

THE

Believer's Treasury.

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Vol. IX.

NEW-YEAR CONFERENCES.

THE various Conferences held at the new-year season will be over before these pages appear; and we doubt not that many have found these special meetings to be times of special blessing. We are all more or less influenced by our surroundings; and the mere coming into contact with believers whom we see only at rare intervals, is in itself a decided "means of grace." At such gatherings we meet with brethren whom we have known for many years—some battered and tossed by the storms of time; yet, in a spiritual sense, the "garments fresh and feet unworn" tell how God has brought them through. The sun of their life is in the western sky; yet

the "dew of youth" has not departed, and the eye is not dim! Even a passing word with such believers is in itself a little time of refreshing.

Then there are those who have newly set out for the heavenly mountains— young converts in the full flood-tide of joy in the great Redeemer's love. You draw near, feeling you are in an atmosphere fragrant with heavenly spices; and perhaps you heave a sigh for the simplicity, the purity, and the guilelessness of a bygone day! These dear young souls appear as yet to be utter strangers to the trials and vicissitudes of Assembly life. They think not, and they have no need to think, of the storms that may yet arise and beat upon their heads. One sweet and great fundamental truth seems

to measure the horizon of their hopes—"My Beloved is mine, and I am His."

Then there is the general body of believers, drawn from every point of the compass. What a variety of Christian life and experience is before you! for every heart there has its history—its joys and sorrows—its conflicts with the powers of darkness—its strivings with adverse circumstances—its wrestlings at Bethel—its victories at Gilgal—its visions on Transfiguration Mount! As we scan that sea of faces, a new world opens up to our vision. We had been studying life within the circle of the local Assembly where our lot is cast; and our impressions of Christian character threatened to be well-nigh as limited as the sphere in which we moved. But we are now finding an "enlargement of heart." At the special meeting of believers we catch many beautiful tints and shades in the heavenly temple that had escaped us at home. We feel that it is not good to

forsake such "assembling of ourselves together."

If, in addition to all this, the ministry approves itself as a message from the Throne, we need not wonder if many are found going down to "the cities of Judah," as in Hezekiah's day, to hew down the groves and altars that bore witness to the departure there had been from Israel's God.

Let us trust and pray that this may indeed be the outcome of the various district Conferences held at this season; for it is vain for us to bear testimony that the Conference was "a splendid meeting," and the presentation of truth "wonderful," if some Samuel be found saying to us, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears?" (1 Sam. xv. 14). But we also trust it may be said of us, beloved, that "we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak" (Heb. vi. 9). We doubt not that many a lonely heart has been cheered, many a

desponding spirit encouraged, many a tempted believer sustained—yea, many a heavenly fire kindled, at the meetings lately held. Let us praise our God for all He has wrought at this time, and let us take it as an earnest and a foretaste of a great time of refreshing wherewith He is about to visit His people!

“APART TO PRAY.”

HAVING sent His disciples before Him “unto the other side,” we read that the Master “went up into a mountain apart to pray; and when the evening was come, He was there alone” (Matt. xiv. 23). We have here a glimpse, pregnant with heavenly significance, into the inner life of the blessed One, as He trod this wilderness world. Even He “who knew no sin” found it well to sever Himself from the multitude and retire to the solitude of the mountain-side—there to be *alone with God!* Our Lord comes specially before

us here as a *Man of Prayer*; and it is for us to remember that we have gone forth outside the camp, not only to have fellowship with Him in His *rejection*, but to have fellowship with Him as the One who withdrew Himself from the multitude and sought the solitude of the wilderness that He might *commune with His Father, God*. We may have followed Him in much that is outward—much that our brethren or the world can see. But the true test of our devotion is found in the simple question, “Do we follow Him—do we delight to follow Him—into the mountain to pray?” Hypocrisy may go down beneath the waters of baptism; it may handle the bread and cup of the Memorial Feast; but hypocrisy cannot follow the Master to the mountain-side to pray, and cannot drink of His cup of communion there. The most searching test of the reality of our Christian life is to be found in that “wilderness experience” which no eye but God’s can see.

RIGHT WITH GOD.

WHEN a believer is getting on happily with God, it is wonderful how he contrives to pick up spiritual nourishment, even in the most unfavourable circumstances. At a joyful Conference of the saints it is not at all remarkable that he should have "a feast of fat things." If his church-connection brings him into contact with believers who are spiritually minded and rejoicing in God, it is not surprising that he grows in grace. But let the scene be changed—let surrounding circumstances be seemingly *unfavourable* to spiritual progress; and you shall find that the believer who *in heart is right with God* shall rise clear above the withering influence of external circumstances. Even "the barrenness of the land" around will remind him that all his springs are in God. The strife of carnal profession, contending with unholy zeal in the things of the Kingdom, may drive some away from their scriptural

moorings. But to *the child of faith* these things only provide another *test* to faith, casting the soul anew upon God. Amid the various trials in the life of an Assembly, we have known of some being tempted to "give the whole thing up," as it is called; while others—resting calmly in God, in spite of circumstances—are led into a new and deeper experience of the goodness of the Lord! To mingle only with Christians of the most genial type will not test us very severely. But if we should find ourselves confronted by angular and crotchety professors, and know what it is to come under the lash of their tongue, we very soon discover whether our Christianity is a "hot-house" production or not. In such circumstances the "fair-weather Christian" is soon overwhelmed, while he whose heart is stayed upon God, will take everything as *from Him* (See 2 Sam. xvi. 11), and find a new experience and a new blessing even through the cursings of a Shimei!

“SMALL” TRIALS.

WHEN our trial is a “small one,” we are apt to think that we can get through it without special help from God. It is the “big trials” that we take right to Him at first. This explains how it is that we are often sustained in some great trouble, while we completely lose command of ourselves in some “insignificant” annoyance, such as the breaking of a dish. Hence the need to remember the exhortation, “In all thy ways acknowledge God” (Prov. iii. 6). “Trust in Him at all times” (Ps. lxii. 8). Israel thought that Ai would be very easily taken, and that there was no need for all the people to go up (Josh. vii. 3). Yet their first defeat in the promised land took place there. Whether the trial be great or small, we need “all the aids of heavenly power.” Our self-sufficiency in “small” trials is nothing less than the presumptuous thought that we can do *without God!*

A CARNAL COMPACT.

IF a brother stands up to minister, on the understanding that if you let *his* Agag alone he will not disturb *your* Agag, he is only “beating the air.” He has received no heavenly call whatever to rise up and bear heavenly testimony. He who is thus “bound hand-and-foot” cannot deliver God’s message. How can there be faithful testimony if there be a secret understanding that in exchange for a certain amount of fleshly compassion towards *me* I will extend a similar quantity of fleshly compassion towards *you*? The men whom God sends are those who are prepared to deliver *His* message; and he who is thus prepared has no need to come under the power of any carnal understanding, that you, the audience, will shut your eyes to his shortcomings, while he, the preacher, will prophesy smooth things and take care to make no reference whatever to your inconsistencies.

TENDENCY TO DECLINE.

AT the beginning of a new year it may be fitting to call attention to a thing observed by many, and plain to everyone who has eyes to see. We refer to the tendency in the life of the individual believer to depart from God, after "running well" and shining brightly for a while—perhaps for years. Explain it how you may, the broad fact stares us in the face that there are many who once upon a time gave every evidence of being on fire for God; and yet to-day the fire seems almost to have gone out. Their zeal was once undoubted; in labours they were abundant. They seemed to have "counted the cost," and were prepared to "deny self" and be "anything for Jesus." But it is altogether different now. The spiritual *tone* has departed from the conversation, and the idols of bygone days are being brought out and worshipped again! They may still *profess* that they are "just as good Chris-

tians" as ever they were. But the signs and tokens of departure from God are plainly discernible. What avails it although all the outward forms of Assembly life are maintained, if the fire upon the altar of the heart is burning so low that it gives scarcely any outward manifestation of its existence!

This, then, seems to be a peculiarity of the present time—departure in heart and ways from God, and yet the whole roll of profession kept up, the same as if nothing were wrong! One can easily perceive a seeking back to the beggarly elements of Egypt, which would have been consumed in the fire that once was burning. What we want now is the fire—the soul-inspiring, flesh-consuming fire from the heavenly altar. The tendency to "decline" from the path of communion is a tendency to which we are all more or less liable. And he who is fully convinced of this is already half prepared to meet the enemy. We are never in so dangerous a

condition as when we persuade ourselves that *we* have no need to fear the advancing tide of a lukewarm Christianity. He who is learning of God will quickly perceive when the temperature of the surrounding atmosphere has fallen. It is only as we abide in the Master's presence that we can preserve the "dew of youth," and be kept secure in the "evil time."

THERE MUST BE TESTIMONY.

IF a general silence is being maintained as to any particular truth, we may confidently expect that the truth in question will begin to lose its hold upon the saints. They will ere long "take liberties" in connection with that thing which God has commanded, or which God has forbidden. And, finding no one to rise up and declare the counsel of God on the matter, they will "revolt more and more," until liberty becomes licence. When departure from

God has become popular, and when some messenger of God—a "swift witness"—arises, it will be found no easy task to get a hearing for "the healthful teaching." They will then turn round and tell him that he is in "a minority"—that the thing has become "established in Israel," and that if he is a wise man he will say nothing whatever on the subject. We thus see the great need that all who witness in any measure for God should not fail to minister what they know to be "neglected truth."

If a certain "line of things," searching and withering to the flesh, has been left untouched for a time, let the Lord's messengers not fail to bring it up, and proclaim it in all the energy and power of a new revelation. You will no doubt find those who will tell you that they have "heard all that before." But that is only another way of saying they "don't want to hear it again." It may be a veritable message of God to their hearts. What matters it although a particular

“line of things” be familiar to many of the saints? If “ease in Zion” has set in, if carnal indulgence and inner departure from God are on the increase, then the trumpet must give forth no uncertain sound. The people of God must be delivered. The standard of our separation must be brought up again to where it was in “the day of our espousals.” And if this happy consummation is to be reached, there is *one* instrument among others which must not be neglected by those who stand forth as the messengers of God—and that is a bold and fearless public proclamation of truth that shall bear directly on the “secret worldliness” and “carnal Christianity” of this apostate age. Let “ministering ones” stand boldly up in our Assemblies, and on our Conference platforms, and lay the axe to the root of the tree. Let them go forth with the sword of Samuel for the destruction of the Agags that are beginning to walk at large. Thus we may rest assured that our God will

honour faithful testimony for Him, and that the things that are not of God will soon be compelled to hide their heads before the realised presence of the Lord.

POWER OF LOVE.



IT has been said that before you can be of any godly help to a brother you must *love* him. And we suppose this is just another way of saying you must first get him *into your heart*. After *that* you may smite. Yet he shall be constrained to admit that “faithful are the wounds of a friend.” When a brother sees that you are honestly seeking his eternal welfare, and that the motive power at work is *love*, he is as nearly ready to be helped as his spiritual condition will permit him to be. Love will open many a door that remains shut against all the thunders of ecclesiastical authority; and many a “hard case” is reached only through the gentleness and faithfulness of love.

THE CONSCIOUS PRESENCE.

WE were having a little conversation one night in a believer's house when brother —— suggested that we had better get down on our knees and have some prayer. He had observed by the drift of the conversation, and in that "multitude of words that wanteth not sin," that we had "lost the consciousness of the presence of the Lord"! These were the very words he used in laying the matter before God. I believe we all felt that our brother was right. After prayer we separated; and I for one got something to think about. How precious and yet how searching is a "consciousness of the presence of the Lord" in a little company engaged in Christian conversation! Yet what an easy thing so to speak, and even to look, that the consciousness of that blessed presence is lost! Happy for us if in circumstances like these there be present a Mephibosheth—quick to discern

the absence of the King; or a Mary who perceives that they have taken away her Lord.

What a world of strife among believers would never have had an existence, if they had simply got down on their knees as soon as they ceased to have a consciousness of the presence of the Lord! Unholy strife cannot live in that holy presence. Harsh thoughts—unlovely words—must stand back abashed before the consciousness that "the Lord is here." Yes, beloved, we simply want to subject our Christian life to that easily-applied test—"Have I, or have I not, a consciousness of the presence of the Lord?" Yea, it may be to our everlasting profit if we stand still in the midst of contention with our brethren, and even in the midst of professed service for God, and let the question be asked: "Have I the consciousness of the presence of the Lord?" If this consciousness be lost, the chariot of our service cannot be drawn up one moment too soon.

“MERELY EXTERNALS.”

THE Corinthians were commended for keeping the ordinances as these were delivered (1 Cor. xi. 2). Let this be pondered by all who would fain tell us that ordinances are merely *externals*, and are not *essential*. It is true that they are externals; but they are externals which *God has commanded*; and that is enough for those who “remember His commandments *to do them*” (Ps. ciii. 18). Our assembling together is an external thing; so is the ordinance of Believers' Baptism, and the Weekly Feast in remembrance of the absent One. But these are externals as to which the Lord has spoken. If they had been of no consequence we would have found some plain declaration in Scripture to that effect. But Scripture clearly reveals that the ordinances referred to are *God's* ordinances—not man-invented, but God-appointed. The instruction as to the observance of the ordinances is a part of *the Truth*

which John refers to when he says, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 Jno. 4). Therefore, let no believer, young or old, be stumbled by the reasonings of those who would make light of God's ordinances. The Lord Himself knows, infinitely better than any of His finite creatures, what is for the highest blessing of His people while here below. Let us ever remember that “the statutes of the Lord are right” (Ps. xix. 8).

As to the assertion, often made, that the keeping of the ordinances is “not *essential*,” we ask, “*Essential to what?*” Do you mean essential to salvation? If so, we quite agree with you. To believe on Him who is spoken of in Jno. iii. 16, is all that is *essential* to salvation from wrath to come. But it is essential to a *good conscience*—it is essential to *communion with God* and *deliverance from the pitfalls of the wilderness*, that I seek to carry out whatever I find recorded in Scripture for my obedience.

"NOTHING BUT GOD."

IN the path of trial the latent unbelief of these hearts will search about for every earthly "prop" on which to lean. When these props are knocked away—when circumstances leave us "nothing but God," as is sometimes said—it is then that *faith* finds its exercise. We then "launch out" upon the promises, having learned by experience that our true and unfailing help is *in God*. Happy for us if we have learned to trust Him without such a painful experience of resting in our surroundings. Yet, if by such an experience, the lesson of simple faith in God *must* be learned, it is better than not to learn the lesson at all. Those who are now "strong in faith, giving glory to God," have not all reached that happy goal by the same way and through the same experience. Let us praise God even for those painful experiences that lead us to say, like Job of old, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

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THE


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Vol. IX.

TESTIMONY, NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE.

HRISTIAN testimony is of a twofold character, viz., *negative* and *positive*.

The *negative* denotes qualities that are absent, and rightly so, from the believer's character; the *positive* denotes qualities that are present, and rightly so, in his character. In other words, positive testimony tells what I *do*: negative testimony tells what I *don't do*.

Scripture abounds in exhortations both negative and positive. "Thou shalt," is positive: "Thou shalt not," is negative. There are things we are enjoined to abstain from: there are things we are exhorted to cleave to.

What we wish now to point out is the important and vital

connection that exists between negative and positive testimony. The two are repeatedly linked together in Scripture—as if to show us that as "faith without works is dead," so negative testimony, divorced from positive testimony, is dead also. Take, for example, that well-known and well-worn passage in the first Psalm, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." We have here three negatives, "walketh not," "standeth not," "sitteth not." Yet the promised blessedness is not ours although we may persuade ourselves that we fulfil these three negative conditions. Our God has linked these three *negatives* with at least two *positives*; and it is only when we

find the positives as well as the negatives true of us, that we can claim the blessedness and the fruitfulness set forth in verse 3. The two positives are contained in these words, "But *his delight* is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he *meditate* day and night."

There may be an outward separation from the ungodly, and a careful avoiding of the scorner, while there is no delight in the Word — no meditation at eventide (Gen. xxiv. 63). When this is so, there cannot be the blessedness and fruitfulness of Ps. i. 3. Negative qualities of themselves can bring no blessedness. But let them be joined with the positive, and they at once become instinct with life and power, and shall be found, in our happy experience, to open the windows of Heaven.

In Rom. xii. 2 we have the exhortation, "*Be not conformed* to this world." And immediately we have the *positive* aspect of the same exhortation—"But be ye *transformed*." You may refuse

to conform to the world; you may stand aloof, and rightly so, from its ungodliness, and its religious systems. But such nonconformity of itself cannot constitute a testimony that will bring glory to God. There must be the positive side to such testimony. There must be *transformation*—the "life also of Jesus made manifest in these mortal bodies." *Nonconformity* is one thing, and *transformation* is another. The flesh may refuse to *conform*; but the flesh has no power to *transform*. When "Conform not to the world," is linked with "Conformed to the image of God's Son," it is then that testimony has power with men, and ascends as a sweet-smelling savour unto God.

If you take the passage, "Be careful for nothing" (Phil. iv. 6), apart from what follows, it might be held to encourage that easy-minded indifference which has no relationship whatever to faith. But such a thought disappears whenever we pass on to the positive side of the exhortation,

"But in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." They only can be careful for nothing who have learned to do with God in prayer about everything.

We need not multiply Scripture references. If we are told to *lay aside* all malice, guile, &c., we are at once exhorted to *desire* the sincere milk of the Word (1 Pet. ii. 1, 2). "Cease to do evil," is joined with "Learn to do well." Thus our God would impress us with the importance of giving due heed to both *positive* and *negative* in our Christian testimony. If our character as children of God is to be developed to His glory, we must have the positive as well as the negative qualities of obedience. There are believers who are strong in negatives. They will not do *this*, and they refuse to bow down to *that*. Indeed, there may be fifty things which they *don't* do. But you look in vain for *positive* qualities. Their nonconformity is plain to all; but their trans-

formation is most difficult to perceive. Their testimony, being thus ill-balanced and uneven, loses its power. And it cannot be otherwise. The cultivation of merely negative qualities can bring neither blessing to man nor glory to God. But let the believer be as remarkable for the beauty of his character as he is for the thoroughness of his separation from the world, and the people among whom he moves shall be compelled to acknowledge that his testimony is with power.

While we thus speak, we have no sympathy with those who sit lightly by Scriptures that tell us what we are *not* to do. To say "*No*" in the energy of faith, when God would have us say "*No*," is an act of positive obedience. We have simply been dealing with testimony which is remarkable for negative qualities alone. When a man's *positive* qualities are conspicuous by their absence, you may well question the reality of the *negative* qualities he seems to possess.

THE SAFE CHANNELS.

A PILOT had just boarded a vessel when he was asked the question, "Do you know all the dangerous places along this coast?" "No," he replied, "I only know the *safe* channels; but that is sufficient." The man was quite right. It was not needful for him to know all the dangerous spots. Indeed, a lifetime might not have sufficed to acquire such a knowledge. Some of these dangers he no doubt knew; but the great thing for him to know was a safe channel for incoming vessels; and his great work was to guide ships through that channel.

As it is with the pilot so is it with the believer. New religious bodies are springing up. New heresies are arising. And some speak as if the child of God were bound to sit down and investigate every new system that claims to be from Heaven. But we have not so learned Christ. If we were to devote our time to following up the ramifications of all

the religious systems presently in existence, and of new systems as they arise, we would have nothing else to do. Life is too short to enter into a discussion with every new theological inventor who may start up. What we have to learn is "*The Truth*" — "*The Faith*" once for all delivered to the saints. Having discovered this from the Scriptures—having found *there* what path the Lord would have us to tread, we have no need to investigate everything else that may profess to reveal God's path. We have simply to keep to "the safe channel" — the path of Truth. Thus, while various religious systems may rise and fall, and prophets come and go, we shall be kept "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," while building ourselves upon our most holy faith.

A PREFERENCE reveals a principle. Let a believer be brought to a testing point, where the claims of God and the claims of the flesh are in conflict, and his choice will determine the depth of his principle.


ACCEPTABLE MINISTRY.

IN public ministry how is it that certain brethren are accepted, while others are rejected? Some serve with a goodly measure of acceptance; while there are those whose ministry is simply a weariness to the saints. How is this? We think the answer may be given in very few words. The man whose ministry is accepted is the man who acts *within* his measure; and the man whose ministry is an infliction is the man who goes *beyond* his measure. You need not try to ride over this great Scriptural principle. You need not attempt to bring all God's saints to a dead level, and make it out that one brother has as good a right to minister as another. We have no "right" — save to be in subjection to the Lord Christ; and if we are in subjection to Him we shall be found giving heed to that Scripture which says, "If any man minister, let him do it *as of the ability which God giveth*" (1 Pet. iv. 11).

"As the man is, so is his strength" (Jud. viii. 21). Having therefore "gifts differing," let us see that we have the mind of the Lord as to what He has fitted us for. What undoubted acceptance usually accompanies his ministry who keeps within his measure! What positive weariness is produced by one who attempts what is manifestly beyond his measure! He may complain that he is not appreciated; and he may point it out as a sign of these degenerate times that the saints are not prepared to receive the hidden manna at his hands. But he needs some gracious and plain-spoken brother to tell him that he has seriously exceeded his measure. We do not doubt that he may have had "a thought" from the Lord; and if he had been content to hand out that thought and sit down, we doubt not that his ministry would have been both acceptable and helpful. But, then, he had to make his address of "a decent length"; and, by the time he had made various additions to the "single

thought" which he rose to communicate, counsel was darkened with words, and even the single thought itself failed of its effect. Many will agree with us that this is a very important subject in its bearing on our Assembly life. This being so, we devote the succeeding article to point out a few things in connection with acceptability in our ministry, however humble that ministry may be.

KNOWING WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE.

N connection with acceptable ministry among the saints (of whatever character that ministry may be) we learn from the Scriptures that "the lips of the righteous know what is acceptable" (Prov. x. 32). That is to say, practical righteousness—doing the right thing before God and man—will itself have a powerful effect in teaching a brother the limit of his acceptability among the saints. Ministry

is often rejected for the very reason that the "serving one" is not known as "a doer of righteousness." If he is not "straight" and "clean" in his dealings—a man of honour and integrity—he is not accepted. He is lacking in that element of character that would let him know what is acceptable. He that would be a preacher of righteousness must first be a doer of righteousness. And not only do the lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but we are expressly told that "the lips of the righteous feed many" (Prov. x. 21).

Unacceptable ministry is often set down to a lack of wisdom. You hear the remark, "A well-meaning brother, and might be useful, *if he only had a little wisdom.*" Very likely. But is there not a reason why the "little wisdom" is absent? Let us turn to Prov. xi. 2, and we find the words, "With the lowly is wisdom." Wisdom, in the matter of public ministry, is to be found, if we would only go *far enough down* to find it. This is just

where the difficulty lies. We forget the exhortation to "mind not high things." We persuade ourselves that the people of God will suffer irreparable loss unless we "deliver our soul." Thus we miss that "wisdom" which would enable us to act becomingly and help us to know our measure; for is not *wisdom* near of kin to *righteousness*? Is it not written that "the wisdom that is from above is first *pure*"? (Jas. iii. 17). "Wisdom" is not the exclusive heritage of some privileged party in the Church. Wisdom is with "the lowly," and is the portion of all who are willing to "*come down*," that they may be taught of God. Thus cultivating the lowly mind, and acquiring the heavenly wisdom, we shall prove that "he that handleth a matter wisely shall find good" (Prov. xvi. 20). It was the "poor wise man" that delivered the city (Ecc. ix. 15).

In the matter of acceptable or unacceptable service, much might be said. But we content ourselves, meantime, with citing one

passage that has more bearing on the subject than may at first sight appear. It is written that *love* "doth not behave itself *unseemly*" (1 Cor. xiii. 5). In other words, love knows what is acceptable or becoming. Apply this to unacceptable ministry—to ministry beyond the ability which God giveth—and you are forced to the conclusion that it is sadly deficient in the great element of *love*. There is a certain courtesy in love that commends itself. There is a seemliness in love's actings that disarms your suspicions and commands your attention. Ministry permeated by love seems to have an instinctive perception as to how far it may go. On the other hand, a cold, loveless ministry goes blindly on, seemingly bereft of all perceptive power as to whether it is being received or rejected.



ONE thing is needful. Therefore entangle not thyself with things not committed unto thee. Doing this, thou shalt belittle or seldom troubled.

IN THE CHOSEN LINE.

IT is wonderful how "men of faith" fail at some critical point to catch the mind of God. We have striking illustrations of this in the case of Samuel and Abraham. Both of these men failed in connection with the same thing, namely, to catch the mind of God as to the chosen line of blessing. And not only so, but each of them set his heart upon *a* line through which he was persuaded, or at least anxious, that the promised deliverance should come. In this matter both Samuel and Abraham were completely mistaken. Their thoughts were not God's thoughts. We have already referred to Samuel's mistake (See "Fill thine horn with oil," in *Treasury*, No. 136), and therefore need to do no more than glance at it here. It was certainly a critical time in Israel's history. The man who was "after the people's heart" had been rejected by Jehovah. It should have been clear to Samuel

that through that rejected king the line of God's deliverance need not be expected. It was for the prophet to wait calmly on God, that *He* might indicate the direction from which the deliverance to Israel was to come. Instead of this, however, he clung to the thought that Israel's sun might yet "arise and shine" in connection with the house of Saul. We know how suddenly his mourning was cut short by the divine rebuke, "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him?" And we know how, at the same moment, he was informed that the Lord had provided Himself a king to rule His people Israel.

In the case of Abraham we find circumstances almost exactly parallel. God had promised that His servant should have a son, and that in the line of that son all the families of the earth should be blessed (Gen. xii. 3, &c.). But it seemed as if the Lord had forgotten His promise. Long years passed away, until to the impatient heart it seemed clear

that something *must* be done to *prevent* the promise of God from falling to the ground! But where was Abraham's faith? Is he not brought before us in the Scriptures as a remarkable man of faith? Truly he is. Yet, as has been well said, you will find the great men of Scripture at some period of their life to be weak in their "strong point." Impatience for the promised seed led to the birth of Ishmael. Thus "a son" was born to Abraham; and it would seem, for the time, as if the promise of God had received its fulfilment. But God's promise was *not hastened a single day by the birth of Ishmael*; and Abraham had yet to learn that fleshly haste can neither work out God's purposes nor hasten the fulfilment of His promises.

The promise of Genesis xv. 4, is repeated to Abraham in the seventeenth chapter, where we also read that he "fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that

is ninety years old, bear?" No sooner has this thought found a place in Abraham's heart than he is heard giving expression to another thought that clearly showed he had not the mind of God as to the line of the promised seed. "And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before Thee!" (ver. 18). He had now to be told plainly that he need not set his heart upon Ishmael as the one through whom the promises should be fulfilled—just as Samuel had to be told, in a later day, that he had better cease to mourn for the rejected Saul. "And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name *Isaac*; and I will establish my covenant *with him* for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him" (ver. 19).

After this plain declaration of the thing that was about to come to pass, Abraham calmly rested in God, having had an experience which no doubt strengthened his trembling faith, and enabled him to believe and "stagger not"

at the promise of God through unbelief.

And thus many an imitator of Abraham's faith has discovered that in a critical moment the mind of God has not been caught. The "wrong turning" has been taken. The heart has been set upon some Ishmael, begotten of some Hagar — savouring of Egypt. And through a channel such as this it was expected that the Lord would send refreshing showers and usher in a reign of righteousness. But the Lord is in no haste, although we may be in great haste. When mere nature is exhausted, and the flesh has no room left for boasting—*then* God comes in—the son of the promise is born—the child of "the royal line" is revealed!

Thus shall it be with us if we are content to trust in God—no matter how circumstances may seem to mock our faith; and no matter how many Ishmaels may stand before us, each of them declared to be the sure and the shortest channel to revival times in Israel.

REFRAINING THE LIPS.

T is a token that we are learning of Christ if we have grace to hold our peace under trying and irritating circumstances. Even a man of the world can "answer back" and give "blow for blow." But it takes a "man of faith" to be silent when it is clear that discussion is degenerating into strife to no profit. Mere talk of the lips tendeth only to penury. Any fool can speak: it takes a wise man to hold his tongue; as it is written, "He that refraineth his lips is wise." The wisdom of such refraining the lips is not hard to perceive. It is very easy to mend matters if you say *too little*. You have simply got to supply what is lacking. But it is altogether different when you say *too much*. When our words in an unguarded moment become "like the piercings of a sword," it is then out of our power to *undo* what is already done. We then see, when it is too late, the *wisdom* of refraining our lips.

TAKE HEED WHAT YE HEAR.

WHEN the apostle of a new faith *gains the ear* of a few of the saints, it need not be at all surprising if he also gains a convert or two. Some believers seem to think they can despise the scriptural exhortation, "*Take heed what ye hear,*" and yet remain scathless. Thus they lend their ear to a new line of doctrine, or a new system of theology without pausing to take counsel at the mouth of the Lord. They are first *interested* in the new thing, then they are *enamoured* of it; and—if the leaven has its due effect—they soon become as wise in the new conceit as "seven men that can render a reason." No doubt there are hidden causes that have helped to bring about such a "shipwreck." If everything were known it would very likely be found that there were secret affinities between the new convert and the new heresy. But, making allowance for all these things, there remains the broad

fact that the divine exhortation to "take heed what ye hear" was despised. The keeping power of God was thus in a manner rejected; for that keeping power on *His* part is ever associated with the keeping of His word on *our* part.

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TO BE A CHILD AGAIN.

AFTER Naaman the leper dipped seven times in Jordan, we read that his flesh "came again like unto the flesh of a little child" (2 Kings v. 14). When we view *Jordan* as the type of death and resurrection with Christ, and when we remember that *seven* is the perfect number of Scripture, we are sure to find something deeply interesting and instructive in Naaman's cleansing.

In Naaman we see a type of the sinner who has come to an end of himself and submitted to God's righteousness—taken God's way of peace, and found it, in going down through the Jordan waters of "death with Christ." He who has thus "*believed God,*" finds "death and

judgment are behind him—grace and glory are before." As Naaman, emerging the seventh time from the Jordan waters, rose up *a new man*, so does the trusting sinner rise from the waters of death with Christ, "a new creation" in Him; "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The believer, so far as the guilt of sin is concerned, has perfect peace with God; for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. The law has no claim on one who has died to its demands; and we know that the believer *has died with Christ.*

The cleansing of Naaman is thus a wonderfully complete and striking type of *Conversion to God.* But while it tells us of death and resurrection, as well as the Heaven-begotten rest of

the believer, as set forth in the *seven* times dipping in Jordan, there is one special feature in Naaman's case that must come home with peculiar power to everyone who remembers the joy and the purity of conversion's earliest day. We refer to the words already quoted, that Naaman's flesh "came again like unto the flesh of a little child." He was, so to speak, *a child again*. How much for us lies enfolded in these words! When we rose from the Jordan river of "death with Christ," were we not children then? The child-like spirit was ours—the child-like simplicity—the child-like purity. Ours was the guilelessness of "a little child." We hoped all things—believed all things—perceived a roseate hue where "old established saints" saw nothing but the tints of decay and the tokens of despair. Faith was big in those days; and no wonder, for there was so little to hinder its exercise. We had not learned to be jealous; and envy did not seem then to be born! In that

great noon-tide of joy in the Redeemer's love, the works of darkness had to hide themselves, and it seemed as if mortality were "swallowed up of life." Grudgings, bickerings, feuds and factions—we were strangers to them all. We had not then acquired the arts of ecclesiastical diplomacy, nor studied how to overreach a brother in the race for power. We were only children then. "Only children!" And who does not long and pray that the guilelessness and purity of our spiritual childhood may shed its benign influence upon all our hearts in this evil and apostate day? Are there not many of us who could say, "Would to God that we were children again"? What would many a believer not give to possess once more the pure and exulting joy that filled his soul on the happy day when he stood on the resurrection side of Jordan, newly delivered from the leprosy of sin? Oh how sin was hated then! As if in anticipation of millennial times, the Lord alone

was exalted in that day! We do not wonder that one has penned the lines:

“Backward!—roll backward,
O Time, in thy flight;
Make me a child again,
But for one night!”

But why is there this longing to be “a child again”? It is because we recognise there was a *something* about the day of our spiritual childhood that is awanting now—something that gave its tone to life and its power to testimony—something that delivered us alike from the billows of temptation and the pangs of an accusing conscience. That “something” was *purity*—the purity, the ingenuousness of childhood; for we may search out a thousand causes, and yet after all come to this, that *the pristine purity of that bygone time was the secret of its power!*


We want that purity again. Shall we have it? Are we willing to have it? Are we really longing to have it? Elisha's God is still mighty to deliver. Nothing is impossible with Him.

It may seem a hard thing—to be a child again—to forget so much that we should never have learned—to sever ties that should never have been formed—to throw off habits that should never have been acquired. It matters not, brother, sister. God is able. But let us remember that half measures will not avail us. There must be no bargaining with the flesh—no compromise with Egypt. There must be whole-hearted surrender to God for the cleansing of the temple from everything that “worketh abomination or maketh a lie.” Thus, from the waters of self-judgment we shall rise; and like Naaman, whose flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, we too shall find the child-like spirit and the child-like purity again. Then, in thy sweet experience, thou shalt gaze upon a cloudless sky, and all thy day shall be bright with the light of God.



HE fills a great “sphere of service” who keeps a clear and steady light burning for his absent Lord.

THE "AFTER-GLOW."

N these northern latitudes we have all seen the after-glow that follows the sun on a summer night. The great luminary has just receded from our view; yet the soft and mellow light lingers, as if reluctant to depart; while the summits of yonder hills that rise out of the western sea, are radiant as with burnished gold. It is the sun's *after-glow*. And is there not an after-glow in Christian fellowship—in the parting of brother with brother, and friend with friend? Who is there among us that has not delighted to dwell upon the after-glow of the Emmaus journey? (Lu. xxiv. 32). The two sorrowing disciples had been in great company that day, although at the time they knew it not. Yet, after the Master had vanished from their gaze, the after-glow upon their spirit was softer and sweeter far than any earthly sun's departing ray. In a sudden burst of adoration they exclaim, "Did not our heart

burn within us, while He talked with us by the way?" They had been with Jesus—they had talked with Him as friend with friend; and the fragrance of that presence seemed to linger still.

And who is there that has not felt the after-glow in parting with some child-like believer whose words and manner breathed of heavenly fields? The interview was short. He had nothing startling to communicate—no new revelation to make known. Yet, when he is gone from your sight, you feel the "after-glow." He has left a fragrance behind him. You find you have something that you did not possess before. You have, in a certain measure, become partaker of his spirit. A new ray of beauty from the great Sun of Righteousness has fallen upon your sight. You beheld it in one of His members. You feel chastened and humbled, although the brother had not a word of rebuke. Ah! the Master was there; and the after-glow is but the after-glow of the Emmaus journey again!

STRANGE FIRE.

WE are all familiar with the fate which overtook Nadab and Abihu when they had "offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not" (Lev. x. 1). "And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them; and they died before the Lord" (ver. 2).

Let us be assured that this awe-inspiring passage from Old-Testament history has its voice for us. Although our lot is cast in the "dispensation of grace," we must never forget that our God is a God of righteousness. "Justice and judgment" have never ceased to be the habitation of His throne. The words addressed to His people "under law" are no less applicable to His people "under grace"—"I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me, and before all the people I will be glorified" (ver. 3).

We need not doubt for a moment that in the present day a vast amount of "strange fire"

is being offered before the Lord. Carnal wisdom has sought out "many inventions" in so-called "holy things"; and, because the Lord speaks not in judgment, as He did under the reign of the "fiery law," we must not conclude that all these devices of human vanity are acceptable to the holy and heart-searching One. Although the Lord in His long-suffering waiteth now, yet every work shall be brought into judgment, with every secret thing. Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the fire shall try it. And the fire of that coming day shall try the "strange fire" of this present day of service; and the all-seeing God shall make manifest what has *come from above*.

In Leviticus x. 1 there is one characteristic of "strange fire," and only one, which our God has been careful to leave upon record. We find it in the words, "*Which He commanded them not.*" We are satisfied that this single passage of Scripture will cut at the root of much that passes as

“sacrificing to the Lord” to-day. In the religious world invention follows invention—anything to make a stir—anything to draw the people. It seems to matter little although God has already spoken in the Scriptures of Truth. These inventors will turn round with the most self-complacent coolness and say, “Where do you find this thing forbidden in the Scriptures?” We reply that we do not need to find it forbidden. Nadab and Abihu were not smitten for doing something that had been forbidden, but because they did that which the Lord *commanded them not*.

Let this be pondered well by all who would worship in spirit and truth, and who seek to serve the Lord acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. Away with that sentiment of carnal policy, that *anything* will do in the service of God, provided your *object* is right. The heavenly warfare must be pursued with heavenly weapons. “In vain do they worship Me,” saith the Lord, “teaching for doctrines the com-

mandments of men” (Matt. xv. 9). Yet this is the very thing that meets us on every hand. The “commandments of men” are set forth as if they had come in the shape of a revelation direct from Heaven, while the things most clearly revealed in the Scriptures are either utterly rejected or completely explained away! But in this matter, one thing is evidently in keeping with another. Where the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures, is made light of, you are sure to find a great reverence for the commandments of men. But the result is only “strange fire”—a fire that can never ascend to God, because it never descended from Him. Let us not be envious at the seeming prosperity of those who offer up the strange fire of sensational methods, and daub the walls of Zion with the untempered mortar of carnal wisdom. Happy they who, at the close of the day of their service, can say :

“With *heavenly* weapons I have fought
The battles of the Lord !”

“THE MORNING MEETING.”

BY “the morning meeting,” as it is so generally called, we mean the gathering-together on the first day of the week to keep the Memorial Feast. At this meeting great liberty of soul may be experienced; or considerable “stiffness” may be felt. As everything has a *cause*, it may be well to consider a few of the causes that bring about, or that hinder, a “good morning meeting.”

Almost everything depends on *the condition of the worshippers*. We need not try to get away from this. God “abideth faithful.” If there be failure, it is not with Him. We must search for the cause in ourselves. What, then, is the spiritual condition of the worshippers? Find a company of believers who mortify the deeds of the body—who walk in the joy of an ungrieved Holy Spirit, and who seek in singleness of eye to give Jesus His place as Lord in the midst; and in that company you may

confidently expect to hear the divine foot-fall, and to be constrained to say, “Truly the Lord is in this place.” If the strings of the instrument are in tune, there shall be music—sweet and harmonious.

Now, an Assembly, gathered together in the attitude of worship, may be well compared to “an instrument of ten strings,” the music whereof shall prove a delight to the Lord our God (see Ps. xxxiii. 2). And when each heart is attuned to the mind of Christ, and delighting in His word after the inner man, the Lord by His Spirit can (if we may so speak) touch string after string. Thus “the sacrifice of praise” ascends—God is glorified, and His people are blessed. One thing seems to chime in with another. The Lord so “helps the Levites” (1 Chron. xv. 26) that one brother, led out in joyful liberty, unconsciously draws out another. And thus the stream of praise rolls onward and upward. From this corner of the meeting a hymn is given

out: from yonder corner a passage of Scripture is read. One has a word that draws out our hearts to Him who is in the midst; while another leads the saints in thanksgiving. It is felt that the Lord is leading out our hearts unto Himself—that the Spirit is “helping our infirmities”—that the sacrifice of praise from many hearts is ascending unto God. But while we lay stress on the spiritual condition of the worshippers, as being so largely conducive to a precious morning meeting, there is no glory to us in such a happy consummation. We simply sought to be in a condition in which the Lord could pick us up and use us to the praise of His glory. We, so to speak, felt it to be our business to see that the *instrument* was in such a condition that music might emanate therefrom at the touch of the Master's hand.

But if we are in a poor spiritual condition as worshippers, we need not be surprised if our enjoyment of the morning meeting be in keeping with our

spiritual condition. There are believers who, with unsparing hand, can show up the “stiffness” in a meeting, who never seem for a moment to imagine that *their* spiritual condition has anything to do with the matter. The Church generally is blamed for everything. But a church is composed of units; and the spiritual condition of a church is just the sum-total of the spiritual condition of each of these units. What, then, is *my* spiritual condition? What kind of a unit am *I*? This is the all-important question for *me*. It comes clear before the question, “What condition is the Church in?” Outside of myself I may see hindrances to “a precious time” at the Weekly Feast. Yet my first care is to see that I am in a condition to be a *help*. If I am found walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, then to that extent the *tone* of the meeting shall be raised—to that extent a bulwark shall be erected against everything that is not of God.

ACCEPTABLE MINISTRY.

(Second Paper.)

WHILE ministry is often rejected for the reasons already given, it is important to remember that a God-sent man, with a God-given message, may be utterly rejected. This side of the question must not be overlooked. Believers who are taught in the Word, and who are walking humbly before God, have a goodly measure of spiritual discernment in perceiving that which comes from above. But you do not always find a company of believers in this condition. And according to their spiritual condition will be their treatment of God's message. If a church is in a carnal condition, and a minister of Christ steps in with a word fitted to arouse them from their sleep of carnal security, we need not wonder if, *in their estimation*, the message be not "acceptable ministry." While a few might "humble themselves" (2 Chron. xxx. 11), it is quite possible that the company as a

whole would turn round and say, "We don't believe that the Lord has sent you here."

Both the Old and the New Testaments will furnish many examples of rejected ministry, although the message had come direct from the Lord Himself. And, wherever you find the Heaven-sent messenger rejected, you will find a cordial welcome given to those who run unsent, and carry not the message of the Lord. While Israel rejoiced under the shadow of false prophets, the God-sent man was put into the dungeon (Jer. xxxviii. 6). While Ahab's prophets were honoured, the man by whom the Lord's message came was smitten and sent off to prison (2 Chron. xviii. 23, 26). When we turn to New-Testament times, we find that while the Corinthians and the Galatians received Paul at one time as the messenger of the Lord, yet at another time they received false teachers with open arms, and treated their ministry as if it had come direct from God. "Ye suffer fools gladly," said

Paul, "seeing ye yourselves are wise" (2 Cor. xi. 19).

We thus see that ministry may be rejected, and often *is* rejected, simply because the believers do not want to be disturbed. Deep down in their heart of hearts they feel that a man of God with a burning message from the throne would *find them out*. They could not bear to be thus exposed. They are not prepared to break with their idols. They are not ready to hear the message that would search them, and allure them to walk anew in the light of God. We need not wonder, therefore, if with all their might they oppose the advent of a man of God. And, if they fail in this, it is not surprising if they take good care to keep out of the reach of his voice. Those who thus reject God's message will no doubt give a very different version of their actings. As a rule you will find them coming down upon the messenger—pointing out his defects; or rejecting his ministry for the alleged reason that it is "not

according to Scripture." You may find a few—very few, we fear—who will make the honest admission—"I know I am not right with God; and I shrink from yon man's searching words, for they would at once make manifest that my way has been perverse before the Lord." Yet this humiliating confession is vastly to be preferred to that self-complacent ease in Zion which nothing seems to be able to reach.

Concerning the ministry or testimony that comes from God, that word will be ever found to apply—"He that is of God heareth God's words" (Jno. viii. 47). A certain preparation of heart is needed—or, rather, a certain condition of soul—in order to hear what God the Lord will speak. "They that forsake the law praise the wicked" (or "the *lawless*," as it might be rendered); "but such as keep the law contend with them" (Prov. xxviii. 4). "The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise" (Prov. xv. 31).

TESTIMONY REJECTED.

WHEN one of the Lord's messengers bears testimony against some particular form of departure from God, without producing any apparent effect, this carnal and short-sighted age is ready to point the finger of scorn at his testimony. "How much better if he had held his peace," they say; "he has only spent his labour in vain." But *has* he spent his labour in vain? We trow not. Because a messenger's testimony is rejected, *that* is no reason for concluding that he had never been sent of God. The Heaven-sent man is here to do his Master's will—to deliver his Master's message, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. His responsibility ceases there—just at the point where his hearers' responsibility begins. Man may form his judgment, and say that certain testimony has been in vain, seeing it was not followed by wonderful results. But *the Day* shall declare what

has been in vain, and who have wrought with God. The Lord's messengers of old had to say, "Who hath believed our report?" Even the testimony of the Faithful and True Witness Himself was largely "in vain," so far as visible results were concerned. Yet we know that His testimony arose, as a sweet-smelling savour, unto His Father, God. *That* could not be affected by the acceptance or rejection of His testimony. Therefore, let us see that we are not discouraged by the sentiments of a Christ-rejecting world, or earthly-minded believers, concerning the path of our service. It is ours to do the will of God—to be true witnesses for Him; and it shall be found in a coming Day that a true witness has "delivered souls."

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THE FALL OF DAGON.

WHEN the Ark of God fell into the hands of the Philistines they evidently thought that the most suitable place for it was the house of Dagon their god (1 Sam. v. 2). But when God's ark was set side by side with Dagon, the people of Ashdod found that their god had "fallen upon his face before the ark of the Lord." They set Dagon in his place again; but only again to fall; and this time more disastrously than before. The ark of God was the symbol of the divine presence; and, even in the land of the Philistines, that ark would be a witness against that which was *not of Him*. Had the ark of God never reached Ashdod, we have no reason to suppose that Dagon would ever

have fallen. But no sooner was the *false* confronted with the *true* than it was made manifest what was *of man* and what was *of God*.

This remarkable incident in the history of God's ark, sets forth a principle no less remarkable, and one capable of wide application in our assembly life and in the sphere of the Lord's work. The principle may be expressed in a very few words, and is simply this, that the most powerful testimony that can be raised against that which is *false* is to bring it into contrast with that which is *true*. We all know that a crooked stick never has its crookedness so thoroughly exposed as when you place a straight stick alongside of it. In the same way a false system of religion is never so easily seen to be false as when it is brought into close

and sharp contrast with a living manifestation of the true. And never is a froward and crotchety believer so thoroughly laid bare as when brought side by side with one who is conspicuous for "the meekness and gentleness of Christ." Eternity alone will reveal the power of this silent testimony. We do not underrate the value of *spoken* testimony; for we must ever remember that the *trumpets* of Gideon's three hundred men were as needful for victory as the *lights* they carried (Jud. vii. 20); and we know that the trumpet sets forth testimony of the *lip*, while the light tells of the *life* bright with the Master's praise. Yet although we accord spoken testimony its due place, it is only the presence of "the ark of the Lord" that can give testimony its power. Yea, the presence of God's ark (that is, the manifestation of "the life also of Jesus" in the believer) is in itself testimony—testimony so powerful and convincing that empty profession and mere assumption have to stand back; for, like


Dagon of old, they are compelled to feel that *God is there*.

Wherever the true light is shining, it must needs make manifest the darkness and corruption that may lurk below the surface; "for whatsoever doth make manifest is light" (Eph. v. 13). Wherever the Lord is present in power—be it in the individual believer, or a church as a gathered company—the presence of the Lord will make itself felt. The man of whom it can be said, as of David of old, that "the Lord is with him" (1 Sam. xvi. 18), shall be a deliverer of souls—a deliverer of Israel. He shall be this in spite of himself—although he covet no position of power—although he toil not, neither does he spin, to be reckoned among the Lord's mighty men.

You may not be publicly acknowledged as one of the Lord's standard-bearers. Saul may be in the place of power, while you must be content with the wilderness of Ziph. But if "holiness to the Lord" be your watchword—

if you be a true carrier of the heavenly light—the glow of the Master's presence shall be felt in your going out and your coming in. You shall thus be a bearer of blessing to Israel. Yours shall be a life with an influence for God—an influence that shall cause the "Philistine host" of worldliness to tremble, and bring joy to the heart of all who are longing for a day of power.

LOST IN GENERALITIES.

 HERE are certain sins that need to be singled out and denounced by name. If you come down upon sin *in general*, no one will differ from you. Even a backslider in heart may say it was a splendid address—and go away as firmly joined to his idols as ever! The story of "the ewe lamb" was very effectively told by Nathan the prophet (2 Sam. xii.). Yet it failed to reach David's conscience. It never seemed to occur to him that *he* had any connection what-

ever with the story. The prophet saw that he must come to closer quarters. Then follow the startling words, "Thou art the man" (ver. 7). David's conscience was reached at last; but it needed very close and pointed dealing to effect that purpose.

In spoken testimony for God to-day the same thing may be seen. The story of the ewe lamb (general truth) is told out—very effectively, to all appearance. But the address seems to be intended for people a hundred miles away. It is an address delivered *before* an audience—not the impassioned utterances of one who is bent upon delivering souls and grappling with consciences. The address may be like a gold chain—link following link with exact regularity, and the whole shining with many beautiful "points." But there is no sigh of a broken heart—there is no wail of a backslider. The preacher lost himself among mere generalities. He forgot his mission. His aim should have been the delivering of souls

— nothing less than actual *business done for eternity*. What an opportunity he had! But he missed it. When he perceived that his audience (like David under Nathan's words) were saying "Amen" to his "parable," *then* was the time to press home the message: he should have come to close quarters and said, "*Thou art the man!*" And in some David's heart, we doubt not that the words would have arisen, "*I have sinned*" (ver. 13).

We must confess to a lurking suspicion as to the address we hear lauded to the skies, while the only effect produced seems to be that of *wonder* at such a clever "manipulation of truth." We would fain see "fruits meet for repentance." Believers in a poor condition of soul may be quite ready to praise a smart address. But, if the address had ploughed up their consciences, and revealed to them their own departure from God, would they have praised the address so highly and so coolly? Commend us to the man of whom it can be said, "Well,

he may not be one of your brilliant speakers; but he is *a man of God*—his life is a sermon—and he had a message to my soul!"

Herod might have tolerated a good deal of John the Baptist's general testimony. But there was one thing he could not bear; and that was the special testimony—"It is not lawful for thee to have her" (Matt. xiv. 4). We thus see that the faithful witness did not shroud himself in general calls to repentance. Under these general calls, Herod might have slept on as soundly as David under Nathan's parable. But he was not allowed thus to sleep. Cost what it might, the message must be delivered: "Thou art the man." We know what the delivering of that message cost. It cost John his life. Yet both life and testimony ascended as a sweet-smelling savour unto God.



THEY have made no small progress in divine things who have learned practically what it is to "cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils."

BACK TO EGYPT.

WHEN one who has known the joys of heavenly communion, departs in soul from the Lord and goes back towards the weak and beggarly elements of the world, he is indeed in sore straits. Humanly speaking, it is now a more difficult thing for him to get out of his entanglements than it was for him to shake off his worldly associations in Conversion's happy day. *Then* it was comparatively easy to separate himself from Egypt. He could turn round—he *did* turn round—and say to his former associates: "A great change has taken place; I am converted to God; old things have passed away: all things are become new. I have found new joys now—pure and eternal. God has saved my soul and made me happy in the love of Christ. He has called me out of Egypt; and I go up through the wilderness with Him to the land of eternal rest."

All this is beautifully simple.

No doubt it may cost something. To some it has cost everything that earth counts dear. But where Christ is truly apprehended as the saving and the rejected One, the Egypt separation will not be encumbered with any special difficulties. The world understands you very quickly. It knows right well that up till the time of your conversion you lived as a man of the world and professed to be nothing else. And when you bore witness that you had found the great spring of everlasting joy, the world quite naturally expected to see a change of life corresponding to your professed change of heart.

But, after having drunk at that heavenly spring, and borne witness to the world that you were separated from it for ever, and then having *gone back to that world* to keep company with *the enemies of Christ*, your position is one of no ordinary difficulty. Though not in words, you have virtually confessed that Jesus has *not* satisfied, and that the Gospel is *not* what you yourself repre-

sented it to be. You have formed associations in which you dare not name the Name of Jesus—in which you dare not say, “My friends, are you *saved*? Are you ready to meet God? Let us have a talk about the rejected Christ.” You know right well you would be silenced if you dared thus to become a witness for God. Room for the world and the world’s gossip, and yet no room for the Son of God! Conversation about anything and anybody but Jesus; and yet you deliberately choose to be in such associations! Surely we may say in the words of Scripture, “How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!” (Lam. iv. 1). We will not degrade the dignity of a child of God so far as to suppose that you are comfortable in such circumstances. Conscience speaks. There are messages from God, even to one who has thus departed. There is a voice which says with startling plainness—“You are away from God, and you know it. You are not

happy. You need not try to satisfy the longings of your spirit by feeding on the husks of a Christ-rejecting world.”

But what are you to do? Perhaps you have longings to be free. Yet you feel that your Egyptian associations will not be easily shaken off. The man who lives a few doors down the street was converted to God last week, and is now “clear out” for Christ. It was a simple matter for him to sever worldly associations. But what are *you* to say? In your case there has been a sinning against light—a going back to things from which you professed to be for ever separated. And all the while you have been keeping up a profession, as much as to say, “I can be a good enough Christian, and yet indulge in all these things”! You have thus ceased to bear witness; or, what is worse, you have borne *false witness* to the keeping power of Christ and the satisfying nature of heavenly joy.

How, then, are you to shake yourself free? Are you to turn

round to your associates and say, "Friends, you may wonder at me, a child of God, enjoying the world like yourselves. But the truth is, I am a backslider. I have departed from the Lord; else I would not have been found here, where conversation about *Him* would be out of place, and getting down on our knees to have prayer would be counted ridiculous. From henceforth I trust it will be "*Christ for me*"?

Such a testimony might be humiliating; but it would not be without its effect. If it is to be with power, there must be an *immediate return* to Him from whom you have departed. And if you are truly restored in heart to God, it is absolutely certain that the new wine of heavenly joy will burst the old bottles of carnal association. Yea, you will bear testimony—mortifying, it may be, to the flesh, yet glorifying to God. And the result will be *separation* from that which is not of Him, and a savour of the Name of Christ shed abroad like spices on the breezes.

"THAT QUIET, PURE LIFE."

THAT quiet, pure life— what a testimony was there!" Thus writes a brother from the United States, concerning the partner of his life, who lately departed to be with Christ. After weary months of suffering she entered into that rest which remaineth for the people of God. Yet the "quiet, pure life" is speaking still. What a testimony!—a quiet, pure life in the power of the Resurrection One! If such can be said of us when called to pass to our eternal rest, we may be assured that we have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Let them strive for position who will: be it ours to covet the "quiet, pure life" that shall breathe the Master's spirit and unconsciously spread the savour of His name. In the coming Day neither the eloquence of a persuasive tongue nor the influence of a great position shall determine the award of the Judgment-seat.

TENACITY OF PURPOSE.

“**H**E is a brother with great tenacity of purpose ; and that, I think you will admit, is something.”

Yes ; that is something, no doubt. But tenacity of purpose *by itself* may prove to be a very dangerous element of character. Much depends upon what the “purpose” is. There are believers who will hold with unflinching tenacity to a purpose which they should at once let go. They enter upon a particular course—they espouse a certain cause ; and their tenacity of purpose, not being balanced by the lowliness and the graciousness of Christ, becomes nothing less than stubbornness. They may flatter themselves that when *they* take up a thing they do not let it drop. They do not belong to those “shifty” believers who are “here to-day and away to-morrow.” No. They believe in being “stedfast, unmoveable.” This is a very good maxim. But to be stedfast, unmoveable in a wrong

path, or in a wrong spirit, is by no means a virtue. If the man of great tenacity of purpose is not a man of great humility of mind, his tenacity of purpose will simply serve to build him up in his own self-conceit. It will blind him to his own deficiencies, and harden him against making any admission to the effect that “I have been wrong—I have made a mistake—I have not manifested a right spirit.” He calls such language “humiliating.” He will not bend in this way. He tells us he is a “man of purpose”—when he says a thing, or does a thing, he “sticks to it.” Yes ; but how much more honouring to God, if he would only bend when the Lord would have him bend, and say candidly, “I am in the wrong” ! We have no wish to exalt the changeable brother—the one who is not master of his own mind for more than three weeks at a time—double-minded, and “unstable in all his ways.” Yet we think a deeper depth of departure from godly stability is to be found in the man who

prides himself that *he* never changes his mind—who takes up an attitude and keeps it, in spite of abundant tokens that his attitude is untenable. But then, it would evidently never do to say, “*I am wrong*”! This reveals the latent pride that would fain palm itself off as “tenacity of purpose.” You may call it by that name if you will; but it is not the God-honouring purpose of being in subjection to the Father of spirits, and to one another in the fear of the Lord. When tenacity of purpose is held apart from communion, it will lead to the loftiest assumptions of possessing the mind of God; it will cause you to overlook the fact that your brethren have a conscience as well as yourself; and it will foster a fictitious idea of your own importance. In such circumstances you will come dangerously near being the man who “never forgives,” and who can harbour a grudge for years, while professing to dwell all the time in the third heaven of fellowship with God.

SAUL'S TENACITY OF PURPOSE.

IT is wonderful with what tenacity of purpose Saul pursued David. His vengeance might relent for a moment (see 1 Sam. xix. 6); but it was only like the receding wave, gathering itself up to roll again, with greater force, upon the shore. We have only to read from the sixth to the ninth verse to see that Saul's purpose is unshaken. “And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin.” Foiled in this, he sends messengers for David saying, “Bring him up to me . . . that I may slay him” (ver. 15). Foiled again, Saul still continues his relentless pursuit. We have here great tenacity of purpose; but we cannot contemplate the “purpose” with any other feeling than that of abhorrence. The purpose was bad; and so was the spirit in which it was followed.

When we turn from Saul to David, we find tenacity of pur-


pose as well—but with a very different object before it. We find one who could say “My heart is *fixed* . . . I will sing and give praise” (Ps. lvii. 7). We find one who could say, “I have set the Lord always before me” (Ps. xvi. 8). Thus dwelling in the presence of God, David was taught the path he should tread, and the spirit in which he should act—even towards the man who sought his life. His first and last thought seemed to be a constant pleasing of Jehovah. His tenacity of purpose got its inspiration *in the presence of God*; and that explains the many beautiful and Christ-like touches that flash out in the life of the fugitive king.

OUTSIDE OF IT.

YOU get the best view of a town or city after you have come outside of it. And you get the best view of the world and worldly associations after you have *come out* at the

call of God, and have taken your stand with the Rejected One. So long as you remain in Egypt—be it the worldliness of Egypt or the religiousness of Egypt—you will not see things in their true light. You may perceive that something is wrong; but the fact that *you are there* will cause you to be very “charitable” in forming your judgment. You cannot be expected to utterly condemn things with which you yourself are so closely identified; seeing that your condemnation of your associations would be followed immediately by the question, “*Why are you there?*” All this tends to blindness of heart—a blindness that is more and more confirmed as light is more and more rejected. What is needed is simply to obey the call to *come out* of Egypt—to be separated *unto God*. Separation *unto Him* involves separation from that which is *not of Him*. It is only when Egypt is left that it is truly seen to be that world which “lieth in the Wicked One.”

NEVER HAD ANY IDEA.

“ NEVER had any idea that I would reach this pass,” said one who was treading the path of the open backslider. He seemed to be as much surprised at his own condition as many who had known him in happier days. But, to those who have observed the counsel of the Word as to departure from God, such cases will not be surprising. Great departure from the Lord is usually accomplished on the principle of a *very little departure at a time*. The descent is gradual—so gradual that no violent shock is felt by the victim of Satanic wiles. One piece of worldly conformity after another is adopted; while one habit of vital Christianity after another is discarded. The soul is being fed with the husks of earth, instead of the freshly-gathered manna of Heaven. Departure from God thus pursues its deadly course. If the departing one is conscious, like the prodigal of old, that he is far away from the Father's

house, his condition is bad enough. But if he contends that he is “all right,” and in quite a good condition of soul, he simply proves that the deadening of conscience has brought him even to a more terrible pass than the prodigal when he discovered there was “a mighty famine in that land.” The moral of all this is plain. Let the *beginnings* of departure be watched with jealous care. It is at “the opening of the gate” that the battle must be fought and won.

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THE
Believer's Treasury.

No. 140.

MAY, 1894.

Vol. IX.

“THE BACKSIDE OF THE
DESERT.”

AFTER Moses had left Midian, we read that he led Jethro's flock to “the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God” (Ex. iii. 1). Egypt and all its honours had been left; and, before Moses could be a God-sent deliverer, it was needful that he should have what has been called “a wilderness experience.” He found this in the desert. The change must have been great and striking—from Pharaoh's court to the wilderness, alone with God. And Moses was there for the very purpose of acquiring a wilderness experience, and thus being fitted for the great work to which he was afterwards called.

The *backside* of the desert

speaks to us of remoteness from the busy haunts of men, and of complete separation from the Egypt world. The backside of the desert tells us that Moses had far more than merely touched the fringe of the wilderness. He had entered its solitudes—he had traversed it, even to its furthest bounds; and now he had reached that lonely spot—“the backside of the desert.” Surely this speaks to us with a voice from God. Do *we* know what it is to have a wilderness experience? We may touch the fringe of the desert land—we may follow the words of some gifted teacher—we may, in a certain measure, imitate the faith of some truly separated one, and yet come entirely short of a real wilderness experience. We want more than the spark of a sudden enthusiasm—more than

the transient longing to meet with God in the desert. We must have something far deeper and better than merely standing on the border of the wilderness, and casting a wistful eye across its silent wastes. The Egyptian influences must be shaken off—the voice of the flesh must be quenched; and in the power of simple faith in the invisible One, we must step forth into the wilderness to walk with Him!

The backside of the desert may, in the eyes of some, be reckoned a lonely place; but this can never be the estimate of those who have trod the wilderness with God. To reach "the backside of the desert" has its joys and its rewards. It leads *to God*—even to His holy mountain; for, after Moses had reached the backside of the desert, he "came to the mountain of God." Egypt had faded away in the dim distance; and then the mountain of God was seen! What a sight for the weary pilgrim! Well may we say, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of

hosts!" How far was Moses separated from Egypt now? A whole wilderness lay between him and the land of bondage! And in your case and mine, beloved, it is the will of God that *a whole wilderness* should lie between us and that world which lieth in the Wicked One. In the case of Moses, Egypt's honours and pleasures were all forsaken (see Heb. xi. 27). A wilderness was behind him; and now, rising before his enraptured vision, was the mountain of God! All the joys of Egypt were not worthy to be compared with the visions of that mountain to which Moses had come. And thus it ever must be with those who go forth to meet with God in the wilderness. They shall assuredly find Him there. And the path of wilderness separation shall be found shining more and more unto the perfect day, until, at the backside of the desert, they come to the mountain of God and say, with the chosen three in a later day (Matt. xvii. 4), "Lord, it is good for us to be here!"

TYPICAL OF WHAT?

THEY make a mistake who suppose that Egypt, the Wilderness, and Canaan, are merely typical of three separate stages in the believer's experience. No doubt there are believers who do not seem to find their way out of Egypt. They appear to be at home in the land of bondage, and therefore cannot know what it is to be "strangers here." Others, again, have evidently reached the Wilderness, while they have manifestly come short of the Canaan rest—that conscious dwelling in the heavenlies, which is the true calling of the people of God. But while there may thus be certain limits imposed by unbelief upon Christian experience, we must not conclude that the Wilderness is of necessity separated by a long period of time from Egypt. Neither must we suppose that a weary marching up and down through the Wilderness is the God-ordained forerunner to *our* entrance to the

land of rest. As a matter of fact, the young convert of yesterday may have a more vivid consciousness that he is now in a wilderness world than many a believer of long standing. Yea, such a young convert may in spirit have already found himself in the Canaan land—dwelling, in resurrection power and joy, in the heavenly places.

Of what, then, are Egypt, the Wilderness, and Canaan, the types? They set forth the experience of the believer as being *at one and the same time* in Egypt, the Wilderness, and Canaan. In short, it takes *all three types* to set forth *one* believer—we mean a believer who has apprehended his true calling. You may ask the question—"What stage of Christian experience have you reached?—Are you in Egypt, or in the Wilderness, or in Canaan?" But this is misleading. If the believer is truly walking with God, and in accordance with the Word, he is in all three at the same moment. He is in Egypt as a *witness*; he is in the Wilderness as a *pilgrim*;

and he is in the heavenly places as a *worshipper*. We may come short of this—we may linger in Egypt; or we may even reach the Wilderness and get no further, so far as regards practical enjoyment of “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” But that does not alter the three-fold character of true Christian experience.

Alas! if Israel in Egypt should fitly set forth our Christian experience. That would mean that we have not yet come out of the house of bondage. And alas! for us if, after having left Egypt, and reached the Wilderness, that word be true of us: “They could not enter in, because of unbelief.” Happy, on the other hand, shall it be for us, if Israel in triumphant conflict in Canaan be the true picture of our experience. Ours shall then be the wilderness spirit; and as for this Egypt world, while *in it* we shall not be *of it*. Yea, we shall be true witnesses, delivering souls, and giving light to many that sit in darkness and in the region and shadow of death.

OUR TRUE CALLING.



A GREAT part of *separation unto God* may be learned in simply understanding our heavenly calling as clearly revealed in the Word. To read and meditate on the Scriptures has a wonderfully separating power. We there see the chosen Seed rejected and cast out—yea, crucified, and risen again on the third day. But, while we wonder that such was *His* lot in the world, we soon discover that we have been crucified *with Him*, and are now risen *with Him*, and seated *with Him* in the heavenlies. Nor can we help sharing in His rejection; for “as He is, so are we in this world.” Thus we find, not what we are commanded to be, but what our God has already made us *in Christ*. In this way we learn our true calling, and perceive our true separation; for we are called and chosen in Him who is despised and rejected of men. To perceive our identity with Christ is to perceive our separation unto God

“WITHOUT THE CAMP.”

WHAT is our Church position? We answer this question by saying that we have “gone forth *unto Him*, without the camp” (Heb. xiii. 13). And having gone forth unto the Lord Jesus Christ, without the camp, we find ourselves identified with a *rejected* Lord. It is here that many fail. They desire to be identified with Christ; but not with the *rejected* Christ. They forget that “as He is, so are we in this world” (1 Jno. iv. 17). And we know that He is still “despised and rejected of men” (Isa. liii. 3).

The world, and many, alas! professing to be of the heavenly seed, desire a *popular Jesus*—One whom it will be no reproach to follow—One whom it will be respectable to be identified with—One whom you can honour without being looked down upon by the world. This is the Jesus who is wanted by many; and—passing strange as it may seem—not a few profess that they


have found Him—the very Jesus, they say, that suits them. The religious world—a confederacy consisting of the enemies of Christ, with a sprinkling of His blood-bought people—declare they have got the Jesus they want—a popular Jesus—One whom they may serve without going outside the camp—One whom they may worship while still under the condemnation of Egypt—One in whom they may boast, without having died with Him, or being buried with Him, or being raised with Him! They tell us they have found Him; and that they can easily do their religion without what is known as *separation*, and can do homage to their Jesus without suffering reproach for His Name.

What have we to say to this? We simply reply that *we believe it*. It is all true. But this also is true, that they have not found the Jesus of the New Testament. They have got an *ideal* Jesus. The religious world has formed a Jesus according to its own heart. It has evolved one “out

of its own consciousness," so to speak. And we do not wonder that the world then sits down to worship Him. No doubt it is a popular thing; for the world knows how to make a thing popular—whether it be religion or anything else. What is more popular than modern religion, which professes to do everything in the name of Jesus? It may truly be called *Religion made easy*; for you may submit to all its forms, and observe all its ordinances, without suffering any reproach whatever! You will be reckoned sensible and respectable. To fall into line with the world's religion entails no loss of worldly dignity. And why? Simply because it involves no offence of the Cross—no persecution for the Truth—no reproach for The Name. But take your stand with the Jesus of whom Scripture tells—the despised and rejected One—and you find everything changed. You are then no longer with the *popular* Jesus. You have gone forth unto the rejected Lord. And what is


the result? The result is, that you are at once called to suffer reproach. You at once find yourself going right against the popular current; and, if you did not know it before, you know now that you are identified with a rejected Man—One whom the world cast out, and whom the world still casts out. In treading separation's path, outside the camp with Him, you will find the religious world expressing its disapproval by giving you names which you disown. But persecution of that kind is not at all remarkable. Indeed, it is to be expected by all who have gone forth *unto Him*. So long as we observed the form of religion that was popular, we had to suffer no reproach for the Truth. But when we went forth unto the rejected Lord Jesus Christ, and sought to carry out "that which is written," immediately the religious world opened fire upon us! It was then we learned something of that word which says, "If ye be reproached *for the Name of Christ*, happy are ye!"

MESSAGES FROM HEAVEN.

HEN Moses had reached the backside of the desert and had come to the mountain of God, "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire" (Ex. iii. 2). Egypt had been left behind, the wilderness had been crossed, the mountain of God had burst upon the gaze of the wearied pilgrim; and now there are *messages from Heaven*. Truly the child of faith has a heritage transcending all the joys of Egypt. And who but the child of faith knows anything about messages from Heaven? It is not a dreary place, the backside of the desert. It is there the fire of heavenly communion glows; it is there we mount as on eagles' wings; it is there we hear "sweeter sounds than music knows." Moses found it so. And the trials and weariness of the desert waste were forgotten; and the wilderness was no longer a wilderness; for *God was there!* If in spirit we have trod where Moses trod, and

reached the holy mountain of separation to our God, we too shall hear the voice from the excellent glory. There shall be *messages from Heaven*.

THE WEEKLY FEAST.

HAT mean ye by this service?" This question may be asked, concerning our observance of the Weekly Feast. Young believers may ask it; or they may be questioned as to why *they* thus observe it. The reason is simply this—*We find it written*. It is not something we have invented, or something which, by a majority of votes, we have resolved to do. What saith the Word? That is the point. We find it written, "This do in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. xi. 24). We also find it written that "upon the first day of the week" the disciples "came together to break bread" (Acts xx. 7); and that all that believed "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship,

and in *breaking of bread*, and in prayers" (Acts. ii. 42). Moreover, we find it written that "as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26). And, again, we find it written, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (Jno. xiv. 15), and "if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (Jno. xiii. 17). There is thus no lack of Scripture for the observance of the Weekly Feast. We may be told, as we have been told, that it is of very little consequence whether the Feast be observed every week, or once in six months. To this we reply that Scripture does not say so. We do not read that the disciples came together to keep "the Half-yearly Sacrament," or to observe even "the Monthly Communion." They came together on the *first day of the week* to break bread; and they continued therein *steadfastly*. Love does not ask, "How *seldom* can I keep this Feast, and yet square matters with my conscience?"

THE ARM OF FLESH.

ONE of the severest trials to faith is to be found in the changes ever taking place in the circumstances that surround us. Yet the varying circumstances of our earthly lot are as nothing compared with the changes we often meet with in our brethren. The ups and downs of a changing world are not surprising. Indeed, these are to be expected as undoubted elements of our sojourn here. But we do not so readily expect to meet with inconstancy in those of the household of faith. Yet even *that* trial of faith comes upon us—sometimes with startling suddenness; and we have thus to learn anew that man at his best state is vanity. Perhaps the lesson was needed. We may have been leaning on the arm of flesh. We may have been resting in the creature, rather than in the living God. And, even through another's failure, our God would teach us that all our springs are *in Him*.

THREE CLASSES OF PREACHERS.

PREACHERS have been divided into three classes — (1) those you can listen to; (2) those you *cannot* listen to; and (3) those you *cannot help* listening to. We have no doubt that these three classes embrace the whole force of preachers of every kind. That is to say, any preacher will find himself under one or other of these "heads." Let us glance at each in turn.

Preachers you "can listen to" are those who have no brilliant abilities, nor any special "fire." They are steady-going believers, who can speak for a quarter-of-an-hour or so, and who, as a rule, have something to say. Being readers of the Word, they are often found handing out some fresh thought, or some old thought in a fresh light. They obtain a hearing more on account of the *matter* of their preaching than the "*unction*" of their preaching. Usually cool, calm, and collected, they claim a cer-

tain amount of attention by the fact that they generally convey some information to the mind in regard to the things of God. They do not rise to speak in a hap-hazard fashion, depending on the inspiration of the moment for a message. They have been "chewing the cud of meditation" regarding some particular truth or passage of Scripture; and, when they rise to their feet, you perceive that they have something definite to bring before the meeting. This of itself invites a certain amount of attention. But when all this is admitted, it must also be admitted that they have set no one on fire. They kindle no flame of enthusiasm. They may "fill up a gap" with moderate acceptance. Some instruction may be picked up from their address. They have been tolerably interesting, and you can listen to them; but that is about all that can be said.

We now pass on to the preacher you "cannot listen to." It is a pity there are any of this class. We would fain hope there were none.

But *facts* are against such a hope. We have to deal with things as they *are*—not as we would like them to be. The preacher you cannot listen to may not be a bad sort of brother. He may possess certain qualities that would give him a fair amount of acceptance as a “rank-and-file” believer—if he would only recognise his true place, and take it. But that is the very thing he fails to do. He is simply a brother who has mistaken his calling. He sees a whole meeting swayed to and fro, through the impassioned ministry of one man; and he thinks he can do that too! Allured by the “dazzling attractions” of the platform, or persuading himself that he has been called of God to the ministry, he presses forward—rushing in with the greatest coolness where a God-sent man would tread with bated breath. As he has not the heavenly call, neither has he the heavenly equipment, nor the spiritual discernment to perceive that he is only beating the air. He may be one who has nothing

particular to say, and who thus wanders from one thing to another, clutching at anything that will enable him to spin out another minute of time. Or, if he has a definite thought, he “pounds” that thought with such monotonous repetition that the toleration of the meeting gives way to impatience. His ministry becomes a positive *infliction*. His defects may be even more serious than those we have pictured. The *life* may give the lie to the teaching. The garments (character) may have an unsavoury smell. But, whatever be the nature of the “dead fly in the ointment,” it will be happy for him, as well as for the saints, if he discovers, or is made to know, his true calling.

As for the preacher you “cannot help listening to,” no doubt you have heard him. He scarcely needs to be described. It can be said of him, in measure at least, that he has been anointed with “the oil of gladness” above his fellows (Ps. lxxv. 7). He has been manifestly fitted of God for the

work of the ministry, unto the edifying of the body of Christ. His lips have been touched with a live coal from the heavenly altar. He has been called of God to a particular work; and man can neither make nor meddle in the matter. The messenger whom God sends is sure to have a message; for he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God (Jno. iii. 34). The opening of his lips shall be right things (Prov. viii. 6); and the words that he indites shall touch the King (Ps. xlv. 1). He needs not to elbow his way into a position, nor to contend that his ambassadorship be recognised. His gift makes room for Him. He arrests your attention—commands your attention. His words are instinct with life. You may not exactly endorse his "line of things"; yet you are compelled to listen. You feel the message searching you—breaking you down; while at the same time it wafts you away to regions of "a purer air." Your prejudices begin to give way. You forget them—you forget

everything but this, that living truth is being ministered to your heart in living power. Explain it how you may, you are to a certain extent a different man, now that you have drunk in that message from the Throne. But, then, the preacher was one whose life, and heart, and lip, were alike attuned by Heaven for the ministration of Christ; and that was why you could not help listening.

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THE
Believer's Treasury.

No. 142.

JUNE, 1894.

Vol. IX.

THE FAILURE OF THE
PRIESTS.

HE Priesthood under the old dispensation set forth the chosen race in the aspect of *Communion*. In the failure, therefore, of Eli and his sons (1 Sam. ii.), we see a foreshadowing of the failure of the Church, or the individual believer, in communion with God. The tokens of failure in the priesthood of old were easily discerned. They were to be seen in a fleshly walk (1 Sam. ii. 13, 22)—in men abhorring the offering of the Lord (ver. 17)—and in the overthrow of the people of God by their enemies (1 Sam. iv.).

The priesthood occupied the central place in the commonwealth of Israel. When things

were going well with the priesthood, things went well with Israel. But when there was failure in the priesthood, there was failure in the field, the result being that Israel were delivered to the will of their enemies.

We have an "object lesson" of all this in the days of Eli the priest. His sons ministered in the priests' office. But they would not be subject to the rule of Jehovah concerning His offerings; and they failed in that godly walk that should characterise those who minister before the Lord. "The way of truth," if we may so speak, was evil spoken of. Eli's sons had made themselves vile. This much was plain, even to Israel at large; and their father, who knew all this, restrained them not.

When things were in this con-

dition we read that "Israel went out against the Philistines to battle" (1 Sam. iv. 1). We know the result. Israel was smitten before the Philistines (ver. 2). The elders of Israel were at a loss to understand this defeat. "Wherefore," said they, "hath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines?" It was then resolved to bring the Ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh, that *it* might save them out of the hand of their enemies (ver. 3). But the second defeat inflicted by the Philistines was even more crushing than before. "There was a very great slaughter . . . and the Ark of God was taken" (ver. 10, 11).

The merely external token that they were Jehovah's favoured people, could not save them. Failure and defilement were in the inner court of the Kingdom. Therefore Israel could not stand before their enemies.

In all this we have a striking illustration of the failure of the believer in communion with God. No doubt the illustration may

also be used to set forth the failure of the whole Church in the aspect of communion. But it may be fully as profitable for us just now to deal with the case of the individual believer. Failure to maintain abiding communion is at the root of all departure from God. If things are right with your soul in the inner court of heavenly communion, there is victory in the field. In other words, there is an overcoming of the world, and a mortifying of the deeds of the body. The joy of the Lord is then your strength. You have meat to eat which the world knows not of. The circumstances of your earthly lot may be as unfavourable as ever to a "walk of faith"; and temptation may be still ready to assail. But, strengthened for conflict in the inner court of the presence of the King, you shall be more than conqueror through Him that loves you.

If, however, the believer fails to maintain communion with God, there will be similar tokens of departure to those that were

apparent in Eli's day. There will be insubjection to the Word of the Lord, a disorderly walk, unholy alliances, and a testimony of waning power among men. But besides all these tokens of departure there will be the inrush of a Philistine host of spiritual enemies, which will lay waste the fair domain of the soul. In an earlier and a happier day you had overthrown these enemies—giants of evil habit or forbidden companionships, it may be. But now, with the fire of communion well-nigh burned out upon the altar of the heart, you soon discover that you are waging an unequal conflict. You are smitten before the Philistine host! Perhaps, like the elders of Israel in the time of Hophni and Phinehas, you cannot understand how you have been overcome. Yet the cause is not far to seek. It has got to do with *priestly communion*. There is secret departure. No matter how you may attempt to conceal it, there is something wrong pertaining to the life within the veil!

EFFACING OURSELVES.


WE recently heard the remark that "few are willing to *efface* themselves for the general good of the people of God." To "efface" myself for the "common-weal" simply means that I am willing to be blotted out as a "person of importance," that the general prosperity of the assembly may be thereby promoted. It would seem, however, that there is a reluctance thus to efface ourselves. Why is this? If we must call things by their right names, we have no hesitation in saying that the reluctance is simply the reluctance of *self* to die. So long as a brother has not entered, by the power of the Holy Spirit, into that passage which says, "Not I but Christ," he is a self-seeker. He may cloak his real condition as he will; and he may profess the deepest longings for the prosperity of the assembly. Nevertheless, *self* will manifest itself and have its own way, and there

will be no *effacing* to the glory of God.

Nothing is more deceptive than the working of *self*, when the prosperity of the people of God is concerned. If I am not on my watch-tower—if the “old man” gets the upper hand, I shall assuredly come to the conclusion that unless I can have *my* way of things, the assembly cannot go on and prosper. The difficulty experienced by a brother in effacing himself is, in other words, the difficulty he experiences in *getting right with God*. Let him get right with God, and the effacing of himself will not be far to seek. When a brother gets into a bad state, and forgets his crucifixion, and death, and burial, as identified with Christ, he is sure to seek his own, and not the things that are Christ's. The chariot of progress moves onward, although he is not a prominent man; yet he is “not sure” about the reality of the progress. If he cannot have some leading place in front of the chariot, he is not prepared to

push it from behind; and there the matter stands. He becomes dull and dispirited, and attempts to explain things by bewailing these evil days and the spiritual declension that abounds. But, if the dear brother were only to *efface himself* for the general blessing of the saints, what a change would come over him! It is simply a case of this old wicked *self* determined to be recognised and made something of. If *self* can be forgotten, and if I sit down to consider what will be for the highest blessing of the assembly, I shall be prepared to rejoice, like John the Baptist, if only the *Bridegroom's voice* be heard. He whom the Master declared to be “a burning and a shining light,” came to this point—“He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jno. iii. 30). Have you, brother, and I, come to that point? Are we willing, yea happy, that Christ should increase, and heavenly prosperity crown the work of the assembly, even although *we* should have to become less every day?

HAD TO COME DOWN A LITTLE.


HE train had stopped for a minute at a wayside station; and before us lay a somewhat steep upward gradient. On the signal being given, the driver turned on the steam. But his engine would not move. What was to be done? Something very simple, yet very effective. The engineer *reversed* his machinery by moving a lever, and ran the train *down* the gradient some inches. He was then in a position to move forward with the whole train, and in a few minutes we were flying onward at the speed of the wind.

What a wonderful difference it made, to bring the train down the incline a little bit! I at once saw in the train a striking illustration of a church preparing itself to face a "steep upward gradient"—some time of special difficulty or trial. But although it bends all its energies to the task, no progress is made. The

"machinery" comes to a complete stand-still. "We *must* go forward," says brother So-and-so. The official handle is turned; but there is no responsive motion. What is to be done? Something very simple, yet very effective. There must be a *coming down a little*. With every one standing on his dignity, you need not be surprised if there be creaking and groaning instead of going on joyfully with God. As the whole train moved down a little, before it could go up at all, so let the whole church come down on its face before the Lord, and there shall be a going forward to His glory. A godly humbling of ourselves is the sure prelude to promotion. In the history of many a church there are trials that would, in all likelihood, have wrecked its testimony had it not been for that "coming down" of which we are speaking. And we need not say that there are ruptures that would never have had an existence, if the "wisdom of the lowly" had prevailed to bring the people of God down on

their faces before Him. "I'm not going to yield," says one; "I'll fight it out to the last," says another; while a third, concealing his true sentiments by a more correct phraseology, declares that for *his* part he is going to "go on for God." This "going on for God" may sound all very well. But, if we are to go on *with* God, we shall find that His leading will bring us time after time into the valley of humiliation; and never will this be more especially the case than when we are nearing a critical time in the history of the assembly. "Before honour is humility"—whether you apply this passage to a believer or to a gathered company of believers. Self-abasement is one of the most important elements in "going on with God." In worldly associations mere force of will may determine what is to be done. But, when we find ourselves within the fellowship of the Spirit and the Kingdom of love, it comes to pass which is written—"By strength shall no man prevail" (1 Sam. ii. 9).

A SOUND PRINCIPLE.

T is a sound principle not to conclude that a thing is right because a "great man" does it. A man may be great in the Church, and yet lead the people of God seriously astray from the simplicity that is in Christ. When one highly esteemed by his brethren takes a wrong path, there are those who are ready to conclude that the path is right, else such an "esteemed brother" would not have taken it. But "great men are not always wise" (Job. xxxii. 9); and when they *do* take the wrong path the results are far more lamentable than if an "ordinary brother" had done so. The man with the greatest influence for good is the man who will wield the greatest influence for evil, if he enters upon a path that is not according to Truth. This is why there should be due waiting on God before entertaining the theories of some leading man who is striking out upon some new path. It does not

matter *who* advocates it ;—is the thing according to God ?—will it stand the light of the Scriptures ? These are the questions with which we have to do.

We have often been amazed to find how meekly certain believers received the most wonderful application of Scripture at the hands of one reckoned head and shoulders above his brethren. They never seemed to question for a moment what he set forth. They evidently concluded that it "must be right" because Mr. So-and-so had propounded it. But, if the same theory had been introduced by a "rank-and-file" man in the assembly, his views would have been subjected to such a fire of criticism that they would in all probability never have gained a footing ! This reveals a bowing down to reputed greatness that will "blind the wise," while it may also help to bring a whole assembly into bondage. It may safely be affirmed, that in any great movement that has rent the testimony for God, a very

few men have sufficed to initiate and carry out the whole business. Perhaps the leaders in departure could be counted on the fingers of one hand, or even less. Yea, it may be that the whole havoc might be due to the action of *one* leading man of determined will. In times of refreshing we are constrained to say, "Behold what *God* hath wrought !" But there are times in the history of the Church when we have to exclaim, "Behold, what *man* hath wrought !" His workmanship speaks for itself. Nor is it often effected by force of numbers. One man great in Israel—and reputedly a good man—made a golden calf for Israel to worship (*Ex. xxxii. 4*). *One man* in a later day led the people of God into a similar path (*Numb. xxxi. 16*). And we know that the solitary Absalom nearly succeeded in rending the kingdom. Therefore, let us take heed that we be not led astray from the beaten track of truth by those who have the prestige of a great name. Wisdom is not

the peculiar heritage of those who stand on the pinnacle of ecclesiastical position. "With the lowly is wisdom" (Prov. xi. 2). It was the poor wise man that delivered the city (Ecc. ix. 15).

TO WALK WITH GOD.

IT is only by means of an experimental walk with God that we are enabled to "walk circumspectly" before men. We may know *what is expected* from one who walks with God; and we may study carefully to have the outward signs of such a walk. But this is only surface-work—a mere playing at vital Christianity. The stamp of *unreality* must needs be upon everything that has not been divinely wrought in the soul. Assumed humility and sanctity may deceive the carnal eye, and count for much with those who "cannot see afar off." But it cannot impress those who are in touch with God; and least of all can it avail with the

Searcher of hearts. If, in the inner sanctuary of our experience, we are treading the path that Enoch trod, and walking humbly with Enoch's God, we shall not require to "act a part" in holy things. The life shall be the light (see Jno. i. 4). The walk in the world shall tell of Christ, because in the wilderness we have been *with Him*.


AT THE MASTER'S FEET.

WE study one another too much and Christ too little; and that is why we become so like one another, and make such slow progress in being conformed to the image of Him who was the First-born among many brethren (Rom. viii. 29). And in studying one another it may be questioned if we "study the best pictures." There is in us a tendency to give a large share of our attention to the "crotchety brother," who tries the patience of the meeting, and who is believed to

be such a dead weight on the wheels of progress. We "consider" the brother in question, and discuss him, and analyse him. But, although we cannot shut our eyes to his angularities, we find that a study of that kind is not specially suited to the promotion of heavenly-mindedness in our own soul. If we even selected a higher standard of Christianity — some of those genial spirits whose manner of life declares them to be "the excellent of the earth" — we would have a subject that might allure us to heavenly fields which the foot of our experience had never trod. Yet it is to be feared that not a great deal of time is spent in beholding and admiring the virtues of Christ as seen in those who specially adorn His doctrine. The result of this is, that we take on a certain impress from the persons or things that engage our attention. The "law of assimilation" comes in, and operates. Like simply produces like. There is a development of character, but it is in the wrong

direction. We then sit down to consider whereabouts we are, and find that while diligent in studying men and things we have not been *considering Him* whom God hath chosen. Hence the knees that are weak, and the hands that hang down, and the life that sends forth such a flickering light for the absent One. Yet our true calling is to be conformed to His image; and that conforming can only be carried on as we sit at His feet. There is *room there* for all who have named His Name. There may not be room for us in the ranks of public testimony; and in many humbler walks of service we may find ourselves crushed out. But there is *room at the Master's feet*. And they who make it their business to sit often there to "consider Him," shall find that they too are serving. The odour of the Master's presence shall reveal itself in those who thus "learn of Him." They shall spread abroad the savour of His Name. They cannot help doing so. It is a law of the Kingdom!

A TERM OF REPROACH.

 HAD been saved for about four years when I learned that it was the will of God I should be *baptised* (Acts ii. 41). By "baptised" I need scarcely say that I mean *immersed*. Not long after I had followed the Lord in this ordinance I was turning the corner of a street when I heard the name "Dipper" called after me. The voice had the tone of reproach; and I knew that no compliment was meant by the epithet thus unceremoniously pitched after me. I did not feel comfortable: it is not comfortable to have names of any kind called at you; and I felt somewhat lacerated as the word "Dipper" fell on my ear. But I began to reflect. "What does it mean?" I said. "What is the cause of my being called a Dipper?" I never was called by such a name before. All the time I sat in the respectable — Church of Scotland—rejoicing in the consciousness that I had been "sprinkled" when an infant—I

was never called a "Dipper"; and during all that time I had to suffer *no reproach whatever* on account of being sprinkled in infancy. But now I found a term of reproach levelled at me because I had been baptised. As everything has a cause, I sought to find out the cause; and I found it. The term "Dipper" was applied to me by way of reproach, *because* I had been *baptised according to Scripture!* I had simply obeyed God in the matter of Baptism; and the result was, that a term of disparagement was thrown at me. "Ah," I said to myself, "I understand it now. I need not expect to tread *God's path* without bearing reproach." We have no reason whatever to complain, but rather to rejoice, if we are called to suffer reproach for the Name of Christ.

The world may indulge in a sneer at those who practise Believer's Baptism. But the sneer is really at *the ordinance*. And *who* gave the ordinance? *God* gave it! Those who apply to a believer a hard name for being

baptised according to Scripture, ought surely to reflect that their quarrel is not with the immersed believer, but with *God Himself!* There are no hard names—no reproach to bear—if you simply float with the current of the religious world, and be subject to *the ordinance of man* in bowing down to infant sprinkling. In that case you shall have no reproach to suffer; and no hard-sounding epithet will follow you round the corner of the street. But, if you subject yourself to that ordinance of God called “Believer’s Baptism,” you need not be surprised if you are reproached for so doing. All this is significant. It is better to suffer reproach through treading God’s path than to escape reproach by bowing down to that which is highly esteemed among men, but which has not a particle of Scripture to support it. Those who so lightly apply the term “Dipper” to their brethren who are scripturally baptised, seem to forget that the Lord of glory was “dipped” by John in Jordan!

AN EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF.

“AN evil heart of unbelief” will of necessity be found associated with departure from the living God. This much comes clearly out in the exhortation: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God!” (Heb. iii. 12). If the believer who has wandered out of the way of understanding, were to sit down and take careful stock of his faith, he would assuredly come to the conclusion that he was belying the title “believer.” He would find that he was *not* trusting in God as he once did, and in all probability taking a course in which he had reason to fear that he could not count upon the presence of the Lord! It will be a healthful exercise of soul for him if he make the discovery that the deadly disease of “an evil heart of unbelief” has already begun to fasten upon the vitals of his testimony.

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Vol. IX.

THE DECLINE OF SPIRITUAL
POWER IN AN ASSEMBLY.

HE work of a medical man in a case of illness is two-fold—(1) diagnosis, and (2) treatment. Diagnosis simply means finding out what the disease really is; while treatment is the means used to get rid of the disease. The most difficult thing usually is to find out what is wrong. After *that* is discovered, the remedy may not be very far to seek. In Jeremiah's day we find this very figure applied to the Lord's ancient people. The false prophets professed to have discovered why Israel were led into captivity. But the Lord expressly says of those would-be "seers"—"They have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity; but have

seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment" (Lam. ii. 14). They had not gone to the root of the matter: they were incapable of such work. We are therefore prepared for the divine declaration: "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly" (Jer. viii. 11).

When we pass right on to the day in which our lot is cast, we are confronted with a great problem—The decline of spiritual power in an assembly: what is its cause?—what is the remedy? Prophets are at hand, as of old, and ready to declare what are the "causes of banishment." One holds that the joints of the "machinery" are too *tight*, and hence the friction—a friction that will sooner or later break up the testimony into fragments.

Another as confidently affirms that the evil time is entirely due, not to a tightness, but to a *looseness*, and that if *that* were remedied, the assembly would, without a doubt, go on with God. Others, again, discarding the purely ecclesiastical theories, find in differences between certain local brethren a cause for all that is outwardly wrong. But, whatever share any or all of these "causes" may have in the matter, it seems clear to us that the *great dominating cause* of the decay of spiritual power in an assembly is simply the decay of spiritual power in the lives of the *individuals* who compose the assembly. Whenever the standard of spiritual power in an assembly *comes down to a certain point*, a very small matter can be made the excuse for "bringing things to a test"—even at the risk of an open rupture. This explains how certain assemblies, after going on well for years, may come into a condition of chronic unrest. In the days when their fear fell on the people around, they were,

as individuals, going on with God. The standard of spirituality was what is called "high"—which means that it was something near to the scriptural standard. There was a godly living and a daily dying that taught the saints to keep short accounts with God and with one another. Trespass was at once followed by confession; for conscience was a "sensitive plant" in those days, and sin was hideous—because the saints were walking in the light of God. The Devil had not a great amount of suitable material to work upon; and his devices were constantly thwarted by a people ever on the watchtower. Cleaving to God and the Word, they were found cleaving to one another. The enemy might come up to the gate, and attempt to gain an entrance by sowing discord among brethren. But, although there might be a few discontented spirits, these were virtually powerless for evil; for the saints, as a whole, were clear out for God and righteousness.


But there came an ebbing of the tide—a lowering of the standard. The bright gold of the individual testimony grew dim. One became careless, another cold, another looked on the world to lust after her; while there is every reason to fear that visits to the secret place to meet with God became fewer and farther between! Thus the “temperature” of the assembly fell, simply because the temperature of individuals fell. Conscience, blunted and deadened, refused to respond to the helm of the Word; and things were said and done, without a pang of regret, which in a bygone day would have brought these same believers into sackcloth and ashes. At this juncture it may be that a difficulty arose in the assembly. Trouble, perhaps disaster, was the result. Yet the difficulty was blamed for everything. “If yon question had never arisen,” you say, “everything would have gone right.” But the difficulty was not the cause of the trouble at all. It simply *revealed* the

true state of matters. The difficulty was merely the “chemical test” that brought the “deleterious matter” to the surface. Soul-departure from God was the real root of the disease. When we come to call things by their right names we may be somewhat nearer a solution of the problems as to failure in assembly testimony.

You may direct your energies to the cleansing of the “outside of the cup and the platter.” You may labour to have an assembly arrayed in the outward habiliments of truth. And there can be no argument against such effort; for no one would desire even a cup and a platter that is not clean; neither would we wish to see an assembly arrayed in the habiliments of heresy. But all will be in vain if there be not *heart-work*—individual dealing with God. Therefore, let each one of us arise and seek unto the Lord as to this matter. Let *hearts* be *right with Him*; and His voice shall be heard in the midst of His gathered people.

It is the inner life—the life which men cannot see—that determines the weight of our testimony in the world. Let this great truth be heralded forth with no uncertain sound. The weight of an assembly's testimony with man is the exact measure of its power with God; and the measure of its power with God is measured by the godly within its borders, who walk with Him, and who sigh and cry for a day of His power.

POWER OF THE CHRIST-LIKE LIFE.

OME of us preach from a platform once a week; but *the Christ-like life* is doing a preacher's work every day, and every hour of every day. The man on the platform may fail to produce any effect. He may run unsent; he may have no message, and thus be only beating the air. But "the life also of Jesus" made manifest in these mortal bodies, never fails

of its effect. We may not know—it might not be good for us to know—what is being wrought through our conformity to the image of Christ. Yet the great work goes on. The Christ-like life *tells*—must tell—cannot but tell. He who studies Christ, imitates Christ, manifests Christ, wields an influence that can be neither gainsaid nor resisted. Sometimes platform-men tread upon one another's heels. There are too many of them; and it may be difficult for every one to find an opportunity to make full proof of his ministry. But the *life-preachers*, as we may call them, are not hampered in any such fashion. They are always in demand, and there is no danger of treading on one another's heels. We cannot have too many witnesses bearing testimony to the absent One by a *life* that allures men *to Him*. Is it not written of the redeemed that they are "the light of the world"? Eternity alone will reveal what has been wrought by the silent shining of a Christ-like life.

CALLED TO SUFFER.

UNTO every child of God there is committed the heritage of *suffering*. We are called to many things as heirs of God—to the fellowship of His Son, and to His eternal kingdom and glory, with joy unspeakable, &c. Yet, as surely as we have been called into the family of our God, so surely have we been called to *suffer*. Therefore, when we find ourselves in the furnace, we need not think that some strange thing has happened to us (1 Pet. iv. 12). “Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” The *believing* was simple enough. It was a joyful time when we first stood upon redemption ground, praising God for having called us out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Pet. ii. 9). But we soon found that we were called to something more than simply to rejoice in the knowledge of sins forgiven. Faith needed to be tested and purified;

and that great work has been going on ever since Conversion's Day. Happy are they who see God's hand in the “furnace,” and who accept the fires of persecution and the storms of affliction as alike permitted by the hand of infinite love for our eternal blessing.

IF I HAD NOT BEEN TOLD.

IT does not commend the power of the Gospel when you hear the remark made, “Well, I should never have taken that man to be a Christian, if I had not been told he was one.” When this is the impression we leave upon others, it is surely time to call a halt and enquire *what we have been saved from*. What difference has the “Great Change” of Conversion made in us, if people see so little difference between us and the uncircumcised? If there is no difference between us and the Egyptians, then the less we say about our Conversion the better. What is

the use of telling people of a mysterious something that has taken place in our heart, if there be not the outward tokens of righteousness and peace, and a seeking to be conformed to the mind of Christ? If you use your tongue like the world, and give blow for blow like the world, and overreach a man like the world, and lose your temper like the world, it will profit nothing to declare that you are one of the redeemed of the Lord, being "led in triumph in Christ" to the land of everlasting day. We remember once reading in an evangelical periodical, of a certain class of preachers of whom the writer said that if it were not for their profession no person would think they had any connection whatever with the Kingdom of God! This is certainly lamentable. But whether we are preachers or not, the question arises—What is our testimony among men? Is it a *visible* testimony? Can the light be seen? Do people take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus?

DANGER OF A NAME.

THERE is nothing more dangerous to a Christian than to have "a name" as a man of God. It is a positive snare of the Devil. Many a professor has fallen grievously through being occupied with a name. Many a useful minister of Christ has been destroyed by the effort to keep up a name. If I have a reputation in any department of public service—as an active evangelist—a gifted teacher—an attractive writer—a man of prayer—a man of faith—a person of remarkable sanctity, or great personal devotedness—a benevolent person,—a name for anything, in short, I am in imminent danger of making shipwreck. The enemy will lead me to make my reputation my object instead of Christ. I shall be working to keep up a name instead of the glory of Christ. I shall be occupied with the thoughts of men instead of doing all my work under the immediate eye of God.

POWER OF NUMBERS.

A CERTAIN great general once profanely said he had observed that "God was always on the side of the big battalions." In other words, his faith was in big battalions, and not in God. That general virtually said, "If you give me the big battalions, I do not care whether God be against me or not." He *had* big battalions; but they availed him not. He ended his days in exile and dishonour.

The thought that God is with the "big battalions" is still strong in the natural heart. The theory is not expressed exactly in these words, but it comes much to the same thing. "God is surely bound to be with great numbers" — "the big side is certain to have God on its side": this seems to be a prevailing thought in this apostate age. But such a thought gets no countenance from the Scriptures. No doubt one needs to be guarded in dealing with questions like this; for any little

sect or cotterie that springs up may point to their numerical weakness as a proof that they are of God. Yet Scripture gives no countenance to those who fancy that weakness in numbers must ensure God's approval. The faithful will be only a "little flock" to the end of time. But that does not mean that everything or anything that professes to be a "little flock" must needs be well-pleasing unto God. The unchanging Word must be the test of everything that professes to come from above. At the same time, Scripture supplies us with some solemn lessons to show that vast numbers can of themselves profit nothing, if the Lord Himself be not set apart as the Holy One in the midst thereof; for "by strength shall no man prevail."

We have a striking illustration of this in the case of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah (see 2 Chron. xvii.). He had not a few things in his favour. It was his privilege to reign over that "favoured section" of the commonwealth of

Israel, which the Lord reserved for Himself at the rending of the kingdom. He had taken a bold stand against apostasy at the beginning of his reign (ver. 1); he had waged war against the high places (ver. 6), and had caused the book of the law to be taught in Judah (ver. 9). The result of all this was that "the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat" (ver. 10). It is just at this point we learn that he "waxed great exceedingly" (ver. 12). And it is also at this point we have a tabular statement of his army (ver. 14-18). If you sum up the several totals given in 2 Chron. xvii., you will find that his standing army exceeded a million of men, ready for war. More than a million men of Judah armed for battle—surely an invincible host! We shall see.

Jehoshaphat, having "waxed great exceedingly," was truly in a perilous position. "Greatness" of any kind is a dangerous com-

modity. It may be the greatness of earthly position and increasing riches, or it may be even the greatness of growing acceptance among our brethren as a teacher or a preacher. It matters not—wherever there is promotion there is danger. Let the pinnacle be what it may, it tends to a dizziness and a puffing up, unless there be a corresponding self-abasement in the presence of God. In Jehoshaphat's case there was a waxing great, but not a waxing humble. Hence he is caught off his guard, and goes forth upon an expedition which shall end in his defeat and discomfiture. He joins his forces to those of Ahab, in order to recover Ramoth-gilead out of the hands of the Syrians. No doubt his eye was upon his vast army. What chance could the Syrians have in battle with the forces of Judah at that time? Then, if you add Ahab's fighting men to those of Jehoshaphat, you have a "battle array" seldom witnessed even in Bible times. Yet this great company were defeated,

and had to flee before the comparatively insignificant Syrians. Mere numbers could not avail. God was not with that great force; and numbers, we know, cannot avail *with Him*, however imposing they may appear in the eyes of man. The swift arrow, sped by a certain man who drew a bow at a venture, ended Ahab's career, as the man of God had foretold (2 Chron. xviii. 16); and Jehoshaphat, mercifully delivered from an untimely end (ver. 31), wended his way home, having learned by bitter experience that his unholy alliance with Ahab was utterly opposed to the mind of Jehovah, and that vast numbers fighting on our side are powerless to deliver, if God be not with us.

—♦—
 WHAT an excellent interpreter is experience! Thus the Christian gets a view of spiritual things which the most piercing eye of unsanctified schoolmen cannot reach. Experience cannot be found in books, nor learned as a theory. By experience in the ways of God, the most simple Christian often knoweth more than those of great parts.

“WITH THE RICH MAN WAS HIS TOMB.”

WHEN our Lord was crucified it is evident that His “betrayers and murderers” meant only to give Him a felon’s grave. At their hands He had received a felon’s doom; and, if they had not been defeated in their purpose, His body would have received a felon’s burial. But “He that sits in Heaven” was watching that “precious body”; for it was a part of the counsels of eternity that the burial and resurrection of Jesus should be attested by the most complete and unquestioned proofs. These could not well have been forthcoming if our Lord had been consigned to a malefactor’s grave as well as a malefactor’s cross. It seemed as if Jewish malice was to have its way unhindered, even after the Messiah had been “cut off out of the land of the living.” But that malice could not go further than it was permitted by Him who “gave to

the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment" (Prov. viii. 29).

Two things had been foretold of the Promised One in relation to His death. In Ps. xvi. 10 we find it written, "Neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption"; while in Isa. liii. 9 it is declared of Him that He "made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death"; or, as it has been beautifully rendered, "His grave was appointed to be with the wicked; but with the rich man was His tomb." These two Scriptures must now be fulfilled; and all the wrath of man cannot frustrate their fulfilment to the letter. His enemies might appoint His grave to be with the wicked; and they might feel confident that their appointment was sure to be carried out. But the Lord Jehovah had appointed otherwise.

It did not seem clear at the time how it would come to pass that "with the rich man" should be His tomb. But the resources

of God are infinite; and He had His chosen instruments prepared and ready, under the impulse of unflinching love, to carry out the mandates of His will. When the set time had come—in the very hour when they were needed—Joseph of Arimathæa, and Nicodemus, the man of the Jewish Sanhedrim, stood clear out for God and His Anointed. This Joseph, who is described as "a rich man of Arimathæa, who also himself was Jesus' disciple," (Matt. xxvii. 57), had a tomb hewn out of the rock, prepared and ready—"wherein never man before was laid." Joseph resolved that the body of his Lord should be placed in that tomb—a "new sepulchre" as it is elsewhere called, and thus free from all taint of corruption. Having so resolved, he went in boldly to the Roman Governor and craved the body of Jesus. Assisted by Nicodemus, he prepared it "as the manner of the Jews is to bury," and laid it in the tomb.

Thus it came to pass, in spite of all the wrath of man, that the

Holy One should not see corruption; and although His grave was appointed to be with the wicked, yet "with the rich man was His tomb."

In the preparation of that tomb it would never occur to Joseph that it should play such a part in the great Redemption plan. Yet we see how a seemingly trivial incident may be deep laid in the councils of eternity. It was needed that there should be at a certain supreme moment a tomb wherein never man was laid—possessed by one of the rich of this world, yet withal a disciple of Jesus. And all that was needed for the carrying out of the divine purposes was ready at the very moment appointed by Heaven! Wonderful are the resources of God. When it was needful that the Scripture should be fulfilled which tells of Zion's King riding into Jerusalem "sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass," at the exact moment an ass and an ass's colt were found standing at a spot where two roads met—

waiting for the messengers of the Lord to lead them away! He who had the ass and its colt in readiness for the entry to Jerusalem, had the new tomb likewise prepared—yea, and two loving hearts to carry out His will concerning the body of Jesus, when all others had fled! Well may we say, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Rom xi. 33).

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JONATHAN.

ONATHAN, the son of Saul, is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful characters in the Old-Testament history. While we thus speak, we admit that we may not find him a pattern in *everything* that pertains to a true member of the commonwealth of Israel at that time. We could have wished, if we may so speak, that he had been found "clear out" on the side of the rejected David. If such had been his portion we may almost safely conclude that the sword of the uncircumcised Philistine would not have found him there, and that he should in all probability have lived to fulfil his own prophecy that he would be next to David on the throne (1 Sam. xxiii. 17). Not-

withstanding this, however, we cannot fail to view him as the "beautiful Jonathan." Though in Saul's camp, he never took up arms against David. While Saul was mercilessly pursuing the fugitive king, Jonathan would venture out to meet the Lord's anointed in the wood, and to strengthen his hands in God! Jonathan knew all about the succession to the throne, and that the close of his father's reign would see the end of the "dynasty of Saul" in Israel. But it may be that Jonathan considered himself in a manner bound to stand by the established order of things until they had manifestly fallen in pieces. From whatever cause, he stood by his father's house to the last. Saul knew right well that he was rejected of God, and that the future king

was the man he was persecuting! (1 Sam. xxiii. 17). Knowing all this, Saul fought to maintain a position that was no longer according to the mind of Jehovah. It is in such associations that we find Jonathan. Yet, in spite of these untoward circumstances, there is much in him to admire and to imitate—very much that is “pure, and lovely, and of good report.”

The first thing that strikes us about Jonathan—and the one thing that gives tone to all that follows in his character—is that he *loved the Lord's anointed*. Nor was his love of any ordinary kind; for he loved David “as his own soul” (1 Sam. xviii. 1). On that day when “the stripling” was brought into the presence of the king (1 Sam. xvii. 56), bearing the head of the Philistine giant, Jonathan's heart was won. The thing seemed to have been “done suddenly”; yet the binding of heart to heart was none the less real and permanent. Whenever he beheld David he was attracted by some strange,

irresistible power, and at once felt that they were united by a bond that would remain until the latest hour of life. And, through all the changes and vicissitudes of that eventful time, Jonathan remained true to his “first love.” Surely, in this aspect of his character, he furnishes a remarkable illustration of the conversion of a soul to God. As Jonathan, in beholding the Lord's anointed for the first time, felt that his heart was irrevocably won, so was it with us in Conversion's happy day. When we beheld Jesus “for the first time”—when we saw Him with the spoils of Calvary—radiant in resurrection power—anoined both as Lord and Christ—our heart was won for ever. From that day old things passed away, and the beams of the new creation broke upon the once dark horizon of the soul! A new object—an object of surpassing loveliness had captivated the heart—a new principle dominated our life—a new centre of attraction claimed and held us in

its welcome power. And through the storms of time, and the ups and downs of assembly life, we rejoice to know that, kept by almighty power, the desire of our soul is still towards Him. We are bound up in the bundle of life with Christ Jesus; and neither time nor eternity shall see the hour that parts our soul from Him!

In Jonathan's "stolen interview" with the Lord's anointed in the wood (1 Sam. xxiii. 16), the believer will easily perceive a beautiful picture of those wilderness communings with the Beloved One, which are at once our joy and our strength as we journey to our promised rest. Here, again, love acts on its own initiative—goes forth, like Jonathan, to meet the Beloved in the desert place, and finds Him there, and *both* are refreshed in that hallowed hour!

Seeing Jonathan loved David "as his own soul," we have in this circumstance the key to all that follows. Jonathan strips himself of sword and bow, and

the robe that was upon him (1 Sam. xviii. 4), yielding all in joyful surrender to David. Behold the sacrifices, yea rather the glad and willing offerings, of love! And is it not so when the heart of the believer goes out to *our* David—the Lord's anointed and exalted One? This is the true secret of self-denial, the spring of happy and unencumbered service—a heart delighting in the absent Lord Jesus Christ. If *this* be wanting, everything is wanting. How vain and wearisome it is to press the exhortations of self-surrender upon a cold and unresponsive heart!

There was a remarkable *similarity of character* between David and Jonathan. This was largely due to the operation of that law by which we become *like those we love*. David had won the heart of Saul's son; and having thus become Jonathan's "beau-ideal" of what was true and lovely, we need not wonder that he is found manifesting the same beautiful disposition as that of the fugitive king. Thus

it is with those who have been enraptured with the vision of Calvary, and who are going on to know Him who is "fairer than the children of men." They are "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18). They become like Him who is the First-born One among many brethren. To behold and admire the beauty of the Lord, is to catch the reflection of that beauty, and to bear some of it away!

IT is nothing less than presumptuous if we count upon the Lord's guidance, while habitually neglecting to wait upon Him in the written word. If we had been rejoicing therein "as one that findeth great spoil," perhaps we should have found the needed word at the needed time. The cleansing of a young man's way is effected by taking heed thereto according to the Word (Ps. cxix. 9). "By the words of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer" (Ps. xvii. 4).

LEADING INTO THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

THE purpose of the true minister of Christ, and the outcome of his service, will be to *lead souls into the presence of God*. While others are fighting battles about points, and striving to make converts to their views, the believer who would serve as in the light of the Judgment-seat, will hear a voice saying to him, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things"; and he will act accordingly. The true man of God knows that there is "One above all others" to whom weary hearts must be directed. To point to Him—to lead to Him—is the great work of those who preach not themselves, but Jesus Christ the Lord. Like John the Baptist, they can say, "He must increase, but I must decrease." In trying times there is something far better than to contend for points and parties. It is to allure our brethren into that "holy presence where the light of earthly glory dies."

THE GOSPEL MEETING A MEANS OF GRACE.

WE have often heard it remarked that a lively Gospel meeting is an undoubted "means of grace" to the believer. No doubt such a meeting is designed to reach the *unsaved*. Yet the Gospel preached to *them* carries with it, at the same time, a blessing of no mean order for those who are already on their way to God. They behold Jesus exalted, they hear Him extolled, they see His beauties unfolded; and the result is—they rejoice in spirit. As the preacher dwells on the fulness of God's provision for the sinner, and the perfections of the great Sacrifice, the people of God feel that it is good to be there. To them the preaching of Christ as the Saving One, is truly a "feast of fat things." And, if the word proclaimed should prove itself the power of God unto salvation to some lone and desolate heart, the saints are privileged to have fellowship in that


joy which is "in the presence of the angels" over one sinner that turns to God! Truly this is "grace upon grace." To hear Christ extolled as the Great Sacrifice and the Almighty Deliverer, is blessed. If to this there be added the kindred joy of rejoicing with Christ over a lost one found for eternity, we come to know something of the meaning of that passage—"In whom . . . ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." In these "troublous times" the gently-flowing Gospel meeting comes as a draught of "the Kingdom wine," often bringing a welcome relief from the din of conflict and the strife of tongues.

Then the Gospel meeting furnishes us with a searching test of our spiritual condition. We very soon discover if our feet are shod with "the preparation of the Gospel of peace." To put our hand to the work of rescuing the perishing, will at once let us know if we are in touch with God. We soon perceive that if we are to be heralds, in however

humble a degree, of the Gospel of peace, we must cultivate a corresponding calm within our own breast. Many a believer, rising from a scene of strife, and going, within one short hour, to preach the Gospel of peace to a people hungering for the bread of life, has discovered to his dismay that *this will never do for God!* We cannot so quickly change the atmosphere which we breathe. It is not in the nature of things thus suddenly to transform ourselves into other men. If we are to allure sinners to God's Son—if we are to have fellowship with Him in bringing in the lost—we must breathe the atmosphere of the Gospel of peace—we must be sharers in the Master's spirit and in the Master's joy. *Every* believer may not discover this, as he puts forth his hand to bear the ark of the Gospel; for there may not be that subjection to God which will fit us to hear His voice and to perceive the operation of His hand. But, wherever there is the subject heart, there will be

the discovery, in putting my hand to the Gospel, that if I am to be in fellowship with God in *that* work, I must tread the path of communion, and see that nothing is permitted to impair my "Gospel joy."

UNPROFITABLE DISCUSSION.

HEN Christians engage in argument upon "debatable points," it frequently turns out an unprofitable business. Perhaps the subject itself was not unprofitable. Yet barrenness was the result. Why was this? It was due to the spiritual condition of those carrying on the discussion. If there be an abundant "supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i. 19), it is wonderful how smoothly even a "vexed question" can be talked over. You may differ from your brethren in your particular way of looking at the question. But there is no difference in spirit. When "both parties" are found breathing a

heavenly atmosphere, there is a beautiful observance of the Christian courtesies, a due regard for others' feelings, and a salutary remembrance of the fact that *all* wisdom is not centred in *us*. Coming together in *this* spirit to talk over things concerning the welfare of the people of God, we may at least safely count upon getting no farther away from each other, while there is a strong probability of our coming nearer to a oneness of mind in the Lord. Momentous issues may hang upon the "manner of spirit" we are of. Indeed, the first requisite in Christian discussion is to see that we are in a condition to enter upon the discussion. *Preparation of heart* has more to do in bringing forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness than the preparation of a logical "statement of the case." To "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," is a most powerful preventive of friction, while it is the nearest way to "the wisdom that cometh from above." When

a sense of the Master's presence is lost, it is then that the un-Christ-like thoughts begin to rise, and words become "like the piercings of a sword" (Prov. xii. 18). We may then contend professedly for truth and righteousness, and even holiness itself, while our zeal is merely stirred by the strange fire of wounded vanity. Then, instead of heart drawing to heart, there is a repelling principle at work that causes each party in the strife to entrench itself still farther in the recesses of "divided judgment." If the time thus swallowed up in profitless discussion were spent in preparation of heart, how soon the mountains would flow at the presence of the Lord! You may say, "There is no time to lose—we must go on." But this is simply the counsel of the flesh. There is no time lost in waiting on God; and that time is assuredly lost in which we are determined to "go on" without the fragrance of the Master's presence and the patience of the Master's spirit.

TO MANIFEST CHRIST.

GREAT portions of a Christian's life may be wasted through his simply *forgetting what he is down here for*. It becomes us, therefore, to stand still, in the midst of many distracting circumstances it may be, and ask the question, "What is my highest mission as a child of God here on earth?" The answer is not far to seek. We are down here to *manifest Christ*. We need not try to lower the standard of Scripture in this matter in order to suit our circumstances. In 1 Pet. ii. 9 we have the authoritative statement, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the virtues of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." Again, it is written that God hath predestinated us to be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. viii. 29); while in 2 Cor. iv. 10 we have the exhortation, "Always bearing about in the

body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." We thus see that our great mission here is to be "Christ-bearers." The image of Jesus is to be reflected in us—the life of Jesus is to be seen in us—the fragrance of Jesus is to be perceived in us. This is truly a great mission—a high calling. Yet it is very easy to forget what our true mission is. And there is every reason to fear that in this day of bustle and activity the true mission of the believer is being forgotten. The results of this forgetfulness are at once evident. No sooner have we lost sight of our true calling than we begin to "walk as men," and war as men, and (if the truth must be told) "become like them that go down to the pit." Our walk as believers will ever be in proportion to our apprehension of our heavenly calling. If that call be but feebly apprehended, there will of necessity be a feeble manifestation of the life of Jesus in these mortal bodies. If

the downward course continues unarrested, the believer seems entirely to forget that he is one of the blood-royal of Heaven, and that he is down here to manifest Christ to a needy and desolate world. Happy for him if he is "pulled up" ere he has "forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." Happy for him if the trumpet call of some man of God be heard, bringing the forgetful one's "untiring zeal" and "splendid efforts" to a sudden stand-still by asking, "Where is the fragrance of the Master's spirit?" How goes the great work of transformation? This is the true test of the work of God in the soul. If Christ be set apart as Lord in the heart, He will make manifest in the life that He sits on the throne. We may "fight the Lord's battles," as we call them, and seem to be "very jealous for the Lord of hosts." But what shall it all profit, if we have lost sight of the great work of practical conformity to the image of the Son of God?

NOT RECOVERED IN A DAY.

WHEN a believer who was once an active worker for God, gets settled on his lees for a while, and then attempts to serve anew in the Gospel, he will find that to a certain extent his "right hand has forgot its cunning." Some time ago a brother who had got roused up to enter anew upon Gospel service, made the remark that he felt somewhat strange to the work, and that he had not his old simplicity and directness in dealing with a soul. The tact needed in a fisher of men is not acquired in a day; and, if it be lost through a careless walk, it is not recovered in a day. Then we must remember that the measure of our enjoyment of the Lord's presence is generally the measure of our liberty in pointing a soul to Christ. In seeking to be workers for God we may have to learn that the fire of restored communion has not reached the point needed for joyful and effective service.

A CORRUPTING INFLUENCE.

WE are told in Scripture that "evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. xv. 33); or, as we have it in the R.V., "Evil company doth corrupt good manners." The believer who keeps improper company will find, to his cost, that the effect upon himself will not be purifying and enobling, but *corrupting*. And we must not conclude that we are quite safe from all corrupting influences if we merely avoid the avowedly unconverted. We may become subject to a corrupting influence while keeping company with *a professed child of God*. This is both solemn and startling, however much it may be forgotten in this dark day. A man may be reputedly in good standing as a Christian, and yet one whose influence upon your spirit is not for good. If you are a young believer, you cannot afford this. Neither can you afford to expose yourself to such an influence, whether you be young

or old in the faith, unless you are prepared to bear witness against it. What is the character of the conversation that goes on? Is it about the things that touch the King? Does it leave behind it a fragrance of heavenly fields? Questions such as these are easily answered. It is not every one possessing the outward trappings of orthodoxy who is to be desired as a Christian companion. Many a simple believer has lost his simplicity, and the once keen edge of his spirituality, by the unhallowed influence of so-called Christians. The importance of all this must be apparent when we reflect that "like produces like," and that a man in great part is what his companionships have made him.

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IN Ps. cxix. 63 we hear David saying, "I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts." If we walk by the same rule in the matter of our companionships, we shall be delivered from many a snare of the fowler.

FIERCE IS THE LIGHT.

YOU may have heard it said that "fierce is the light that beats upon a throne."

That is to say, those who occupy exalted positions are exposed to the fierce light of public observation and public criticism. This is no less true in the domain of the Lord's work. If I assume the position of an ambassador of Christ, or a leader among my brethren, I need not take up the ground that I will "act as I please," and yet serve my generation and do the will of God. He who stands in the place of public testimony thereby exposes himself to the light of public opinion. That light—more or less "fierce"—will beat upon him. He may lay his account with this. He who affects to be indifferent to public opinion, and cares little what is the general estimate of his character, has yet to learn the first qualifications in a public servant of Christ. A man's person must be accepted before his testimony can be received.

WITHOUT A CHANGE OF MIND.

NONE of the most precious truths of Scripture is the declaration of Rom. xi. 29 that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." In the Revised Version we have the reading, "The gifts and the calling of God are *not repented of*" (margin). In other words, the gifts and the calling of God are without *a change of mind*. "No change Jehovah knows." He knew us from the beginning—ere He had "sent and drawn us out of many waters." Yet, knowing everything, He called us, and saved us, even with an everlasting salvation. Nor will He ever depart from His purposes of grace. Is not this a "strong consolation" for all who have "fled for refuge" to the Man of Calvary?

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Vol. IX.

SOMETHING VERY DEFINITE NEEDED.

T is a customary thing for the advocates of a rigid type of church-government to point to the scattered and broken-up condition of the people of God, and say, "Now, is *that* not a proof that something very definite is needed?" To this we reply, "Yes, it is a proof that something very definite is needed. But what is that *something*?" This is the question. We certainly do *not* believe that the "something" needed is the outward machinery of a rigid type of church-government. We do not believe that a cut-and-dry set of "rules, regulations, and penalties," administered on the principle of a confederacy of assemblies, will usher in a

spiritual millennium in these last days. Nor are we left to speculate in this matter. The attempt has been *already made*; and the result has been failure, and that continually. In the history of past years we have seen religious confederacies, each professing to be the great gathering centre for "the children of God which were scattered abroad"; and yet these systems have proved themselves to be powerful engines of disintegration. Why? Because they attempted, by external rules and regulations, to do what it needed nothing less than the *power of God* to do. This has been the great mistake in the things of God—men attempting to restore the departed glory by an alteration in the external form of things. God's way, in this matter, is altogether different from man's

way. Man begins at the outside, and attempts, by the application of an adamantine form of church-government, to mould hearts into uniformity, and usher in a reign of peace and righteousness. But God's way is to begin from *the centre*—to begin with *hearts*—to begin in the secret place. Revival in individual hearts is God's way of ushering in a day of His power.

Once upon a time, when saints professedly gathered unto the Name were few—in the simplicity of their first love, and not far “advanced in truth,” it was not a hard matter to get on with each other. They were weak in numbers then, it is true; yet in a goodly measure it could be said that “great grace was upon them all.” But, as time wore on, numbers increased; and, as numbers increased, it would seem that heavenly power began to wane. There was no “needs-be” that this should have taken place. Yet it is significant that, in the infancy of the New-Testament Church, it was “when the number

of the disciples was *multiplied*, there arose a murmuring” (Acts vi. 1). How often, alas, in the history of the people of God has this been repeated—an adding to and a multiplying, immediately followed by a murmuring! But the lesson of Acts vi. 1 has been forgotten; and the result is, that many a company of believers, professedly owning the one great gathering Name, has found that multiplication of numbers has not been an unmixed blessing. When departure from God set in, there were larger companies to control, and far less of heavenly power to control them. Hence the failure in testimony—hence the diversity of judgment—hence the confusion that followed close on the heels of departure from God. The “physicians” took up the case; leading men considered it—are considering it to-day. What is to be done? “Something very definite is needed,” they say. To this we agree. But again we ask, “what is that *something*?” To this we reply that the “something” that is

needed is the "something" that has been *lost*; and that is *the power of God* in the hearts and lives of His saints!

The great need of the Church is the Pentecostal fire! We want to go back, like Abraham, to where the tent was pitched at the beginning (Gen. xiv. 3). We want the pathos of the love that glowed on Calvary; we want our lips touched with a live coal from off the heavenly altar; we want back the power and simplicity of a bygone day—the purity of that time when the thought of sin was a "great transgression," and when the constant fire of heavenly communion burned up the dross of earth! What shall take the place of that departed power? You may devise an ecclesiastical confederacy—you may frame a law to meet every conceivable difficulty, and then say to yourselves, "We have found it now." But ah! you have not got back the departed power! And you need not attempt, by human devices, to do what only that power can do. Let us not be

blindfolded as to this great question. Satan will allow us to do as much ecclesiastical fighting as we have a mind to, and to set up as many "brazen shields" as we please, to replace those of the pure, bright gold (1 Kings xiv. 27). But he will use all his arts to hinder us getting back *the Pentecostal fire*! Foes will arise to hinder our entry into the land of abiding communion. Obstacle after obstacle will appear in our path. Many will be found indifferent—some, from whom we perhaps expected better things, will be hostile. Nevertheless, let us not be diverted from our purpose. It is the will of God that we should walk in the fulness of His joy and in the noon-tide of His power. Such must be our condition of heart if we are to be well-pleasing unto Him, and be the honoured instruments, in however humble a degree, of hastening the dawn of a brighter day for the people of God. To this great end, who among us is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?

WITHERING INFLUENCES.

WE know a man who, after repeated attacks of illness, was told by his medical adviser that nothing could save him except removal from the house he then occupied. The atmosphere of the house had become tainted; and what he needed was not so much a course of medicine as *a new atmosphere*. He found a new atmosphere, and he is living and well to-day. It is easy to apply this to the spiritual life of a child of God. Yonder is a believer who is making very little apparent progress in the divine life—perhaps making progress in the wrong direction. You apply remedies—you expound the Word. But everything seems of no avail. What is wrong? He is breathing *a vitiated atmosphere*. His self-chosen surroundings are simply withering to anything like the promotion of vital godliness. What he sees and hears and comes in contact with, does not allure him to the “holy place” of

fellowship with God. His first great need is *a new atmosphere*—an atmosphere favourable to the growth of the heavenly “graces,” and a daily being conformed to the image of God’s Son. We do not say that external surroundings are *everything* in seeking to walk with God. But we do say that a believer may place himself inside an “environment” that will make it, humanly speaking, impossible to walk in the joy of salvation and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. The atmosphere—that is to say, the associations—into which a believer plunges, will have an effect upon his walk and testimony. It will impregnate him, so to speak; and its savour will be felt upon him by others, whether he is conscious of it or not; for a man cannot take fire into his bosom and his clothes not be burned.

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ALL decays begin in the closet; no heart thrives without much secret converse with God; and nothing will make amends for the want of it.

THE PATH TO HONOUR.

HUMILITY is the true path to honour in God's service. No man was ever so praised by Christ as the man whom we find saying of himself, "I must decrease" (Jno. iii. 30). The lowly mind may not count for much with those among whom we dwell; but in God's sight it is of great price. In these days of coveting a position among our brethren, and striving for the reins of power, let us remember that the man who thus covets and thus strives thereby proves his unfitness for the honoured place. The Lord's anointed ones never did so. A Saul might continue to reign after he knew the dread secret that he was rejected by Jehovah; and an Absalom might strive for power, who had never reigned before. But the man whom God had chosen and fitted to reign made no rush to get his foot upon the throne. And thus it ever is. The strife for power simply manifests the man who strives.

Honour *comes* to those whom God fits for it in the valley of humiliation. All others have to *go after* honour. Yet, when they have found it they shall find, sooner or later, that it is not the honour that has come *from God*.

THE PATH OF SIMPLICITY.


WE are specially counselled in Scripture to see that we are not corrupted from "the *simplicity* that is in Christ" (2 Cor. xi. 3). This word of counsel should be kept in mind when men come to us with fine-spun theories which are not borne out by a definite "Thus saith the Lord." When theories of that kind are applied to church-fellowship, you do well to be on your guard. Men's inferences and reasonings must not be permitted to take the place of what God hath declared. We read, in connection with revival in a bygone day, that "they found it written" (Neh. viii. 14). We, too, must find it *written*. It

is not sufficient that a brother, reputed to be great, proclaims that such-and-such is the case. Does *God* say it? Is it in the Word? If so, we shall be able to find it. Let us be assured of this, that the truth as to church-fellowship is just as simple as the truth concerning the Gospel. In the one, as in the other, the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein (Isa. xxxv. 8). The Gospel is so simple that it may be grasped by a simple mind; and the same can be said of truth pertaining to the Church. Gospel truth and church truth are alike characterised by "the simplicity which is in Christ." Let no man beguile you from that simplicity. You may rest assured that a system of church-government that is beyond the power of a simple-minded believer to comprehend, has never come from above. In these days there is an exposition of so-called church truth that is simply bewildering to the ordinary mind. An elaborate system is drawn out before your eyes, founded

upon inferences and hair-splitting definitions; and you are then boldly asked to accept that system as being the only true representation of the Church of God on earth! Not a few of the Lord's simple ones have been made merchandise of in this way. But how were they so easily ensnared? It was because Mr. So-and-so, a recognised teacher, confidently declared that he had *the mind of God* on this matter; and the simple ones concluded that a great man like Mr. So-and-so "*must* be right." But they omitted to *search the Scriptures* and see if these things were so. They were content with inferences and reasonings of men, instead of a definite "Thus saith the Lord." Thus they were beguiled from the simplicity that is in Christ; and accepted a church-system with so many delicate distinctions, that it would require a "specialist" in those things to come from a distance and explain to the humble believer what it is that he has actually received!

JONATHAN.

(*Second Paper.*)

ONATHAN, as we have seen, loved David as his own soul. To see David was to love him; at least Jonathan found this to be the case. We have here a striking illustration of the truth that our estimate of another man's character largely depends on the condition of our own heart. We know Jonathan's estimate of David. He saw in the fugitive king all that was pure and lovely. He was attracted—he could not help being attracted—by that purity and that loveliness. He perceived David's worth, and rejoiced to acknowledge the virtues of the man whom God had anointed. Yet there was *another man* upon whose mind David left a very different impression. That man was Eliab, David's brother. On the day when "the stripling" had stepped forth to do battle with Goliath, there was one in the hosts of Israel looking on with sullen and

envious eye. In his sight there was no beauty in David that he should be desired. Eliab saw nothing of what Jonathan saw. David's elder brother perceived not the grace and beauty that had such a wonderful effect upon another heart. But, although Eliab saw not what Jonathan saw, he could see something, or persuade himself he saw something, which Jonathan did not see. "I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart," said the elder brother (1 Sam. xvii. 28). What a different impression David left upon different minds! Jonathan sees David as the incarnation of the heavenly virtues: Eliab sees nothing in David except "the pride and naughtiness" of his heart!

Why such a remarkable difference in the effect produced by the same object? The difference was due to the *condition of heart* in the two men who looked upon the Lord's anointed. Eliab, judging by his own standard, took David to be "altogether such an one as himself." Moved

by jealousy and blinded by envy, he could see nothing of the "moral glory" (if we may use the phrase) that shone in the shepherd king. What he did see—or, rather, what he professed to see—was only the reflection of his own heart! And the pride and naughtiness thereof he wantonly charged home upon another—even upon the man after God's own heart! O the blinding power of envy, and all the kindred dark and forbidding features which rise in a heart that is away from fellowship with God! No blinding influence was at work in *Jonathan's* case. He saw with undimmed and ungrudging eye, because he was in a *condition* to see in measure as God saw, and to hail with joy the advent of one anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.

A great principle is revealed here—a principle which, if honestly applied to our own hearts, will search us to the core. No matter what our profession may be—no matter what our reputation may be—let us ask

ourselves the question, Is it the spirit of Jonathan or of Eliab that influences me in my likes and my dislikes? Am I prepared to rejoice in the advent of some valiant David, although I can only hope to be "*second*" to him in the kingdom"—perhaps not even second? Or, do I view with suspicious and grudging eye the man who is manifestly raised up of God for the blessing of many? Am I blind to his beauties, while I have an eye for his pride and the naughtiness of his heart? What a test of latent envy is often furnished by a new arrival in the valley of Elah! It is sometimes needful that such a test should be applied—that circumstances should arise to expose us to ourselves, and so manifest that envy which is "the rottenness of the bones." But happy shall it be for us if we are of "the pure in heart" who "see God" in the changing circumstances of our lot, and who are found *rejoicing with Him* when "the thoughts of many hearts" are revealed.


REPRODUCTION AND IMITATION.

ARE we, as children of God, called to *reproduce Christ* in our life or merely to *imitate* Christ? We answer this question by saying that we are called *both* to reproduce and to imitate the Son of God. We must not lose sight of the two-fold aspect of this truth. There are believers who dwell almost exclusively upon their own experience, and who tell us that we are to be miniature editions of Christ, so to speak—that the Christ-life is to be our life—and that we are not called to be imitators. These believers are correct in what they affirm, but wrong in what they deny. They are correct in affirming that our life is to be the Christ-life—that He is to live in us; but they are wrong when they fancy they are in such an exalted spiritual condition that *they* have no call to imitate the perfect One. He who simply seeks to be guided by "what is written" shall have no

difficulty in grasping both sides of this truth. "I am crucified with Christ," says the apostle; "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). Here we have the great truth of the *indwelling Christ*. But we have it as clearly stated that He left us *an example*, that we should *follow His steps* (1 Pet. ii. 21). Yet there is no contradiction between these two statements. On the contrary, there is a vital connection between them. *Because* Christ lives in me, I am called to imitate Him. It is only the *believer* that has the desire and the power to follow in the Master's steps. If you hold that you are not called to imitate Christ, that means that you have within *your own consciousness* an infallible standard of right and wrong. But you leave out of account the workings of the flesh and the deceitfulness of your own heart! To study Christ in the written word—to "consider Him," and trace His footsteps—will be the delight of a loving heart, and will prove a

searching test as to whether Christ is really living in me. It is an evil day for us when we are "so far advanced" that we flatter ourselves *we* have no need of the Master's counsel, "Take My yoke upon you, and *learn of Me.*"

THE RIGHT MEN.

 AN old periodical, speaking of a great revival work then in progress, says: "The greatest care should be taken in arranging these meetings, that those who take part in them should be the right men; and no desire to conciliate or please should be allowed to lead to a neglect of this necessity."

These are weighty words, and should be pondered by all who have any responsibility in carrying on the Lord's work. When it is our care to see that *the right men* are in the right place in the Gospel chariot, we shall at least be relieved of a great hindrance to our faith in looking for "signs following." It genders to serious

bondage if brother So-and-so must be asked to give an address, else he will take offence and become disagreeable. When the prosperity of the Lord's work has to be jeopardised in order to please a particular brother, it is time to call a halt and see if we are on God's lines. The question is simply this—"Who is it that the Lord has fitted for this work? and how shall we best carry it on that He may be glorified and sinners reached and saved?" You are on the sure highway to barrenness and failure the moment you come down to the level of trying to please everybody and propitiate grumblers by flattering them they are what they are not. Those who have had any experience in revival movements will have observed that there is a marked relation between the *men who preach* and the general prosperity of the work. We need not cry to the Lord for a time of blessing if we are not making use of the means that appear to us best fitted to reach that end.

"GOD AND ONE."

DO not be impatient for numbers," a brother once said—"God and one make a majority." There is a strong temptation to desire to be on "the big side." When it comes to a counting up of heads or of votes, the flesh loves to be in the majority. "The people are with us," the flesh says; "we have numbers—no doubt we are right." But stay, brother. Mere numbers are of no account with God. What you call "the big side" can have no influence with Him who searches the heart and by whom actions are weighed. I want to know on which side God is! Numbers can have no weight with the man who endures "as seeing Him who is invisible." You may point to a certain movement, and say it cannot be of God, seeing that only a minority are found identifying themselves with it. But the matter cannot be settled by an appeal to the argument of numbers. If we are seeking to please God, we will

not stand still to discover where "the people" are going to be, but where God is going to be. There are those who cannot get on, unless under the inspiration of numbers. To them no argument is so powerful as a big company. If you cannot give them numbers they lose heart and think that everything is going wrong. But it is entirely different with those whose eyes are on *the living God*. They do something in the counting up of numbers, it is true, but not in the popular fashion. In their reckoning, *God and one* make a majority; and it matters not who may be on the other side.

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Vol. IX.

THE INNER CLEANSING.

N 2 Cor. vi. 17 we hear God saying, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean." Then follow the words, "And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Now, in connection with the restoration of Israel, as recorded in Ezek. xxxvi., there is a parallel passage which says, "And ye shall be My people, and I will be your God" (ver. 28). It may therefore be profitable for us to look at our "separation" in the light of Ezek. xxxvi. Many of us profess to have "come out," and to be separate, and that we touch not the unclean. We claim that God is unto us a Father, and that we are unto Him a

people—a separated people. Let us test ourselves, then, and see if there follow the signs recorded in Ezekiel's prophecy. No sooner is it said of Israel, "Ye shall be My people, and I will be your God," than we have the declaration, "*I will also save you from all your uncleannesses*" (ver. 29). Separation, in Israel's case, was not to be a mere change of locality. It is true that they were to be taken from among the heathen, and "gathered out" and "brought in" (ver. 24). But this was not by any means to be the beginning and end of Israel's separation to God. A certain and definite *saving* was at the same time to go on—"I will also *save you from all your uncleannesses.*"

Has this great element of godly separation been true in our

experience? We may make our boast that we have "come out," that we are a separated people, and that 2 Cor. vi. 18 belongs in a special way to *us*. But what about the very next verse (vii. 1): "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"? That verse, although it begins a new chapter, has a most vital connection with the "*Come out*" which goes before it. The cleansing of ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit corresponds exactly with that passage in Ezekiel which says, "I will also save you from all your uncleannesses." And if we have truly *come out* to the Lord Jesus Christ, we have truly come under the power of that word which tells of a mighty cleansing in the inward parts.

If this great central thought in Separation be lost sight of—if ours is a separation that can contend vehemently for a certain church-position, while contend-

ing feebly for the cleansing of the inner court of the temple—we have a separation only in name. He makes a serious mistake who fancies that obedience to the ordinances of "Baptism" and "Breaking of Bread" will warrant him to say, "I have obeyed the commandments of the Lord." We know that these *are* commandments of the Lord; and may it ever be our joy to keep the ordinances as they have been delivered. But let us remember that obedience to the Lord embraces a vastly larger field than that which deals with Believers' Baptism and the Weekly Feast. Indeed it is quite possible for the flesh to go under the symbolic water, and eat with unfailing regularity the symbolic bread, and make its boast that it is on divine ground. But there is one thing the flesh cannot do—it cannot rejoice in the great *inward* separation that tells of being delivered from "all your uncleannesses." Separation unto God has got to do with the inner man of the heart. Wherever the

inner reality has been divorced from the outward form, there will sooner or later be a manifestation that only the form is left.

We need not attempt to carry out divine principles apart from divine power. If there be not a salvation from uncleanness—if there be not a separation whose key-note is *purity within*—we may rest assured of this, that we have not got hold of God's separation. The mere counterfeit of a heavenly pattern will not have power with men, and it cannot avail with God. Yea, the great element in the heavenly pattern is the heavenly power. The great element in heavenly separation is heavenly cleansing—salvation from uncleanness. And wherever you have the heavenly power and the heavenly cleansing, there will be all the less need to contend that God is undoubtedly with *us*. His presence among us will *speak for itself*. A manifest separation of heart and ways to God will be a more eloquent appeal than the most thundering protestations

from a convention platform. If we have truly gone forth to the rejected Lord Jesus Christ, we have gone forth to One whose office it is to take away our filthy garments and cleanse us from all our uncleannesses, and to teach us that Separation unto God is the great and deep and blessed reality of *walking with Him*, and *shining for Him*, and *being rejected with Him*.

JONATHAN.

(*Third Paper.*)

WE have seen how singularly free from envy was the character of Jonathan, the son of Saul. "Heir-apparent" to the throne, he could look on with complacency—yea, even with joy—while another man was manifestly chosen of God to deliver Israel and bear the sceptre of kingly rule. The man who could thus rejoice with God, thereby saying farewell to all his hopes of a throne, could be no ordinary

person. He must have possessed a certain intrinsic worth—a certain purity of character—an undoubted faith in God; for it takes worth to appreciate worth; it takes purity of heart to perceive the operation of God's hand; and there must needs be faith in God before we can rejoice *with Him*. Although Jonathan was not marked out as *the greatest* in the kingdom, we need not be surprised to find him *great* in the kingdom. If he was not *the* deliverer of Israel, we may well expect to find him *a* deliverer of Israel, and that of no mean order. Yea, we are inclined to think that at that time in the roll of the deliverers of Israel he was, to use his own words, next to David on the throne. We shall see this by a reference to an incident in the Philistine wars, even before the great battle in the valley of Elah had been fought—and while David was yet with his father's sheep in the wilderness. Jonathan comes before us even then as a man of faith—one who was valiant for

the cities of his God—one who delivered Israel, and that in troublous and trying times.

True greatness does not consist in one attempting to be the greatest man of his time, or in trying to leave the most remarkable impress on his day and generation. True greatness is simply the seeking, through humble faith in God, to serve Him according to our measure—to take up whatsoever our hand findeth to do, and to do it with our might—"content to fill a little space, if God be glorified." Jonathan understood this. If he could not be king in Israel, he was not going to throw down his sword in disgust. It was not with him a question of "Who shall reign?" but rather this—"How shall God be honoured?" The man with the large heart was not one with a weak arm. We question if you ever find it so. Jonathan—the man of the generous impulses and the unenvious eye—was truly "great" in his day; and we could scarcely have expected it to be otherwise.

In I Sam. xiv. 1 we are told how "it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison that is on the other side. But he told not his father." Faith in God cannot be "battered down" by the regulations of Saul's camp, or compelled to walk according to the rules of carnal wisdom. Such faith will ever find a path to tread and a field upon which a victory for God may be won. It was thus that Jonathan went forth for the delivering of Israel. Nor did he go forth in vain. "Come," he said to his armourbearer, "and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few" (ver. 6). Here we have the language of faith, the sentiments of a man who believes he has a mission, even in a day of failure and calamity, and who is convinced that God will *honour faith*

in Him, no matter how dark and evil be the day—no matter how unfavourable and hostile be the surrounding circumstances.

We know how signally Jonathan's faith was rewarded. We read that "they fell before him, and his armourbearer slew after him" (ver 13). "And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people . . . it was a very great trembling . . . and, behold, the multitude melted away . . . And, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, and there was a very great discomfiture . . . Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle. So the Lord saved Israel that day." And the honoured instrument in this great victory was Jonathan, the man of such largeness of heart that he could rejoice to behold "another heir-apparent," and say with another Jonathan of a later day, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

SOME HINTS FOR THE PRAYER-MEETING.

THE following "quiet little address" was delivered by a brother at the starting of a prayer-meeting a number of years ago, and will doubtless be read with profit by many at the present time:—

"We are met here to-day to commence a prayer-meeting. But better not to meet at all, than not really to pray; for if we do not *pray*, we will get hardened by engaging in the outward form of prayer.

"We want the living outpouring of earnest hearts. For my own part, I don't have all the ends of the earth laid on my soul at every approach to the throne of grace; and it would be a mere wordy formality were I to make a 'descant through creation,' and address God in every prayer respecting the case of Papists, Mohammedan, Jews, Heathen, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free.

"It is only if I pray intelligently that I will pray spiritually and acceptably. And to do so—to pray in the Spirit—is to ask only for the things I really mean.

"Then, brethren, in our prayers let us observe the rule, to pray out only that which is laid upon our minds at the time, and when we have done so in the most devout and direct way, let us stop, and not attempt to *manufacture* prayers.

"Prayer, to be 'in the Holy Spirit,' must be the spontaneous outflow of a Spirit-touched soul, and must spring to the lips as naturally as water bubbles up in a well.

"Let us thus pray, and all woodenness and wandering will be excluded, and we shall have an edifying variety and richness in our services—the blessed work of the Spirit of God; and thus praying in the Spirit whom we have already, we will soon be conscious of having a larger measure bestowed—the very thing we meet to supplicate God to give us.

"I have a horror at the mockery of merely driving the machinery of a prayer-meeting: we want living communion with the 'living God.'

"We wish to enjoy divine blessing, not only at some future time after we have prayed well for it, but we should begin expecting God's blessing *in* our praying at this our first meeting.

"Why should we not? God is as

able to bless us now as in the undefined future. Has He not said, 'While they are yet speaking I will hear'? 'He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He shall answer thee.'"

APPLY TO THE SAME PEOPLE.


THE term *Christian* applies to God's people in their relation to Christ. We are *Christ's ones*; His Name has been named upon us; we are Christians. The term *brethren* applies to God's people in their relation to one another. "One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren" (Matt. xxiii. 8). It is the family name. We are brethren because we are all members of one family. We thus see that the term *Christian* and the term *brethren* apply to the same people—each setting forth the elect in a different aspect of their character. All *Christians* are *brethren*, no matter what their attainments may be.

BUSY AT THE QUARRYING.

WE have had splendid building-up meetings where I am," said a brother to me one day; "it is *building up* that is needed."

Now, I believe in building up, though not in building up the religious system to which my brother belongs. But I believe that something else is needed. "Building up is very good," I said; "but I can tell you this, that if all the quarrymen in Ayrshire were to stop work to-morrow, all the *building* that is going on would come to a standstill in three weeks. I am busy just now at the *quarrying*—getting sinners dug out of the world's quarry by the power of the Gospel of Christ, for the building of the Church, which is His body. I say nothing against *building up*. I'm only putting in a word for the *quarrying*; because, if the quarrying stops, I do not see how you will carry on the building."—(*Jotting from Believers' Tea-Meeting*).

THE NAMES "BRETHREN" AND "CHRISTIANS."

N coming from a Christian Conference not long ago I was surprised to find one brother labouring hard to convince another that there was a wonderful difference between *brethren* and *Christians*. He wanted to show that while all God's people are "Christians," all are not entitled to be called "brethren." Indeed, according to his idea, the term *brethren* can only be claimed by those who observe the ordinances of Baptism and Breaking of Bread, and who belong to a certain ecclesiastical confederacy! We need scarcely say that such a claim has not a particle of Scripture to support it. We are not surprised that such a claim is made. We have ceased to be surprised at almost anything that emanates from certain brethren who have the loftiest pretensions to possess God's mind as to Church order. The fact that they seek to *narrow down* the application of the term

"brethren," affords undoubted evidence that they are on very *narrow* lines. But alas for us when we have to press and contract Scripture itself, in order to suit our own narrow conception of divine things! Scripture will never lend itself to such a purpose; and any attempt of ours to *force* Scripture in to help us in sectarian narrowness can only end in manifesting how far we have departed from the Lord's thoughts concerning His people.

Never was a more absurd claim than this put forth, that the name "brethren" can only be righteously appropriated by a certain ecclesiastical faction. Take that well-known passage on assurance of salvation, and see how it will "dovetail" into this new theory: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 Jno. iii. 14). Who are *the brethren* referred to? Does any one mean to say "the brethren" are those who see eye-to-eye with us on Church truth — only those who are part of the ecclesiastical system to which

we belong? Away with such a thought. Alas for the spiritual condition of any intelligent believer who can hold such a theory! "The brethren" referred to in the passage quoted are without a doubt *the people of God*, no matter where they may be found. When Scripture speaks of *loving the brethren* it takes no cognisance of ecclesiastical factions or of sectarian narrowness. If we love only those who are on the same church lines as we are ourselves, the words may well apply to us, "How dwelleth the love of God in you?" We could not conceive of *God's* love being manifested—or contracted, rather—in such a fashion. His love goes out to *all* the heavenly family; and, if we are in fellowship with Him, our love will be of a kindred nature.

Let us now look at another passage (Heb. ii. 11), "For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Now, let us ask the question, "Who is it that our Lord is not ashamed to call brethren?" Is it a particular

section of the Lord's people? Assuredly not. Those He is not ashamed to call "brethren" are all who are embraced in *the family*. It is not on account of our obedience, but because we are all of One (literally out of One) that He is not ashamed to call us brethren. This is clear from Heb. ii. 11. Then, when you turn to other passages referring to "brethren," you find yourself face-to-face with most serious difficulties if you narrow the application of the term *brethren* to a *section* of the Lord's people. We have the exhortation, "Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous" (1 Pet. iii. 8). Who will dare to question that this word is for all the people of God? But we need not pursue the subject; and we refer to it merely that simple-minded believers may be on their guard. When these imaginative hair-splittings are brought before a believer we may be sure that they do not make for peace, and that they are not on the lines of that "simplicity which is in Christ."

NOT A SMALL BODY.

“**Y**OU surely belong to a very small body,” my friend remarked. O no, I replied, I belong to a remarkably large body. I belong to the body that embraces all who believe in Jesus, by whatsoever name they may permit themselves to be called. What Church do I belong to? I belong to the General Assembly and Church of the first-born ones, which are written in Heaven (Heb. xii. 23). You surely do not call *that* a small body? You see I am just in the body in which the Lord put me. I claim kindred with every saint of God on the face of the earth. Indeed, I do not need to claim kindred; for I am in *the family* now. I am already a member of the Great Church. I am one with all who love the name of Jesus. You want me to take some sectarian name, you say, so that you may “label” me, and be able to point out to what sect I belong. But I cannot take a name which the Lord has

not given me; and which, indeed, He has forbidden me to take. What am I? I am a Christian. I belong to Christ. I am a child of God. I belong to the royal family of Heaven. Surely this is a far higher title than that implied in any sectarian name. You say you will give me some special name to distinguish me. I cannot help that. But I am not at liberty to accept any name, as a child of God, except those I find in the Scriptures. I cannot rejoice in a sectarian name; for that would embrace only a section of God's people. I can rejoice only in a name that will embrace *all* in the family—the born-again ones—the goodly company of the redeemed. You thus see that I am not left to make any choice in the matter. I am Christ's, and of Him we know that “the whole family in Heaven and earth is named” (Eph. iii. 15). That settles the whole question as to a sectarian name. In the things of God all is simplicity itself if we simply keep by “that which is written.”

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES.

THERE is hardly a more severe test of Christianity than a man's bringing up of a family. When he was a single man, he likely found the Christian life a very pleasant experience. His difficulties were few, and his trials were not serious. The Christian life to him was like a summer day without a cloud upon the horizon. He had not then the experience of the cares and responsibilities of bringing up a family; and he was a little prone to be hasty in his judgment of others who had trials of that kind, to which he was an utter stranger, and into which he could not enter. But his time came. He is now the head of a house, and around him a family is growing up, among whom certain tendencies to lawlessness are becoming manifest. He has entered upon a new experience. He realises that it is a solemn thing to have the training of a young heart for eternity. He is cast upon God

in a very special way. "Ah," he says, "when I was a young man, how easy was my path! I knew nothing of the battle of life." The most trying test of his Christianity has come. If he has been merely keeping up an appearance before men, that "appearance" will not avail him in the searching light of the family circle. Nothing but the real power of God can be effective *there*. If he is made of the true metal he will set himself (1) to the ruling of his own spirit, and (2) to the ruling of his own house. Slackness will not do; for "he becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand" (Prov. x. 4). Like Abraham he will "command his children after him" (Gen. xviii. 19). It will be no feeble "*Do you not think, my child, you should do this?*" He will not let them do as they please, and presume on God's grace to save them after all. No. He will act on the counsel of the Lord which says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

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No. 147.

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Vol. IX.

A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS
GOSPEL WORK.

HOW to carry on a happy and prosperous Gospel work: this is a great problem with many saints of God. And the fact that they find it a problem proves that their hearts are exercised about *the right thing*. To be burdened as to the salvation of souls is to be burdened about a great work—about *the* work which brought the Son of God from Heaven to earth; for we know that He came “to seek and to save that which was lost.” If we are exercised as to rescuing the perishing, we are exercised about a work which occupies the heart of God: if we are *not* exercised as to the saving of the lost, it seems to us to matter little how intensely our

zeal may burn in fighting the “battle of points,” or contending for some special line of truth. We are not all evangelists, we know; but we are all called into the fellowship of God's Son; and to be experimentally “in the fellowship” *with Him*, is to be permeated in measure with the love that sought Gethsemane, and wept over Jerusalem, and went after that which was lost until He found it.

The first requisite, it seems to us, in seeking to carry on a prosperous Gospel work, is a genuine and habitual *love for the perishing*. A spasmodic working up of our zeal once a week will be of no use. The real article cannot be worked up: it must be *brought down*. And, when we have got it down, we shall find that love for the perishing is a

constant flame. It burns all the week. Very little will be accomplished by that professed revival fire which dies out on the altar on Monday, and must be kindled anew at the approach of another Gospel meeting on the following Lord's-day. The prosperity of our Gospel work will be found to depend largely on our love for the perishing. This reminds us that we may have sincere longings to see *numbers increasing*, while we are not at all burdened as to the perishing. The deep Spirit-wrought longing to see souls made happy in the love of Jesus, is quite a different thing from the partisan sentiment that merely longs to see "our meeting" increasing in numbers. And you may be energised by that sentiment without knowing it—you may be impatient to have such "a successful work" as will command the attention of outsiders, while quite unconscious of such a feeling. The searching light of the Holy Presence will enable us to perceive what kind of motive power is driving the

chariot wheels of our zeal in the Lord's work. We read that "as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children" (Isa. lxvi. 8). May this not help to explain how it is that so few "children" are brought forth, compared with what our eyes would fain behold—yea, what our eyes have seen in other days? To travail in birth for souls is a sure token that the Lord hath laid them on our heart, and that children shall be brought forth to the praise of our God.

Wherever there be this love for the perishing and this travail-ing in birth for souls, we may well expect that there shall be "signs following." The great reality of a love that goes out to the lost, shall not be without its effect, and shall not go without its reward. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Ps. cxxvi. 6). Even the unsaved seem to have an intuitive perception of that which is real in Gospel effort.

The touch of a loving hand counts for more with the wanderer on the wilds of sin than the voice of thundering eloquence. The sympathy of a loving heart is greater than the power of a dazzling gift. Let there be love for souls—it may not be vast, but let it be true—and unsaved ones shall be made to feel *something* of the love that glowed on Calvary. Many have been brought into the deep waters of conviction by finding that some obscure Christian worker was concerned about them while they had no concern about themselves! An old writer says we must “conspire with the Holy Spirit for souls.” We want the baptism of love; we want the bowels of compassion; we want the largeness of heart. And let us remember that love for the perishing is no fitful gleam—no mere pastime. It is a master-passion. It cannot be manufactured. You cannot learn it as an art, nor create it by an effort of the will. It comes in obedience to “a law of the Kingdom,” as you follow the great Lover of

souls from the wilderness of Judea to the Capernaum shore, and round by Gethsemane, and on to Calvary and Olivet.

NO MAN SHALL DESIRE THY LAND.



WE find one of the beautiful touches of divine grace in connection with the annual feasts which the men of Israel were commanded to keep. In Ex. xxxiv. 23, 24 it is written, “Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: *neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year.*” Jehovah’s ancient people had no need to fear that the uncircumcised nations would take advantage of the absence of the men when up at the annual feasts, and seize the land. While they were keeping Jehovah’s feasts, no

man would desire their land! He who had the hearts of all in His hand, had so arranged it. No attack would be made upon their borders. Not even the thought of it would occur to any one! Israel walking in the ways of God, were as secure as if their cities were walled up to Heaven. How blessed is the heritage of those that fear the name of the Lord! It was as if Jehovah had said, "Fear not to keep My statutes: no hostile foot shall touch your land when you go up to appear before Me. While it is your care to walk in My ways, it shall be My care to see that no enemy shall encroach upon the possession which I have given you."

The lessons which all this has for *us* are not far to seek. "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good" (Ps. xxxiv. 10). In the keeping of His statutes there is great reward (Ps. xix. 11). To tread the path of subjection to God is the secret of keeping in subjection

that lower nature which is so ready to cross the boundary line of our spiritual heritage, and rob us of our peace. The measure of our subjection to God will ever be the measure of our victory over the enemies of the soul.

Israel were assured of safety from *earthly* enemies. But our enemies are of a different nature; "for our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. vi. 12, R.V.). How, then, shall we carry on a victorious conflict with these enemies of the soul? How shall we be delivered from the dominion of the flesh, and keep in subjection the forces of evil that would fain come in like a flood and lead us captive at their will? We answer, *By the power of the risen One, through whole-hearted surrender to the will of God.* It is wonderful what peace is the portion of those whose heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord (Ps.

cxii. 7). In the deep calm of resting in God, the forces of evil seem to be hushed to rest. We say "seem to be." In reality they are not hushed to rest. They are rather overshadowed—held in abeyance—overpowered by *the joy of God!* Thus following Him, and delighting in His ways, our portion is that joy which is strength (Neh. viii. 10). And is it not written, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee"? (Isa. xxv. 3).

I MAY count it humility to think that "God cannot bless my unworthy efforts." But such a thought has no connection whatever with humility. It is born of unbelief. It ever belongs to the unbelieving heart to say, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" True humility ever counts on the Lord. He was one of the truly humble who said, "And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ."

GUIDE ME, O MY SAVIOUR.

WHEN the waves of fierce temptation
O'er my trembling spirit roll,
I will look away to Jesus,
Who will guard and keep my soul.

CHORUS—

Guide me, O my Saviour, guide me,
Though the breakers fierce may roar;
Keep me till I rest with Thee, Lord,
On the bright, eternal shore.

For the world, vain and alluring,
Would entice my soul away
By its syren, gilded pleasures,
From the path of life to stray.

When beyond life's latest tempest
I am anchor'd sure and fast,
In the fadeless light I'll praise Him
That I'm safely home at last.

J. M. L.

THE believer's humility is in proportion to his fruitfulness. The most heavily-laden branches bow the lowest down.

AS you *work* for Christ, see that you *abide* in Christ. The mere activity of service may give a form of godliness without the power.

HOLINESS is higher than righteousness. Holiness may be called *spiritual* perfection, as righteousness is *legal* completeness.


TWO GREAT PURPOSES.

THERE are at least two great purposes for which we are down here—(1) to *increase* the sum-total of human happiness, and (2) to *decrease* the sum-total of human misery. Upon these two “heaps” we are all at work every day, whether we are conscious of it or not. Unconsciously, or forgetfully, we may be adding to the groans of a desolate world, or to the sighs of a sorrowing believer. Yet it is in the power of each follower of Christ to do a great deal and yet make very little effort. A genial and Christ-like disposition—a kindly and unostentatious manner—will scatter sunbeams around our path, and prove a ministry of encouragement and refreshing, whose issues can only be measured by eternity itself! A word fitly spoken may minister Christ. A toss of the head may wound some one who has already enough to bear. A little “dignified stiffness” or so-called “righteous indignation”

may work the deepest purposes of Satan, while a look has been known to win a soul and break a heart! Away with the thought that it is only “platform men” who affect the lives of others. Every believer, no matter how obscure, *has an influence*; and every day that passes, whether he relishes the thought or not, he is helping to mould the destinies of those with whom he comes in contact. How important, then, to see that I am seeking, in however humble a degree, to add to the sum-total of human happiness, and to diminish, in however humble a degree, the sum-total of human misery! There are lonely hearts to cherish—perhaps not so far away as we imagine. And these lonely hearts shall be cherished, and many a burden lightened, and many a heavenly message borne on the silent wings of love, if you only “*let* this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” The Christ-like mind is the true and the only preparation for shedding around us the beams

of heavenly gladness. Wherever you have the Christ-like mind you have the humble mind, that thinks not of self or how self is being treated. Wherever you have the Christ-like mind you have the guilelessness and the simplicity of love, which is far removed from that policy which ever seeks its own. Therefore, let us give heed to the Master's voice, saying, "*Learn of Me*; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. xi. 29). In learning of *Him* and shining for *Him* we shall attract to *Him*, and thus be unto God a "sweet savour of Christ," in them that are saved, and in them that perish" (2 Cor. ii. 15).

SHALL ASCEND TO GOD.

 IF we are "a savour of Christ," the sweet-smelling savour shall ascend to God, no matter how man may misunderstand or reject it. When we bear this in mind it sustains the soul, even when a host of external

circumstances seem to be against us. To serve as serving the Lord Christ—to "endure as seeing Him who is invisible": this is our calling. The restlessness and vain-glory of the flesh is ever hankering after the hum of the multitude's approval. There are those who cannot serve with any measure of joy or liberty unless under the inspiration of an appreciative crowd. But alas for the joy and the liberty that depend on such an inspiration! He who has dealt with God in secret, and found his message and his inspiration *there*, shall be prepared, if need be, to go against both wind and tide. "Not as pleasing men but God," he shall have the calm consciousness that the "savour of Christ" in life and ministry is ascending to the place from whence it came; and that the message of God, whether they hear or whether they forbear, is working out the purposes of His eternal glory.

—♦—
THE secret of the *prayer of faith* is the *life of faith*.

TO MANIFEST MY LOVE.



DARESAY we have all been grieved at times by the lack of love shown to us by our brethren. And perhaps we felt inclined to demand an apology or an explanation. But, so far as I remember, I can recall no text of Scripture that would bear me out in demanding that love should be shown *to me*. You will find any number of texts to show that *I* ought to manifest love. But this is quite a different thing from demanding that love be manifested *toward me*. If we remember this, we do not take it so unkindly when we receive "the cold shoulder." If others fail in their manifestation of love to me, that is *their* matter; and the loss will be *theirs*. My mission is to abide in Jesus' love, and *to shine*—not to regulate my shining by the degree in which I may think my brother's love is shining. As regards the attitude of others towards me, I must make up my mind for *the heritage of suffering*—suffering for righteousness'

sake—suffering "shame for the Name," and persecution for the Word; or, perchance, being buffeted for my faults. When I remember that unto me it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe but to *suffer*, I see things in a new light, and a hundred "*disappointments*" are then seen to be God's *appointments*. As regards *my* attitude towards others, however, I must ever remember that mine is to be the *ministry of love*. Thus seeking, according to my measure, to be a Christ-bearer—bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that His life may appear—I shall prove that it is "more blessed to give than to receive."

—♦—

A DOCTOR was once asked by a patient who had met with a serious accident, "How long shall I have to lie here, doctor?" "Only a day at a time," was the reply. This taught the patient a precious lesson—a lesson we all need to learn. Time is short when faith makes the reckoning "*one day at a time.*"

TRUTH FOR THE TIMES.

WHILE truth is for all time, there are special truths for special times.

Every time has its special need ; and he is a God-sent ambassador who perceives what that need is, and brings forth from the storehouse of truth the message of God to meet the need of His people.

In the time of John the Baptist spiritual famine was reigning in Judea. It was a day of forms and ceremonies—tithing mint and rue—cleansing the outside of the platter. Yet it would seem that the greater the zeal for religious forms and ceremonies the less desire there was after the power of God in the soul. Ceremonies without life—forms without power : such were the characteristics of John the Baptist's day. For that day a special message was needed ; and the man "sent from God" (Jno. i. 6) was the man with a message to meet the need of the time. John the Baptist was none of

your smooth-tongued flatterers, who make a calculation as to what will "go down" with the people, and shape their message accordingly. Withering and unpalatable though his message might be, he did not hesitate to deliver it. His was not a word to please men, but a message to deliver souls. "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance," he said, "and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father" (Matt. iii. 8, 9). Vain their boast that they were children of the true commonwealth, if they were not bringing forth fruit unto God. They might pride themselves in their descent from Abraham, and point to their temple-worship and observance of times and seasons. But where was the fruit? If theirs was not a dead faith it would attest itself by an outward manifestation. That manifestation was wanting. Hence the call to repentance—"Bring forth therefore fruits answerable to amendment of life" (Matt. iii. 8, margin). John virtually said, "It is of no use

to boast of your descent from Abraham and your obedience to the law: what is wanted is *fruit unto God.*"

Apply John's message to the state of things among God's people to-day, and we believe you will find it a message that shall meet the need of the time. We may make high-sounding claims that "we are the people" — we may point to our observance of certain ordinances as a proof that we "have obeyed the commandments of the Lord." But what of *spiritual power*? Perhaps it is at the lowest ebb; and, if we had ears to hear a true John the Baptist, we would hear the startling message from the throne: "*Bring forth fruits meet for repentance.*" What avails the most precise ecclesiastical machinery if it be not throbbing with spiritual power? Heavenly citizenship must ever be attested by a heavenly manner of life. Professed devotion to Christ will count for nothing if there be not a manifestation of the spirit of Christ. We want the departed

power. We want the great element of *reality* in the things of God. We must be done once and for all with the "traffic in unfelt truth." Judging ourselves in the light of the throne, we must step forth into that heritage of power and fruitfulness which is the portion of all who are willing to be "all for Christ."

SEEN AT A DISTANCE.

THERE are certain believers in whose case "distance lends enchantment to the view" when you are forming an estimate of their character. They look best when seen "afar off." If you never saw them except when they are on a platform you would probably retain a very high opinion of their spirituality. But, when you get a nearer view, you find reason to change your mind considerably. Their supposed excellent qualities either disappear rapidly or begin to assume quite a different shape on a close inspection, just as some

work of art at once betrays its coarser fibres when placed under the eye of the microscope. Of such believers it may well be said that the less you know of them the higher you will think of them.

There are other believers, again, with nothing very remarkable in their outward appearance, of whom it may be said that the more you know them the better you like them. A close inspection only reveals virtues which you had not observed at a distance, just as one of nature's flowers will disclose increasing beauty the more minutely you examine it. This will ever be the case with the believer who has habitually to do with an ever-present God. On the other hand, when your favourable estimate of a brother falls to pieces whenever you come to know him, you may be certain that his external appearance of Christianity was simply "a work of art"—bound to be exposed at the first microscopic glance of true spiritual discernment.

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Vol. IX.

REVIVAL OF TRUTH.

DURING the year which is now closing, and for some years past, there has been a steady movement in the direction of a "Revival of Truth." Believers in various places throughout the country, identified with popular systems of religion, are finding out that these popular systems will not stand the test of Scripture. Children of God are having their eyes opened to the truth that Church-fellowship with the unconverted is strictly forbidden by the Scriptures (2 Cor. vi. 14; Eph. v. 11, &c.). They are also discovering that every believer is a priest, and that no man-ordained priest is needed to stand between them and God—to "conduct the worship" or to "administer the

ordinances." Many saints, long held in bondage by traditional customs, are thus rising in obedience to the heavenly call, and coming out of the man-ordered religious confederacies to go forth to the rejected Lord Jesus Christ, "outside the camp." They have found and tasted something of the gathering power of the one great Name. Thus it has come about that here and there, in divers quarters, companies of believers are found gathered to their rejected Lord—believers who but a short time ago were bound hand-and-foot by the grave-clothes of tradition. They are now seeking to honour the Name of the Lord Christ; and, with an open Bible before them, they are striving to walk in the truth, and to keep the ordinances as these have been delivered.

Such a movement must surely delight the hearts of all who, like the apostle, have no greater joy than to know that the saints are walking in the truth (3 Jno. 4). These believers may not as yet have a very comprehensive grasp of what is widely known as "Separation Truth." Their knowledge of the Word may be meagre, and their light may be feeble. But it seems clear to us that they are in "the trend that makes for righteousness." However imperfect their knowledge of the great field of truth, they have gone forth to meet with God in the wilderness. No one, with any discernment of the times, can fail to see that God is moving upon the hearts of His people, and that it is in response to *His* leading that His people are arising "from among the dead," to gather to that Name which is above every name. In this movement we see the undoubted operation of the Spirit of God; for neither the world, the flesh, nor the Devil would inaugurate a movement that

means separation from the ungodly and obedience to that which is written. In the presence of such a movement we are constrained to say, in the words of one when speaking of a former revival—"The ground whereon we stand is holy."

This revival of truth may not have come about exactly in the manner that *we* should have liked. We may not have been the honoured instruments in its promotion. The Lord may in great measure have passed us by in working out His purposes at this time. But what of that? Shall we therefore refuse to rejoice *with God*? Is He not the Sovereign One? Is it not written that "He doth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth," and that "none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" So far as human instrumentality in the present movement is concerned, it would not appear that any special instrumentality has been used. The flesh has been left very little

room to glory. The spirit of God has been at work in the hearts of His people. It is not a revival that has been "got up": it is one that has *come down!*

How are we affected by all this? Are we found rejoicing with Him who "gathereth the outcasts of Israel"? (Isa. lvi. 8). If we are in fellowship with God we shall surely be glad that He is working. Like the burning and shining light of Jno. v. 35, we shall be found rejoicing to hear the Bridegroom's voice (Jno. xii. 28), and rejoicing that others are hearing and responding to the Bridegroom's call.

BEGINS AT THE HEART.

WHenever you see a drawing together of *heart to heart* among believers, you may be sure that the Lord is at work. It is ever *His* way to begin at the heart. *Man's* way is to seek an external unity—to begin at the outside, and demand subjection to certain

forms, which are claimed to be undoubtedly according to the mind of God. But unity has never been attained in this way; and every "reformer" who has arisen, thus professing to have discovered the true secret of Christian unity, has invariably increased the confusion. Why? Because those would-be reformers in the Church have begun at the wrong spot. They have not begun where *God begins*—at *the heart*. Being wrong at the starting point—having failed to begin with God, we need not be surprised that they have not gone on with God. What can avail the most powerful engines of ecclesiastical truth, if hearts are not right with God? And, if the "reformers" professing to produce an external unity have so missed the mind of God as not to begin where *He* begins, we have no reason to believe that they have caught *His* mind in the ecclesiastical movement for which they are contending. We believe they are attempting to establish an impossible religious

system—or, rather, a system which is only possible if saints surrender their consciences to the will of a “central authority.”

One of the evils of a purely ecclesiastical war is seen in this, that men in heart away from God are found contending with all their might for what they term “the truth.” They seem to have been suddenly endued with new life. They become enthusiastic, and even valiant, in the fight. Yet there are undoubted tokens that they are not right in heart with God! Now, what does all this mean? It means that a man out of communion with God can easily enter upon a campaign to get things set outwardly right in the churches. He can display a great amount of zeal and activity in dealing with the alleged “lawlessness” around him. But take him apart, and ask how it fares with his soul in the inner court of heavenly communion, and you at once discover that he does not care about *that* kind of truth!

To enlist such a man in an

ecclesiastical war is simply to blind him to his true condition, and to keep him going about with a lie in his right hand. What cares the great Enemy of souls how zealously you contend for the outward thing, so long as you are indifferent to the great truths of that separation which has to do with *the heart*!

We have no sympathy with those who are opposed to all contending for *Church* truth among the people of God. By all means let the truth—the whole truth—be proclaimed, whether it bear upon us collectively or individually. We certainly believe that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable.” And we cannot see what is to be gained, while we see much to be lost, by suppressing truth pertaining to the gathering together of the people of God. But, while we say this, we are also perfectly clear that if “Separation Truth” is to have free course it must begin where *God begins*—at *the heart*.

AN EASY PATH.

THERE are believers with whom the Christian life, in its outward aspect at least, is a very simple matter. We refer to those who never "trouble themselves" about "Church affairs." Perhaps they have had some little experience of the trials and "afflictions" of assembly life. Or, it may be, they have found out in some way that assembly life has its cares and responsibilities. Wishing to avoid everything that would ruffle the spirit or overtax the patience, they have studied to keep clear of a church-connection that might involve them in any cares and responsibilities. We quite sympathise with their desire to avoid that which might hinder their spiritual growth, and we readily grant that every heaven-taught believer has a natural shrinking from everything that might lead to a strife of tongues. We also admit that many a child of God thus seeking a "land of peace," may be

"of an excellent spirit" — cast in a gentle mould, seeking to breathe the air of heavenly fields and to dwell in the unbroken calm of heavenly communion. Nevertheless, we are bound to say that a "land of peace" may be bought at too dear a price. By a land of peace we mean a church-connection free from all "the trials and vicissitudes of assembly life"—a church-connection in which the peaceful years are unbroken by any sound of conflict, and where "troubles and difficulties" are unknown. Those who have found, or think they have found, such a spot, may congratulate themselves that they have now "found their rest." But, if we are truly seeking to be followers of God and to walk in the truth, our first question will be, "Is this a spot where *God* has found His rest?" Is that particular Church one that is being built upon the New-Testament pattern? Is it a fellowship into which I am convinced *the Lord* has gathered me? These are the points I have to

determine, before asking myself the question, "Will I be comfortable here?"

I may find a so-called church-connection in which I shall find the "comfort" referred to, and an outward stillness unbroken by the slightest sound of conflict. But what if it is *the stillness of death*? What if the uniformity and the calm are occasioned by the operation of a church-government that shuts out the operation of the Spirit of God? It is quite possible to have a form of church-government which leaves no room for God to act, and which secures an unbroken calm by enforcing subjection to laws that were never upon God's Statute-Book! To have a peaceful church-connection at such a price is to have it at too dear a price. Yea, when *the Truth* is the price we are called to pay for a peaceful church-connection, we cannot enter into the compact. We are not at liberty to yield up the truth at any price; for it is written, "Buy the truth, and sell it not" (Prov. xxiii. 23). You

may say, "But I wish to be where my soul shall prosper." To this we reply, Do you mean to say that your soul is bound to prosper in a church-connection opposed to the New-Testament order, while it would suffer through your being in an assembly going on with God and seeking to be fashioned according to the New-Testament pattern? You cannot contend for such a thing for a moment. Your soul-prosperity depends very largely, if not entirely, upon your subjection to *what you know to be the will of God*. The mere experience of feeling comfortable may be altogether deceptive. I may feel comfortable through a lack of power to discern that which should make me uncomfortable. I may feel comfortable because I have habituated myself to a condition of things that is not according to God. I am not called upon to seek a comfortable path. I am called to *do the will of God*. The path of the will of God may entail trial, difficulty, reproach. What then? "Would

we have one sorrow less?" Shall we seek to avoid God's path because we see certain difficulties looming up in the distance? If His path has its trials it has also its comforts and its consolations; and these of a far deeper and more enduring nature than the fancied stillness to be found in that which is not according to God.

NO MAN'S PERMISSION.

“**A**ND you come from ——” we said, addressing one known to some of us as a consistent believer. “Yes,” our brother answered, “I am one of the little assembly gathered to the Name of the Lord there.” “Indeed!” we said, “we were not aware that there was an assembly at that particular spot.” “There is one now,” he replied, “although it is only three weeks old.”

Only three weeks old! We were quite interested in such an “infant church.” We soon learned how the Lord had led

them out to His Name, and we praised God as we beheld the operation of His hand in thus leading out unto Himself.

These believers had been taught by the Lord out of His Word that His people were to come out from the ungodly, and to gather in the one great Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. With the open Bible before them they had found it written that such was the path the Lord would have them to tread. When they reached that point what did they do? They simply set about carrying out what was written. They came together according to the Word, and sought to walk in the light which they had received.

“But,” says some one, “did these believers not *ask liberty* to ‘set up a Table’?” Ask liberty! From whom? Just think of asking liberty from a certain man, or certain men, to do the thing which the Lord has commanded! These believers found it written, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate.” Did they

need some permission from man in order to obey that injunction? "No," you say, "they had only to do with God." And when they found that word which says, "Let us go forth therefore *unto Him* without the camp," did they need any permission from man before they could thus go forth? "No," you again reply; "they had only to do with God." And when they found it written that they that gladly received His word were baptised, and when they heard the command of love in 1 Cor. xi. 24, "This do in remembrance of Me," there was likewise no permission of man needed to enable them to carry out the commandments of the Lord. They proceeded at once to put into practice what they had learned of divine principles.

And how did *we* feel about the matter? We rejoiced. And what did we do with the brother? We gave him the right hand of fellowship, you may be sure, and received Him as becometh saints.

It will be generally admitted

that this is all very simple and very beautiful. Yet there are those who would not recognise such an assembly, and would set it down as a lawless company—unless, indeed, it "repented," and cast in its lot with a certain confederacy of assemblies, promising only to have "fellowship" with the assemblies in that confederacy. That is to say, the young assembly must receive all that the confederacy would receive, and reject all that the confederacy would reject! And, unless such a promise is made, these believers are told that they will not be "recognised." But recognised *by whom*, we ask? Does *the Lord* recognise the assembly in question? Is it in obedience to *His* word and *His* leading that it has arisen? If so, then it can suffer no loss by being refused "recognition" by any confederacy of assemblies. The young assembly can point to the Word for its position, and show that in obedience to the commandments of the Lord it now finds itself in that position.

They have *Scripture* for what they have done. But if they came under an obligation to receive or reject God's saints according to the dictates of a confederacy of assemblies, they would be doing a thing for which they have not the slightest vestige of *Scripture*. No company of believers are at liberty thus to hand over their consciences to the will of a confederacy. "You'll not be recognised," may have a terrifying sound to some. But these words can have no terror to any believers who are seeking to go upon the simple lines of *Scripture*, and to be careful as to this—that they are *recognised by the great Master of Assemblies*. The consciousness of *His* recognition will far outweigh any rejection we may meet with at the hands of brethren who, however well meaning, have yet to learn that the confederacy principle of assemblies is not of God, and simply genders to a yoke of bondage which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear.

WHAT COMMUNION IS.

COMMUNION must not be mistaken for merely "feeling happy." A child of God may feel happy, as it is called, and yet know very little of what communion really is. Communion involves the thought of having something *in common*. To be *at one* with God as to His Son—to rest where God rests—to rejoice where God rejoices: this is communion. You may feel happy in a lively meeting; smooth and peaceful external circumstances may create a kind of joy. Yet you may be far from entering into God's thoughts as to Christ. We want to rise higher than circumstances—higher than meetings—even to the Lord Himself, that we may be of those who can truly say, "*We joy in God.*" It is when we get into fellowship with Him about His Son that we are constrained to say in the voice of holy adoration, "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God!"

SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

IN these days when "knowledge is increased," there is one kind of knowledge which we fear is not much sought after. We refer to *self-knowledge*. It is of the utmost importance that a believer should know himself. Every man has his strong points and his weak points. That is to say, he has elements of character that need to be curbed and held in, while there are elements in which he is weak, and which need to be developed and strengthened. He is a wise man who has devoted some pains to finding out what kind of person he himself is. On the other hand, he who is deficient in self-knowledge is suffering from a neglected education, however oblivious he may be of the fact. His weak points are becoming weaker, and the unduly conspicuous elements of his character are ever becoming more prominent. His unevenness is more intensified to-day than ever; and all for the lack of knowing one

person whom, above all others on earth, he ought to know—namely, *himself!*

NOT A SCRAP.

WE once heard it remarked of a Believers' Meeting, which was held in the interest of a certain church position—"An hour's speaking, and not a scrap for my soul!" This is what it comes to. When truth is held out of proportion, when one side is dwelt upon, and another side neglected, a great dearth sets in. There may be a wonderful handling of truth, and many words of thundering sound. But somehow even *the truth* fails of its purpose. It is truth out of season—truth out of communion—and truth which a spiritual eye would perceive to be *not* the message of God for that time. Alas for the condition of a professed ambassador of Heaven when a humble believer has to say of his ministry: "*An hour's speaking, and not a scrap for my soul!*"

TO OUR READERS.

AT the close of 1894 we have again to express our gratitude to the Giver of all good, that we have been sustained by His grace in another year of this ministry. For whatever tokens He has vouchsafed that His saints have been refreshed through these pages, we praise His Name. While it would not become us to seek to commend this periodical by quoting the words of others in its favour, we may say that we have been encouraged in this work. Unto those who have been bearing us up in the arms of their faith in the year now closing we would say, Continue in prayer, brethren, that the Lord may be pleased to guide and own this ministry to the praise of His glory and the blessing of His people.

TO SUBSCRIBERS.

WHILE we do not believe in pushing upon believers a periodical which they do not want, we certainly believe in bringing before the saints a periodical which, after perusal, they *may* wish to take regularly. With this object in view, we have to say to all who are in sympathy with the aims of this Paper that we are prepared to send free packets of back-numbers to any address. While we rejoice to know of what is already being done by *Treasury* subscribers, we believe our circulation might be largely increased if in each local centre there was one sympathetic and energetic brother who would *make a point* of bringing this Paper before the saints, and enrolling subscribers.

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