

Many get little out of the study of some of the richest portions of the Word of God because they have not learned, or have failed to bear in mind, that the central purpose of all Scripture is to bear witness of Jesus Christ, that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. xix. 10). It was when Jesus expounded to the two on the way to Emmaus "in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" that their hearts burned within them (Luke xxiv. 27, 32). In a similar way will our hearts be made to glow if the Scriptures are opened to us in such a way that we see Christ in them. How wearisome are all the details about the tabernacle and the sacrifices and the high priest and his garments, if we have not learned to look for the truths here set forth concerning the Word which "was made flesh and tabernacled among us" (John i. 14, see Greek) and the "lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter i. 19), "Christ our passover . . . sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. v. 7), and our "high priest who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26). When we learn to see in these Old Testament types the "shadow of things to come," and in Christ the body that casts the shadow (Col. ii. 17), then everything is replete with the profoundest significance and interest.

The selection of an improper time for the study of the Bible, leads to more fruitless Bible study than one would think who had not given considerable thought to the matter. The Bible demands the clearest thought a man has in order to understand it. God's "judgments are a great deep," and the vision of most men does not penetrate very deeply in the closing hours of a day, or after a hearty meal. Few men are as alert intellectually by artificial light as by daylight. There is, it is true, with many, a certain hectic intellectual glow in the late hours of the night, but it is not a time for clear vision or well balanced judgment. The writer has always been accustomed to late hours, and yet he must confess that the Bible is a different book to him by daylight from what it is by gaslight. The simple change from late night to early morning hours for Bible study has for many a man changed fruitless Bible study into fruitful Bible study. It is of the highest importance that the one who would get the most out of his Bible study, should sacredly set apart some part of each day for the work, and that he select such time as experience shows his mind to be the clearest, and to be freest from interruptions. With the great majority of men the early morning hours have proven to be the best for Bible study.

There still remains one source of barrenness in Bible study which we must mention,—neglect of prayer. It has been said, over and over again, that he who would see the beauties and glories revealed in the Bible must approach it with the prayer of the Psalmist: "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."—Ps. cxix. 18).—REV. R. A. TORREY in *Christian Observer*.

Unworthy Religious Leaders.*

BY REV. ADDISON F. POSTER, D.D.

Christ's last public address was a scathing denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees. It was delivered primarily to the people as a warning against those who were leading them astray. The people are responsible for their leaders. They have whom they will. Such leaders would have no influence, did not the people accept their teaching. The people, therefore, should be careful whom they accept as religious leaders, not only ministers but all others who are prominent in church matters. Christ indicates several ways in which unworthy religious leaders may be recognized.

1. *They may be known by the burdensomeness of the requirements they put on others but do not impose on themselves.* To impose an excessive standard of conduct and minute details of duty is calculated to conceal any lack in the teacher and give an impression of sanctity. The Pharisees went beyond the law in their demands as to Sabbath Observance and other similar things, but did not live up to their own standards. The modern false teacher is equally inconsistent. It is worth while for the people to notice whether their religious leaders are in the habit themselves of generous giving, of careful Sabbath Observance, of upright business dealing, of total abstinence when urging it.

2. *Unworthy religious teachers may be known by*

their ostentation. Like the Pharisees they are sure to make a display of piety. Their desire to be seen of men is evident. If your leaders are self-seeking and proud, sanctimonious in their piety, pushing for place, have an undue fondness for title and are seeking pre-eminence among the brethren, beware of them. They have Pharisaic characteristics and Christ warns you against them.

3. *Such leaders may be known by their eagerness for followers and the ill character of the followers they secure.* They indulge in what Phillips Brooks calls "a scramble for adherents rather than a Christ-like love for souls." The true leader is eager to win men to Christ, but his thought is not to rally men around himself. The false leader has this ambition. He can count on so many who believe in him and will do as he says. But the distinction comes out in the character of the adherents. A true leader will impress men for good. If a preacher, his converts will be godly. If a church-officer, he will rally a following for self-denials and spiritual lives. There have been leaders of another kind;—ministers who brought multitudes into the church without stability, Christian purpose or helpfulness in them; church officials who turned the votes of churches and had their way, but who dragged church ideals in the mire, and perhaps made a beer-garden of the church meeting.

4. *Unworthy leaders may be known by their empty distinctions.* The Pharisees made themselves ridiculous in this particular. They considered promises confirmed by certain oaths as not binding. They justified lies. Corruption in religion is universally shown in the same way. False teachers evince great ingenuity in devising distinctions without a difference, to justify certain forms of wrong-doing. There is a jesuitical cunning in finding excuses for questionable courses. Deceit, dishonesty, double-dealing, injustice, all have a ready excuse.

5. *Unworthy leaders are likely to lay undue stress on formalities and ignore spiritual truths.* They tithe mint, anise, and cummin and pass by judgment, mercy and faith. They have nothing to say or do regarding spiritual discernment, love to their fellow-men and trust in God. In other words trivialities, superficialities and formalities absorb their thought and effort, instead of the great fundamental truths of God's Word. Here is a peculiarly searching test of the worth of a Christian teacher. What are his themes? What occupies his thought? How far does he present the underlying truths of the Bible? He must be not simply a practical teacher, but a spiritual preacher. He must at least present enough of doctrine to lay the foundation for character, to enable one to judge correctly between right and wrong, to deal rightly with men, to commit himself savingly to Christ. The leader who fritters away his golden moments in the pulpit or in Sunday school on tithing herbs will not guide you through deep waters or usher you to heaven.

6. *The unworthy leader may be known by his hypocrisy.* With a great outward pretense of piety he unites an unworthy life. Such inconsistencies are sure to be known sooner or later. They cannot be forever concealed. The man prominent in the church who is secretly dishonest, who indulges himself in some debasing habit, whose home life is irritable and selfish, whose name is connected with whispered scandal, who allows himself privately in unworthy amusements or Sabbath desecration, may be influential to-day, but in time the mask will fall and his true self will be recognized and dishonored.

7. *Perhaps one of the surest ways to know the unworthy religious leader is by his ill treatment of good men.* He necessarily is out of sympathy with them. No wonder the Pharisees persecuted those that preached Christ. Such leaders are out of sympathy with that which is good. They are indignant at the silent rebuke of good lives. The truth as spoken by good men scorches and angers them. Many a faithful Christian in consequence of his rebuke of sin, has been ostracised by friends and neighbors. More than one godly minister, because he has spoken unwelcome truth, has been driven from his post. The church should exercise great care not to fall under the domination of leaders who are essentially worldly in habit and aim.

*An Exposition based on (Matt. xxiii.; in the Bible Study Union Course on "The Teachings of Christ.")