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True Christian Character

"And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power." - Eph. 1:19.

THE Scriptures in a general way represent the Christian religion under three different classifications. First, as *a principle* it is called *Faith*; and this faith is extolled as the essential thing for salvation. "By grace are ye saved through faith"; we "walk by faith"; and "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." - Eph. 2:8; 2 Cor. 5:7; 1 John 5:4.

Second, as *a sentiment*, or emotional reaction to the revelation we are given of God, it is styled *Love*. Jesus taught that love to God and man was to be one of the very distinctive features of Christian deportment.- God must be loved with all the heart, mind, soul, and strength, and the neighbor must be loved as oneself. The Apostles in their various epistles likewise represent such love to be the very essence of the Gospel of Christ, and the outstanding evidence. of Christian character. "The end of the commandment," says Paul, "is love out of a pure heart." And to this Apostle, the greatest thing in the world is love. "And now abideth faith, hope, love, but the greatest of these is love," aside from which all other virtues are worthless. John likewise puts the emphasis on this quality of character, the possession *or* absence of which will determine the standing of the individual. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in Him." "If we love one another, God dwelleth *in* us, and His love is perfected in us."-1 John 4:16, 12; 1 Cor. 13:13.

Third, as *a law* or rule of life the Bible defines true, Christian character as sincere *obedience to the will of God*. Christ is the "Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." Again we read, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." "Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." - John 14:21.

But in the general teaching of the Word of God all three of these aspects are united' and beautifully blended. Thus the Apostles Paul and Peter could say that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"; therefore "denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts" we should "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world," occupied with "whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report" and adding to our faith "fortitude, knowledge, self control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, love." All of these characteristics are embraced in the fundamental principle, the devotional response, and the *law* of the Spirit under which new creatures in, Christ attain His image and likeness.

Looking unto Jesus

In a very concise way we believe the foregoing-sets forth the facts of Christian experience and character. And we understand that the complete supremacy of our entire being, all *its* interests, and *all* its possibilities of responding to God's power are involved in this. It is not the external conduct alone that concerns' the spiritual man, but the principles from which he acts, the motives that govern him, and the fervency of the love of God which he must find unmistakably shed abroad in his heart. When these aforementioned things become facts in the character, the Christian will find himself possessed of a spiritual power pervading his being-the evidence that He who raised Christ from the dead is now raising him up also into newness of life. Living thus with Christ within, he will be able to bear with equanimity the changes, trials, and perplexities of earth, and with confidence be able to say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me," "according to the might of His power which He wrought in Christ.

The important question is, How may we receive these blessings into our lives? How may we attain these qualities, and show forth the loveliness of the Christ-like character-shining as lights in the world?

Let us go to the perfect pattern-"looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith." In Him we see all the virtues exhibited which we desire to practise, all the love and obedience which gratitude constrains us to have wrought out in our own lives. In Him we find such a richness of character, that our receptive hearts are made to yearn for likeness to Him. "In the dignity, and the sweetness which characterize Him, how strongly do we feel that there is much more than a display of external qualities, conformity to a prescribed rule, and graceful propriety of outward demeanor. Nothing is more striking than the evident connection of everything which He said and did with something internal. The sentiment and disposition which reign within, are constantly visible through His exterior-deportment; and we regard His words and deeds less as distinct outward things, than as expressions or representations of character. In contemplating the life of Jesus, we find ourselves perpetually looking beyond His mere actions, and fixing our thoughts on the qualities which they indicate. His life is but the expressive countenance of His soul. We feel, that, though in the midst of present things, He is led by principles, wrapt in thoughts, pervaded by sentiments, which are above earth, unearthly; that He is walking in communion with another sphere; and that the objects around Him are matters of interest to Him, no further than as they afford materials for the exercise of His benevolence, and opportunities for doing His Father's will."

This, then, is the example set before us as we look unto Jesus. This is the model of true Christian character we are to seek to pattern ourselves by. And when we can be imbued with this same spirit of "God first in all our thoughts," when we become possessed of the same potent inward sentiments of heart devotion to God, so that all -our words, actions, and life shall be of the same spontaneous expression of this "mind of Christ," then we will have attained a manifest degree of His character. We will be showing forth that fruitage of the Spirit which will bear testimony that we are habitually, "looking unto Jesus," and that His purity, His devotion, His peace,- His delight in the Father's will have been imparted to us and display themselves in the manner and conduct of life.

More Likeness to Thee O Christ

To attain and perfect this character, we have learned from the Word, is to be the real objective and business of life. Though the Christian life must be recognized as embracing many features, it must never be forgotten that in the last analysis there is but one real purpose before the individual, namely his own personal crystallization of character, in likeness to that of Jesus Christ. In the wisdom of God a number of things are made contributory to this end—the preaching of the Gospel to others as time and opportunity may permit, and the laying down of one's life for the brethren in whatever manner the Lord's providences may indicate. But with Paul, we too may well be exercised in mind to be fully assured that after having preached to others, we ourselves shall not be castaways. The great fact must never be lost sight of, that what God will look for in us when all of life is over, and its opportunities for attainment have all passed away, will simply be, the image of His own dear Son.

In all that we are privileged to learn, then, as the light of truth shines on our pathway, in all that we think; and feel, and do, there must be a constant reference to this great end. Whatever will serve to forward this Divine purpose, we must learn to cherish and meditate upon. Whatever would in any way hinder this, or in any manner operate injuriously upon a character transformation that God has purposely determined shall be built up or destroyed by so small a thing as good or evil thought, we must learn to discountenance and positively shun. All that would give a wrong bias to passions and appetites, or make provision for our predisposition to questionable inclinations toward indulging these, must be judged as contrary to the mind that was in Christ Jesus. "Whatsoever ye do," the Scriptures teach, "do all to the glory of God." Our attitude toward others, our opinion of ourselves, our use of time and means, eating and drinking, everything, is to be judged before the example furnished us by the life of Jesus.

Surely, then, nothing is of so great importance as true Christian character, and to attain it, is the greatest of all objectives. Whatever else may be done, nothing has really been done, if so be that Christ has not been formed in us, if it cannot be said of us because of our likeness to Him that we are "unto God a sweet savor of Christ" (2 Cor. 2:15), because in heart and life we are constantly reflecting the same love and devotion exemplified in Jesus.

Established, Strengthened, Settled

"By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be," is the promise we delight to sing when "psalms and hymns and spiritual - songs" seem to best express our deepest longings. And it is by looking to Jesus as the embodiment of all that pleases the Father, that we are filled with - the desire to experience all the possible reproduction of His life in ours, that God has promised. But how little of this reproduction or manifestation of Christ in us there would be, if it were not for the fact that He Himself has taken up His abode in our hearts' for the very purpose of making us like Himself. O how impossible such a transformation, unless He undertake it for us! Since it is a work which cannot be done in a short time, or by the spasmodic excitement of desire and feeling so characteristic of most of us, how necessary it is that we be found constantly constraining Him to abide with us and in us, assuring Him by the fervency of our entreaty that we have learned so well that "unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it."

It is only by a surrender of our whole being, and of our entire life to Him, that we could ever hope to awake, satisfied with His likeness. It is therefore imperative that we learn just what it means to acknowledge that we are not our own, and to learn to live in the moment-by-moment realization that mind and heart and tongue, and all the powers of our being are wholly His. And after all, this alone is consecration-the surrender of the whole man and the entire life to the will of God, in faith, in unadulterated affection, and in action-the life of action revealed in the example of Jesus. "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." (1 John 2:6.) Keeping step with Jesus will mean our gaining more and more of His devout and humble temper of mind, more of the deep spirituality of His affections, more of the purity and loveliness of His daily life. Anything less than this, any partial, external conformity to a rule of "what would Jesus do" is wholly insufficient. It is only from His place of residence within the heart's deep affections that He can work upon and mold us into true Christian characters. Only then can we really experience the peace and joy which He has assured us may be ours, and which He has also taught us can be known in experience only by those who are daily seeking to be conformed to the Divine will.

This will mean on our part a moment-by-moment appropriation of the strength imparted to us by "looking unto Jesus" as the full and complete provision for all our needs. It will mean "always rejoicing" in our acceptance in the Beloved One, and in His all-sufficient grace for every time of need. It will also mean a constant self-examination, a judging of oneself that will embrace alike the conduct of our external life and the habitual tenor of our inward condition of mind. As a result we will realize that sensitiveness toward sin which will keep our conscience awake and functioning in a faithful use of the "sword of the Spirit, the Word of God." It will cause us to survey the habitual trend of our thoughts, the tempers we sustain in our deportment toward others, the examination of our habits of conversation, the impartial consideration of what motives may be guiding us in our decisions. We will be exercised to question the probable good or bad effect of our example upon others, the good to edification, or the undermining influences for evil, flowing out from our contact with others. Are they left by us with "roots of bitterness" ready to grow into words and actions whereby many may be defiled, or have we left them seeing "no man but Jesus only"? We *must* be habitually measuring our ways by the life of Him who is "our life" and our example, if we would obey the laws of holy living, of true Christian character prescribed for us in the Gospel and life of Jesus.

Not as Though We had yet Attained

'Be on your guard, therefore, from the first, against setting your mark too low. Do not allow yourself to be persuaded that anything less is religion [true Christian character] or will answer for you, than its complete and highest measure. Remember that these things must be 'in you and abound.' The higher you aim, the higher you will reach; but if you are content with a low aim, you will forever fall short. The Scriptural word is *perfection*. Strive after that. Never be satisfied while short of it, and then you will always be improving. [For God can work in, us only as we continue to recognize the need, and the possibilities of His creative power in us.] But if you set *yourself* some definite measure of goodness, if you prescribe to yourself some limit in devotion and love, you will by and by fancy you- have reached it, and thus remain stationary in a condition far *below* what you might have attained. Remember always that you are capable of being more devout, more charitable, more humble, more devoted and earnest in doing good, better acquainted with religious truth; and that, as it is impossible there should be any period to the progress of the human soul, so it 'is impossible that the endeavors of the soul should be too exalted. It is because men do not think this, or do not practically apply it, that so many even of those who intend to

govern themselves by religious motives, remain so lamentably deficient in excellence. They adopt a low or a partial standard and strive after it sluggishly, and thus come to a period in religion before they arrive at the close of life. Happy they, who are so filled with longings after spiritual good, that they go on improving to the end of their days."

True Christian character is not a theory, it is not a dogma, it is not a theme around which we array our arguments, but it is an experience, an inheritance, a personal realization of relationship to God, and an individual consciousness within the heart, that God's creative, transforming, purifying, peace-giving, and holiness-producing work, is definitely going on in the life. It is a life so under the control of the Spirit of God, that the one possessing it can say with Paul, "I live, yet not I, but Christ-liveth in me." How much have we proved, any of us, the resources that lie within our reach in that mighty indwelling? How much are we experiencing in the fibers of our being, the penetrating influences actively at work in the Christian character? Do our fellows know that we "have been with Jesus" ? Is our present character attainment mostly put on from without, or a living evidence of God's work within? Are we properly receiving and reflecting the life of Christ, so that there shines from us a heartiness, an animation, a simple-hearted eagerness which operates so irresistibly in bearing down on opposition and disarming prejudice, that other honest, inquiring hearts can affirm as they behold our joy and blessing: "This is reality -- this is no empty hallucination -- this is of God." Is this asking too much of us in our weakness? -- Yes indeed in our weakness, but not when His strength is made perfect in our weakness. God's way is to make the Christian religion infectious, to produce results in us whereby others will be led into the same experience of His grace. As "the salt of the earth" are we making others thirsty for more of Jesus, and for more of His character-likeness?

A Good Work Begun and Completed

For of this I am confident, that He who has begun a good work within you will go on to perfect it in preparation for the day of Jesus Christ . - Phil. 1:6 Weymouth.

HOLINESS IS moral purity; and it is written that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14); and again, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matt. 5:8.) Purity of heart signifies purity of the will or intention, the mainspring of life. To be perfectly holy or pure in every sense of the word would signify absolute perfection, which no man can now claim; but those who by faith are clothed with the righteousness of Christ are now reckoned "holy and acceptable unto God" (Rom. 12:1), the righteousness of Christ being imputed to them by faith. These, whose hearts are fully consecrated and loyal to the Lord, are "the pure in heart," whose privilege it is to see God.

While the heart of every accepted child of God must be pure from the very beginning of his Christian life (otherwise he is not accepted or owned as a child), yet as the Apostle suggests (2 Cor. 7:1), there must be from that time onward a gradual work of perfecting holiness in the fear (filial fear) of God; that' is (being graciously reckoned of God as holy through Christ, from the hour of our entire consecration to His will, because our will and effort are to be so), we are to go on striving daily against our natural imperfections, and endeavoring as nearly as possible to make the reckoned holiness more and more actual. Thus we should continue- to grow in grace and in the actual likeness of the Lord.

Some Christians make the very serious mistake of supposing that they, as merely passive subjects, may receive instantaneously the blessing of holiness as a mark of God's special favor. But such a conception is very far from the Apostle's idea, as expressed above. He presents the attainment of holiness as a life work, and the individual Christian as the active, and not as the passive, agent in accomplishing it. From the standpoint of a reckoned holiness, he is to go on day after day, and year after year, in the work of actual cleansing of himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit-of person and of mind- perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord."

In the exceeding great and precious promises we have abundant incentives to ' strive daily to perfect holiness; but these must be held before the mind that they be not crowded into the background by the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of its pursuits. The pure in heart-whose will is only to serve and please Him- do see God by faith and with the eyes of their understanding. They see Him in His Word and His Plan, as He graciously opens it up to their minds as meat in due season; they see Him in His mighty works-of creation, and of redemption and salvation; they see Him in nature, whose open book is ever eloquent in His praise to those who have eyes to see; by faith they see Him in the secret closet communions when there is no eye to see and no ear to hear but God's, where the heart may-freely unburden itself of its load and lay down its cares and feel that unutterable sense of Divine sympathy and love which only those can understand who have taken the Lord as their personal, friend and counselor. They see. Him, too, in His providences; for, having entered into their closets and shut to the door and prayed to their Father in secret, the open reward of His sure and safe leading always follows, according to His promise.

How blessed it is thus to see God -- to realize His presence and power and His abiding favor in all the vicissitudes of life; to watch Him and see how, as the days and years go by, He makes all things work together for good to them that love Him, and to see also, from the grand standpoint of

observation He gives us, how glorious a destiny He has carved out for us and for all the willing and obedient subjects of His authority.

If we cultivate acquaintance with God and with our Lord Jesus, communing with them through the Divine Word and prayer, almost unconsciously to ourselves the work of perfecting holiness progresses. To be thus in communion with them is to, receive more and more of their mind and disposition. And having the mind of God thus in us, as the controlling principle of our actions, to what purification of the flesh it will also lead!

It begins at once to clean up the whole man. Old unclean, as well as sinful, habits are put away unseemly conversation is not permitted to pass the door of the lips, or if, by force of old habit, slips of this kind occur, they are promptly repented of and rectified; and unholy thoughts are not entertained. The same spirit of holiness prompts also to the cleansing and purifying of the body, the clothing, the home, and all with which we have to do; for the outward man must be in conformity with the pure heart within, and with the heavenly Guests that make their abode with us. - John 14:23.

It is quite possible, however, that the more we succeed in purifying ourselves of the old carnal nature, the more we may realize the imperfections that still remain; for the purifying process is also an educating one: we learn to appreciate and admire purity,--holiness, the more thoroughly we assimilate it, until "the beauty of holiness" becomes the most desirable of all possessions, that which is lacking of its glory is our deepest concern, and the great work of perfecting holiness becomes the chief business of life. Let the good work go on, dearly beloved, and, in the end, the Lord Himself shall be your exceeding great reward.

Accounted Worthy of the Kingdom of God

*"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth: so that we ourselves glory **in** you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure; which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye, may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer." - 2 Thess. 1:3-5.*

GOD'S great accounting commands the utmost interest of all the faithful. Those most specially favored in this dispensation as to come under His dealing as disciples of Christ are profoundly interested in the fact that God has a definite method by which He is going to assign them high stations and account them worthy to be joint-heirs with His blessed Son in the Kingdom of God.

"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord," says one Apostle, thus positively identifying a knowledge of God with the receiving of His grace and peace, and indicating that that knowledge is essential in connection with their being counted worthy of the glorious goal. But the knowledge of God and acquaintance with Him and His purposes is due only to those able and anxious to cooperate with Him in their preparation and development. And to such the Master said, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith." All such learn that God does not display His plans to merely satisfy curiosity. There must be first of all a full heart reception of the great truth concerning the promised redemption through the precious blood of Christ, and an obedient heart that will express itself in full surrender to the will of God in Christ. In other words, there must be the earnest inquiry arising from a heart grateful for the promise of life through the Redeemer—"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Evidently such and such only are worthy to know, and such only ever really come to see in the sense of a heart appreciation and understanding of the deep things of God, otherwise designated by Jesus, "the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven." Such are the called according to the Divine purpose, who are to be disciplined and educated under the influence of the Spirit and the truth. Such are the righteous for whom the light (truth) is sown. And such was the Lord's attitude when He said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." He was meek and lowly of heart and ever ready to render implicit obedience to the will of God; and it is to those who are similarly meek that He was sent to preach the Good Tidings in harmony with the promise, "The meek will He guide in judgment and the meek will He teach His way." Whoever has this evidence of worthiness, this acquaintance with the truth and with God, let him rejoice in his privilege and by his life-work and devotion to God, manifest his continued worthiness.

Crucial Tests to Prove God's People

Indeed this worthiness is inquired for not only at the beginning, but all along the path of light; and if one is not found worthy through the various searching tests that are applied from time to time, he cannot proceed in the path of light and fellowship with his Master. If any find on careful examination that he has been unfaithful to his Lord, unless such an one rouse himself to greater diligence and watchfulness, the light that is already in him will become darkness. To realize the glorious hope that once inspired our hearts slipping away and the truth whereon we built that sacred hope beginning to seem like an old song or an idle tale, or as relics of the past, to be displaced at any time by any plausible subterfuge of error which our wily adversary may be pleased

to lead us into as advanced Divine truth, should be sufficient to arouse us to a realization of the fact that we are going into darkness-darkness which will only become the more intense as we slip and slide along the backward track.

Our possession of this heart knowledge and acquaintance with God has thus far proved us meek enough to renounce various errors of belief and unbecoming traits of conduct, and to loyally espouse the cause of our Master at the cost of reproach and earthly loss, looking forward to the great joy of the Master's ultimate approval, and seeing by faith those gracious blessings in store for those who are faithful unto the end. But the Apostle enjoins, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall"; for subtle and sharp will be those tests applied to prove our continued faithfulness. The world, the flesh, and the Evil One all conspire to allure and ensnare the overcomers. Allurements come from the world through various agencies and objects about us. Attempts will be made to encroach upon the clearly defined lines which we have drawn between ourselves and the world. Then the flesh is subject to growing weary in fighting the good fight of faith, weary of the self-denying, sacrificing, and daily cross-bearing life. If we turn aside for a moment to ponder or to question why our lot and experiences are what they are, the Adversary is quick to see an opportunity and will cunningly devise some test specially suited to our peculiar condition of mind, and the crisis comes in our experience, the results of which will prove the exact strength of our devotion to God and His truth. These crucial tests God permits and He desires to have come upon us in order that we may be thoroughly tried and proved either worthy or unworthy of the great reward He has in keeping for those who remain faithful "unto death. Long years ago our dear Brother Russell wrote the following lines which are still full of solemn meaning to those who are seeking first the Kingdom of Heaven

Every Soul Knoweth its Own Burdens

"You know that you have weaknesses; special points upon which you are aware by past experience you are specially liable to fail, under trial and temptation. It may be the pride of life and love of the world, which seem to draw your feet from the narrow way oftenest. It may be that business has such an attraction to you that you have at times been almost swallowed up with its ambitions and cares, and that its demands upon your time and talent have been for a season almost overwhelming, and that you found your appetite for spiritual things forestalled by the earthly, and your consecrated time absorbed in labor for the meat that perisheth.

"Or it may be that your special weakness is a love of approbation, which absorbs consecrated time in making your person, your home, and your family charming, as well as hinders you from engaging in service for the Lord and your fellow-saints in carrying them spiritual food, lest some should think you 'peculiar,' and 'strange,' and should 'cut' your acquaintance.

"Or you may have an uncongenial family relationship and opposition to study and Christian growth from that quarter.

"Or, it may be that seeming duties and necessities in your circumstances demand your time and keep you as they did Martha from communing with the Master, and from engaging in and enjoying the higher and grander privilege of breaking to others spiritual food. No matter in which particular direction your besetment lies, rest assured that yours is not an exceptional case. Every soul knoweth its own burdens, and before each one Satan is permitted to lay obstacles and hindrances in order that each may be tried and thus have opportunity of *overcoming* and proving

his love and appreciation of the prize and of the Lord's approval, by faithfulness under adverse conditions.

Break the Bondage at any Cost

"What is your duty? What shall you do? Give up, because the way is not smooth? Why certainly you did not expect to be classed an 'overcomer' without having something opposing you to overcome. No, you knew well when you started, that the Master and forerunner on this way, said: 'Strait [difficult] is the gate and narrow is the way.' You remember He said that every follower in His footsteps must expect to endure the crossing of his human will and interest all through the 'way.' You remember how strongly He put it that none might deceive themselves, when He said, 'If any man come to Me, and hate not [love not less] his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.' - Luke 14:26, 27.

"And do you not know that your temptation on these weak points of your besetment is daily becoming more absorbing, more difficult to resist? Do you not see that we are living in the 'evil day' which is evil or full of special danger, because of its increase of temptation on, every point of weakness to every member of the Body? that the besetments of the world, the flesh and the Devil are more subtle and deceptive and more powerful than ever before? Yes, you realize it. To be forewarned is useless unless it leads us to action, that we may be forearmed and protected. What are you going to do about it? We answer, Break the bondage at any cost; though it be dear to your heart as your eye or hand-pluck it out, cut it off, cast it from you. Make thorough work of it, strangle it, overcome your besetments at once and thoroughly. Lay aside every weight and hindrance which impedes your growth in grace, which hinders your sacrifice, the fulfillment of your covenant in the service of the truth, that you may patiently run the race set before you. You must either overcome these besetments by changing your course and cutting them off, or they will overcome you, and bring you more and more under their control. Hence the Apostle's advice, Make straight paths for your feet. Remove from your pathway at once every hindrance and stumbling-block which the Adversary may put in your way, and keep right on, running for the prize of the high calling and keeping your eye on Jesus and Paul as examples of endurance and overcoming. They endured the temptation, but speedily ended' it by promptly casting it from them. We must do likewise; to parley with besetments is to fail; to endeavor to carry them along on the way is impossible -the way is too narrow. We must choose at once whether we will be turned aside by circumstances and obstructions, or whether we will turn them aside and follow on to the end of the way-to glory, honor and immortality."

No Good Thing Withheld

How refreshing in the midst of the battle of life, in the struggle of the narrow way, are the words, "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk up rightly." It is one of those promises therefore that guarantees to the faithful child of God that all that comes to him in life is "good"; on the grounds of course if accepted in faith and in the spirit intended. To realize that absolutely all things and all experiences that come to us are of the class called "good" requires a strong faith and much spiritual discernment. Reference is made here to the edifying and illuminating statement of another bearing upon this thought:

"Some statements of the Bible seem as startling and impossible as the dream of the philosopher's stone. Surely, it is as easy to turn all things into gold as to verify the promise that 'no good thing will God withhold from them that walk uprightly.' Where are the people who possess all good things? Not the adherents of any favored sect, for then all controversy would cease, and faith give place to sight. Shall we take refuge in the limitation of the promise to those who walk uprightly, and reply that until we find persons who never waver, stoop, or stumble, it cannot be said the promise has failed? But it is addressed to fallible mortals, and by the upright must be meant those who, in spite of failing, honestly and habitually try to be right with God. Do persons enjoy all things generally regarded as good? This is not the teaching of the Bible. It is unfair to interpret any book or document by the meaning we choose to place on some sentence opposed to the general tenor of it. The Bible in all its teachings and narratives shows that 'many are the afflictions of the righteous.' No one is invited to be a Christian by the bribe of receiving all things the world accounts 'good.'

Training Time of Eternity

"What then, is the meaning of the promise? That is good which is for our complete and lasting advantage. A bed in a garden may be cultivated, a wing of a house decorated, a member, of the body cared for so as to entail injury on the whole. It would not, therefore be a good thing. A child may be gratified by a berry or a toy, which, may prove a fatal injury. Bitter medicine, a 'painful operation, a difficult task, though regarded by the child as very evil, may be good things, no wise parent would withhold. As the physical nature is developed by exercise, and the mental by education, so the spiritual by the discipline of trial. If thus, we are trained to the conquest of self-will, to filial submission, and confidence toward God, it is a good thing of supreme value.

"The present life is the childhood, the training time of eternity. If, then, a transitory grief helps to fit us for everlasting bliss, it must be good, and not evil. But who can tell what is thus good? We feel present pain and pleasure, but cannot see their spiritual results. It is not necessary. It is not possible that we should. God does, and He has the power so to overrule all things as to secure the desired end. We do not argue the matter with unbelievers. . They point to our poverty, sickness, disappointments, desires unsatisfied, prayers apparently refused; and in the faith God's Word warrants and His Spirit produces, we reply with Faber:

"'Ills that God blesses are my good
All unblessed good is ill
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be His dear will.'

"This is the alchemy that turns sorrow into joy, sickness into health, death into life. It is illustrated in the history of God's children. We see it in the case of Joseph, Moses, David, and Asaph. (Psa. 73.) St. Paul learned to glory in the thorn in the flesh.

"Things are not what they seem. God alone perceives their true value and lasting results. He is infinitely wise, and cannot err; infinitely strong, and cannot fail; infinitely kind, and cannot neglect. He will keep back nothing that is good, nor give us what would injure. This is our culture time.

"That is best which promotes the fruitfulness in which God delights, and which will be our own true glory by His grace. Christians must not judge of things as men do whose possessions and hopes are limited by the present. We are pilgrims, and must estimate circumstances in view of

their influence, not so much as making us comfortable on our way as in helping us home. Nobler aims involve severer toil; fiercer conflicts, costlier sacrifices. If we seek a nobler goal, let us not envy others their smoother path. If we would win a richer prize, we must fight a sterner battle. If we would attain a loftier height, we must clamber up sharper crags."

Seeking His Precious Jewels

When it is remembered that this dispensation has been intended for the selection and polishing of what is designated the Lord's "jewels, those who are to occupy high stations of honor in the Kingdom, then the question of present sufferings, trials, and disciplines in preparation for Kingdom honors, become luminous. The Lord at this time is seeking His precious jewels, and from outward appearances many are what might be called diamonds in the rough. The real diamond suggests the thought of a noble, loyal, faithful character, devoted and uncompromising in its allegiance to God. In some cases the circumstances of life have deprived such of education or the advantages of intellectual culture, and have left them only sufficient means for the barest necessities of life. But this matters not, God's eye is on them: it is the holy character and likeness of Christ that He is looking for, and in due time when that character is sufficiently developed, confirmed, tested and proved worthy. of exaltation, He can and will add to it all the glories of knowledge and wisdom as well as grace and beauty.

But first He will subject it to all the necessary tests. If it is a genuine diamond it will receive and it will also transmit to others the light of Divine truth. Nothing so gloriously reflects the truth as the worthy character of the true and faithful saint of God.

One of the important methods of testing a diamond is to put it under pressure. If it is a real diamond, it will stand the strain, inasmuch as the diamond is the hardest substance known; but if it is not possessed of the real diamond qualities it will go to pieces and thus prove itself spurious. ' So our Heavenly Father allows us to come under the constant pressure of years of toil and care and self-sacrifice to determine how we will endure and blessed is that diamond-proved character that endures to the end.

Enduring Severest Pressure

Again, crucial tests come in the way of trials of faith that the Lord's people are called upon to prove themselves whether they be in the faith when some subtle errors are presented to them as advanced truth. But as the Master declared, the true disciple knows the voice of the Good Shepherd and will not be easily beguiled. We recall inspired counsel, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word it is because there is no light in them." To the law and to the testimony then we go, and relying implicitly upon them as the infallible teaching of the Spirit of God, we are enabled to arrive at definite, clear, and positive doctrines. So far as all the essential truths are concerned, the devout follower of Christ is, not left in doubt as to what is sound doctrine, but is enabled to give a solid, Scriptural reason for the hope that is in him, on which hope he dares implicitly to rest his faith and with humble boldness to successfully withstand the assaults of error. But truly such must be dead to selfish ambition and fully devoted to the will of God in order to experience such providential protection and care.

Let us, dearly beloved in Christ, as we realize that thus far God has counted us worthy to be taken into His confidence and to be admitted into that position of nearness to Him and closeness of

fellowship in the things of the Spirit and of our future blessed heritage, prove our worthiness to be continued in the enjoyment of these wondrous things, by faithful obedience and fidelity to Him and His holy will. Let us not undervalue our great privilege of being accounted worthy to suffer some reproach and some hardness and some tribulation as good soldiers of Jesus Christ; "let us prove ourselves jewels of the, rarest value, diamonds indeed, heartily receiving and beautifully transmitting to others the light of truth," and in full resignation, enduring the severest pressure that God may permit to come upon us, for if faithful in these small things we shall in due time be accounted worthy of that glorious exaltation with Christ in power and great glory. Let it not be said of us as of some who have only a little good earth on the surface of their hearts, while the heart itself is really hard and stony. Contrariwise, may the good seed of Divine truth sink down and take deep root and then may it branch out in the life and bear its abundant fruitage to the Master's glory. So shall we be accounted worthy to see the King in His beauty and to live and reign with Him as His beloved Bride and Joint-heir. And when to the worthy Lamb that was slain the voices of the multitude ascribe blessing and honor and glory and power, they will also exclaim, "Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to Him for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready."

Half Hour Meditations on Romans

No. 39

"Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you; for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." - Isa 51:2.

WHAT, then, shall we say, (we Israelites), that Abraham our forefather bath found, *according to the flesh*? Not righteousness, certainly, for *that* he found by faith. Nor was his the faith of a circumcised man, for it was several years previous to his circumcision that his faith was reckoned to him for righteousness. Moreover it is not "according to the flesh" that he was made heir of the world. The inheritance of the world is not his as the reward of merit -because of his having performed every requirement of God's righteous law-for this he did not do. It is his because he rested in the promise, because he relied on, trusted in, the unfailing word of God.

Such, we have seen, has been the substance of the Apostle's argument in the first 16 verses of chapter 4 of our Epistle. But unbelief in mind and heart is difficult to conquer; prejudice is not easily disarmed and routed. And notwithstanding the Apostle's cogent reasoning, a Jewish opponent would yet be apt to debate the matter further. Such an one might insist: "What you say, Paul, is undoubtedly true, *so far as it goes*. But the inheritance, as you yourself have shown, and as I am glad to concede, is really centered not so much in Abraham himself, illustrious father of our nation though he is, but in his seed, and especially in his Messianic Seed, that great One for whom our nation yet waits with longing expectation. And this Messianic Seed was certainly promised to be a Son of David *according to the flesh*, for in Psa. 132:11 it is written: 'Jehovah hath sworn unto David in truth; He will not turn from it; *Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.*' And David, in his turn, was a descendant of Abraham *according to the flesh*. Now there could have been no David and consequently there could be no Messianic Seed unless there had first been an Isaac. And Isaac was born to Abraham in the way of natural, physical, generation. Is it not apparent, therefore, that instead of finding nothing according to the flesh, as you would have us believe, Abraham really found a very great deal? For he found Isaac thus and without Isaac it is clear that the whole plan, and purpose of God would have been frustrated." If possessed of a sufficiency of this world's polish and refinement such an opponent might hesitate to utter the rest of his thoughts, but if not he would add: "And we, Jews, are the descendants of Isaac-God's chosen people. Surely there must be something wrong with your gospel, Paul,

reducing us, as it does, to the level of Gentile dogs in the sight of God." A mind as familiar as was St. Paul's with the secret thoughts of the Israelitish heart, could not, as an able writer has observed, "neglect this important side of the question." On the contrary, in the verses we now consider (Romans 4:17-22), he enters into this new subject as boldly as into the two preceding, and sapping the last root of Jewish prejudice by Scripture, he demonstrates that the birth of Isaac, no less than the grace of justification and the promise of the inheritance, was the effect of faith.

The Birth of Isaac was "a Birth from the Dead"

Let us follow the Apostle as he traces in the Old Testament narrative the evidence that Isaac's birth, natural though it was, was yet a miracle vouchsafed to living faith-that it might well be described as a "birth from the dead." First he will appeal to Scripture in support of his previous assertion that Abraham

is the "father," not of believing Jews only, but also of believing Gentiles. And will the Scriptures support his argument? Will the law again be found to "witness" to his message? It is even so. The glorious Gospel preached beforehand to Abraham-"In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Gal. 3:8)-lies hidden in the very name of the Patriarch. For the name "*Abraham*" means "*Father of a great multitude.*" How, then, had he come to receive this name? Was it always his? No, indeed! It was given him in connection with the confirmation of God's promise as we read: "Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham, *for a father of many nations have I made thee.*" - *Gen. 17:5.*

But there is in, this promise an expression which seems to be belied by the facts of the case. How could God say, "*I have made thee a father of many nations,*" when as a matter of fact Abraham was still childless? Is there not some error in the translation here? Should not the record read: "*I will make thee a father of many nations*"?

Such a conclusion indeed would necessarily be ours had the promise proceeded from the mouth of any other than the great Jehovah. But the form this language takes only reveals His grandeur, for, as the Apostle goes on to say, He is that God "Who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." (Ver. 17.) In His sight a thousand years are but as a day, and a day as a thousand years. In His sight, therefore, all generations are included in one view-the dead as though they still lived; the unborn as though they already existed.

Such is the majesty of our God, and it is always appropriate for us to pause in humble adoration when we contemplate it. But the point with which the Apostle is chiefly concerned here is to show that the faith of Abraham corresponded to that majesty. And what an insight his analysis gives us into the essence and quality of Abraham's faith, for it was undoubtedly the two attributes of God the Apostle here mentions -His power to *quicken* ("God who quickeneth the dead"), and His power to *create* ("God who calleth those things which be not as though they were")-on which Abraham's faith fastened in this moment of decision. Quickening power there must needs be if from his own body, now "as good as dead," and in Sarah's old age there should come a son through whom the promise might be fulfilled. "Quickening power, therefore, there will be," 'reasons Abraham, "for God's purpose knows no hindrance. Dead though I and my wife may be as regards our generative faculties, God is He that giveth life to the dead. And though I see them not, yet since it is as much in His power to summon them to appear as it is in mine to summon my servants, and since He has announced His purpose so to do, my faith takes hold on His promise,

and already I rejoice in prospect of my own future life, and in the seed which for multitude He has likened to the starry heavens above my head, and which in His sight are no less real."

Shall not the judge of all the Earth do Right?

It is impossible to meditate long on the life and character of Abraham without being impressed with his greatness, and without realizing that it was the remarkable simplicity and strength of his faith which made him great. We do not wonder, therefore, that in the succeeding verses the Apostle dilates with such evident satisfaction on this, his outstanding characteristic. And believing that it may be profitable for us to do so, we have decided to postpone the consideration of verses 23-25 until our next issue, and to devote the remainder of this "Half Hour" to a brief review of the major incidents of his life.

In one well-known passage Abraham asks the question: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" "But though a question in form, in substance it is an affirmation, Abraham had no doubt—he was sure that the judge, that is, the Ruler, of the whole earth would both do right and get right done at the last. There was nothing else of which he was so sure as of this. The conviction that one God ruled all the world, and that this God was a righteous God who insisted on righteousness in men, was the deepest, the ruling and shaping, conviction of his soul. His religion grew out of it; his character was formed by it; his hopes were based on it. We may take it as the key to his whole nature and history.

Abraham a Man of Faith and Consecration

"The very first thing we hear of him is that in some mysterious way, by a Divine call of which we have no explanation, he had reached this conviction. His father, and his forefathers, had served many and other gods than Jehovah. But Jehovah *called* Abraham, we are told that is, He in some way revealed Himself to him as the only true God, and moved him to respond to that revelation. By an act of devotion difficult for us to adequately estimate, Abraham separated himself at once from the tents and from the idolatry of his fathers and his neighbors, put a mighty river between himself and them, and commenced that long pilgrimage, that long quest after the inheritance promised to him which knew no earthly close.

"Consider, then, for a moment, how great this initial act was. Idolatry, the recognition of many gods, was the prevalent religion, not of his own clan alone, but, so far as he knew,— of the whole world. It was 'in possession of the ground, and pressed upon him with all the power of association and authority.' But at the first instant at which we catch sight of him, Abraham has thrown off this creed or superstition, in defiance of custom and habit. He has released himself from the bondage of early associations, and challenged the whole force of public opinion and authority, in order that he may worship the one God who rules heaven and earth, in order that he may come into close and immediate relation with the Maker and Ruler of all.

"And do we not all know how strong the claims of habit, of general custom, of accepted authority are; how difficult it is to break away from the ruling ideas of the age in which we live? To resist their influence, to swim against the current of received opinion and established authority, on the mere prompting of an inward conviction for which no proof can be adduced, denotes a certain greatness and heroism of character, a strength and independence of mind amounting to originality. A man must stand head and shoulders above his fellows, he must be 'before his time,'

he must habitually live in that which is best and highest in his nature, he must be a bold thinker and a daring reformer, before he can thus oppose himself to the pressure of his age, sever himself from his own past, and commit himself at all risks to the persuasion which has grown up in his own heart, but in no other heart than his.

"In cutting himself loose, then, from the opinions and associations of his youth, from the habit and influence and piety of his age, to sail into an unknown and untried sea of thought and action, Abraham gives us the first proof that he was a man of the noble and heroic type. He was one of the few over whom 'ideas' rule rather than 'interests,' and rule with an irresistible power; a man, who, when convinced of any great truth, would meet it greatly, would dwell on it, and feed on it, and act on it, giving it an undivided sway, and following it whithersoever it might lead, at any cost of toil and sacrifice."

Abraham Wrestles with the Problem: Why does God permit Evil?*

"Nor was it long before his new conviction drew him into intellectual and moral perplexities which called for a new exercise of 'that forecasting fervor which we call Faith. To a man who believes in many gods, whose prerogatives and provinces of action limit each other on every side, the apparently malignant forces of Nature, and the obvious inequalities and wrongs of human life, either present no problem at all or a problem capable of easy solution. For *his* gods are limited in power, and limited in goodness. They cannot do all they wish, and they do not always wish to do that which is right. . . . But when a man came to believe in *one* God as the judge of all the earth, the problem of Providence grew more mysterious than ever, and seemed to be incapable of any reasonable solution. For if there be but one God, and He is at once good and almighty, why does He permit the evils which are alien to His nature, and which it must be in His power to prevent? That is a question which men have never ceased to ask, which many are asking to this day. . . .

* For a helpful treatise on this perplexing problem read chapter VII of "The Divine Plan of the Ages," by C. T. Russell, published by our institute-30 cents postpaid.

"It was this dark problem which threw its shadows across the soul of Abraham. He had been told of the approaching overthrow of the wicked cities of the Plain, cities in which, wicked as they were, he knew there were a few righteous souls. And to him it was nothing short of horrible that God should 'sweep away the righteous with the wicked,' as we may infer from the boldness and the iterations of his, remonstrance with the Divine Ruler of men: 'That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked! That the righteous should be as the wicked, this be far from thee!'. And yet, though God conceded much to him, He did not concede any solution of the problem why the just and the unjust are often overtaken by the same doom, much less of that still deeper problem, why men are so made and so conditioned that they may become wicked much more easily than they become 'righteous. He had to fall back on faith, on his intuitive conviction that the Ruler of all the earth *must* do right; must love righteousness better than any of His creatures love it, must be bent on getting righteousness done in the earth.

"It was this indomitable faith, this reliance on great religious convictions which came to him he knew not how, though he was sure they came from heaven, this refusal to part with them or distrust them, let appearances say what they would, that the real greatness of the man came out, the greatness which has made him the father of the faithful of every age. And in no other way can *we* become great; on no other terms can we be true to our simplest and deepest convictions,

the only convictions which can sustain us in the love and pursuit of that which is right under all the changes and temptations of time. *We*, indeed, may see reasons for the permission of evil, for the existence of pain and sorrow and wrong, which Abraham could not see, since we may regard them - as an inevitable part of the discipline by which we are being raised to our full statute, first, as men, and then, as men in Christ Jesus. We may see that we ought to trust in the perfect goodness of God even when we cannot prove it, just as the artist believes in an ideal beauty which he has never beheld and cannot express, just as the man of science believes in a hypothetical, and reconciling truth which he has not yet demonstrated, amid the failure of many attempts to verify it. But when all is done that reason can do, we, like Abraham, shall have to fall back on the intuitions and inspirations of faith, on the power of convictions which we have found to be true and faithful and life-giving in so far as we have adventured upon them, on those abiding and sustaining presentiments of the heart which no science can preach down and no experience disprove. *We must* believe that there is but one God if the whole world of reasoned thought is not to fall in ruin about us. We must, believe that the judge of all the earth will both do right and get right done, if all the testimonies and prophecies of conscience are not to be belied, and our whole moral life is not to be cast away on the- rocks. And faith is reasonable- when it is based on such supports as these. To believe becomes a duty if reason and conscience and the history of the ages prove it were better we had never been born than born to believe in no god, or in a god who is not good, and cannot make us good.

Abraham Foresees a Golden Age to Come

"Abraham's faith in the justice of God had another result which we must consider if we would know the sort of man he was, and recognize his greatness. Though he entirely believed that the judge 'of all the earth would do right, he could not but observe, as the years went on, that the due reward of men's deeds was often slow in arriving. Though he entirely believed that the Ruler of all mankind would make men righteous, he saw that for the present many remained unrighteous, and, for some inscrutable reason, were permitted to prosper in unrighteousness. As the intuitions and hopes of faith were not fulfilled in the present, instead of doubting truth itself to be a liar, he projected himself into the future and looked for a fulfillment yet to come which should, justify his largest hopes. He was sure that it was the judge of all the earth who had promised him, 'In thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families [that is, nations], of the earth be blessed'; and his faith embraced that promise and rested on it. As yet he could see no such blessing, nor any prospect of it; nevertheless he was persuaded that it was coming, and 'greeted it from afar.' " In the language of St. Paul, "against hope he believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith," he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither- yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. (Verses 18-22.) That his faith had reference to his immediate seed, Isaac, there can be no question. But that it looked forward also to his Messianic Seed is equally certain; even to that Seed who was to spring from himself in the line of Isaac; and of whose coming the supernatural birth of Isaac must have been to him an assurance and -pledge. "Your father Abraham," said Jesus to the Jews, "rejoiced to see *My day*; and he saw it and was glad." (John 8:56.) It was in connection with this, as the ground of his hope, that he "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (Heb. 11:10.) In short he believed that in the promise of God and his embrace thereof "a movement in the order of the world had been commenced which would lead to some great end and consummation in the distant future.

"Now to live in and for the future, rather than in and for the present, is a great and signal achievement, and indicates a remarkable and original strain of mind. For the ordinary man does not take thought for the future of the world. He lives in and for the present, and hardly expects that men will ever be very different from what they are today. To him the great hopes of a golden age to come, of a perfected society in which all men will be free, and just, and good, which were cherished by the poets and thinkers of Greece and Rome, but came to their full expression only in the Psalmists and Prophets of Israel and of the Christian Church-these great hopes, the forecasts of faith, have as little effect on the average man plunged in his toils, his merchandise, his amusements, as the ethereal chimes of his lofty towers and steeples have on the Belgian peasant buying and selling in the market-place below them. He would miss them, perhaps, were the music to cease; but they call tip no forms of beauty, no vision of hope, before his mind. They do not tell on his buying and selling, on his ambitions, on his pleasures, and make him more just, more temperate, more generous. He is not 'a being breathing thoughtful breath'; his very religion is little more than a creed and a ceremony; and because he has little faith, his hopes burn dim and low.

"It is therefore a mark of true greatness in Abraham that, in a primitive age, standing as on the threshold of time, he was habitually looking onward to the future life of the world, and forecasting the nobler forms it would assume. He at least was not confined to 'the ignorant present,' so occupied and pre-occupied with eating and drinking, buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, as' to have no outlook into the larger and higher spaces of the soul. The chimes *had* a message for him. The future might be dim, but none the less he was sure that the world would have a great future, that humanity was moving onward and upward to its goal and rest, that Time held in its hand a great benediction in which all the nations of the earth would share. A righteous race in a renovated earth, an earth' in which at last the Judge of all the earth will get right done, an earth in which, because its righteousness stands firm as the great mountains, peace will flow like a river-this was his -forecast for the world, as it was of all the Prophets who came after him.

"It is the only forecast which makes life worth living,, and the world worth working for, which can redeem our existence from the trivial round of self regarding tasks and aims in which too many of us spend and waste our days. Let us bend our eyes on the future, then, if we would redeem the present and live nobly in it. Let us lift up our heads, and listen to the sweet chimes of faith and hope, which sound even more clearly from the prophetic heights of the New Testament than from those of the Old. Strong in faith, strong in hope, let us live and labor for the good time coming in which all men shall know, and love, and serve the Lord of all."

"GOD HOLDS THE KEY"

"God holds the key of all unknown,
And I am glad ;
If other hands should hold the key,
Or if He trusted it to me,
I might be sad.

"What if tomorrow's cares were here,
Without its rest?
Rather would I unlock the day,
And as the hours swing open, say
'Thy will is best.'

"I see not all His future plans;
But this I know,
I have the smiling of His face,
And all the refuge of His grace,
While here below.

"Enough! this covers all my want,
And so I rest;
For what I cannot, He can see,
And in His care I sure shall be
Forever blest."

Convention Reports,

Winnipeg, Man.

"On August 19th and 20th some sixty or seventy of the friends met in convention at Winnipeg, which had been arranged by the local Class. The sentiments of the friends were like those of the disciples of old-'Lord, it is good to be here.' Many expressed the thought, in private conversation, that the rich spiritual food which was given to us by the Father's band would serve to strengthen the new creature against the onslaughts of the .world, the flesh, and the Adversary..

"Friends came to the convention from scattered towns in Manitoba. Two auto loads came from Minneapolis, Minn., and one brother came from that city by train. The Pastoral Bible Institute was represented by a brother who gave three very helpful and instructive discourses. Other discourses of like helpful nature were given by three of the brethren from Minneapolis and one brother of the local Class. There were the usual opportunities for individual testimonies to the keeping power of our Heavenly Father in these days of stress and perplexity; and it was felt by a large number of the friends that these testimony meetings were perhaps the most helpful of all the services.

"We, who were the guests of the Winnipeg friends, take this occasion to thank them for all their splendid ministrations to our spiritual and temporal wants; and we are sure that all those acts of kindness, love, and devotion have been noted of our Heavenly Father and that they will in due course receive out of His bountiful hand a suitable reward."

Minneapolis, Minn.

"The convention held here on September 3 and 4 proved to be a very blessed and happy season of spiritual edification and refreshment.

"The attendance far exceeded expectations. Approximately twenty-five out-of-town friends attended, most of them from such distant points as Kansas City, Topeka, St. Louis, Chicago, Waukesha, Winnipeg, and Duluth. -Several members of the local Polish Class joined us also, bringing the highest attendance to well over one hundred.

"The discourses were very deep and heart-searching, and the speakers, by frequent reference to the shining example of Jesus, enabled us to see more clearly our privileges and obligations at this time. The program also featured a live Bible study on the Wedding Garment parable, also a symposium by four brethren on the parable of the Sower, each of which brought a rich blessing to us.

"There was much evidence of the Lord's Spirit amongst the brethren on this occasion. The happy faces and hearty greetings produced an atmosphere in which the other good things could be appreciated to the fullest extent."

Richmond, Va.

"The friends who were privileged to gather in convention at Richmond over Labor Day week-end surely enjoyed a precious season of happy fellowship, which in a very real way, was like to that above. It was not expected that the gathering would be a large one, due to the fact that Richmond is some distance from centers where larger numbers of brethren reside, and also that other conventions held at the same time would undoubtedly attract some who might otherwise have made an effort to be present at this more remote point. But, true to His promise, the Lord gathered with His people, and verily He girded Himself and made us to sit down while He so bountifully served us with the words of life, and manifested Himself to us in those words.

"The same general theme characterized the entire program, and judging from the responsive testimonies heard at the different praise services, the Lord's hand had directed in the choice of subjects. Special reference was made by all the speakers to the wonderful possibilities of a more in time fellowship with the Lord, and those present were encouraged to seek this full vision of Christ, and the great attainment open to all who follow on to know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Considerable attention was drawn to the many Scriptural illustrations of what the saints of God may be in character and experience—trees of righteousness; the salt of the earth; faithful sheep, true to a faithful Shepherd; and as living epistles, known and read in their words of love and acts of kindness and the precious spikenard of comfort, devotion, and unselfish service.

"The solemn facts of the present hour in which we live, and the desire on the part of so many of those present to be found ready whenever or however the consummation of our pilgrimage may come, seemed to pervade this little gathering, and it is certain that the two happy days of fellowship were used of the Lord to give renewed strength to all hearts. The very increase of gratitude which the atmosphere of the gathering created, surely filled our hearts with fresh courage, greater devotion, and a deeper confidence as we went back to the daily routine of life. Blessed assurance that we shall be kept by the power of God until our work is done, and our complete deliverance has come!"

Seattle, Wash.

"The annual convention of the Northwest, which was held in Seattle on September 2-4, is in the past, but it is not forgotten, and it may not be going too far to say that it may never be forgotten by many who were privileged to be present, because of the real help and comfort received. One dear sister said, with tears of joy and gratitude in her eyes, that she had attended many gatherings of the different groups of brethren, but had never witnessed such a manifestation of the Lord's Spirit and power. The writer also found his heart overflowing with joy and gladness as he noticed the wonderful improvement in tone and spirit compared with the first gatherings he attended a number of years ago.

"What we have noticed and reported with much thankfulness of heart is just what we should expect and be looking for if we are the people of God, the work of His hands, and if He is dealing with us, and making us ready for 'Home Sweet Home.' How could we be at home in the presence of our loving and holy Father and His dear Son, and how could they want our presence and be at home in the same, if we have not developed to the point that we can meet with our dear brethren in convention, and see and know and fellowship with them as new creatures, and have the sweet fellowship of kindred minds, which is like to that above—and all this in spite of the fact that we

cannot see eye to eye on every detail of doctrine. It was good to be at the convention if it was only to note this very thing, for it gives us assurance that the Lord is still with us, that He is dealing with us, and that we are daily nearing our goal, which is 'Christ alone.'

"A convention has been held here for so many years about the same time-the Labor holiday-that it has become a fixed date in the minds of many of the brethren in these parts, and is looked forward to and prepared for during a great part of the year. Therefore it was with hungry and expectant hearts that many gathered together, and on that account it was soon found that the One-our dear Lord-who had wrought this fond desire, was there, girded, and with basin and towel, to refresh His loving disciples as they sat at His feet, and submitted to Him, and said in their hearts, 'Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.' - John 13:9.

"But that was not all: after rest, and after getting settled down, it was found that He had prepared a feast of fat things suitable for every appetite, and all could hear Him say, 'Come and dine.' The invitation was accepted, and we dined until the Lord saw we had enough, and that it would be for our good to separate, and go on our different ways,, and have some exercise, and use the strength received, " and put into practice the lessons learned. 'For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom men have committed much of him they will ask the more.'- Luke 12:48.

"The things needful for our bodies were not overlooked. Entertainment for all wishing the same was provided, and two very wholesome meals each day-free for all. The Lord will not fail to reward the self-sacrifice and effort of the dear saints in Seattle which made the convention possible and profitable. 'Blest be the tie that binds."

Submission and Confidence

"WALK HUMBLY with God." (Mic. 6:8.)

The **sum** of our duty and privilege as Christians is comprised of submission to and confidence in God. This is the normal state of a holy will, the basis of its volitions, the sweet undercurrent of its consciousness, which gently constrains it to step aside from the plumed ranks of its conceited prerogatives and rabbinical assumptions, down into the company of the little children, lisping, "Abba. Father," with every decision.

In the degree that this state becomes habitual to the will, do peace and rest take possession of the soul. Cutting loose from self and every object but God, as a regulating center, brings a spiritual equipoise to the desires and affections.

God would have all his children learn this simple, yet profound lesson of unconditional submission to and confidence in His will and ways. The stout resistance of the natural will, contesting every step in the way to an attainment of this state, makes needful much providential discipline in most cases; and it would seem that often there is an alteration of purposes in such heavenly teaching: one series of providences bringing the soul into a condition of blind and helpless submission to God's will, and another set inspiring confidence in His character; the process being continued in order that after the soul has "suffered awhile," it may become established, strengthened, and settled. (1 Pet. 5:10.). Willing obedience in the schooling would abbreviate the painful discipline, and bring the subsequent rest-life earlier; for God cloth not willingly afflict us. - Lam. 3:33.

In proportion as the Christian becomes submissive and confiding toward God, is true spiritual service for God possible; for as the self-consciousness of the soul is supplanted by God, consciousness, the will, ceases from its own works, and enters into its rest in God's will, so that God worketh more and more in the soul both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and the good works result which God bath before ordained that we should bring forth. (Eph. 11:10.) Thus a new world of opportunities opens up continually. Every circumstance assumes the aspect of an occasion significant of God's will and the soul's pleasure. The Heavenly Father, well pleased, saves the important errands for His most faithful and affectionate child. And work for such a child is in a sense its pastime, for the child does what it most loves to do-please its father! Such a life is at once working and resting.

Do you know this sweet experience, my fellow Christians? If so, you are aware of the need of watchfulness, lest the enemy of our peace either thrust or decoy you from your position of submission and confidence.

But if you do not know this experience, let me ask, Are you willing to know it? longing to know it? Then you may know it! However harassing are your daily cares, you are for that reason in the exact position to receive this experience, as the gift of Christ, who calls not to the idle and unburdened, but says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."-*The Testimony of Jesus.*

Encouraging Letters

Dear Brethren

Thank you so much for having sent me the "HERALD."- I am enclosing five shillings for same. This should have been about this date last year, so please continue sending them and I will D. V., send a further five shillings shortly for this year; supply of good things. How very helpful and refreshing they continue to be. Truly many of us are being fed in the wilderness today, and being led by the Greater than Moses. The article in the May issue "Where He Leads Me I will Follow" has been particularly helpful to me, for it is only as we are fully surrendered in heart and life that we realize the need of being more alone with Him, to commune with *Him* and feel the sweet peace and joy even though sorrow and trouble be all around. How good to feel and know, He knows, He loves, and He cares.

Thank you, dear brethren for all the great help and encouragement you have been instrumental in bringing to me, and not to me only but to many other dear ones in our many troubled hours. I pray He may bless you continually and keep you faithful in His service, until the glorious consummation of all our hopes and we all meet at that great Harvest Festival or Home Gathering and kneel at our dear Redeemer's feet and praise Him for all the way that He has led us, even to Himself, that this poor, sin-sick world may rejoice when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His beams.

With Christian love in Him,
Your sister by His grace,
N. C.-ENG.

Dear Sirs

Would you kindly send me a few leaflets? I found a piece of a leaflet in my yard. I cannot think how it came there, but I read all I could as part had been torn away, but I had your address and your wonderful offer so I am looking forward to finish reading, "When the Morning Cometh." If you have any different ones I shall be delighted to read them. The Bible prophecies on Christ's Second Coming must be worth reading, as it is what we are looking for each day.

Yours in Christ,
MRS. R.-ENG.

Dear Sirs:

A friend gave me a copy of "When the Morning Cometh." I have enjoyed it so much. Please send me several copies -- about six -- for other friends. Would also like some of "Christ's Second Coming."

Thanking you, Respectfully,
Mrs. M. G.-OKLA.