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If you want to see something that is really funny hunt up a photograph of yourself taken about twenty years ago.

SOCIALISM'S FIRST HYPOCRITE

The International Sunday School Lesson For January 25th is "Truth and Honesty."—Acts 5:1-11.

By William T. Ellis.

Even a slight knowledge of history steadies a person in times of turmoil. The past is a lamp for present paths. Our air is filled with the clamor of utopian "get-good-quick" schemes, and patent devices for a made-over world. Various types and degrees of socialism are being proffered as the panacea for humanity's ills. So we turn back for a look across the centuries at similar experiences; and we find that the most nearly successful, for a short time, was the first Christian community in Jerusalem. There the believers had all things in common and lived for a period in an almost ecstatic mood—although a little later, significantly, we find Paul taking up a collection among the missionary churches to relieve the poverty of the Jerusalem Christians.

Opportunistly, the present lesson portrays the first hypocrite in this new experiment in Christian socialism. It rather jars our optimism to find that even amidst these almost ideal conditions, under the personal supervision of Peter and John and the other apostles, self-seeking and pretense so quickly found their way into the community. Ananias was the first example of the sort of this which is to-day happening in Russia, where Trotsky lives in regal state, and other Bolshevik leaders have seized gold and goods and special privileges for themselves, as well as power. The difference between the Bible and other radical literature is that it does not overlook the Ananiases.

One Family's Costly Pretense. In the fervor of faith and fellowship, the early Church pooled its property. It was an experiment in communism. It was an experiment in communism. Seeking to have a reputation for full Christian surrender, while at the same time determined to hold on to their own private possessions and privileges, two church members, Ananias and Sapphira, sold their property and offered part of the price to the Church's common treasury, pretending it was the whole.

Supporting his deception by a clear-cut lie, Ananias fell dead at the feet of Peter. Shortly afterwards his wife, Sapphira, not knowing of the tragic fate of her husband, came forward with the agreed-upon lie, and she, too, was fatally stricken. They had tried to lie to man and to God; but truth caught up with them, as it usually does, although in their case somewhat more quickly and dramatically than usual.

About the most stupid blunder ever attempted by a rather stupid world is this popular one of trying to fool God. It met dramatic failure in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. It always meets failure. No wonder the Bible represents Jehovah as laughing at the silly sins and vaunting vanities of man. Sometimes men successfully deceive their neighbors—though, oftener than they know, they are only laughed at—but they never deceive God. None of us is any more virtuous or any more religious than God knows him to be; and it is really not worth while to inconvenience ourselves to the extent necessary to play make-believe with the world. That "truth in the inward parts" which God requires is the only comfortable sort of religion to have.

Press-Agented Piety. If this man Ananias had ever paid attention to the discourses of Jesus, whom doubtless he had frequently heard, he would have caught the note of scorn in the Master's voice for the piety-posing and prayer-parading pharisees. Jesus spoke with disdain of the sort of religion that was merely to be seen of men. In his opinion it rated as of less than no value. Ananias, however, had either not heeded, or else he had forgotten; for here he was trying to introduce the disreputable pharisee fashion into the Christian Church.

Many of us are quite as dull-witted as Ananias in this matter. We want to get public credit for all our virtues, and even for those we have not. That is why financiers, society leaders and politicians employ press agents. They thirst for publicity, not understanding that it never yet satisfied a parched spirit. Of all the vanities of a vain world, this love of the limelight is the vainest. Simple sincerity is strength. A measure of disdain for public opinion is an element of greatness. There is something divine about disregard of men's approval. Samuel V. Cole has put the teaching into verse:

"Why fret you at your work because The deaf world does not hear and praise? Were it so bad, O workman true, To work in silence all your days? "I hear the traffic in the street, But not the white worlds o'er the town; "I heard the gun at sunset roar, I did not hear the sun go down. "Are work and workman greater when The trumpet blows their fame abroad?"

Nowhere on earth is found the man Who works as silently as God."

Jeers for a False "Reformer." Like all other pretenders, Ananias found his scheme of hypocrisy futile. So deeply established in the very soul of things is God's principle of truth that all of us eventually come to be known for what we truly are. Nobody is clever enough to mislead everybody. Even our faces betray us. However favorably the public prints may represent a man, the real facts about him quickly pass from mouth to mouth.

Recently I was present at a public dinner of newspaper men; and one of the speakers, who had secured by appointment, his first public office, was a "reformer" who gave utterance to platitudes that might have been appropriate before a less sceptical and less sophisticated audience. As it was, these men were familiar with the private business practices of the speaker, and his notorious parsimony and pretense, so they openly jeered at his simulated modesty and public zeal. Perhaps it was not polite; but it seemed to me an illustration of the judgment day that is every day. This sham "reformer" was undergoing a mild version of the Ananias experience.

Because one's real self is already known to some men, and will someday be known to all men, as well as to God, is a sufficient reason for keeping that self true and noble. Passion for righteousness is a better reason, for it is born of a desire to do the will of God. By what we are we best serve the world. Everybody is followed by somebody. George Lee Burton writes:

"He toiled on the street for his daily bread, Jostled and pushed by the surging throng. 'No one has time to watch,' he said, 'Whether I choose the right or the wrong; No one can be by me misled.' "He chose the wrong, and thought no one cared, But a child lost that day his ideal of strength; A cynic sneered at the soul abandoned; A weak man halted, faltered, at length Followed him in the sin he had dared."

A Church With Discipline. "Justice is the supreme concern of heaven on earth," said Daniel Webster. The swift and summary fate of these two offenders in the early Church may seem severe. Thereby we know how awful is a lie. By the flash that brought death to Ananias and his wife we glimpse the sacredness of truth. In private life and in public affairs, there cannot be built up a safe structure on the basis of deceit and misrepresentation.

The world feels deep resentment against the old order of lying diplomacy which has brought such woe to humanity. It has carried "discretion" and self-advantage to such a point that the tested integrities of old life mean nothing to it. It will sacrifice the honor of an individual or the welfare of a people for its own dishonest purposes. We shall never have a new world until the contempt and wrath of all honest people have exterminated the present type of state department and foreign office and diplomacy in general.

Condemnation was created in the early Church by the fate of Ananias and Sapphira. The experience was chastening and beneficial. It is not clear that the first need of organized Christianity to-day is a spirit of discipline, that will refuse to condone known evil in the lives of members? No "revival" can succeed that is not a revival of righteousness. The most spectacular evangelist of recent times has become a spectacle of failure because he trimmed his message to the rich and powerful, and because the element of thrift—to write ephemerally—became paramount in his arrangements. The favor of God cannot be with the Church or the social enterprise that closes even one eye to sin. Our new times must have, if they are to be Christian, the sternness of the Apostolic Church toward falsehood, dishonesty and pretense.

TO-DAY IN HISTORY



Nineteen years ago today, January 22, 1901, Queen Victoria died. Find Edward Seventh. Answer to yesterday's puzzle: Upper left hand corner down, at shoulder.

Events at Stella. J. M. Campbell, Kingston, speaks on Steamboat Service. Stella, Jan. 20.—The ice in the Bay is once more in good shape for travelling. The different roads are being marked off. A road has also been marked off from the foot of the island down the lake to Kingston.

The congregation of St. Albans and Christ church, Emerald, held their annual Sunday school entertainment in Victoria Hall on Thursday evening, January 21st. L. R. Neilson, and A. Richardson held a dance in Victoria hall on Tuesday evening last. Salsbury's orchestra, Kingston, provided the music. Lunch was provided by the ladies. A committee of Emerald young men held a dance on Friday evening last in Victoria hall. Music was furnished by Russell's orchestra, Wolfe Island. There was a good attendance. Mr. Willoughby, Cobourg, and Mr. Brethen, Ernestown, addressed a meeting in Victoria hall on Friday last of the farmers in the interests of the U.F.O. Mr. Willoughby spoke on the United Farmers Co-operative Association. Mr. Brethen, the U.F.O. candidate, at the last election, also gave a short address.

J. M. Campbell, Kingston, addressed a meeting of the residents of the township in the hall on Monday afternoon, regarding steamboat service on the bay for next season. Mr. and Mrs. R. F. Sanders, have been spending a few days with friends in Deseronto. Harris Tugwell has arrived from the west to spend the remainder of the winter with his parents.

Barrie-Field News Budget. Barrie-Field, Jan. 20.—Mrs. Redden and two children, of Portmouth, spent the week-end with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Knapp, R. Worthington has returned from Toronto. Mrs. Knight, who has been so ill, is improving at the Pines. School has reopened with the former teacher, Miss Jones. The choir of St. Mark's church intends holding a dance on Thursday. A number from here are having a driving party at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Kincaid, "Riverway."

The Grand Trunk Railway system's traffic earnings from Jan. 7th to 14th were as follows: 1920, \$1,228,846; 1919, \$1,029,573; increase, \$199,273. Hon. G. H. Ferguson regards the wave of U.F.O. popularity as starting to decline.

Boards to Co-operate. To Establish Experimental Farm in Peterboro' County. Board of Trade and the Farmers' Club announced that they will co-operate through a joint committee to enlist the active interest of other bodies and direct the attention of the provincial Government to the importance of establishing the proposed experimental farm in Peterboro' county.

The Supreme Council on Tuesday adopted the British and French proposals regarding the list of those guilty of crimes incident to the war, whose surrender will be demanded of Germany. Rumors are current in Mexico City that General Obregon has revolted against the Carranza Government according to a dispatch from Mexico City received by a Mexican paper published in San Antonio, Texas. The R. B. Russell, Winnipeg case will be taken to the Privy Council to determine trades unionism standing in Canada.

Influenza is epidemic among the American soldiers at three United States camps; it was announced Tuesday. Miss Harriet McLaren, for forty years a bookkeeper at the Right House, Hamilton, died on Monday. She was sixty-nine years of age. It is rumored that former President Poincare will be foreign minister in the new Millerand Cabinet.

Three Peterboro passengers were injured in the wreck in which the Belleville G. T. R. train No. 98 was derailed Tuesday morning 2 1/2 miles west of Campbellford. The baggage car for the first coach left the rails and rolled over into the ditch. In New York, search has begun for Ambrose J. Small, Toronto, former owner of a chain of Canadian theatres, who disappeared on Dec. 2nd last.

French-Canadian bakers of Montreal, who recently banded together, had put up the price of bread, have been found guilty by the Board of Commerce of an infraction of the Combines Act, and ordered to dissolve. The increase in the price of bread is found to be justified. Privision is being made for the printing of a new Canadian cent. It will approximate the American cent in size.

By GEORGE McMANUS

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