

Seed of Worldly Church!

"An enemy hath done this."

In few words Jesus painted a broad panorama of Christian history. The parable of the wheat and tares, found in Matthew 13, describes the course of Christianity from the beginning, to its culmination in a harvest. The householder of the parable sowed good seed in his field. The anticipated fruitage was corrupted by the householder's enemy. The enemy over sowed the wheat field with tare seed (false wheat) while the householder's menservants slept. When the blade was spring up and brought forth fruit, the act of vandalization was manifest. The true wheat was choked in the midst of the imitation wheat.

The menservants asked if they should weed out the tares. The householder said, "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them into bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." Matthew 13:24-30

The Parable Explained

This lesson greatly interested the disciples and so they asked Jesus to explain it. What a great benefit to us that he did! The householder represented Jesus. The field—the Christian world with its fruitages. The good fruit represented Christ's true followers, his faithful disciples. Tares, which outwardly look like wheat, were imitations planted by the enemy—Satan.

The tares were not to be weeded out until the harvest. The harvest would take place in the end of this world or age (Greek - aion). Jesus' work at the end of the Christian Age is as Chief Reaper. He will order his angels (messengers in the Greek), his disciples, to harvest the wheat in his second advent just as he did in the first. Luke 10:1-3; John 4:35,36

Two Seeds

The two fruitages are the result of two different kinds of seed. Wheat, the true Christian, springs forth from the Word of God. This is taught in the

parable of the sower. "The seed is the word of God...they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it and bring forth fruit with patience." Luke 8:11,15 The apostles carried forth the ministry of Christ, preaching the word of life, sowing seeds of the kingdom. The Father "begat us with the word of truth". James 1:18 "In Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the gospel," said the Apostle Paul. I Corinthians 4:15

A sinister turn in church history occurred when the apostles fell asleep in death (compare Matthew 13:25). In their absence Satan sought to corrupt the church. His weapon was error. Just as truth produces a true Christian, so error produces an imitation. Satan's work of corrupting God's truth in Christ began even during the apostles' time. "Every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and thus is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now is already in the world." I John 4:3

That anti-christian spirit spread throughout the Christian world sowing tares. Satan hoped to choke the spiritual life out of God's wheat by surrounding them with tares. One of Satan's principal instruments to sow bad seed were the Neo-Platonist Christians. These were philosopher Christians who sought to apply scientific methods in understanding scripture. Their methods were derived from Plato, a great man—also a pagan.

The unfortunate result of bending scripture to fit human philosophy was the creation of bad seed and its fruit—nominal Christians. Human science did no favor to the church of God. How sad that the apostolic admonition was not heeded, "Avoid profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some (believers) professing have erred concerning the faith." I Timothy 6:20,21

A False Seed Close up

One such false seed was the Grecian philosophy of eternal torment for the wicked. Neo-Platonic concepts of the afterlife corrupted the simple truth of the Bible Hell. The New Testament Hades and the Old Testament Sheol no longer were perceived as the death state. They were instead transformed into a place of eternal conscious torment. (Space does not here permit an adequately thorough discussion of death and hell. We encourage you to order the booklet "Where Are The Dead?" offered at the end of this letter. The scriptures on these subjects are fully discussed in the booklet.)

The threat of such enormous and eternal suffering was (and still is) held over the heads of unbelievers. They converted to Christ under pressure. Thus many people, who would not otherwise bother being burdened with Christ's name, have made a profession of faith.

God's Purpose in Christianity

Conversion through coercion is not God's purpose in Christianity. "True worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." John 4:23,24 In other words, God wants our hearts to yield in willing love to Him and His truth. Many unwilling converts, motivated by fear, have feigned obedience to Him. That is how a tare is created.

is is taught in the parable of the sower. "The ople for God's name. Those called out are God's elect. The elected ones, found faithful in this life, will serve in the office of priests and kings. Their ministry will be to the remainder of humanity—those not called and willingly converted during the Christian Era. See Acts 15:14-17 and Revelation 5:10.

The confusion brought about by doctrines of fear have clouded over many important Christian doctrines. The doctrine of election, that God now calls a few to belief, is made horrible by trying to fit it in with Satan's doctrine of eternal conscious torment. The great twists of mind, heart and conscience needed to grasp Satan's teachings on hell bear an empty fruit at best. At worst, those twists bear a fruitage of hate, injustice and selfishness.

Hell in National News

"The Rekindling of Hell" was the featured cover article of U.S. News and World Report for March 25, 1991. "Record numbers of Americans now believe in a nether world and in a wide variety of after death punishments," it claimed. According to a Gallop survey done in November 1990, three out of five Americans now believe in hell. However, views of what constitute hell sharply differ.

Some try to understand hell philosophically and, through human wisdom, invent the hell of their choice. Others fall back on creeds of human invention and hold forth the hell of tradition. Some are returning to the Scriptures to study them anew. The Scriptures are shedding light on hell. "Such highly regarded theologians as Clark H. Pinnock, theology professor at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario; John R.W. Stott, president of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, and Philip E. Hughes, a noted Anglican clergyman and author, contend that rather than suffering endlessly, those who ultimately reject God will simply be put out of existence in the 'consuming fire' of hell."

"Those who subscribe to this view—called 'annihilationism'—point to New Testament passages that speak of 'eternal destruction' and 'the second death' for those who know not God and to the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel's declaration that 'the soul that sins shall die.'" (U.S. News and

World Report, March 25, 1991, p. 63).

These men are to be commended for looking back to scriptures to understand what the Biblical hell is. Hughes interestingly observes "that the traditional belief in unending punishment is linked to the erroneous belief in the 'innate immortality' of the soul—a belief, he says, that is based more on Plato than on the Bible."

On the other hand, traditionalists "argue that annihilationism takes some of the punch out of Gospel preaching. 'To tell the unrepentant that the worst fate that could befall them is extinction,' says Harold O.J. Brown, a theology professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 'makes continuing in sin seem less risky.'" And that is the very point of the parable of the wheat and tares. Wheat, the true Christian, rejoice to leave sin behind. They love righteousness and hate iniquity. They are not coerced by terror, but by love and the beauty of God's Word.

Tares may look back longingly at "the good old days" of sin or may yet practice their old sins after coming to Christ. A popular phrase on T-shirts and bumper stickers today is "How much can I get away with and still get to heaven?" That is not the spirit that a true follower of Christ will have. "Love rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." I Corinthians 13:6

Forewarned is Forearmed

Our hope for all God's people is that they will be led on to full Christian fruitage by God's Word. We pray that His people will stand firmly for the truth even against the majority public opinion or entrenched human creeds. Remember that the tares in the parable are the overwhelming majority. Let us all, by the grace of God, receive the Word of God into good and honest hearts, bringing forth good fruit with patience.