

Ellen G. White 1882 Sign of The Times

January 5, 1882

A Happy New Year

Another year of life is now in the past. A new year is opening before us. What will be its record? What will we each inscribe upon its spotless pages? The manner in which we spend each passing day will decide this question. Fathers and mothers, while you wish your children a Happy New Year, will you strive in the fear of God to make it a happy year? Will you seek to lead your dear ones to the true source of peace and joy? Will you consecrate your own hearts to God, that you may exert a sanctifying influence upon your children? Will you separate them from sin and sinners, and by living faith connect them with God?

It should be the work of every parent to cultivate all that is good, and true, and noble, in his children. It is his duty to correct their faults, to restrain their waywardness, even as the Lord required Eli to restrain his sons. Fathers and mothers, make the word of God your guide in the education of your children, ever considering what will be for their future good, rather than what is for your present convenience. The mother may bestow upon her daughters an education that will be invaluable, by training them to bear their share of the family burdens. The father may give his sons a capital of more worth than gold or lands, by teaching them to love useful employment, instead of seeking happiness in idle amusements or dissipation. Parents, now is the time to form in your children habits of industry, self-reliance, and self-control; to cultivate economy and business tact. Now is the time to teach them courtesy and benevolence toward their fellow-men, and reverence and love for God.

You may make a happy new year for your children, if you faithfully discharge your duty. Home should be the most sunny and attractive spot on earth; and it may be made such by pleasant words and kind acts, and, underlying all, a steadfast adherence to the right.

By their neglect to exercise proper restraint, many parents are creating great unhappiness for their children. The youth who are left to constantly seek for pleasure in amusement or selfish gratification are not happy, and never can be happy while following this course. Fathers and mothers, teach your children that the only way to be truly happy is to love and fear God; and enforce the lesson by your example. Let them see that the peace of Christ is ruling in your heart, and that his love pervades your life. Practical religion is the need of the present hour. You cannot teach this to your children unless you possess it yourselves.

Let us enter upon the new year with our hearts cleansed from the defilement of selfishness and pride. Let us put away every sinful indulgence, and seek to become faithful, diligent learners in the school of Christ. A new year opens its unsullied pages before us. What shall we write upon them?

Children, you greet your father and mother with a "Happy New Year," but will you make it a happy year to them? It is in your power to do this. Your conduct, more than everything besides, will make a happy or an unhappy year for your parents. You may cause their hearts to throb with joy or pain. Whatever

dishonors your Saviour, whatever causes a stain upon your character, brings anxiety and distress to the heart of godly parents. You cannot give them a happy new year if you live only for self-gratification.

Seek to begin this year with right purposes and pure motives, as beings who are accountable to God. Ever bear in mind that your acts are daily passing into history by the pen of the recording angel. You must meet them again when the Judgment shall sit and the books shall be opened.

How often your lips utter the kindly greeting, "I wish you a happy new year," and then in a few moments speak impatient, fretful words. How many children are ever ready to dispute about trifles, unwilling to make the smallest sacrifice for others. To such the new year will bring no real happiness. They may indulge in boisterous mirth, but their hearts know no peace nor joy. Will you not come with penitence and humility to Jesus, that he may cleanse you from the impurity of sin, and fit you for his heavenly kingdom? All who do this will have the happiest new year that they ever experienced. It will bring joy in Heaven and joy on earth.

Many have been seeking some rare gift to bestow upon their friends. Will you not, children, bring to Jesus the gift which he prizes above all others—the gift of your heart? While others at the holiday season adorn themselves to please the eye of their friends, will you not seek the adorning which Heaven values—the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit? If we bring to God the first gift, the value of every other is enhanced; for love makes it not merely a passing compliment, but a precious offering. From the softened heart in which the peace of Christ abides, will flow forth sincere wishes, kindly words and deeds, and worthy, appropriate offerings.

Many are the gifts and greetings that have been exchanged on New Year's day, by parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, friends and acquaintances. When it is over, many feel a sense of relief. They have discharged their duty in bestowing presents, and smiles, and compliments for the occasion, and there the matter is supposed to end. The next day, and the next, and onward to the end of the year, bring fretful, passionate words, faultfinding, recrimination, and careless neglect of the dear ones of the household. Oh, such a new year is one that angels will be grieved and ashamed to register. It is anything but happy. Friends and relatives bestow a gift of sorrow, a burden of unkindness, that crushes out hope, and makes the grave look desirable.

Do we truly wish our loved ones a happy new year? Then let us make it such to them by kindness, by sympathy, by cheerfulness, by unselfish devotion. If we connect with God, the source of peace, and light, and truth, his Spirit will flow through us as a channel, to refresh and bless all around us. This may be the last year of life to us. Shall we not enter upon it with thoughtful consideration? Shall not sincerity, respect, benevolence, mark our deportment toward all?

Let us withhold nothing from Him who gave his precious life for us. Fathers and mothers, bring to him your children, in the freshness and bloom of youth, and devote them to his service. Let us all consecrate to God the property he has intrusted to us. Above all, let us give him ourselves, a free-will offering. Let us do his will, live for his glory, and he will give us a Happy New Year.

January 12, 1882

The Ark in Philistia

The loss of the ark was the heaviest blow which had fallen upon Israel since their establishment as a nation. Unfaithful to God as they had been, they still regarded this sacred symbol with awe and reverence, not unmingled with pride, as they recalled the glorious triumphs of the past. The tidings that it had been taken by the Philistines sent a thrill of terror through every heart, followed by the mute calmness of despair. Military power, could they command it, would not avail them now; and the strength of their men of war seemed paralyzed.

But the Lord had not wholly cast aside his chosen, nor would he long suffer the exultation of the heathen. He had used the Philistines as the instrument to punish Israel, and he would now employ the ark to punish the Philistines. In time past the divine presence had attended it to be the strength, salvation, and glory of his obedient people. That invisible presence would still attend it to bring terror and destruction to the bold transgressors of God's holy law.

The Philistines removed the ark in triumph to Ashdod, one of their five principal cities, and placed it in the house of their god, Dagon. They felt that now they had nothing to fear from Israel. In their superstitious ignorance they imagined that the mighty power which had hitherto attended the ark would be theirs, and this, united with the power of Dagon, would render them invincible. Attributing their success wholly to the favor of their god, they sought to show their gratitude by the most extravagant demonstrations of reverence and praise.

Their rejoicing was of short duration. Upon entering the temple on the following day, they beheld a sight which filled them with consternation. Dagon their god had fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of Jehovah. Reverently the priests lifted the idol and restored him to his place. But the next morning they found him, strangely mutilated, again lying upon the earth before the ark. The upper part of this idol was like that of a man, and the lower part was in the likeness of a fish. Now every part that resembled the human form had been cut off, and only the uncouth body of the fish remained.

Priests and people were horror-struck as they beheld their cherished deity thus mutilated and dishonored. They looked upon this mysterious event as an evil omen foreboding destruction to themselves and their idols before the God of the Hebrews. They now removed the ark from their temple, and placed it in a building by itself.

The living God whom the Philistines had insulted and defied, had arisen to assert his authority and manifest his power. The divine judgments rested heavily upon Ashdod, and the inhabitants were smitten with a distressing and fatal disease. Remembering the plagues which were visited upon Egypt by the God of Israel, the people attributed their afflictions to the presence of the ark among them. Accordingly they assembled their leading men to consider what to do with the ark, declaring that it should no longer abide with them. It was decided to convey it to Gath. But the plague followed close upon its removal, and the men of that city sent it to Ekron.

Here the people received it with terror, crying, "They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people." They sought to their gods for protection, as the people of Gath and

Ashdod had done. But the work of the destroyer went on, until, in their distress, “the cry of the city went up to heaven.” Fearing longer to retain the ark among the homes of men, the people next placed it in the open fields. There followed a plague of mice, which infested the land, destroying the products of the soil, both in the storehouse and in the field. Utter destruction, by disease or famine, now threatened the nation, and gloomy forebodings for the future added to the heavy burden of the present.

In his dealings with the Philistines, God had shown how easily at his appointed time he can overthrow the stronghold of superstition, and sweep away the refuge of lies. The Lord often employs his bitterest enemies to punish the unfaithfulness of his professed people. The wicked may triumph for a time as they see Israel suffering chastisement; but let them be assured that the wrath of God will ere long fall with crushing weight upon themselves. However the sinner may now rejoice in the rewards of unrighteousness, the blind eyes will yet see, the hard heart one day fell, that a life of rebellion against God has been a terrible mistake.

For seven long months the ark remained in Philistia. During all this time the Israelites made no attempt to recover the symbol of Jehovah's presence. But the Philistines were now as anxious to free themselves from its power as they had been to obtain it. Instead of being a source of strength to them, it was a great burden and a heavy curse. Yet they knew not what course to pursue; for wherever it went, the judgments of God followed. The people called for the princes of the nation, with the priests and diviners, and eagerly inquired, “What shall we do to the ark of the Lord? Tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place.” They were advised to return it with a costly trespass-offering, that the wrath of God might be appeased. “Then,” said the priests, “ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you.”

In India at the present day, when a pilgrim comes to a pagoda or temple to be cured of any disease, he invariably brings with him a figure of the member or part affected, in gold, silver, or copper, according to his means, and presents it as an offering to his god. A similar custom was in vogue among the Philistines; and in accordance with the prevailing superstition, the lords directed the people to make representations of the plagues by which they had been afflicted,—“five golden emerods, and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines; for,” said they, “one plague was on you all, and on your lords.”

These wise men acknowledged a mysterious power accompanying the ark; a power which they had no wisdom to meet. Yet they did not counsel the people to turn from their idolatry to serve the Lord. They still hated the God of Israel though compelled by overwhelming judgments to submit to his authority. Thus sinners may still be convinced by the judgments of God that it is in vain to contend against him. They may be compelled to submit to his power, while at heart they rebel against his control. Such submission may honor God, but it can have no power to save the transgressor. The heart must be yielded to God and subdued by divine grace before man's repentance can be accepted.

We are filled with wonder as we contemplate the long-suffering of God toward the wicked. The idolatrous Philistines and backsliding Israel had alike enjoyed the gifts of his providence. Rain and sunshine, objects of beauty, gifts for sustenance,—the music of birds, the fragrance and loveliness of

flowers, fruits without number, pleasant to the sight and good for food, golden harvests to clothe the plain and cattle upon the hills—all came to them from God. Ten thousand unnoticed mercies were silently falling in the pathway of ungrateful, rebellious men. Every blessing spoke to them of the Giver, but they were indifferent to his love. The forbearance of God was very great toward the children of men; but when they stubbornly persisted in their impenitence, he removed from them his protecting hand. They refused to listen to the voice of God in his created works, and in the warnings, counsels, and reproofs of his word, and he spoke to them through judgments. They rejected mercy, and the great I Am caused them to feel his power.

How many there are today, who, like the Philistines, will present offerings to God, but refuse to give him their hearts, and cast away their idols. How many with idolatrous delight set their affections on sparkling vanities, that must ere long be consumed, turning away from the only treasure worth possessing.

God still bears long with the wicked. He still surrounds them with temporal blessings. It is his hand that provides the bounties upon their tables. He gives them raiment and dwellings. There are rich fields for the harvest; there are flocks and herds, gold and silver, friends and health. Let God but remove his providential care, and what want, desolation, and inexpressible wretchedness would result! A blight would come upon the fields, every creature that ministers to our comfort would perish, and man himself would be swept from the earth as by a devouring plague. And yet men enjoy God's blessings, and, like the soulless beasts, return to him no grateful acknowledgment. They feel secure in their possessions, when a word, a breath, the slightest accident, might deprive them of their earthly all. No bounty or blessing can men claim as their own. All are committed to us as a trust, which, if not wisely improved, God will remove.

The Philistines hoped by their offerings to appease the wrath of God, but they were ignorant of the one great sacrifice which alone can secure to sinful men the divine favor. Those gifts were powerless to atone for sin; for the offerers did not through them express faith in Christ. Not a ray of hope, no proffer of mercy, no token of God's favor, could have been ours, but for the cross of Calvary. Justice must have cut men off forever from temporal and spiritual blessings, separating us from God both here and hereafter, closing the door to all the joys of earth, and forever shutting out the brightness of Heaven. For us, Jesus trod the wine-press of God's wrath. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Let every son and daughter of Adam unite to exalt the name of Christ, as our King and our Redeemer. "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

January 12, 1882

The Missionary

Among the Churches

Petaluma

November 25, I left Oakland for Petaluma, and found a pleasant home with the family of Bro. Chapman, where I have ever been heartily welcomed. On the Sabbath I spoke with freedom to the little company who reverence God's holy day and assemble for his worship. A social meeting followed, in which sixteen testimonies were borne. We realized that the Lord's presence is not confined to large assemblies, but that where two or three are gathered in his name, he meets with them. All seemed strengthened and encouraged. I felt the sweet peace of Christ, the consolation of his Spirit. I was in feeble health, but the precious evidence of the favor of God, more than repaid me for the effort made.

Would that our smaller churches could be more often visited. The faithful ones, who stand firmly in defense of the truth, would be cheered and strengthened by the testimony of their brethren. The few standard bearers at Petaluma have had much to contend with; unruly, rebellious spirits have done their utmost to discourage all who would maintain the truth in righteousness. But these discordant elements have separated from the church. They went out from us, because they were not of us. Those who now meet from Sabbath to Sabbath are at peace with one another, and in harmony with the work of God.

Our gracious Redeemer looked down the stream of time, and beheld the perils that would in the last days surround his chosen. For our encouragement he declares, in the words of the prophet Malachi: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

If the members of the church labor faithfully to build up the cause of truth, they will not escape the tongue of gossip, falsehood, and slander. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Their consistent, unwavering course is a constant rebuke of the unbelief, pride, and selfishness of the hypocritical professor.

Their prayers and admonitions disturb his worldly ambition, and he endeavors to cast reproach upon the faithful followers of Jesus. He will garble, distort, and misrepresent facts, in the same spirit that actuated the Pharisees in their opposition to Christ.

Jesus does not lose sight of his people who have so many discouragements to encounter. It requires little effort to float with the popular current, but those who would gain the immortal shores must struggle against wind and tide. There is a form of Christianity—a spurious article—which has no reformatory energy. Its possessors delight to oppose and decry the faith of others. Their religion is not seen in the marketplace, in the family, or in the workshop. Their religious experience runs in the corrupt channel of the world.

The true follower of Christ should not be dismayed at receiving reproach from this class. Said the beloved apostle, "Marvel not, my brethren, that the world hate you." And our Saviour reminds his disciples, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." Those who are faithful to God will not be harmed by reproach or opposition. Nay, rather, virtues will thus be developed that will not flourish in the sunshine of prosperity. Faith, patience, meekness, and love will bud and blossom amid clouds and darkness.

The members of the church should individually keep the light of God's love brightly burning in their own souls, that it may also shine forth to others. We have too much at stake to allow spiritual lethargy to creep over us. Let us beware of indulging a disrelish for religious services and religious duties. Let us resolutely battle against that sluggishness of soul which is so fatal to the growth and even the life of the Christian.

That church will be healthy and prosperous whose members are putting forth active, personal effort to do good to others, to save souls. This will be a constant incentive to every good work. Such Christians will labor with greater earnestness to secure their own salvation. The dormant energies will be aroused, the whole soul inspired with an unconquerable determination to win the Saviour's plaudit of "Well done," and to wear the victor's crown.

I would encourage those who assemble in little companies to worship God. Brethren and sisters, be not disheartened because you are so few in number. The tree that stands alone upon the plain, strikes its roots deeper into the earth, spreads out its branches farther on every side, and grows stronger and more symmetrical while wrestling singly with the tempest or rejoicing in the sunshine. So the Christian, cut off from earthly dependence, may learn to rely wholly upon God, and may gain strength and courage from every conflict.

May the Lord bless the scattered and lonely ones, and make them efficient workers for him. The Christian should not be content to be merely an active man of business. He should not be so absorbed in worldly affairs as to have scarcely a spare moment or a thought for recreation or friendship, for the good of others, for the culture of the mind, or the welfare of the soul. Energy and diligence in business are commendable, but these should not lead us to neglect that love for God and man which the Bible enjoins.

Would that we all could remember that worldlings feel at liberty to watch and criticise the professed followers of Christ. Our course in temporal matters, our conduct toward one another, is commented upon with keenness and severity. What we say in the church is not of so great consequence as our deportment in the home circle and among our neighbors. The kindly word, the thoughtful act, true politeness and hospitality, will constantly exert an influence in favor of the Christian religion. Let not the testimony be borne concerning any of us, "Religion has made them no better. They are as self-indulgent, as worldly, as sharp in trade, as ever." All who bear such fruit scatter from Christ, instead of gathering with him. They place obstacles in the way of those whom they might by a consistent course have won to Jesus. It is our duty as Christians to give to the world unmistakable evidence that we are obeying the great commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," which is the same as our Saviour's golden rule, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

God bless the church at Petaluma. Brethren, do not forget the wants of these small and isolated companies. Christ will be found a guest at their little gatherings.

E. G. White.

January 19, 1882

The Ark Restored

When it was proposed among the Philistines to return the ark to its own land, there were some who stood ready to oppose the plan. Such an acknowledgment of the power of Israel's God would be deeply humiliating to the pride of Philistia; some way to evade it was eagerly sought. Many urged that none would dare risk their lives in removing that which had brought such destruction upon the land. Still others denied that their calamities had been caused by the ark, and protested against surrendering so famed a trophy.

The "priests and diviners," whose counsel had been sought on this occasion, admonished the people not to imitate the stubbornness of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and thus bring upon themselves still greater afflictions. A plan in which all concurred, was now proposed, and immediately put in execution. The ark, with the golden trespass-offering, was placed upon a new cart, thus precluding all danger of defilement; to this cart, or car, were attached two kine, upon whose necks a yoke had never before been placed. Then, their calves having been tied up at home, the cows were left free to go wherever they pleased. If the ark should thus be returned to the Israelites by the way of Beth-shemesh, the nearest city of the Levites, "then," said the Philistines, "the God of Israel hath done unto us this great evil; but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us."

No sooner were the kine set free than they turned from their young, and, lowing as they went, took the straight road to Beth-shemesh. Guided by no human hand, the patient animals kept on their way. The Divine Presence accompanied the ark, and it passed safely on to the very place designated.

It was now the time of wheat harvest, and the men of Beth-shemesh were reaping in the valley. With great joy they beheld the ark approaching; and when the kine of their own accord stopped near a great stone, some of the Levites present offered them up as a sacrifice to the Lord, the cart itself being used as fuel for the burnt-offering.

The lords of the Philistines, who had followed the ark to the border of Beth-shemesh, and had witnessed its reception, now returned to Ekron. The plague had ceased, and they were convinced that their calamities had been a judgment from the God of Israel.

The men of Beth-shemesh quickly spread the glad tidings that the ark was in their possession, and the people from all the surrounding country flocked to welcome its return. The ark had been placed upon the stone which first served for an altar, and before it additional sacrifices were offered unto the Lord. Had the worshipers, with penitence and humiliation, put away their sins, the divine blessing would have attended them. But they were not faithfully obeying the law of God; hence, while they rejoiced at the return of the ark as a harbinger of good, they could have no true sense of its sacredness as the repository of that law. Instead of preparing a suitable place for the reception of the ark, they permitted it to remain in the harvest-field. As they continued to gaze upon the sacred chest, and to talk of the wonderful manner in which it had been restored, they began to conjecture wherein lay its peculiar power. At last, overcome by curiosity, they removed the coverings and ventured to open it. Their joy was quickly changed to mourning.

All Israel had been taught to regard the ark with awe and reverence. When required to remove it from place to place, the Levites were not to so much as look upon it. Only once a year was the high priest permitted to behold the ark of God. The heathen Philistines had not dared even to remove its coverings. Angels of Heaven, unseen, ever attended it in all its journeyings. The irreverent daring of the people at Beth-shemesh aroused the anger of the Lord, and a great number were instantly destroyed.

The terror of the survivors was equaled only by their former presumption. Yet they were not led by this judgment to repent of their sin, but only to regard the ark with superstitious fear. Eager to be freed from its presence, yet not daring to remove it, the Bethshemites sent a message to the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim, inviting them to take it away. They consented, and the ark was accordingly removed.

The spirit of irreverent curiosity still exists among the children of men. Many are eager to investigate those mysteries which infinite wisdom has seen fit to leave unrevealed. Having no reliable evidence from which to reason, they base their theories on conjecture. The Lord has wrought for his servants and for the upbuilding of his cause at the present day as verily as he wrought in behalf of ancient Israel; but vain philosophy, "science falsely so called," has sought to destroy faith in the direct interposition of Providence, attributing all such manifestations to natural causes. This is the sophistry of Satan. He is asserting his authority by mighty signs and wonders in the earth. Those who ignore or deny the special evidences of God's power, are preparing the way for the arch-deceiver to exalt himself before the people as superior to the God of Israel.

Many accept the reasoning of these would-be wise men as truth, when in fact it undermines the very foundations which God has laid. Such teachers are the ones described by inspiration, who must become fools in their own estimation, that they may be wise. God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise. By those who are guided only by human wisdom, the simplicity of his mighty workings is called foolishness. They think themselves wiser than their Creator, when in fact they are victims of finite ignorance and childish conceit. It is this that holds them in the darkness of unbelief, so that they do not discern the power of God, and tremble before him.

Though the ark had brought judgments both upon the inhabitants of Philistia and of Beth-shemesh, yet the men of Kirjath-jearim welcomed it with joy. They knew that while it was a precursor of wrath to the transgressor of God's law, it was the pledge of divine favor to the obedient and faithful. With solemn gladness they brought it to their city, and placed it in the house of Abinadab, a Levite. This man appointed his son Eleazar to take charge of it, to see that it was kept from injury or pollution. Thus it remained for many years.

The Israelites as a nation still continued in a state of irreligion and idolatry, and as a punishment they remained in subjection to the Philistines. During this time Samuel, who was already recognized as a prophet, visited cities and villages throughout the land, seeking to turn the hearts of the people to the God of their fathers. He faithfully set before them the claims of the divine law and their sin in transgressing its precepts, the long-suffering and mercy of God, and his assurance of favor to those who confess and forsake their sins.

These efforts were not without good results. The hearts of the faithful were encouraged, and apostates were led to return to the Lord. The mirror of God's law, held up before the sinner, gives him a correct view of his own character. The greater the reverence felt for that law, the keener will be the sense of condemnation on account of sin. Every willful transgression is an act of rebellion against its Author. Every one who assumes this attitude, is by his practice saying to the people, "The requirements of God are exacting and severe, a yoke of bondage. Let us break this yoke from off our necks, and be at liberty."

The law of God was not given to the Jews alone. It is of world-wide and perpetual obligation. "He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all." Its ten precepts are like a chain of ten links. If one link is broken, the chain becomes worthless. Not a single precept can be revoked or changed to save the transgressor. While families and nations exist; while property, life, and character must be guarded; while good and evil are antagonistic, and a blessing or a curse must follow the acts of men—so long must the divine law control us. When God no longer requires men to love him supremely, to reverence his name, and to keep holy the Sabbath; when he permits them to disregard the rights of their fellow-men, to hate and injure one another—then and not till then, will the moral law lose its force.

January 19, 1882

The Missionary

Among the Churches

Healdsburg

After leaving Petaluma, I visited the church at Healdsburg. Accompanied by Sr. Rogers, I made the journey with my own horse and carriage, hoping thus to receive benefit healthwise. After a ride of thirty-three miles, we were warmly welcomed to the home of Bro. and Sr. Harmon. These friends furnished me a convenient room, where I could write or rest undisturbed, and did all in their power for my health and happiness.

I was far from well, yet felt a duty to write upon important matters that would not admit of delay. Being unable to sleep more than a few hours at night, I would rise at three A.M. and write by lamplight. Such a strain upon mind and body could not be long endured. Intense pain in my eyes soon compelled me to lay aside my writing.

This was a severe trial. My thoughts seemed consuming me. I felt an unceasing anxiety for the cause of God, especially for the institutions which his own hand has established. There is a great lack of spiritual life among us. Religious declension is seen and felt everywhere. As the faithful standard-bearers fall at their post, who will come up to fill their place, and to work with unselfish interest in the cause of God? As I thought of these things, my soul was troubled day and night. I felt the need of my husband's help. The future looked dark and lonely. Weighed down by disease and by a heavier burden of care, anxiety, and sorrow, I knew that unless the Lord should come to my help, and the balm of Gilead should be applied to soul and body, I could no longer labor.

Yet the thought of becoming useless was too terrible to be entertained for a moment. It seemed to me that death would be preferable. Satan was determined that my testimony of warning, encouragement, and reproof, should not reach the people. I felt urged to go forward, but seemed powerless. Night after night I dreamed that my husband and myself were laboring together to bring souls to Christ, and awoke to find that I was alone, wrestling with the powers of darkness. Oh, how I longed for rest in Christ! I thought how he once hushed the tempest-tossed waves of Galilee, and I prayed that his voice might speak peace to my soul. I humbled myself before God, and earnestly presented my petitions at the throne of grace. My faith was tried to the utmost. I received no direct evidence that my prayers were answered, but I decided to go to work as though I had received the help so greatly needed.

On the Sabbath I attended meeting, trusting in God for support. In speaking to the church, I was comforted and refreshed. The Lord gave me peace and rest in him. I felt burdened for the youth, and my words were addressed especially to them. They listened attentively, with serious faces and tearful eyes. At the close of my remarks I requested all who wished to become Christians to come forward. Thirteen responded. These were all children and youth, from eight to fifteen years of age, who thus manifested their determination to begin a new life. Such a sight was enough to soften the hardest heart. The brethren and sisters, especially the parents of the children, seemed to feel deeply. Christ has told us that there is joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth. Angels were looking with gladness upon this scene. Nearly all who came forward spoke in a few words of their hope and determination. Such testimonies ascend like incense to the throne of God. All hearts felt that this was a precious season. The presence of God was with us.

I sought to impress upon fathers and mothers their duty to lead these inexperienced youth into the path cast up for the ransomed of the Lord. They now need special care and tenderness and earnest prayer. In the Christian life they have everything to learn, and they should daily have patient, faithful instruction. The young cannot be gained to the service of Christ by faultfinding or compulsion. They must be won by love. This requires time and effort. Parents must arouse from their carnal security. They cannot afford to waste precious hours in dress and gossip. They must close their ears to the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. They must begin in earnest to work for Christ—begin to be missionaries at home, themselves closely following in the Saviour's footsteps, that they may give a right example to their children.

Fathers and mothers, will you not make this effort to save the souls of your loved ones? Have you not a sufficient incentive? Is not this work of infinitely greater consequence than your temporal affairs? To gain the whole world would be no compensation for the loss of a soul. You need daily the spirit which moved our Saviour to come to earth to suffer and to die for us. He wept and agonized and prayed, that lost man might be redeemed. What will you do to save your own souls and the souls of your dear children?

There is need of earnestness and zeal in this work. The juvenile depravity which is everywhere so painfully apparent, spurning restraint and defying law, should arouse every parent to decided, effectual action. The corrupting influences in our great cities should alarm us. And yet fathers and mothers are asleep. How many move from the country to these cities, which are hot-beds of vice, in order to educate

their children! Like Lot, they choose that which seems most agreeable, irrespective of moral influence. Like him they see too late the sin and folly of their course. They place their children where the temptations to dissipation and crime are almost irresistible, where they daily associate with youth of dissolute habits and corrupt morals, and then are not careful to give them proper instruction and wholesome restraint. If balanced by religious principle, the youth might pass the ordeal in safety; but unless they have learned to look daily to God for strength, they will be overcome. The work of ruin is gradual. The children's feet are set in a path which diverges from the way of purity, integrity, and holiness, and the parents, blinded by pride and the customs of the world, do not discern the danger till a great gulf yawns between them; and then it is too late.

We should bring our children early to Christ, and teach them that he alone can keep them from the tempter's power. I know that parents are not doing what they might do in this work. Unceasing watchfulness and prayer are the weapons by which we must overcome the foe. Parents, do not permit Satan to take the children from your hands. He will often urge, "You must indulge children, in order to keep them with you;" but, on the contrary, it is this unwise indulgence that separates your children from you, and leads them into the ranks of the great deceiver.

I look back with interest to the Sabbath spent at Healdsburg. May the Lord bless all who that day had moral courage to lift the cross. Temptations will assail them as surely as Satan lives. They must seek strength from Christ to resist the power of evil. We fear that the older members of the church were not all prepared to guide these youth in the path to Heaven. It is difficult for those who have cherished a self-righteous, Pharisaical spirit, to come down to the simplicity of humble, experimental religion. They need to have their own hearts softened and subdued by the Holy Spirit, and then they will be able to win the children to Christ.

We should seek to enter into the feelings of the youth, to sympathize with them in their joys and sorrows, their conflicts and victories. Jesus did not remain in Heaven, away from the sorrowing and sinful, but he came down to this world that he might become acquainted with the weakness, the suffering, and temptations of the fallen race. He reached us where we were, that he might lift us up. Such should be our work. We must come to the youth where they are, and make their case our own, if we would benefit them. If these youthful disciples are overcome by temptation, I hope that you who are older in experience, who have yourselves shown but little strength to resist the tempter's power, will not deal with them harshly, or regard their efforts with indifference. I entreat you to be as patient with these lambs of the flock as you wish others to be with you. God has so constituted us that even the strongest desire sympathy. How much more then do children need it. Even a look of compassion will often soothe and strengthen the tried and tempted child.

Jesus calls to every wanderer, "My son, give me thine heart;" "Return unto me, and I will return unto you, and will heal all your backslidings." The youth cannot be happy without the love of Jesus. He is waiting with pitying tenderness to hear the confessions of the wayward, and to accept their penitence. He watches for some return of gratitude from us, as the mother watches for the smile of recognition from her beloved child. The great God teaches us to call him Father. He would have us understand how earnestly and tenderly his heart yearns over us in all our trials and temptations. "Like as a father pitieth

his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him." The mother might sooner forget her child than God forget one soul that trusts in him.

The young should be constantly growing in grace, and in a knowledge of the truth. The Creator of all things, with whom are all the treasures of wisdom, has promised to be the guide of their youth. He who has conquered in their behalf all the powers of evil asks for their homage. There can be no higher knowledge than the knowledge of Him whom to know aright is life and peace; no purer, deeper affection than the love of our Saviour.

Many parents have through mistaken fondness permitted their children to grow up with habits of selfish gratification, perhaps have indulged them because this required less effort than the exercise of proper restraint. They should now labor earnestly and prayerfully to undo their own past work, and to form aright the character of their children. These fathers and mothers enter the field to engage in a hand to hand combat with Satan and his angels. There are temptations on every hand to ensnare the feet of the unwary. Ungodly, corrupt youth exert a strong influence to lead others into forbidden paths. These are among the most successful agents of Satan. If parents would detect and successfully resist the advances of the wily foe, their own perceptive and reasoning powers must be quickened and strengthened by the Spirit of God. Every member of the church is pledged to stand as a faithful sentinel. The lovers of the world will often approach under a garb of friendship, and attempt to introduce its customs and practices. Let every true soldier stand ready to resist these allurements.

When the youth attempt to break away from Satan's control, he will redouble his temptations. Taking advantage of their ignorance and inexperience, he attempts to obscure the distinction between right and wrong. He transforms himself into an angel of light, and beguiles by promises of pleasure in a forbidden path. If the youth have formed the habit of following inclination rather than duty, they will find it hard to resist temptation. They do not see the danger in indulging even once in forbidden pleasures.

The suggestions of Satan will stir every lingering element of depravity in the heart. The eager desires which the parents have not guided in the right channel, wrong habits which have been indulged until they have become second nature, will arouse as an armed man to second his temptations. Too often reason and conscience remonstrate in vain. Oh, then will there be fathers and mothers in Israel, to rescue these youth from Satan's snare? Will there be wisdom to out-general the enemy, and guide the wandering feet into the narrow path of holiness?

The older members of the church should give the youth an example of Christian firmness and self-control, of patient, cheerful submission to the divine will. God forbid that the fathers and mothers of children whose help we need so much should themselves be overcome by Satan. There are many professed Christians who are as fitful and moody as the weather of a California winter. There may be a few sunshiny days, but you may look oftener for fogs and rain. Children are critical observers. They mark the caprice, the petulance, the sullenness. They cannot desire a religion which bears such fruit.

There is no excuse for a man, with a man's reasoning powers and a man's experience, to yield to his feelings and cast a gloom on all around him. Says Christ, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with

me in my throne." Satan attacks us at our weak points; but we need not be overcome. The assault may be severe and protracted, but God has promised help for us, and in his strength we may conquer. I entreat my brethren to become established, rooted and grounded, in the truth. Study the Bible diligently and prayerfully. The precepts and promises of God's word will arm you with divine power to resist the enemy. "Thy word," says the psalmist, "have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Satan will be baffled and defeated when he finds the heart preoccupied with the truth of God. We need also to be often found at the throne of grace. Earnest, persevering prayer, uniting our human weakness to Omnipotence, will give us the victory.

The Lord would have the church at Healdsburg become strong in him. They may be thus if they will hide self behind the cross of Christ. Those who cherish self-love and a desire for self-exaltation open the soul to temptations that set aside reason and weaken judgment. Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and he will exalt us in due time. There is work to be done for our Master. There are souls who may by our influence be led to Christ. Who is ready to engage in this work with all the heart?

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." "And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal."

"Thine is the seed-time; God alone

Beholds the end of what is sown;

Beyond our vision, weak and dim,

The harvest time is hid with him;

Yet unforgotten where it lies,

The seed of generous sacrifice,

Though seeming on the desert cast,

Shall rise with bloom and fruit at last."

E. G. White.

January 26, 1882

The Victory at Ebenezer

After suffering the oppression of their enemies for twenty years, the Israelites "mourned after the Lord." They repented of the sins which had alienated them from him, and sought to return again to their allegiance. Samuel counseled them, "If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods, and Ashtaroth, from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only; and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." "Return unto the Lord with all your hearts;" "Prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only"—here we see that practical piety,

heart religion, was taught in the days of Samuel, as taught by Christ when he was upon the earth. The teacher is virtually the same in both dispensations. God's claims are the same. Without the grace of Christ, the outward forms of religion were valueless to ancient Israel. They are the same to modern Israel. All the pleas of self-righteousness are unavailing; all hope is groundless except that based upon the sacrifice and victory of our Saviour. Obedience to God, required in the days of Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, was enforced by the world's Redeemer.

Samuel endeavored to impress upon Israel the fact that they themselves had something to do to secure the divine favor. They must repent of their sins, and put away their idols. The prophet had succeeded in arousing the people from the lethargy of sin, and he greatly desired that this awakening might result in a general and permanent reformation. With the co-operation of the heads of the tribes, a large assembly was convened at Mizpeh. Here a solemn fast was held. With deep humiliation the people confessed their sins, and poured out water before the Lord as a symbol of their supplications poured out for the divine favor, their tears of sorrow for sin, and of gratitude that the Lord was still gracious and merciful. As an evidence of their determination to obey the instructions they had heard, they invested Samuel with the authority of judge.

Remembering how the prayers of Moses had formerly prevailed with God for Israel, the people entreated Samuel to intercede for them. Again the prophet exhorted them to renounce their idolatry and turn from their backslidings, and then as the servant of God he prayed for a blessing upon them.

The Philistines interpreted this gathering of Israel to be a council of war, and with a strong force set out to attack and disperse them before their plans could be matured. The tidings that these powerful foes were approaching caused great terror among the Israelites. Unarmed and defenseless, they felt that their only hope was in God. If he went forth with their armies, they would be victorious; if he refused to help them, defeat was certain. Hence they entreated Samuel, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines."

With great earnestness the prophet pleaded for divine help, and the people also sought the Lord. While Samuel was in the act of presenting a lamb as a burnt-offering, the Philistines appeared in the distance, ready for battle, and expecting to make an easy prey of the people whom they had so long oppressed.

Then the Mighty One who had descended upon Sinai amid fire and smoke and thunder; who had parted the Red Sea, and made a way through Jordan for the Hebrew host,—the God of Israel, again manifested his power. Vivid lightning flashes and terrific peals of thunder struck terror to the advancing host. When the blinding glare had passed away, the earth was strewn with the dead bodies of armed warriors. Against such a foe, military skill was powerless. Paralyzed with fear, the Philistines looked only for utter destruction.

During the raging of the elements, the Israelites stood in silent awe, trembling with hope and fear. When they beheld the slaughter of their enemies, they knew that God had accepted their repentance, and that he had wrought in their behalf. Though wholly unprepared for battle, they seized the weapons of the slaughtered Philistines, and fell upon the force they had so lately dreaded, and pursued the fleeing hosts to Beth-car.

This signal victory was gained upon the very field where, twenty years previous, Israel was smitten before the Philistines, the priests slain, and the ark of God taken. Thus was again repeated the great lesson, that for nations as well as for individuals the path of obedience to God is the path of safety and happiness, while that of transgression leads only to disaster and defeat.

It was the Lord's purpose so to manifest his power in delivering Israel, that they might not take the glory to themselves. He permitted them, when unarmed and defenseless, to be challenged by their enemies, and then the Captain of the Lord's host marshalled the army of Heaven to destroy the foes of his people. Humility of heart and obedience to the divine law are more acceptable to God than the most costly sacrifices from a heart filled with pride and hypocrisy. God will not defend those who are living in transgression of his law.

All Israel recognized the hand of God in their deliverance, and gratefully acknowledged his great mercy. That the occasion might never be forgotten, Samuel set up, between Mizpeh and Shen, a great stone as a memorial. He called the name of it Ebenezer, "the stone of help," saying to the people, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" This stone was to stand as a witness to all future generations, to testify of God's care for his people, and to strengthen faith in him as their deliverer.

The Philistines were so completely subdued by this defeat, that they surrendered the cities which had been taken from Israel, and refrained from all acts of hostility for many years. Other nations followed the example of this powerful and warlike people, and the Israelites enjoyed peace during the whole period of Samuel's sole administration.

The condition of God's people at the present day is similar to that of idolatrous Israel. Many who bear the name of Christians are serving other gods besides the Lord. Our Creator demands our supreme devotion, our first allegiance. Anything which tends to abate our love for God, or to interfere with the service due him, becomes thereby an idol. With some their lands, their houses, their merchandize, are the idols. Business enterprises are prosecuted with zeal and energy, while the service of God is made a secondary consideration. Family worship is neglected, secret prayer forgotten. Many claim to deal justly with their fellow-men, and seem to feel that in so doing they discharge their whole duty. But it is not enough to keep the last six commandments of the decalogue. We are to love the Lord our God with all the heart. Nothing short of obedience to every precept—nothing less than supreme love to God as well as equal love to our fellow-men—can satisfy the claims of the divine law.

There are many whose hearts have been so hardened by prosperity that they forget God, and forget the wants of their fellow-men. Professed Christians adorn themselves with jewelry, laces, costly apparel, while the Lord's poor suffer for the necessaries of life. Men and women who claim redemption through a Saviour's blood will squander the means intrusted to them for the saving of other souls, and then grudging dole out their offerings for religion, giving liberally only when it will bring honor to themselves. These are idolaters.

Church-members expend their Lord's money in various forms of self-indulgence, and when means are needed to sustain the church, a fair, a theatrical entertainment, or a grand supper is given. Thus professed Christians unite with worldlings in mirth and frivolity, feasting and display—sometimes, far

worse, in practices which in a slightly different form are denounced as crimes by the laws of the land. And all this to obtain means from those who have no interest in religion, and who are actuated only by a desire for sensual gratification! Is not this base idolatry?

The history of our Saviour's life of humiliation, self-denial, and sacrifice, is looked upon as an old story, which has become distasteful to the refined imagination. It does not possess sufficient interest to stir the heart, to lead to self-denial for Christ's sake, or for the sake of souls for whom he died. A large proportion of the Christian world are saying by their practice, "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die." Their religion has no elevating, ennobling influence upon themselves or upon society. Though all they have is the gift of God, they do not acknowledge it as such.

Oh, how great is the mercy of our God; to bear thus with the perversity of his creatures! Every spring the earth is clothed with verdure, that its freshness and beauty may bring to our minds thoughts of the Creator. The fields of grain waving in the sunshine of summer, or the autumn breeze, tell us of Him who giveth to his children their daily bread. The trees bending under their burden of rich fruit, proclaim his mercy and benevolence. But men, blinded by selfishness and mammon, can discern only the amount of gain which shall fill their coffers.

The cattle upon a thousand hills, could they but speak, would acknowledge the care of the Great Shepherd. The birds of the forest sing with sweetest strains the praise of God. The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth his handiwork. The things of nature—earth itself, teeming with bounties and blessings—would call the mind away from self to honor and adore the Lord God, our Creator. And yet men feel no duty to return thanks to the Giver of all good. They appropriate the gifts of providence, and then too often hold themselves aloof from their fellow-men, as though worldly possessions had given them special importance. They will yet learn that it is goodness of heart, integrity of character, not the riches of the world, which make a man worthy of honor.

God must be worshiped in spirit and in truth. No other worship will he accept. There is need today of such a revival of true heart-religion as was experienced by ancient Israel. We need, like them, to bring forth fruit meet for repentance,—to put away our sins, cleansing the defiled temple of the heart that Jesus may reign within. There is need of prayer—earnest, prevailing prayer. Our Saviour has left precious promises for the truly penitent petitioner. Such shall not seek his face in vain. He has also by his own example taught us the necessity of prayer. Himself the Majesty of Heaven, he often spent all night in communion with his Father. If the world's Redeemer was not too pure, too wise, or too holy to seek help from God, surely weak, erring mortals have every need of that divine assistance. With penitence and faith, every true Christian will often seek "the throne of grace, that he may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Repentance is the first step which must be taken by all who would return to God. No one can do this work for us. We must individually humble our souls before God, and put away our idols. When we have done all that we can do, the Lord will manifest to us his salvation.

And when the light of Heaven dispels our darkness, let us, like Samuel, evince our gratitude by making a memorial to God. We often lose great blessings by neglecting to praise the Giver. Let us make melody to

him in our hearts and with our voices. The soul may ascend nearer Heaven, on the wings of praise. God is worshiped with song and music in the courts above. And as we thus express our gratitude, we are approximating to the worship of the heavenly hosts. "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth God." Let us with reverent joy come before our Creator "with thanksgiving and the voice of melody."

January 26, 1882

Among the Churches—St. Helena

It was almost with regret that we left our comfortable home at Bro. Harmon's to visit St. Helena. Bro. and Sr. H. thought it unsafe for Sister Rogers and myself to make the journey alone at this season of the year. Hence they accompanied us, their team leading the way, while ours followed. When we left Healdsburg, the fog was so dense that we could see but a short distance before us, but in a few hours the mists dispersed, and we enjoyed beautiful sunshine.

The road through Knight's Canyon, always perilous to the inexperienced traveler, is often impassable in the rainy season. We were very thankful for a pilot in this part of our journey. I dared not look either to the right or left to view the scenery, but, holding the lines firmly, and guiding my horse in the narrow passage, I followed our leader. Carelessness here would have been fatal. Had our horse turned out of the right path, we should have plunged down a steep precipice, into the ravine below. As we rode along in almost breathless silence, I could but think how forcibly this dangerous ride illustrates the Christian's experience. We are making life's journey amid the perils of the last days. We need to watch carefully every step, and to be sure that we are following our great Leader. Skepticism, infidelity, dissipation, and crime are on every hand. It would be an easy matter to let go the reins of self-control, and plunge over the precipice to sure destruction. How great the mercy that surrounds and preserves us every moment!

Infinite Love has cast up a pathway upon which the ransomed of the Lord may pass from earth to Heaven. That path is the Son of God. Angel guides are sent to direct our erring feet. Heaven's glorious ladder is let down in every man's path, barring his way to vice and folly. He must trample upon a crucified Redeemer ere he can pass onward to a life of sin. Our Heavenly Father's voice is calling us, Come up hither. The tokens of his love are as numerous as the sand upon the sea-shore. The humble, trusting ones are guided and protected in the way of peace. But He who is infinite in wisdom compels none to accept Heaven's most precious gift—compels none to walk in the path which has been cast up at such a cost. Every one is permitted to choose for himself the narrow, shining steep that leads to Heaven, or that broader and easier way which ends in death.

In this one day's ride I have seen the greatness, the majesty, and the power of God in his created works. Mountain and valley, field and forest, rocks and streams; also villages and cultivated farms were spread out before me. Wherever I turn, are the sublime, the grand, or the beautiful; and my heart goes out in praise and gratitude to God for these evidences of his love. All the varied and lovely scenes of nature are so many pictures spread out before our senses to help us grasp the unseen glories of that land where the beauty fades not, and the living never die. Sin has made our world the abode of sorrow and misery, and we long for the sinless country. But we should not cease to value and enjoy all that brightens our

earthly path, as the faint semblance of that which is richer and purer and more beautiful in our heavenly home.

As we passed Calistoga, about ten miles from our destination, we rode from sunshine into shadow. The fog came in upon us, and again shut us in like a thick cloud. We were glad to reach St. Helena, and find ourselves once more in the pleasant parlor of the Crystal Springs Health Retreat, where we were kindly welcomed by Bro. and Sister Atwood. A wood fire was burning on the hearth, and its warm, bright blaze was a pleasant contrast to the damp and darkness without. It is, however, but justice to state, as I was assured by residents here, that fog is rarely seen in this locality.

On the Sabbath it was rainy, yet we rode three miles to the church at St. Helena. Here I again engaged in labor for the young. After prayer for those who came forward, a social meeting was held, in which nearly all took part. Union and harmony exist among the members of this church, yet many need the transforming influence of the Spirit of God, ere they will be prepared to shed light upon others. If all who profess the faith would bring forth corresponding works; if they would in humility work for Jesus, willing to bear burdens in the church, and glad to do anything to benefit their fellow-men and to save souls, how much more might be accomplished in the cause of God!

Every member of our little churches may become strong in Christ. All should constantly feel that they are not their own; that Christ has a right to use them, to the fullest extent of their capabilities, for his own honor and glory. Although there is a cross to be borne, let us cheerfully follow in the path where Jesus leads the way. All who have been ransomed by the blood of Christ, have a work to do for their Redeemer. The salvation of our souls cost an infinite price. In return we are required to sacrifice for the good of others. If every member of the church would seek to maintain in its purity the faith once delivered to the saints; if all would live for God and the great hereafter, what a power would attend their labors. It is the privilege of every child of God to gather light from the exhaustless fountain, and to shed it forth upon others. When I think of this, I long to urge upon every one who bears the name "Christian," the importance of representing Jesus, and not self.

In order to bless others by our influence, we must have a living connection with Heaven, and must be willing to deny self, to labor, and sacrifice. The careless and ease-loving seek to shun anxiety and effort, while the few earnest and faithful ones are left to bear all the burdens. May God help these self-denying laborers. Let them go forward with hope and courage. The prize is before them. It is those who run the race who will win the crown of immortal glory. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."

Mrs. E. G. White

February 2, 1882

The Sons of Samuel

Samuel continued to judge Israel all the days of his life. For many years he made an annual circuit to Mizpeh, Gilgal, and Ramah, for the administration of justice; at other times performing the duties of his

office at his home in Ramah. With unremitting zeal and devotion he labored for the welfare of his people, and the nation prospered under his wise control. But with advancing years it became necessary to share with others the burden of judicial care. Hence while he continued to judge the people at Ramah, he appointed his sons to act for him at Bethel and Beersheba.

These young men had received faithful instructions from their father, both by precept and example. They were not ignorant of the warnings given to Eli, and the divine judgments visited upon him and his house. They were apparently men of sterling virtue and integrity, as well as of intellectual promise. It was with the full assent of the people that Samuel shared with his sons the responsibilities of office. But the characters of these young men were yet to be tested. Separated from their father's influence, it would be seen whether they were true to the principles which he had taught them. The result showed that Samuel had been painfully deceived in his sons. Like many young men of today who have been blessed with good abilities, they perverted their God-given powers. The honor bestowed upon them rendered them proud and self-sufficient. They did not make the glory of God their aim, nor did they seek earnestly to him for strength and wisdom. Yielding to the power of temptation, they became avaricious, selfish, and unjust. God's word declares that "they walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment."

In all this they were disregarding the will of their Divine Sovereign. The Lord had through Moses given special directions to his people that the rulers of Israel should judge righteously, deal justly with the widow and fatherless, and receive no bribes. It were well for the nations of the earth today, if these instructions were obeyed by the rulers and judges of the people. How important that all who are entrusted with the responsibility of government should be men who fear God, and labor unselfishly for the welfare of the human brotherhood. It is their work to judge with equity, maintaining the right of the stranger, relieving the oppressed, spurning every bribe to clear the guilty or punish the innocent. The well-being of society calls for men of moral integrity in legislative halls and courts of justice. Our churches are in need of those to minister in holy office who shall be men of honor, of piety, of purity; who shall be sanctified by the Spirit and by the word.

A corrupting power stands in prominent places. How often are we painfully startled at the announcement that men of talent, men in positions of usefulness and honor, have betrayed their trust, and appropriated to themselves the public money, or worse still, the treasured pittance of the widow and fatherless. Had these men made the word of God their guide, they would not thus have fallen. That word contains plain, definite instruction, adapted to every possible complication of social and public interests. Every plan and purpose of life should be subjected to this unerring test. The word of inspiration is the wisdom of God applied to human affairs. However advantageous a certain course may appear to finite judgment, if denounced by that word it will be only evil in its results.

It may be a difficult matter for men in high positions to pursue the path of undeviating integrity whether they shall receive praise or censure. Yet this is the only safe course. All the rewards which they might gain by selling their honor would be only as the breath from polluted lips, as dross to be consumed in the fire. Those who have moral courage to stand in opposition to the vices and errors of their fellow-men—it may be of those whom the world honor—will receive hatred, insult, and abusive falsehood.

They may be thrust down from their high position, because they would not be bought or sold, because they could not be induced by bribes or threats to stain their hands with iniquity. Everything on earth may seem to conspire against them; but God has set his seal upon his own work. They may be regarded by their fellow-men as weak, unmanly, unfit to hold office; but how differently does the Most High regard them. Those who despise them are the really ignorant. While the storms of calumny and reviling may pursue the man of integrity through life, and beat upon his grave, God has the "well done" prepared for him. Folly and iniquity will at best yield only a life of unrest and discontent, and at its close a thorny dying pillow. And how many, as they view their course of action and its results, are led to end with their own hands their disgraceful career. And beyond all this waits the Judgment, and the final, irrevocable doom, Depart!

Samuel had labored earnestly to correct the erroneous customs introduced by the sons of Eli, and especially to counteract the spirit of greed and selfishness fostered by their course. The sons of the prophet should have employed their authority to carry forward the reforms instituted by their father. Instead of this, their own example greatly hindered the work of reform. Their promotion to office was the cause of their ruin. The love of gain controlled them. Bribes perverted their judgment, and smothered their protests against sin. How many, like these judges of Israel, enter upon their work with good purposes, but failing to make God's word their guide, they are flattered by worldlings, weakened by prosperity, until their moral power as reformers is gone, their hands nerveless to set things in order.

The Son of God has set an example for all his followers. They are not to court the praise of men, not to seek for themselves ease or wealth, but to emulate his life of purity and self-denial at whatever cost. While preserving the meekness of Christ, they are to wage war with iniquity, and to push the triumphs of the cross. Selfishness will not dwell in the Christian's heart. He will not manifest a disregard for the rights of others. God's law commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves, to suffer no evil to be instituted against him which we can hinder. But the rule which Christ has given extends still further. Said the world's Redeemer, "Love one another, as I have loved you." Nothing short of this can reach the standard of Christianity.

February 2, 1882

Among the Mountains

The Health Retreat at St. Helena is situated upon a mountain side commanding an extensive view of the surrounding country. During my stay here, the sublime and beautiful scenery spread out before me, was a source of increasing interest and delight. In the valley are dwellings and cultivated lands. Beyond are the mountains, rising peak above peak until they seem to touch the blue ether of the heavens. There from age to age they have stood, like silent sentinels, directing our eyes upward, and telling us of the unchanging power and glory of the infinite God. His word of promise is more immutable than the everlasting hills. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but his kindness shall not depart, neither shall the covenant of peace be removed from those that put their trust in him." Oh that we could ever cast fear and anxiety from our hearts, and find secure, satisfying rest in Jesus! And we can

do this, if we will look upward to God with constancy and faith, as the mountain heights forever look to the clouds and the sky.

The morning sun pours its new glories upon these mountains of God, while in the valley, mists and clouds are rolling like the billows of the sea. In the distance they appear white as the drifted snow in the noonday sun. Soon they roll swiftly up the mountain steeps, until they reach the summit, and shut out from us the bright rays of the sun. A few moments, and all is clear again, and the sunlight rests on the bald mountain tops. There is enough to feast the imagination in the scenes of nature. Surely, no one who loves the sublime and the beautiful could be lonely among these grand old mountains.

The mountain heights and rocky fastnesses have ever been the friendly refuge of God's people when oppressed and hunted by their enemies. For hundreds of years the Waldenses worshiped God amid the mountain solitudes, and there defied the armies of kings and emperors. On their rocky heights, in sight of their enemies, they sang the praise of Him who made the hills; and no opposing power could silence their hymns of lofty cheer:

“For the strength of the hills we bless thee,

Our God, our fathers' God!

Thou hast made thy children mighty

By the touch of the mountain sod.

“Thou hast fixed our ark of refuge

Where the spoiler's foot ne'er trod;

For the strength of the hills we bless thee,

Our God, our fathers' God!”

Among the blessings of the lot of Ephraim and Manasseh, Moses enumerated “the chief things of the ancient mountains, and the precious things of the lasting hills.” In his last prophetic words to the tribes of Israel, he dwelt with peculiar earnestness upon the precious things of the hills. While the chosen people were wandering in the desert, he encouraged them by describing their promised inheritance as a land of hills and valleys; a land that drinketh water of the rain of heaven; a land upon which the eyes of the Lord rest for good throughout the year. To those who have lived in a level country, there is something peculiarly inspiring in the sight of the mountains. And all who have dwelt amid their wild and romantic scenery must ever long for the high places of the earth. I have never enjoyed the privilege of gazing upon the hills of Palestine, but I can look upon the mountains of our own land, and behold the wisdom and love of the Creator.

As I stood among the hills, I thought how centuries ago our Saviour came to the groves and mountains to worship God. The most costly and beautiful structure which man can devise is not to be compared with the solemn grandeur of these mountain sanctuaries. To such retreats Jesus often led his disciples.

With the beautiful scenes of nature, he associated lessons of divine truth. Afar from the bustle and strife of the haunts of men, he strove to turn the hearts of rich and poor from the perishable treasures of earth to the unfading glories of the world to come.

The hills and forests furnish a blessed retreat for those who, weary of the din and confusion of city life, desire to enjoy communion with nature. And the invigorating air and sunshine bring new life to the over-taxed and weary. In all my journeyings, east and west, north and south, I have seen no place which offered so many and so great advantages as are offered at St. Helena. Here the hills pour forth their treasures in streams and fountains of the purest water. The atmosphere is mild and balmy, the surrounding heights seeming to modify the temperature, shutting off storms and chilling currents. While in many parts of our country the trees are in winter stripped of their foliage, and the bare, skeleton-like frames speak of death and decay, the trees here are green throughout the year. The bright sunbeams, pouring their glory on the living verdure of the madrona, the manzanita, the fir, the pine, and the California laurel, delight the senses, and fill the heart with gratitude to God.

Many have gladly availed themselves of the advantages for rest and recreation afforded by the mountain home at this place. We found here one family, eight in number, comprising three generations, mother, daughters, and granddaughters. For five months they have here enjoyed freedom from the claims of society and the restrictions of fashionable life. All were indisposed when they left Oakland, some suffering from continual colds, and others from general debility; but during their stay in the mountains they have greatly improved in health. In the city they thought it a task to walk even a short distance; but as they enjoyed the fresh, mountain air, the pure water, and the restful quiet of this home, they were soon able to climb the steep ascents, and daily to walk miles without inconvenience.

I could but think of the large sums paid annually in doctors' bills, or in the purchase of hurtful or poisonous drugs. If the means thus often worse than wasted could be spent in visiting such a resort as is afforded in this delightful place, how many might be benefited physically and mentally. Our people should purchase this establishment, and make of it a Hygienic Institute, as was the original intention of its founders. New buildings ought to be erected, and all needed facilities added to make it in all respects a first-class institution. It should be opened in the spring for the reception of patients.

"The groves were God's first temples;" and still he speaks to us in the fields, the forests, and the mountains, as verily as in the house of prayer. The prophets and poets of the Bible were keenly susceptible to the beauty of the leafy woods. The psalmist calls upon the trees to praise the Lord; and the prophet Isaiah declares that all the trees of the field shall clap their hands in that day when the word of the Lord shall have accomplished its work of salvation among men.

When Israel marched out of Egypt, they made their first encampment under the shelter of green boughs at Succoth. And for more than fifteen hundred years the Hebrew nation by the command of God left their houses, and dwelt one whole week in tabernacles of green boughs, to commemorate the encampment of their fathers under the palm branches of Succoth. These seasons of sacred recreation were fraught with both physical and spiritual blessings to Israel. God's people still need seasons of quiet and reflection—seasons in which the soul may undisturbed commune with its Maker. The great work

which has been committed to our hands cannot be best carried forward in excitement and confusion. That calm deliberation so essential to sound judgment can often be best secured in some quiet retreat where the thoughtful mind and pure heart can be prompted by the still, small voice. These forest and mountain homes have great blessings for those who are wearied physically or mentally. Wisely has an American poet counseled:

“If thou art worn and hard beset

With trials that thou wouldst forget.

Go to the fields and hills; no tears

Dim the sweet look that Nature wears.”

Mrs. E. G. White

February 9, 1882

Among the Churches

Napa

Journeying southward from St. Helena, I next visited Napa. Here Eld. Van Horn had been holding a series of meetings, with some good results. On the Sabbath I spoke to the church on the duty of parents to educate, discipline, and restrain their children. There is a sad neglect of this work among those who profess the truth in Napa. I felt deeply the need of a work of reformation in this church, and invited all to come forward who desired that day to become for the first time children of God, and also all who had departed from him and now wished to return. About twenty responded. Earnest prayer was offered in their behalf. Those in Napa who believe in present truth will receive but little favor from members of other churches who trample under their feet the law of God. Only those who make it an individual work to secure eternal life will remain steadfast to the faith.

On Sunday I spoke in the Methodist Church, upon the subject of temperance. After the discourse the minister expressed his gratification at what he had heard, and said that some of the ideas advanced were new to him. He thought we had found the right starting-point in commencing the work of temperance at home, and that mothers should be aroused to see and feel their responsibility. Many expressed a desire that I would address them again Sunday evening; but fearing that the effort would overtax my strength, I spoke instead Monday evening, on the duty of parents.

On this occasion I dwelt particularly upon the evils resulting from parental neglect. Notwithstanding our boasted advancement in education, the training of children is sadly defective. For this state of things, must not mothers to some extent be held responsible? Are they not generally the willing servants of worldliness and fashion? Are not even those who profess to have renounced the vanities of the world, influenced to a great degree by its customs? It is too true that mothers are not standing at their post of duty, faithful to their motherhood. God requires of us nothing that we cannot in his strength perform;

nothing that is not for our own good and the good of our children. He does not call woman to engage in any work that will lead her to neglect the physical, mental, and moral training of her own children. She may not shift this responsibility upon others, and leave them to do her work.

Before individuals take upon themselves the great responsibility of parents, they should consider whether they are fitted to properly train and educate children. Those who fill their houses with children, whom they have neither patience to instruct nor wisdom to control, are thereby not only bringing a burden upon society, but are committing a sin against their offspring and against God. The Lord would have parents obey the dictates of reason, rather than the clamors of impulse and blind passion. They should learn to control themselves, and then they are prepared to control their sons and daughters.

Children require patient, faithful care. It is not enough for the mother to feed and clothe her little ones. She must also seek to develop their mental powers, and to imbue their hearts with right principles. They should be taught that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Christ should be associated with all the lessons given to children. But how sadly is the highest education neglected! Beauty of character, loveliness of temper, are lost sight of in the eager interest in dress and outward appearance.

The mother should not be governed by the world's opinion, nor labor to reach its standard. She should decide for herself what is the great end and aim of life, and then bend all her efforts to attain that end. She may, for want of time, neglect many things about her house, with no serious evil results; but she cannot with impunity neglect the proper discipline of her children. Their defective characters will publish her unfaithfulness. The evils which she permits to pass uncorrected, the coarse, rough manners, the disrespect and disobedience, the habits of idleness and inattention, will reflect dishonor upon her, and embitter her life. Mothers, the destiny of your children rests to a great extent in your hands. If you fail in duty, you may place them in Satan's ranks, and make them his agents to ruin other souls. Or your faithful discipline and godly example may lead them to Christ, and they in turn will influence others, and thus many souls may be saved through your instrumentality.

I have heard mothers say that they have not the ability to govern which others have; that it is a peculiar talent which they do not possess. Those who realize their deficiency in a matter which concerns the happiness and usefulness of future generations, should make the subject of family government their most diligent study. As an objection to this, many point to the children of ministers, teachers, and other men of high repute for learning and piety, and urge that if these men, with their superior advantages, fail in family government, those who are less favorably situated need not hope to succeed. The question to be settled is, Have these men given to their children that which is their right—a good example, faithful instruction, and proper restraint? It is by a neglect of these essentials that such parents give to society children who are unbalanced in mind, impatient of restraint, and ignorant of the duties of practical life. In this they are doing the world an injury which outweighs all the good that their labors accomplish. Those children transmit their own perversity of character as an inheritance to their offspring, and at the same time their evil example and influence corrupt society and make havoc in the church. We cannot think that any man, however great his ability and usefulness, is best serving God or the world while his time is given to other pursuits, to the neglect of his own children. Parents, when you have faithfully done your duty, to the extent of your ability, you may then in faith ask the Lord to do that

for your children which you cannot do. But if you attempt to govern without exercising self-control, without system, thought, and prayer, you will most assuredly reap the bitter consequence.

The study of books will be of little benefit, unless the ideas gained can be carried out in practical life. And yet the most valuable suggestions of others should not be adopted without thought and discrimination. They may not be equally adapted to the circumstances of every mother, or to the peculiar disposition or temperament of each child in the family. Let the mother study with care the experience of others, note the difference between their methods and her own, and carefully test those that appear to be of real value. If one mode of discipline does not produce the desired results, let another plan be tried, the effects being carefully noted. Mothers, above all others, should accustom themselves to thought and investigation if they would increase in wisdom and efficiency. Those who persevere in this course, will soon perceive that they are acquiring the faculty in which they thought themselves deficient; they are learning to form aright the characters of their children. The result of the labor and thought given to this work will be seen in their obedience, their simplicity, their modesty and purity. This result will richly repay all the effort made.

God would have mothers seek constantly to improve both the mind and the heart. They should feel that they have a work to do for him in the education and training of their children, and the more perfectly they can improve their own powers, the more efficient will they become in their work as parents.

Wherever I go, I am pained by the neglect of proper home discipline and restraint. Little children are allowed to answer back, to manifest disrespect and impertinence, using language that no child should ever be permitted to address to its superiors. Parents who permit the use of unbecoming language are more worthy of blame than their children. Impertinence should not be tolerated in a child even once. But fathers and mothers, uncles and aunts and grandparents laugh at the exhibition of passion in the little creature of a year old. Its imperfect utterance of disrespect, its childish stubbornness, are thought cunning. Thus wrong habits are confirmed, and the child grows up to be an object of dislike to all around him.

As children advance in years, and go out from the parental roof to choose their own associates, they often become careless of home rules and family discipline. They come to their father's house when they choose, but by their disrespect they dishonor their parents at home and abroad. These youth have so long been permitted to say what they please, and go and come when they like, that they have little respect for man, or reverence for God. Human rights are disregarded, and the divine law set aside at pleasure. Parents who tolerate the sin of disrespect in their children are themselves dishonoring God by such a course. Obligations are mutual. It is the duty of fathers and mothers to care for their children, but when the latter refuse to respect parental authority and to observe the rules of the family, they should be left to bear their own burdens in life. Parents cannot enjoy the favor of God while they permit their children to trample upon his law. Angels will not abide in the house where strife exists, where God's name is blasphemed, and his authority defied.

Parents, you should early begin to teach your children respect, obedience, and self-control. Every exhibition of passion that is not firmly and decidedly checked is a lesson of evil to your children. Your

neglect of proper restraint opens the door to Satan, and invites him to control them. This he will not be slow to do.

Let mothers be careful not to make unnecessary requirements to exhibit their own authority before others. Give few commands, but see that these are obeyed. Give children but little notice. Let them learn to amuse themselves. Do not put them on exhibition before visitors as prodigies of wit or wisdom, but leave them as far as possible to the simplicity of their childhood. One great reason why so many children are forward, bold, and impertinent, is they are noticed and praised too much, and their smart, sharp sayings repeated in their hearing. Endeavor not to censure unduly, nor to overwhelm with praise and flattery. Satan will all too soon sow evil seed in their young hearts, and you should not aid him in his work.

Children must have constant care, but you need not let them see that you are ever guarding them. Learn the disposition of each as revealed in their association with one another, and then seek to correct their faults by encouraging opposite traits. Children should be taught that the development of both the mental and the physical powers rests with themselves; it is the result of effort. They should early learn that happiness is not found in selfish gratification; it follows only in the wake of duty. At the same time the mother should seek to make her children happy. She should give them the time and attention which they really need. Let not visitors be permitted to engross the precious hours that belong to her own dear ones.

Unsteadiness in family government is productive of great harm; in fact is nearly as bad as no government at all. The question is often asked, Why are the children of religious parents so often headstrong, defiant, and rebellious? The reason is to be found in the home training. Too often the parents are not united in their family government. The father, who is with his children but little, and has little knowledge of their peculiarities of disposition and temperament, is harsh and severe. He does not control his own temper. He corrects in passion, and with a revengeful, vindictive spirit. The child knows this, and the punishment given fills him with anger. He is not subdued. He comes to feel neither love nor respect for his father. Thus are sown seeds of evil that spring up and bear fruit. The mother often allows misdemeanors to pass uncorrected which at another time, when she is more attentive, she will severely punish. The children never know just what to expect, and are tempted by Satan to see how far they can transgress with impunity. The father and mother should be united in their government. They should study with care the disposition of their children, and together seek wisdom and strength from God to deal with them aright.

Great harm is done by a lack of firmness and decision. I have known parents to say, You cannot have this or that, and then relent, thinking they may be too strict, and give the child the very thing they at first refused. A life-long injury is thus inflicted. It is an important law of the mind—one which should not be overlooked—that when a desired object is so firmly denied as to remove all hope, the mind will soon cease to long for it, and will be occupied in other pursuits. But as long as there is any hope of gaining the desired object, an effort will be made to obtain it, and a denial will arouse the worst passions.

When it is necessary for parents to give a direct command, the penalty of disobedience should be as unvarying as are the laws of nature. Children who are under this firm, decisive rule, know that when a thing is forbidden or denied, no teasing or artifice will secure their object. Hence they soon learn to submit, and are much happier in so doing. The children of undecided and over-indulgent parents have a constant hope that coaxing, crying, or sullenness may gain their object, or that they may venture to disobey without suffering the penalty. Thus they are kept in a state of desire, hope, and uncertainty, which makes them restless, irritable, and insubordinate. God holds such parents guilty of wrecking the happiness of their children. This wicked mismanagement is the key to the impenitence and irreligion of thousands. It has proved the ruin of many who have professed the Christian name. The restless, rebellious spirit, unsubdued in youth, creates disturbance in the church of Christ. Many of the so-called church trials may be traced to defective family government. Intemperance and crime of every degree are often the fruit from seed sown by the parents.

Let none imagine, however, that harshness or severity are necessary to secure obedience, or that a boisterous, commanding tone is proof of authority. On the contrary, I have seen the most efficient and constant family government maintained without one harsh word or look. In other families, commands were constantly given in an authoritative tone, and harsh rebukes, and severe punishments were often administered. In the first case the children followed the course pursued by the parents, and seldom spoke in harsh tones to each other. In the second, the parental example was imitated by the children; cross words, fault-finding, disputes, were heard from morning till night.

Fathers and mothers, you are teachers; your children are the pupils. The tones of your voice, your deportment, your spirit, are copied by your children. In the fear of God, seek to know and to do your duty. Take up your God-given responsibilities, and work for time and for eternity.

Mrs. E. G. White

February 16, 1882

Among the Churches

Freshwater

From St. Helena I went alone on the cars to Williams. Sister Manor came eight miles to meet me at the station, and took me to her home at Freshwater. Here also I was provided with a convenient room, where I could write, meditate, and pray undisturbed. Mr. Manor and his wife were attentive to my comfort, and endeavored to make my stay with them agreeable. Nearly the entire week was cloudy and rainy, yet despite the unpleasant weather, I continued to improve in health.

On the Sabbath the few believers in present truth assembled in Sr. Manor's sitting-room; after Sabbath-school I endeavored to speak to them the word of life. Although but few were present, I knew that they needed comfort and encouragement even more than the members of larger congregations who are oftener favored with preaching.

On Sunday forenoon and evening, I spoke to a larger number who met in a school-house. I had freedom in speaking, and the people listened with evident interest. Bro. Rice has been presenting here the reasons of our faith. This called out opposition from some, while others were pleased and interested, and one came out firmly upon the truth, and was baptized. There are but few in this age of the world who have moral courage to take their position on the side of unpopular truth. Its principles are the principles of Heaven. Hence it conflicts with every wrong habit and sinful desire. Those who accept and obey the truth, must deny self, bear the cross daily, and follow in the footsteps of Jesus. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Therefore there is a constant warfare between inclination and duty. Inclination too often prevails, and silences the convictions of the Holy Spirit.

The faith which we cherish as "present truth" is sustained by the clearest and most conclusive evidence from the word of God. Still there is urged against it one objection which our ablest ministers cannot remove. Christ himself could not remove it. It has effectually barred the way of life to thousands. This hindrance is the cross. The cross, covered with shame and reproach, which Jesus bore for us, stands directly in the Christian's path. To evade that cross, the selfish, the world-loving, and the pleasure-seeking turn from the light that would guide their feet to Heaven. They choose doubt, unbelief, and infidelity, that they may have the pleasure of following inclination, and giving loose rein to the promptings of the carnal heart. Those who choose the broader and easier path, may enjoy the friendship of the world, which inspiration declares to be enmity with God; they may receive the empty praise of men whose hearts are not pure and whose lives are not holy; but they lose the only honor which is of lasting value, the honor which comes from above. They may secure worldly gain and transient pleasures, but they lose the eternal riches and that life which measures with the life of God. The language of many who are standing undecided is

"I thought that the course of the pilgrim to Heaven
Would be bright as the summer, and glad as the morn;
Thou show'dst me the path; it was dark and uneven,
All rugged with rock, and all tangled with thorn.
"I dreamt of celestial rewards and renown;
I grasped at the triumph which blesses the brave;
I asked for the palm branch, the robe, and the crown;
I asked—and thou showd'st me a cross and a grave."

Those who sincerely believe and teach the word of God must expect to be received by the world with no greater favor than was the ancient preacher of righteousness. Those who lived in Noah's day despised his prophecy. Scientists quieted the fears of the people by assuring them that it was impossible for his predictions to be fulfilled; they were but the delusive fancies of an imbecile old man. But the unbelief

and mockery of the people did not hinder the event. The God of science manifested his power in a manner which has astonished the philosophers of every age.

The laws of nature cannot prevent the fulfillment of God's word. The law is never greater than the Law-giver, nor are the things created greater than the Creator. As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man. As men are warned of impending judgment, thousands will say, It cannot be. They will despise the truth, make light of prophecy, and deride the teacher of righteousness. One will turn aside to his farm, another to his merchandise, and care for none of these things.

The inhabitants of the antediluvian world were condemned to destruction for their iniquity, yet they had the offer of mercy. By repentance and reformation of life they might have secured forgiveness and the protection of God. So in this dispensation, every one who believes and obeys the divine word will find pardon and a shelter from the wrath to come. The history of their sins, with the sure destruction that followed, should be a warning to us. There is to be a baptism of fire as there was of water, and all the unbelief and scoffing of the ungodly will not hinder the event.

The Scriptures briefly state the reason for the prevailing iniquity in Noah's day. The sons of God married the daughters of men. Those who still cherished the knowledge of God united themselves with the ungodly and corrupt, and as a result became assimilated to them in character. The message of warning would have been received by a larger number, had it not been for their connection and association with those who despised and derided the word of God.

In the days of Noah the Spirit of God was so long and stubbornly rejected that it ceased to strive with men. Thus will it be, prior to the end of the world. When the gospel falls on closed ears, when the Holy Spirit ceases to imprint the truth upon the heart, preaching and hearing will alike be in vain. Are we not fast approaching this state of things?

Those who would stand now must be Bible-readers, and Bible Christians; they must faithfully obey the divine precepts, both in private and in public. There are some who think it an evidence of superior ability to manifest indifference for the Bible and for religious things. They think it weak and unmanly to be always fearing to do wrong. Many a man permits himself to be allured from Christ, from purity and holiness, by those who at heart he despises. And these very persons will privately ridicule his weakness in yielding to temptation. Those who associate with godless companions learn ways of life, habits of thought and speech, which lead them down to darkness and perdition. To win the applause of the low, the worthless, and the vulgar, they degrade themselves in the sight of God and man.

There is no class in greater danger than the young. Evil men and seducers are no less active now than before the flood. On the contrary, the word of God declares that they shall wax worse and worse. There are not wanting agents of Satan to taunt and ridicule all who would be true to virtue and true to God. We are pained to see young men fearful or ashamed to acknowledge their principle before the ungodly or the blasphemer; ashamed that they have cherished holier sentiments, and cultivated purer morals. Oh, if these youth would but be firm and bold in the practice of virtue; if they would frown down the base advances of the agents of Satan, what a victory might be gained over the world, the flesh, and the

devil! God calls upon the youth of today to love and serve him with the whole heart. They need a daily connection with Heaven to keep them unsullied by the corruptions of the last days.

Says Christ, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." And again, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." Those who obey God's will as it is revealed to their understanding, will be safely guided into the way of life. But it is impossible for finite man to fully understand the purposes and ways of the Infinite One. Those who refuse to accept and obey God's word until every objection has been removed, and there is no longer an opportunity for doubt, will never come to the light. Truth and error are before us. God has given us sufficient evidence to determine the right way, and then he leaves us to choose for ourselves.

Jesus calls us to walk with him in the light, instead of wandering in the dark mazes of unbelief. If men would but stop to consider the worth of the soul, and their own need of a Savior, they would gladly, gratefully accept the hand which he has stretched out to them. Alas that so many, in their pride and stubbornness of heart, refuse to accept the guidance of infinite wisdom! Faith, hope, and love, man's highest and noblest faculties, have been paralyzed by sin and Satan. But Jesus stands ready to awaken them to new life, that they may be enlisted in his service. The power of renewing grace will bring them again into vigorous exercise.

Temptations to discouragement will at times come upon the children of God like an overwhelming torrent. Many are disheartened as they see that Christian example and instruction seem almost powerless before the tide of ignorance and unbelief. But Jesus is the stronghold of his people. His light shines still. It can never be quenched. Though evil now seems to prevail over righteousness and truth, yet it is by no means the strongest power. It shall not always conquer. Nay, even now its end is nigh. Truth and righteousness are plants of heavenly origin. God nourishes them every hour. He will no more suffer them to die than he will forget the honor of his own throne and name.

Every Christian must meet trial and temptation. Those who basely shun the reproach of Christ, and choose the honor which the world bestows, will surely reap the bitter harvest. Separation from God, the loss of Heaven, agony and despair, must be their portion. But if we will stand fearlessly and firmly for God and the right, relying upon the promises of the sacred word, we shall not be ashamed. Earth and hell can have no power to triumph over us. Let not the weakest be discouraged because they are assailed by temptation. The best men who ever lived have been grievously assaulted by Satan and his agents. Unless we yield to its power, temptation is not sin. The armor of truth will prove a sure defense against all the fiery darts of the enemy.

Yet the Christian should not place himself needlessly in the way of temptation. Every soul is surrounded by an atmosphere of its own, laden with the fragrance of love and piety, the heavy fogs of unbelief, or the deadly poison of infidelity and crime. When brought in contact with others, we are unconsciously affected by the atmosphere surrounding them. If this be laden with moral poison, the very life-blood of the soul may become tainted, ere we are conscious of danger.

The worth of a human soul can be estimated only by the light reflected from the cross of Calvary. So terrible was the doom of the lost race, so great the glory to which the redeemed might be exalted, that

the Father is satisfied with the infinite price which he pays for their redemption. It was the joy set before Christ in accomplishing so great salvation, that led him to submit to shame, agony, and death. How do all the treasures and the glories of earth sink into insignificance when compared with the value of a human soul!

As I see in the world such astonishing indifference to the work of redemption; as I see the unbelief, the skepticism, the Heaven-daring rebellion against God and his law, I am more and more convinced that we have reached those days of peril foretold in the Scriptures. I feel assured that the end is near; that our time of waiting and watching is short.

May divine grace and power be imparted to the few in Freshwater who love God and keep his commandments. We earnestly hope that those who have been convicted of the truth will decide to follow the light, that it may not for them go out in darkness.

Mrs. E. G. White

February 23, 1882

Among the Churches

Arbuckle

Sabbath, Dec 31, I spent at Arbuckle. Here I spoke to the church twice on Sabbath, and once on first-day. The Lord gave me freedom.

The believers in present truth here are few in number, and some of them are very unfavorably situated, their families not being united in the faith. Those who are thus striving alone to obey God, have trials, temptations, and opposition to encounter, of which others know nothing. They need our sympathy and our prayers.

Some are struggling with poverty, but this need not prevent them from obtaining the eternal riches. All should seek, so far as possible, the most favorable position for perfecting a Christian character. This is a duty which we owe to ourselves, to society, and to God. We should endeavor to become intelligent Christians, growing in grace, and in knowledge of the truth. Those whose advantages are few, should not feel that they are therefore excused from effort for self-improvement. The most illiterate may be elevated, sanctified, and ennobled by the Spirit and the word of God. If the love of Christ dwells in the heart, we shall not be content to keep a low level, and shall not associate with those who will have no influence to increase our aspiration after knowledge or holiness.

A sore trial has been brought upon the little company here, by the course of their leader. Since he was chosen elder of the church he has repeatedly attended dancing parties with his wife and daughter. This is the first instance of the kind that I have ever met among our churches. I was greatly surprised that one who had a knowledge of our faith could thus unite with the ungodly. Even if he has so little spiritual discernment as to see no wrong in this fascinating pleasure, he can but know that he is placing a stone of stumbling in the way of others. He knows that he is wounding his brethren. What say the Scriptures

concerning these things? “If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth.” And again, “Let us not therefore judge one another any more, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way.”

But dancing, as practiced at the present day, is detrimental to the health of soul and body. Theater-going, dancing, card-playing, gambling, inebriety, are all steps in the path of vice and dissipation. He who, having received the light of present truth, will yet persist in venturing into this path, is unworthy of the name of Christian. What attractions can this elder of the church find in the dance-hall? Is he in this godless company fitting himself to exert a proper influence over the flock of God? The so-called little things of life, the little acts of faith or sacrifice, go to make up the sum of Christian character and influence. It is the spirit of Christ manifested at home, in the field, in the workshop, in the church, that makes men living epistles, known and read of all.

The state of the world in the last days is declared by our Saviour to be similar to that which existed before the flood. Men were wholly absorbed in the things of this life. They forgot the claims of their Maker, and thought only of self-gratification. God's people are not to pursue such a course. Their example and influence should be such as to win men away from selfish aims and sensual indulgence, to higher motives and purer joys. The history of the antediluvians is recorded as a warning to us. We are living in a most solemn period of earth's history. The divine judgments are again to be poured out upon the world. The prophet declares that God's people are not in darkness, that the day of wrath should overtake them as a thief. They should be men and women of serious thought and earnest prayer.

Those whose hearts are cheered by the presence of an indwelling Saviour, will have no disposition to resort to places of worldly amusement. A Christian family is one in which the love of Christ is the spring of action, the precepts of God's word the rule of life. Those who can turn away from the sacred influences of truth to engage in the frivolous and exciting pleasures of the world, are regarded by our Saviour as showing contempt for himself. Jesus will not abide in any household, to guide and bless them, unless they first relinquish the sinful customs, practices, and amusements of the world. All who refuse to comply with these conditions are thereby bidding him depart from them. And how dreadful are the words he utters, as in sorrow he turns away,—“Your house is left unto you desolate.” Desolate indeed must be that home from which the presence of Christ is withdrawn!

The religion of the Bible takes men as they are, with all their wants and weaknesses. It satisfies the restless cravings of the mind, ennobles the aspirations, purifies the heart. When Christ is formed within, the hope of glory, the true, joyous life of the soul begins. Those who feed upon the bread of life, so freely provided in the store-house of God's word, will become strong and vigorous to labor for Christ and for their fellow-men.

A great responsibility rests upon the husband—house-band—to bind the household together, by the ties of kindness, love, and harmony. In the patriarchal ages, the husband and father was the priest of his own household. And still it is his duty to invoke in their behalf the divine blessing, and to instruct and guide them in the way of life. Alas that his influence should ever be exerted to lead them into folly and dissipation! When about to accompany his wife and children to the theater or the ball-room, let the

professed Christian ask himself, Can I seek God's blessing upon the scene of pleasure? Would my Master be a guest at such a place? Will angels minister to me there? Can I there let my light so shine before men, that they may be led to glorify God? Worldlings themselves look upon these amusements as inconsistent with the Christian's profession. The following incident expresses the feeling which is entertained by many: A young lady professing to be a Christian had been gliding through the mazes of the dance, in a fashionable ball-room, when in conversation with another lady who lived only for this world, she revealed the fact that she was a member of a Christian church. "What!" exclaimed the other, "are you a Christian?" "I am," was the answer. Whereupon she received the stinging rebuke, "Then why are you here?"

Ours is a solemn faith. We profess to be giving the last message of warning to the world. In our religious life we should be in advance of every other people upon earth. We must rise above the standard of public opinion, even in a professedly Christian community, if we would have our character without fault in the day of God. When the final hour shall come, and the shadows of death gather about the soul, shall we regret that we have visited so few places of amusement? that we have joined in so few dances? Shall we regret that religion has debarred us from scenes of revelry, profanity, and mirth? Will not many, rather, bitterly regret that precious time has been squandered, golden opportunities neglected, by following inclination rather than duty?

God's word declares that our Saviour is soon to come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. We are admonished to watch, and wait, and pray for his appearing. Yet notwithstanding the testimony of the Scriptures, unbelief is expressed everywhere. Even ministers of the gospel are teaching that the day of God may not come for thousands of years. And while the world is enshrouded in darkness, and the night of doom is fast approaching, let us who are of the day be sober. By the intensity of our faith, the purity of our love, let us show that we believe the end of all things to be at hand. If God has given us light from Heaven, he requires us to reflect that light to the world. Christ is soon to act as Judge, where now he officiates as mediator. When he shall come, he will reward every man according to his works. The test in that day will not be, What did you profess? to what church did you belong? But it will then be asked, What character was developed in your life? Only to those who have been faithful, to those who have done well, will the Saviour say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Mrs. E. G. White

March 2, 1882

Daniel a Temperance Reformer

[Summary of an address given at College City, Cal., January 2, 1882]

To rightly understand the subject of temperance, we must consider it from a Bible stand-point. The first chapter of Daniel presents a most comprehensive and forcible illustration of the principles of true temperance and the blessings to be derived from their observance. Inspiration has recorded the history of Daniel and his companions as a shining example for the youth of all succeeding ages.... What men have done, men may do. Did those faithful Hebrews stand firm amid great temptation, and bear a noble

testimony for God and the right? We may bear a similar testimony, even under circumstances as unfavorable.

It was not their own pride or ambition which had brought Daniel and his associates into the king's court, into the companionship of those who knew and feared not the true God. Infinite wisdom had placed them where they were. It was their duty to honor God and give to the world an example of faithfulness. They considered their position with its difficulties and dangers, and then, in the fear of God, made their decision. Even at the risk of the king's displeasure, they would be true to the laws which had been divinely given to their fathers.

Besides a portion of his wine, the food apportioned them "from the king's table," would include swine's flesh and other meats pronounced unclean by the law of Moses, and which the Jews were forbidden to eat. The Hebrew captives requested the officer who had them in charge, to grant them more simple fare. The officer demurred, fearing that such rigid abstinence as the young captives proposed would unfavorably affect their personal appearance, and thus bring himself into disfavor with the king. Daniel pleaded for a ten-day's trial. This was granted, and those youth were found at the expiration of that time to present a far more healthy appearance than those who had indulged in the king's dainties. Hence the simple "pulse and water" which they at first requested was thereafter supplied to Daniel and his companions.

These young men had received a right education in early life, and now, when separated from home influences and sacred associations, they honored the instructors of their childhood. They obeyed the divine law both natural and moral, and the blessing of God gave them physical strength and comeliness, and intellectual power. With their habits of self-denial were coupled earnestness of purpose, diligence, and steadfastness. They had no time to squander in thoughtless pleasure, vanity, or folly. They were not actuated by pride or unworthy ambition. They sought to acquit themselves creditably, for the honor of their down-trodden people, and for His glory whose servants they claimed to be.

God always honors the right. The most promising youth of every land subdued by the great conqueror, had been gathered at Babylon, yet amid them all the Hebrew captives were without a rival. The erect form, the firm, elastic step, the fair countenance showing that the blood was uncorrupted, the undimmed senses, the untainted breath,—all were so many certificates of good habits,—insignia of the nobility with which nature honors those who render obedience to her laws.

When their ability and acquirements were tested by the king, at the close of the three years of training, none were found "like unto Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah." Their keen apprehension, their choice and exact language, their extensive and varied knowledge, testified to the unimpaired strength and vigor of the mental powers. Would that youth of today would emulate the example of these Hebrew children. All who will, may, like them enjoy the favor and blessing of God.

Not only did these young men decline to drink the king's wine, but they refrained from the luxuries of his table. The lesson is one which we would do well to ponder. Our dangers are not from scarcity, but from abundance. We are constantly tempted to excess. Those who would preserve their powers

unimpaired for the service of God must observe strict temperance in the use of all his bounties, as well as total abstinence from every injurious or debasing indulgence.

The youth are surrounded by allurements addressed to the appetite. In our cities, liquor saloons on almost every corner make indulgence easy and inviting. The evil does not often begin with the use of intoxicating liquors. Tea, coffee, tobacco, as well as alcoholic beverages, are different degrees in the scale of artificial stimulants. Those who, like Daniel, refuse to defile themselves, will reap the reward of their temperate habits. With their greater physical stamina and increased power of endurance, they have a bank of deposit upon which to draw in case of emergency.

Right physical habits promote mental superiority. Intellectual power, physical strength, and longevity, depend upon immutable laws. There is no happen-so, no chance, about this matter. The higher powers will not interfere to preserve men from the consequence of the violation of nature's laws. There is much of sterling truth in the adage that every man is the architect of his own fortune. While parents are responsible for the stamp of character they give their offspring, as well as for the education and training of their sons and daughters, it is still true that our position and usefulness in the world depend, to a great degree, upon our own course of action. Daniel and his fellows enjoyed the benefits of correct training and education in early life, but these advantages alone would not have made them what they became. The time came when they must act for themselves. Their future then depended upon their own course. They decided to be true to the lessons given them in childhood. The fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom, was the foundation of their greatness. His Spirit strengthened every true purpose and noble resolution.

The great work of temperance should begin with the child in its mother's arms. With patient care the little ones should be trained to unperverted tastes and simple habits. Fathers and mothers will have a fearful account to render at the day of final reckoning. The rich, highly seasoned, unwholesome food which the mother spreads upon her table, produces indigestion, headache, and other unpleasant sensations. The children are permitted to eat whatever they please, and at any hour of the day, thus allowing the jaded stomach no rest. Hence they are constantly in a state of nervous irritation. Then, perhaps following the example of the father, they become addicted to the use of tobacco, wine or beer, and in many cases, the path to drunkenness is short. Habits of strict temperance always have been and always must be the only safeguard for our youth.

Let old and young remember that for every violation of the laws of life, nature will utter her protest. The penalty will fall upon the mental as well as the physical powers. And it does not end with the guilty trifle. The effects of his misdemeanors are seen in his offspring, and thus hereditary evils are passed down, even to the third or fourth generation. Think of this, fathers, when indulging in the soul and brain benumbing narcotic, tobacco. Where will this practice leave you? Whom will it affect besides yourself?

We rarely pass through a crowd, but men—we cannot call them gentlemen, for they do not deserve the name—will puff their poisoned breath into our face. Is it honest thus to contaminate the air which others must breathe? Wherever we go is the tobacco devotee, enfeebling both mind and body in the enjoyment of his darling indulgence. Have men a right thus to deprive their Maker and the world of the

service which was their due? Is such a course Christlike? There is no middle ground. If not in harmony with the divine will, it must be Satanic.

The slaves of appetite are constantly spending their earnings in sensual indulgence, and thus robbing their children of food and clothing and the advantages of education. Millions of gallons of intoxicating liquors are drunk annually, and thirty million dollars are spent for tobacco. It is estimated by Dr. Cole, an able writer on health, that professed Christians of the different denominations annually squander five million dollars in these indulgences. It is said that a larger sum is spent for the single article of cigars than for all the churches and common schools in the Union.

Opium, tea, coffee, intoxicating liquors, and tobacco are extinguishing as fast as they well can, the spark of vitality left for the race. We are suffering for the wrong habits of our fathers, and yet how many take a course in every way worse than they. Can any be called Christians who thus willfully destroy themselves?

There can never be a right state of society, until the law shall close up liquor saloons, not only on Sunday but on all other days of the week. This would render it much easier to maintain public order, and would conduce greatly to domestic happiness. And why cannot this be done? It is not too much to say that liquor saloons would be closed at once, in obedience to the dictates of reason and religion, if public officers, judges, police, sheriffs, magistrates, and others were not the patrons. These men are by their influence corrupting society, and then they concur in judging and condemning the poor souls who follow their example!

Only men of strict temperance and integrity should be admitted to our legislative halls and courts of justice. Property, reputation, and even life itself is insecure when left to the judgment of men who are intemperate and immoral. How many innocent persons have been condemned to death, how many more have been robbed of all their earthly possessions, by the injustice of besotted jurors, lawyers, witnesses, and even judges! The records of crime published in our public journals show that intemperance and profligacy are increasing. While every right-minded person stands aghast at the condition of the world, is it not time to inquire, Who are giving their influence to increase this tide of evil? Who are digging the pitfalls for our youth? But every inquiry is met by the authoritative announcement that the process is sustained by law. We are expected to look on in silence, while our youth are engulfed in ruin.

Notwithstanding thousands of years of experience and of progress, the same dark blot which stained the first pages of history remains to disfigure our modern civilization. Drunkenness, with all its woes, is to be found everywhere. Its victims are more numerous today than before the license laws were enacted. Legal regulation has not stayed its progress. Efforts are now made to establish institutions where the victims of intemperance may receive help to overcome their terrible appetite. This is a noble work, and yet how much wiser, how much more effective, would be the removal of the cause of all this woe! Considering only the financial aspect of this question, what folly is it to tolerate a business that is making paupers by the thousand! The laws of the land legalize the trade of making drunkards, and then at great

expense provide an institution for converting them again into sober men! Is this the best solution of the question that can be furnished by our legislators?

The fact is, government can provide only one effective safeguard against inebriety, and that is prohibition. This is the grandest inebriate retreat ever erected. Such a law, rigidly enforced from ocean to ocean, would produce the greatest temperance reform that the world has ever known. Take away from men all opportunity for indulgence, and the appetite for intoxicants would cease. But as long as the sale of liquor is sanctioned by law, the poor victim of appetite can receive little benefit from inebriate asylums. He will not be content to remain there always. He must again take his place in society. The appetite, though dormant, is not wholly destroyed; temptation assails him on every hand, and too often he falls an easy prey.

The use of intoxicating liquor dethrones reason, and hardens the heart against every pure and holy influence. The inanimate rocks will sooner listen to the appeals of truth and justice than will that man whose sensibilities are paralyzed by intemperance. This change is not wrought at once. Those who venture to enter the forbidden path are gradually and unconsciously seduced, demoralized, corrupted, and maddened. And while Christians are asleep, this evil is constantly gaining more strength and making fresh victims.

There is need now of men like Daniel to do and dare. A pure heart and a strong, fearless hand are wanted in the world today. God designed that man should be constantly improving,—daily reaching a higher point in the scale of excellence. He will help us, if we seek to help ourselves. It is the duty of every Christian to see that his example and influence are on the side of reform. Let ministers of the gospel lift up their voice like a trumpet, and show the people their transgressions, and the house of Israel their sins. The youth need to be instructed. Our hope of happiness in two worlds depends upon the right improvement of one. We should be guarded at every point against the first approach to intemperance. If we would preserve our children from evil, we must give them a right example, and then teach them to make God their fear, their wisdom, and their strength.

March 2, 1882

Visit to College City

A few weeks since, I visited College City, to speak, by invitation, upon the subject of temperance. The church was tendered for the occasion, and there was a good attendance. The people of this place have already taken a praiseworthy stand upon temperance principles. In fact, it was upon this condition that a college was established here. The land upon which the college building stands, with a large tract surrounding it, was donated to the Christian Church for educational purposes, with the stipulation that no saloon should ever be opened within three miles of the college. This agreement seems to have been faithfully kept. We would feel that the youth were much safer in attending school in such a town than where there are saloons open day and night on every street corner.

The rules of this college strictly guard the association of young men and young women during the school term. It is only when these rules are temporarily suspended, as is sometimes the case that gentlemen

are permitted to accompany ladies to and from public gatherings. Our own College at Battle Creek has similar regulations, though not so stringent. Such rules are indispensable to guard the youth from the danger of premature courtship and unwise marriage. Young people are sent to school by their parents to obtain an education, not to flirt with the opposite sex. The good of society, as well as the highest interest of the students, demands that they shall not attempt to select a life partner while their own character is yet undeveloped, their judgment immature, and while they are at the same time deprived of parental care and guidance.

It is because the home training is defective that the youth are so unwilling to submit to proper authority. I am a mother; I know whereof I speak, when I say that youth and children are not only safer but happier under wholesome restraint than when following their own inclination. Parents, your sons and daughters are not properly guarded. They should never be permitted to go and come when they please, without your knowledge and consent. The unbounded freedom granted to children at this age has proved the ruin of thousands. How many are allowed to be in the streets at night, and parents are content to be ignorant of the associates of their children. Too often, companions are chosen whose influence tends only to demoralize.

Under the cover of darkness, boys collect in groups to learn their first lessons in card-playing, gambling, smoking, and wine or beer sipping. The sons of religious parents venture into the saloons for an oyster supper, or some similar indulgence, and thus place themselves in the way of temptation. The very atmosphere of these resorts is redolent with blasphemy and pollution. No one can long remain in it without becoming corrupted. It is by such associations that promising youth are becoming inebriates and criminals. The very beginnings of the evil should be guarded against. Parents, unless you know that their surroundings are unexceptionable, do not permit your children to go into the streets after nightfall to engage in out-door sports, or to meet other boys for amusement. If this rule be rigidly enforced, obedience to it will become habitual, and the desire to transgress will soon cease.

Those who are seeking to shield the youth from temptation and to prepare them for a life of usefulness, are engaged in a good work. We are glad to see in any institution of learning a recognition of the importance of proper restraint and discipline for the young. May the efforts of all such instructors be crowned with success.

Mrs. E. G. White.

March 9, 1882

The Light of the World

Said Christ to his disciples, "Ye are the light of the world." As the sun goes forth in the heavens to fill the world with brightness, so must the followers of Jesus shed the light of truth upon those who are groping in the darkness of error and superstition. But Christ's followers have no light of themselves. It is the light of Heaven that falls upon them, which is to be reflected by them to the world. Jesus speaks through clay. Let men beware how they slight or reject the words of his representatives, for in so doing they are rejecting Christ.

A great responsibility rests upon the professed followers of Jesus. If they present to the world self instead of Christ, they will have a fearful account to render at the day of final reckoning. But none need thus to fail. Our compassionate Redeemer has provided for us the help we need. He is waiting to kindle in every heart that will receive his words such love as he alone can inspire. He will impute his own righteousness to the sincere penitent, and will fit him to become a witness for Christ.

The light of life is freely proffered to all. Every one who will, may be guided by the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Christ is the great remedy for sin. No man can plead his circumstances, his education, or his temperament, as an excuse for living in rebellion against God. The sinner is such by his own deliberate choice. Said our Saviour, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." The reason why there are so many of the present time to oppose the truth is, they love some indulgence which the word of God condemns. Hence they hate the light which reveals their sin.

There are many styled by the world liberal, generous-hearted, noble men whom God looks upon as wicked and corrupt. He sees not as man sees. His thoughts are not as our thoughts. Many in their self-complacency attempt to gloss over the defects in their lives and characters, and flatter themselves that all is well. To come to the light would reveal their danger, and strike the death-blow to their self-satisfaction. Then they would see the importance of a holy life, and their own need of Christ as a Saviour.

Many of those who profess to believe the Bible, and even to expound its sacred truths, are yet living in the indulgence of some cherished sin—living as though there were no God whose eye could search the inmost recesses of the soul. They are blessed with Heaven's bounties, and yet they express no more gratitude to the Giver than do the beasts of the field. They may now have no sense of their own sinfulness; but when summoned before the great white throne, they will in speechless terror stand condemned. The excuses now so flippantly urged to shield themselves from the divine requirements, they dare not mention with the eye of the Judge looking upon them. They knew their Master's will, but did it not, and they will be beaten with many stripes.

When the claims of God are presented, those who love sin evince their true character by the satisfaction with which they point to the faults and errors of professed Christians. They are actuated by the same spirit as their master, Satan, whom the Bible declares to be the "accuser of the brethren." Let an evil report be started, and how rapidly it will be exaggerated and passed from lip to lip! How many will feast upon it, like vultures upon a heap of garbage. Whether the slanderous tale comes with or without proof, they give it ready credence, showing a strength of faith that is surprising. And yet these very persons will refuse to believe the truths of God's word so long as there is the semblance of an excuse for doubt.

The fact that some professed Christians are not what they should be, does not prove that religion is at fault, but only that these persons are not faithfully obeying its teachings. Neither does it prove that the church is corrupt. Does she not deal with an offending member, and separate from her company those who persist in all evil way? But the very ones who make the most of a person's faults while he is a

member of the church, will, when he is expelled, turn about and sympathize with him, declaring the church to be uncharitable and severe. It is thus that Satan works through his agents, to turn men away from the Light of life.

The true Christian, "he that doeth truth, cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." His godly life and holy conversation are a daily testimony against sin and sinners. He is a living representative of the truth which he professes. Of these true-hearted followers, Jesus declares that he is not ashamed to call them brethren. Every one who at last secures eternal life will here manifest zeal and devotion in the service of God. He will not be ready to flee at the approach of trial, hardship, or reproach. He does not search the Scriptures to find some excuse for resistance to the truth. He does not inquire, What will my friends say, if I take my position with the people of God? To know his duty, is to do it heartily and fearlessly. He follows the light, as it shines upon his path, regardless of consequences. The God of truth is on his side, and will never forsake him. All apparent losses for Christ's sake will count to him as infinite gain.

Our thoughts and purposes are the secret springs of action, and hence determine the character. Every thought, feeling, and inclination, though unseen by men, is discerned by the eye of God. With what care, then, should we examine our hearts in the light of the divine law, and compare ourselves with the one faultless Pattern, that no defect may be found upon us in the day of God. We cannot afford to make a mistake in a matter in which eternal interests are involved.

The rebellious purpose formed in the heart needs not expression by word or act to consummate the sin, and bring the soul into condemnation. The unlawful word or deed is but the fruition of the evil which has taken root in the heart; the outward evidence that temptation has prevailed, and hell has triumphed. Says the apostle, "Every man is tempted [that is, enters into temptation] when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." God has provided the means by which we may resist temptation. These are the study of his word, and earnest prayer. In his encounters with the prince of darkness our Saviour prefaced every answer with the words, "It is written." It was the word of God that vanquished Satan. Those who make that word their study are arming themselves with weapons of divine power against the attacks of the foe. "Thy word," said the psalmist, "have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

Every Christian should be a diligent student of the Scriptures. The word of God, believed and obeyed, exerts a transforming power upon the life and character. Its sublime truths, its pure and holy principles, strengthen the intellect, ennoble the affections, enlighten the understanding. How great the loss which they sustain who neglect this store-house of eternal riches.

We should know why we believe as we do, and should be able to give to others the reasons for our faith. But this will require effort. The mind grows by what it is fed upon. The understanding gradually adapts itself to the subjects which it is required to grasp. If allowed to dwell only upon the things of this life, it becomes dwarfed and enfeebled. If absorbed in vanity and folly, it will after a time almost lose the power of growth. To secure strength and vigor, the mind must be tasked; and there is no other means by which this can be so successfully accomplished as by the study of the Scriptures.

Hours are worse than wasted when spent in the society of those who are not seeking to improve in mind or morals. Idle gossip, frivolous chitchat, the cruel slander, the base innuendo, weaken the intellect and corrupt the heart. Time is precious. We have but a brief space in which to prepare for the future life. All who expect to dwell hereafter with the pure and holy, must here obtain a fitness for such society. Let the moments heretofore squandered in idleness and folly be henceforth devoted to prayer and the reading of God's word. This discipline every Christian may have, and, rightly improved, it will make him wise unto eternal life.

Many accept the theory of the truth, whose hearts have not felt the renewing power of divine grace. They do not wholly renounce their former life of sin and folly. They do not see the work which must be wrought in them by the Holy Spirit before they can be transformed from Satan's subjects to sons of God. In his words to Nicodemus, Christ explained the nature and importance of true conversion. He solemnly declares, "Except a man be born again,"—unless he receive a new heart, new desires, purposes, and motives, leading to a new life—"he cannot see the kingdom of God." He must no longer remain in subjection to the power of sin. He is no longer to be a willing subject to the enemy of Christ. He is to become an heir of God by faith, a son of God by adoption.

Those who have experienced the new birth have but entered upon the Christian life. To such are addressed the words of the apostle, "As ye have received the Lord Jesus Christ, so walk ye in him." In the storm of opposition, the whirlwind of strife that we are called to meet, it is sometimes hard to maintain the patience and gentleness of Christ, hard to meet the railing accusation with words of Scripture truth. But such must be the Christian's course. God has promised grace for every trial. By patient endurance we may become strong, by failure we may learn success, and through apparent defeat we may conquer.

Let not those be discouraged who are sorely tried and tempted, and who feel that they have not strength to cope single-handed with the power of evil. God asks you to become co-laborers with him. You need not wait for great opportunities nor ask for extraordinary talents. Use the ability that you now have. Do not weary yourself with anxiety about the success of your efforts, but quietly, faithfully do what you can, leaving the result with God. Though surrounded by the darkness of unbelief, you may let your daily life be a light to the world, a living testimony to the power of divine grace. The influence of that testimony will widen and deepen, so long as you are connected with the God of wisdom and power. Be assured that your memorial is written above, and in the day of God some at least among the redeemed will call you blessed.

March 16, 1882

Sanctification Through Obedience to the Truth

Christ prayed for his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth." In every age, God has committed to his people some special truth which is directly opposed to the desires and purposes of the natural heart. It is no argument against the truth, that there are few ready to accept it. The word of God was received with little favor when priests and people, Pharisees and publicans, listened to the divine Teacher.

Christ brought to men truths glowing with the light of Heaven, showing in contrast the darkness of error and revealing the superstition, self-righteousness, and bigotry of that age. His heart overflowed with sympathy for the poor, the ignorant, the afflicted, and the fallen. He healed the sick, comforted the desponding, cast out devils, raised the dead, and made known to all the words of eternal life. The priests and elders, who professed to be the expositors of divine truth, were sending forth no rays of heavenly light to a benighted people. In their self-righteousness they held themselves aloof from those who most needed help. When One came to do the work which they had left undone, they felt that his life was a constant rebuke to them; and they feared that he would turn the people from their teachings. Their hearts were filled with pride, love of ostentation, and desire for praise. They despised Christ's humility and self-denial. They hated the purity while they feared the power of his teachings. They refused to accept him themselves, and bent all their energies to hinder others. Against these professed leaders of the Jewish people, Christ brings the terrible accusation, "Ye have taken away the key of knowledge. Ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."

Reformers of the present time will meet with the same discouragements as did their Master. Men are no more favorable to Bible simplicity or to practical godliness than in Christ's day. Few accepted the world's Redeemer; few will now accept the message of his servants. Though the multitude eagerly flocked around him to receive temporal blessings, yet Christ sadly declares, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." Thus the mass of mankind are today seeking earthly good, to the neglect of eternal riches.

When Christ was upon earth, frowning priests and angry rulers threatened the people with exclusion from the synagogue, and thus kept many from hearing the great Teacher. Today the so-called "orthodox" ministers by similar threats deter their hearers from listening to the words of Christ's ambassadors. Many fear even to study the word of God for themselves, lest they shall be convinced. Young persons who find no attractions in the Bible, and who have never searched its pages, will, parrot-like, repeat the sayings of opposers to the truth. They imagine that it savors of manly independence to talk of having a mind of their own, when in fact they merely echo the opinions and sentiments of others. What the minister says in the desk, against the truth, is greedily devoured by those who love to have it so, and his assumptions, though wholly destitute of Scripture proof, are repeated as conclusive evidence.

Those words of inspiration are even more applicable today than when first uttered: "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so. And what will ye do in the end thereof?" A solemn question indeed; but how few give heed to it.

Christ says of the people in his day, "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes; and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." The Jews willfully closed their eyes and their ears, and barred their hearts with prejudice, lest they should see a better way, and thus be aroused from their pleasant dreams of carnal security. The people of the present generation are pursuing the same course. The great mass of mankind are unwilling to

exchange error for truth. They are satisfied with their present condition, and have no desire to be converted.

New truth is constantly unfolding; at every step, new and clearer light is shining upon the pathway of God's people, that they may go onward and upward. We are to be sanctified through obedience to the truth. For want of this Bible sanctification, the soul of many a professed Christian has become a desecrated shrine, the haunt of hollow formalism, of selfishness and hypocrisy, pride and passion. Thousands are living on in guilty unconsciousness of their sin and danger, despising the Saviour's warnings, treating his ambassadors with contempt, and their words as idle tales.

The servants of Christ may at times feel almost disheartened as they see that there are many obstacles to the progress of the truth, and the work seems to move slowly. But their duty remains the same. They are to sow the seed of truth beside all waters. Whatever their difficulties and trials, they can carry all to God in prayer. They can weep between the porch and the altar, saying, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach." By study of the Scriptures and earnest, wrestling prayer, they may become strong in the strength of the mighty one. Labor on, brethren, while the day lasts. The night cometh, in which no man can work. The world must be warned, and God has called us to this work. If we neglect our duty, souls will be lost through our unfaithfulness.

A serious and perhaps unsuspected hindrance to the success of the truth is to be found in our churches themselves. When an effort is made to present our faith to unbelievers; the members of the church stand back, as though they were not an interested party, and let all the burden rest upon the minister. I know that for this reason the labor of our most able ministers has been at times productive of little good. The very best sermons may be preached, the message may be just what the people need, and yet no souls are gained as sheaves to present to Christ.

In laboring where there are some already in the faith, the minister should at first seek not so much to convert unbelievers, as to secure his army of workers. He is not merely to present the truth from the desk, but as the shepherd of the flock he should care for the sheep and the lambs, searching out the lost and straying, and bringing them back to the fold. He should visit every family, not merely as a guest, to enjoy their hospitality, but as Christ's servant to inquire into the spiritual condition of every member of the household. His own soul must be imbued with the love of God; by kindness, love, and courtesy, he should win his way to the hearts of all, and then labor faithfully for the good of parents and children, entreating, warning, encouraging, as the case demands.

A constant effort to promote personal piety should be seen in the minister's public labors. Sermon after sermon should not be given on the prophecies alone. Practical religion should have a place in every discourse. The discourses should be short, and to the point, and followed by a spirited social meeting. Sometimes the social meeting would have the best influence to come first. Let every member of the church feel a duty to labor wisely, skillfully, and earnestly. Let all bear testimony with the one object in view, to glorify God, to gain a deeper experience themselves and to save souls. Thus the church will be kept working with the minister, the careless will be aroused to seek a reconversion themselves, and

then they are prepared to work for others. This is good generalship. The results will be found to be far better than if the minister performed all the labor alone.

Each church can enjoy the labors of a minister but a short time at best. Hence they should seek to gain the greatest possible benefit from his labors. During his stay among them, they should give less attention to their temporal affairs, and all stand ready to second the efforts of the Lord's messenger.

It is harder to reach the hearts of men today than it was twenty years ago. The most convincing arguments may be presented to sustain the truth, and yet sinners seem as far from repentance and conversion as ever. The work of saving souls is no child's play. It requires earnest, untiring labor to wrench the prey of Satan from his grasp. But God will sustain his servants in the work which he has himself committed to their hands. Said Christ to the first disciples, as they toiled upon the sea of Galilee, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." When the gospel net is cast, let there be a watching by the net, with tears and earnest prayer. Let the workers determine not to become discouraged; and not to let go the net until it is drawn ashore, with the fruit of their labor. Sometimes, indeed, we may say with Peter, "We have toiled all the night and have taken nothing," but still it is the Master's command, as of old, "Let down the net on the right side of the ship,"—work on in faith, and God will give success.

Jesus bids us as a people, Go forward. There are higher attainments, a purer love, a deeper experience for us, if we will consecrate ourselves to God, and humbly take him at his word. The reason why we have no greater confidence and joy is that there is in us an evil heart of unbelief. Our Heavenly Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. Let us shake off the spiritual paralysis that dishonors God and imperils our souls. If we draw near to God, he will draw near to us. We must not wait for better opportunities, for strong persuasions, or for holier tempers. We can do nothing of ourselves. We must trust to Jesus' power to save. He is holding out to us the crown of life, and desires us to accept it. Let us come to him, just as we are, and we shall find a present help in our time of need.

The sweet sense of sins forgiven, the light and love which Christ alone can give, fill the soul with subdued, solemn joy. The assurance that we are under the protection of Omnipotence imparts new courage and confidence, inspires a hope that is as an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil. With this assurance we have a source of strength unknown before. Whatever the duty which God requires, we are ready cheerfully to perform it. So long as we have the presence of our Saviour, difficulties cannot dismay nor dangers appall us. If we were only as free to speak of the blessings we receive from God as we are to talk of doubts and discouragements, we would enjoy far more of his presence. "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth God." Let us praise God more, and complain less; let us talk of the love of Jesus, and his wondrous power, and we shall be brought nearer and nearer to our Saviour.

Shall we not consecrate ourselves to God without reserve? Christ, the King of glory, gave himself a ransom for us. Can we withhold anything from him? Shall we think our poor unworthy selves too precious, our time, our property, too valuable to give to Jesus? No, no; the deepest homage of our

hearts, the ablest service of our hands, our talents of ability and of means, all are but too poor to bring to our Redeemer.

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,

That were a tribute far too small;

Love so amazing, so divine,

Demands my life, my soul, my all.”

March 16, 1882

Among the Churches

Santa Rosa

Sabbath and First-day, January 28, 29, I attended the quarterly meeting at Healdsburg. February 1, I went to Santa Rosa. Elds. Van Horn and Israel had been holding meetings here for two weeks. They labored earnestly, not only to present before the people the evidences of our faith, but to urge upon them the importance of practical godliness. Some manifested an interest to hear the word, but we were pained to see that the number was so small. My heart was especially burdened for the church, who were not themselves prepared to unite with their ministers in laboring for the salvation of souls. The Lord aided me by his Spirit as I endeavored to present before them their duty.

February 6, in company with Bro. and Sr. Cole, I visited Bro. Thorpe's family, among the mountains eight miles from Santa Rosa. They invited their neighbors to come in, and though living at quite a distance, fathers, mothers, and children, young men, and young women assembled, until the family sitting-room was full. I spoke to them from the text, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself.” I had as much freedom in addressing this intelligent mountain audience as in speaking to assembled thousands. The Lord's presence is not confined to large numbers. He is ready to bless the few who assemble for his worship.

We next visited Green Valley, and spent a pleasant and profitable evening with Bro. and Sr. Babcock, and Bro. Morton's family. We conversed upon the wisest and most successful manner of laboring for the salvation of souls, and also considered how the Sabbath can be most profitably spent where there are but very few who observe it. If there are but three who can meet on the Sabbath, these should come together and search the Scriptures, read from our publications whatever seems most suitable for both parents and children, and then unite in prayer for the presence and blessing of God.

Sabbath, February 11, I spent at Santa Rosa. It was a day not soon to be forgotten by the church there.

I spoke in the morning from the words of Christ, “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye

therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." The solemn scenes of the day of God seemed to me a living reality. I felt the danger of his professed people, and urged them to seek a preparation for the soon-coming Judgment. We are far from being as earnest and devoted as we should be. How few among us have become dead indeed to the world, and alive unto God. Many of the children of believing parents, children who have been trained in the Sabbath-school, and are familiar with the Scriptures, have yet no interest in religion. Under the most powerful appeals of the Holy Spirit, they seem as unmoved as if chiseled out of stone. What can be done to break the spell which Satan has cast upon these souls? I can see no help, except as parents shall present their children at the throne of grace, in humble, earnest, believing prayer, entreating the Lord to work with their efforts and the efforts of their ministers, until conviction and conversion shall be the result.

As I spoke the word, the Spirit of God rested upon me with power, and set home the truth to many hearts. I entreated both the unconverted and backsliders to return to the Lord with confession and repentance. Between twenty-five and thirty responded. Heartfelt confessions were made, and earnest prayer was offered for those who had come forward, and also for others who had not yet decided to give their hearts to God. Eld. Van Horn was greatly blessed while praying. The unction of the Holy Spirit rested upon him, and the sacred influence seemed to pervade the assembly.

In the afternoon we met again, and the blessing of the Lord was with us in still greater measure. The testimonies borne seemed to come from hearts softened and subdued by the Holy Spirit. To me this was a precious season. My cup of blessing seemed full to overflowing. The Son of God was with us as with the disciples of old, saying, "Peace be unto you." Several remarked that Jesus seemed very near. They felt that they had but to reach out the hand to touch him. The light of Heaven seemed to be streaming down from the gates ajar, through which an ascending Saviour has entered to make intercession for us. We would not have been deprived of this bright spot in our experience for any amount of gold or silver.

We hope that the experience of this Sabbath may not be lost upon the church at Santa Rosa. Jesus has come very near to them in blessing. Oh, will any suffer the sacred influence of the Holy Spirit to come and go unappreciated? Will they treat it lightly, as of little moment? God forbid! Let every one to whom the Lord has revealed himself cherish the holy influence. Let not unbelief come in to poison the soul. Let us hold fast that whereunto we have attained and press forward, toward the mark for the prize.

We should remember that every blessing unimproved increases our guilt. Said Christ to Capernaum, that city so highly favored during his public ministry, "Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell, for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day." Let us beware lest, by slighting, Heaven's favors, we bring upon ourselves this terrible malediction.

A good work was accomplished by the labor at Santa Rosa, though little interest was manifested by unbelievers. The opportunity was gratefully improved by those who loved the truth. They listened to the reasons of our faith with feelings akin to those of the disciples to whom Jesus expounded the Scriptures on the way to Emmaus. When these disciples learned that it was Christ who had walked and talked with

them, they said, one to the other, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" Christ is still sending chosen servants as his representatives to explain and enforce the truths of his sacred word. This is one important channel by which he has chosen to communicate his will to men. Those who reject these opportunities lose the message which Christ has sent them by his servant.

There were some at Santa Rosa who had, through many discouragements, given up the truth. These were reclaimed by the recent effort there, and they have again united with the church. May the Lord impart strength and courage to these trembling souls. Persons are sometimes so reserved, timid, and sensitive upon religious subjects, even after they have given their hearts to God, that they do not receive the strength which they might have. We talk without reserve of our temporal affairs, and why should we be so reluctant to speak of our eternal interests? Would that all hearts might be inspired with holy boldness. Would that we all might lift up Jesus before the people with courage, and fortitude, and faith. E. G. White.

E. G. White.

April 20, 1882

The Primal Cause of Intemperance

Only one lease of life is granted us here; and the inquiry with every one should be, How can I invest my life that it may yield the greatest profit? Life is valuable only as we improve it for the benefit of our fellow-creatures and the glory of God. Careful cultivation of the abilities with which the Creator has endowed us, will qualify us for elevated usefulness here, and a higher life in the world to come.

That time is spent to good account which is directed to the establishment and preservation of sound physical and mental health. We cannot afford to dwarf or cripple a single function of the mind or body, by overwork or abuse of any part of the living machinery. As surely as we do this, we must suffer the consequences. Our first duty to God and our fellow-beings, is that of self-development. Every faculty with which the Creator has endowed us should be cultivated to the highest degree of perfection, that we may be able to do the greatest amount of good of which we are capable. In order to purify and refine our characters, we need the grace given us of Christ that will enable us to see and correct our deficiencies, and improve that which is excellent. This work, wrought for ourselves in the strength and name of Jesus, will be of more benefit to our fellow-creatures than any sermon we might preach them. The example of a well-balanced, well-ordered life, is of inestimable value.

Intemperance is at the foundation of the larger share of the ills of life. It annually destroys tens of thousands. We do not speak of intemperance as limited only to the use of intoxicating liquors; it has a broader meaning, including the hurtful indulgence of any appetite or passion. There are today thousands suffering the torture of physical pain, or writhing under a sense of mental and moral degradation, and wishing again and again that they had never been born. God did not design this condition of things; but it was brought about through the gross violation of Nature's laws. If the appetites and passions were under the control of sanctified reason, society would present a widely

different aspect. Many things that are usually made articles of diet, are unfit for food; the taste for them is not natural, but has been cultivated. Stimulating food creates a desire for still stronger stimulants.

Indigestible food throws the entire system out of order, and unnatural cravings and inordinate appetites, are the results. "Touch not, taste not, handle not," is a motto that should be carried farther than the mere use of spirituous liquors. True temperance teaches us to abstain entirely from that which is injurious, and to use judiciously only such articles of food as are healthful and nutritious.

The first steps in intemperance are usually taken in early youth. Stimulating food is given to the child, which excites unnatural cravings of the stomach. These false appetites are pandered to as they develop. The taste continually becomes more perverted; stronger stimulants are craved and are indulged in, till soon the slave of appetite throws aside all restraint. The evil commenced early in life, and could have been prevented by the parents. We witness strenuous efforts in our country to put down intemperance; but it is found a hard matter to overpower and chain the strong, full-grown lion.

In half the efforts that are put forth to stay this giant evil were directed toward enlightening parents as to their responsibility in forming the habits and characters of their children, a thousand-fold more good might result, than from the present course of combatting only the full-grown evil. The unnatural appetite for spirituous liquors is created at home, in many cases at the very tables of those who are most zealous to lead out in the temperance campaigns. We bid all workers in the good cause, God speed; but we invite them to look deeper into the causes of the evil they war against, and labor more thoroughly and consistently in the work of reform.

Parents should so conduct themselves that their lives will be a daily lesson of self-control and forbearance to their household. The father and mother should unite in disciplining their children. They should feel themselves under solemn obligation to God to train up their offspring in such a way as to secure to them, as far as possible, good physical health and well-developed characters. Upon the mother, however, will come the heavier burden, especially in the first few years of her children's lives. It is her duty to control and direct the developing minds of her tender charge, as well as to watch over their health. The father should aid her with his sympathy and counsel, and share her burdens so far as possible.

Parents should not lightly regard the work of training their children. They should employ much time in careful study of the laws which regulate our being. They should make it their first object to learn the proper manner of dealing with their children, that they may secure to them sound minds in sound bodies. Too many parents are controlled by custom, instead of sound reason and the claims of God. Many who profess to be followers of Christ are sadly neglectful of home duties. They do not perceive the sacred importance of the trust which God has placed in their hands, so to mold the characters of their children, that they will have moral stamina to resist the many temptations that ensnare the feet of youth.

We urge that the principles of temperance be carried into all the details of home-life; that the example of parents should be a lesson of temperance; that self-denial and self-control should be taught to the children, and enforced upon them, so far as consistent, from babyhood. And first it is important that the

little ones be taught that they eat to live, not live to eat; that appetite must be held in abeyance to the will; and that the will must be governed by calm, intelligent reason. Much parental anxiety and grief might be saved if children were taught from the cradle that their wills are not to be made law, nor their whims to be continually indulged. It is not so difficult as is generally supposed to teach the little child to stifle its outbursts of temper, and subdue its fits of passion.

Few parents begin early enough to teach their children obedience. The child is usually allowed to get two or three years the start of its parents, who forbear to discipline it, thinking it is too young to learn to obey. But all this time self is growing strong in the little being, and every day makes it a harder task for the parent to gain control of the child. At a very early age children can comprehend what is plainly and simply told them; and, by kind and judicious management, can be taught to obey.

The mother should not allow her child to gain an advantage over her in a single instance; and, in order to maintain this authority, it is not necessary to resort to harsh measures; a firm, steady hand, and a kindness which convinces the child of your love, will accomplish the purpose. But let selfishness, anger, and self-will, have their course for the first three years of a child's life, and it will be hard to bring it to submit to whole-some discipline. Its disposition becomes soured; it delights in having its own way; parental control is distasteful. These evil tendencies grow with the child's growth, until, in manhood, supreme selfishness and a lack of self-control place him at the mercy of the evils that run riot in our land.

May 4, 1882

Labor as a Blessing

Many look upon work as a curse, originating with the enemy of souls. This is a mistaken idea. God gave labor to man as a blessing, to occupy his mind, to strengthen his body, and to develop his faculties. Adam labored in the garden of Eden, and he found in mental and physical activity the highest pleasures of his holy existence. When he was driven from that beautiful home as the result of his disobedience, and was forced to struggle with a stubborn soil to gain his daily bread, that very labor was a relief to his sorrowing soul, a safeguard against temptation.

Judicious labor is indispensable both to the happiness and the prosperity of our race. It makes the feeble strong, the timid brave, the poor rich, and the wretched happy. Our varied trusts are proportioned to our various abilities, and God expects corresponding returns for the talents he has given to his servants. It is not the greatness of the talents possessed that determines the reward, but the manner in which they are used,—the degree of faithfulness with which the duties of life are performed, be they great or small.

Idleness is one of the greatest curses that can fall upon man; for vice and crime follow in its train. Satan lies in ambush, ready to surprise and destroy those who are unguarded, whose leisure gives him opportunity to insinuate himself into their favor, under some attractive disguise. He is never more successful than when he comes to men in their idle hours.

The greatest curse following in the train of wealth is the fashionable idea that work is degrading. "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom; pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her, and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." Here are presented before us, in the words of Holy Writ, the terrible results of idleness. It was this that caused the ruin of the cities of the plain. Idleness enfeebles the mind, debases the soul, and perverts the understanding, turning into a curse that which was given as a blessing.

The rich often consider themselves entitled to the pre-eminence among their fellow-men and in the favor of God. Many feel above honest labor, and look down with contempt upon their poorer neighbors. The children of the wealthy are taught that to be gentlemen and ladies they must dress fashionably, avoid all useful labor, and shun the society of the working classes. They dare not shock their fashionable associates by putting the gifts of God to a practical use.

Such ideas are wholly at variance with the divine purpose in the creation of man. What are the possessions of even the most wealthy, in comparison with the heritage given to the lordly Adam? Yet Adam was not to be idle. An all-wise Creator understands what is for man's happiness; and this is why he gave to Adam his appointed work.

The Son of God honored labor. Though he was the Majesty of Heaven, he chose his earthly home among the poor and lowly, and worked for his daily bread in the humble carpenter shop of Joseph. Christ is our example. He came to earth to teach us how to live. Does it require too great humiliation for us to follow where the King of glory has led the way?

Misguided parents are trying to improve upon God's plan. Many send their children away from home influences and home duties, to some boarding-school or college, to obtain an education. There, deprived of parental care, the youth squander precious hours in novel reading, in frivolous amusements, or in studying the adornment of the person, that they may outrival their companions. For such pursuits, their duties to their fellow-beings and to God are neglected.

This false education leads young ladies to regard uselessness, frivolity, and helplessness as proofs of gentility. Fashionable butterflies, they have nothing to do for the good of others, at home or abroad. Here may be found the secret of many of the unhappy marriages and flirtations ending in shame, that curse our world today.

Those who are in the possession of wealth and leisure, and yet have no purpose in life, have nothing to arouse them to either mental or physical activity. Thus many a woman loses her health, and is sent to some medical institution for treatment. Here attendants are hired, at great expense, to rub, stretch, and exercise the muscles, which have become powerless by inaction. She hires servants, that she may live a life of idleness, and then hires other servants to exercise the muscles enfeebled by disuse. What consummate folly! How much wiser and better for women, young or old, to brave the sneers of fashion's votaries, and obey the dictates of common sense and the laws of life. By the cheerful performance of domestic duties, they might become useful and happy members of society. Such labor affords a more efficient and profitable "movement cure" than the best inventions of the physicians.

Young men, as well as young women, manifest a sad lack of earnest purpose and moral independence. To dress, to smoke, to talk nonsense, and to indulge their passion for amusement, is the ideal of happiness, even with many who profess to be Christians. It is painful to think of the time which is thus misspent. Hours that should be given to the study of the Scriptures or to active labor for Christ are worse than wasted.

Life was given for a true and holy purpose. It is too precious to be thus squandered. I entreat those who have taken the name of Christ to examine their own hearts, and pass sentence upon themselves. Do you not love pleasure more than you love God or your fellowmen?

There is work to be done. There is the mind, with all its capabilities, to strengthen and store with the treasures of divine wisdom. There are souls to save. There is a Heaven to win. There are battles to fight. You may come to the front and join in the warfare against the hosts of evil. In the strength of God you may do a good and noble work for the Master.

God designed that all should be workers, and upon those whose opportunities and abilities are greatest, rest the heaviest responsibilities. Upon them, also, will fall the heaviest condemnation if they are unfaithful to their trust. The patient beasts of burden put to shame that indolent do nothing, who, endowed with reasoning powers and a knowledge of the divine will, refuses to perform his allotted part in God's great plan.

The indolence of the many, occasions the overwork of the few. A large class refuse to think or act for themselves. They have no disposition to step out of the old ruts of prejudice and error; by their perversity they block up the way of advancement, and force the standard-bearers of the right to more heroic efforts in their march forward. Earnest and devoted laborers are failing for the want of a helping hand, and are sinking beneath their double burdens. Their graves are waymarks along the upward paths of reform.

The true glory and joy of life are found only by the working man and woman. Labor brings its own reward, and the rest is sweet that is purchased by the fatigue of a well-spent day. But there is a self-imposed toil which is utterly unsatisfying and injurious. It is that which gratifies unsanctified ambition, that which seeks display or notoriety. The love of appearance or possession leads thousands to carry to excess what is lawful, to devote all the strength of mind and body to that which should occupy but a small portion of their time. They bend every energy to the acquisition of wealth or honor; they make all other objects secondary to this; they toil unflinchingly for years to accomplish their purpose; yet when the goal is reached, and the coveted reward secured, it turns to ashes in their grasp; it is a shadow, a delusion. They have given their life for that which profiteth not.

Yet all the lawful pursuits of life may be safely followed, if the spirit is kept free from selfish hopes and the contamination of deceit and envy. The business life of the Christian should be marked with the same purity that held sway in the work shop of the holy Nazarene. It is the working men and women—those who are willing to bear its responsibilities with faith and hope—who see something great and good in life.

Patient laborers, remember that they were sturdy working men whom Christ chose from among the fishermen of Galilee and the tent-makers of Corinth, to labor with him in the work of salvation. From these humble men went forth a power that will be felt through all eternity.

The angels are workers; they are ministers of God to the children of men. Those slothful spirits who look forward to a Heaven of inaction will be disappointed; for the Creator has prepared no such place for the gratification of sinful indolence. But to the weary and heavy-laden, rest is promised. It is the faithful servants who are welcomed from their labors unto the joy of their Lord. Gladly will they lay off their armor, and forget the noise of battle in the peace that shall be the inheritance of the saints.

The path of the Christian laborer may be hard and narrow, but it is honored by the foot-prints of the Redeemer, and he is safe who follows in that sacred way.

May 4, 1882

Our School at Healdsburg

In the providence of God a school has been established by our people in California. The time has fully come for such a step. The need of a school has been deeply felt, and we trust that our brethren on this coast will sustain it by their means and their patronage.

It is the purpose of managers and teachers, not so much to copy the plans and methods of other institutions of learning, as to make this school such as God can approve. We trust that a high moral and religious standard will be maintained, and that Healdsburg Academy will be free from those pernicious influences which are so prevalent in popular schools.

Some parents may feel that they cannot afford to pay for the tuition of their children, when an education can be obtained free of charge, in the public schools. But we maintain that even in the matter of dollars and cents, parents will find it their wisest course to place their children under good moral and religious influences. In their association with worldlings, the young are exposed to many temptations. Pride and extravagance in dress are among the prevailing sins of the age. Will not the influence of worldly associates affect the habits, tastes, and desires of your children? Will it not lead them away from simplicity in dress, and make them discontented with that which is useful and substantial? Will not the extra demand upon your purse far exceed the cost of tuition at a school where such influences would be held in check? We have seen this experiment made again and again. In every instance parents have lost instead of saving.

By association with ungodly or vicious companions, the young often contract tastes and habits which prove a lifelong injury. Boys from six to twelve years old may be seen coming from the public schools, smoking their cigarettes. Some who have been taught better things are not proof against such examples.

Instead of permitting our children to imitate the customs and practices of the world, we should seek to impress upon their minds that the love of pleasure and selfish indulgence is dangerous to virtue and morality. We often hear it said that the young must "sow their wild oats." But let it be remembered that

the seed sown will determine the character of the harvest. Youthful follies and indiscretions will leave an impress upon the mind and character. In early life the brain is peculiarly susceptible to injury. Even a slight degree of sensual indulgence lowers its tone and impairs its power. The effect of such indulgence will be seen and felt, long after the sin itself has been repented of.

If parents desire that their children shall become pure, noble, upright men and women, they must give them right surroundings and proper associates in childhood. Inquire into the history of the world's best and noblest men,—those who have made life a success,—and you will find that from childhood they were governed by sterling principle. They were simple in their tastes, and temperate in their habits. The lessons of self-denial and self-control were early learned. Such men can be said, in the highest sense, to still enjoy their youth. Its purity remains unsullied, its strength and vigor undiminished. The parents thought less of hoarding money for their children than of securing to them pure morals and a vigorous intellect. The fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, was the foundation of their greatness.

Fathers and mothers, will you not seek to build a barrier about your children, that the contaminating, corrupting influence of the world, like a fast-sweeping current, may not bear them down to perdition? When you count the cost of educating your sons and daughters at our own school, please take into account, also, the cost of educating them in the public schools and in the colleges of the day. Consider what will be their associations, to what temptations they will be exposed, what tastes and habits they will form.

Nearly all youth wish to be and try to be fashionable. Not only the sons and daughters of fortune, but the children of poverty as well, are engaged in the wild chase for pleasure and display. However limited their circumstances, most parents will yield to the influence of their pleasure-loving children, and find means to gratify their desires. Many a youth is constantly in a state of exhaustive excitement or depressing discontent. Indulgence only increases the thirst for pleasure and display, until it becomes an insatiable craving. Examples of this are as frequent as they are painful. One such instance I will relate. A lady had from her girlhood found pleasure in the gratification of pride and vanity, until a love for display and a desire for admiration became the ruling passion of her life. It was still the ruling passion in her dying hour. While the death-damp gathered upon her brow, she was thinking only how she might create a sensation. She expressed a wish to be attired for the grave in her richest robes, and to be adorned with all her costly jewels. It was done, and in hollow mockery, gold and gems glittered upon the decaying body. This is idolatry scarcely to be surpassed by the worshipers of heathen gods. But to such lengths will pride and fashion lead their votaries. Shall we expose our children to these baleful influences?

To gain wealth, men will cheerfully brave any danger and endure any hardship. They will cross the sea, explore the depths of the earth, scale the mountains, or traverse the desert. They will incur any and every risk, in anticipation of future profits. Should not God's people be willing to make some sacrifice for the present and future welfare of their children?

I have felt surprised and pained to see parents send their sons and daughters hundreds of miles away from home, among unbelievers, to obtain an education. Deprived of parental watchcare, these youth

are surrounded by influences that are opposed to God. The parents will find, to their sorrow, that their children have received an education in frivolity and worldliness which will place them beyond the influence of the truth.

We counsel parents to avail themselves of the opportunity now offered to separate their children from these worldly associations. Mothers, would it not be true wisdom to practice economy and self-denial in the furnishing of your house or the adorning of your dress, and let the means thus saved be devoted to the education of your children? Fathers, can you not sell a piece of your land, and send your children to a school where the moral and religious influence predominates? The money thus invested will bring returns more valuable than bank-stock. It will be repaid to you, both principal and interest, in the mental and spiritual advancement of your children.

It is designed that the education given in our school shall be in harmony with the teachings of God's word. Religious instruction will be given daily. Christian principles will be faithfully inculcated. It is the purpose of the Principal to conduct the school on the plan of a well-regulated Christian family. Whether engaged in study or recreation, the pupils will be under the supervision of kind yet watchful teachers.

The Bible is the word of God to men. It teaches us how to live that we may secure life's great end. The knowledge contained in this book lies at the very foundation of all knowledge. Yet God and his word have been ignored, while the words of men have been treasured as the counsels of wisdom. We should give the Bible its proper place in our schools and our homes, as the most valuable book which men possess.

Thousands in this age are seeking to clothe sin in garments of righteousness, to conceal its true deformity. The youth should be taught to study the word of God for themselves, and to try every act and purpose of life by this unerring test. Let the fact be ever kept before their minds that truth and justice could not be compromised, even to save a lost race. Looking upon the cross of Calvary, can we entertain the thought that sin is a matter of little moment? God could give his only-begotten Son to die for our redemption, but he could not permit the principles of his government to be overthrown.

Sin is the evil thing which has brought such misery upon our race. The young should be taught to hate sin, to avoid it, not merely from fear of punishment, but from a sense of its inherent baseness. They should learn to do right because it is right. Every youth should be impressed with the fact that he is not his own; that his strength, his time, his talents, belong to God. It should be his chief purpose in life to glorify God and to do good to his fellow-men. The Bible teaches him that he is a branch, on which fruit must be found; a steward, whose capital will increase as it is wisely improved; a light, whose bright beams are to illuminate the moral darkness that enshrouds the earth. Every man, every child, has work to do for God's glory, and for the salvation of souls that are ready to perish.

The greatest want of this age is the want of men,—men who will not be bought or sold; men who are true and honest in their inmost souls; men who will not fear to call sin by its right name, and to condemn it, in themselves or in others; men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole; men who will stand for the right, though the heavens fall.

To form such a character in the young, there is needed a different system of education from that generally adopted. Moral and religious training must receive more attention. We are educating our children for time and for eternity. Let us enter upon our work as though we realized its importance.

Mrs. E. G. White

May 18, 1882

Burning of the Magical Books

In the days of the apostles, the city of Ephesus was famed for the worship of the goddess Diana and the practice of magic. The temple of Diana was considered, for its size and splendor, one of the wonders of the world. Its surpassing magnificence made it the pride of both the city and the nation. The idol itself was but an uncouth wooden image, on which were inscribed mystic characters and symbols. These were supposed to possess great power. When pronounced, they were said to accomplish wonders. When written, they were treasured as a potent charm to guard their possessor from robbers, from disease, and even from death. Numerous and costly books were written by the Ephesians to explain the meaning and use of these mysterious symbols.

In this city, the very stronghold of superstition and sorcery, the apostle Paul labored for several years. Here the power of God was mightily displayed through his servant. The sick were healed, and evil spirits were cast out.

The miracles wrought by Paul in the name of Jesus, created great excitement in Ephesus. Among those who practiced magic arts were certain Jewish exorcists, who claimed to possess the same power exercised by Paul. Believing that the name of Jesus acted as a charm, they determined to cast out evil spirits by the same means which the apostle had employed.

An attempt was made by seven brothers, the sons of Sceva, a chief priest of the Jews. Finding a man who was possessed with an evil spirit, they addressed him, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." But the evil spirit answered with scorn, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" and the man who was possessed attacked them with such violence that they fled out of the house, naked and wounded.

The discomfiture and humiliation of those who had profaned the name of Jesus soon became known throughout Ephesus, by Jews and Gentiles. It furnished unmistakable proof of the sacredness of that name, and the peril which they incurred who should invoke it, while they had no faith in Christ's divine mission.

Many dared not breathe aloud the name, on which they had hitherto heaped reproach and blasphemy. A large number were convinced that Christ was all that Paul claimed him to be, and they determined to receive the gospel. These openly renounced the practice of sorcery, and acknowledged their secret arts to be deceptive and Satanic. They brought together the manuals of enchantment, the costly books containing the mystic symbols of Diana, and the secrets of their art, and burned them in the presence of

all the people. The sacrifice thus made was estimated at fifty thousand pieces of silver, equal to about ten thousand dollars.

The conversion of these Ephesians was attended with the results that always follow genuine conversion. When convinced that their magical books were false and pernicious, they were unwilling to sell them and thus place temptation in the way of others. They promptly burned the records of divination, at a great personal sacrifice. The power of truth triumphed over men's prejudices, favorite pursuits, and love of money.

Those magical books contained rules and forms of communication with evil spirits. They were, in fact, the regulations of the worship of Satan; directions for soliciting his help, and obtaining information from him. The system of magic or sorcery then extant was in reality the same as that which is now known as modern Spiritualism. Many were deceived in Paul's day by this Satanic delusion, and many are deceived today by the same power. "Magical books" were not confined to the apostolic age, or to nations that are called heathen. The sorcerers of our time are taking advantage of the freedom of the press to spread abroad their baleful literature. Could all the productions of modern Spiritualism be treated as were the magical books of the Ephesians, one of Satan's most successful avenues to destroy the souls of men would be cut off.

Witchcraft and sorcery are practiced in this Christian age and Christian nation, even more boldly than by the old-time magicians. Satan is finding access to thousands of minds by presenting himself under the guise of departed friends. The Scriptures of truth declare that "the dead know not anything." Their thoughts, their love, their hatred, have perished. The dead do not hold communion with the living. But Satan—true to his early cunning, when in the form of a serpent he deceived the mother of our race—employs this device to gain control of the minds of men.

Paul warns his Corinthian brethren of the deceptive power of their great adversary. He declares, "I fear that by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

He writes to his son Timothy, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils."

In his second epistle to the Thessalonians, he warns them that the second advent of our Lord will be preceded by the working of Satan," with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie."

Because the children of men reject the plainest teachings of his word, and trample upon his law, God leaves them to choose that which they desire. They spurn the truth, and he permits them to believe a lie. They refuse to yield to the convictions of the Holy Spirit, and Satan, transforming himself into an angel of light, leads them captive at his will. If men were but conversant with the word of God, and obedient to its teachings, they could not be thus deceived; but they neglect the great detector of fraud,

and the mind becomes confused and corrupted by the deceptive arts of men, and the secret power of the father of lies.

Men of intelligence are infatuated with Satanic sorcery as verily today as in the days of Paul. Thousands accept the opinion of the minister or obey the injunctions of the pope or priest, and neglect God's word and despise his truth. God would have his people learn their duty for themselves. The Bible declares his will to men, and it is as much our privilege and our duty to learn that will as it is that of ministers and popes and priests to learn it. What they can read from God's word, we can all read.

When the Ephesian converts burned their books on magic, they showed that they hated what they had once loved, and loved what they had once hated. The light of truth, shining into their minds, had convinced them of the unlawfulness of their arts, and had stirred their souls with abhorrence of their unholy deeds. Such a change is the best evidence of true conversion.

A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or to trace all the chain of circumstances in the process of conversion; yet this does not prove him to be unconverted. Said Christ to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit." Though the work of grace is silent and almost imperceptible, it may be fully as effective as when its operations are more apparent. But if the heart has been renewed by the Holy Spirit, the life will bear witness to the fact. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Light and darkness are not more distinct than are the state of the converted and the unconverted. A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are.

The world and the church have a right to expect such proof of true conversion as was given by the Ephesians,—proof that a new moral taste has been created. You may not have practiced sorcery, you may not have tampered with Spiritualism; but remember that "To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey." If you indulge in any practice forbidden in God's word, you have yielded obedience to Satan; you are his servant.

Every unconverted man is fascinated, bewildered, by the bewitching power of the great deceiver. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?" Every person who cherishes a known error, in faith or practice, is under the power of sorcery, and is practicing sorcery upon others. Satan employs him to mislead other souls.

If we would indeed become children of God, we must renounce at once and forever, every sinful indulgence. We must close every avenue through which Satan may gain control of our thoughts or our affections. Many persons manifest determined hatred of some sins denounced in the word of God, while they at the same time indulge their favorite sin. Not so did the Ephesian converts. Their particular sin was magic. By this means Satan held them in his power. They might have been earnest and vigilant to correct other evils, but had they spared this one sin, they would ere long have yielded their faith. But they laid the axe to the root of the tree; they renounced the hidden things of darkness and destroyed that which had led them into sin.

This incident, was placed on record as an important lesson for every age. The Ephesians directed their efforts against the very sin of which they were guilty. Have the people of God in this age acted in like manner? There are many who manifest supreme devotion to their money, their business or their houses and lands. The ambitious man worships fame or honor as his idol. The covetous man fosters covetousness. The sensualist is wedded to his lust. These love their cherished objects of pursuit more than they love God. They are idolaters.

Those who venture to cherish the sin which they love best, are tampering with Satan's sorcery. The enchanting power of temptation has paralyzed conscience and blinded reason, so that they do not perceive their danger. The magical books have not been destroyed.

When the truth, presented to the understanding, exerts its sanctifying power upon the heart, the sins which were once cherished will be put away, that Jesus may occupy the soul-temple. If covetousness has been indulged, it will be given up. If the love of the world has captivated the senses, a higher attraction will break its power. Deceit, falsehood, impurity, will be cleansed from the heart. He who maintains his allegiance to Christ, can render no service to Christ's bitterest foe.

Many place themselves on the enchanted ground by frequenting scenes of amusement where fallen spirits congregate. Professing Christian, when you resort to the theater, remember that Satan is there, conducting the play as the master-actor. He is there to excite passion and glorify vice. The very atmosphere is permeated with licentiousness. Satan presides, also, at the masquerade and the dance; he throws around the card-table its bewitching power. Wherever an influence is exerted to cause men to forget their Creator, there Satan is at work, it matters not how innocent the guise under which he conceals his purpose.

Many who cannot be attracted by the allurements of pleasure, are ensnared by the teachings of "science falsely so-called." These are led to extol human reason, above divine revelation; to exalt nature, and forget the God of nature. Is there no magic, no sorcery, going on around us?

The press is now sending out books in great numbers, that teach the ignorant and unsuspecting how they may serve Satan. There are works breathing the poison of skepticism and infidelity. There are treatises on money-making, that fill thousands of minds with fancies and follies, that fire thousands with an insane desire to amass wealth. There are fascinating volumes, that portray with all the power of human eloquence the lives of those who have made fame their god. And outnumbering all other productions of the press, like the swarms of locusts that darkened the whole land, comes the flood of novels and romances, to cultivate in the youth a love-sick sentimentalism, to teach them that courtship and marriage are the great object of their existence, and to unfit them for the practical duties of a useful life.

Satan is seeking by every means he can devise, to suggest doubts concerning the truth of God's word. Those who are naturally inclined to skepticism should, above all others, avoid everything that would strengthen this dangerous tendency. On the contrary, many read with avidity skeptical writings which exert such a deceptive, bewitching power that the reader seeks in vain to free the mind or purify the heart from the unholy spell. Evil angels, having once gained access, suggest doubts that human

reasoning is powerless to remove. When God speaks to the soul, those who would be free will cut every tie that holds them under Satan's power. They will destroy that which so nearly proved their ruin, lest it prove the ruin of others.

Many a work is highly prized for its wealth and beauty of language, when these are but a fair garment to conceal principles that in their native deformity would shock the reader. Those principles have led the author step by step away from God, from hope, and Heaven. Will they not exert the same influence upon the reader? The course of the Ephesians was the only safe course for them; it is the only safe course for you. Destroy these agencies of Satan. Put beyond your reach that which has power to seduce you.

The authors of no small share of current literature are men who have lived in the atmosphere of vice, and who are slaves of passion. Poets of brilliant talents have perverted their powers to the service of Satan. Over all that is good, and pure, and noble, they have cast the darkness of their own base thoughts. They encourage dissipation and sanction vice.

The bewildering brilliancy, the deceptive pathos, of many a gifted author, are Satan's bait to allure and destroy the souls of men. Many who are in no danger from the productions of the gross and sensual, are deceived by writers who virtually clothe Satan in angel's garments and make him a benefactor of the race. Such works are legion.

Have the disciples of Christ burned the magical books? Have they made a decided change in their principles and habits of life? Have they separated themselves from the enchantments of the world? Those who, knowing their danger, will yet venture into places of worldly, demoralizing amusement, or who will poison the mind with the literary productions of the skeptic, or the sensualist, are guilty of presumption. God does not give his angels charge to keep those who choose to walk in forbidden paths.

When in the way of duty we are brought into trial, as was Daniel in the king's court, we may be assured that God will preserve us. But if, through stubbornness, hardihood, or bravado, we place ourselves under the power of temptation, we shall fall, sooner or later.

We are living at a time when Satan's power is great. "As a roaring lion, he walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Anon, he will quell his roar to the faintest whisper, that he may deceive the unsuspecting by his hellish arts. The glories of the world are presented in glowing colors to fascinate the senses, to beguile unstable souls. What have professed Christians done to close every avenue whereby Satan can approach them? Have they given proof of the work wrought in them by the Holy Spirit? Have they erected barriers, firm and strong, between their soul and every earthly idol?

The infidel, when converted, will abhor the books that led him to doubt the word of God. The dissolute man who has purified his soul by obedience to the truth, will not venture into the haunts of dissipation, from curiosity or habit. Neither will he permit his mind to dwell upon such scenes, portrayed in the pages of the sensualist. He will be awake to his danger, shunning temptation himself, and earnestly warning others of its bewitching power. Whatever the idol previously cherished, the converted man will

not only resist evil, but will, so far as possible, place himself beyond the power of Satan. Again we would ask the followers of Christ, "Have you burned the magical books?"

May 25, 1882

Home Training—Its Importance and Results

"That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace." It should be the object of every parent to secure to his children a well-balanced, symmetrical character. This is a work of no small magnitude and importance. It will require earnest thought and prayer, no less than patient, persevering effort. A right foundation must be laid, a framework, strong and firm, erected, and then day by day the work of building, polishing, perfecting, must go forward.

Upon the mother rests, to a great degree, the responsibility of the early training of her children. Did mothers but realize the importance of their mission, they would be much in secret prayer, presenting their children to Jesus, imploring his blessing upon them, and pleading for wisdom to discharge aright their sacred duties. Let the mother improve every opportunity to mold and fashion the disposition and habits of her children. Let her watch carefully the development of character, repressing traits that are too prominent, encouraging those that are deficient. Let her make her own life a pure and noble example to her precious charge.

The mother should enter upon her work with courage and energy, relying constantly upon divine aid in all her efforts. She should never rest satisfied until she sees in her children a gradual elevation of character, until they have a higher object in life than merely to seek their own pleasure. Children should be taught at home to exert every faculty of mind or body. Thus they gain an understanding of their own capabilities, and at the same time strengthen and develop every power by calling it into action.

Parents, your own home is the first field in which you are called to labor. The precious plants in the home garden demand your first care. To you it is appointed to watch for souls as they that must give account. Carefully consider your work, its nature, its bearing, and its results. Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little you must instruct, warn, and counsel, ever remembering that your looks, words, and actions, have a direct bearing upon the future course of your dear ones. Your work is not to paint a form of beauty upon canvas, or to chisel it from marble; but to impress upon a human soul the image of the Divine.

Mothers, will you not dispense with useless, unimportant labor for that which must perish with the using? Will you not seek to draw near to God, that his wisdom may guide and his grace assist you, in a work which will be as enduring as eternity? Aim to make your children perfect in character. Remember that such only can see God.

I speak the more freely and earnestly, because I know that many parents are neglecting their God-given work. They are themselves far from purity and holiness. They do not see the defects of their children as they would if their own eyes were beholding and admiring the perfection of Christ's character.

For Christ's sake, for the sake of your children, seek to conform your own life to the divine standard. Let nothing come in between you and your God. Be earnest, be patient and persevering, instant in season, out of season. Give your children intellectual culture, and moral training. Let their young hearts be fortified, with firm, pure principles. While you have the opportunity, lay the foundation for a noble manhood and womanhood. Your labor will be rewarded a thousand fold.

You must make the Bible your guide, if you would bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Let the life and character of Christ be presented as the pattern for them to copy. If they err, read to them what the Lord has said concerning similar sins. There is need of constant care and diligence in this work. One wrong trait tolerated by parents, uncorrected by teachers, may cause the whole character to become deformed and unbalanced. Teach the children that they must have a new heart; that new tastes must be created, new motives inspired. They must have help from Christ; they must become acquainted with the character of God as revealed in his word.

Family prayer receives too little interest and attention. In many cases, the morning and evening worship is little more than a mere form, a dull, monotonous repetition of set phrases in which the spirit of gratitude or the sense of need finds no expression. The Lord accepts not such service. But the petitions of a humble heart and contrite spirit he will not despise. The opening of our hearts to our Heavenly Father, the acknowledgment of our entire dependence, the expression of our wants, the homage of grateful love,—this is true prayer. When we come pleading the merits of Christ's blood, and trusting with implicit faith his promises, we shall secure the blessing of the Lord.

Redeem the precious hours worse than wasted in talking of your troubles, or gossiping over the faults of others. Seek earnestly to God for help, and you will become strong in his strength. You may have Christ as a guest in your home. Be not satisfied merely to bear the name of Christians. Be in truth followers of Jesus. Let your hearts be warmed with his love. Make him your friend, your helper, your counselor.

The most valuable rules for social and family intercourse, are to be found in the Bible. There is not only the best and purest standard of morality, but the most valuable code of politeness. Our Saviour's sermon on the mount contains instruction of priceless worth to old and young. It should be often read in the family circle, and its precious teachings exemplified in the daily life. The golden rule, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," as well as the apostolic injunction, "In honor preferring one another," should be made the law of the family. Those who cherish the spirit of Christ, will manifest politeness at home, a spirit of benevolence, even in little things. They will be constantly seeking to make all around them happy, forgetting self in their kind attentions to others. This is the fruit which grows upon the Christian tree.

Few realize the influence of the little things of life, upon the development of character. Mothers, cease to spend your time and strength for that which is merely attractive to the eye, but which does not minister to comfort or real happiness, and you will cut off a large share of the cares and worries that make you nervous and irritable, impolite and unchristian. The precious moments heretofore given to needless labor should be devoted to beautifying the souls of your children, teaching them how they may obtain the inward adorning, that meek and quiet spirit which God accounts of great price.

If real politeness were practiced by all the followers of Christ, if obedience to the golden rule were made one of the corner-stones of Christian character, we would see fewer church-trials, less hardness and animosity between brethren. There would be no harsh, thoughtless words, no strife for the highest place. God's people will be tested. Every one will be exposed to the fierce fire of trial and temptation. If we would not be consumed as dross, we must have the love of God—the gold that has been tried—abiding in us. Now is the time to soften and subdue our rough, harsh traits of character. We must cherish kindness, forbearance, Christian integrity. Ungenerous criticism, hard speeches, questioning the motives of another, or magnifying his faults, open the door to Satan's temptations, and lead many away from God. The Holy Scriptures give us a safe and profitable rule for thought and conversation.

“Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” If we would have our children practice kindness, courtesy, and love, we ourselves must set them the example.

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind.” It “thinketh no evil,”—another fruit borne on the tree of love. Our souls must be stayed upon God, imbued with his Spirit, if we learn these sacred lessons. Said the apostle, “Gird up the loins of your mind.” If the thoughts are rightly disciplined, it will be a far less difficult task to control the feelings. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, will give us courage, hope and constancy. Shall we not obey the teachings of God's word? Shall we not make it our guide and counselor? Shall we not devote time and thought to its perusal? How can Christians neglect the book in which God has revealed his will to men? Our children need help to understand the Scriptures. They should become acquainted with the life and character of Jesus, that they may love him, and choose to obey him.

Parents and guardians must themselves maintain purity of heart and life, if they would have their children pure. They must give the needed instruction, and in addition to this, they must exercise unceasing watchfulness. Every day new thoughts are awakened in the minds of the young, new impressions made upon their hearts. The associations they form, the books they read, the habits they cherish—all must be guarded. The interests of your children, for this life and the next, are at stake.

“What now you do, you know not,

But shall hereafter know,

When the seeds your hands are sowing,

To a ripened harvest grow.”

When you stand before the great white throne, then your work will appear as it is. The books are opened, the record of every life made known. Many in that vast company are unprepared for the revelations made. Upon the ears of some, the words will fall with startling distinctness, “Weighed in the balance, and found wanting.” To many parents the Judge will say in that day, “You had my word, plainly setting forth your duty. Why have you not obeyed its teachings? Knew ye not that it was the voice of God? Did I not bid you search the Scriptures, that you might not go astray? You have not only ruined

your own souls, but by your pretensions to godliness you have misled many others. You have no part with me. Depart, depart!”

Another class stand pale and trembling, trusting in Christ, and yet oppressed with a sense of their own unworthiness. They hear with tears of joy and gratitude the Master's commendation. The days of incessant toil, of burden-bearing, and of fear and anguish, are forgotten, as that voice, sweeter than the music of angel harps, pronounces the words, “Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.” There stand the host of the redeemed, the palm branch of victory in their hand, the crown upon their head. These are the ones who by faithful, earnest labor, have obtained a fitness for Heaven. The life-work performed on earth is acknowledged in the heavenly courts as a work well done.

With joy unutterable, parents see the crown, the robe, the harp, given to their children. The days of hope and fear are ended. The seed sown with tears and prayers may have seemed to be sown in vain, but their harvest is reaped with joy at last. Their children have been redeemed.

Fathers, mothers, shall the voices of your children swell the song of gladness in that day?

May 25, 1882

At the Southern Camp-Meeting

Accompanied by W. C. White and Sister Mary A. Davis, I reached the grounds, Thursday, May 4, at 10 P. M. We found a neat, commodious tent, conveniently fitted up for us during our stay on the ground.

At the 9 o'clock meeting on Friday morning, I tried to present before our people the importance of the occasion. This holy convocation affords a precious opportunity to draw near to God. We should improve this privilege to search our own hearts, to compare our life and character with the divine law, and see what would hinder the Spirit of God from abiding with us. We should begin the meeting aright, that God may impart to us his blessing. We must carefully shun any violation of the Sabbath, making all needful preparation on Friday. We are not to consult our own pleasure or convenience, but to consider how we can best honor our Creator.

One day in the week God claims as his own; he has set it apart for religious worship, and has commanded man, “In it thou shalt not do any work.” He will not grant his blessing to those who willfully trample upon his holy day. “If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

The Lord gave the children of Israel explicit instructions prohibiting unnecessary labor upon the Sabbath. “Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord. Bake that which ye will bake today, and seethe that which ye will seethe.” Carelessness in the observance of the Sabbath has crept in among us as a people. Many have sought to please themselves rather than to honor God. If we would enjoy the blessing of the Lord, the Sabbath-day must be kept holy. All cooking should be done on Friday. On the

camp-ground, when the mornings are cool, hot water or hot gruel should be provided. In winter, at our homes, the food previously cooked should be warmed before it is eaten. In warm weather this is unnecessary. Divine mercy has directed that the sick and suffering should be cared for; the labor required to do this is a work of necessity, and no violation of the Sabbath.

At our annual gatherings we assemble to seek the Lord, to humble ourselves before him, to search diligently our own hearts, and to learn whether we are in the faith. How inconsistent for us, on such an occasion, to make eating and drinking our chief business. The one day in seven, which God has sanctified, should be observed in accordance with the commandment.

If we would preserve health and clearness of mind, we should eat temperately of plain, wholesome food. Those who have been accustomed to eat three meals would experience benefit from taking only two meals of simple food, prepared in a simple manner. If we had bread and water only, we should receive it with thankfulness; but we are not yet compelled to confine ourselves to this restricted diet. I am convinced, however, that very many would find it a great advantage to partake of a much plainer diet on the Sabbath than on the working days of the week.

The violation of the fourth commandment is not confined to the preparation of food. Many carelessly put off blacking their boots, and shaving, until after the beginning of the Sabbath. This should not be. If any neglect to do such work on a working day, they should have respect enough for God's holy time to let their beards remain unshaven, their boots rough and brown, until the Sabbath is past. This might help their memory, and make them more careful to do their own work on the six working days.

At every camp-meeting, instruction should be given on all these points. How can we expect the special blessing of God, unless we shun with abhorrence the smallest sin. We should choose to suffer inconvenience, loss, or privation, rather than disregard the instructions of the Lord. Our lack of spirituality has been caused by our own course. We have gradually and insensibly chosen to please ourselves instead of seeking to honor God. Christian perfection consists in the complete harmony of our will with the will of our Creator. The inhabitants of Heaven find, in obeying the will of God, their joy and blessedness.

Let every family of Seventh-day Adventists honor God by a strict regard for his law. The children should be taught to respect the Sabbath. On the day of preparation, clothing should be put in proper repair, shoes polished, baths taken. Then around the family altar all should wait to welcome God's holy day, as they would watch for the coming of a dear friend.

To the praise of God, I would say that my words upon this point met a response in the hearts of the people. Our restaurant table was well furnished, yet free from extravagance. On Friday, all needful preparation was made, so that the least work was performed on the Sabbath that I have seen at camp-meeting for many years. The plain, wholesome food was eaten with a relish. Only two meals a day were prepared at the restaurant, and those in charge had an opportunity to attend nearly all, if not all, the meetings.

For two mornings I observed that while the five o'clock meetings were in session, our sisters were busily engaged in preparing breakfast, but after this I was gratified to see that nearly all were present in the tent. These meetings were intensely interesting. There was no great excitement, but a steady advance in spiritual strength. The people were hungry for the bread of life. I have never attended a meeting where there seemed to be a stronger desire to learn, and to profit by the instruction received, than at this meeting. Oh, how much easier to labor where the people put forth earnest efforts to help themselves! Most encouraging testimonies were borne. I received precious blessings as I sought to present some practical points of truth in a few minutes' talk. And it was encouraging to learn from the testimonies borne, that our brethren and sisters gathered up these gleams of light, and purposed to make the best use of them.

Our meetings were a great blessing to myself as well as to the people. So deep was the affliction experienced in the loss of my husband, that I have felt I had received my death-wound. And as I saw our people drifting away from God, into the current of worldliness and pleasure-loving, and neglecting the light which God has permitted to shine upon them, it caused me far deeper grief than the death of my children and my husband. I had no rest day nor night.

I longed for peace. I longed for the burden to be lifted from me. I had in faithful testimony reproved, warned, and counseled. I could do no more. I was powerless to correct the existing evils. I had feared to attend the southern camp-meeting; I hardly dared test my strength by the labor which I should be called to perform; but from the first day I felt that the Lord was sustaining me. The everlasting arms were my support. When standing before the people, I was conscious of a strength not my own. I was but the instrument; God spoke to the people through clay. The burden which had weighed me down, was removed. Peace, like a river, flowed into my soul. I was cheerful, yea, joyful, in God. Thus has the Lord in mercy often helped me in time past, as I have labored for the salvation of souls. Peace and joy continued with me through the meeting. My wakeful hours at night were spent in communion with God. I felt that a risen Saviour pleads in our behalf, at the right hand of the Father. Because Jesus lives, we live also; he in us, and we in him.

On the Sabbath, we invited all those to come forward who desired to reach a higher standard in their religious life, and also those who desired, for the first time, to give their hearts to Jesus. A large part of our number at once responded, and we had a season of confession, prayer, and humiliation, before God. This meeting was timely; it seemed to break the spell of coldness and worldliness, and, from this point, there was steady advancement.

I was strengthened to speak to the people ten times during the meeting, besides several short talks of from fifteen to forty minutes, in the social gatherings. In addition to this, I wrote not less than one hundred pages, during the ten days we were upon the ground.

Of many interesting features of the meeting, I have not space here to write. The Bible-classes were productive of much good, in directing the minds of our people to the contemplation of Scripture truth. The meetings held specially for the youth and children, were among the best of the series. At all these

yearly gatherings, special attention should be given to the spiritual interests of the young. Earnest labor should be put forth in their behalf.

On the last Sunday, I spoke in the five o'clock morning prayer-meeting upon the importance of cherishing faith. We must not allow our minds to be led into the channel of unbelief. If we talk of our doubts, we shall always find doubts to express. If we talk faith, we shall have faith, hope, and courage, in the Lord.

Sunday afternoon, I spoke to a good congregation on the subject of temperance, and in the evening continued the same subject, before a larger company. The Lord gave me strength and freedom. To his name be all the glory. After the exertion of this day, we slept about two hours, and then arose to prepare for our homeward journey, leaving the camp-ground at three o'clock, Monday morning.

I returned from this meeting with improved health, increased courage, and renewed hope, and with the peace of Christ abiding in my heart. As I look back at my condition of health a few weeks since, and then see what the Lord has wrought for me, I can hardly find language to express my gratitude to God. In every emergency he has sustained me. I fear that my faith has not always been as strong as it should have been. The waves of affliction had almost gone over my head. But the Lord has again revealed himself in power to me, and I will cast all my care upon him who careth for me. To me this camp-meeting has been one of the best I ever attended.

Dear brethren and sisters who shall assemble in our camp-meetings, Jesus will do great things for us, if we will faithfully perform our duty. We must yield our will to the will of God. We must honor the Lord by obeying all his commandments, even in what we term little things. The truth, like its divine Author, is unchangeable in its requirements, the same yesterday, today, and forever. It is not in harmony with the traditions of men, it does not conform to their opinions. The truth has ever brought a separation between God's people and the world. But if our position in former years, as a peculiar people, was approved of God, how does he regard our present position? Have we gained in spirituality since we departed from our early simplicity? "Ye are living epistles, known and read of all men." It was our Saviour's mission to "purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." To his disciples he says, "Ye are the light of the world." And the apostle Paul declares, "We are a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men."

Every person will reveal in his life all the faith that he possesses. Our dress, our conversation, our house, our associates, all bear testimony to the world with greater force than words can have. "Faith is made perfect by works," "but faith without works is dead." We profess to be giving to the world the last message of mercy. Is our daily life in harmony with our profession?

A form of godliness is popular in the world. A profession of Christianity costs little. There are but few who choose the way of self-denial, the way of the cross. A few, only, with the apostle, bear about in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus, desiring to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified. But God's blessing will attend the faithful few. He will make them channels of light to the world.

Those who conduct our camp-meetings should from the very beginning of each meeting, teach others how to work. This is wise generalship. The labor should not be permitted to come wholly upon the ministers, for this will deprive the people of the education which they need. They should feel that a responsibility rests upon them to engage in the meetings in the tents. There is work that all can do, and should do to help others, and in doing thus they help themselves. The reason why so many are dying spiritually is that they are slothful servants, do-nothings. Would they go to work, they would increase in spiritual strength.

The work before us is great. Probation is soon to close. The wrath of God is about to be poured upon the earth. The sweet voice of mercy will soon cease to be heard. Every servant of the True Shepherd will realize the perils of this time, and will labor earnestly to bring souls to Christ. We must not depend on theory. The most conclusive arguments are not sufficient in themselves. Our only hope is to reach the people through God. The Bible is the sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well that we take heed; but those who labor in word and doctrine must have a vital connection with God, a deep and living experience. While clear and convincing arguments appeal to the understanding, the Spirit of God abiding in the heart of the minister, must speak to the hearts of those who hear.

As a rule, ministers are too formal. We must show the people that we are in earnest, not merely in the desk, but out of the desk; that we fully and solemnly believe the truths we preach. If we wish them to feel, we must feel ourselves. Some ministers are adopting the customs of other churches, copying their habits and manner of labor. With many, pulpit preaching is mechanical, a mere trade. They do not kindle their taper at the divine altar. They do not have the unction from on high. The shepherds of the flock should be earnest, vigilant, and active now; the end is nearer than when we first believed. The people have a right to ask, Watchman, what of the night? Satan would have them sleep until the time for the salvation of sinners is past. Let the trumpet give a certain sound.

Let not our camp-meetings be occasions for visiting and feasting. They should be occasions of heart-searching, deep humiliation, earnest, agonizing prayer. The judgments of God are about to fall upon the unsheltered head of the sinner. We have no time now to seek worldly honor, no time to exalt self, to indulge pride or ambition. "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence. A fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth that he may judge his people." How shall we stand in that day when heaven and earth shall hear the voice of God calling to judgment?

When each thought, and word, and motive, is revealed as it stands registered in the books of Heaven, when every soul shall be tried by the one perfect standard, the law of God, how will our case stand? When God makes inquisition for the blood of souls, when the undershepherds gather with their flocks around the great white throne, where will those stand with whom we have been associated, whom we have influenced? In that day, may it be seen that we have done well the work committed to our hands. May our voices swell the glad chorus.

E. G. White.

June 8, 1882

Skepticism—Its Cause and Cure

The present age is marked by an alarming prevalence of infidel and atheistic tendencies. To successfully resist the tide of evil, God's people should give diligent heed to the instruction and counsel of his word. Its precious examples of faith, its warnings against unbelief, will, if rightly heeded, arm us with divine power to repel the attacks of Satan.

The healing of the impotent man at Bethesda has a lesson of priceless worth to every Christian, a lesson of solemn and fearful import to the unbelieving and the skeptical. As the paralytic lay beside the pool, helpless and well-nigh hopeless, Jesus drew near and asked, in tones of pity, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Be made whole!—this had been the burden of his desire and prayers for long, weary years. With trembling eagerness he told the story of his efforts and disappointments. No friend was at hand to bear him with sturdy arm into the healing fountain. His agonizing appeals for help fell unheeded; all around him were those who sought for their own loved ones the coveted boon. When at the troubling of the waters he painfully sought to reach the pool, another would be hurried down before him.

Jesus looked upon the sufferer, and said, "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk." There was no assurance of divine help, no manifestation of miraculous power. What marvel, had the man made answer, "It is impossible! How can I be expected now to use my limbs, that have not obeyed my will for thirty-eight years?" From a merely human stand-point, such reasoning would appear consistent. The sufferer might have given place to doubt, and thus have permitted that God-given opportunity to pass unimproved. But no; without a question, he seized his only chance. As he attempted to do what Christ had commanded, strength and vigor came; he was made whole.

Would you, doubting reader, receive the blessing of the Lord? Cease to question his word and distrust his promises. Obey the Saviour's bidding, and you will receive strength. If you hesitate, to enter into a discussion with Satan, or to consider the difficulties and improbabilities, your opportunity will pass, perhaps never to return.

The miracle at Bethesda should have convinced all beholders that Jesus is the Son of God. But the Jews desired only a pretext for unbelief, and it was not hard to find what they sought. At Christ's command, the paralytic had borne away the simple mat on which he had lain; and now Satan, ever ready with his insinuations, suggested that this act might be construed into a violation of the Sabbath. The Jews had perverted this sacred rest-day from its original design by their customs and traditions, making its observance a burden rather than a blessing. It was hoped that a controversy on this point would destroy the faith inspired in some hearts by our Saviour's act of healing.

As the restored one went on his way with quick, elastic step, his pulses bounding with the vigor of renewed health, his countenance glowing with hope and joy, he was met by the Pharisees, who told him, with an air of great sanctity, that it was not lawful to carry his bed on the Sabbath day. There was no rejoicing at the deliverance of that long-imprisoned captive, no grateful praise that One was among them who could heal all manner of disease. Their traditions had been disregarded, and this closed their eyes to all the evidence of divine power.

Bigoted and self-righteous, they would not admit that they could have misapprehended the true design of the Sabbath. Instead of criticising themselves, they chose to condemn Christ. We meet with men of the same spirit today, who are blinded by error, and yet flatter themselves that they are right, and all who differ from them are in the wrong.

The man on whom the miracle had been wrought, entered into no controversy with his accusers. He simply answered, "He that had power to make me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk." The Pharisees, pretending ignorance, still urged, "What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?" It was their policy to question and cavil, that they might perplex and entangle him, and lead him to doubt, or else cast discredit upon his testimony.

When the Jews were informed that it was Jesus of Nazareth who had performed the miracle of healing, they openly sought to put him to death, "because he had done these things on the Sabbath day." These pretentious formalists were so full of zeal for their own traditions, that to sustain them they were ready to violate the law of God!

To their charges, Jesus replied calmly, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Through the operations of nature, and by the ministration of angels, God is constantly working to sustain and bless humanity. I am working in perfect harmony with my father." This answer furnished another pretext to condemn him. Murder was in their hearts, and they waited only for a plausible excuse to take his life. But Jesus steadily continues to assert his true position. "The Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father do. Whatsoever things he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. The Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that he himself doeth."

Ample evidence had been presented, on which to base their faith in Christ, yet all who desired to doubt and cavil found opportunity. And what was the occasion of that murderous outbreak against Christ? A poor sufferer had been made whole! No better excuse have the cavilers of our time. God works through whom he will, by ways and means of his own choosing; but there are ever some to act the part of the criticising Pharisees. They cannot deny that the power of God is manifested through his servants; but still, in some points, the work does not accord with their ideas. If with their finite judgment they can find but the semblance of an excuse, they are free to challenge and disbelieve.

In the carrying forward of his work in the earth, and the manifestation of his power, God does not consult the will or imperfect judgment of men. His plans and methods may be directly opposite to those approved by human wisdom. If men would criticise and condemn the Saviour's work, when they had such evidence of divine power as the miracle at Bethesda, can we wonder that they criticise and condemn those through whom he works today? Unbelief will always find an excuse for its existence. God designs that men shall believe, not because there is no possibility of doubt, but because there is abundant evidence for faith. Christ bade the Pharisees, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." The Jewish teachers professed to be expounders of God's word; but had they prayerfully studied and rightly understood its teachings, they would not have substituted their own traditions for the law of Jehovah.

The Saviour continued, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings how shall ye believe my words?" Those who begin by doubting and disbelieving the Old Testament, will come to doubt and disbelieve the New. We cannot afford to slight or neglect any of the provisions of God's grace, any of the manifestations of his Spirit. Those who do not gratefully accept and improve the warnings, counsel, or reproofs of divine mercy, will little by little come to regard them with indifference. They feel that it is optional with themselves to receive or reject the light from Heaven. Like the Jews in Christ's day, they reject the clearest evidence, because they find some pretext for doubt, something to criticise.

Thus are many in their pride and self-conceit placing themselves where no divine influence can reach them. By persistently cherishing doubt, they lose all power to believe. The Holy Spirit is slighted until its influence is no longer felt. Thus is cut off the means by which God has chosen to communicate with men. He has in reserve no more potent agency through which to reach them. In their own estimation, they are wiser than their Creator. Light has become darkness to them, and how great is that darkness!

The word of God is looked upon with distrust for the same reason as was its Author—because it reproves and condemns sin. Those who are unwilling to obey its requirements, endeavor to overthrow its authority. Many read the Bible, or listen to its words as presented from the sacred desk, merely to find fault with the Scriptures or with the sermon. Not a few become infidels, simply through their willful neglect of duty. Others are led to adopt skeptical principles from pride or indolence. They do not love close application. They will not put forth the effort necessary to accomplish anything noble or really useful. But they desire to be thought sharp and critical, to secure a reputation for superior wisdom. Turning their attention to the Bible, they find much which the finite mind, unenlightened by the wisdom from above, is powerless to comprehend, and they begin to doubt and cavil.

The indolent man invites Satan's temptations, while those who are actively engaged in some useful calling have neither time nor inclination to cherish doubts or indulge repining. Adam in holy Eden was commanded to labor, and he found in this employment one of the greatest blessings of his sinless existence. If the would-be skeptics of our time would apply themselves to honest, useful toil, they would enjoy improved spiritual as well as physical health.

Many consider it a virtue to doubt; and they delight in finding something in the Scriptures to puzzle the minds of others. They do not realize that they are thus entangling themselves in the snare of the fowler. There is a bewitching power in skepticism. Unbelief and stubbornness usually go hand in hand. When a man has once yielded to this deception of Satan, it will be found well-nigh impossible to break the spell.

There are some who at first criticise and reason on the wrong side, from a mere love for controversy. But having openly expressed unbelief, they feel that they must maintain their position. Thus they unite with the ungodly, and close to themselves the gates of Paradise.

We encounter skeptics not only in the world, but in the church. When the people of God assemble to worship him, there Satan intrudes his presence. Wherever there is a religious interest, there the poor souls that have been entangled in his snare may be found zealously working for their master. On almost every camp-ground may be seen little groups gathered here and there, eagerly listening to what some

doubter or infidel has to say. Here the skeptic is in his element. He delights to talk. He has studied the Bible with the sole object of finding passages which he can use to trouble and perplex other minds. Some Christians feel it their duty to defend the word of God, and they enter into controversy with the skeptic—rather with Satan and his angels, who speak through him. This is just what the Prince of darkness and his agents desire. The infidel has nothing to lose, however the discussion may terminate; but the Christian suffers an immeasurable loss when his confidence in God's word is lessened.

These scoffers at sacred things may utter many sharp, witty, apt sayings, but “the poison of asps is under their lips.” The father of lies lends them his power and his Satanic cunning. Christians should avoid controversy with these men. We may feel that we are in no danger from their influence, but others will gather about to listen, and some soul may be led into the path of doubt and skepticism. Treat them kindly, but give them no opportunity to parade their infidelity. Give no place for Satan to insinuate his presence. Do not take one step on the enemy's ground.

God would have his people shun the society of infidels, atheists, and spiritualists. He has warned us of their character and their fate: “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.” “The transgressors shall be destroyed together; the end of the wicked shall be cut off.”

Satan will endeavor to destroy the faith of every follower of Christ. He comes to some as a roaring lion. To others he appears in angel garments, his voice subdued to the gentlest whisper. Our only safety is to cling with unwavering faith to the word of God, and promptly and resolutely to shun whatever that word condemns, it matters not how pleasing its appearance, or how specious its pretenses.

There are some professed Christians who are always weak, always desponding. They permit themselves to be constantly harassed by doubts, and seem to think they must always remain in this condition. These persons might be free, did they but realize their danger, and put forth an effort to escape from the snare of Satan. Let them cease to give utterance to their doubts. Every unbelieving word strengthens their own tendency to doubt, and plants the evil seed in the minds of others. Whatever we choose to sow, that we must reap. If the farmer sows wheat, he will reap wheat. If he sows thistle seed, his harvest will consist only of thistles.

Light and darkness, truth and error, are before us. We are free to choose. God will never remove all excuse for unbelief. Those who look for hooks to hang their doubts upon, will find them close at hand. It is far easier to suggest doubts than to inspire faith. Because the natural heart is at enmity with God, a greater effort is required to believe than to doubt the word of the Most High. And Satan himself opposes everything that would strengthen faith.

There is one course which all must pursue who honestly desire to be freed from doubts. They are cherishing some indulgence forbidden by the word of God, or neglecting some duty enjoined therein. Let those who complain that they walk in darkness, give heed to the light which already shines upon them, and they will receive greater light. Let them do every duty which has been made plain to their understanding, and they will be enabled to understand and perform those of which they are now in doubt. “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.”

June 15, 1882

“The Fear of the Lord Tendeth to Life”

“Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”

The opinion is widely held, that spirituality and devotion to God are detrimental to health. While this conclusion is radically false, it is not without apparent foundation. Many who profess to be Christians are ever walking under a cloud. They seem to think it a virtue to complain of depression of spirits, great trials, and severe conflicts.

But these persons do not correctly represent the religion of the Bible. So far from being antagonistic to health and happiness, the fear of the Lord lies at the foundation of all real prosperity. “What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile; depart from evil, and do good, seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.”

The consciousness of right-doing, is the best medicine for diseased bodies and minds. He who is at peace with God has secured the most important requisite to health. The blessing of the Lord is life to the receiver. The assurance that the eye of the Lord is upon us, and his ear open to our prayer, is a never-failing source of satisfaction. To know that we have an all-wise friend, to whom we can confide all the secrets of the soul, is a privilege which words can never express.

The gloom and despondency supposed to be caused by obedience to God's moral law, is often attributable to disregard of his physical laws. Those whose moral faculties are beclouded by disease, are not the ones to rightly represent the Christian life, to show forth the joys of salvation, or the beauties of holiness. They are too often in the fire of fanaticism, or the water of cold indifference or stolid gloom.

The Saviour of mankind declared, “I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life;” and he bade his disciples, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.” It is the duty of every Christian to follow closely the example of Christ; to cultivate peace and hope and joy, which will be manifested in unfeigned cheerfulness, and habitual serenity. Thus may they shed light upon all around them, instead of casting the dark shadow of discouragement and gloom.

Many are constantly craving excitement and diversion. They are restless and dissatisfied when not absorbed in mirth, frivolity, and pleasure-seeking. These persons may make a profession of religion, but they are deceiving their own souls. They do not possess the genuine article. Their life is not hid with Christ in God. They do not find in Jesus their joy and peace.

The vain and trifling amusements of the world may divert for a time, but when the excitement is past, when the mind reflects, and conscience arouses and makes her voice heard, then the pleasure-seeker feels how powerless are his pursuits to give health to the body or peace to the soul.

Undue excitement is invariably followed by corresponding depression. Transgression yields only disappointment and remorse. Those who walk in the path of wisdom and holiness, will not be troubled with vain regrets for their misspent hours; they will not need to plunge into the round of gayety or dissipation to banish gloomy or harassing thoughts. Useful, active labor that quickens the circulation and gives strength to the muscles, will also give tone and vigor to the mind, and will prove a most effective agent in the restoration of health.

The religion of Christ is first pure, then peaceable, full of righteousness and good fruits. Such religion is needed in the world today. Many young persons who profess to be followers of Christ, are indulging in romantic sentimentalism which is deteriorating in its influence, and dangerous in its tendency. They indulge day-dreaming and castle-building, and thus squander their precious hours, and unfit themselves for usefulness.

With great self-complacency many flatter themselves that if circumstances were only favorable they would do some great and good work. They do not view things from a correct stand-point. They have lived in an imaginary world, and have been imaginary martyrs, and imaginary Christians. Their character is destitute of sterling virtue, and real stamina.

Young ladies of this class sometimes imagine that they possess exquisite delicacy and refinement of character, and a keenly sensitive nature, which must receive sympathy and encouragement from all around them. They put on an appearance of languor and indolent ease, and imagine that they are not appreciated. These sickly fancies are an injury to themselves and to others.

Despondent feelings are frequently the result of undue leisure. Idleness gives time to brood over imaginary sorrows. Many who have no real trials or hardships in the present, are sure to borrow them from the future. If these persons would seek to lighten the burdens of others, they would forget their own. Energetic labor that would call into action both the mental and physical powers, would prove an inestimable blessing to mind and body.

Invalids should not allow themselves to sink down into a state of inaction. This is highly detrimental to health. The power of the will must be asserted; aversion to active exercise, and the dread of all responsibility must be conquered. They can never recover health, unless they shake off this listless, dreamy condition of mind, and arouse themselves to action.

There is much deception practiced under the cover of religion. Passion controls the minds of many who flatter themselves that they have reached high spiritual attainments. Their experience consists of idle fancies and love-sick sentimentalism, rather than of purity and true goodness.

The mind should be trained to look away from self, to dwell upon themes which are elevated and ennobling. Let not the precious hours of life be wasted in dreaming of some great work to be performed in the future, while the little duties of the present are neglected.

The heart must be in the work or it will drag heavily; whatever it may be. The Lord tests our ability by giving us small duties to perform. If we turn from these with contempt or dissatisfaction, no more will be

intrusted to us. If we take hold of them with cheerfulness, and perform them well, greater responsibilities will be committed to our trust.

Talents have been committed to us, not to be squandered, but to be put out to the exchangers, that at the Master's coming he may receive his own with usury. These talents have not been unjustly distributed. God has dispensed his sacred trusts according to the known ability of his servants. "To every man his work."

As he bestows his gifts upon each, he expects from each a corresponding return. If we faithfully perform our duty, the amount intrusted to us will be increased, be it large or small. All who thus prove their fidelity, will be accounted as wise stewards, and will be intrusted with the true riches, even the gift of everlasting life.

"No man liveth to himself." True happiness will not be found by those who live merely for self-gratification. He who would secure the highest, and most satisfactory enjoyment of this life, as well as a right hold upon the future immortal life, must make it his highest aim to glorify God, and do good to his fellow-men. "Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily, and thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.

"Pure religion before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." True religion ennobles the mind, refines the taste, and sanctifies the judgment. It makes the soul a partaker of the purity of Heaven, brings angels near, and separates more and more from the spirit and influence of the world.

It reveals to man an infinite and all-wise Protector, a Redeemer from sin, a Comforter in sorrow, a Light in darkness, a Guide in obscurity. It invites man to become a son of God, an heir of Heaven. It fills the soul with "joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

This precious gift of Heaven is freely offered to all who will accept it. Our brightest hopes, our loftiest aspirations can ask nothing more complete, more noble, more exalted. The tokens of infinite love, the pleadings of divine mercy, are ever wooing us to turn to God. "Why do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live."

June 22, 1882

The Schools of the Prophets

The institutions of human society find their best models in the word of God. For those of instruction in particular, there is no lack of both precept and example. Lessons of great profit, even in this age of educational progress, may be found in the history of God's ancient people.

The Lord reserved to himself the education and instruction of Israel. His care was not restricted to their religious interests. Whatever affected their mental or physical well-being, became also an object of divine solicitude, and came within the province of divine law.

God commanded the Hebrews to teach their children his requirements, and to make them acquainted with all his dealings with their people. The home and the school were one. In the place of stranger lips the loving hearts of the father and mother were to give instruction to their children. Thoughts of God were associated with all the events of daily life in the home dwelling. The mighty works of God in the deliverance of his people were recounted with eloquence and reverential awe. The great truths of God's providence, and of the future life, were impressed on the young mind. It became acquainted with the true, the good, the beautiful.

By the use of figures and symbols, the lessons given were illustrated, and thus more firmly fixed in the memory. Through this animated imagery the child was, almost from infancy, initiated into the mysteries, the wisdom, and the hopes of his fathers, and guided in a way of thinking and feeling and anticipating, that reached beyond things seen and transitory, to the unseen and eternal.

From this education many a youth of Israel came forth vigorous in body and in mind, quick to perceive and strong to act, the heart prepared like good ground for the growth of the precious seed, the mind trained to see God in the words of revelation and the scenes of nature. The stars of heaven, the trees and flowers of the field, the lofty mountains, the babbling brooks, all spoke to him, and the voices of the prophets, heard throughout the land, met a response in his heart.

Such was the training of Moses in that lowly cabin home in Goshen; of Samuel, by the faithful Hannah; of David, in the hill-dwelling at Bethlehem; of Daniel, before the scenes of the captivity separated him from the home of his fathers. Such, too, was the early life of Christ, in the humble home at Nazareth; such the training by which the child Timothy learned from the lips of his "mother Eunice, and his grandmother Lois," the truths of the Holy Writ.

Further provision was made for the instruction of the young, by the establishment of the "school of the prophets." If a youth was eager to obtain a better knowledge of the Scriptures, to search deeper into the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and to seek wisdom from above, that he might become a teacher in Israel, this school was open to him.

These institutions were missionary seminaries, designed to maintain a higher standard of morals and religion at a period when the deplorable condition of degeneracy and corruption called loudly for such reformatory effort. The aged Eli had dishonored the Lord by his neglect to restrain and control his children. These degenerate sons called license liberty, and under the cover of their holy office practiced the most debasing sins. The character of these men as leaders of the nation, indicates clearly the state of things existing at that time. Had Eli restrained his excessive fondness for his sons, and performed his duty to them as a father and a priest, theirs had been a nobler life and a happier fate. They might have been an honor to their father, the crown of the nation, and the guardians of the sanctuary. But their crimes had polluted the ordinances of the Lord, and corrupted his people. To prevent the moral

degeneracy from becoming universal, he resorted to a speedy and powerful remedy. Divine justice destroyed the father and the sons.

Then amid the moral darkness there shone forth once more the light of purity and holiness and truth. The chosen leader was a youthful Levite, whose infant years had been guarded by a faithful, praying mother, whose boyhood had been unsullied by the surrounding corruption. Samuel was now invested by the God of Israel with the threefold office of judge, prophet and priest. Placing one hand in the hand of Christ, and with the other taking the helm of the nation, he holds it with such wisdom and firmness as to preserve Israel from destruction.

By Samuel, the schools of the prophets were established, to serve as a barrier against the widespread corruption, and to promote the moral and spiritual welfare of the youth. These schools proved a great blessing to Israel, promoting that righteousness which exalteth a nation, and furnishing it with men qualified to act, in the fear of God, as leaders and counselors. In the accomplishment of this object, Samuel gathered companies of young men who were pious, intelligent, and studious. These were called the sons of the prophets. As they communed with God and studied his word and his works, they were imbued with wisdom from above, as well as richly endowed with intellectual treasures. The instructors were men not only well versed in divine truth, but those who had themselves enjoyed communion with God, and had received the special endowment of his spirit. They enjoyed the respect and confidence of the people, both for learning and piety.

In Samuel's day there were two of these schools—one at Ramah, the home of the prophet, and the other at Kirjath-jearim, where the ark then was. Two more were added in Elijah's time, at Jericho and Bethel, and others were afterward established at Samaria and Gilgal.

The pupils of these schools sustained themselves by their own labor as husbandmen and mechanics. In Israel this was not considered strange or degrading; indeed it was regarded a crime to allow children to grow up in ignorance of useful labor. In obedience to the command of God, every child was taught some trade, even though he was to be educated for holy office. Many of the religious teachers supported themselves by manual labor. Even so late as the time of Christ, it was not considered anything degradable that Paul and Aquila earned livelihood by their labor as tent-makers.

The chief subjects of study in these schools were, the law of God with the instructions given to Moses, sacred history, sacred music, and poetry. The manner of instruction was far different from that in the theological schools of the present day, from which many students graduate with less real knowledge of God and religious truth than when they entered. In those schools of olden time, it was the grand object of all study to learn the will of God and the duties of his people. In the records of sacred history, were traced the footsteps of Jehovah. From the events of the past were drawn lessons of instruction for the future. The great truths set forth by the types and shadows were brought to view, and faith grasped the central object of all that system, the Lamb of God who was to take away the sins of the world.

The Hebrew language was cultivated as the most sacred tongue in the world. A spirit of devotion was cherished. Not only were students taught the duty of prayer, but they were taught how to pray, how to

approach their Creator, how to exercise faith in him, and how to understand and obey the teachings of his Spirit. Sanctified intellects brought forth from the treasure-house of God, things new and old.

The Spirit of God was signally manifested in these seminaries, in prophecy and sacred song. Upon one occasion a company of prophets met Saul at the "hill of God," not far from Gibeah, with psaltery and tabret, pipe and harp. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, these men were prophesying and praising God with the music of instruments and the voice of song. The Spirit of the Lord and his converting power came also upon Saul, and he prophesied with them.

The art of sacred melody was diligently cultivated in those schools of the prophets. No frivolous waltz was heard, nor flippant song that should extol man and divert the attention from God; but sacred, solemn psalms of praise to the Creator, exalting his name and recounting his wondrous works. Thus music was made to serve a holy purpose, to lift the thoughts to that which was pure and noble and elevating, and to awaken in the soul, devotion and gratitude to God.

How different the objects to which musical talent is often devoted! How many who profess this gift employ it to honor and exalt self, instead of glorifying God! A love for music leads the unwary to unite with world-lovers in pleasure gatherings where God has forbidden his children to go. Thus that which is a great blessing when rightly used, becomes one of Satan's most successful agencies to allure the mind from God and from eternal things.

Music forms a part of God's worship in the courts above. We should endeavor in our songs of praise to approach as nearly as possible to the harmony of the heavenly choirs. I have often been pained to hear untrained voices, pitched to the highest key, literally shrieking the sacred words of some hymn of praise. How inappropriate those sharp, rasping voices for the solemn, joyous worship of God. I long to stop my ears, or flee from the place, and I rejoice when the painful exercise is ended.

Those who make singing a part of divine worship should select hymns with music appropriate to the occasion, not funeral notes, but cheerful yet solemn melodies. The voice can and should be modulated, softened, and subdued.

The proper training of the voice should be regarded as an important part of education. The singer should train himself to utter every word distinctly. It should be remembered that singing as a part of religious service is as much an act of worship as is the prayer. The heart must feel the spirit of the words, to give them right expression. Parents should not employ to instruct their children, a teacher of music who has no reverence for sacred things, nor should they allow them to learn and practice dance songs and frivolous music.

How wide the difference, between the schools of ancient times, under the supervision of God himself, and our modern institutions of learning. Few schools are to be found that are not governed by the maxims and customs of the world. There are few in which a Christian parent's love for his children will not meet with bitter disappointment.

In what consists the superior excellence of our systems of education? Is it the classical literature which is crowded into our sons? Is it in the ornamental accomplishments which our daughters obtain at the sacrifice of health or mental strength? Is it in the fact that modern instruction is so generally separated from the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation? Does the chief excellence of popular education consist in treating the individual branches of study, apart from that deeper investigation which involves the searching of the Scriptures, and a knowledge of God and the future life? Does it consist in imbuing the minds of the young with heathenish conceptions of liberty, morality, and justice? Is it safe to trust our youth to the guidance of those blind teachers who study the sacred oracles with far less interest than they manifest in the classical authors of ancient Greece and Rome?

“Education,” remarks a writer, “is becoming a system of seduction.” The most bitter feelings, the most ungovernable passions, are excited by the course of unwise and ungodly teachers. There is a deplorable lack of proper restraint and judicious discipline. The minds of the young are easily excited, and drink in insubordination like water.

The existing ignorance of God's word, among a people professedly Christian, is alarming. The youth in our public schools, have been robbed of the blessings of holy things. Superficial talk, mere sentimentalism, passes for instruction in morals and religion; but it lacks the vital characteristics of real godliness. The justice and mercy of God, the beauty of holiness, and the sure reward of right-doing; the heinous character of sin, and the certainty of punishment,—these great truths are not impressed upon the minds of the young.

Skepticism and infidelity, under some pleasing disguise, or as a covert insinuation, too often find their way into school books. In some instances, the most pernicious principles have been inculcated by teachers. Evil associates are teaching the youth lessons of crime, dissipation, and licentiousness that are horrible to contemplate. Many of our public schools are hot-beds of vice.

How can our youth be shielded from these contaminating influences? There must be schools established upon the principles, and controlled by the precepts, of God's word. Another spirit must be in our schools, to animate and sanctify every branch of education. Divine co-operation must be fervently sought. And we shall not seek in vain. The promises of God's word are ours. We may expect the presence of the heavenly Teacher. We may see the Spirit of the Lord diffused as in the schools of the prophets, and every object partake of a divine consecration. Science will then be, as she was to Daniel, the handmaid of religion; and every effort, from first to last, will tend to the salvation of man, soul, body, and spirit, and the glory of God through Christ.

June 29, 1882

Importance of Physical Training

The present age is one of unparalleled interest in education. The wide diffusion of knowledge through the agency of the press, placing the means for self-culture within the reach of all, has awakened a general desire for mental improvement.

While we acknowledge with gratitude our increased facilities, we should not close our eyes to the defects in the present system of education. In the eager effort to secure intellectual culture, physical as well as moral training has been neglected. Many youth come forth from institutions of learning with morals debased, and physical powers enfeebled; with no knowledge of practical life, and little strength to perform its duties.

As I have seen these evils, I have inquired, Must our sons and daughters become moral and physical weaklings, in order to obtain an education in the schools? This should not be; it need not be, if teachers and students will but be true to the laws of nature, which are also the laws of God. All the powers of mind and body should be called into active exercise, that the youth may become strong, well-balanced men and women.

Many students are in so great haste to complete their education that they are not thorough in anything which they undertake. Few have sufficient courage and self-control to act from principle. Most students fail to understand the true object of education, and hence fail to take such a course as to secure this object. They apply themselves to the study of mathematics or the languages, while they neglect a study far more essential to the happiness and success of life. Many who can explore the depths of the earth with the geologist, or traverse the heavens with the astronomer, show not the slightest interest in the wonderful mechanism of their own bodies. Others can tell just how many bones there are in the human frame, and correctly describe every organ of the body, and yet they are as ignorant of the laws of health, and the cure of disease, as though life were controlled by blind fate, instead of definite and unvarying law.

Physical health lies at the very foundation of all the student's ambitions and his hopes. Hence the pre-eminent importance of gaining a knowledge of those laws by which health is secured and preserved. Every youth should learn how to regulate his dietetic habits,—what to eat, when to eat, and how to eat. He should learn how many hours to give to study, and how much time to spend in physical exercise. The human body may be compared to nicely-adjusted machinery, which needs care to keep it in running order. One part should not be subjected to constant wear and pressure, while another part is rusting from inaction. While the mind is tasked, the muscles also should have their proportion of exercise.

The proper regulation of his habits of eating, sleeping, study, and exercise, is a duty which every student owes to himself, to society, and to God. The education which will make the young a blessing to the world, is that which enables them to attain a true and noble manhood or womanhood. That student who is studying hard, sleeping little, exercising little, and eating irregularly of an improper or inferior quality of food, is obtaining mental training at the expense of health and morals, of spirituality, and, it may be, of life.

The young naturally desire activity, and if they find no legitimate scope for their pent-up energies after the confinement of the school-room, they become restless and impatient of control, and thus are led to engage in the rude, unmanly sports that disgrace so many schools and colleges, and even to plunge into scenes of actual dissipation. Many of the youth who left their homes innocent, are corrupted by their associations at school.

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Every institution of learning should make provision for the study and practice of agriculture and the mechanic arts. Competent teachers should be employed to instruct the youth in the various industrial pursuits, as well as in the several branches of study. While a part of each day is devoted to mental improvement, let a stated portion be given to physical labor, and a suitable time to devotional exercises and the study of the Scriptures.

This training would encourage habits of self-reliance, firmness, and decision. Graduates of such institutions would be prepared to engage successfully in the practical duties of life. They would have courage and perseverance to surmount obstacles, and firmness of principle that would not yield to evil influences.

If the youth can have but a one-sided education, which is of the greatest importance, the study of the sciences, with all the disadvantages to health and morals, or a thorough training in practical duties, with sound morals and good physical development? We unhesitatingly say, the latter. But with proper effort both may, in most cases, be secured.

Those who combine useful labor with study have no need of gymnastic exercises. And work performed in the open air is ten-fold more beneficial to health than in-door labor. Both the mechanic and the farmer have physical exercise, yet the farmer is the healthier of the two. Nothing short of nature's invigorating air and sunshine will fully meet the demands of the system. The tiller of the soil finds in his labor all the movements that were ever practiced in the gymnasium. His movement-room is the open fields. The canopy of heaven is its roof, the solid earth its floor. Here he plows and hoes, sows and reaps. Watch him, as in "haying time" he mows and rakes, pitches and tumbles, lifts and loads, throws off, treads down, and stows away. These various movements call into action the bones, joints, muscles, sinews, and nerves of the body. His vigorous exercise causes full, deep, strong inspirations and exhalations, which expand the lungs and purify the blood, sending the warm current of life bounding through arteries and veins. A farmer who is temperate in all his habits, usually enjoys health. His work is pleasant to him. He has a good appetite. He sleeps well, and may be happy.

Contrast the condition of the active farmer with that of the student who neglects physical exercise. He sits in a close room, bending over his desk or table, his chest contracted, his lungs crowded. He cannot take full, deep inspirations. His brain is tasked to the utmost, while his body is as inactive as though he had no particular use for it. His blood moves sluggishly through the system. His feet are cold, his head hot. How can such a person have health?

Let the student take regular exercise that will cause him to breathe deep and full, taking into his lungs the pure invigorating air of heaven, and he will be a new being. It is not hard study that is destroying the health of students, so much as it is their disregard of nature's laws.

In institutions of learning, experienced teachers should be employed to instruct young ladies in the mysteries of the kitchen. A knowledge of domestic duties is beyond price to every woman. There are families without number whose happiness is wrecked by the inefficiency of the wife and mother. It is not so important that our daughters learn painting, fancy work, music, or even "cube root," or the figures of rhetoric, as that they learn how to cut, make, and mend their own clothing, or to prepare food in a wholesome and palatable manner. When a little girl is nine or ten years old, she should be required to take her regular share in household duties, as she is able, and should be held responsible for the manner in which she does her work. That was a wise father, who, when asked what he intended to do with his daughters, replied, "I intend to apprentice them to their excellent mother, that they may learn the art of improving time, and be fitted to become wives and mothers, heads of families, and useful members of society."

Washing clothes upon the old-fashioned rubbing-board, sweeping, dusting, and a variety of other duties in the kitchen and the garden, will be valuable exercise for young ladies. Such useful labor will supply the place of croquet, archery, dancing, and other amusements which benefit no one.

Many ladies, accounted well-educated, having graduated with honors at some institution of learning, are shamefully ignorant of the practical duties of life. They are destitute of the qualifications necessary for the proper regulation of the family, and hence essential to its happiness. They may talk of woman's elevated sphere, and of her rights, yet they themselves fall far below the true sphere of woman. It is the right of every daughter of Eve to have a thorough knowledge of household duties, to receive training in every department of domestic labor. Every young lady should be so educated that if called to fill the position of wife and mother, she may preside as a queen in her own domain. She should be fully competent to guide and instruct her children and to direct her servants, or, if need be, to minister with her own hands to the wants of her household. It is her right to understand the mechanism of the human body and the principles of hygiene, the matters of diet and dress, labor and recreation, and countless others that intimately concern the well-being of her household. It is her right to obtain such a knowledge of the best methods of treating disease that she can care for her children in sickness, instead of leaving her precious treasures in the hands of stranger nurses and physicians.

The idea that ignorance of useful employment is an essential characteristic of the true gentleman or lady, is contrary to the design of God in the creation of man. Idleness is a sin, and ignorance of common duties is the result of folly, which after-life will give ample occasion to bitterly regret.

Those who make it their rule of life to serve and honor God will give heed to the apostle's injunction, "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Such students will preserve their integrity in the face of temptation, and will come from school with well-developed intellects, and with health of body and health of soul.

July 13, 1882

Israel Desire a King

The first form of government over men was established by God himself, and acknowledged him as the only Sovereign. He made known his will by written commands and revelations, by messages to his chosen servants, by dreams, by signs, and wonders. He would have continued to be their king, had they been content with his paternal care.

At the beginning, the father was constituted priest and magistrate of his own family. Then came the patriarchal rule, which was like that of the family, but extended over a greater number. When Israel became a distinct people, the twelve tribes, springing from the twelve sons of Jacob, had each a leader. These leaders, or elders, were assembled whenever any matter that pertained to the general interest was to be settled. The high priest was the visible representative of Christ, the Redeemer of his people. When the Hebrews settled in Canaan, judges were appointed, who resembled governors. These rulers were invested with authority to declare war and proclaim peace for the nation; but God was still the recognized king of Israel, and he continued to reveal his will to these chosen leaders, and to manifest through them his power.

But increase of population, and intercourse with other nations, brought a change. The Israelites adopted many of the customs of their heathen neighbors, and thus sacrificed to a great degree, their own peculiar, holy character. Their worship became less earnest and sincere. Gradually they lost their reverence for God, and ceased to prize the high honor of being his chosen people. Dazzled by the pomp and display of heathen monarchs, they tired of their own simplicity, and desired to be freed from the rule of their Divine Sovereign. As they departed from the Lord, the different tribes became envious and jealous of one another. Strife and dissensions increased, until it was vainly imagined that the installation of a king was the only means by which harmony could be restored.

The government of Israel had never been conducted with so great wisdom and success as under Samuel's sole administration. In no previous ruler had the people reposed so implicit confidence. He had labored with untiring and disinterested zeal for the highest good of the nation. In every transaction he had been governed by justice and benevolence. And not only was his course wholly unselfish, but he was often inattentive to his own dues and rights. Hence, the selfishness manifested by his sons appeared more striking in contrast with the course of their faithful father.

The arrogance and injustice of these judges caused much dissatisfaction among the people, who were far more troubled by dangers threatening their temporal interests than they had been by the profligacy and sacrilege of Hophni and Phinehas. Ere long many who considered themselves aggrieved presented their complaints to the elders of Israel. A pretext was thus furnished for urging the change which had long been secretly desired.

Had Samuel been informed on the unjust course of his sons, he would at once have removed them, and appointed others, more upright, in their place. When, however, the complaint against his sons was laid before him, followed immediately by the petition for a king, Samuel saw that the real motive was discontent and pride. He perceived that the desire did not spring from a sudden impulse, but was the result of long deliberation and a determined purpose.

The petitioners were careful to state that they could find no fault with Samuel's administration; but they urged that he would soon be too old to serve them, and his sons had given evidence that they could not be trusted. Despite these explanations and professions of regard, Samuel was deeply wounded. He looked upon the request as a censure upon himself, and a direct effort to set him aside. But he did not reveal his feelings. He uttered no reproaches because of the ingratitude of the people. Had he done this, one bitter recrimination might have wrought great harm.

Samuel carried this new, and to him difficult matter to the Lord in prayer, and sought counsel alone from him. His petitions were heard; "and the Lord said unto Samuel, hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee." The prophet was reprov'd for grieving at the conduct of the people toward himself as an individual. They had not manifested disrespect for him, but for the authority of God, who had appointed the rulers of his people.

The days of Israel's greatest prosperity had been those in which they acknowledged Jehovah as their king,—when the laws and the government which he had established were regarded as superior to those of all other nations. Moses himself in his last address, appealed to Israel, "What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?"

And yet, notwithstanding the Lord had so often wrought mightily for their deliverance, the Israelites were now disposed to attribute all their disasters to their manner of government. The Lord permitted his people to follow their own course, because they refused to be guided by his counsels. Hosea declares that God gave them a king in his anger. In their pride they desired to be like other nations, not considering that with the pomp of royalty they must endure also its tyranny and exaction. This would be a bitter exchange for the mild and beneficent government of God.

It is a hazardous step to place the scepter in the hands of finite man, and crown him monarch. God understands the human heart far better than men understand it themselves. A departure from the Lord's wise arrangement would pervert authority into tyranny, and subjection into slavery. Even if a ruler were naturally merciful and benevolent, unlimited power over his fellow-men would tend to make him a despot. Such power God alone is able to use with justice and wisdom.

The Lord had, through his prophets, foretold that Israel would be governed by a king. But it by no means follows that this form of government was according to his will. Though he foresees all things, he often permits men to take their own course, when they refuse to be guided by the counsels of infinite wisdom. In this instance, he instructed Samuel to grant their request, but to faithfully warn them of the Lord's disapproval, and also make known what would be the result of their course: "Now therefore hearken unto their voice. Howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them."

Samuel accordingly assembled the people, and faithfully represented to them the burdens which they would have to bear under a king, and the contrast between such a state of oppression and their present comparatively free and prosperous condition. He reminded them that their king would imitate the pomp and luxury of other monarchs, to support which, grievous exactions upon their persons and property would be necessary. He would take the young men for charioteers and horsemen, and would even employ some to run before and about his chariots. A standing army would require their services; and they would also be required to till his fields, to reap his harvest, and to manufacture for his service instruments of war.

The daughters of Israel, who should become the centers of happy homes, would be taken for confectioners and bakers, to minister to the luxury of the royal household. To support his kingly state he would find pretexts to seize upon the best of their lands, bestowed upon the people by Jehovah himself. The most valuable of their servants also, and of their cattle, would he take and "put them to his own work."

Besides all this, an oppressive taxation would be instituted. The people already gave to the Lord a tenth of all their income, the profits of their labor, or the products of the soil. The king would require an additional tithe of all. "Ye shall be his servants," concluded the prophet. "And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day."

But the people were bent upon following their own course. The solemn warnings from God, through his aged prophet, had no effect to turn them from their purpose. They returned the answer, "Nay; but we will have a king over us, that we may also be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles."

"Like other nations"—the Israelites did not realize that to be in this respect unlike other nations was a special privilege and blessing. God had separated Israel from every other people, to make them his own peculiar treasure. But they, disregarding this high honor, eagerly desired to imitate the example of the heathen. What blindness! What ingratitude!

With deep sadness, Samuel listened to the words of the people, and then he again sought divine guidance. And the Lord said unto Samuel, "Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king."

The prophet had done his duty. He had faithfully presented the warning, and it had been rejected. He could say no more. With a heavy heart he dismissed the people, and himself departed to prepare for the great change in the government.

Would that this passage in Israel's history had no counterpart in the present experience of God's people! But alas, we see it frequently repeated! A discontented desire for change, a longing to conform to worldly plans and worldly customs, too often controls even professed Christians. As they depart from God, they become ambitious for the gains and honors of the world. Those who stand firm against conformity to the world, discouraging pride, superfluity, and extravagance, and enjoining humility and self-denial, are looked upon as critical, peculiar, and severe. Some argue that by uniting with worldlings and conforming to their customs, Christians might exert a stronger influence in the world. But all who

pursue this course thereby separate from the source of their strength. Becoming friends of the world, they are the enemies of God.

The dissatisfied longing for worldly power and display, is as difficult to cure now as in the days of Samuel. Christians seek to build as worldlings build, to dress as worldlings dress,—to imitate the customs and practice of those who worship only the god of this world. The instructions of God's word, the counsels and reproofs of his servants, and even warnings sent directly from his throne, seem powerless to subdue this unworthy ambition. When the heart is estranged from God, almost any pretext is sufficient to justify a disregard of his authority. The promptings of pride and self-love are gratified at whatever expense to the cause of God.

The unconsecrated and world-loving are ever ready to criticise and condemn those who have stood fearlessly for God and the right. If a defect is seen in one whom the Lord has intrusted with great responsibilities, then all his former devotion is forgotten, and an effort is made to silence his voice and destroy his influence. But let these self-constituted judges remember that the Lord reads the heart. They cannot hide its secrets from his searching gaze. God declares that he will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing.

The most useful men are seldom appreciated. Those who have labored most actively and unselfishly for their fellow-men, and who have been instrumental in achieving the greatest results, are often repaid with ingratitude and neglect. When such men find themselves set aside, their counsels slighted and despised, they may feel that they are suffering great injustice. But let them learn from the example of Samuel not to justify or vindicate themselves, unless the Spirit of God unmistakably prompts to such a course. Those who despise and reject the faithful servant of God, not merely show contempt for the man, but for the Master who sent him. It is God's words, his reproofs and counsel, that are set at naught; his authority that is rejected.

When men persist in following their own course, without seeking counsel from the Lord, he often grants their desires, in order to reveal their folly or punish their iniquity. When they lightly esteem the words of his servants, he may permit the voice of counsel and warning to be silenced. But human pride and wisdom will be found a dangerous guide. That which is most desired by the unconsecrated heart will prove the most painful and bitter in the end.

Let the servants of God carry their burdens to their compassionate Redeemer. His ear is ever open to their prayers. His eye notes every sacrifice and every sorrow. The neglect and injustice which they endure here will but make their reward greater in the coming day.

July 20, 1882

A King Chosen

While a monarchial form of government for Israel had been foretold in prophecy, the regulation had been established that only those should be raised to the throne who were chosen by Jehovah himself.

The Hebrews still so far respected the authority of God as to leave the selection entirely to his hands. The choice fell upon Saul, a son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin.

The personal qualities of the future monarch were such as to gratify that pride of heart which prompted the desire for a king. There was not a goodlier person than he among all the people of the hills. Of a noble and dignified bearing, in the full prime of life, comely and tall, he appeared like one born to command. Yet with all these external attractions, Saul was destitute of those higher qualities which constitute true wisdom. He had not in youth learned to control his rash, impetuous passions; he had never felt the renewing power of divine grace.

Saul was the son of a powerful and wealthy chief, yet in accordance with the primitive simplicity of the times, he was engaged with his father in the humble duties of a husbandman. A herd of the father's cattle having strayed upon the mountains, Saul was sent with a servant to seek for them. For three days the search was fruitless, and then, finding themselves near Ramah, the home of Samuel, the servant proposed that they inquire of the prophet concerning the missing property: "I have here the fourth part of a shekel of silver; that will I give to the man of God to tell us our way" This was not intended as a bribe; it was customary for a person in approaching a superior in rank or office to make him a small present, as an expression of courtesy and respect.

Approaching the city, they made inquiry for the seer, of some young maidens who had come out to draw water. In reply they were informed that a religious service was about to take place, that the judge had already arrived, there was to be a sacrifice upon the "high place," and after that a select feast.

A great change had taken place under Samuel's administration. The worship of God was maintained throughout the land, and the people manifested an interest in religious services. The ark still remaining at Kirjath-jearim, and there being no services in the tabernacle, sacrifices were for the time offered elsewhere; and the cities of the priests and Levites, where the people resorted for instruction, were chosen for this purpose. The highest points in these cities were usually selected as the place of sacrifice, and were hence denominated the "high place."

On the present occasion a peace-offering was to be presented before the Lord, with fervent prayer for his acceptance, and for his blessing on the service as a means of spiritual good to the worshippers. Then, a blessing having been invoked upon that part of the sacrifice which had been reserved for the people, all would unite in a sacred feast. While establishing the external forms of religion, Samuel ever sought to encourage a spirit of true devotion. These services were not permitted to degenerate into a mere ceremony, or to become an occasion of self-gratification. Rightly conducted, they promoted real piety as well as a spirit of kindness and sympathy among the people.

At the gate of the city, Saul was met by the prophet himself. God had revealed to Samuel that at that day and that hour the destined king of Israel should present himself before him. As they now stood face to face, the Lord said to Samuel, "Behold the man whom I spake to thee of. This same shall reign over my people."

The request of Saul, "Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is," Samuel replied, "I am the seer," assuring him also that his father had found the lost cattle, and had now begun to be anxious about his son. Nevertheless he urged him to tarry with him and attend the feast, at the same time giving some intimation of the great destiny before him.

Saul replied, with modest self-depreciation. "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore then speakest thou so to me?"

About thirty of the principal men of the city had been invited to attend the feast, and Samuel conducted the stranger to the room where these guests were assembled, gave him the seat of honor, and when the meat was served he directed that the most honorable joint, the shoulder, be set before him.

Upon returning to his home in the city, Samuel repaired with his guest to the housetop, as the place of greatest quiet and seclusion, and there talked with him, setting forth the great principles on which the government of Israel had been established, and thus seeking to prepare him in some measure for his high position.

When Saul departed, early the next morning, the prophet walked forth with him. After a time, Samuel directed the servant to pass on, and then bidding Saul stand still that he might show him the purposes of God, he anointed him captain over the Lord's inheritance. Then he kissed him, and to strengthen his faith, told him with great exactness the various incidents which would occur on the homeward journey, and assured him that he would be qualified by the Spirit of God for the important station awaiting him.

As Saul went on his way, he witnessed the fulfillment of the prophet's words. Near Rachel's sepulcher, in the border of Benjamin, he was informed that the lost animals had been found. In the plain of Tabor he met three men who were traveling to the place of sacred stones at Bethel, to worship God there. One of them carried three kids for sacrifice, another three loaves of bread, and the third a leather bottle of wine, for the offering-feast. They gave Saul the usual salutation, and also presented him with two of the three loaves of bread.

As Saul went on to Gibeah in Benjamin, he perceived a company of prophets returning from the high place where they had been to worship; and as they went, they sang the praise of God to the music of the pipe and the harp, the psaltery and the tabret. Then the Spirit of God rested upon Saul, and he joined the prophets, and with them sang the praise of the Most High and declared the wonders of divine truth. He spoke with so great fluency and wisdom, and joined so earnestly in the services of prayer and praise, that those who had known him only as the untaught husbandman exclaimed in wonder, "What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" They could not understand how so great a transformation had been effected.

Samuel had founded the first regular establishments for religious instruction and the unfolding of the prophetic gifts. Among the chief subjects of study, were the law of God with the instructions given to Moses, sacred history, sacred music, and poetry. In these "schools of the prophets" young men were educated by those who were not only well versed in divine truth, but who themselves maintained close

communion with God and had received the special endowment of his Spirit. These educators enjoyed the respect and confidence of the people both for learning and piety. The power of the Holy Spirit was often strikingly manifest in their assemblies, and the exercise of the prophetic gift was not unfrequent. These schools, or colleges, were of untold value to Israel, not only as providing for the dissemination of religious truth, but as preserving the spirit of vital godliness.

As Saul united with the prophets in their worship, a great change was wrought in him by the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. The light of divine purity and holiness shone in upon the darkness of moral depravity. He saw himself as he was before God. He saw and felt the beauty of holiness. He was now to commence in earnest the warfare against sin and Satan, and he was made to feel that in this conflict his strength must come wholly from God. The plan of salvation, which had before seemed dim and uncertain, was opened to his understanding with great clearness and power. That experience which some Christians have been years in obtaining was gained by Saul in a short time. The Lord endowed him with courage and wisdom for his high position. He revealed to him the source of strength and grace, and then, having enlightened his understanding as to the divine claims, and his own duty, he left him free to obey the light which he had received.

The fact that Saul had been anointed king over Israel was not then made known to the nation. The choice of God was to be publicly manifested by lot. For this purpose Samuel convened the people at Mizpeh. Earnest prayer was offered for divine guidance; then followed the solemn ceremony of casting the lot. In breathless silence the assembled multitude awaited the issue. The tribe, the family, and the household were successively designated, and then Saul, the son of Kish, was pointed out as the individual chosen. But Saul was not to be found. Assured of the result, and burdened with a sense of the grave responsibility about to fall upon him, he had remained apart from the assembly.

When his retreat was discovered, he was led before the congregation, and they observed with pride and satisfaction that he was of kingly bearing and noble form, being "higher than any of the people, from his shoulders and upward." And even Samuel proclaimed him to the assembly with the words, "See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people!" In response to his words, one long, loud shout of joy arose from that vast throng, "God save the king!"

Samuel then set before the people "the manner of the kingdom," stating the principles upon which the monarchical government was based, and by which it should be controlled. The king was not to be an absolute monarch, but to hold his power in subjection to the will of the Most High. This address was recorded in a book, wherein were set forth the prerogatives of the prince and the privileges to be accorded to the people. Samuel knew that a king would be inclined to assume undue authority, and he guarded as far as possible the liberties of the nation.

The people in general acknowledged Saul as their king, and brought him such presents as Oriental monarchs usually receive. But there was still a party who were displeased and discontented. That a king should be chosen from Benjamin, the smallest of the tribes of Israel, to the neglect of Judah and Ephraim, the most numerous and most powerful, was a slight which they could not brook. They refused to profess allegiance to Saul or to bring him the customary presents. He however took no notice of their

insults, but wisely “held his peace.” In the existing condition of affairs he did not see fit to assume royal dignity and power. Leaving Samuel to administer the government as formerly; he returned to his home at Gibeah. He was honorably escorted thither by a company, who, seeing the divine choice in his selection, were determined to sustain him.

Those who had been most urgent in their demand for a king, were the very ones who refused to accept with gratitude the man of God's appointment. Their expectations were not realized. They looked for a king to be inaugurated with great pomp and display; failing in this, they felt that little had been gained. Envy and jealousy burned in the hearts of many. Each had his favorite whom he had wished to see placed upon the throne, and several among the leaders had hoped themselves to occupy that exalted position. All the efforts of pride and ambition had resulted in disappointment and discontent. It is ever thus. The heart must learn to submit to God, in order to be at peace.

July 27, 1882

The Inauguration at Gilgal

Saul had been chosen by God and acknowledged by the nation as king of Israel; yet he made no attempt to maintain his right to the throne. In his home among the uplands of Benjamin he quietly occupied himself in the duties of a husbandman, and left the establishment of his authority entirely to the hand of God. It was not to be long deferred. Soon after his election, the Ammonites, under their king, Nahash, invaded the disputed territory east of the Jordan, and threatened the large and powerful city of Jabesh-gilead. The inhabitants endeavored to secure terms of peace by offering to become tributary to the Ammonites. But the barbarous and cruel king refused to spare them, except on condition that he might put out the right eye of every one of them, that they might remain as so many living monuments of his power.

The people of the besieged city begged a respite of seven days for deliberation, hoping that during this time the tribes on the west side of the river might be summoned to their deliverance. The Ammonites consented, reasoning that if the matter were thus made public it would greatly increase the honor of their expected triumph.

Swift messengers spread the tidings through Israel, creating wide-spread terror and consternation. Saul, returning with his herds from the field, heard the loud wail that told of some great calamity. He said, “What aileth the people that they weep?” When the shameful story was repeated, all his dormant powers were roused, and he stood up as a hero and a king. “The Spirit of God came upon him,” as on Samson, and “he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen.”

All Israel obeyed. Three hundred and thirty thousand men gathered on the plain of Bezek, under the command of Saul. Messengers were immediately sent to apprise the people of Jabesh-gilead that they might expect help on the morrow, the very day on which they were to yield up their eyes to the Ammonites.

By marching all night, the king appeared with his army before Jabesh-gilead in the morning. He then divided his force into three companies, which approached the camp of the Ammonites upon different sides, and making a sudden and vigorous attack, completely routed them, with great slaughter. Those who escaped were so scattered that no two could be found together.

By the king's promptitude and energy upon this occasion, as well as his bravery and military skill, the people were far more strongly influenced in his favor than they had been by the Lord's appointment, Samuel's anointing, or his own prepossessing appearance. They now, by universal acclamation, greeted him as their king, attributing all the honor of the victory to human skill, and forgetting that without God's special blessing all their efforts would have been in vain.

In their enthusiasm, some proposed to put to death those who had at first refused to submit to the new sovereign. But the king interfered, saying, "There shall not a man be put to death this day; for today the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel." Here Saul gave evidence of the great change which had taken place in his character. Instead of taking honor to himself, he gave the glory to God, to whom it rightfully belonged. Instead of showing a desire for revenge, as would have been natural, he manifested a spirit of compassion and forgiveness. This is unmistakable evidence that the grace of God dwells in the heart.

Samuel now proposed that the people go to Gilgal, and there solemnly confirm the kingdom to Saul, all opposition to his authority seeming now to have ceased. This was done, with great rejoicing, and abundant sacrifices of thanksgiving.

Gilgal was memorable as the place of Israel's first encampment in the promised land. Here Joshua set up the pillar of twelve stones to commemorate the miraculous passage of the Jordan; here the manna ceased; here circumcision was renewed; here the people kept the first passover after their wanderings; here the Captain of the Lord's host appeared. From this place they marched to the overthrow of Jericho and the conquest of Ai. Here Achan met the direful penalty of his sin, and here was made that unwise treaty with the Gibeonites which punished Israel's neglect to ask counsel of God. Upon this plain, so rich in thrilling associations, stood Samuel and Saul; and when the shouts of welcome to the king had died away, the aged prophet spoke to the people his parting words as ruler of the nation.

Lest the blessings granted to Israel should lead them to justify all their proceedings, Samuel took this occasion to admonish them that their course had been most displeasing to God. He also vindicated his own conduct and the purity of his administration. He called upon the people to cite one instance of fraud, oppression, or corruption, while he alone was their judge:

"Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said to me, and have made a king over you. And now, behold, the king walketh before you; and I am old and gray-headed; and behold, my sons are with you; and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe, to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it to you."

Without one dissenting voice, the people replied, "Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand."

Samuel had a higher object than merely to justify his own course. He had previously endeavored to set forth the principles which should govern both the king and the people, and he now desired to present before them an instructive example. From childhood, he had borne responsibilities in the work of God, and during his long life, one object had been ever before him,—the glory of God and the highest good of Israel. This had been apparent to the whole nation, and all now bore testimony to his integrity and faithfulness.

The honor accorded him who is concluding his work is of far more worth than the applause and congratulations which those receive who are just entering upon their duties, and who have yet to be tested. One may easily lay off his burdens, when even the enemies of truth acknowledge his fidelity. But how many of our great men close their official labors in disgrace, because they have sacrificed principle for gain or honor. The desire to be popular, the temptations of wealth or ease, lead them astray. Men who connive at sin may appear to prosper; they may triumph because their undertakings seem crowned with success; but God's eye is upon these proud boasters. He will reward them as their works have been. The greatest outward prosperity cannot bring happiness to those who are not at peace with God or with themselves.

It may at times be necessary for the servant of God to vindicate his own character, and to defend his course, that the Lord's name may be glorified, and the truth be not reproached. Let all who are treated with neglect or injustice, follow the example of Samuel, taking care not to make self prominent, but to maintain the honor of God. Let the injured one, instead of dwelling upon the wrongs which he has suffered, show the people how they have wounded Christ in the person of his servant. Many hearts would thus be led to humiliation and repentance, when if personal feelings were aroused, they would be as hard as stone.

Unless men constantly cherish mercy, compassion, and love, Satan will encourage a fault-finding, selfish spirit which will crowd these precious graces out of the soul. Those who have toiled long and unselfishly in the cause of God, should not be surprised if they are at last set aside. Many a man through whom God has wrought to achieve great results, whose influence has been felt east and west, north and south, is at last rewarded with neglect or cruel contempt. Ingratitude is natural to the unrenewed heart. No man is faultless, and many are ready to find some excuse for condemning or reproaching the one who has served them unselfishly. They forget that they themselves may be guilty of sins far more offensive in the sight of God than those of which they accuse his worn, wearied, and perplexed servant.

It seems to us strangely inconsistent and almost incredible that a man of Samuel's sterling virtue, integrity, and devotion could have been set aside for one who was wholly untried, and who had been well-nigh a stranger to God's cause and to his people. Yet we see the same course often repeated. The chosen of God, who might long have continued in his service, doing the good that they desired to do, are prevented because mercy, love, and gratitude are excluded from the hearts of their brethren. When the faithful laborers are no longer permitted to hold a leading position, let them instruct those who will

appreciate their efforts. Let them do all the good they can do in any capacity. They have not received their commission from men, but from God. It is he who has given them their work. If they are shut out from all other avenues of usefulness, they can pray. They have proved the Lord again and again; they are familiar with his word, and can claim his promises. God hears their intercessions.

We should learn to honor those whom God honors. Those who have toiled long and unselfishly for his cause should be ever treated with respect and tenderness, even though it may be evident that they cannot perform the work which they once could, or, that they sometimes err in judgment.

Notwithstanding their imperfections, these very men may be far more useful in the work of God, than those who would criticise and reject them. All have defects of character. All need the help of God every hour, or they will decidedly fail.

Samuel rehearsed to Israel the leading events in their past history, the wonderful manifestations of divine power, and the evidence of his favor in establishing them as his peculiar people. He reminded them of their transgressions in departing from God, and seeking to imitate the example of surrounding nations; he pointed to the judgments which had been visited upon them for their sins, and the gracious deliverances which their repentance had secured. All their calamities had been brought upon them by rebellion against God. Their prosperity was secured by obedience. Yet when threatened by their enemies, they had not made God their trust, but had demanded a king to stand at the head of their armies. Samuel had sought to encourage them to rely upon their Divine Helper, and had even volunteered to lead them out to battle himself; but they had obstinately rejected his proposition.

Now the Lord had granted their desire, and set a king over them; yet their prosperity would still depend upon their obedience to God. Notwithstanding their sin, the Lord would pardon and bless them if they would from this time manifest true repentance and fidelity. "But," said the prophet, "if ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers."

As a proof of the truth of his words, and also as evidence of the Lord's displeasure, Samuel called down thunder and rain from heaven. It being the time of wheat harvest, when the air is usually serene and mild, the people were greatly terrified at this manifestation, and they confessed their sin, and entreated the prophet's prayers in their behalf. They now saw that God had greatly honored the man whom they had rejected; and they felt for the time being that they had made a great mistake in their opposition to the Lord's wise arrangement.

Samuel did not leave the people in a state of discouragement. He knew that this would prevent all effort for a better life. They would look upon God as unforgiving and severe, and thus would be exposed to manifold temptations. Such is not the character of our gracious God. He is merciful and forgiving, ever willing and anxious to show favor to his people when they will hear and obey his voice. Said the prophet, "Fear not; ye have done all this wickedness; yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart; and turn not ye aside; for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain. For the Lord will not forsake his people." Samuel also assured the people of his continued intercession in their behalf, and also of his services as judge and teacher. He

ended his address with the warning, "But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king."

Samuel's life of purity and unselfish devotion to God's cause, was itself a perpetual rebuke both to scheming, self-serving priests and elders and to the proud, sensual congregation of Israel. Although he assumed no pomp and encouraged no display, his labors bore the signet of Heaven. He was honored by the world's Redeemer, under whose guidance he ruled the Hebrew nation. But the people became weary of his piety and devotion, despised his humble authority, and rejected him for a man who should rule them as a king.

In the character of Samuel we see reflected the likeness of Christ. The spotless purity of our Saviour's life provoked the wrath of Satan. That life was the light of the world, and revealed the hidden depravity in the hearts of men. It was the holiness of Christ that stirred up against him the fiercest passions of profligate professors of godliness.

Christ came not with the wealth and honors of earth, yet the works which he wrought showed him to possess a greater power than that of any human prince. The Jews looked for a Messiah who should break the oppressor's yoke, yet they cherished the sins which had bound it upon their necks. They would not bear Christ's fearless rebuke of their vices. The loveliness of a character in which benevolence, purity, and holiness reigned supreme, which entertained no hatred except for sin, they despised. Had Christ cloaked their sins and applauded their piety, they would have accepted him as their king. They hated him because he waged war with pride, injustice, lust, and hypocrisy.

Thus it has been in every age of the world. The light from Heaven brings condemnation upon all who refuse to walk in it. It is the duty of every Christian to maintain the honor of God by his own unselfish, spotless life, and fearlessly to condemn sin in all its forms. Satan will make strong efforts to sweep from the earth those who uphold purity and piety. But a stronger than he draws nigh to the believing, trusting soul, and measures weapons with the prince of darkness. In every age there have been faithful men to stand as God's witnesses in the earth. The present is a time of darkness and feebleness to the church; but this is because they are not united to Christ. The moral palsy upon professed Christians need not exist. They may have the vigor of perpetual youth, if they will put away their idols, and serve God with an undivided heart.

"All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." The natural heart is as strongly opposed to God now, as in the days of Samuel or of Christ. When rebuked by the example of those who hate sin, hypocrites will become agents of Satan to harass and persecute the faithful. "But," says the apostle, "what can harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?" Such have through faith been adopted into God's family; they will become more than conquerors through Him who hath loved them.

August 3, 1882

The Forbidden Sacrifice

When Saul was crowned at Gilgal, the nation seemed unanimous in his support, and he felt that his throne was firmly established. He now dismissed to their homes the vast army that had arisen at his call to overthrow the Ammonites, reserving only two thousand men to be stationed under his command at Michmash, and one thousand to attend his son Jonathan at Gibeah of Benjamin.

Elated with the honor of the recent victory, Saul was disposed to relax his efforts. He preferred the enjoyment of ease and the pomp of royalty to the toil, uncertainty, and danger of the field of battle. Here was a serious error. While his army was filled with hope and courage, he should have proceeded at once to make war upon other enemies of Israel. By neglecting to do this, he lost the opportunity to strike a telling blow for the honor of God and the liberties of the nation.

Meanwhile their warlike neighbors, the Philistines, were active. After the defeat at Ebenezer, they had still retained possession of some hill fortresses in the land of Israel; and now taking advantage of the somewhat disorganized condition of the Hebrew nation, consequent upon the change in the government, these powerful foes had established themselves in the very heart of the country. Yet they were filled with fear at the defeat of the fierce and cruel Ammonites, and had they been attacked with the same courage and energy, they might then have been subdued.

In facilities, arms, and equipments, the Philistines had great advantages over Israel. During the long period of their oppressive rule, they had endeavored to strengthen their power, by forbidding the Israelites to practice the trade of smiths, lest they should make weapons of war. At the conclusion of peace, they had still kept the trade in their own hands, the Hebrews resorting to the Philistine garrisons for such work as needed to be done. Had the men of Israel possessed proper energy and foresight, they would, during the long interval of peace, have secured the services of skilled workmen, and furnished themselves with weapons of war. But love of ease, and the abject spirit induced by long oppression, controlled them. Hence they had suffered even their agricultural implements to become blunt, and none among the Israelites, except Saul and his son Jonathan, possessed a spear or sword.

It was not until the second year of Saul's reign that an attempt was made to subdue the Philistines. The first blow was struck by Jonathan, who at the command of his father attacked and overcame their garrison of Geba. The Philistines were greatly exasperated by this defeat, and they made ready for a speedy attack upon Israel.

Saul was now aroused to the necessity of immediate action. He caused war to be proclaimed by the sound of the trumpet throughout the land, and also issued a proclamation calling upon all the men of war, including the tribes across the Jordan, to assemble immediately at Gilgal. This summons was obeyed.

The Philistines had gathered an immense force at Michmash—"thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is upon the sea-shore innumerable." When the Hebrews became apprised of the strength and numbers of the opposing force, and then considered their own defenseless condition, they became terrified and disheartened. Every day saw the army of Saul diminishing, as multitudes of the people stole away to hide themselves in caves, thickets, and pits;

and some even fled across the Jordan, to the land of Gad and Gilead. Those who still remained “followed him trembling.”

Where was now Israel's pride and confidence in their king, demanded, as they had declared, “that we may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles”? Alas, how utterly worthless are all hopes based on human pomp or pride!

Samuel had appointed to meet the king at Gilgal, there to “offer burnt- offerings and sacrifices, and to show him what he should do.” The prophet did not arrive within the allotted time, and as Saul saw their dangers increasing, and the hearts of the people failing for fear, he became impatient. Instead of resorting to prayer, and humbling his soul before God, he determined to do something himself to relieve the difficulties of the situation.

Here is where many have failed, and continue to fail. They will not wait patiently for the Lord to work for them. They desire to be active, and if God does not give them something to do, they will venture to do even what he has forbidden. The Lord had detained his servant, in order to test the faith and obedience of the king. Saul did not stand the test. God had promised to be with him, if he would be obedient. He should have trusted this promise, and waited patiently for divine instruction and guidance. But thinking that something must be done at once to inspire the people with courage, he commanded them to bring forward their victims for sacrifice, and then he presumptuously took the place of priest, and himself offered them upon the altar. This act was a flagrant violation of the divine command that only those should offer sacrifice who had been sacredly consecrated to the work. Moreover, the public nature of the act, as well as the high position of the offender, added greatly to the pernicious influence of his example, and rendered prompt punishment indispensably necessary.

No sooner had Saul made an end of offering sacrifice, than he heard of Samuel's approach, and went out to meet him. But though greeted with demonstrations of reverence and affection, the prophet understood that all was not right. In answer to his pointed inquiry, “What hast thou done?” Saul endeavored to excuse his own course, by depicting the terror of the people and the danger of an immediate attack from the Philistines. But the prophet returned the stern and solemn answer,

“Thou hast done foolishly. Thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee; for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue; the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou has not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.”

Saul's transgression proved him unworthy to be intrusted with sacred responsibilities. One who had himself so little reverence for God's requirements, could not be a wise or safe leader for the nation. Had he patiently endured the divine test, the crown would have been confirmed to him and to his house. In fact, Samuel had come to Gilgal for this very purpose. But Saul had been weighed in the balance, and found wanting. He must be removed to make way for one who would sacredly regard the divine honor and authority.

An all-wise God had foreseen these events, yet Saul's threatened humiliation was chargeable only to his own sin and folly. God had given him great advantages to develop a right character. The Holy Spirit had enlightened his understanding, giving him clear views of the divine character and requirements, and of his own duty. All this made his sin more grievous.

Had Saul cherished the light which Christ had given him, he would have trusted less to the performance of religious rites, and would have felt more deeply the importance of humbling his heart before God. Impulse would have been guided by reason, and chastened and purified by conscience. But it is difficult for a man whose habits are fixed, to unlearn what he has for years been learning. Divine grace only can effect this transformation.

In the faithful performance of God's will, all the powers of the mind, all the emotions of the heart, will be called forth into their noblest, purest, happiest exercise. Great are the privileges of the Christian, and great the change which must be wrought by the Holy Spirit, ere men sinful by nature can become the sons of God. Mental abilities and spiritual affections, the treasures of memory and the anticipations of hope, are alike to be sanctified by the spirit of Christ, and consecrated to his service. The life of Christ's disciple is begun by faith and continued by obedience.

August 10, 1882

Victory at Michmash

The energy and military skill displayed by Saul in the victory of Jabesh-gilead were extolled by the whole nation. In their enthusiasm the people forgot that he was but the agent by whom the Lord had wrought for their deliverance. And though at first the king ascribed the glory to God, he afterward took honor to himself. When first called to the throne, he was humble and self-distrustful; but success made him self-confident, and ere long he was guilty of presumption and sacrilege, in offering the unbidden sacrifice at Gilgal.

The same blind self-confidence led him to reject Samuel's message of reproof. Saul acknowledged Samuel to be a prophet sent from God. Hence he should have accepted the reproof, even though he could not himself see that he had sinned. Such a course, showing a willingness to be set right, would have gone far to re-instate him in the favor of God. But Saul endeavored to vindicate his own course, and blamed the prophet, instead of condemning himself.

There are today many who pursue a similar course. Like Saul, they are blinded to their errors. When the Lord seeks to correct them, they receive reproof as insult, and find fault with the one who brings the divine message.

Had Saul been willing to see and confess his error, this bitter experience would have proved a safeguard for the future. He would afterward have avoided the mistakes which called forth divine reproof. But feeling that he was unjustly condemned, he would, of course, be likely again to commit the same sin.

The Lord would have his people, under all circumstances, manifest implicit trust in him. Although we cannot always understand the workings of his providence, we should wait with patience and humility

until he sees fit to enlighten us. We should beware of taking upon ourselves responsibilities which God has not authorized us to bear. Men frequently have too high an estimate of their own character or abilities. They may feel competent to undertake the most important work, when God sees that they are not prepared to perform aright the smallest and humblest duty.

Saul was in disfavor with God, and yet unwilling to humble his heart in penitence. He desired to devise some plan by which to establish more firmly his royal authority, as well as to revive the courage of the people. What he lacked in real piety, he would endeavor to make up in pretension and display. Saul was familiar with the terrible history of Israel's defeat when the ark of God was brought into the camp by Hophni and Phinehas; and yet, knowing all this, he determined to send for the sacred ark and its attendant priests.

With a spirit of exultation he enters upon the accomplishment of his plans. He hopes to inspire the hearts of Israel with fresh courage, to reassemble his scattered army, and to vanquish the Philistines. He will now dispense with Samuel's presence and support, and thus free himself from the prophet's disagreeable criticisms and severe reproofs. He feels that Samuel does not rightly appreciate the position and authority of a king, and hence does not treat him with proper respect. He expects that Ahiah the priest will be awed by royal dignity, and will readily yield to the king as to a superior.

The Holy Spirit had been granted to Saul to enlighten his understanding and soften his heart. He had received faithful instruction and reproof from the prophet of God. And yet how great his perversity! The history of Israel's first king presents a sad example of the power of early wrong habits. In his youth, Saul did not love and fear God; and that impetuous spirit, not early trained to submission, was ever ready to rebel against divine authority.

The lesson is one which all would do well to ponder. Men cannot for years abuse the noblest powers which God has given them for his service, and then, when they choose to change, find these powers fresh and free for an entirely opposite course. Those who in early life cherish a sacred regard for the authority of God, and who faithfully perform the duties of their position, will be prepared for higher service in after years. If we would conquer in the battle of life, we must take counsel of infinite wisdom, first and last and always.

Saul's efforts to inspire the people with hope and courage proved unavailing. Finding his force reduced to six hundred men, he left Gilgal, and retired to the fortress at Geba, so lately taken from the Philistines. This stronghold was situated on the south side of a deep, rugged valley, or gorge, a few miles north of the site of Jerusalem. On the north side of the same valley, at Michmash, the Philistine force lay encamped, while detachments of troops went out in different directions to ravage the country.

On the one hand was a little company of almost unarmed men, on the other, vast numbers of well-drilled troops, with their thirty thousand chariots of iron. What marvel that the hearts of the men of Israel were filled with fear! God had permitted matters to be thus brought to a crisis, that he might rebuke the perversity of Saul, and teach his people a lesson of humility and faith.

Jonathan, the king's son, a man who feared God, was chosen as the instrument to deliver Israel. Moved by a divine impulse, he proposed to his armor-bearer that they should make a secret attack upon the enemy's camp. "It may be," he urged, "that the Lord will work for us; for there is no restraint to the Lord to work by many or by few."

The armor-bearer, a man of faith and prayer, encouraged the design, and together they withdrew from the camp of Israel, secretly, lest their purpose should be opposed as presumptuous. With earnest prayer to the Guide of their fathers, they agreed upon a sign by which they might determine how to proceed. Then passing down into the gorge separating the two armies, and which here stretched out to half a mile in width, they silently threaded their way, under the shadow of the cliff, and partially concealed by the mounds and ridges of the valley. Approaching the Philistine fortress, they were revealed to the view of their enemies, who said tauntingly, "Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they have hid themselves," then challenged them, "Come up, and we will show you a thing," meaning that they would punish the two Israelites for their daring.

This challenge was the token which Jonathan and his companion had previously agreed to accept as evidence that the Lord would prosper their undertaking. Passing now from the sight of the Philistines, and choosing a secret and difficult path, the warriors made their way to the summit of a cliff before deemed inaccessible, and therefore not very strongly guarded. Thus they penetrated the enemy's camp, and slew the sentinels, who were so overcome by surprise and fear as to offer no resistance.

The whole army was seized with consternation, which was increased by an earthquake miraculously occurring at the same time. The Philistines imagined that a vast army was upon them, and in their confusion they began to slay one another.

Soon the noise of the battle was heard in the camp of Israel. Upon inquiry it was found that none were absent but Jonathan and his armor-bearer. Saul at first desired to consult the Lord as to whether an attack should be made upon the Philistines; but the confusion among them evidently increasing, his impatient spirit could not brook delay. Marshaling his little force, he advanced against the enemy. The Hebrews who had deserted to the Philistines, now joined their fellow country-men; great numbers also came out of their lurking-places, and as the Philistines fled, discomfited, Saul's army committed terrible havoc upon the fugitives.

August 17, 1882

King Saul's Rash Oath

When Saul beheld the Philistines fleeing in terror from Michmash, he determined to make the most of his advantage. To avoid unnecessary delay, he forbade the pursuers to partake of food for the entire day, enforcing his command by the solemn imprecation, "Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies."

The king might properly have warned his soldiers not to waste time in feasting upon the spoil of their enemies; but to deprive them of food for a whole day was unwise in the extreme. The long abstinence

rendered them weak and exhausted at the very time when they should have been strong and courageous to push the battle against the foe. And then to confirm this inconsiderate prohibition by a solemn oath showed Saul to be both rash and profane. Such a course could not be prompted by a zeal for the glory of God. The king declares his object to be, not "that the Lord may be avenged on his enemies," but only "that I may be avenged on mine enemies." Yet the fact was, that Saul had no real share in the battle; the victory had been virtually gained without his knowledge or co-operation.

Fearing the king's displeasure, the soldiers refrained from partaking of the spoil of their enemies, and even from eating the wild honey which was found in great abundance as they passed through a forest. But Jonathan was ignorant of his father's prohibition, and unwittingly transgressed by eating a little of the honey.

In the evening, being hungry, and faint with labor, many of the people hastily slew the cattle which they had taken, and ate the flesh with the blood, contrary to the law. Thus did Saul's injudicious severity lead to disregard of the divine command. When, however, the monarch learned what was going on, he interposed his authority, and directed that a sacrifice be first offered unto the Lord, and then the animals be properly slaughtered and the blood separated, as the Mosaic law required.

When the people had satisfied their hunger, Saul proposed to continue the pursuit that night; but the priest suggested that it would be wiser first to ask counsel of God. This was done in the usual manner; but no answer came. Regarding this silence as a token of the Lord's displeasure, Saul determined to discover the cause. Had he properly realized the sinfulness of his own course, he would have concluded that he himself was the guilty one. But failing to discern this, he gave command that the matter be decided by lot. "Draw ye near hither, all ye chief of the people, and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day. For as the Lord liveth, which saveth Israel, though it were Jonathan my son, he shall surely die." The people listened in silence, their hearts thrilled with fear, as they saw the rash, impetuous spirit of their king.

Again the monarch commanded, "Be ye on one side, and I and my son Jonathan on the other." The lot was cast; it fell upon Saul and Jonathan. Again it was cast, and Jonathan was taken. The Lord was pleased that the course of Jonathan should be brought to light, to manifest more fully the spirit of Saul. Thus the people would be led to see their great error in rejecting the government which God had given them. They had exchanged the pious prophet whose prayers had brought down blessings, for a king who in his blind zeal had prayed for a curse upon them.

When the lot fell upon Jonathan, the king demanded with great sternness, "What hast thou done?" Jonathan replied frankly, acknowledging the act, and deprecating the direful penalty. Now at last we might expect Saul to see and deplore his folly in making so rash a vow. Now, surely, paternal affection will rise superior to royal authority. But no; Saul wished his people to see that the justice of the king was superior to the affection of the father. He had not shared the honor of the victory; but he hoped now to secure honor by his zeal in maintaining the sacredness of his oath. Even at the sacrifice of his son, he would impress upon his subjects the fact that the royal authority must be maintained. How terribly

significant the words which fell from that father's lips,—“God do so, and more also; thou shalt surely die, Jonathan.”

At Gilgal, but a short time previous, Saul had presumed to officiate as priest, in direct violation of the command of God. When reprov'd by Samuel, he had stubbornly justified his own course. Now, upon the bare suspicion of sin in another—before the lots were cast—he had sworn that the offender should surely die; not considering whether the offense might not be a sin of ignorance, to be expiated by a sin-offering, instead of a willful transgression punishable with death.

When the offender is pointed out, and it is known that his only crime is the ignorant violation of an unreasonable requirement, the king and father coldly sentences his son to death. What a contrast between the boldness with which Saul himself violates the law of God and defies reproof, and the cruel severity manifested by him toward one whom God had honored!

The people refused to allow this unjust sentence to be carried into effect. They could see where the guilt belonged; that Saul himself was the one whom God was rebuking. Unheeding the anger of the king, they boldly declared, “Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid; as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day.” Noble decision! wise and courageous people! The proud monarch dared not disregard this unanimous verdict, and the life of Jonathan was preserved.

Saul could but feel that his son was preferred before him, both by the people and by the Lord. Jonathan's deliverance was a severe reproof to the king's rashness. He felt a presentiment that his curses would fall upon his own head. He did not longer continue the war with the Philistines, but returned to his home, moody and dissatisfied.

Those who are most ready to excuse or justify themselves in sin are often most severe in judging and condemning others. There are many today, like Saul, bringing upon themselves the displeasure of God. They reject counsel and despise reproof. Even when convinced that the Lord is not with them, they refuse to see in themselves the cause of their trouble. How many cherish a proud, boastful spirit, while they indulge in cruel judgment or severe rebuke of others really better in heart and life than they. Well would it be for such self-constituted judges to ponder those words of Christ: “With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

To exalt self, to glory in what we have done or what we can do, is proof of extreme ignorance or folly. Those who have an undue estimate of themselves are often brought into positions where their true character will be developed. It was thus in the case of Saul. His own course convinced the people that kingly honor and authority were dearer to him than justice, mercy, or benevolence.

The Lord bears long with the waywardness of the children of men, and grants to all ample opportunity to see and forsake their sins. Yet he will maintain his own glory, and care for his own people; whatever the course of the rebellious and backsliding. He may appear to prosper those who disregard his will and despise his warnings; but in his own time he will surely make manifest their folly.

By one wrong decision, men may subject themselves to untold perils. One misstep may cost a lifetime of care, anxiety, and sorrow. Had not the men of Israel interposed to save the life of Jonathan, that intrepid warrior would have perished by the decree of their chosen leader. With what misgivings must that people afterward have followed Saul's guidance! How bitter the thought that he had been placed upon the throne by their own act!

God's people of today are in danger of committing errors no less disastrous. We cannot, we must not, place blind confidence in any man, however high his profession of faith or his position in the church. We must not follow his guidance, unless the word of God sustains him. The Lord would have his people individually distinguish between sin and righteousness, between the precious and the vile.

Those who labor faithfully and unselfishly in the cause of God should be highly esteemed for their works' sake. We may, like the children of Israel, be tempted to exchange the devoted, self-sacrificing laborer for one who appears more pleasing, but whose faith and steadfastness are yet untried. Let us beware how we manifest ingratitude or contempt for those whom God has made burden-bearers in his cause. Those who smite the soldiers of the cross are smiting the hand of God that covers them as a shield.

August 24, 1882

A Doomed People

After delivering the reproof at Gilgal, Samuel had little intercourse with the king of Israel. Saul resented the prophet's stern rebuke, and avoided him as far as possible; and Samuel did not intrude his presence or his counsel. But the Lord commanded him to bear another message to the king. God purposed again to work through Saul, to destroy the enemies of Israel.

Obedying this command, the prophet reminded him that he had been commissioned by the Lord to anoint him king, and that he still spoke by the same authority. Then he declared the divine message. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not."

The Amalekites were a wandering people inhabiting the wilderness to the south of Palestine, between that country and Egypt. Like most of the neighboring tribes, they were idolaters, and bitter enemies of Israel. Soon after the exodus they attacked the Israelites in the desert of Rephidim, but were signally defeated by Joshua. The Amalekites were not among the nations whose lands were granted to Israel, nor had they received any injury from them. This assault was, therefore, wholly unprovoked. It was also most cowardly and cruel; the foe, not daring to risk an open encounter with the Hebrews, had attacked and slain those who from feebleness and exhaustion had fallen behind the body of the host.

Moses was commanded to preserve a record of the battle, and also of the final doom of that idolatrous people, as pronounced by God himself: "I will blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven, because [marginal reading] the hand of Amalek is against the throne of Jehovah." The Lord of all the

earth had fixed his throne in Israel, and had shown his glorious power and majesty in bringing the chosen people from their bondage in Egypt. When Amalek made an assault upon them, he attacked the throne of God, who determined to vindicate his authority, as a warning to all future generations.

After denouncing judgments against the Amalekites, the Lord waited long for them to turn from their evil ways; but they went on in sin until their iniquity had reached its height, till their day of probation ended, and divine justice demanded their destruction. That wicked people were dwelling in God's world, the house which he had prepared for his faithful, obedient children. Yet they appropriated his gifts to their own use, without one thought of the Giver. The more blessings he poured upon them, the more boldly they transgressed against him. Thus they continued to pervert his blessings and abuse his mercy. They strengthened their souls in iniquity, but God kept silence; and they said in their hearts. "How doth God know? and is there knowledge with the Most High? "But the dark record of their crimes was constantly passing up to Heaven. There is a limit beyond which men may not go on in sin,

"A hidden boundary between

God's mercy and his wrath."

When that limit had been passed, God arose in his indignation to put them out of the house which they had polluted.

Our gracious God still bears long with the impenitent. He gives them light from Heaven, that they may understand the holiness of his character, and the justice of his requirements. He calls them to repentance, and assures them of his willingness to forgive. But if they continue to reject his mercy, the mandate goes forth devoting them to destruction.

Thus was it with Sodom. Behold the fairest city of the plain, set in a garden of beauty. To human vision it is a scene of quietness and security. The fertile fields are clothed with harvests. There is an abundance for the supply of every want, almost without labor. The distant hills are covered with flocks. The merchants of the East bring their treasures from afar. The people live for pleasure and make one long holiday of the year.

Idleness and riches are their curse. They are absorbed in worldly pursuits and sensual gratification. Yet no visible token of God's wrath hangs over the devoted city. Their last day is like many others that have come and gone. Their last night is marked by no greater sins than many others before it. But mercy, so long rejected, ceases at last her pleadings. The fires of divine vengeance are kindled in the vale of Siddim. The beautiful but guilty Sodom becomes a desolation, a place never to be built up or inhabited.

The flames which consumed the cities of the plain shed their warning light down even to our time. They bid us shun the sins that brought destruction upon the ungodly at that day.

God requires the service of all his creatures. Everything in nature obeys his will. The measureless heavens are ablaze with his glory. Of all that he has created upon the earth, only man rebels against the Creator. Puny, erring men, the creatures of an hour, dare to enter into controversy with the Eternal, the Source of all wisdom and all power. They who are constantly dependent upon God's bounty, dare to

spurn the Hand whence all their blessings flow. There is no ingratitude so sinful, no blindness so complete, as that of men who refuse to acknowledge their obligation to their God.

Not only are men dwellers in God's great house, and partakers of his bounties, but they are the objects of his unceasing care and love. He makes it their privilege, through the righteousness of Christ, to call him Father. They may ask infinite blessings without exhausting the treasures of his grace. In their ignorance they may be guided by the counsels of unerring wisdom. In calamity they may shelter themselves beneath the shadow of his throne, and find safety in his secret place.

This mighty God pledges his immutable word that those who love and trust him shall not want any good thing. But he declares that he will surely punish the transgressors of his law. The wickedness of the race is not forgotten nor overlooked because God does not at once visit them with judgments. Each century of profligacy and rebellion is treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.

When the scribes and Pharisees rejected the teachings of Christ, he bade them fill up the iniquity of their fathers, that it might be time for God to work; that the message of glad tidings might be given to others, who would joyfully receive it. When at last the divine forbearance was exhausted, God's wrath fell signally upon a people who had rejected so great light.

The Lord does not delight in vengeance, though he executes judgment upon the transgressors of his law. He is forced to do this, to preserve the inhabitants of the earth from utter depravity and ruin. In order to save some, he must cut off those who have become hardened in sin. Says the prophet Isaiah: "The Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act." The work of wrath and destruction is indeed a strange, unwelcome work for Him who is infinite in love.

Again, the divine message comes to Ezekiel: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." The very fact of God's unwillingness to punish sinners shows the enormity of the sins that call forth his judgments. And yet to every transgressor of his holy law is addressed that earnest, pleading call, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?"

The records of sacred history declare, that while God is a God of justice, strict to mark iniquity, and strong to punish the sinner, he is also a God of truth, compassion, and abundant mercy. While he visits judgments upon the transgressors of his law and the enemies of his people, he will protect those who respect his statutes and show kindness to his chosen.

When he commanded that a war of extermination be waged against Amalek, he also directed that the Kenites, who dwell among them, should be spared, because they had shown mercy to Israel in their distress. Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, and a prince among the Kenites, had joined Israel soon after the latter came out of Egypt. His presence and counsel at that time was of great value to the Hebrews. Moses afterward urged Hobab, the son of Jethro, to accompany them in their journeyings through the wilderness, saying: "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you. Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

Hobab declined, choosing to live in his own country and among his own people. But Moses knew that his brother-in-law was well acquainted with the country through which they were to pass, and that he could greatly assist them in their journey. He therefore earnestly entreated: "Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes. And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee." Hobab consented to this; but the journeyings of Israel over, he and his followers forsook the neighborhood of the towns, and betook themselves to freer air, to the wilderness of Judah, on the southern border of Canaan.

The promise of special protection and friendship given by Moses to the Kenites, was made by the direction of the Lord. Hence when Saul was commanded to destroy the Amalekites, special directions were given that the Kenites should be spared. Jethro and his family had been devoted worshipers of the true God; but though the Kenites were still friendly to Israel, and acknowledged the living God as the ruler of the earth, their religion had become corrupted with idolatry. After this time they degenerated more and more into heathenism, and their influence became a snare to the Hebrews. Hence they were finally visited with divine judgments.

Balaam, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, foretold the destruction of both the Kenites and the Amalekites: "When he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable and said, Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall be that he perish forever. And he looked on the Kenites and took up this parable, and said, Strong is thy dwelling-place, and thou puttest thy rest in a rock. Nevertheless, the Kenites shall be wasted, until Asshur shall carry thee away captive. And he took up his parable, and said, Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!"

August 31, 1882

The Final Test

The defeat of the Philistines at Michmash seemed a turning-point in the fortunes of Israel. Though the Lord was displeased with Saul, and purposed to set aside his family, yet he granted him success in battle against the oppressors of his people. No enemy seemed able to stand against him. He made war in turn against Moab, Ammon, and Edom, and against the Amalekites and the Philistines; and wherever he turned his arms, he gained fresh victories. Yet, having missed the opportunity which God had granted him, he was never able permanently to subdue the Philistines. He had sore war with them all the days of his life.

When commanded to destroy the Amalekites, Saul did not for a moment hesitate. To his own authority was added the command of the prophet, and at the call to battle the men of Israel flocked to his standard. Two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah were numbered at Telaim. With this force, Saul attacked and defeated the king of Amalek, and overran the country.

This victory was by far the most brilliant which Saul had ever gained, and it served to kindle anew that pride of heart which was his greatest danger. The divine edict devoting the Amalekites to utter

destruction was but partially executed. Ambitious to heighten the honor of his triumphal return by the presence of a royal captive, Saul ventured to spare Agag, the fierce and warlike king of Amalek.

This act was not without influence upon the people. They too felt that they might safely venture to depart somewhat from the Lord's explicit directions. Hence they covetously reserved to themselves the finest of the flocks, herds, and beasts of burden, destroying only that which was vile and refuse.

Here Saul was subjected to the final test. His presumptuous disregard of the will of God, showing his determination to rule as an independent monarch, proved that he could not be intrusted with royal power as the Lord's vicegerent. Unmindful of all this, Saul marshals his victorious army, and with the captive king and the long train of flocks and herds—a booty highly valued in the East—set out on the march homeward. At Carmel, in the possessions of Judah, he set up a monument of his victory.

While pride and rejoicing reigned in the camp of Saul, there was deep anguish in the home of Samuel. His intense interest for the welfare of Israel had not abated. He still loved the valiant warrior whom his own hands had anointed as king. It had been his earnest prayer that Saul might become a wise and prosperous ruler. When it was revealed to him that Saul had been finally rejected, Samuel in his distress “cried unto the Lord all night,” pleading for a reversal of the sentence. With an aching heart he set forth next morning to meet the erring king. But when he heard that Saul had erected a monument of his own exploits, instead of giving glory to God, he turned aside and went to Gilgal.

Thither the monarch with his army came to meet him. Samuel had cherished a longing hope that Saul might, upon reflection, become conscious of his sin, and by repentance and humiliation before God, be again restored to the divine favor. But the king came forward with great assurance, saying, “Blessed be thou of the Lord; I have performed the commandment of the Lord.” Saul had so often followed his own will, regardless of the command of God through his prophet, that his moral perception had become dulled. He was not now conscious of the sinfulness of his course.

The sounds that fell upon the prophet's ears, disproved the statement of the disobedient king. To the pointed question, “What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?” Saul made answer, “They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.” The plea here urged was at best but an excuse for covetousness. The beasts saved from the spoil were to be offered by the Israelites in place of their own animals required for sacrifice.

The spirit which actuated Saul is evinced by the fact that when proudly boasting of his obedience to the divine command, he takes all the honor to himself; when reprov'd for disobedience, he charges the sin upon the people. Samuel was not deceived by the king's subterfuge. With mingled grief and indignation he declares, “Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night.” Then he reminded Saul of his early humility: “When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?” He repeats the divine behest concerning Amalek, and demands from the king the reason for his disobedience.

Saul stubbornly persists in his self-justification; “Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal.” Had Saul himself obeyed the command of God, and enforced it upon the people with the same decision that he had manifested in carrying out his own decrees, he would have had no difficulty in securing obedience. God held him responsible for the sin which he basely endeavored to charge upon Israel.

In stern and solemn words the prophet of the Most High sweeps away the refuge of lies, and pronounces against Saul the irrevocable sentence: “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.”

As the king heard this fearful sentence, he cried out, “I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and thy words because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.” Saul was filled with terror by the denunciation of the prophet, but he had, even now, no true sense of the enormity of his transgression. He still persisted in casting blame upon the people, declaring that he had sinned through fear of them.

This was the same excuse urged by Aaron to shield himself from the guilt of making the golden calf. But so far from accepting the excuse, Moses sternly rebuked Aaron, in the presence of all the people. As the high priest of Israel, and the representative of Moses in his absence, Aaron should at any risk have opposed the rash and godless designs of the people. His neglect to do this brought upon them sin, disaster, and ruin, which he was powerless to avert. While he found it easy to lead them into sin, he sought in vain to lead them to repentance. Moses afterward declared, “The Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him.” His sin would have been punished with death had he not in true penitence humbled himself before the Lord. Had Saul, in like manner, been willing to see and confess his sin, he too might have been forgiven.

It was not sorrow for sin, but fear of its penalty that actuated the king of Israel as he entreated Samuel, “I pray thee, pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the Lord.”

“I will not return with thee,” was the answer of the prophet; “for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.” As Samuel turned to leave, the king, in an agony of fear, laid hold of his mantle to hold him back, but it rent in his hands. Upon this, the prophet declared, “The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine that is better than thou.” And knowing how lightly his words had heretofore been regarded by the king, he adds the solemn assurance, “The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent.” Saul had gloried in his exploits, as though he were the deliverer of his people. The prophet rebukes this pride by reminding the haughty monarch that God was the strength of Israel.

Even now Saul fears only personal disgrace and the loss of his kingdom. He is far more disturbed by the alienation of Samuel than by the displeasure of God. He entreated Samuel to pardon his transgressions,

as if the prophet had authority to reverse the divine sentence against him. He knew that the people had greater confidence in Samuel than in himself. Should another king be immediately anointed by divine command, he felt that his own case was hopeless. Should Samuel denounce and forsake him, he feared an immediate revolt among the people.

As a last resort, Saul entreated the prophet to honor him before the elders and the people by publicly uniting with him in the worship of God. Samuel remained, but only as a silent witness of the service. Without humility or repentance, Saul's worship could not be accepted of the Lord.

An act of justice, stern and terrible, was yet to be performed. Samuel must publicly vindicate the honor of God, and rebuke the course of Saul. He commands that the king of the Amalekites be brought before him. Above all who had fallen by the sword of Israel, Agag was responsible as the upholder of the debasing heathenism of his people, and the instigator of their revolting cruelties; it was just that upon him should fall the heaviest penalty. He came at the prophet's command, in the pride of royalty, flattering himself that he could overawe the servant of God, and that all danger of death was past. Samuel's words dispelled his assurance: "As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be made childless among women." "And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord." This done, Samuel returned to his home at Ramah, Saul to his at Gilgal. The prophet and the king were never to meet again.

Samuel was a man of great tenderness of spirit, and strong affections, as is evinced by the anguish which he felt when commanded to declare the divine sentence against Saul. Yet when required to execute justice against the wicked king of Amalek, he performed the unwelcome task unflinchingly. He would maintain his fidelity to God, however great the sacrifice of personal feeling.

How wide the contrast between the conduct of Samuel and the course pursued by the king of Israel. To serve his own purpose, Saul could be exceedingly cruel; but when divinely commissioned to destroy utterly a rebellious people, he smites only the lesser criminals, and spares the one upon whom the curse of God especially rested. In his pride of heart he flattered himself that he was more merciful than his Maker. By his course of action he declared the divine requirement unjust and cruel.

The case of Saul should be a lesson to us, that God's word is to be respected and obeyed. All the crimes and calamities of ancient Israel resulted from their neglect to heed the instructions of their divine Ruler. Here is our danger. We must give diligent heed to what the Lord has spoken, even in apparently small matters. God requires his people not merely to assent to his word, but to obey it with all the heart. To comply with the Lord's instructions when it is compatible with our own interests, and to disregard them when this best suits our purpose, is to pursue the course of Saul. Pride in our own achievements or a stubborn adherence to our own will, renders the most exalted profession or the most splendid service odious in the sight of God.

September 14, 1882

Obedience Better Than Sacrifice

“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.” These words of reproof, addressed to the king of Israel by Samuel the prophet, contain a lesson that should be pondered by the people of God in every age. The sacrificial offerings of ancient times were of themselves of no value in the sight of God. Those who presented sacrifice before the Lord must have a true sense of its import, acknowledging their lost condition as sinners, and accepting the death of Christ in their behalf. They must repent of their transgressions of God's law, and exercise faith in Jesus as the only one who could remove their guilt. When the offering of a sacrifice was substituted for true, willing, glad service to God, when it was regarded as having any virtue or merit in itself, or when the type was exalted above the object typified, then it became displeasing to the Lord.

Had Saul presented an offering of the greatest value, from his own flocks and herds, obeying in every particular the requirements of the law, yet in a spirit of self-sufficiency, and without true penitence, his offering would have been rejected. But when he offered the spoils of Amalek, upon which the divine curse had been pronounced, how utterly abhorrent must have been his course in the sight of a holy God. He had presumed, in the presence of all Israel, to show contempt for the authority of his Maker.

“To obey is better than sacrifice.” This lesson is of special importance at the present time, when the claims of God's law are urged upon our attention. The light now shining from the sacred word reveals the fact that an alien power has tampered with the statutes of Jehovah. The papacy, “the man of sin,” has attempted to change the times and laws of divine appointment. The Creator of the heavens and the earth commanded, “The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work.” This command was enforced by the example of its Author, proclaimed with his own voice, and placed in the very bosom of the decalogue. But the papal power has removed this divine ordinance, and substituted a day which God has not sanctified, and upon which he did not rest, the festival so long adored by heathens as the “venerable day of the sun.”

In all this, Satan is the master spirit. He has no particular regard for Sunday, but he desires that his will shall be obeyed, rather than the will of God. It was Satan that incited Adam and Eve to transgress the command of their Maker, and he has continued this work even to our own day. We see the success of his attacks upon the law of God, in the wide-spread disregard for the ancient Sabbath of Jehovah, and the well-nigh universal veneration for the institution of heathenism and papacy. And we see the terrible results, in the skepticism which everywhere prevails. The Sabbath was instituted in Eden, as a memorial of creation. It points men directly to the true God as the Maker of the heavens and the earth. Thus it stands as a mighty barrier against idolatry, atheism, and infidelity. Had the Sabbath been universally kept, not one of these evils could have gained a foot-hold in our world. There could not have been an infidel nor an idolater.

Even the political regulations given to Moses when he was in secret council with Jehovah, contain important lessons for the people of every age. But the law proclaimed from Sinai in the hearing of assembled Israel, and written by the finger of God, is obligatory upon all men to the close of time.

When God commissioned Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites, he did not leave it to Saul's judgment to destroy or keep alive as he should see fit. When he forbade our first parents to eat of the tree of knowledge, he did not leave it to them to eat or not to eat, as they pleased. When he commanded men to keep holy the seventh day, he did not make it optional with them to obey if convenient, and if not to sanctify a day of their own choosing.

Many endeavor to evade the claims of the fourth commandment by urging that the law of God was given to the Jews exclusively; that the seventh day of the week is the Jewish, while the first day is the Christian Sabbath. This distinction is not recognized in the Scriptures. There is no such contrast as is often claimed to exist between the Old and the New Testament, the law of God and the gospel of Christ, the requirements of the Jewish and those of the Christian dispensation. Every soul saved in the former dispensation was saved by Christ as verily as we are saved by him today. Patriarchs and prophets were Christians. The gospel promise was given to the first pair in Eden, when they had by transgression separated themselves from God. The gospel was preached to Abraham. The Hebrews all drank of that spiritual Rock, which was Christ. It was by Christ that the worlds were made. By Christ the law was proclaimed from Sinai. Hence, Christ is, in the fullest sense, as he declares himself to be, "Lord of the Sabbath." He made the day sacred to himself, on which to receive the worship of angels and of men.

How dare any, understanding the claims of the fourth commandment, trample upon its requirements? Saul stated, as an excuse for his transgression, that he "feared the people." Are there not many in our day, even among the professed ministers of Christ, who could give no better reason for their course? Though the word of God is plain, they dare not offend the prejudices or arouse the fears of their hearers; therefore they let them go on unwarned in their violation of God's law. In the day of final judgment the excuse of Saul will avail for them no more than it availed for him.

"Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." Rebellion originated with Satan. Notwithstanding the exalted position which he occupied among the heavenly host, he became dissatisfied because he was not accorded supreme honor. Hence he questioned God's purposes and impugned his justice. He bent all his powers to allure the angels from their allegiance. The fact that he was an archangel, glorious and powerful, enabled him to exert a mighty influence. His complaints against God's government, at first met with no favor; yet being urged again and again, they were finally accepted by those who had before been loyal and happy subjects of the King of Heaven. There was not the shadow of justification or excuse for disaffection; but envy and jealousy, once cherished, gained a power that paralyzed reason and destroyed honor and loyalty. As the result, Satan and all his sympathizers were cast out of Heaven.

In his rebellion, Satan showed contempt for the authority of God, and virtually trampled upon every precept of his law. He is the grand prototype of all transgressors. To indulge unbelief, ingratitude, apostasy, defiance of God, or enmity against him, is but to repeat the course which Satan pursued in Heaven. Rebellion against God is as directly due to Satanic influence as is the practice of witchcraft. Like witchcraft, it exerts a bewitching, deceptive power almost impossible to break. Those who set themselves against the government of God have entered into an alliance with the arch-apostate, and he will not lightly lose his prey. All his power and cunning will be exercised to captivate the senses and

mislead the understanding of his victims. Everything appears to them in a false light. Under his bewitching spell they can, like our first parents, see only the great benefits to be received by transgression. To achieve the desired object, they will stop at no means, however great the danger to another or the sin to themselves.

No stronger evidence can be given of Satan's delusive power than that many who are thus led by him deceive themselves with the belief that they are in the service of God. The Jewish scribes and elders in the days of Christ professed great zeal for the honor of God, and yet they rejected his Son. Jesus gave them the most conclusive evidence that he was the Promised One. Upon one occasion, the Spirit witnessed so powerfully to his claims that the hearts of all who were in the synagogue responded to the gracious words that proceeded from his lips. Here was the turning-point with that company. As Christ's divinity flashed through humanity, their spiritual sight was quickened. A new power of discernment and appreciation came upon them, and the conviction was almost irresistible that Jesus was the Son of God. But Satan was at hand to arouse doubts, unbelief, and pride. They steeled their hearts against the Saviour's words. As they yielded to the control of Satan, they were fired with uncontrollable rage against Jesus. With one accord they would have taken his life, had not angels interposed for his deliverance.

The same spirit still exists in the hearts of those who set themselves to follow their own perverted judgment in opposition to the will of God. The struggle between truth and error will reveal the same pride and stubbornness, and the same unreasoning hatred against the advocates of truth, as was displayed by the unbelieving Jews.

He who could cause all the glories of earthly empires to pass before Christ in his hour of temptation, exerts a wizard-like power upon the minds of all who do not implicitly trust and obey God. It is this moral infatuation which steels their hearts against the influence of the Holy Spirit. It was this that led Korah, Dathan, and Abiram to rebel against the authority of Moses. Satan deluded them with the idea that they were opposing only a human leader, a man like themselves. But in rejecting God's chosen instrument, they rejected Christ, their invisible leader. They insulted the Spirit of God; and judgments followed close upon their sin. They were deceived by Satan, but by their own consent; because they placed themselves in his power.

Thus was it with Saul. He had the most decisive evidence that Samuel had been divinely appointed and inspired. It was in opposition to all the dictates of reason and sound judgment, that he ventured to disregard the command of God through the prophet. His fatal presumption must be attributed to this Satanic sorcery, which made him blind to the sin, and reckless of its consequences. Saul had manifested great zeal to suppress idolatry and witchcraft, decreeing that all found guilty of these practices should be punished with death. Yet the prophet shows him that in his disobedience to the divine command he had been actuated by the same spirit of opposition to God, and had been as really inspired by Satan, as though he had practiced sorcery. And, further, when reproof, he had added stubbornness to rebellion. Instead of confessing his sin, and humbly seeking pardon, he rejected reproof, and hardened his heart in transgression. He could have offered no greater insult to the Spirit of God, had he openly united with idolaters.

It is a perilous step to slight the reproofs and warnings of God's word or of his Spirit. Many, like Saul, yield to temptation until they become blind to the true character of sin. They flatter themselves that they have had some good object in view, and have done no wrong, in departing from the Lord's requirements. Thus they do despite to the Spirit of grace until its pleading voice is no longer heard, and they are left to the delusions which they have chosen.

November 2, 1882

My Health Restored

For two months my pen has been resting; but I am deeply grateful that I am now able to resume my writing. The Lord has given me an additional evidence of his mercy and loving-kindness by again restoring me to health. By my recent illness I was brought very near to the grave; but the prayers of the Lord's people availed in my behalf.

About two weeks before our camp-meeting in this State, the disease from which I had been suffering was checked, yet I gained little strength. As the time for the meeting drew near, it seemed impossible that I could take any part in it. There was but little prospect that I could even go upon the ground. I prayed much over the matter, but still remained very feeble, unable to endure any taxation. A severe cough troubled me night and day. The pain in my left lung was so great that I could not lie upon that side. I was very weak, both in body and mind. My courage and energy seemed paralyzed. I was unable even to exercise faith. In my suffering condition I could only fall helpless into the arms of my Redeemer, and there rest.

When the first Sabbath of the meeting came, I felt that I must be upon the camp-ground, for I might there meet the Divine Healer. In the afternoon I lay upon a lounge under the large tent, while Eld. Waggoner addressed the people, presenting the signs that show the day of God very near. At the close of his discourse, I decided to rise to my feet, hoping that if I thus ventured out by faith, doing all in my power, God would help me to say a few words to the people. As I began to speak, the power of God came upon me, and my strength was instantly restored.

I had hoped that my feebleness might gradually pass away, but had looked for no immediate change. The instantaneous work wrought for me was unexpected. It cannot be attributed to imagination. The people saw me in my feebleness, and many remarked that to all appearance I was a candidate for the grave. Nearly all present marked the change which took place in me while I was addressing them. They stated that my countenance change and the deathlike paleness gave place to a healthful color. I testify to all who read these words, that the Lord has healed me. Divine power has wrought a great work for me, whereof I am glad. I was able to labor every day during the meeting, and several times spoke more than one hour and a half. My whole system was imbued with new strength and vigor. A new tide of emotions, a new and elevated faith, took possession of my soul.

During my sickness I learned some precious lessons,—learned to trust where I cannot see, while unable to do anything, to rest quietly, calmly, in the arms of Jesus. We do not exercise faith as we should. We

are afraid to venture upon the word of God. In the hour of trial, we should strengthen our souls with the assurance that God's promises can never fail. Whatever he has spoken, will be done.

While I was lying upon my sick-bed, a message came by telegraph from Dr. Kellogg, "We are praying for Sister White's restoration." From friends in Oakland, and other places, the assurance came, "We are praying for you." My brethren and sisters, God has heard your prayers, Eld. Waggoner, with the members of my family, and other friends, often bowed at my bedside, and prayed earnestly for me. Sometimes the thought would come to my mind that I was too weak to have this exercise in my room; but I felt that in prayer was my only hope, and I could not give it up. In my conscious hours, those earnest petitions were a great comfort to me.

Before my sickness, I thought that I had faith in the promises of God; yet I find myself surprised at the great change wrought in me, so far exceeding my expectations. I am unworthy of this manifestation of the love of God. I have reason to praise God more earnestly, to walk in greater humility before him, and to love him more fervently than ever before. I am placed under renewed obligation to give to the Lord all that there is of me. I must shed upon others the blessed radiance which he has permitted to shine upon me.

I do not now expect to be lifted above all infirmities and tribulations, and to have an unruffled sea on the journey Heavenward. I expect trials losses, disappointments, and bereavements; but I have the Saviour's promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee." We must not count it a strange thing if we are assaulted by the enemy of all righteousness. Christ has promised to be a present help in every time of need, but he has not told us that we shall be exempt from trials. On the contrary, he has plainly informed us that we shall have tribulation. To be tried and tested is a part of our moral discipline. Here we may learn the most valuable lessons, and obtain the most precious graces, if we will draw near to God, and endure all in his strength.

My sickness has taught me my own weakness, and my Saviour's patience and love, and his power to save. When passing sleepless nights, I have found hope and comfort in considering the forbearance and tenderness of Jesus toward his weak, erring disciples, and remembering that he is still the same,—unchangeable in mercy, compassion, and love. He sees our weakness, he knows how we lack faith and courage; yet he does not cast us off. He is pitiful and of tender compassion toward us.

I may fall at my post before the Lord shall come; but when all that are in their graves shall come forth, I shall if faithful, see Jesus, and be made like him. Oh, what joy unspeakable, to see him whom we love,—to see him in his glory who so loved us that he gave himself for us,—to behold those hands once pierced for our redemption, stretched out to us in blessing and welcome! What will it matter though we toil and suffer here, if we may only attain to the resurrection of life! We will patiently wait till our time of trial ends, and then we shall raise the glad shout of victory.

Mrs. E. G. White

December 7, 1882

Importance of Right Associations

Every association we form, however limited, exerts some influence upon us. The extent to which we yield to that influence will be determined by the degree of intimacy, the constancy of the intercourse, and our love and veneration for the one with whom we associate. It is only by acquaintance and association with Christ, that we can become like him, the one faultless example.

Communion with Christ—how unspeakably precious! Such communion it is our privilege to enjoy, if we will seek it, if we will make any sacrifice to secure it. When the early disciples heard the words of Christ, they felt their need of him. They sought, they found, they followed him. They were with him in the house, at the table, in the closet in the field. They were with him as pupils with a teacher, daily receiving from his lips lessons of holy truth. They looked to him as servants to their master, to learn their duty. They served him cheerfully, gladly. They followed him, as soldiers follow their commander, fighting the good fight of faith. “And they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.”

Let all put the question to their own hearts, Have we been seeking the friendship and applause of the world, rather than the presence of Christ and a deeper knowledge of his will? Examine your own hearts, judge your own course. Consider what associates you are choosing. Do you seek the company of the wise, or are you willing to choose worldly associates, companions who fear not God, and obey not the gospel? Are your recreations such as to impart moral and spiritual vigor? Will they lead to purity of thought and action?

Many parents are disregarding the most sacred claims of God, by their neglect to consecrate themselves and their children to him. Many are reposing in false security, absorbed in selfish interests, and attracted by earthly treasures. They fear no evil. Danger seems a great way off. They will be deceived, deluded, to their eternal ruin, unless they arouse, and with penitence and deep humiliation, return unto the Lord.

The pride, self-indulgence, impiety, and iniquity that surround us, have an evil influence upon us. Few realize the importance of shunning, so far as possible, all associations unfriendly to religious life. In choosing their surroundings, few make their spiritual prosperity the first consideration.

Parents flock with their families to the cities, because they fancy it easier to obtain a livelihood there than in the country. The children, having nothing to do when not in school, obtain a street education. From evil associates, they acquire habits of vice and dissipation. The parents see this, but because it will require a sacrifice to correct their error, they stay where they are, until Satan gains full control of their children. Better sacrifice any and every worldly consideration that to imperil the precious souls committed to your care. They will be assailed by temptations, and should be taught to meet them; but it is your duty to cut off every influence, to break up every habit, to sunder every tie, that keeps you from the most free, open, and hearty committal of yourselves and your family to God.

Instead of the crowded city, seek some retired situation where your children will be, so far as possible, shielded from temptation, and there train and educate them for usefulness. The prophet Ezekiel thus enumerates the causes that led to Sodom's sin and destruction: “Pride, fullness of bread, and

abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." All who would escape the doom of Sodom, must shun the course that brought God's judgments upon that wicked city.

Who will heed the counsel of the True Witness, to seek the gold tried in the fire, the white raiment, and the eye-salve? The gold is faith and love, the white raiment is the righteousness of Christ, the eye-salve is that spiritual discernment which will enable us to see the wiles of Satan and shun them, to detect sin and abhor it, to see truth and obey it.

The deadly lethargy of the world is paralyzing the senses. Sin does not appear repulsive to those who are blinded by Satan. The judgments of God are soon to be poured out upon the earth. "Escape for thy life," is the warning from the angels of God. Other voices are heard saying, "Do not become excited; there is no cause for special alarm." Those who are at ease in Zion cry peace and safety, while Heaven declares that swift destruction is about to come upon the transgressor. The young, the frivolous, the pleasure-loving, consider these warnings as idle tales, and turn from them with a jest. Parents are inclined to think their children about right in the matter, and all sleep on at ease. Thus it was at the destruction of the old world, and when Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed by fire. On the night prior to their destruction, the cities of the plain rioted in pleasure. Lot was derided for his fears and warnings. But these scoffers perished in the flames. That very night the door of mercy was forever closed to the wicked, careless inhabitants of Sodom.

It is God who holds in his hands the destiny of souls. He will not always be mocked; he will not always be trifled with. Already his judgments are in the land. Fierce and awful tempests leave destruction and death in their wake. The devouring fire lays low the desolate forest and the crowded city. Storm and shipwreck await those who journey upon the deep. Accident and calamity threaten all who travel upon the land. Hurricanes, earthquakes, sword and famine, follow in quick succession. Yet the hearts of men are hardened. They recognize not the warning voice of God. They will not flee to the only refuge from the gathering storm.

Many who have been placed upon the walls of Zion, to watch with eagle eye for the approach of danger, and lift the voice of warning, are themselves asleep. The very ones who should be most active and vigilant in this hour of peril are neglecting their duty, and bringing upon themselves the blood of souls.

Let no one put aside the warning, and say, "It does not mean me. I will not be disturbed by this excitable message." It is the evil servant who says in his heart, "My Lord delayeth his coming." Professedly a servant of Christ, he may not, in words, deny that the Lord is soon to come; but his actions show that he puts off that day to a distant period. He guiltily presumes-on the supposed delay; he becomes careless, and his works testify his unbelief. He adopts the maxims and conforms to the practices of the world.

As soon as the evil servant begins to lose the spirit and power of the message, he manifests his unbelief. He smites his fellow-servants. He is ready to pass censure on those who are better than himself. "The poison of asps is under their lips." His course is downward. Erelong he may be found "eating and drinking with the drunken"—uniting with worldlings in their gatherings for pleasure, and, to all intents and purposes, one with them. Such is the condition of very many among us today.

In the instruction given by our Saviour to his disciples are words of admonition especially applicable to us: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." Watch, pray, work—this is the true life of faith. "Pray always;" that is, be ever in the spirit of prayer, and then you will be in readiness for your Lord's coming.

The Christian life is a warfare. The apostle Paul speaks of wrestling against principalities and powers as he fought the good fight of faith. Again, he declares, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Ah, no. Today sin is cherished and excused. The sharp sword of the Spirit, the word of God, does not cut to the soul. Has religion changed? Has Satan's enmity to God abated? A religious life once presented difficulties, and demanded self-denial. All is made very easy now. And why is this? The professed people of God have compromised with the powers of darkness.

The path to Heaven is no smoother now than in the days of our Saviour. All our sins must be put away. Every darling indulgence that hinders our religious life must be cut off. The right eye or the right hand must be sacrificed, if it cause us to offend. Are we willing to renounce our own wisdom, and to receive the kingdom of Heaven as a little child? Are we willing to part with self-righteousness? Are we willing to give up our chosen worldly associates? Are we willing to sacrifice the approbation of men? The prize of eternal life is of infinite value. Will we put forth efforts and make sacrifices proportionate to the worth of the object to be attained?