

SUNDAY  
SCHOOL

## The Quiet Hour

YOUNG  
PEOPLE

## THE IMPERFECTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

By Rev. Professor Stalker.

Though we speak of the Parable of the Tares and the Wheat, this title is a misnomer; because the seed sown among the wheat was not tares but darnel, a kind of wild or bastard wheat, which, in the earlier stages of its growth, is indistinguishable from genuine wheat, but in the later stages is distinguished by a rough and bearded head. So entangled do its roots become with the wheat, that it is difficult to separate the two without pulling up both. Darnel is a poisonous growth, the eating of which produces nausea and vertigo. The sowing of a field with darnel, after it had been sown with good seed, has been supposed to be a purely fanciful incident, beyond human nature's capabilities in the direction of evil. Unfortunately, however, this is not the case; it is a crime well known in the East; and, as long as in other parts of the world the houghing of horses and the burning of stack-yards are crimes not unknown, it will have to be recognized that it is not easy to reach the limit of man's inhumanity to man. That figure, stalking over the newly sown field "while men slept," and poisoning the crop before its birth, is an image of the heart's uttermost malignity.

**The Mixture of Good and Evil in this World.**—In this world good and evil are inextricably mingled. So has it been from the beginning. At first God created all things very good; but it was not long before an enemy spoiled the happiness of Paradise. Since then, there have been among men many things noble and good—just governments, beneficent institutions, patriotic enterprises, scenes of domestic peace and bliss—but there has never been one which an enemy has not tried to mar and blight, and too often with success. Is not, however, the Church of Christ the one exception to this rule—the one perfect thing in an imperfect world? So we might expect. If, in reference to the world as a whole, we ask in surprise, "Whence, then, hath it tares?" much more may we ask this about the Church. We flee from the world, with its sins and sorrows, to the Church, to find brotherhood and companionship, peace and purity. The Church is described in Scripture as "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." Is it not, then, the home which simple and aspiring hearts desire, the refuge from a disappointing world? There are few more striking proofs of our Lord's greatness than the fact that he did not expect this but foretold the opposite. The very purpose of his life was to call out of the world those who should create a better society, and he commanded his followers to be perfect as their Father in heaven was perfect; yet, he foresaw that even into the Church every kind would be gathered. In his own lifetime, when it might be supposed nothing was to be gained by entering the Church except persecution, one of the original Twelve followed Jesus for the sake of filthy lucre; and, the more numerous and prosperous the institution has grown, the more mixed have been its elements.

Although, however, our Lord predicted this so plainly, many of His followers have not been reconciled to the humiliating truth. In every Christian century there have been those who have dreamed of an immaculate Church; nor have these been by any means the worst of Christians. They are represented in the parable by the servants who asked whether they might gather up the tares. But the Master said, "Nay, lest, while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them." To make a proper division would require keener discrimination than we have at command: at the end of the world this is to be the task not of men, but of angels. This does not mean that

there ought to be no church-discipline, all being admitted indiscriminately to membership or retained in it. The similarity of the darnel to the wheat is an essential point. No farmer would allow thistles or nettles to grow in His fields. But, we are not to judge; for we cannot read the heart; we ought to make charitable estimates of our fellow-men, being quick to mark the beginnings of goodness, slow to take up an ill report, and hopeful whenever there are visible any signs of improvement.

**The Separation at the End of the World.**—There are truths of Scripture which we ought to apply specially to our neighbors, and others which we should take specially to ourselves. While we should give others the advantage of the fact that in this world good and bad will always be mixed, we should make the application to ourselves as we think of the separation which will take place in the next life. This is here described in terms which, as Gregory the Great has said, are to be trembled at rather than explained. But, if these are not to be dwelt upon, still less are they to be suppressed. Our Lord spoke of the sufferings of the next world, far more forcibly than any of the Apostles, was including Paul. We may be certain it was not lack of sensibility or of love which made Him do so, but, on the contrary, the overflowing of love. He spoke of condemnation, not in order that men might be condemned, but that they might never be condemned; and His words do not belong to preachers or teachers to give or withhold as they may list. But, while the wicked will be thus separated for doom, the righteous, it is said in the parable, will "shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." This will be due to their separation from the wicked, by whom in this world they are impeded and overshadowed, so that they are neither so holy nor so happy as they ought to be, neither doing justice to themselves nor credit to the gospel.

Aberdeen, Scotland.

## I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU COMFORTLESS.

Hear the pledge of Jesus Christ: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come unto you. Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." As long as God lives and our souls live, so long does this pledge stand. It is true, we cannot always feel this presence. But we can always know that it is there, always think of it, so long as thought endures, always rest upon it forever and forever; and the reason why this promise is given is that we may hold fast to this truth. There may be a moment in the very depth of sorrow and anguish when the presence is hidden from us. But is it not because we are stunned, unconscious?

It is like passing through a surgical operation. The time comes for the ordeal. The anaesthetic is ready. You stretch out your hand to your friend, "Don't leave me, don't forsake me." The last thing you feel is the clasp of that hand, the last thing you see is the face of that friend. Then a moment of darkness, a blank—and the first thing you see is the face of love again. So the angel of God's face stands by us, bends above us, and we may know that he will be there even when all else fails. \* \* \* Amid the mists that shroud the great ocean beyond the verge of mortal life, there is one sweet, mighty voice that says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. In all thy afflictions I will be with thee, and the angel of My face shall save thee."—Henry van Dyke, D.D.

Never mind what the other man is going to do. You will need all your enthusiasm and steadfastness for your own job.

## "GENTLE, EVEN AS A NURSE."

Men and women in power often become offensive. As private citizens they were amiable and kindhearted, but when they rise to positions of prominence they become dictatorial in their manner and unduly assertive in their ways. It is not uncommon to receive from men and women insult added to injury because they have inherited riches or attained positions of authority.

They gradually grow into offensiveness, and, consciously or unconsciously, they not uncommonly wound the feelings of those with whom they may chance to have dealings.

This is frequently illustrated both in business and in church life, as well as in the many callings and pursuits among men and women of influence. Even the most lovable persons are often annoyed and ruffled by the treatment they receive from such men and women. And yet, we need all to pattern after the great apostle St. Paul, who on one occasion said: "When we might have been burdensome, as apostles of Christ, we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children."

The sweetest-tempered persons are entitled to maintain their just rights, even though it may apparently mean at times the giving of a severe rebuke to such as wrongly provoke anger and invite rebuke. And yet, the spirit of the apostle should be the spirit of every one of us in dealing with mankind. First of all, we should be careful not to provoke others to wrath, for even the Son of God severely rebuked such. But, on the other hand, we should also be slow to take offense. It is so easy to misunderstand, and things are frequently made to appear in a very different aspect from that which was intended. We should, therefore, be slow in passing unkind judgment, and, like the blessed Master Himself, should "recompense to no man, evil for evil." We might all learn a wholesome lesson from the true and faithful nurse in her general conduct toward her patients. She goes among them often like a ministering angel. Her manner, her words, her very touch, are all of the gentlest character, and she frequently proves an angel of God ministering to the sick and suffering. She may not always get her full reward here on earth, but God will some day give her back pay. So should we all, in our conduct toward our fellowmen, be among them "gentle even as a nurse," and we will be loved both by God and our fellowmen.—Dr. Zimmerman, in the *Lutheran Observer*.

## PRAYER.

Almighty God, undertake for us in all things. We would be servants of Thine, and in no wise masters, receiving Thy will, in a measure understanding it, and gladly attempting in Thine own power to carry it out in all its gracious meaning. Thus would we begin our life by spending our few earthly days wisely and well. We do but begin here. Our full time is not until by-and-by, when the veil shall be rent and destroyed, and we shall stand in the eternal, and see Thy purpose more completely. Amen.

No large growth in holiness was ever gained by one who did not take time to be alone with God. Not otherwise can the great central idea of God enter into a man's life, and dwell there supreme. For such a possession of the idea of God, we must have much of the spirit of him who departed into a solitary place, and who continued all night in prayer "The morning star finding him where the evening star left him."—A. Phelps.

The most fatal heresy here and hereafter is an unloving heart and an unloving life.