

GOOD TIDINGS

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THE REFORMED MENNONITE CHURCH, FOR THE
PURPOSE OF DISSEMINATING SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE

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EDITORIAL

With this issue of "Good Tidings" is presented striking and well defined thoughts supported by the letter and spirit of the word of God.

These writings are based on scriptural subjects and texts, no effort is made at literary display in the use of language, the object being by simple words to convey to the understanding what is easily comprehended, the matter being carefully compiled by research into scripture contexts, that the interpretation may harmonize with the principles and spirit of the Scriptures. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "When I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God, . . . and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

Christmas time the anniversary of the birth of Christ, and His advent into the world, attracts attention, and is the theme dwelt upon by many throughout all the civilized world, and well can the circumstance be recalled with admiration, and may the beautiful song which the angels sang at His birth give us joy. And, do we realize its real significance? Do our lives reflect "Glory to God in the

highest?" Shall we finally glorify Him when the scenes of this earthly life are closed? It's a weighty consideration!

With the advent of the "New Year," we naturally think of the passing of time, the mind is directed to the beginning of a new year, and should bring with it grateful appreciation for the privilege of enjoying it, and should inspire us with a willingness to reciprocate God's love and mercy by living a life which reflects honor and praise to the Father of all mercies. May we enjoy the happiness obtainable in this life and have the assurance of a well-grounded hope of final glory!

May we all have a desire to read and search the Scriptures carefully and aid in contributing articles for "Good Tidings" without being prompted, though a sense of inability is felt, this should not discourage the effort, as all writings are examined before being published; the privilege being reserved to change or to reject writings.

We take this opportunity of reminding delinquent subscribers to renew promptly that no numbers be missed. We encourage those who have friends that might be interested in reading "Good Tidings" to subscribe for them, or solicit their subscriptions. It has occurred that such subscriptions have awakened interest in others. Let us have the mind of the Master: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

THE MESSAGE OF GLAD TIDINGS

We read that an angel appeared unto Zacharias in the temple, foretelling the birth and mission of John the Baptist as one "who would go forth in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the

Lord." The angel said, "I am sent to speak unto thee and to show thee these glad tidings."

John came as the forerunner of Christ. It was written, "Behold I send my messenger before thy face which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." John came preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

The scepter had departed from the Jewish nation and dark clouds of doubt and uncertainty seemed to hover over the Jewish people. The pious ones turned for consolation to increased fidelity to the Mosaic laws, and the hopes of a coming Messiah became more fixed in their minds. Even the heathen world seemed to expect something portentous.

It was over four hundred years since a prophet had been sent to God's people. When it became known that this new prophet was speaking what God had told him, not what he had learned from the Rabbis, multitudes thronged to hear him. He startled them by his cry, "Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." No doubt many heard his message with accusing consciences as he fearlessly warned them of their formalism and falsity. He taught repentance as the first step to protect them from the wrath to come. When many wondered if he were not the Christ whom they expected, he was free to confess that he was not the Christ nor Elias, but only "a voice in the wilderness" and that after him would come One who was preferred before him for He was before him.

The time of the coming of the Messiah had come. He was nigh them then but they were not aware of His presence. He did not come with pomp and splendor to restore their kingdom as many supposed He would. When the angel appeared to the Judean shepherds they were

sore afraid but the angel said, "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people."

Our Savior began His ministry by preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. Well might these be called good tidings of great joy, not only to the Jewish nation, God's chosen people, but to all people and for all time. We today are partakers of this good, this promised mercy.

The Apostles were commissioned to go and teach all nations, which they did. The Gospel message was brought to all, but it did not prove to be the glad tidings of good, nor did it become the means of salvation to any except those who believed and obeyed.

The prophet Isaiah says, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things. Their sound went into all the earth and their words unto the ends of the world." There was reason for the prophet as well as the Apostle to ask, "Lord, who hath believed our report?" for the sad commentary was, "Having eyes they see not and having ears they hear not." The Lord through the prophet said in sorrow, "The ox knoweth its owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider."

The works of nature, the starry heavens and the planets in their order have ever given testimony of God's wondrous and eternal power. Just so the glad tidings of the gospel of Christ have been declared and attested to in all lands and nations. But it only becomes the glad tidings of good to those who accept it. If any one fails to reap its benefits, the fault is his own. The gospel is offered without money and without price.

There were many who followed our Savior from place to place, they heard His teaching and said, "He spake as

never man spake before," but if they were not obedient to His word it did not prove to be the good tidings of good to their souls.

Our Savior in tenderest compassion wept over Jerusalem saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, but ye would not." They heard His message and noted His sinless life, His many miracles and acts of mercy but they refused Him and so were not benefitted by the glad tidings of great good.

May those who have heard the glad tidings and been moved to obedience be strengthened by a renewed desire for a closer walk. May all heed the message, "The Savior is calling, O hear and obey."

Hagerstown, Md.

E. V. L.

THE SAVIOR'S BIRTH

"For unto you is born this day, in the City of David, a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." Luke 2: 11, 12.

What humiliation, what condescension was here displayed in the advent of the blessed Son of God into this lower world! He who was in fellowship with His Father from eternity, who was with Him when the worlds were made, in fact it is said, "the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." John 1:10. To contemplate so lowly a birth for one so exalted, fills our minds with wonder and amazement, and should teach us an impressive lesson in humility and self denial.

The Wise Men of the East saw His star and hastened to Jerusalem thinking of course that He who was born King of the Jews would be found in the City of

the Kings, the City where the Temple was, the seat of all the oracles, the sacred traditions, and all the recorded laws and ceremonies of the Jewish worship. Surely in this City they would find the child Jesus! But they found Him not.

Herod was troubled in the prospect of a rival king, and "he gathered all the Chief Priests and Scribes of the people together and demanded of them where Christ should be born, and they said unto him in Bethlehem of Judea." Matt. 2: 3, 4, 5. He sent the wise men to Bethlehem "and lo, the star which they saw in the east went before them" and they rejoiced. They found the young Child with Mary, His Mother, "and fell down and worshipped Him; and when they had opened their treasures they presented unto Him gifts; gold and frankincense and myrrh." Matt. 2:11.

Now was fulfilled God's promise from the beginning that He would send a Redeemer. Now all the prophecies of the preceding ages were fulfilled—all the types and shadows of better things to come were realized. Man could no more censure Adam for transgressing and thereby forfeiting eternal life. Although by Adam the liability to sin was transmitted to all future generations, yet now by accepting this blessed Child Jesus, the primitive relation could again be restored and eternal life reclaimed.

This child Jesus is the most precious gift God ever gave to man. He bestowed many good gifts to promote the comfort and happiness of man in this mortal life, but Christ was the "perfect Gift," who, if he be accepted not only gives "promise of the life that now is but of that which is to come," thus unfolding to mortal vision the glorious prospect of a happy eternity for the soul.

The birth of our Savior caused rejoicing in Heaven, for it is said: "And suddenly there was with the Angel a

great multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Luke 2: 13, 14. The few on earth who comprehended the meaning of his birth, rejoiced also.

The world today rejoices at Christmas time in exchanging gifts and doing kind and charitable deeds in commemoration of His birth. There is lavish display in entertaining, in music and singing praises to His name. We fear these demonstrations are only the expression of the carnal, natural mind, and hence do not glorify the Saviour's birth, for to worship Him and to rejoice in the true sense, we must first find Him like the Wise Men. His spirit must be born in our hearts. He was born king of the Jews, but not a natural king. His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom and "cometh not with observation, . . . for behold, the kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17: 20, 21.

When the grace of God disturbs us we realize we need a Savior, and figuratively speaking we like the Wise Men first go to Jerusalem, or to the Priests and the Scribes who represent the Law. We do not find Him there but the Apostle says, "The law is our Schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." This holy law reveals unto us our lost condition and under the increasing burden of condemnation, we continue to seek the Savior. We leave Jerusalem, and His star again appears, or His grace, and we follow it to the lowly Bethlehem. Here we find Him and in an humble and contrite spirit we accept Him. We open the treasure of our heart and give all we have, which is only a meager gift compared with His gift of eternal life. We now become spiritually minded and are qualified to worship Him and rejoice not only on the anniversary of His birth, but at all times.

We fear that many who seek the Savior go only as far as Jerusalem, not being willing to humble themselves and

seek for Him in His lowly environment of Bethlehem. They believe that He was born but their faith is only a historical one and not the faith that works by love and obedience. They formulate a worship that is cold and unfruitful of love. "The veil of Moses is yet upon their hearts, which veil is done away in Christ." 2 Cor. 3: 15. They cannot distinguish between the law and the Gospel or between the kingdom of this world and the spiritual kingdom of Christ. Under the guise of a false charity they assemble together and recognize each other as brethren, though they differ widely in their religious views. Christ Jesus was born into this world "to gather in one the children of God that were scattered abroad," John 11: 52; and to establish unity, fellowship and love. If we do not wholly accept Him and cherish His word in our hearts God's purpose will not be accomplished in us, a babel of worship will result and will end in destruction to the soul.

Lancaster, Pa.

E. H. W.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

On Judea's plains the shepherds,
Watching o'er their flocks by night,
Saw an angel's form appearing
Clothed in wondrous heavenly light.

While they gazed with awe and wonder
Angel bade them not to fear,
For good tidings I am bringing
To all people, joy and cheer:

Unto you is born a Saviour,
Christ the Lord has come to earth!
Seek ye Him within a manger,
This shall prove His heavenly birth.

Then were heard the hosts of heaven!
Praising God who dwells on high
Peace, good will to men be given
Songs of praise filled all the sky.

'Tis this wondrous gift from heaven
Christ the Lord, whose birth we tell.
Precious hope to us He's given
Gladly we His praises swell.

Waynesboro, Pa.

A. S. F.

PEACE

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." St. John, 14: 27.

When our Savior was born there was great rejoicing in heaven. We read that a multitude of the heavenly host appeared with the angel who brought the good tidings to those shepherds of Judea as they watched their flock by night. This celestial multitude was praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace good will toward men." How happy the shepherds must have been to know that the long-looked-for Savior had at last come to earth, and that now, as the angel had told them, there was to be "great joy to all people." In reading St. Luke's account of the birth of Christ, we note that the leading thought expressed by the heavenly host, after praising God, was that the Savior had brought *peace* and good will to men.

Christ lived a life of peace—he preached peace, he practiced peace. Finally, shortly before he was betrayed and crucified, He said to His disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." This was His parting gift, and was most precious and significant! How greatly to be desired is the peace that Christ gives! To receive it we must do as His disciples did—leave all and follow Him. If we love anything or any person, (including ourselves), more than we love Christ, we are not worthy of Him, and cannot receive His peace. So we must, in our minds, separate ourselves from every attachment to this life, and hold our love for, and devotion to God the Father and Christ the Son, as the ruling principle of life, overpowering all other attachments. This frame of mind gives us "peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

The peace which Christ gave, and still gives to His followers, is far-reaching:

there is peace with God through Christ's sufferings and death, the benefits of which we receive through faith and obedience. This is well expressed by St. Paul in Romans 5. From the realization of our peace with God comes peace in ourselves, or peace of conscience, because we have obeyed the call of God and have accepted the gift of His dear Son, Jesus Christ.

All who have accepted Christ become new creatures by a change of heart through the new birth. These have peace with each other, for all have the peaceable nature of Christ. They also, as far as in them lies, live at peace with all men. Through grace, and by earnest devotion, they receive divine help to bear the fruits of the spirit—love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. We note that peace ranks high among these spiritual fruits.

Peace is rest of soul—quietness of mind. It results from perfect trust in God, and earnest striving to walk in the narrow way that leads to life. It comes from having uppermost, in the mind, love to God and love to man and living so. To live otherwise never brings peace, but always an accusing conscience, disappointment and unrest of mind.

Let us "covet earnestly the best gifts," and strive after them, for it is only in so doing that we can hope to have a living realization of the peace that passeth understanding.

Lancaster, Pa.

L. L. F.

THE NEW YEAR

"A Happy New Year!" This often conveys only a formal wish, yet to followers of the Savior it carries an expression of the divine love that possesses the heart; and it is given alike to friend or foe.

With the passing of the old year, we are impressed that there is gone forever

another year of the time which the Creator has graciously allotted to us. In retrospect there may be regrets, perhaps deep and painful; and we may wish that we could live over again, more perfectly, part if not all, of an eventful past. Perhaps we might avoid or correct some serious mistake or employ to better purpose some mis-spent time. We also realize that we are nearer to the close of all our activities in this life, and to that time when we must render an account of the trust that has been committed to us; for finally "Time shall be no longer," as proclaimed by the mighty angel.

Now we stand on the threshold of a new year, and we wonder what it may bring to us of joy or sorrow. But it is all concealed from our view. We are thus able to concentrate our energies to the performance of our duties as they come before us day by day, leaving the future to Him who in infinite wisdom, cares for His own.

To the true followers of the Savior, not only New Year's Day but every day, is a day of new resolve and endeavor, with a prayerful desire for grace, that the gratitude we feel for the manifold blessings we enjoy may find a fuller expression in our daily life. The desire is that we might benefit by our past mistakes and "press on unto perfection;" that having life, we "might have it more abundantly;" that His Spirit might fully dwell in our hearts; and that we might be submissive and obedient to all its promptings, saying with David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart."

The Christian graces are admired and many resolutions are made to apply them in every-day life, but the endeavors so often fail, because these graces cannot be acquired and lived without having the spirit of Christ as the ruling power in the heart. His Spirit ruling in our

hearts, and our antagonistic selfish desires subdued, will ever promote happiness in ourselves, in our families, among us as fellow-believers and will attend us in all our social and business relations.

We will then be prompted to diligence in business, yet restrained from engaging in questionable ventures with a desire for gain, because we realize that "godliness with contentment is great gain." We will cherish a meek and quiet spirit, remembering that "A soft answer turneth away wrath." We will be kinder to the brutes or animals under our care, knowing that "The righteous man regardeth the life of his beast."

Our life will then be a reproof to those who indulge in "foolish talking and jesting," which, as the Apostle declared, "are not convenient." We will respect the experience of those who are perhaps more advanced in years, and be considerate toward those who, in the evening of life, feel the shadows grow longer; and we will be an example to those who in their tender years are growing into responsibility, that they may be encouraged to take a course that will promote the honor of God and be to their eternal interest. All that we have and enjoy is the gift of a kind heavenly Father, and if we become dispossessed of it we will feel that it is according to His will and purpose and for our highest good.

With the humble desire ever first in our heart, that we might "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," and yet in our weak humanity being ever able to say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," shall we not surely have A Happy New Year?

Doylestown, Ohio.

C. W.

THE NEW YEAR

Today we hail thee glad New Year,
Thou'rt come with promises of cheer
Fortelling joys to come.

We'll welcome thee, O bright New Year
And all that thou hast hidden here
Revealed to us shall be.

Thus day by day we'll journey on
Await with joy each morning's dawn
And each day's task fulfill.

O blest New Year come thou apace,
May we eternal goodness trace
Through all thy twelve months reign.
Waynesboro, Pa. A. S. F.

NEW YEAR REFLECTIONS

Standing on the threshold of a New Year we realize keenly the swift flight of time. We pause to consider what the blank pages of the new year may hold in store for us.

Our duties and occupations are varied as are our individual talents. There is a resolve to be more diligent in our daily work, to use well our time and opportunity. We consider what we may, with added effort, accomplish in the coming days and months.

Perhaps we desire to overcome or improve habits formed. New year resolves for good are helpful. We may resolve to be more kind, to be more thoughtful of those who come in touch with us in daily life.

Do we not all appreciate and admire our dear friends whose characters show much of these lovable virtues? It is our privilege to cultivate higher faculties and to develop through favorable surroundings a moral, charitable and well governed life. Moral, upright men and women are a blessing everywhere. But there is danger these virtues may prove to be a snare.

Many honest, moral persons justify themselves that they are doing God's

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Math. 5: 8.

service, though void of the spirit of Christ. Such souls find virtue in their good works and thus attain a satisfied state. They are comforted in thinking the merits of their own righteousness are sufficient to save them. These virtues are not the means of salvation. We are saved by grace through faith in Christ. We are saved through Christ's atonement and intercession. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us." These virtues are required of every child of God. If Christ dwells in us these virtues will ever follow as fruits of the spirit of Christ.

"What does the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God." "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men." All the Lord asks of us is that we heed His call, that we open our hearts to grace. When we open our hearts light enters and we are convicted of sin. We may have been moral, yet we realize the sin in our past life, since we failed to live to the honor of God and did not confess Christ. We feel the need of something we do not possess and cannot of ourselves obtain. We now realize we are poor, weak, and needy. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." We hear the invitation, "Come unto me." Our Savior calls, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden." Christ comes unto us and will abide with us and make us new creatures.

Our Savior said to Nicodemus "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." We enter the kingdom without righteousness of our own. "Except ye be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." As a little child we should be loving and trusting, obedient to God's word and will.

In the new life we are admonished to grow in grace and knowledge, which begets love and obedience and the fruits of obedience are peace, gentleness, meekness, long suffering and faith.

We now desire knowledge. But we seek after knowledge of the truth and knowledge of ourselves and of our sinful human nature. Self-knowledge causes us to be watchful that we "believe not every spirit but try the spirits whether they are of God." We have a spiritual warfare "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Meditating we think of the changes that the new year may bring. In the past year many dear ones have passed from the duties of life. Perhaps the goal of natural achievement, the goal for which we were striving, may not be reached this year.

We stop and consider, what is life? We find the fitting answer, "your life is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time then vanisheth away." Natural life is as a tale that is told. Life's brief day is a time of probation given us that we may attain eternal life, life without end.

We are free agents to receive or reject this opportunity. Do we not all wish to have a well grounded hope of entering eternal rest? Would it not be wise to heed God's grace and accept so great salvation, if we have not already done so? If we do not heed God's grace and do not enter His kingdom it is the sin that stands as a blot on life's page.

The earth so lately bare and naked is now covered with the falling snow. How beautiful in its resemblance to the white raiment with which Christ clothes those whose names are written in the book of life. "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment." Risen from a dead state of sin to the new life in Christ "He hath clothed me

with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." We are righteous through Christ dwelling in us, we do not merit righteousness.

At the close of the day we hold a court in our own minds. Our thoughts are witnesses, our conscience sits in judgment upon our actions. This enables us to know our frailty and the need of cleansing through a loving Savior's intercession. Knowing our constant need of help we daily implore Him for grace and strength.

May each new day arouse in every awakened soul, the prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; renew a right spirit within me." "Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow."

Hagerstown, Md.

E. S. L.

THE ANGELS REJOICE

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." Luke 15: 7.

These are our Savior's words witnessing that the angels rejoice for us. Do we realize how our actions are watched by the angelic host? It is said, the angels minister unto the heirs of salvation. Heb. 1: 14. We are told satan can appear like an angel. That is why the Savior says, "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

Our text speaks of two classes, the saved and unsaved. The angels are at ease about the saved, for if they remain obedient "no man is able to pluck them out of the Father's hand." John 10: 29. There is loving concern for the unsaved. The angels yearn for them with pure and untiring love; the redeemed on earth live to gain them; He, on the Mercy Seat is waiting to pardon the penitent.

How may we be just? If we obey God's will with all our heart we are just, for then there is no law to condemn us. Infirmary hinders our efforts, but God regards the sincerity of the heart. While He is willing to forgive infirmity He is also just in demanding loyalty as a double service is not just. The Savior called pretenders hypocrites, and His judgment is still the same, and will apply in the Last Day.

God, who knows the heart, told His people through faithful Moses of future prosperity if they were obedient, and of adversity if they were disobedient. "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day: and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after gods, which ye have not known." Deut. 11: 26. Regardless of such warnings His people fell under the direst affliction. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . behold, your house is left unto you desolate!" Matt. 23: 37.

Through their disobedience the chosen people had their chief city and temple utterly destroyed, with the loss of over a million lives, and they were scattered among many nations. When God's judgments were so severe in earlier times, can we hope to escape now when we are disobedient? God has established natural laws the transgression of which brings us suffering. Why should we hope to escape penalty when we transgress spiritual law? Is there not a law in our mind that now afflicts us for wrong-doing? Does not our intelligence give us consciousness of what we may expect if we live "without God in the world?" Are we not convinced that God is the Author of life, and that our lives should be subject to Him, as all

other life of creation is under His rule? Are we not nearer to God by his gift of intelligence than any other being on this earth, and should we not try to fill our high places as the subjects of His care?

Activity and service to one another are the duties appointed us, as all nature attests, and, the Savior said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The duties intended for us are plainly taught, and neglect of duty in any way at all makes us guilty, and only repentance and correction of faults can make us free from judgment. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice!" The profession of religion is plainly empty when we do not regard God's will in all His precepts. "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth!"

Lancaster, Pa.

E. H. H.

THE REDEMPTION OF FALLEN MAN

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." Isaiah 9: 6.

The language of our text was a prophecy and a pledge for the fulfillment of God's promise of His greatest gift to man. It was yet future seven hundred years, nevertheless, this prophecy along with many others was an inspiration to the faithful of that dispensation. Their faith in the promised Child challenges our admiration and prompts us to a fuller realization of the great good that has come to us through His advent into this sin-stricken world.

These are among the comforting predictions of the effect of His coming. "For the Lord shall comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places, and joy and gladness shall be found therein." "He shall feed His flock as a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arms and carry them in His bosom." His final appearing was heralded by the angels and revealed to the shepherds,

who watched their flocks by night. The proclamation of the angel was, "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ, the Lord."

Soon after the lone angel was joined by a multitude of celestial spirits, who sang the greatest song that ever fell on mortal ears: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and good will to men." No wonder the heavenly host rejoiced in rapturous strains, telling the glad tidings over all the earth, that the redemption of fallen man was nigh. It was the day-star of hope for the coming day, fittingly typified by the shepherds who longed for the dawn of day, as David expressed it: "My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning."

The prospective mother of Jesus and her husband lived at Nazareth about sixty-five miles from Bethlehem. They journeyed together over hill and dale to this town, in compliance with Caesar's proclamation that all the world should be taxed. It was a practice of Augustus Caesar to take an account of all his subjects every five years, relating to their age, trades and estates. The concourse of people at Bethlehem was so great that all the room at the inn was taken. Joseph and Mary found a lodging place in a stable where the Christ child was born and laid in a manger.

To this birth the shepherds were among the first witnesses; then the Wise Men, guided by the star, came into His presence, and worshipped Him, giving their best gifts of gold, frank-incense and myrrh.

When His parents took Him to the temple to present Him to the Lord, the aged Simeon, who was waiting for the consolation of Israel, took Him in his arms and blessed God and said: "Now

lettest Thou, Thy servant, depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of all the people." The aged widow, Anna, also gave thanks to God for the great redemption nigh at hand.

The child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him.

We again read of Him, when at the age of twelve years, when His parents went to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of the Passover; the child Jesus accompanied them, and later they found Him in the Temple sitting with the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions; to His parents He said; "Know ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" At the age of thirty, he was publicly anointed with the Holy Spirit and consecrated to His life-work—that of the redemption of a fallen race, with the Father's approval, in these words, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." He was filled with wisdom without human learning, so that many marvelled at His gracious words. He was possessed of such power that all things were subject to Him. He healed the sick, restored vitality to the palsied limbs, gave sight to the blind and healed all manner of sickness. He restored the dead to life. He commanded the raging billows and they obeyed; the winds and the sea obeyed Him. "These things" said He, "that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the keys of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth I am the first and the last, I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore and have the keys of hell and of death."

The child born and the son given came at a time when He was most of all needed. Peace had forsaken the earth. Man did not know the way of peace; destruction and misery was in his way.

During four thousand years peace was lost to the earth. A suffering, bleeding world needed one who could heal the hurt of the soul. The world was in crying need of one who could minister to its spiritual malady. "Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?" A suffering, sin-stricken world needed one to come with good tidings, with words of pity, mercy and forgiveness; one to reveal the Father as a God of love who wishes all men to love Him and to love one another, and, finally, enjoy His presence in eternity.

A brief review. It was not only promised that a child would be born and a Son given, but also that of His government and peace there should be no end. The prophecy along with the angelic testimony is positive evidence of the inauguration of a reign of peace on the earth, as an effect of Christ's work of redemption. We are therefore authorized to claim the non-resistance of evil as far as Christianity prevails. There was no room in the inn. An important inquiry is; Has the Christ been born in our hearts, and is there room for Him there?

The crib in the manger has vanished and the angel song is no more heard, yet the lowly birth without attendant wealth, parade or show has its impressive lesson to us. It emphasizes the emptiness of gorgeous palaces, and of luxurious living, and teaches humility, self-abasement and nonworldliness.

The star that safely directed the Wise Men, is a fitting illustration of the safety in following the light that came into the world to enlighten every man. Gold, frank-incense and myrrh may typify the best gifts we possess by grace, those of faith, hope and charity.

Finally, can the existing events of strife, contention and unrest of the professed Christian nations be reconciled with the proclamation, "On earth peace

and good will to men?" Truly long was the distance, deep were the waters, high the mountains, thorny the path and dark the night to encounter from the manger to the throne. But for the joy that was set before Him, He endured it all. The joy was: the dethronement of satan and the restoration to the earth of "peace on earth and good will to men."

Chambersburg, Pa.

J. S. L.

CHRISTIAN ERA

The advent of Christ Jesus,
 Caused loud angelic glee,
 With voice that never ceases—
 Blest song of jubilee;
 The choice annunciation,
 Of "peace, good will to men";
 The joyful information,
 That Christ hath come to reign.

The longed for promise dawning
 The glorious boon in sight,
 The happy era morning,
 The epoch of delight,
 What sacred strains of gladness,
 Should fill our every heart;
 That every pain of sadness,
 Should speedily depart.

But is it not observant,
 This day oft set apart,
 For trivial diversions
 To please the sinful heart.
 Doth it comport with reason,
 These promptings to caress,
 And spend this favored season
 In sporting and excess?

For if this annual greeting,
 Is wrapt in carnal mirth,
 It is not celebrating
 The blessed Savior's birth.
 Such cannot claim the sanction
 A child of grace to be.
 Through merits of our Savior,
 Who died on Calvary.

Our faith must be unvarnished
 Clean, truthful to the core;
 Our love to Christ untarnished,
 To praise and to adore.
 Such will obtain the sanction
 Through Christ of Bethlehem,
 To enter the blest mansion,
 In New Jerusalem.

Lancaster, Pa.

IT IS WELL

Faith in God's promises characterizes the writings of the Prophets and Apostles. They teach us that our happiness and communion with God and one another depends upon our faith. It affects every experience in life, sustains and comforts in times of sickness and bereavement and helps us to accept every dispensation both natural and spiritual as being for our good. For an example of faith, as recorded in God's word, we refer to 2nd Kings, 4th Chapter.

The Shunammite woman is an example of faith to us. Elisha the prophet often passed by her home. She, perceiving that he was a holy man of God, consulted with her husband and then proceeded to prepare a lodging place for him on the wall of her house, in the hope that he would turn in thither. There is no evidence that the Shunammite woman had in mind a reward of any kind from Elisha. We should never expect rewards for acts of kindness that we are able to do for others, but should feel it a privilege to make others comfortable and happy. Her reply to inquiry made by Elisha as to what she would desire gave evidence of contentment with her lot, and she expressed no desire whatever for any reward.

She seemed to lack faith when told that she should have a son, as it appeared impossible to her that this should be. Elisha told her however that she would have a son and his word was fulfilled. This greatly strengthened her faith. The child grew to be a lad, then took sick and died. Here was a trial of faith. The child that was such a great comfort to the father and mother and seemed to be a special dispensation to them was removed. The mother, though greatly distressed, at once prepared to go to Elisha, the man of God. When yet afar off she was seen by him. He made haste to send his servant Gehazi to meet her,

S. C.

and to say, "Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child?" and she answered, "It is well." However she came to the man of God and caught him by the feet, saying, "As the Lord liveth I will not leave thee." The prophet then went to her house and performed a miracle, bringing the child to life.

The instruction we should receive from this narrative is that of submission to whatever may befall us, also of faith in God and His true servants. It also teaches us not to set our affections too strongly upon our children, or upon any thing, that we could not say from the heart if bereft of them, "It is well."

It was at the feet of Elisha the prophet that the distressed woman sought relief. In those days the Lord spake to the people by His Prophets. The great Prophet, Christ Jesus, now speaks to us, and it is at His feet that we must come as humble suppliants pleading for grace, to say in truth, "It is well."

This Shunammite is said to have been a great woman, yet she condescended to prepare a place for the man of God to lodge. Na matter how well we are situated in life we should prepare a place in our hearts for God's grace. If we permit grace to lodge in the heart it will cause great rejoicing in the Spirit, but it will not exempt us from affliction and sorrow. Our desires may fail us, distress may meet us, our hopes may die as did this Shunammite woman's son, but if we have faith in God's promises we will wait upon the Lord and in due time He will comfort us and give us new courage. All God's children at any time can go to Him for help and make their troubles and requests known to Him. It is a sacred duty that as Christians we make our requests known to God, but we must come in humility, to the feet of Jesus, and if we remain there we will

at all times be able to say, through the eye of faith, "It is well."

When the poor sinner, who is unwilling to prepare a lodging place for God's Spirit in his heart, meets with sorrow and affliction he is indeed in a sad condition, for he cannot say, "It is well."

Let each of us ask himself the question; Have I suffered God's grace to lodge in my heart? Have I been willing to obey His holy Word? Do I love all mankind? Am I in Christian fellowship with all God's people? If so, I can in truth say, "It is well."

Lancaster, Pa.

J. L. K.

HUMAN INFIRMITY

True followers of Christ do not feel that there is any righteousness in them. They feel that they are weak and imperfect and that they come far short of any righteousness. They are justified only by faith. But they do not, on this account, wish the high standard of Christ's and the Apostles' teachings lowered. They do not say, as do some persons, that these teachings are an ideal only, and that they are not practicable, for they perceive a spirit within themselves that is in accord with those teachings and which they wish to nourish and strengthen. They find in the New Testament and in it alone, that which satisfies their faith and answers their hopes, meets their feelings, longings, aims and strivings. Their attitude to the commandments is no longer one of opposition, but with the Apostle they "consent to the law, that it is good" and "delight in the law of God after the inward man." It is only in this spirit that they can receive the justification which is by faith.

Human infirmity, the sin in the flesh, which came by birth and shall last till death, remains. Believers have the same

moral weakness as others and the temptations which are common to man. Between the "law in their members," the impulses and tendencies of sin, and the law of the spirit to which their minds are conformed there is a continual warfare. They often fail in thought and word and deed. If they are faithful to God they do not sin premeditatively. If they fail to keep one of the commandments it is not because they have rejected it, or question its authority, or regard it lightly. Their disobedience is not wilful nor is it continuous for grace remains with them, and realizing their fault they will penitently and humbly confess it and make restitution, and by so doing they repudiate the act, maintain the truth and fulfill its requirements. Their sin is one of infirmity which the scriptures recognize: In the Lord's prayer we say daily, "forgive us our debts;" the Apostle John says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us;" the Apostle James states, "In many things we offend all."

These failings, of course, are not the deadly sins of the flesh condemned beforehand by scripture and prohibited in the second table of the law. They are offenses against the spirit of that law as the Sermon on the Mount makes clear concerning two of the commandments: "Thou shalt not kill" and "Thou shalt not commit adultery," forbidding in the one case anger and angry words, in the other the lascivious thought. They are sins of the temper and of the feelings; short-comings through want of charity and good-will, meekness and gentleness, sobriety, courtesy and respect to others especially in the family and towards those who are appointed to rule over us. They are failings in the use of lawful things which are to be used in moderation and temperance, not alone to our own but also to others benefit; denying and limiting ourselves in their use and

avoiding the anxious cares, the restlessness and discontent so often associated with them; above all, in their use, to avoid placing a "stumbling block or an occasion to fall," or "anything whereby thy brother stumbleth or is offended or is made weak."

Failings may result from forgetfulness, often from a lack of watchfulness and prayerfulness, from not walking fully after the spirit and not mortifying and keeping under "the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."

In regard to these failings may we not draw a distinction between the false and the true professor of religion? The one sins through disobedience, he justifies himself, resents reproof and continues in his error; the other laments over it, takes it to heart, freely confesses and seeks with all his powers to avoid it. Is not the manifestation of this humble spirit, and this unchangeable purpose and desire to do right, the readiness to accept reproof and correction, and the willingness to make every satisfaction one of the most distinctive fruits of the christian life? Even here light may shine through weakness.

We are endowed with like gifts and opportunities. In some persons the propensities to evil are stronger and the natural powers of restraint weaker than in others. Some characters are strong and others weak, some even-tempered and some passionate. Our natural dispositions make us neither better nor worse. No one may claim merit for that which he has inherited, and in casting blame there is much to consider. We are responsible for our acts and not for the weaknesses of our nature if we strive to overcome the latter. We consider that in the christian fold we may expect weakness rather than strength, for "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty or noble are called."

These constitutional infirmities do not affect our relation to God, but they never shine in the world. There is a multitude of them; they affect us sensibly. Through them we are attracted by things from without; we may be tempted time and again, and at times influenced perceptibly. We are conscious of the besetment and strive to overcome it but sometimes continue under its influence for a season. We lament the besetting sin; many are the wounds, many and deep the regrets. We may never justify wrong-doing or wrong feeling, or excuse ourselves on the ground of our natural disposition and tendencies, for we know that the least of our sins needs the atonement.

For the buffetings of satan from within and without, for the thoughts that distress and burden, that come unbidden and which we are not able always to control; for the infirmity we feel every day that keeps us from fulfilling perfectly our duties; for bodily, mental and moral disabilities may the words to Paul apply: "My grace is sufficient for thee for in weakness My strength is made perfect."

We have learned, and the scriptures teach, that all unrighteousness is sin; "that in our flesh there dwelleth no good thing," it is sinful, impure, unholy. On the ground of holiness, we must ever feel as the Apostle Paul felt, that the things we would, we do not and the things we would not, we do, if we can say with him, "it is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me." Though we are sinful yet not loving sin or living in it or consenting to it, we are free from condemnation through the atonement, and sin is not imputed; and that which for us is a continual burden may be a means of grace to preserve us in humility and poorness of spirit, to make us forbearing and forgiving, and to enable us to "esteem others better than ourselves."

"Where sin abounded grace did much more abound" and grace triumphs over sin.

Lancaster, Pa.

M. H. M.

RULING OVER SIN

"Sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." Gen. 4: 7.

Our first parents enjoyed the bliss of perfect peace in the garden of Eden, but through the subtlety of the serpent, they were deceived and fell. As a penalty the curse was pronounced upon them. God gave them the promise of a Redeemer, in the woman's seed. At the birth of Cain, Eve rejoiced in the hope that the deliverer had come.

The two sons of Adam and Eve brought offerings unto the Lord, but the spirit in which Cain brought his offering caused it to be rejected, while Abel's was accepted. Bitter envy arose in the heart of Cain and in paternal love the Lord asked him, "Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door, and unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." Gen. 4: 6, 7.

After being reprov'd and commanded to rule over sin Cain, through jealous anger and hatred, slew his brother Abel. Severe condemnation followed the awful transgression. As creatures possessed of a two-fold nature, we realize the presence of inherent sin and are conscious of its baneful influence ever lying at the door of our hearts. Should not every child of God be moved with a deep sense of gratitude for the gift of conscience by which sin can be discerned? May we strive with prayerful hearts to rule over inward sin for we are able to "rule over sin" only when we are willing to allow Christ to rule over us.

The promise was that the head of the serpent should be bruised, the power of satan be conquered, or that he can rule over only those who willingly obey him. It was said the serpent should bruise the heel of the woman's seed, meaning that Christ should conquer satan by suffering.

With the apostle Paul we often beseech the Lord that the thorn in the flesh might depart from us. 2 Cor. 12: 7, 8, 9. God's answer to Paul applies to us: "My grace is sufficient for thee." We cannot be delivered from the conflict with sin while in this body.

How can we know that we are "ruling over sin?" By overcoming evil with good, by loving our enemies and showing deeds of kindness to them, by practicing the meekness and forgiveness which Christ teaches. In simplicity of life and worthy deportment, in being no party to personal strife nor divided worship, by withdrawing from folly, vain display, idle pastime and frivolous conversation, and from litigation and war, and by keeping aloof from corporations and all powers that engage in strife, whether civil or religious, by holding to purity of church and by not bidding Godspeed to any cause, acts or persons not in agreement with God's revealed will we may prove ourselves.

Ephrata, Pa.

S. G. K.

POWER THAT GIVETH SALVATION

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Romans 1: 16.

Paul, whose conversion was so remarkable, introduces the above text with his avowed readiness to preach the Gospel to the believers at Rome also. As Rome was then the world's capitol, the center

of human culture, the seat of the widest, haughtiest despotism which the world has ever seen, he was well aware that to its cultured citizens the cross was foolishness, and was weakness to its power. Yet he was not ashamed of the Gospel of the Cross, for to all who would believe it, whether the Jew to whom it was first offered, or the Greek to whom it was then proclaimed, it was the promise of God's power, for their salvation.

This Gospel was not a new discovery or invention, but the fulfillment of many and great promises given in past ages. The first promise of it was given to Adam and Eve after their fall in Eden; it was the promise of "The woman's seed." After the flood this covenant was again renewed with Noah, next with faithful Abraham, then with Isaac, and with Jacob. This promised redemption centered in Christ who was to come in the fullness of time, through the lineage of David, and who was to be a Redeemer of whose reign and power there should be no end.

At the birth of our Savior this message of Glad Tidings was heralded by the angels. John, the forerunner of Christ, came to prepare the way, and proclaim that Jesus had come to give salvation to all who would believe. Later we read, "That Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom."

"To the Jew first and also to the Greek," these few words are quite significant. They are the sign that a new age had dawned on the world, a period of immeasurable duration, (emanating from, and being directed by God himself). God's righteousness is revealed in His power to give salvation to Jew and Gentile, and even to the whole world, or to all who will embrace it.

What a glorious privilege is ours to enjoy, and what a mistake if we refuse to hear Him who speaks to us through

His grace! It requires but little light to reveal to us our sinful nature, our need of cleansing; even our thoughts are evil continually and we are led to the feet of Jesus for pardon and help to overcome "the sin which doth so easily beset us."

If the repentant sinner comes to Jesus, He will receive him as a loving father welcomes an erring child, and will forgive him his sins, and give him the power of God unto salvation. Faith and power are given only to those who believe. The inward teaching and drawing of the Father, the power given the sinner qualifies him to become a believer, and from henceforth to show the praises of Him who called him from darkness, and who revealed to him the way of life.

While the Christian often has trials and temptations, and gladly would reflect more of the Christ-spirit in his daily walk, he knows his hope of salvation is not dependent upon his good works, his dependency is upon Christ, the Mediator. It is to His mercy-seat that he flees, seeking pardon for his many failings, and asking the power from above to overcome, feeling deeply as a favorite old time hymn expresses it:

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."

But amid all opposition that assails the believer in Christ, from within or without, he is not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, and at times within himself feels strongly and unspeakably the power of God, coming to him as a benediction of peace and comfort. Often when alone, or wrestling with a fierce temptation, or a great sorrow, it brings him a peace and comfort beyond all understanding, and for which he would not exchange anything that this world can give him.

Waynesboro, Pa.

A. S. F.

KEEP THE HEART RIGHT

How can we keep the heart right? By giving it to Christ, who will implant His spirit of love and peace into it. He will give us a change of heart that we will desire not earthly pleasure, but we will long for the life that will lead us to higher planes.

Are we willing to consecrate our lives to Him, and follow the light from heaven, which calls all mankind to walk humbly upon the way of peace and joy? We are plainly taught in His holy gospel, and we may accept the gift of grace freely offered unto all, without money or price.

Have you ever thought of how little we get of this world's goods without money? We pay for the grave to which we return, but grace is free. God gives when we ask. Then why not partake of the life-giving virtue freely offered to us all?

We experience great joy when we accept Christ as the Ruler of our lives. We live right only when we do the things which the Master would have us do, and in doing them we find abiding comfort and peace. Then can we say, "For to me to live is Christ." He invites all to taste the sweetness of His love, which sustains us in all the trials and perplexities we meet in this world. What a strong arm to lean upon for comfort! We can dwell safely in the house of the Lord; and when the Master cometh may our hearts be right! Then we need have no fear to pass through the mists that sometimes obscure the way. We are promised His rod to measure our steps and His staff to lean upon. We shall reap with joy if we faint not. May we each endeavor to "Keep our heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

“ 'Tis what I know of Thee, my Lord, my God,
That fills my heart with peace, my lips with
song;
Thou art my health, my joy, my staff, my rod,
Leaning on Thee, in weakness I am strong.”

Lancaster, Pa.

A. A. G.

GRACE A CONDITION

“Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.” Luke 8: 18.

The sense of the scripture forming our text is to guard us against indifference. By hearing we get an impression on the mind, and our purpose should be to follow correct guidance. We shall be given light if our purpose is right. Righteousness shall prosper and have increase, while false hearing and false purpose have no promise of a blessing. To those that have shall be given. We are told that obedient souls “shall have manifold more in this life.” There shall be increase from the Lord to the faithful. They shall have the wisdom from above, a peace that remains. They add one virtue and grace to another; their lives are useful to strew happiness in their paths and in the paths of others; their conscience gives them rest; their hope is abiding and will not disappoint them.

“From those who have not shall be taken even that which they seem to have.” To seem to have something is not to have it in reality. This condition applies to those who live carnal lives. They seem to have happiness but the words of Christ put their happiness in doubt. He knew the secrets of the heart, and knew that carnal happiness was only a seeming reality. What seems to be their joy He knows to be unsound and trivial compared with the happiness enshrined in the heart garnished with the graces of the Holy Spirit.

The heart devoid of this holy presence is inclined to seek happiness in the service of him whose influence is deceptive and hardening. His wiles are so deceptive that we are told he can transform himself into an angel of light, that if it were possible the very elect should be deceived. In the days of our Savior he appeared in the persons of very zealous worshippers whom He called children of the devil. John 8: 44.

When we resist grace we are exposed to this alarming state. “For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” 2 Thes. 2: 11, 12. Those who obey not truth are like them who sent the message after the gracious nobleman, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” They despised their opportunity. By trifling with grace our conscience may be seared as with a hot iron. 1 Tim. 4: 2. The Savior applied to the people of His time the reproof of the prophet declared over 700 years before to worshippers of that day. “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.” Matt. 15: 8. This is a heart-searching appeal to every one of us who worships!

Lancaster, Pa.

E. H. H.

KNOW THE SCRIPTURES

“Understandeth thou what thou readest?”
Acts 8: 30.

This is an important question. It was asked by Philip who was guided by the Spirit of the Lord to one of great authority, under the queen of Ethiopia, that had come to worship at Jerusalem. He was reading the book of Esaias when Philip asked him the question. He an-

swered, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" Whereupon Philip expounded the prophecy, and "preached unto him Jesus." He believed and desired to be baptized. They came, traveling in the nobleman's chariot, to a certain water, and the question was prompted: "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" The ceremony was performed upon his faith by both going into the water alike, without any intimation of the form of administration.

The Savior says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." This expression means having an earnest desire. He says: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke 11: 13. We read that the disciples did not understand all of their Lord's teaching, but He "opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." Luke 24: 45. The Scriptures cannot be fully understood without the aid of the Holy Spirit. Paul writes of some, who are, "Ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." 2 Tim. 3: 7. O, how sad! Why is this? It is plainly a lack of willingness to follow the light graciously offered.

Let us unite with the entreaty: "Show me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths; lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all day; . . . examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart." Psalms 25: 4, 5; 26: 2. So we all should be minded with a desire to understand and to do the will of our heavenly Father, sanctified by the love of Him who yet intercedes for us!

Columbus Grove, Ohio. J. W. B.

DEATH

Oh! what a conqueror is death,
How quickly he may call;
At his command this mortal breath
Will cease, for one and all.

Oh! angel death thou'rt often kind,
To end the sufferer's woes,
Release from pain, with thee to find
An undisturbed repose.

Oh! earth, to thee we now entrust
This form to us so dear;
The soul has left this house of dust
And dwells no longer here.

Oh! Jesus; Thou canst comfort give
To all who trust in Thee.
Our sainted dead again shall live,
This will our solace be.

Waynesboro, Pa. A. S. F.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said let there be light; and there was light." Gen. 1: 2, 3.

God was preparing the earth as a habitation for living creatures including man, who was to have dominion over all. Of all God's mighty works, light is one of the most wonderful and indispensable. Created beings could not have existed without light to reveal and make manifest unto them the varied things provided for their subsistence and comfort.

The first dawning of light may typify the Mosaic dispensation, which emitted some light to man. The glorious sun was not yet created. This occurred on the fourth day. "God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night; He made the stars also." Gen. 1: 16. This great luminary of the heavens was now the true light of the material world, and it may typify the Sun of Righteousness, Christ Jesus, who is the true light

of the spiritual world. Compared with His light the light shed by the Law is yet darkness or only a light like the moon and the stars in the night. It is testified that "The people which sat in darkness saw great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up." Matt. 4: 16.

The prophet says, "For behold, darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people." Isa. 60: 2. This woeful condition was brought about through the transgression. God, however, promised a means of restoration of the light that had gone out. The advent of Jesus fulfilled the promise. It is proclaimed, "He brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." 2 Tim. 1: 10.

Light and darkness in the material world are directly opposite conditions, for darkness is the absence of light. They are just as opposite in the spiritual world. The Scriptures represent darkness as unrighteousness and sin—separation from God. Light, on the other hand, as righteousness, truth and fellowship with Christ and God. Solomon portrays the two conditions: "The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble." Prov. 4: 18, 19.

To worship God then we must be in the light. For "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." 1 John 1: 5. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." 1 John 1: 6. This blessed light is a free gift from God, but to obtain it we must repent of our sins: we must forsake our selfish carnal life and accept the "life which is hid with Christ in God." Then we experience the spiritual birth; we become new creatures. Formerly we "loved darkness rather than light, because our deeds were evil." John 3: 19. We now come to the light

that "our deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." John 3: 21. We now walk in the light as He is in the light and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. 1 John 1: 7.

To walk in the light is to manifest a life so distinct and separate from the worldly and carnal life, that it is apparent to all. The Apostle says, "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men." 2 Cor. 3: 2. Those who walk in the light separate from all unrighteousness, even from unfaithful worshippers, for the Apostle says, "What communion hath light with darkness." They have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Eph. 5: 11.

In the light of these scripture testimonies should there be any controversy as to who are in the light or who in darkness, or who are worshipping God in spirit and in truth, or who are worshipping "they know not what"?

Is it possible that the human mind can be so deceived and perverted that man is led to believe that he is in the light when he is in darkness? It is possible. The Apostle says, "And no marvel, for satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness." 2 Cor. 11: 14, 15. The power is great to deceive souls who are not willing to accept Jesus, the true light, who said, "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John 8: 12.

To preserve this blessed light in the soul requires watchfulness and prayer, for there is always a conflict with darkness or sinful promptings in the flesh. If faith becomes weak, and love grows cold, the light may become obscured. "Walk while ye have the light, lest dark-

ness come upon you, for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." John 12: 35. If we walk in the light, it will ever reveal to us the weakness of our own works, and the need of grace to enable us to overcome evil promptings and carnal desires. It will keep us meek and lowly in heart and give rest and peace to the soul. It gives promise of the eternal inheritance, of that Celestial City of which it is said: "There shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light and they shall reign forever and ever." Rev. 22: 5. They who remain in darkness, on the other hand, "shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. 8: 12.

Lancaster, Pa.

E. H. W.

THE CHOICE OF SERVICE

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve." Josh. 24: 15.

Our lives are influenced by every choice we make, not only on great occasions nor in serious matters, but in the little every day affairs and interests of life, we choose what we think most desirable. The thoughts we cherish may be looked upon in the same way. Promptings often come from others, but the choice of thought or action rests with us. We may seek the things that are a benefit to the natural life bringing us honor, prosperity and the praise of others, the things that pertain to this world and perish with it; or, we may seek to know God and follow His will as it is revealed to us, even if by this choice we are led into the way of humility and self-denial.

What an inspiration to hear the hearty decision of a champion of the Lord like Joshua! "Choose you this day whom ye will serve, . . . but as for me and my

house we will serve the Lord." He knew without hesitation which way he would take, for in the course of a long life it had been proven to him that the Lord only was worthy of service. Joshua is a notable Bible character much to be admired. It has been said that his was a life on which, in sacred records, no blot rests. His name is significant in this that Joshua and Jesus mean the same, saviour or deliverer. We first learn of him as a co-worker with Moses. He was called his minister. In the brief account we have of Moses going up into the mount to meet God to receive the law Joshua went with him, and he it was who on their coming down first heard the noise of the people as they shouted and danced around the idol they had made in the forty days of waiting for their leader.

In view of past training it is not strange that Joshua was so well fitted to lead the children of Israel into Canaan after Moses' death. Beautiful are the words of God's commission to him: "Be strong and of good courage, be not afraid or dismayed, for the Lord is with thee whithersoever thou goest." The crossing of Jordan, the fall of Jericho, the banishment of the native tribes from the promised land, all attest the quality of Joshua's service and obedience to God. He never faltered in carrying out Divine instruction even though, as in the case of the siege of Jericho, the instruction did not agree with human reason. His last address at Shechem, in which he appealed to Israel to serve God faithfully, forms a worthy close to an exemplary life. He told them they would be witnesses against themselves if in their profession to be God's people they went after other gods. Their answer was "The Lord our God we will serve and His voice we will obey."

Christ in His teachings made it plain that we must decide whom we will serve.

He said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." If we are in possession of faith and a belief in the ways of God it should be easy to see the wisdom of the higher choice.

Life is fraught with serious consequences, the possibilities of good are great, so also are the consequences of evil. It is hard for us to be impressed with the limit of the time given us here. We do not like to be troubled, we would rather drift along without much thought. But this was not God's design in our creation. We are created to serve Him and are accountable. This makes it important that we choose whether, or not, we will be on the Lord's side. Solomon said, "There is a way that seemeth right unto man but the end thereof is death." We must always consider whether the way we take is really God's way. It is not probable that any one would deliberately choose evil, but the failure to choose good is practically the same thing. What we are in time and eternity is shaped by our readiness to accept God's standard of what is best for us. The New Testament teaches that we shall repent of our sins and accept Christ, as our Savior, and live in accordance with the Divine Spirit. We are not capable of rendering any service of ourselves that will save us. Salvation is only by faith in Christ. He died for our sins, and rose for our justification, and is now our Intercessor. It is planned for us that we accept Him and walk in His ways, that we heed the instruction: "Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." We should choose the virtues and graces that accord with holiness and gladly deny ourselves of everything that hinders that practice. It is not once, but many times, yea daily and hourly, that we must declare our alle-

giance to Christ. We must pray for help in all our efforts and believe in His gracious promises. May it always be with us as the prophet Isaiah told his people, "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, this is the way, walk ye in it." Isa. 30: 21.

Chambersburg, Pa.

M. C. S.

CONSISTENCY

"They said He is beside Himself." Mark 3: 21.

The religion we learn through Jesus is either a reality or a vision. Either He was the Christ, the son of the living God, or He was beside Himself. We individually, must decide this.

Some of His teachings are popular; some unpopular. If we accept His religion, it means that we must accept the unpopular as well as the popular; both *that* which we by our finite minds can appreciate and *that* which we can grasp only by faith.

We all realize that He was unusual. His religion is of a reconstructing character. It signifies "a new creature, a new heart, a new birth." Unless we have undergone a change we cannot know the religion of Jesus Christ. If this change has not taken place in us we may be of the same impression that some of His friends were when He was here on earth that "He is beside Himself."

However the inconsistent Christian is the real eccentric. That person is surely beside himself who assumes the name of Christ, and seemingly, is unfamiliar with His message or is unwilling to follow it. We must realize that unless we lose our life and give our affections to eternal things we cannot receive that life which is forevermore.

We cannot deliberately set out to obey the precepts recorded in the New Testament, except through faith in Jesus.

After a change of heart, it will follow as a sequel that we will withdraw from sin. Unless the separation from sinfulness is an inward experience, the outward separation is an illusion. The vital point is not so much what are we to do, but rather that we be obedient to our promptings and that they be consistent with the recorded Word. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate; saith the Lord, etc.," 2 Cor. 6: 17. When the inward separation actually exists and the outward disposition is manifested as a consequence, *this* is consistent. However if this act is only an outward form or practice, it is one of hypocrisy, and worthy of condemnation.

May we be able to deny ourselves of those things which are evil. If we have not the power to overcome self, under no circumstances dare we justify evil. Even though we be considered beside ourselves, let that not trouble us for to be beside one's self for Christ's sake is to be in fellowship with Christ.

Lancaster, Pa.

M. H. B.

A MIRACLE LESSON

"Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." John 6: 26.

How often do men mistake the gift of God for the more transient and perishable things! The Jews did not see in the miracle anything more than an opportunity to advance their temporal condition; and for that Jesus never labored. His miracles were intended to soften the hearts, and prepare them by the witness of His power to receive spiritual instruction and benefit, as were also His parables. But even those who were directly benefitted by His miracles did not always appreciate them nor glorify Him. When the ten lepers were cleansed on their way to shew themselves to the priests, only

one returned to glorify God, and he was a Samaritan. Luke 17: 15. As in the above scripture, the multitudes hoped for more favors; and it is still so. When the worldly-minded see the comforts the true christian receives and enjoys they become imbued with a desire to partake of them also, but instead of coming humbly, with a broken heart and contrite spirit, they come with the expectancy of receiving as a reward for their good deeds, and failing in this they turn with impatience, and follow their own devices; they lose sight of the self-denial they should or must practice for Christ's sake, in their selfish desire to advance their personal interests, and are not willing to pray, "Thy will be done."

The miracle which was the occasion for these words was a truly remarkable one; there was sufficient food for the multitude in the insignificant quantity which they had, because Jesus blessed it. He intended to impress us with faith that when the way is dark before us, or seems to be closed altogether, there is a power within reach which will sustain the redeemed in every trying hour; will give food for the soul, relieve all weariness, give strength to perform all duties, and power to overcome in all the conflicts with the spiritual enemy.

While there was such an abundance for the multitude, yet Jesus commanded to gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost; signifying that we must not waste anything, because it has been hallowed and sanctified by the Son of God, and is therefore too precious to waste. But how little do we heed this example or value the blessings we enjoy! We take, as a matter of course, our privileges and blessings, and are inclined to forget the Giver of all good; we expect from day to day a continuance of mercy, grace, forbearance and love, and might forget that our salvation has been purchased by the blood

of the Son of God. What a loss—what a waste—when such a price has been paid, and no one benefits by it! The miracle was intended for the welfare of men's souls, and they used it only for the comfort of their bodies.

Landisville, Pa.

C. S. N.

BRIEF NOTES

Under the Old Testament dispensation the faithful, who put their trust in the Lord, were never forsaken; neither will they be in the nearer relation to Him in the gospel dispensation. For "He who tamed the Chaldean lions, is mighty still to save."

* * * *

It is only under a realization of our own weakness and inability of ourselves to withstand the subversive and evil influences opposing our righteous endeavors, that the prayer of David becomes our own: "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I!"

* * * *

Obedience to the teaching of God's grace and spirit results in the christian graces becoming manifest in our lives, under all conditions; and in our ever being moved by a sincere desire to "do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

* * * *

The Savior said, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven," and "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also." We can only lay up treasures in heaven by rendering whole-hearted love and service to the Lord our God. It was said, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Also, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Where, then, is our heart, and to whom is our service rendered?

With many there is anxious concern over world-conditions, with its evil forebodings to mighty conflicting powers and forces; but this anxiety and concern is spared the true believers, for they "Trust in the Lord Jehovah," who is able to overrule all for the accomplishment of His ends and purposes, which man may not know. Though a wicked ruler, God's message, delivered to Pharaoh was, "For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might shew in thee my power."

* * * *

As the personality of one through continual association is reflected in the other, so are our thoughts reflected in our lives, and leave their impress on our conversation and conduct in every relation of life, at home and abroad. The Apostle fittingly admonishes to think on the things that are "true, honorable, just, pure, lovely and of good report." All who have passed "from dead works to serve the living God," delight in "thinking on these things," and the influence on their lives is such that they become "an epistle of Christ," "known and read of all men," "written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God."

* * * *

One of the martyrs, who by tortures, threats and fair promises was prevailed upon to recant, when he came to make his recantation as required, began openly and anew to proclaim and confess the truth, deploring that he had allowed himself to be prevailed upon to recant. Being then sentenced and led to the place of execution he walked along so resolutely that when his shoes stuck fast in the mud he hastened on without them, singing for gladness that such abundant grace was now afforded him that he could willingly confess his Lord and Savior. Here is a striking example of the "perfect peace," and the "everlast-

ing strength" which was declared by the Prophet will ever come to those who "Trust in the Lord Jehovah!"

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Is there any excuse for getting angry?

A. No, but it is likely to happen. Our Savior "looked on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." Mark 3: 5. His must have been a compassionate anger. We are taught; "Put away from you anger; . . . be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Anger is sin in the flesh and is to be mortified like every other sin. Evil sometimes momentarily overcomes us that our words are not with grace, but the unction of the Spirit reproves us, and the obedient make amends for all their failings. As we are to "overcome evil with good" there will be no strife.

Q. Is humorous talk a transgression?

A. In Proverbs it is said, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." We are repeatedly taught to edify one another in conversation. The wonderful gift of language should be sacredly used, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Matt. 12: 37.

Q. Do the Scriptures teach about dress?

A. Paul and Peter say women shall not adorn themselves with costly apparel, nor with gold and pearls, but they shall have modest habit. This instruction is by the Holy Spirit and all christians obey it, men as well as women. To disregard it is like neglecting other scriptures. If the principle of display is wrong in dress it is wrong in all things. While there is no saving virtue in any form or ordinance, yet uniformity in dress and ordinance is in line with the fellowship affirmed by scripture. Sim-

plicity in all practices is a principle maintained by all New Testament teachings, as is the principle of unity. "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3: 28.

REFLECTIONS ON THE LORD'S PRAYER

OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN. Our Savior taught His disciples saying, "After this manner pray ye: Our Father which art in Heaven." His disciples who were taught by Him, and who believed, obeyed and followed Him. They believed and received His doctrine. They were the representatives of all who are born of God in all succeeding ages, true spiritual children, born not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God. They only can utter in truth and sincerity this prayer. All who in the unconverted state presume to pray this prayer do plainly utter a falsehood, as did the Scribes and Pharisees whom He reproved as hypocrites, and who said to Christ, "We be not born of fornication, we have one Father, even God. But Christ declared unto them, "Ye are born of your Father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." As long as we delight in sin and live an unregenerate life, we are aliens, not children. We do not in truth love God nor His Son Jesus Christ, as He says, in the same place, "If God were your Father you would love me, for I proceeded forth, and came from God." It is therefore evident that to call upon God and to name Him Our Father, if we are not His children, is a violation of the fourth commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain."

HALLOWED BE THY NAME. By this we may understand, the love, reverence and adoration, which the true child of God feels toward the Heavenly Father. No man knoweth the Son but

the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. It is not until our spiritual eyes are opened, and our understanding spiritually enlightened that we are brought to know the Father; to know Him in His true character and attributes, that is to say, His name, and thus be enabled to render Him that adoration, love, honor, praise, and thanksgiving which is acceptable, because it must emanate from the true spirit and an humble and upright heart rightly exercised by experience. A dutiful child, from a sense of duty and respect will be careful of its conduct, lest it reflect dishonor upon the name and character of its father, and more especially so if the father is kind, affectionate and wise. In like manner a child of God feels bound through divine Love shed abroad in the heart, to hallow God's name by a holy walk, conduct and conversation, separate from the world, not fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind: seeking in all things to pattern after the example of the Son of God who came to deliver us from the guilt and bondage of sin into the glorious liberty of the children of God. It is evident that no unregenerated person is able to utter this prayer in sincerity and truth.

THY KINGDOM COME. Every child of God sincerely seeks for, desires and prays for the establishment of the Kingdom of God, and that Christ the King, to whom all power is given in Heaven and on earth, may be enthroned in the heart. He says, the Kingdom of God is within you, namely the law of love, the law of the Spirit of Christ Jesus—as ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them likewise, to desire and be concerned for the welfare of all men, to be a light and example to all, to seek to direct them in the way of truth and to that source from

whom all good cometh, and to embrace and submit to the blessed yoke of Christ and His Gospel.

THY WILL BE DONE. This is the desire of every child of God who in true childlike faith and trust believes and confides in the promises of His Word. The will of God is beneficent and obedience thereto is our highest good, and will bring us the enjoyment of His richest spiritual blessings. No matter how great our temptations, how severe our tribulations or bitter our sufferings, resignation through faith will bring deliverance, comfort, blessing, joy and peace to the soul, such as no man can take away, and which transcend all the joy, peace and happiness which the earth with all its gifts and treasures can bestow.

IN EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN. As Christ and all the angels in Heaven are subject and obedient to the will of God so His children on earth are to be, and will be in subjection to the Heavenly Father's will, for in the faithful obedience to His will is perfect felicity, peace and safety.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD. Our Lord Jesus Christ is that living Bread that came down from Heaven to give life and spiritual sustenance to man. When the children of Israel journeyed through the waste, howling, wilderness there was no natural sustenance to be found in that desert land through which they were obliged to make their journey to the promised land. The dry and sterile soil could yield no food to feed the journeying multitude of God's people. All must have perished miserably had not God provided, in a miraculous manner, means by which their lives could be preserved, which He also did by a daily supply of manna, that like the dew of heaven descended upon the earth and was found every morning sufficient to supply the wants of every one of that great multi-

tude. Thus the Lord fed and sustained His people, but in this case only as to their natural requirements and wants. This was a figure and type of the Spiritual Bread, namely Jesus Christ, of which believers are privileged to partake and are sustained and preserved in their spiritual life while journeying through the spiritually barren wilderness of this world. The manna which God gave the children of Isreal in the wilderness did not give nourishment to sustain life in the soul. It served only as a sustenance for their natural bodies to preserve their natural lives. For those who were sustained in this manner all died in course of time as Christ said to the Jews, "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread that came down from heaven that a man may eat thereof and not die, I am the living Bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this Bread he shall live forever: and the Bread that I will give is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world." This may be the daily Bread which Christ taught His disciples to desire and pray for. He is the Word that became flesh which He gave for the life of the world, a sacrifice on the tree of the cross. He also is the True Bread, the living word that came down from heaven, as He also said, "As it is written. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live."

FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS. Before one can become a child of God he must become sensible that he is a sinner, in a deplorable state of helplessness, knowing that the wrath of God rests upon him seeing no way of escape, conscious that all his own efforts are of no avail, that he is an insolvent debtor, his liabilities being enormous, contracted by a rebellious life, his assets nothing; the prison

with all its gloom and horrors in prospect, and no hope of succor when finally shut in the gloomy cells! He tries means by which he might hope to escape from his awful state but can see no way. He is undone. He sees his lost condition, but is without means to make restitution or pay his debts. He cries out for mercy, as he realizes that he has nothing to offer to make satisfaction. His morality in which he at one time trusted has become as filthy rags. It will pay no debts before that holy law by which he is judged. He is wholly undone. He humbles himself. He confesses his guilt. He pleads for mercy before the righteous judge of the Holy Law, but this judge is inexorable. The utmost farthing must be paid. In his perplexity, well nigh unto despair, Christ his surety and Savior is revealed to him. He takes courage, he beholds the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. He takes hold of faith; he sees him a dying Savior on the cross who made atonement for his sins; he has found a Friend and a Ransom; he trusts in Him who has fulfilled the stern requirements of the Holy Law which stood against him as an adversary. The blood which he shed washes away the guilty stains which are on his conscience. The filthy rags of his own righteousness are cast away for the pure Robe of Christ's righteousness. Being relieved of the hard yoke of sin he finds the yoke of Christ easy and the burden light, and in obedience he finds rest for his soul. Having experienced mercy the pardoned sinner becomes merciful to others. He has come to know how weak, frail and erring he is, how liable to trespass, and to incur debts; therefore he is forgiving to those who trespass against him, and as he is willing to forgive those who commit faults against him, he prays his Heavenly Father to forgive him his own trespasses.

AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION. The Lord allows us to have manifold trials and temptations, and it is written in Deuteronomy: "That He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee." A child of God will always desire to be preserved against temptation, because of the knowledge of the great weakness, frailty and corruption in the flesh.

DELIVER US FROM EVIL. Evil is ever present. It is without and within. We are surrounded on every side. We are powerless of ourselves to overcome it. This knowledge the child of God has acquired by painful experience. This petition is ever necessary. It is a prayer without ceasing. There is an ever present occasion for it. God alone is our refuge: "A very present help in trouble."

FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOREVER. AMEN. To God is to be ascribed all power. He is the Creator, Upholder and Preserver of all things. He is the God of truth. The faithful God. In Him do His children put all their trust. He has the will and power to fulfill all His rich and precious promises given for the comfort of His children. No matter how great the trial of their faith, even though it waver and tremble like the needle in the compass, for a time, yet will they settle and firmly fix their hope upon Him as their only refuge. They are enabled to say, "From the end of the earth, I will cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I; for Thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in Thy Tabernacle forever: I will trust in the covert of Thy wings."

To our Heavenly Father is ascribed all the Glory, for by Him and in Him "all things consist." Our election, call-

ing, preservation and salvation He has wrought by sending His only begotten Son into the world to suffer and to die for us that we might through Him obtain eternal life. In eternity we shall sing the song of Moses, the servant of God and of the Lamb, saying, "Great are Thy works Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O! Lord, and glorify Thy name. For Thou only art Holy. For all nations shall come and worship before Thee, etc."

In Revelations we read that the four and twenty elders fell down before Him that sat upon the throne and worshipped Him who liveth forever and ever and cast their crowns before the throne saying, "Thou are worthy, Oh Lord, to receive glory, honor and power, for Thou hast created all things and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Amen, so be it." Let our petition come before Thee, and do Thou, graciously and in mercy, grant our prayers according to Thy will.

Waynesboro, Pa.

B. F.

A COMMUNICATION

"To do good and to communicate forget not." Hebrews 13: 16.

To communicate is to share, give or impart of what we have to others. Besides food, clothing and other necessities of life, which those who have are to share with those who have not, there are other things to communicate. These *other things* are the most precious of this life. They cannot be bought and sold or handled as one handles merchandise. Yet their value is above that of gold or silver. They are the treasures of the heart, mind and spirit, without which life would be desolate. They are sympathy, kindness, love, helpful thoughts and ideas, revelations of God's love and mercy to his creatures, faint glimpses of

“the wisdom that passeth understanding.”

Through the columns of “Good Tidings” we now have a new means of imparting to one another these good things. We well know that we all are taught of God—all are in the school of Christ, but, being human, and each one differing from the other in nature, our exercises differ. We each need and receive from our Great Teacher different lessons. Each one of the flock who has a revelation or a thought that has been very helpful to himself or herself has the privilege of putting it into written words, and thus, through “Good Tidings,” sharing its benefits with those who read. Even the least one of us has the opportunity for expression. So I venture:

This thought or question has come to me; no doubt it has come to others also: Do we, of the flock, think or speak enough of our duty to our shepherds? Are we not apt to think more of the duty of the shepherds to the flock? Do we not owe our ministers more than honor and respect? Do we not owe them a duty of practical love?

If we search the Scriptures we find teachings to the effect that we *do* owe them such a duty. St. Paul says in 1 Cor. 9: 14, “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” In Gal. 6: 6. “Let him that is taught in the word *communicate* unto him that teacheth in all good things,” and in 1 Timothy 6: 17, 18, “Charge them that are rich in this world . . . that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to *communicate*.”

I do not advocate paying our ministers salaries. One of them when asked what he thought about being paid, did not approve of it. His sentiments are that receiving a salary would take away from him his freedom of speech. I merely

wish to rouse myself and the laity in general to realize the fact that we have a duty to our ministers.

We, lay members of the church, having no special call to official church-work, are free to give all of our time to our natural callings—to provide for our families, and even to lay by for future needs. We are told—Eph. 4: 28—To work the thing which is good “that we may have to give to him that needeth.” While our ministers, “serving not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind,” 1 Peter 5: 2, regardless of weather conditions, or of what there is to be done at home, must be, and are, ready at all hours of the day and night to respond to calls of spiritual need or distress from within or without the church. In every way they give their time and their best thought and strength in trying to preserve the unity of the household of faith. In so doing their work at home is much interfered with. We all know what that means and in what it results.

Let us then, as children of the household of faith, ask ourselves, “Are we doing our duty to our spiritual householders?” Is there not among us a strong tendency to let the matter rest and think that the Lord will provide for the ministers if they are faithful. So He will. But *how* does He provide? God works through instruments. Each one of us lay members of the church is an instrument which God wishes to use to His honor and to the help and comfort of his ministry. All our so-called worldly possessions, are not really ours, they are God’s. We are merely stewards. We hold them subject to God’s call. God calls us to love, and love is active. Let us then try to be faithful stewards and not forget holders and keepers of what God has permitted us to gather and call our own. Let each one of us, as God has prospered us, consider what is our duty to our ministry.

Those of us who have nothing material to spare can give words of sympathy and appreciation, and perhaps offers of service. If every lay member who has something to spare would each year give only a little, quietly and privately to those of the ministry who have less of this world's goods than we, it would be a material help—more than all, it would be to those to whom it is given, a practical evidence of our appreciation of the self-sacrifice they are making for us and the cause.

Lancaster, Pa.

L. L. F.

OUR HOME

Where we live can matter little,
 Whilst sojourning here below,
 But 'tis how we live determines
 Our eternal weal or woe.

Thus 'twill be at God's tribunal,
 When we're judged at the last day
 Where we lived will not be questioned,
 All that matters is the way.

If we search the hills and mountains,
 Pleasant vales or prairies wide,
 'Tis the same in every nation,
 Wheat and tares grow side by side.

Fort Loudon, Pa.

C. R.

ISRAEL UNDER THE RULE OF JUDGES

Moses had often reminded the children of Israel of God's promise, to be with them and bless them if they were obedient to His will. Before Moses died, he again reminded them of the wonderful things the Lord had done for them. He said they were not only to obey the law, but to teach the words of the Lord to their children and to their children's children, that it might never be forgotten.

A blessing and a curse were set before them, a blessing if they were obedi-

ent and a curse if they disobeyed God's word. Joshua too, repeated the instructions given Moses and the people promised obedience. They were told to drive out the wicked and idolatrous nations, destroy their idols and never make covenants of peace with them.

They were obedient for a little while, but soon forgot their promise. They left some of the idolatrous nations remain in the land. The Lord was displeased by their disobedience and told them, that these idolaters would be as thorns in their sides, and their idols would prove to be a snare unto them. This caused the Israelites great sorrow and they wept.

But it was not long until the words of the Lord were forgotten. They made friends with the nations they were told to destroy. The men of Israel took heathen wives, and the daughters of Israel married heathen men. It was not long until the Israelites too were worshipping Baal and Ashtaroth, as two of their idols were named.

We would think that the children of Israel would have long remembered God's goodness, in leading them out of Egypt, where they had been so greatly oppressed and so cruelly treated. From that oppression they could never have rescued themselves. Neither should they have forgotten the solemn promise made to Joshua, that they would serve and obey the Lord.

But in this time Joshua had died, and probably another generation had succeeded those who remembered Joshua. We must not forget, that they were surrounded by idol worshippers, and from what we know of the world at that time, the Israelites were the only people who knew of the Lord, and who did not worship idols. The tabernacle which had been set up at Shiloh, was far from any of their homes and they neglected going there to worship the Lord, and as there

were idols all about them they began to worship with the heathen.

The anger of the Lord was hot against them and He allowed their enemies to rise against them and make them servants. When the Lord left them to themselves they were helpless. The Power that before had protected them when they were obedient, was now turned against them on account of their disobedience. Not only was the Lord no more with them, but the Lord was against them.

When they were made subject to their enemies, and were in great distress they remembered the Lord and called upon Him for help. They knew trouble was the punishment for their sins, and they also knew there was One able and willing to deliver them from their enemies, if they would but turn to Him.

In mercy the Lord would then raise up one of their number to lead them and deliver them from their enemies. These leaders, or rulers were called Judges. They were not chosen by the people and they had no power to make or change the laws, given by the Lord to Moses, but were to carry out the law under the direction of the Lord. These Judges were raised up on extraordinary occasions to be instruments in God's hands to deliver them.

For three hundred years after the death of Joshua, the Israelites were ruled by Judges. Othniel was the first of the Judges and the Lord blessed his rule, so that the people had rest for forty years. After the death of Othniel the people again did wickedly, and the Lord allowed the Moabites, the very nation whom the Israelites had imitated in their idol worship, to become their oppressors. They served the Moabites for eighteen years.

Then Ehud, another Judge was raised for their deliverance. He overcame the Moabites and there was rest again for

many years in Israel. After his death when the people again did wickedly they were overcome by the Canaanites. All the northern tribes in the land of Israel fell under the power of King Jabin, and his general, Sisera. The people were in great distress and called upon the Lord. When we read of their lapses into idolatry and the corrupt state of the nation, it does not appear that all had become idolatrous. There were yet some faithful ones who maintained allegiance to the one God above. This seems to have been the case in all ages. The Lord had His witnesses.

One of these was Deborah, a prophetess. Her knowledge of the law, led the Israelites to go to her for counsel and help. She was a Judge, the first and only woman mentioned as a Judge in Israel. She did not rule by force, but all believed the spirit of the Lord was with her.

Deborah called Barak, as her general, to go against the Canaanites and set his people free. He refused to go unless Deborah went with him. She went with him and Barak gained a complete victory. Sisera, the general of the Canaanites, was slain by Jael a woman. After this the land had rest for many years. Deborah and Barak sang a triumphant song of praise to the Lord for their deliverance, saying, "Let them that love Thee, be as the sun that goeth forth in his might."

After Deborah's death the people again did wickedly. To punish them the Lord allowed the Midianites to ravage their whole land and to rob them of their food, their fruit and their cattle. They were compelled to hide in caves to get away from their enemies. If they raised any food, they had to hide it for fear it would be taken from them.

They again turned to the Lord for help, and Gideon, the son of Joash was appointed as Judge. The story of

Gideon is very interesting. When I write again I will tell you of him.

Hagerstown, Md.

E. V. L.

A CHILD'S STORY

My dear little children: I believe you would like to hear a Christmas story. Hundreds of years ago in a far off country there was something most wonderful happened.

One night some sheperds were watching their sheep. The stars were shining brightly in the blue sky, and everything was calm and quiet. Those shepherds did not dare to go to sleep for fear that a bear or a wolf might come out of the woods, and spring upon one of the little lambs or even a sheep, and carry it away. The shepherds were great strong men, wearing coarse clothes, and carrying sticks called shepherd's crooks in their hands. I always think of them being very kind men, for we read of them carrying the little lambs in their bosoms, I have heard that when they wanted to take the flocks to another place of pasture they would carry a little lamb in their arms and the mother sheep would follow closely to watch what was done with the little lamb, then as the habit of sheep is, the rest of the flock would follow, and in this way the whole flock could be moved without trouble.

Have you ever thought what a peculiar and beautiful animal a sheep is? they are not ferocious and will not bite or try to defend themselves, if they are chased by a dog or wolf they run to get away and try to hide. Even our Savior, when here on earth compared His followers to sheep, and told them if they were treated cruelly in one city they should flee to another.

But while those shepherds were watching their flocks all of a sudden a wonder-

ful light shone around them, and they saw a beautiful angel coming in the sky, and they were afraid. But the angel said to them "Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

Then suddenly there was with the angel a great many angels, and it seemed as if the whole sky was filled with them, all singing those most beautiful words, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Do we not sometimes wish we could have heard those angel voices? But if we love and follow the Savior's words and example we can hope to enjoy even more than this when we reach our heavenly home above.

When the singing ceased, and the light in heaven faded away, those shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." And they found the babe lying in a manger, wrapped round and round in soft pieces of muslin, swaddling clothes they are called, just as the angel had told them. Then they knew that this was indeed the Christ that had come to open up a new way for all that will come and follow Him and give us a hope of going to heaven when we die.

This is why we all rejoice when Christmas comes, it is the anniversary of Christ's birth, and as we grow older we will see more and more why His coming to earth has been such a wonderful blessing to the whole world.

Waynesboro, Pa.

A. S. F.