

“THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST”

(The discourse below is by W. J. Thorne, Asbury Park, June 27, 1914, P. 210.)

To our understanding, there are three schools in God’s Universe. First, there is the school of observation, in which are found all the holy angels, who are observing man’s course in sin and degradation. Second, the school of experience is the one in which all humanity are learning some wonderful lessons.

The human race has been in this school for 6,000 years. The next 1,000 years will be Messiah’s glorious reign, and will also be the world’s great graduation day, when every man, woman and child will have an opportunity to demonstrate before God and all the holy angels whether they have profited by these lessons. Everyone who passes that examination or trial period successfully and comes into harmony with God, aided by the great Mediator, and Judge, who will also be the great Deliverer (Rom. 11:26), all such will pass over the threshold of that Millennial Day into the ages of glory to follow where “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, for God will wipe all tears from their eyes.” Neither shall there be any more pain, for thus saith the Lord that created the earth and made it, he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited (Rev. 20:14; Isa. 45:18). “The earth abideth forever” (Eccl. 1:4). “And they [restored humanity] shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them” (Isa. 65:21-25). But “all the [willfully] wicked will God destroy” (Psalm 101:6-8; 145:20; Acts 3:23). Some of the angels sinned also, and fell from their holy estate (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). These, too are in the school of experience, learning with mankind the evil consequences of wrong doing. Some of these, having learned the lesson well, will graduate and pass out of their sinful condition, back to their original condition, after repentance and coming back into full harmony with God (1 Pet. 3:19; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3). All the incorrigibly wicked, among both angels and men, God will destroy, and all the willing and obedient will be preserved everlastingly (Psalm 72:12-14).

Third, and most important in God’s estimation, is the school of Christ. The object of this school is to prepare, by careful training and discipline, a class to occupy a very high and exalted position in God’s Universe. Indeed this class are to constitute the “heirs of God and joint-heirs with His dear Son Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:17). “If so be that they suffer with Him, that they may be glorified together.” These, like their great Head or Chief, are to be raised “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” God gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body (Eph. 1:21-23).

This school may properly be termed a normal school, for its object is to develop a class which shall become the world’s teachers or instructors. The question will naturally be

asked: Would not God preferably invite the holy angels to such an exalted position, for they have always remained in harmony with Him and kept His holy law perfectly? We are amazed when we read in the Scriptures that God purposed passing by these holy angels because they were not specially suited for the purpose He had in view. They were, however, well adapted to minister unto or serve those who shall be the heirs of this great salvation (Heb. 1:14; 2:1-3), for God declares it to be His purpose to call out from among the sin-cursed world, “a people for His name” (Acts 15:14).

In other words, as Jesus is to be the great King over all the world, the Heavenly Father has planned that His dear Son shall have a Bride, who shall become His Queen, and sit with Him in His throne, and reign with Him (Rev. 3:21). This class, taken from among mankind will be more suited for God’s purpose, because they will have had an actual experience with sin, and will be the better enabled to sympathize with the poor, groaning creation. Further, it will be found, that this Church class as a whole will have experienced all the aches and pains of humanity and will therefore understand their case better. There is a principle involved here, viz: only those who have suffered similarly can enter into fullest sympathy with any one in their affliction—Jehovah alone being the grand exception to this rule. We read of our Lord, “For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able [therefore] to succor them [His body members] that are tempted” (Heb. 2:17, 18). Jehovah also intends that this Church class shall represent the whole world in the Heavenly Courts. For we read of this class, “Thou has redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and has made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on [over] the earth.” (Rev. 5:9.)

The education to be given in this school is of the highest order, therefore, as God looked over all His sons on the angelic plane, He selected from among them His well Beloved or only Begotten Son, as the one most fitted for this responsible position. Nicodemus declared to Him, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a Teacher come from God” (John 3:2). Yes, Jesus is the great Teacher, appointed by the Father in this wonderful school. As we have seen, then, this school was intended for those who shall be of the Church, the Body of Christ, and who will eventually become His glorious Bride.

Who are invited to this school? All the justified? “Not all the justified are called, but all are welcome.” (See W.T. 1904, p. 255.) Only those who accept the call (Rom. 12:1), and sacrifice unto death and give up all earthly or restitution privileges and blessings and lay down their human wills at the feet of the Master, and take God’s will instead of their own, are the ones who enter the school of Christ and are begotten of the Holy Spirit. (John 3:3.) All of this class must remember, however, that the school term is not to last forever. The school has been in existence for 1900 years, and will soon close. Previous to the closing time (Matt. 25:10), comes the period when all the scholars undergo a close examination, or inspection, and all who have carefully studied their lessons and been diligent in all things, attendance at meetings, etc., will surely pass their examination.

We can learn some excellent lessons through our children and the schools which they attend. When the child arrives at the proper age, it is given to understand the time has come for it to attend school. The parent instructs the child as follows: "Now, my dear child, the school is for the purpose of giving you an education which will help and fit you for life's duties and responsibilities. You must therefore be diligent with your studies and attend regularly, and in about six or eight years you should expect to graduate with honors, not only to yourself but to the school which you attend, and to the teacher who instructs you." "I will not be able to be with you in school, but I will be able to keep track of you by means of the deportment card which will tell exactly how you are getting along."

Everything goes along very well for the first few weeks, and later the parent notices the child's card has a tardy mark, indicating the child is late in getting to school. You say to the child, "What is the trouble? Why don't you get to school in time?" And the child replies, "I played on the way".

Later, you notice that the deportment card indicates that the percentage in studies is falling off instead of rising; also that the general deportment isn't as good as it ought to be. In alarm, you say, "I must go and see the teacher about this." Usually it is found that the trouble is with the child, seldom with the teacher; but in the school of Christ, the trouble is always with ourselves and not with the Teacher. A tardy mark on our deportment card means, late to the meeting. "Does that amount to anything?" says someone. Yes, indeed, we reply, because in Heaven everything is done on time, and "order is Heaven's first law." Late at meeting indicates a lack of system or order, and with such a lack we would surely find ourselves out of place in Heaven, for time is a very important element in all of God's arrangements, and the same is true in the world's affairs. As the Lord is always on time at each meeting, there present to bless all who meet in His name, so we should also begin the meeting on time, and not keep the Lord waiting. In some places, the dear Elder says, "We will wait for brother and sister Man. They are generally a little late." This dear brother and sister, remembering this, do not see the necessity of hurrying along, as the class will wait some times fifteen minutes for the late-comers, and at times the meeting begins a half-hour behind time. This is surely displeasing to the Lord.

Who have a right to enter this school? Answer: Only those whom God invites. Has not God invited the world into this school? We answer, No! The world are in the school of experience, where they properly belong. God invites only those who are His by having accepted Jesus as their Savior and who have further consecrated themselves wholly to the doing of God's most holy will in all things. Rom. 12:1 shows plainly who are called or invited: "I beseech you, *brethren*, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice," etc. Such are acceptable to God.

How much will it cost? is the next question, for we say, "Surely it must have cost a great deal to procure such an education as is given here." Yes, says the Lord, it cost Me the life of My beloved Son, and He gave His life for you and all the world; therefore, the tuition is free to all who wish to attend.

In entering this school, however, we must remember that certain rules must be kept strictly. Obedience must be rendered in all things.

We next inquire, Who attend this school? Are there many wise, mighty, or noble called? No, says St. Paul, for ye see your calling brethren how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, that no flesh should glory in his presence." (1 Cor. 2:26-29). Hear St. James also: "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" (James 2:5). We see then, not many wise, rich or noble are called, but the Lord chooses chiefly from among the poor, not because they are poor, but because they are rich in faith. The majority of those who belong to the I.B.S.A. are of the poor class, and many inquire astonishingly, "Where does all the money come from for all these public lectures and a collection is never taken?" Where do you get all of this money for the production of "The Photo Drama of Creation" in all the cities and towns? And you never charge anything for admission, and yet it must cost a great deal to get these things up. We reply, Yes, it does cost a great deal, but we have a very rich Father.

He hath given all to His dear Son, whom He hath made the heir of all things. (Heb. 1:2) St. Paul also says: "If ye be Christ's, all things are yours." (1 Cor. 3:21) There, dear friends, is the secret of the whole thing. That is where all the money comes from. The Lord had the railroads built just in time for the great harvest work. He also had the printing presses invented in time so that all the literature might be prepared which was to be used to help in the instruction of those attending this school and incidentally to help enlighten the world regarding God's great plan. He has control of all the money in the world, for has He not said, "All the silver and gold are mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills are mine also." (Hag. 2:8; Psalm 50:10) Therefore as sons of God (1 John 3:1), we are rich also, because our Father withholds no good and necessary thing from us. But He gives it all to us to use as faithful stewards in His service. The railroads, electric cars and automobiles, and all money necessary for our use so we may attend conventions, classes, etc., and to be used in this great Harvest Work. As all these things belong to us, because we belong to Christ; we don't have the slightest objection to the world using them, since they keep them so orderly and in such good shape for our use, and they are always ready for us when we need them.

Another important lesson in the school of Christ is self-denial, which means we are to deny there is such a person in existence as our Old Man. We are now New Creatures in Christ Jesus. (2 Cor. 5:17.) The New Creature must gain the ascendancy day by day and the Old Creature must go under until completely conquered in death.

In the class room all the scholars are seated at their desks. There is Jones. He wants to show the teacher how well he can write and in his anxiety to write well, he takes an extra drop of ink on his pen, and in so doing he lets the ink fall upon his clean copy book. He has no blotting paper near at hand and tries to get the blot off his copy book before the teacher gets around to his desk. But he spreads the blot over the whole page and smears it, and the scholars say, "Poor Jones, he is in for it now." But the teacher, much to Jones' astonishment, instead of scolding him, just speaks kindly to him and tells him to be a little more careful next time and see to it that that and each stumbling stone becomes a stepping stone to higher and better things. Jones feel encouraged and says, Since the teacher is so kind and didn't judge me by the blot on my book, but by my heart's intention, I will from now on try to do better than ever and at last graduate with high honors. So let us, dear friends, not be discouraged but "press with vigor on." Let us each day start anew with fresh determination and renew our consecration vows to the Lord and fulfill them.

In the school there is a gymnasium, a hospital, and recitation room. The gymnasium is found in Eph. 6:12, "For we wrestle not with flesh and blood," etc. The hospital is found in 1 Cor. 11:19-32 and James 5:14, 15. Lack of reverence for God and the sacred institutions of the Church placed several of the Corinthian Church in the hospital for the sick. (1 Cor. 11:30). The recitation rooms are the Wednesday night Prayer and Testimony meetings, and the Vol. 2 Berean Study meetings, etc. It is very necessary we should all attend these meetings and not get behind in our exercises and lessons. The Prayer and Testimony meeting is one of the most important meetings; but some attend and take no active part in Prayer and Testimony and thereby miss a great blessing, for our Lord has said, It is more blessed to give than it is to receive. (Acts 20:35.)

Mathematics are also taught in this school, because it is a real, and practical and thorough education that is given in this school. Someone might say, "Is all of this necessary?" We answer, "Yes, absolutely so, because we must be fitted by these lessons for the kingdom, so that we shall know how to give the world their instruction in the Millennium and be able to help them out of their degradation and sin. We proceed with our arithmetic." First, subtraction, "Put off the old man with his deeds." (Col. 3:9) Second, addition, "And put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge," etc. (Col. 3:10) And besides this, giving all diligence, *add* to your faith, virtue and to virtue knowledge, etc. (2 Peter 2:5-8) Third, multiplication. Grace and peace be multiplied *unto you through the*

knowledge of God. (1 Peter 1:2) Fourth, division. “Learn to rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

Spelling is also taught. When we can spell p-a-i-n with a smile, we are learning to spell well. When we can spell *h-e-a-d-a-c-h-e* with a smile, and go to meeting just the same, we are certainly improving in our spelling. When we can further spell s-t-o-r-m with a smile and say, “I am not a fine weather soldier, I go to meeting rain or shine, storm or calm, because the Apostle enjoins upon me to ‘endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ’.” (2 Tim. 2:3.)

Grammar is also taught in this school; for grammar is the use of proper words in the proper place. Usually our grammar is very poor when we first come to a knowledge of the Truth and not considering the proper *moods* and tenses, in speaking to others, we are apt to prejudice people and do a great deal of injury to the Cause we all love so dearly. It will be better for us to go home and study our grammar, so that “we may be workmen that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Tim. 2:15.)

Geometry also. We must learn to draw a straight line, and discover the shortest distance between two given points. In other words, when we are in the wrong and know we are wrong, the proper thing to do is at once to acknowledge and *confess* it and ask forgiveness of the one we have wronged. Well we know it is not always the easiest thing in the world to say we are wrong, or at fault, but “confession is good for the soul.” Therefore, draw a straight line and go right at the matter as soon as possible, and not beat around the bush.

Music is taught here too, for Jehovah wishes us all to be good musicians. He wishes us to take lessons on the Harp. The Harp is God’s Word. We must learn to play and sing the Song of Moses (Restitution) and the song of the Lamb, “Our High Calling.” But some of the Lord’s dear people “harp” too much on the Song of Moses—Restitution. We must remember that the Song of the Lamb is the one we must learn to play especially well.

Some of the Lord’s dear people say, “Restitution is good enough for me,” because they can’t appreciate a bargain when they see it, and anyone who chooses Restitution in preference to reigning with Christ, surely has a pitiful lack of appreciation of values, and gives evidence of having weakness of mind. Restitution for the world is a splendid thing, but it is not the Gospel call now. God calls the Church into His eternal glory. (1 Pet. 5:10.) We ask these dear friends why they choose Restitution, and they reply, Because they want to be with their children and relations and friends, forgetting that the family relationship will be so greatly enlarged in the Millennial Day that all the world will become brothers and sisters and the children of the Christ. Those who choose Restitution will never see God, nor Christ, nor the Church in Glory, but will be confined to and live

upon this earth. These dear friends will come to see what a great mistake they have made in choosing for themselves instead of taking and choosing what God has to offer now.

Soon the door to the High Calling will be closed, and when that occurs, “many will seek to enter then and will not be able.” (Luke 13:24.) Of this class it is written, “In those days shall men seek death [consecration to death] and shall not find it.” (Rev. 9:6.) They will be bitterly disappointed when they realize what they have missed, but it will be too late then, for consecration to life will be the only consecration possible at that time, and these will take their position with the world, whereas they might just as well have been, if they had been willing, on a much higher plane.

We all want to be more determined to win this glorious prize, with the Lord’s assistance, and, like St. Paul, say, “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8:38, 39.) We should daily examine ourselves and see whether we are progressing or not. The Apostle does not say, I press toward the mark for the prize of “Restitution” or the “Great Company Class,” but “I press toward [or down upon] the mark for the prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect (having reached the mark of perfect love) (See S. Studies, Vol. 6, pp. 186-191 and 369-375.) be thus minded. (Phil. 3:14, 15.)

“Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve,
And press with vigor on;
A heavenly race demands thy zeal,
And *an immortal crown.*”

“That prize with peerless glory bright,
With Thee, O Lord, we’ll gain,
When earth’s great monarchs shall have lost,
Their glory and their fame.”

Let us, like our glorious Lord and Head, say from the heart, “Not my will, but Thine, O Lord, be done” (Heb. 10:7-9), and be faithful unto death.