men say, lo here, or lo there, for the kingdom of heaven is within you," a doctrine at war with the then existing popular Chaldean faith, and obnoxious to the most numerous cultivated, religious sect of the Jews at that time, the Pharisees. These Gospels were evidently written to counteract or neutralize the false teachings and evil influence of this stolid religious sect in retarding the more progressive and enlightened thought among the more intelligent Jews, and the Greeks. The kingdom of heaven of the Gospels is a state of righteousness and harmony among the people through a wise enlightenment and intelligent, right living. What constituted the location and the necessity of a kingdom of heaven and a Heavenly Father, seems to have been the pivotal or central question about which the Gospel writers and the Pharisees or orthodox Jews did not harmonize, and the multiplicity of problems, growing out of this difference in faith, has given rise to a succession of conflicts among those claiming to be Christians, ever since. Jews nor Gentiles who profess to have adopted the Christian faith, have never accepted the palpable teachings of these Gospels as derived from and founded upon Moses and the

prophets, when the lessons were more intelligently and spiritually applied to life, under a higher civilization.

Friends in reading and teaching the real lessons meant to be conveyed by these writers should do it in the light and by the aid of contemporary history. All teaching of these gospel lessons without these advantages must be deficient and misleading. It is proper we should know what opinions were entertained and what importance was attached to them on their first appearance. Those who wrote them and the age in which they were written should be the best judges of their worth and of the purposes for which they were written. Without the aid of this light we can scarcely fail to put an erroneous and improper value on them.

It is no matter how single-minded, how sincere or how unprejudiced about them, no person is qualified or should be trusted to explain, spiritualize and teach these gospels without a general knowledge of their origin and history and of the circumstances that seemed to make it necessary for their authors to write them, and why they were adapted with a special purpose for the age in which they were written. There are some simple lessons in them that can scarcely be misunderstood or misapplied, but on the whole it would be very unwise, unsafe and scarcely fail to be pernicious to place them in the hands of incompetent teachers.

We find running, especially all through the synoptics, this mixture of the Egyptian and Chaldaic faith. The earlier manuscript Greek copies, the late revisers of our New Testament inform us were much more pure Mosaic than those translated or prepared in more modern times, which writers probably sincerely believed could be improved by changing the text to adapt it to the Pagan mind and the existing Pagan religions. It is well known, and not denied by anyone familiar with ancient ecclesiastical history, that deception, artifice and clerical forgery were not only justifiable but commend-