

„BLIND GUIDES”

At the M.E. Church Conference Nov. 9th, Bishop Foster addressing the twelve bishops and forty laymen of the Conference with the large audience present, among other things, said, as reported in the daily Press:—

„There are some who too fondly anticipate a millennium. There is a lack of information on the progress of Christianity. The facts are misstated daily in pulpits all over the country. Ministers hesitate to present the worst side for fear of causing discouragement. They create hopes that are never to be realized. We are not at the dawn of the millennium. Compared with the work to be done, the past is nothing. Our children’s children for ten generations to come must labor harder than we are doing to accomplish the conversion of the world. The world’s population is 1,500,000,000. Of these, Christians number less than a third. Half of that third belong to the Roman Catholic Church. The Protestants number 113,000,000. They are divided into 500 sects. And this number of their strength includes, also, all the thieves, ex-convicts, the debased, besotted, the speckled and streaked in Christendom. The popular idea is that the Church of Rome is anti-Christ. I don’t agree with the popular belief. I regard that wonderful institution as a great Christian camp. It may have to be reconstructed, but before us we have the great problem—the 1,100,000,000 of pagans to convert to Christianity. That is the solid rock that looms up in our path. Look at it; see what work has been done in 1800 years, and how much is yet to be accomplished. In India, after more than a hundred years of mission work, we have 600,000 converts [?] and 2,000,000 Christians [?] among 260,000,000 heathen. Can we remove that solid boulder that is as old as the hills? ... It is a big loaf to be leavened and it has been a long time working. We have now with us the sunlight of modern thought that is melting superstition. I am tired of the cant from our pulpits of sacred phrases that mean nothing.”

This contains some hard truths symbolically called „hail,” as it is written, „the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies.” (Isa. 28:17) Thus this great Doctor of Divinity is unwittingly serving truth as are Communists, et al., in other directions. Few sensible, thinking people can differ with the bishop as to the *facts* to which he refers, but we must take exception to his inferences and unscriptural reasonings therefrom.

Among the facts agreed to, one is, that few in Christian lands have any adequate conception of the smallness of even nominal Christianity as compared to the world as a whole, even when the reckoning is carried to the extreme of reckoning the entire population of the United States as „Christian,” i.e., not barbarous, and including in this calculation all the infidels and unbelievers and

the children. If this be reduced to ordinary limits it is an indisputable fact that not one third of these are even professors of

::R0820 : page 6::

religion; and of the professors, who can estimate rightly the smallness of the „little flock” of wholly consecrated ones, but the searcher of the thoughts and intents of the heart?

But while the Bishop sees this fact, it is in a very limited measure, for he proceeds to reckon the great mass of people living in civilization, including as he says, all the thieves, ex-convicts, the debased, and besotted, and he might have added the Infidels and Atheists in Christendom, and lumping them and all their evils together, the Bishop asks how long it will take to convert the balance of the world to this same state. We question if any but a very few would be bettered by such a conversion. When they are all thus converted the Millennium will be here, the Bishop’s argument would imply. Alas! it will be indeed a sad Millennium of war, murder, suicide, want, oppression and misery, if we judge from the Millennium now being enjoyed by the nations taking the highest rank among the so-called converted nations or Christian kingdoms (Christ-en-dom).

The Bishop’s blindness to the Scriptural teaching concerning the Millennium and its object, and how it will be brought about, is another illustration of the truth of prophecy by its fulfillment. (See Isa. 29:10-12.) He is blind and cannot see afar off, and his argument is based wholly upon human reasoning devoid of and opposed to Scripture. He reasons exactly as the worldly man reasons, and neglects to seek wisdom concerning the future at the fountain of wisdom, God’s Word.

We wonder whether he remembers that the Scriptures state that the worldly will be in darkness as to God’s purposes and methods, and that the child of God has the more sure word of prophecy, to which he does well to take heed as a light shining in a dark place. (2 Pet. 1:19.) Does he forget that God is working the matter in such a way that it will be a surprise to the world, and come upon them as a snare—covertly, when not expected—and that they only who have the supernatural light of God’s Word shall not be in darkness, that it should come upon them thus? for these will be guided by it into an understanding of „things to come,” not discernable from the worldly standpoint. (John 16:13.)

As the Bishop looks out he sees the comparative smallness even of nominal Christianity, and under the false idea that the world must be converted to this Babylon condition, in which over five hundred sects contradict each other, before Christ comes, he is led to relax the strictness with which Christian character should be measured, so as to include under the name of Christ all who make any pretensions toward morality, in order to swell the number of the five hundred sects. And because the Church of Rome and the Greek Catholic Church would help on the count and number

more than all the others, these must all be counted to the „Christian Union” in order to swell the pride of Christendom and carry out their theory—that the world is being rapidly converted to Christ.

But God will laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh—when this seemingly great structure of Babel falls to pieces in the day of the Lord; for „the Lord knoweth them that are his”; and his description of that „little flock,” of whom he says, „They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels” (Mal. 3:17), leaves no question that it is a very different flock from the „speckled and streaked” of which the Bishop speaks. It is to the „pure in heart” who have „made a covenant by sacrifice,” a „little flock” that it is the Father’s good pleasure to give the Millennial kingdom. When this elect company is selected, and thus exalted to power with Christ their head, they shall break in pieces the shackles and fetters, religious and political, by which Satan, the „god of this world,” has so long oppressed the world and humanity. Thus he shall make „wars to cease unto the ends of the earth” (Psa. 46:9 and Rev. 11:17,18). Then „He shall speak peace to the heathen”

::R0821 : page 6::

(Zech. 9:10). He will turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent (Zeph. 3:9). Then the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth.

This error that the Church, in her present condition, is to conquer and convert the world before the Lord comes, has misled many in every stage of the Church in this Christian age. It has been Satan’s snare by which he has diverted the attention and service of many away from the work given them by the Lord, viz.: to witness to the world, and to feed and build up the Church, and prepare her as his joint-heir to accomplish with him in the next age the subduing of all things unto himself.

The Bishop’s hopes for the success of his plans for the future lie, not in Church creeds which cause a jargon, or in the power of the truth as conveyed to us through God’s Word, originally accepted as the sword of the Spirit; these for eighteen hundred years have failed to accomplish the Bishop’s plans, though the Word of God has not failed to accomplish God’s plans (Isaiah 55:8-11), but now his hope grasps a new lever of power, which above he terms „the sunlight of modern thought.”

In his last sentence the Bishop voices the sentiment of the world and the devil, as well as the saints, for all are tiring of „the cant from our pulpits, of sacred phrases that mean nothing.” See Isa. 29:15,14.

=====

— January, 1886 —