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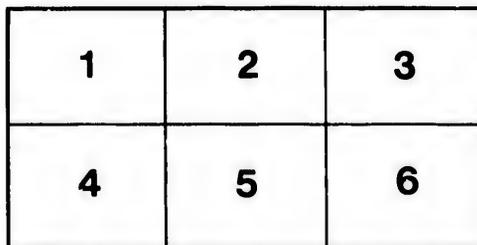
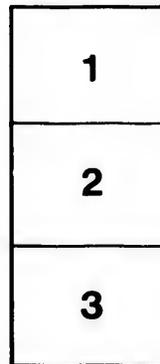
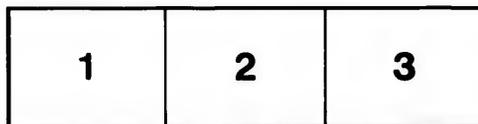
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FALSE PROPHETS.

LECTURE

BY REV. D. D. MCLEOD, BARRIE, ONT.

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”—MATTHEW, VII., 15—21.

This passage, which meets us in the course of Lectures we have been engaged in on the Sermon on the Mount, like all the other words of our Lord, has a message in it for every age. It was a warning which was needed in his own day, and in the days of the Apostles. There were men rising up from time to time, claiming without any authority, to be the servants of God, and to have a special message from God to the people, while they were at heart bitter enemies of the truth. They came to the people in “sheep’s clothing.” That is, speaking and acting as if they were the genuine, divinely appointed teachers; so that ignorant observers were easily deceived. All the while they were seeking their own selfish and wicked ends. “Inwardly,” they were “ravening wolves.” Such our Lord does

not hesitate to call them. Enemies of this description are much more dangerous to any cause than those who let their hostility be plainly known. They are also much more to be condemned. They gained access to the confidence of the friends of Christ's cause, by their pretended zeal for religion, and having gained such confidence, used their position to weaken and destroy the cause which they professed to support. Such base and treacherous conduct we are slow to believe men would be guilty of. Putting on the profession of religion in order to betray and destroy religion. Base as such conduct appears, experience teaches us it is not uncommon. Every good cause has to contend against such enemies. Among the band of patriots fighting for their rights, how often has the traitor been found wearing the clothing of the loyal and true. Such were they who are spoken of here, and not only in those early days, but in every age, the church of Christ has had to be on her guard against the same kind of enemy.

MODERN FALSE TEACHERS.

But there is another kind of false Teacher to be met with today. I do not know that we have any among us, at least any large number, who answer exactly to the description here given. But we have false teachers coming among our people, and seeking to draw them away from the truth. Of course there are many kinds of false prophets carrying on their deadly work in the world. To many of these we have no occasion to refer. Those to which I propose more particularly to refer, are such as we meet with from time to time in our own neighborhoods. Because there are few neighborhoods where the work of God is going on, that these teachers do not come to, in order to interrupt that work. And it is very true of them, that they come in "sheep's clothing." Because they come professing great zeal for religion, and mourning the great lack of zeal in the members of the church of Christ. They devote themselves to preaching their doctrines, going from house to house among the people, in order to acquaint them with these, and to win them over to their acceptance of them. And in all this seemingly good work, they profess to be animated by the highest and purest motives. They make it understood that they are not working for money, and that in this respect they are much superior in motive and conduct to ordinary preachers of the gos-

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pel. They profess to be guided by the Spirit of God in all they do, and they are so much above the ordinary ministers of the various churches, that they stand quite aloof from them ; cannot work along with them ; indeed, devote their whole energies to undermining and hindering them. Now these false teachers are the *kind we have to deal with*. And it is right we should look a little into their claims and pretensions, so that we may give them their proper place. I do not say that these false teachers I refer to are not sincere in their profession, and their work. They may be quite sincere. But that they are so, is no evidence of their fitness for the work, nor of their work being the work of Christ. Sincerity of desire to do good is not enough to qualify one to be a teacher of others. There may be gross ignorance along with such sincerity, ignorance which quite unfits one to be a teacher. And there may be other things along with this sincerity, besides ignorance, which quite disqualify one from teaching. Many of the most effective enemies of the gospel have been sincere in the belief that they were promoting the gospel. So is it with these. Their work, while it seems to be for Christ, is really against Him and His church. While seeming to serve men, they are in reality leading them away from the Saviour. While they profess to lead people out of denominationalism, they are really leading them into the narrowest sect in Christendom. Now there are some marks by which these teachers of error can be easily known. And one prominent mark is this :

That they misrepresent the teaching of the ministers of the gospel; and also what they themselves teach.

That is a conspicuous mark of them. They are rarely met without it. The position they set out with is this : "We who now appeal to you intend to teach you only what is in the Bible. We have no 'man-made' creed, as ordinary ministers have, to teach you. We teach the pure Word of God. We have no creed to bind us, while these ministers of the churches are bound and hindered by their creeds. So you see our position is much superior to theirs. We are safe guides. They are not."

That, I say, is the position they start out with, and by which they may be known. Now these brethren, in making this statement, do it either in ignorance of what is the truth in the matter, or they do it knowing that what they say is false. We would not

like to believe the latter. Would not like to believe that they would say what is not true, knowing that it is not true. Then if we acquit them of that, as we do, the only alternative is, that they are ignorantly slandering the ministers of the different churches. Because the fact is, that the ordinary preachers of the gospel are free to preach the whole pure Word of God as any men can be. We do not need to go out of the church of Christ to preach the Bible. We are not restrained by our creeds. Our difference from them is simply this, that we tell publicly and plainly what we believe the Bible in the main teaches. We do not hide what we believe, while they conceal what they believe. They do not put it down in black and white, so that every one may know what they hold. So that it is difficult to find out what they do believe. And this hiding of their views is done, in order the more easily to mislead those whom they seek to gain over to their views. Which is the more honest course? to say, "There is my creed; there is the meaning I take out of the Bible on vital points;" or to say, "I will not tell you what I think the Bible teaches, except as I explain it to you at meetings." In the one case, you have those who are not ashamed to tell you what they have gathered from the Bible. In the other, you have those who are afraid to tell you, because if they told you honestly and fully, you never would accept of their doctrines. Are then, these men who ignorantly slander the ministers of Christ's church, fit to be public teachers of Divine truth? The men that they slander are at least men that are known. They have passed through some preparation for their work. They are not "man-made" and self-appointed, as these false teachers are. They would not presume to teach on their own authority, or their own judgment of their fitness, as those teachers do. And who are those false teachers? They come unsent by any authority human or divine. They bring no evidence of character or fitness for the work. They invite you to accept them as spiritual guides on their own unsupported testimony. And such testimony is of no value. *No one should be accepted as a spiritual guide, until he presents some evidence of his fitness for that work.*

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But passing from this :—There is another mark by which these false teachers can easily be distinguished, and that is

THEIR FALSE VIEWS OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY, AND THEIR HOSTILITY TO SUCH MINISTERS.

They call the gospel ministry a “man-made ministry,” and a ministry that works for hire. And in saying that, they imagine they have said something which ought to overwhelm such ministry with confusion.

BUT IN THIS THEY ARE MISTAKEN.

The ministry of the church we believe to be an order of workmen divinely appointed. And our belief is founded on many passages of Scripture. One passage is enough to establish our proposition, namely, Ephesians iv., 11, where we read, “When He ascended up on high He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And He gave some apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Here it is stated that our ascended Lord has given “pastors” as a gift to His church. Such pastors are not therefore “man-made,” nor “self-appointed,” but God-given. And these pastors or teachers are always spoken of in Scripture as a distinct order. “Take heed,” says the Apostle Paul, in Acts xviii., 25, “therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers,” (that is, Bishops or Pastors). And why did he press so anxiously on pastors the duty of taking heed to the flock? It was, “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; *also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*” Such ‘overseers,’ as is evident from other places, are identical with pastors. And in 1 Cor. iv., “Let a man so account of us as of the *ministers* of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.” The Apostle, v. 25, speaks of “the *ministry* which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Whatever name, then, we choose to apply to the ministry, whether that of Pastor, or Bishop, or Presbyter, or Elder, or Minister, the office is distinctly taught to be a divine institution, and the officer a gift to the church from Christ himself. Such office is not given to a man by

the vote of the people, but every one who has a right to be in this office is called to it by the Holy Spirit. It is not an office conferred on a man by any College, nor assumed by himself. When, therefore, these teachers of error assail the ministry and call it "man-made," and "a hired ministry," they are simply heaping such dishonour as they can on an institution of Christ's own appointment. This opposition arises largely from spiritual pride. They imagine they can know as much of the Bible without study or education, as men can who give it years of study, and are so taught that they may study it with intelligence.

They are impatient to occupy the position of public teachers; and therefore rush into it quite unprepared; and to cover their deficiencies, they assail men who have patiently and humbly waited until they had acquired some fitness for the work.

OLD TESTAMENT EVIDENCE.

In addition to this evidence from the New Testament, which could be increased by many other passages, let me place before you the following facts from the Old Testament. In the Old Testament church God appointed two orders of ministers to attend to the religious ceremonies of the people, namely, the Priests and the Levites. In Numbers xviii., 7, it is said, "I have given your priest's office unto you as a service of gift, and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death." And as to the Levites it is said, v. 6, "Behold, I have taken your brethren, the Levites, from among the children of Israel; to you they are given as a gift for the Lord, to do the service of the Tabernacle of the congregation." There was then in the Old Testament church, as in the New Testament church, a divinely-appointed body of men to do the work of God. And how were these men supported? They were specially provided for by the direct appointment of God. The provision for the priests is given in the same chapter, the xviii. of Numbers, as also the provision for the Levites. That for the priests from the 8th verse onward; and that for the Levites in the 20th verse, where it is said, "Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the Tabernacle of the congregation." Such is the testimony of the Old Testament, as to the appointment and support of God's servants in the church of that day.

Now teaching language ix., 13, holy things at the altar ordained. That is the Aposthian church same class and to it even in nation of ple which On this is found

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Now in answer to this it will be said, that the Old Testament teaching has no reference to Gospel times. But on this point the language of the Apostle is clear and sufficient. In 1 Corinthians ix., 13, it is said, "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple, and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar. *Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.*" That is the law laid down for the New Testament church. Though the Apostle himself, because of the conduct of some in the Corinthian church toward him, would take nothing from them. The same class of men, who seek now to harass the church of Christ, and to injure its ministers, were plying their vocation apparently even in Paul's day; and against such as these, and for the information of the church generally, he points out as above, the principle which is to govern Christian people in this matter.

On these two grounds then, this duty of supporting the ministry is founded:

1. ON THE GROUND OF THEIR OFFICE.

As ministers set apart by the Lord for His work, and not following any worldly calling for their own support, they are to be supported by the church. This lifts the support of the ministry out of the region of hire and bargain-making. Their support is to come out of what we give of our substance for Christ. We bring our offerings to Him; out of these we pay all expenses of his ministry. This is the proper, Scriptural view of the matter. A true minister is always, and first of all the servant of God, and as such he is to be supported, and as such he is and he delights to be the servant of man, "your servant for Christ's sake." The fact that Paul the apostle, worked at his trade, and supported himself thereby, is worthy of notice. One reason why he had to do so was, because of the unorganized state of the church in his day. Another reason was, no doubt at times, the poverty of the people among whom he laboured. There may have been other reasons, but the fact that he did so labour makes all the more emphatic his testimony to the law he lays down, "*That they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.*"—1 Cor. ix., 13.

But there is a second principle on which this payment of the ministry is founded, and which is stated by our Lord himself when

He sent forth his disciples to preach, as recorded in Luke x., 7: "And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give, *for the labourer is worthy of his hire.*" This is repeated by the Apostle Paul in his epistle to Timothy, 1 Timothy, v., 17, 18, "Let the Elders that rule well be accounted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, *the labourer is worthy of his reward.*" (The word translated *reward*, being the same that is translated in Luke, *hire*). "I have given them," it is said, Numbers xviii. 21, "all the tenth * * * * for the service which they serve,"—showing that our Lord, both in the Old and New Testament, recognizes this just principle of human society. And this aspect of the relation leaves room for the display of all kindly feeling, and for much of the inequality that obtains in the support of the ministry. We see, therefore, that there is no ground in Scripture for the position which those "brethren" assume, when they attack the ministry as an institution, or speak against it because it is paid. In both positions they are going directly in opposition to the Word of God. And I might add, it is only the more ignorant of the brethren that indulge in such unworthy attacks on ministers. Those among them who know and follow their Bibles in regard to this matter, abstain from this foolish and unwarranted procedure.

THE FRUIT OF THEIR DOCTRINE.

Our Lord in this passage says, "By their fruits ye shall know them." And the fruit of this erroneous teaching is easily seen; Seen in the teachers and in their disciples. The fruit of the doctrine of Jesus Christ is to produce love, and brotherly kindness, and unity of spirit among those who formerly stood apart from one another. The fruit of the teaching of these brethren is strife and division, and separation among those who were living in peace with one another. The doctrine of the gospel is a uniting doctrine. The doctrine of these brethren is a separating doctrine. Christ came not "to send peace but a sword," he says. That is, to make separation between His own people and the world. But these teachers come to bring the sword among Christ's people. They sow everywhere the seeds of strife and variance between those who otherwise would live at peace with one another.

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ANOTHER FURTHER RESULT OR FRUIT OF THEIR DOCTRINE,

Is separation from the church of Christ, and the infusing of a sectarian spirit into their disciples. Professing to abhor division, their doctrines are the most sectarian in existence, everywhere alienating Christian people by their denunciation of the church of Christ. Professedly attacking denominationalism, they are in reality weakening and hindering the cause of Christ. The true gospel tends to draw Christians of every branch of the church of Christ together. The doctrine they teach has the opposite effect of setting them in enmity to one another.

A third fruit of their doctrine exhibited in themselves and their disciples, is that of

THEIR SPIRITUAL PRIDE.

They claim superior knowledge and superior holiness for themselves. To be more directly led by the Spirit of God. They imagine that they and their disciples have more light than ordinary Christians in spiritual things; and take upon themselves without authority from man or God, but simply on their own judgment of themselves, the work and the duties of the Christian ministry.

Many other evil fruits might be spoken of as resulting from their teaching, and this feature in their proceedings is very noticeable, that it is not so much to bring sinners to Christ, apparently, that they labour with unwearied zeal, but to bring those that are already members of the Christian church, into fellowship with them. Their whole conduct in this respect being as opposed to the true spirit of the gospel of peace, as darkness is to light.

AND WHO ARE THEY ?

Are they really persons of superior intelligence and character? Are they more learned, more earnest, better fitted to teach than the ministers of the gospel in your midst, who for years have laboured amid many difficulties to spread among the people the knowledge of the truth? What evidence do they bring of their high claim? Is a proud standing aloof from all who do not adopt their doctrine, a proof of a humble Christian spirit? Is this spirit of strife and hostility to the preachers of the gospel the mark of an advanced Christian experience? Is a spirit of presumption and an ill-regulated zeal, a bitter opposition to the ordinances of the church of God, and an endeavour to break up the peace of families

and congregations a proof of superior piety and knowledge of the gospel of Christ. And yet these are the chief marks and characteristics of these zealous perverts, and their sectarian teaching.

THEY USE HIS IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST.

That is the worst element in their proceedings. While the whole tendency of their work is to injure His cause and give encouragement to His enemies, they use His name to delude the people, and drawing them away from Christian fellowship into coteries of their own, involve them in spiritual delusion and darkness.

THEY APPEAL TO MEN'S COVETOUSNESS.

They find this a strong ground of appeal, that they take no stipulated salary. Even while they are living in a man's house, and costing him more than he ever contributed to the support of the gospel, they persuade him they are working for nothing. And going from house to house they live at less cost to themselves, and probably better provided for, than if they had to earn their bread by honest labour. It was such men that embittered the life of the Apostle himself, at Corinth and elsewhere; assailing him for taking money, and boasting of their converts and their baptisms, rending by their irregular proceedings the early church, sowing tares among the wheat, and playing into the hands of the enemies of the gospel.

From all this it will be seen that these teachers are not to be encouraged. I do not mean to speak evil without a cause, of well meaning but misguided Christians. I only point out the true character of these "brethren," and the fruit of their teaching. Good intentions are no excuse for unscriptural doctrines and practices; and however pious these may be, they are to be vigorously opposed when they pursue courses injurious to the gospel of Christ. When men act in an honourable and Christian spirit, and speak the truth of those they oppose, they have a right to teach what they believe to be the truth, and to call themselves "saints" or "brethren," or any other name they choose. But when men, under a pretense of preaching the gospel, creep into the houses and confidence of professing Christians, and seek to poison their minds against their pastors and the church of Christ, and try to impose on them erroneous views of the gospel, and pervert them from the

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faith, then they deserve to be condemned by all honourable men. No zeal can justify such conduct.

SUCH ARE THESE FALSE TEACHERS,

With whom we meet from time to time at the present day, coming in "sheep's clothing," and undermining the work of the church of Christ. The fruit they bring forth condemns them, and by the fruit above pointed out they can easily be discovered.

FINALLY,

It is no pleasure to be compelled to discharge the duty I have endeavoured so do in these remarks. Some readers may think I have spoken too strongly. But many years observation of, and acquaintance with the tactics and working of these "brethren," an inferior order of "Plymouth brethren," sustains me in every statement made. One can scarcely speak too strongly of the mischief they do. So far as they themselves are concerned, I cannot but feel it my duty to condemn them.

Those who have been perverted by them are not likely to be brought back to the truth by any appeal except as they may be enlightened by the Spirit of God. Those who keep by the teaching of the Bible will not be perverted by them. And as we prosecute the work of the gospel we may expect their opposition.

But all who regard their own peace and religious life, will refuse to be misled. I need not add more. The fruit of the gospel of Christ is humility, and love, and unity, and peace among all who love His name. The men who teach a doctrine that brings forth such fruit, are preaching the gospel of Christ; while the teaching that produces pride, uncharitableness, separation, evil speaking, evil judging of others, bitterness of spirit, deception, and opposition to the church of Christ, is manifestly entirely opposed to the spirit and gospel of Jesus Christ.

We would give the "brethren" all credit for what knowledge and zeal they have, and for what sincerity and desire to do good they manifest; at the same time we cannot but regret and condemn the spirit they exhibit, and the methods they pursue.

