

Ellen G. White 1883 Sign Of The Times

January 4, 1883

The Old Year and the New

Already has the new year been ushered in; yet before we greet its coming, we pause to ask, What has been the history of the year that with its burden of records has now passed into eternity? The admonition of the apostle comes down the lines to every one of us, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." God forbid that at this important hour we should be so engrossed with other matters as to give no time to serious, candid, critical self-examination! Let things of minor consequence be put in the background, and let us now bring to the front the things which concern our eternal interests.

Christian brethren, as Christ's ambassador I entreat you to inquire into the character of your thoughts, tempers, purposes, words, and works during the past year. What has been the nature of your experience? Compare the records of your religious life with the Bible standard, and pass judgment upon yourselves. Have the fruits of righteousness testified that you are in the faith, or have the fruits that you have borne, witnessed against you? This is a subject worthy of earnest, careful thought. Be thorough and impartial in your examination of the past year's record. Do you see the defects in your character, and are you compelled to admit that you have made no decided advance in overcoming these unholy traits? Remember that if not overcome, these will surely separate you from the presence of a pure, holy, sin-hating God, and close the doors of the heavenly mansions against you.

How many have, in the past year, cherished heart-burnings and bitterness toward their brethren and sisters in the church? How many have thought and spoken unkindly of those who, like themselves, profess to be followers of Jesus? We may think we had an excuse for this; but is there any provocation of sufficient weight to excuse us in harboring unkindness and malice in our hearts? Said Jesus, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." If we do not in our daily life exemplify these principles, we cannot be accepted before God. We must earnestly seek his grace to kill every fiber of the root of bitterness, and must let the love of Jesus take possession of our souls and reveal itself in our words and works, or we are not of Christ but of the wicked one.

The Church militant is not the church triumphant, and earth is not Heaven. The church is composed of erring, imperfect men and women, who are but learners in the school of Christ, to be trained, disciplined, educated for this life, and for the future, immortal life. No one of us can in our own strength represent the character of Christ; but if Jesus lives in the heart, the spirit dwelling in him will be revealed in us; all our lack will be supplied. Who will seek at the beginning of this new year to obtain a new and genuine experience in the things of God? Make your wrongs right as far as possible. Confess your errors and sins one to another. Let all bitterness and wrath and malice be put away; let patience, long-suffering, kindness, and love become a part of your very being; then whatsoever things are pure and lovely and of good report will mature in your experience. Another year with its spotless record is before us; what shall that record be?

As a people we have not realized the work which should have been done in the last days of the old year, and much of it is left undone. The excitement of the Christmas holiday is now in the past, and what has been the record that has passed up to God? As we have professed to celebrate the birth of our Saviour, have our hearts been filled with gratitude for the infinite gift of God's dear Son? Have our thoughts and affections been such as God can accept? Has Jesus been revered and honored? Has he been made prominent in our thoughts and plans? and have our gifts flowed into his treasury? Is it not true that in many instances Christ and his claims have been forgotten in the feasting and merriments, and that the honor due to him has been given to man? Have not the thoughts, the labor, and the means been diverted from the proper object, and turned into a channel to please, honor, and exalt the human, rather than the divine?

I have felt most keenly our danger as a people on these occasions. I have feared that selfishness would be strengthened, that idolatry would be encouraged, and the love of God be crowded from our hearts; that the record borne to the heavenly courts would show that Christ was made of less consequence than earthly friends. I have feared that feasts and social gatherings would prove to be a snare of Satan to divert the mind from Christ and his great sacrifice in our behalf; that the very associations which should lead us to contemplate the work of redemption would be lost sight of in the observance of worldly customs, and that there would be less thought of Jesus and the mansions he has gone to prepare for those who love him, than upon common occasions.

I see no objection to placing even in our churches a Christmas or New Year tree bearing fruit in gifts and offerings for the cause of God. We may thus take advantage of the occasion to turn the customary gifts of the season into the right channel. And such a holiday celebration is a useful lesson to our children, teaching them to bestow their gifts in a manner to honor their Redeemer. But when we devote our means and labor to feasting ourselves, we fail to render to God that honor which is his due.

I have resolved from this time to make Christ first and last and best in everything. I will not sanction feasts made to celebrate birthday or marriage anniversaries, but will bend all my energies to lift up Jesus among the people. I will seek to impress upon the minds of my brethren and sisters the great necessity of preparation of heart, by confession and humiliation, to be accepted of God and acknowledged as his dear children. My heart has ached as I have seen men honored, while Jesus was neglected and almost forgotten,—liberal gifts for earthly friends, but poor and meager offerings for him to whom we owe our all.

Christ opened before us the bright path of peace, of joy, of Heaven; and what have we done for him on these occasions when every word and act should express our gratitude for his wondrous love? How stands the record of the past Christmas? Have we given to Jesus all that there is of us? Have we denied self that we might show our affection for our best friend? Have we made a record that we shall not be ashamed to meet in the day of final accounts? If all realized as they should the shortness of time, the backslidings of our people, the perils which beset our pathway, the deceptions of Satan, and his victories over unguarded souls, there would be no feasting, no mirthful gatherings to pay honor to the human; but there would be a great humbling of heart before God, and earnest prayer for pardoning and sanctifying grace.

Peter, who once denied his Lord, was afterward forgiven by our Saviour, and entrusted with the work of feeding the flock of God. Yet when condemned to death, and about to suffer for Christ's sake, the apostle begged that he might not be crucified in the same position as his Lord and Master, but that he might be nailed to the cross with his head downward. He felt that it was too great an honor for him to be put to death in the same manner as his Saviour whom he had denied. Would it not be well if our consciences were more sensitive? if we could possess more of the same spirit of contrition and humility? At a time when we are professedly celebrating Christ's birth, should we not keep self in the background? Would it not be more appropriate to abase self and to exalt Jesus?

The perfection of our Saviour's character awakens the admiration of angels and of men. Here is an exhaustless theme for thought. The brightest and most exalted of the sons of the morning heralded his glory at creation, and announced his birth with songs of gladness. They veil their faces before him as he sits upon his throne; they cast their crowns at his feet, and sing his triumphs as they behold his resplendent glory. Our souls are cold and dull because we do not dwell upon the matchless charms of our Redeemer. If we occupy our thoughts in contemplating his love and mercy, we shall reflect the same in our life and character; for by beholding, we become changed. Oh, the mysteries of redemption! Only by exalting Jesus and abasing self can we celebrate aright the birth of the Son of God.

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, there is need of an impartial examination of our hearts to dispel the pleasing illusions of self-love. Our condition is helpless and hopeless unless infinite mercy is granted us daily, and pardon is written against our names in the heavenly records. Those only who see and feel their spiritual necessities will go to Jesus for that help which they so much need, and which he only can give. He alone can cleanse us from all sin. He alone can place upon us the robe of righteousness.

What fruit have we borne during the year that is now past? What has been our influence upon others? Whom have we gathered to the fold of Christ? The eyes of the world are upon us. Are we living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men? Do we follow the example of Jesus in self-denial, in meekness, in humility, in forbearance, in cross-bearing, in devotion? Will the world be compelled to acknowledge us to be the servants of Christ? What is our past record? What will be our future record? If we cannot without pain trace the workings of our own hearts and review the record of our lives, how can we stand before the Judge of all the earth, who is infinitely pure and holy, and who will determine our cases by the unerring standard of his perfect law?

Shall we not in this new year seek to correct the errors of the past? It behooves us individually to cultivate the grace of Christ, to be meek and lowly of heart, to be firm, unwavering, steadfast in the truth; for thus only can we advance in holiness, and be made fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. Let us begin the year with an entire renunciation of self; let us pray for clear discernment, that we may understand our Saviour's claims upon us, and that we may always and everywhere be witnesses for Christ.

Our time and talents belong to God, to be used for his honor and glory. It should be our earnest, anxious effort to let the light shine through our life and character to illumine the pathway Heavenward, that souls may be attracted from the broad road to the narrow way of

holiness. Oh, that the followers of Christ had less desire to devote labor, time, and money, to feasts and celebrations in honor of earthly friends, and a greater desire to honor Jesus! I entreat you to bring to him your gifts and offerings, and withhold not yourselves. Strong men are needed in the church, successful workers in the Lord's vineyard, men and women who will labor that the church may be transformed to the image of Christ, rather than conformed to the customs and practices of the world. We have everything to gain or to lose. Let us see that we are on the side of Christ—the gaining side; that we are making sure work for Heaven.

“Take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand”

“Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through his eternal Son.”

January 11, 1883

Tests of Christian Character

“He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself so to walk, even as He walked.” “And if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Conformity to Jesus will not be unobserved by the world. It is a subject of notice and comment. Yet the Christian may not be conscious of the great change; for the more closely he resembles Christ in character, the more humble will be his opinion of himself. Those who have the deepest experience in the things of God, are the farthest removed from pride or self-exaltation. They have the humblest thoughts of self, and the most exalted conceptions of the glory and excellence of Christ. They feel that the lowest place in his service is too honorable for them.

Moses did not know that his face shone with a brightness painful and terrifying to those who had not, like himself, communed with God. Paul had a very humble opinion of his own advancement in the Christian life. He says, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” He speaks of himself as the “chief of sinners.” Yet Paul had been highly honored of the Lord. He had been taken, in holy vision, to the third heaven, and had there received revelations of divine glory which he could not be permitted to make known.

John the Baptist was pronounced by our Saviour the greatest of prophets. Yet what a contrast between the language of this man of God and that of many who profess to be ministers of the cross. When asked if he was the Christ, John declares himself unworthy even to unloose his Master's sandals. When his disciples came with the complaint that the attention of the people was turned to the new Teacher, John reminded them that he himself had claimed to be only the forerunner of the Promised One. To Christ, as the bridegroom, belongs the first place in the affections of his people. “The friend of the bridegroom, that standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all.” “He that hath received His testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true.”

It is such workers that are needed in the cause of God today. The self-sufficient, the envious and jealous, the critical and fault-finding, can well be spared from his sacred work. God is not straitened for men or means. He calls for workers who are true and faithful, pure and

holy; for those who have felt their need of the atoning blood of Christ and the sanctifying grace of his Spirit.

When we see those who profess the faith firm in principle, fearless in duty, zealous in the cause of God, yet humble and lowly, gentle and tender, patient toward all, ready to forgive, manifesting love for souls for whom Christ died, we do not need to inquire, Are they Christians? They give unmistakable evidence that they have been with Jesus and learned of him. When men reveal the opposite traits, when they are proud, vain, frivolous, worldly-minded, avaricious, unkind, censorious, we need not be told with whom they are associating, who is their most intimate friend. They may not believe in witchcraft, but notwithstanding this, they are holding communion with an evil spirit.

To this class I would say, "Glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

When the Pharisees and Sadducees flocked to the baptism of John, that fearless preacher of righteousness addressed them, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." These men were actuated by unworthy motives in coming to John. They were men of poisonous principles and corrupt practices. Yet they had no sense of their true condition. Filled with pride and ambition, they would not hesitate at any means to exalt themselves and strengthen their influence with the people. They came to receive baptism at the hand of John that they might better carry out these designs.

John read their motives, and met them with the searching inquiry, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Had they heard the voice of God speaking to their hearts, they would have given evidence of the fact, by bringing forth fruits meet for repentance. No such fruit was seen. They had heard the warning as merely the voice of man. They were charmed with the power and boldness with which John spoke; but the Spirit of God did not send conviction to their hearts, and as the sure result bring forth fruit unto eternal life. They gave no evidence of a change of heart. Without the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, John would have them understand that no outward ceremony could benefit them.

None are farther from the kingdom of Heaven than self-righteous formalists, filled with pride at their own attainments, while they are wholly destitute of the spirit of Christ; while envy, jealousy, or love of praise and popularity controls them. They belong to the same class that John addressed as a generation of vipers, children of the wicked one. They serve the cause of Satan more effectively than the vilest profligate; for the latter does not disguise his true character; he appears what he is.

God requires fruits meet for repentance. Without such fruit, our profession of faith is of no value. The Lord is able to raise up true believers among those who have never heard his name. "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

God is not dependent upon men who are unconverted in heart and life. He will never favor any man who practices iniquity. "And now the ax is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire."

Those who laud and flatter the minister, while they neglect the works of righteousness, give unmistakable evidence that they are converted to the minister and not to God. We inquire, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Was it the voice of the Holy Spirit or merely the voice of man which you heard in the message sent from God? The fruit borne will testify to the character of the tree.

No outward forms can make us clean; no ordinance, administered by the saintliest of men, can take the place of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God must do its work upon the heart. All who have not experienced its regenerating power are chaff among the wheat. Our Lord has his fan in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor. In the coming day, he will discern "between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not."

The spirit of Christ will be revealed in all who are born of God. Strife and contention cannot arise among those who are controlled by his Spirit. "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." The church will rarely take a higher stand than is taken by her ministers. There is need of a converted ministry and a converted people. Shepherds who watch for souls as they that must give account will lead the flock on in paths of peace and holiness. Their success in this work will be in proportion to their own growth in grace and knowledge of the truth. When the teachers are sanctified, soul, body, and spirit, they can impress upon the people the importance of such sanctification.

The Lord has not closed Heaven against his people, but their own course of continual backsliding has separated them from him. Pride, and love of the world, live in the heart. Few are alarmed or astonished at their want of spiritual power. The general opinion is that the church is flourishing, and that peace and prosperity are in all her borders.

The warnings of God's word, and the influence of his Spirit, have alike been neglected. The result is apparent in the deplorable condition of the church. Impurity is today wide-spread, even among those who profess to be followers of Christ. Passion is unrestrained; the animal propensities are gaining strength by indulgence, while the moral powers are constantly becoming weaker. Many are eagerly participating in worldly, demoralizing amusements which God's word forbids. Thus they sever their connection with God, and rank themselves with the pleasure-lovers of the world. The sins that destroyed the antediluvians and the cities of the plain exist today—not merely in heathen lands, or with the avowed unbeliever, but among professors of Christianity. Base passions defile the mind and corrupt the soul. Some who are in the vilest iniquity have borrowed the livery of Heaven, that they may serve Satan more effectively. If God should present these sins before us as they appear in his sight, we would be filled with shame and terror.

And what has caused this alarming condition? Many have accepted the theory of religious truth, who have not been converted to its principles. There are few indeed who feel true sorrow for sin; who have deep, pungent convictions of the depravity of the unregenerate nature. The heart of stone is not exchanged for a heart of flesh. Few are willing to fall upon the Rock, and be broken.

No matter who you are, or what your life has been, you can be saved only in God's appointed way. You must repent; you must fall helpless on the Rock, Christ Jesus. You must feel your need of a physician, and of the one only remedy for sin, the blood of Christ. This remedy can be secured only by repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Here the work is yet to be begun by many who profess to be Christians. Like the Pharisees of old, they feel no need of a Saviour. They are self-sufficient, self-exalted. Said Christ, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The blood of Christ will avail for none but those who feel their need of its cleansing power.

What surpassing love and condescension, that when we had no claim upon divine mercy, Christ was willing to undertake our redemption! But our great Physician requires of every soul unquestioning submission. We are never to prescribe for our own case. Christ must have the entire control of will and action, or he will not undertake in our behalf.

Many are not sensible of their condition and their danger; and there is much in the nature and manner of Christ's work averse to every worldly principle, and opposed to the pride of the human heart. Jesus requires us to trust ourselves wholly to his hands, and confide in his love and wisdom.

We may flatter ourselves, as did Nicodemus, that our moral character has been correct, and we need not humble ourselves before God, like the common sinner. But we must be content to enter into life in the very same way as the chief of sinners. We must renounce our own righteousness, and plead for the righteousness of Christ to be imputed to us. We must depend wholly upon Christ for our strength. Self must die. We must acknowledge that all we have is from the exceeding riches of divine grace. Let this be the language of our hearts, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."

Genuine faith is followed by love, and love by obedience. All the powers and passions of the converted man are brought under the control of Christ. His Spirit is a renewing power, transforming to the divine image all who will receive it.

God spared not his own Son, but delivered him to death for our offenses, and raised him again for our justification. Through Christ we may present our petitions at the throne of grace. Through him, unworthy as we are, we may obtain all spiritual blessings. Do we come to him, that we may have life?

Experience is knowledge derived from experiment. What we need is experimental religion. How shall we know for ourselves God's goodness and his love? The psalmist tells us—not, hear and know, read and know, or believe and know; but—"Taste and see that the Lord is good." Instead of relying upon the word of another, taste for yourself.

Many believe in the wrath of God, but put forth no earnest efforts to escape it. They believe in Heaven, but make no sacrifice to obtain it. They believe in the value of the soul, and that ere long its redemption ceaseth forever; yet they neglect precious opportunities to make their peace with God. They read the Bible, but its threatenings do not alarm or its promises win them. They approve things that are excellent, yet they follow the way in which God has

forbidden them to go. They know a refuge, but do not avail themselves of it. They know a remedy for sin, but do not use it. They know the right, but have no relish for it. All their knowledge will but increase their condemnation. They have never tasted and learned by experience that the Lord is good.

To become a disciple of Christ is to deny self and follow Jesus through evil as well as good report. Few are doing this now. Many prophesy falsely, and the people love to have it so; but what will be done in the end thereof? What will be the decision when their work, with all its results, shall be brought in review before God?

The watchmen are responsible for the condition of the people. If they open the door to pride, envy, doubt, and other sins, there will be strife, hatred, and every evil work. Jesus, the meek and lowly One, asks an entrance as our guest, but many are afraid to bid him enter. He has spoken to us in both the Old and the New Testament; he is speaking to us still by his Spirit and his providence. His instructions are designed to make men true to God, and true to themselves.

Jesus took upon himself man's nature, that he might leave a pattern for humanity, complete, perfect. He proposes to make us like himself, true in every purpose, feeling, and thought—true in heart, soul, and life. This is Christianity. Our fallen nature must be purified, ennobled, consecrated by obedience to the truth. Christian faith will never harmonize with worldly principles; Christian integrity is opposed to all deception and pretense. The man who cherished the most of Christ's love in the soul, who reflects the Saviour's image most perfectly, is, in the sight of God, the truest, most noble, most honorable man upon the earth.

January 18, 1883

Christian Unity

“I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

Union is the strength; division is weakness. When those who believe present truth are united, they exert a telling influence. Satan well understands this. Never was he more determined than now to make of none effect the truth of God, by causing bitterness and dissension among the Lord's people.

The world is against us, the popular churches are against us, the laws of the land will soon be against us. If there was ever a time when the people of God should press together, it is now. God has committed to us the special truths for this time, to make known to the world. The last message of mercy is now going forth. We are dealing with men and women who are Judgment-bound. How careful should we be in every word and act to follow closely the Pattern, that our example may lead men to Christ. With what care should we seek so to present the truth that others by beholding its beauty and simplicity may be led to receive it. If our characters testify of its sanctifying power, we shall be a continual light to others,—living epistles, known and read of all men. We cannot afford now to give place to Satan by cherishing disunion, discord, and strife.

That union and love might exist among his disciples, was the burden of our Saviour's last prayer for them prior to his crucifixion. With the agony of the cross before him, his solicitude was not for himself but for those whom he should leave to carry forward his work in the earth. The severest trials awaited them; but Jesus saw that their greatest danger would be from a spirit of bitterness and division. Hence he prayed:

“Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

That prayer of Christ embraces all his followers, to the close of time. Our Saviour foresaw the trials and dangers of his people; he is not unmindful of the dissensions and divisions that distract and weaken his church. He is looking upon us with deeper interest and more tender compassion than moves an earthly parent's heart toward a wayward, afflicted child. He bids us learn of him. He invites our confidence. He bids us open our hearts to receive his love. He has pledged himself to be our helper.

When Christ ascended to Heaven, he left the work on earth in the hands of his servants, the under-shepherds. “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

In sending forth his ministers, our Saviour gave gifts unto men, for through them he communicates to the world the words of eternal life. This is the means which God has ordained for the perfecting of the saints in knowledge and true holiness. The work of Christ's servants is not merely to preach the truth; they are to watch for souls, as they that must render account to God. They are to reprove, rebuke, exhort with long-suffering and doctrine.

All who have been benefited by the labors of God's servant, should, according to their ability, unite with him in working for the salvation of souls. This is the work of all true believers, ministers and people. They should keep the grand object ever in view, each seeking to fill his proper position in the church, and all working together in order, harmony, and love.

There is nothing selfish or narrow in the religion of Christ. Its principles are diffusive and aggressive. It is represented by Christ as the bright light, as the saving salt, as the transforming leaven. With zeal, earnestness, and devotion, the servants of God will seek to spread far and near the knowledge of the truth; yet they will not neglect to labor for the strength and unity of the church. They will watch carefully lest opportunity be given for diversity and division to creep in.

There have of late arisen among us men who profess to be the servants of Christ, but whose work is opposed to that unity which our Lord established in the church. They have original plans and methods of labor. They desire to introduce changes into the church to suit their ideas of progress, and imagine that grand results are thus to be secured. These men need

to be learners rather than teachers in the school of Christ. They are ever restless, aspiring to accomplish some great work, to do something that will bring honor to themselves. They need to learn that most profitable of all lessons, humility and faith in Jesus. Some are watching their fellow-laborers and anxiously endeavoring to point out their errors, when they should rather be earnestly seeking to prepare their own souls for the great conflict before them. The Saviour bids them, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Teachers of the truth, missionaries, officers in the church, can do a good work for the Master, if they will but purify their own souls by obeying the truth. Every living Christian will be a disinterested worker for God. The Lord has given us a knowledge of his will, that we may become channels of light to others. If Christ is abiding in us, we cannot help working for him. It is impossible to retain the favor of God, and enjoy the blessing of a Saviour's love, and yet be indifferent to the danger of those who are perishing in their sins. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."

Paul urges the Ephesians to preserve unity and love: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

The apostle exhorts his brethren to manifest in their lives the power of the truth which he had presented to them. By meekness and gentleness, forbearance and love, they were to exemplify the character of Christ and the blessings of his salvation. There is but one body, and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith. As members of the body of Christ, all believers are animated by the same spirit and the same hope. Divisions in the church dishonor the religion of Christ before the world, and give occasion to the enemies of truth to justify their course. Paul's instructions were not written alone for the church in his day. God designed that they should be sent down to us. What are we doing to preserve unity in the bonds of peace?

When the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the early church, the brethren loved one another. "They did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people; and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Those primitive Christians were few in numbers, without wealth or honor, yet they exerted a mighty influence. The light of the world shone out from them. They were a terror to evil-doers wherever their character and their doctrines were known. For this cause they were hated by the wicked, and persecuted even unto death.

The standard of holiness is the same today as in the days of the apostles. Neither the promises nor the requirements of God have lost aught of their force. But what is the state of the Lord's professed people as compared with the early church? Where is the Spirit and power of God which then attended the preaching of the gospel? Alas, "how is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!"

The Lord planted his church as a vine in a fruitful field. With tenderest care he nourished and cherished it, that it might bring forth the fruits of righteousness. His language is, "What could

have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" But this vine of God's planting has inclined to the earth, and entwined its tendrils about human supports. Its branches are extended far and wide, but it bears the fruit of a degenerate vine. The Master of the vineyard declares. When I looked that it should bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes.

The Lord has bestowed great blessings upon his church. Justice demands that she return these talents with usury. As the treasures of truth committed to her keeping have increased, her obligations have increased. But instead of improving upon these gifts and going forward unto perfection, she has fallen away from that which she had attained in her earlier experience. The change in her spiritual state has come gradually, and almost imperceptibly. As she began to seek the praise and friendship of the world, her faith diminished, her zeal grew languid, her fervent devotion gave place to dead formality. Every advance step toward the world was a step away from God. As pride and worldly ambition have been cherished, the spirit of Christ has departed, and emulation, dissension, and strife have come in to distract and weaken the church.

Paul writes to his Corinthian brethren: "Ye are yet carnal, for whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" It is impossible for minds distracted by envy and strife to comprehend the deep spiritual truths of God's word. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." We cannot rightly understand or appreciate divine revelation without the aid of that Spirit by whom the word was given.

Those who are appointed to guard the spiritual interests of the church should be careful to set a right example, giving no occasion for envy, jealousy, or suspicion, ever manifesting that same spirit of love, respect, and courtesy which they desire to encourage in their brethren. Diligent heed should be given to the instructions of God's word. Let every manifestation of animosity or unkindness be checked, let every root of bitterness be removed. When trouble arises between brethren, the Saviour's rule should be strictly followed. All possible effort should be made to effect a reconciliation, but if the parties stubbornly persist in remaining at variance, they should be suspended till they can harmonize.

Upon the occurrence of trials in the church, let every member examine his own heart to see if the cause of trouble does not exist within. By spiritual pride, a desire to dictate, an ambitious longing for honor or position, a lack of self-control, by the indulgence of passion or prejudice, by instability or lack of judgment, the church may be disturbed, and her peace sacrificed.

Difficulties are often caused by the venders of gossip, whose whispered hints and suggestions poison unsuspecting minds, and separate the closest friends. Mischief-makers are seconded in their evil work by the many who stand with open ears and evil heart, saying, "Report, and we will report it." This sin should not be tolerated among the followers of Christ. No Christian parent should permit gossip to be repeated in the family circle, or remarks to be made disparaging the members of the church.

(To be Concluded.)

January 25, 1883
Christian Unity
(Concluded.)

Christians should regard it as a religious duty to repress a spirit of envy or emulation. They should rejoice in the superior reputation or prosperity of their brethren, even when their own character or achievements seem to be cast in the shade. It was the pride and ambition cherished in the heart of Satan that banished him from Heaven. These evils are deeply rooted in our fallen nature, and if not removed they will overshadow every good and noble quality, and bring forth envy and strife as their baleful fruits.

We should seek for true goodness, rather than greatness. Those who possess the mind of Christ will have humble views of themselves. They will labor for the purity and prosperity of the church, and be ready to sacrifice their own interests and desires rather than to cause dissension among their brethren.

Satan is constantly seeking to cause distrust, alienation, and malice among God's people. We shall be often tempted to feel that our rights are invaded, when there is no real cause for such feelings. Those whose love for self is stronger than their love for Christ and his cause, will place their own interests first, and resort to almost any expedient to guard and maintain them. When they consider themselves injured by their brethren, some will even go to law, instead of following the Saviour's rule. Even many who appear to be conscientious Christians are hindered by pride and self-esteem from going privately to those they think in error, that they may talk the matter over in the spirit of Christ, and pray for one another. Contentions, strife, and lawsuits between brethren are a disgrace to the cause of truth. Those who take such a course expose the church to the ridicule of her enemies, and cause the powers of darkness to triumph. They are piercing the wounds of Christ afresh, and putting him to an open shame. By ignoring the authority of the church, they show contempt for God, who gave to the church its authority.

Paul writes to the Galatians: "I would they were even cut off which trouble you. For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

False teachers had brought to the Galatians doctrines that were opposed to the gospel of Christ. Paul sought to expose and correct these errors. He greatly desired that the false teachers might be separated from the church, but their influence had affected so many of the believers that it seemed hazardous to take action against them. There was danger of causing strife and division which would be ruinous to the spiritual interests of the church. He therefore sought to impress upon his brethren the importance of trying to help one another in love. He declared that all the requirements of the law setting forth our duty to our fellow-men are fulfilled in love to one another. He warned them that if they indulged hatred and strife, dividing into parties, and like the brutes biting and devouring one another, they would bring upon themselves present unhappiness and future ruin. There was but one way to prevent

these terrible evils, and that was, as the apostle enjoined upon them, to “walk in the Spirit.” They must by constant prayer seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which would lead them to love and unity.

A house divided against itself cannot stand. When Christians contend, Satan comes in to take control. How often has he succeeded in destroying the peace and harmony of churches. What fierce controversies, what bitterness, what hatred, has a very little matter started! What hopes have been blasted, how many families have been rent asunder by discord and contention!

Paul charged his brethren to beware lest in trying to correct the faults of others, they should commit sins equally great themselves. He warns them that hatred, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, and envyings are as truly the works of the flesh as are lasciviousness, adultery, drunkenness, and murder, and will as surely close the gate of Heaven against the guilty.

Christ declares, “Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.” Whoever by willful deception or by a wrong example misleads a disciple of Christ, is guilty of a great sin. Whoever would make him an object of slander or ridicule is insulting Jesus. Our Saviour marks every wrong done to his followers.

How were those punished who in olden time made light of what God had chosen as sacred to himself? Belshazzar and his thousand lords profaned the golden vessels of Jehovah, and praised the idols of Babylon. But the God whom they denied was a witness of the unholy scene. In the midst of their sacrilegious mirth, a bloodless hand was seen tracing mysterious characters upon the palace wall. Filled with terror, king and courtiers heard their doom pronounced by the servant of the Most High.

Let those who delight to trace words of calumny and falsehood against the servants of Christ remember that God is a witness of their deeds. Their slanderous touch is not profaning soulless vessels, but the characters of those whom Christ has purchased by his blood. The hand which traced the characters upon the walls of Belshazzar's palace, keeps faithful record of every act of injustice or oppression committed against God's people.

Sacred history presents striking examples of the Lord's jealous care for the weakest of his children. During the journeying of Israel in the wilderness, the weary and feeble ones who had fallen behind the body of the people, were attacked and slain by the cowardly and cruel Amalekites. Afterward Israel made war with the Amalekites and defeated them. “And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua; for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.” Again the charge was repeated by Moses just before his death, that it might not be forgotten by his posterity: “Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary, and he feared not God.... Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it.”

If God thus punished the cruelty of a heathen nation, how must he regard those who, professing to be his people, will make war upon their own brethren who are worn and wearied laborers in his cause. Satan has great power over those who yield to his control. It was the chief priests and elders—the religious teachers of the people—that urged on the murderous throng from the Judgment Hall to Calvary. There are hearts today among the professed followers of Christ, inspired by the same spirit that clamored for the crucifixion of our Saviour. Let the workers of evil remember that to all their acts there is one witness, a holy, sin-hating God. He will bring all their works into Judgment, with every secret thing.

“We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself.” As Christ has pitied and helped us in our weakness and sinfulness, so should we pity and help others. Many are perplexed with doubt, burdened with infirmities, weak in faith, and unable to grasp the unseen; but a friend whom they can see, coming to them in Christ's stead, can be as a connecting link to fasten their trembling faith upon God. Oh, this is a blessed work! Let not pride and selfishness prevent us from doing the good which we may do, if we will work in Christ's name, and with a loving, tender spirit.

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Here, again, our duty is plainly set before us. How can the professed followers of Christ so lightly regard these inspired injunctions? Not long since I received a letter describing a circumstance in which a brother had manifested indiscretion. Although it occurred years ago, and was a very small matter, hardly worthy of a second thought, the writer stated that it had forever destroyed her confidence in that brother. If that sister's life should show, upon review, no greater errors, it would be indeed a marvel, for human nature is very weak. I have been and am still fellowshiping as brethren and sisters those who have been guilty of grave sins, and who even now do not see their sins as God sees them. But the Lord bears with these persons, and why should not I? He will yet cause his Spirit so to impress their hearts that sin will appear to them as it appeared to Paul, exceedingly sinful.

We know but little of our own hearts, and have but little sense of our own need of the mercy of God. This is why we cherish so little of that sweet compassion which Jesus manifests toward us, and which we should manifest toward one another. We should remember that our brethren are weak, erring mortals, like ourselves. Suppose that a brother has through unwatchfulness been over-borne by temptation, and contrary to his general conduct has committed some error; what course shall be pursued toward him? We learn from Bible history that men whom God had used to do a great and good work committed grave sins. The Lord did not pass these by unrebuked, neither did he cast off his servants. When they repented, he graciously forgave them, and revealed to them his presence, and wrought through them. Let poor, weak mortals consider how great is their own need of pity and forbearance from God and from their brethren. Let them beware how they judge and condemn others. We should give heed to the instruction of the apostle: “Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” We may fall under temptation, and need all the forbearance which we are called to exercise toward the offender. “With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

The apostle adds a caution to the independent and self-confident: "If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself... Every man shall bear his own burden." He who considers himself superior in judgment and experience to his brethren, and despises their counsel and admonition, evinces that he is in a dangerous delusion. The heart is deceitful. He should test his character and life by the Bible standard. God's word sheds an unerring light upon the pathway of man's life. Notwithstanding the many influences which arise to divert and distract the mind, those who honestly seek God for wisdom will be guided into the right course. Every man must at last stand or fall for himself, not according to the opinion of the party that sustains or opposes him, not according to the judgment of any man, but according to his real character in the sight of God. The church may warn, counsel, and admonish, but it cannot compel any to take a right course. Whoever persists in disregarding the word of God must bear his own burden,—answer to God for himself, and suffer the consequences of his own course.

The Lord has given us in his word definite, unmistakable instructions, by obedience to which we may preserve union and harmony in the church. Brethren and sisters, are you giving heed to these inspired injunctions? Are you Bible-readers, and doers of the word? Are you striving to fulfill the prayer of Christ, that his followers might be one? "The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God." "Finally, brethren, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

February 1, 1883

Brotherly Love

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." The more closely we resemble our Saviour in character, the greater will be our love toward those for whom he died. Christians who manifest a spirit of unselfish love for one another are bearing a testimony for Christ which unbelievers can neither gainsay nor resist. It is impossible to estimate the power of such an example. Nothing will so successfully defeat the devices of Satan and his emissaries, nothing will so build up the Redeemer's kingdom, as will the love of Christ manifested by the members of the church. Peace and prosperity can be enjoyed only as meekness and love are in active exercise.

In his first Epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul sets forth the importance of that love which should be cherished by the followers of Christ: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

No matter how high his profession, he whose heart is not imbued with love for God and for his fellowmen, is not a disciple of Christ. Though he should possess great faith, and even have power to work miracles, yet without love his faith would be worthless. He might display great liberality, but should he from some other motive than genuine love, bestow all his goods to feed the poor, the act would not commend him to the favor of God. In his zeal he

might even meet a martyr's death, yet if destitute of the gold of love, he would be regarded by God as a deluded enthusiast or an ambitious hypocrite.

The apostle proceeds to specify the fruits of love: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind. Charity envieth not." The divine love ruling in the heart exterminates pride and selfishness. "Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." The purest joy springs from the deepest humiliation. The strongest and noblest characters rest upon the foundation of patience and love, and trusting submission to the will of God.

Charity "doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil." The heart in which love rules, will not be filled with passion or revenge, by injuries which pride and self love would deem unbearable. Love is unsuspecting, ever placing the most favorable construction upon the motives and acts of others. Love will never needlessly expose the faults of others. It does not listen eagerly to unfavorable reports, but rather seeks to bring to mind some good qualities of the one defamed.

Love "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." He whose heart is imbued with love is filled with sorrow at the errors and weaknesses of others; but when truth triumphs, when the cloud that darkened the fair fame of another is removed, or when sins are confessed and wrongs corrected, he rejoices.

"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Love not only bears with others' faults, but cheerfully submits to whatever suffering or inconvenience such forbearance makes necessary. This love "never faileth." It can never lose its value; it is the attribute of Heaven. As a precious treasure, it will be carried by its possessor through the portals of the city of God.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and peace. Discord and strife are the work of Satan and the fruit of sin. If we would as a people, enjoy peace and love, we must put away our sins, we must come into harmony with God, and we shall be in harmony with one another. Let each ask himself, Do I possess the grace of love? Have I learned to suffer long, and to be kind? Talents, learning, and eloquence, without this heavenly attribute, will be as meaningless as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Alas that this precious treasure is so lightly valued and so little sought by many who profess the faith!

Paul writes to the Colossians: "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness; and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful." "And whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

The fact that we are under so great obligation to Christ, places us under the most sacred obligation to those whom he died to redeem. We are to manifest toward them the same sympathy, the same tender compassion and unselfish love, which Christ has manifested toward us. Selfish ambition, desire for supremacy, will die when Christ takes possession of the affections.

Our Saviour taught his disciples to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." A great blessing is here asked upon conditions. We ourselves state these conditions. We ask that the mercy of God toward us may be measured by the mercy which we extend to others. Christ declares that this is the rule by which the Lord will deal with us: "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Wonderful terms! but how little are they understood or heeded. One of the most common sins, and one that is attended with most pernicious results, is the indulgence of an unforgiving spirit. How many will cherish animosity or revenge, and then bow before God and ask to be forgiven as they forgive. Surely, they can have no true sense of the import of this prayer, or they would not dare to take it upon their lips. We are dependent upon the pardoning mercy of God every day and every hour; how then can we cherish bitterness and malice toward our fellow-sinners! If, in all their daily intercourse, Christians would carry out the principles of this prayer, what a blessed change would be wrought in the church and in the world! This would be the most convincing testimony that could be given to the reality of Bible religion.

God requires more of his followers than many realize. If we would not build our hopes of Heaven upon a false foundation, we must accept the Bible as it reads, and believe that the Lord means what he says. He requires nothing of us that he will not give us grace to perform. We shall have no excuse to offer in the day of God if we fail to reach the standard set before us in his word.

We are admonished by the apostle: "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another." Paul would have us distinguish between the pure, unselfish love which is prompted by the spirit of Christ, and the unmeaning, deceitful pretense with which the world abounds. This base counterfeit has misled many souls. It would blot out the distinction between right and wrong, by agreeing with the transgressor instead of faithfully showing him his errors. Such a course never springs from real friendship. The spirit by which it is prompted dwells only in the carnal heart. While the Christian will be ever kind, compassionate, and forgiving, he can feel no harmony with sin. He will abhor evil and cling to that which is good, at the sacrifice of association or friendship with the ungodly. The spirit of Christ will lead us to hate sin, while we are willing to make any sacrifice to save the sinner.

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." The apostle admonishes his brethren, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus, that after having professed the gospel they should not conduct themselves as did the Gentiles, but should show by their daily deportment that they had been truly converted.

"Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Once they were corrupt, degraded, enslaved by lustful passions; they were drugged by worldly opiates, blinded, bewildered, and

betrayed by Satan's devices. Now that they had been taught the truth as it is in Jesus, there must be a decided change in their life and character.

The accession of members who have not been renewed in heart and reformed in life is a source of weakness to the church. This fact is often ignored. Some ministers and churches are so desirous of securing an increase of numbers that they do not bear faithful testimony against unchristian habits and practices. Those who accept the truth are not taught that they cannot safely be worldlings in conduct while they are Christians in name. Heretofore they were Satan's subjects; henceforth they are to be subjects of Christ. The life must testify to the change of leaders. Public opinion favors a profession of Christianity. Little self-denial or self-sacrifice is required in order to put on a form of godliness, and to have one's name enrolled upon the church book. Hence many join the church without first becoming united to Christ. In this Satan triumphs. Such converts are his most efficient agents. They serve as decoys to other souls. They are false lights, luring the unwary to perdition. It is in vain that men seek to make the Christian's path broad and pleasant for worldlings. God has not smoothed or widened the rugged, narrow way. If we would enter into life, we must follow the same path which Jesus and his disciples trod,—the path of humility, self-denial, and sacrifice.

(To be Concluded.)

February 8, 1883

Brotherly Love

(Concluded.)

“Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.” Man by wicked works alienated himself from God, but Christ gave his life that all who would, might be freed from sin and re-instated in the favor of the Creator. It was the anticipation of a redeemed, holy universe that prompted Christ to make this great sacrifice. Have we accepted the privileges so dearly purchased? Are we followers of God as dear children, or are we servants of the prince of darkness? Are we worshipers of Jehovah, or of Baal? of the living God, or of idols?

No outward shrines may be visible, there may be no image for the eye to rest upon, yet we may be practicing idolatry. It is as easy to make an idol of cherished ideas or objects as to fashion gods of wood or stone. Thousands have a false conception of God and his attributes. They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal. Are we worshiping the true God as he is revealed in his word, in Christ, in nature, or are we adoring some philosophical idol enshrined in his place? God is a God of truth. Justice and mercy are the attributes of his throne. He is a God of love, of pity, and tender compassion. Thus he is represented in his Son, our Saviour. He is a God of patience and long-suffering. If such is the being whom we adore, and to whose character we are seeking to assimilate, we are worshiping the true God.

If we are following Christ, his merits, imputed to us, come up before the Father as sweet odor. And the graces of our Saviour's character, implanted in our hearts, will shed around us

a precious fragrance. The spirit of love, meekness, and forbearance, pervading our life, will have power to soften and subdue hard hearts, and win to Christ bitter opposers of the faith.

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” “Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless, and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.”

Vainglory, selfish ambition, is the rock upon which many souls have been wrecked, and many churches rendered powerless. Those who know least of devotion, who are least connected with God, are the ones who will most eagerly seek the highest place. They have no sense of their weakness and their deficiencies of character. Unless many of our young ministers shall feel the converting power of God, their labors will be a hindrance rather than a help to the church. They may have learned the doctrines of Christ, but they have not learned Christ. The soul that is constantly looking unto Jesus will see his self-denying love and deep humility, and will copy his example. Pride, ambition, deceit, hatred, selfishness, must be cleansed from the heart. With many, these evil traits are partially subdued, but not thoroughly uprooted from the heart. Under favorable circumstances they spring up anew, and ripen into rebellion against God. Here lies a terrible danger. To spare any sin is to cherish a foe that only awaits an unguarded moment to cause our ruin.

Ministers should see that their own hearts are sanctified through the truth, and then labor to secure these results for their converts. It is pure religion that ministers and people need. Those who put away iniquity from their hearts, and stretch out their hands in earnest supplication unto God will have that help which he alone can give them. A ransom has been paid for the souls of men, that they may have an opportunity to escape from the thralldom of sin, and obtain pardon, purity, and Heaven. God hears the cry of the lowly and contrite. Those who frequent the throne of grace, offering up sincere, earnest petitions for divine wisdom and power, will not fail to become active, useful servants of Christ. They may not possess great talents, but with humility of heart, and firm reliance upon Jesus, they may do a good work in bringing souls to Christ. They can reach men through God. Ministers of Christ should ever feel that a sacred work engages all their souls, their efforts should be for the edification of the body of Christ and not to exalt themselves before the people. And while Christians should esteem the faithful minister as Christ's ambassador, they should avoid all praise of the man.

“Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.” My brethren and sisters, how are you employing the gift of speech? Have you learned so to control the tongue that it shall ever obey the dictates of an enlightened conscience and holy affections? Is your conversation free from levity, pride and malice, deceit and impurity? Are you without guile before God? Words exert a telling power. Satan will, if possible, keep the tongue active in his service. Of ourselves we cannot control the unruly member. Divine grace is our only hope. Those who are eagerly studying how they may secure the pre-eminence, should study rather how they may gain that wisdom which is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” He who has Christ

formed within, the hope of glory, will “show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.”

Peter exhorts the believers: “Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.”

When the right way is so plainly marked out, why do not the professed people of God walk in it? Why do they not study and pray and labor earnestly to be of one mind? Why do they not seek to cherish compassion for one another, to love as brethren, instead of rendering evil for evil, and railing for railing? Who does not love life and desire good days? yet how few comply with the conditions, to refrain the tongue from evil, and the lips from speaking guile. Few are willing to follow the Saviour's example of meekness and humility. Many ask the Lord to humble them, but are unwilling to submit to the needful discipline. When the test comes, when trials or even annoyances occur, the heart rebels, and the tongue utters words that are like poisoned arrows or blasting hail.

Evil-speaking is a two-fold curse, falling more heavily upon the speaker than upon the hearer. He who scatters the seeds of dissension and strife, reaps in his own soul the deadly fruits. How miserable is the tale-bearer, the surmiser of evil! He is a stranger to true happiness.

“Blessed are the peacemakers.” Grace and peace rest upon those who refuse to join in the strife of tongues. When vendors of scandal are passing from family to family, those who fear God will be chaste keepers at home. The time that is so often worse than wasted in idle, frivolous, and malicious gossip, should be given to higher and nobler objects. If the professed followers of Jesus would indeed become missionaries for God, visiting the sick and afflicted, and laboring patiently and kindly for the erring—in short, if they would copy the Pattern—the church would have prosperity in all her borders.

The sin of evil-speaking begins with the cherishing of evil thoughts. Guile includes impurity in all its forms. An impure thought tolerated, an unholy desire cherished, and the soul is contaminated, its integrity compromised. “Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” If we would not commit sin, we must shun its very beginnings. Every emotion and desire must be held in subjection to reason and conscience. Every unholy thought must be instantly repelled. To your closet, followers of Christ. Pray in faith, and with all the heart. Satan is watching to ensnare your feet. You must have help from above if you would escape his devices.

By faith and prayer all may meet the requirements of the gospel. No man can be forced to transgress. His own consent must be first gained; the soul must purpose the sinful act, before passion can dominate over reason, or iniquity triumph over conscience. Temptation, however strong, is never an excuse for sin. “The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers.” Cry unto the Lord, tempted soul. Cast yourself,

helpless, unworthy, upon Jesus, and claim this very promise. The Lord will hear. He knows how strong are the inclinations of the natural heart, and he will help in every time of temptation.

Have you fallen into sin? Then without delay seek God for mercy and pardon. When David was convicted of his sin, he poured out his soul in penitence and humiliation before God. He felt that he could endure the loss of his crown, but he could not be deprived of the favor of God. Mercy is still extended to the sinner. The Lord is calling to us in all our wanderings, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." The blessing of God may be ours, if we will heed the pleading voice of his Spirit. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

February 15, 1883

The Love of Christ

Oh, was there ever suffering and sorrow like that endured by the dying Saviour! It was the sense of his Father's displeasure which made his cup so bitter. It was not bodily suffering which so quickly ended the life of Christ upon the cross. It was the crushing weight of the sins of the world, and a sense of his Father's wrath that broke his heart. The Father's glory and sustaining presence had left him, and despair pressed its crushing weight of darkness upon him, and forced from his pale and quivering lips the anguished cry: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Jesus had united with the Father in making the world. Amid the agonizing sufferings of the Son of God, blind and deluded men alone remain unfeeling. The chief priests and elders revile God's dear Son while in his expiring agonies. Yet inanimate nature groans in sympathy with her bleeding, dying Author. The earth trembles. The sun refuses to behold the scene. The heavens gather blackness. Angels have witnessed the scene of suffering until they can look on no longer, and hide their faces from the horrid sight. Christ is in despair! He is dying! His Father's approving smile is removed, and angels are not permitted to lighten the gloom of the terrible hour. They could only behold in amazement their loved Commander suffering the penalty of man's transgression of the Father's law.

Even doubts assailed the dying Son of God. He could not see through the portals of the tomb. Bright hope did not present to him his coming forth from the tomb a conqueror, and his Father's acceptance of his sacrifice. The sin of the world with all its terribleness was felt to the utmost by the Son of God. The displeasure of the Father for sin, and its penalty, which was death, were all that he could realize through this amazing darkness. He was tempted to fear that sin was so offensive in the sight of his Father that he could not be reconciled to his Son. The fierce temptation that his own Father had forever left him, caused that piercing cry from the cross "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Christ felt much as sinners will feel when the vials of God's wrath shall be poured out upon them. Black despair like the pall of death will gather about their guilty souls, and then they will realize to the fullest extent the sinfulness of sin. Salvation has been purchased for them by the suffering and death of the Son of God. It might be theirs if they would accept of it willingly, gladly; but none are compelled to yield obedience to the law of God. If they refuse the heavenly benefit, if they choose the pleasures and deceitfulness of sin, they can have their choice, and at the end receive their wages, which is the wrath of God and eternal

death. They will be forever separated from the presence of Jesus, whose sacrifice they had despised. They will have lost a life of happiness, and sacrificed eternal glory for the pleasures of sin for a season.

Faith and hope trembled in the expiring agonies of Christ, because God had removed the assurance he had heretofore given his beloved Son of his approbation and acceptance. The Redeemer of the world then relied upon the evidences which had hitherto strengthened him, that his Father accepted his labors and was pleased with his work. In his dying agony, as he yields up his precious life, he has by faith alone to trust in Him whom it has ever been his joy to obey. He is not cheered with clear, bright rays of hope on the right hand nor on the left. All is enshrouded in oppressive gloom. Amid the awful darkness which is felt even by sympathizing nature, the Redeemer drains the mysterious cup even to its dregs. Denied even bright hope and confidence in the triumph which will be his in the near future, he cries with a loud voice, "Lord into thy hands I commit my spirit." He is acquainted with the character of his Father, his justice, his mercy, and great love. In submission he drops into the hands of his Father. Amid the convulsions of nature are heard by the amazed spectators the dying words of the Man of Calvary, "It is finished."

Nature sympathized with the sufferings of its Author. The heaving earth, the rent rocks, and the terrific darkness, proclaimed that it was the Son of God that died. There was a mighty earthquake. The vail of the temple was rent in twain. Terror seized the executioners and spectators as they beheld the sun veiled in darkness, and felt the earth shake beneath them, and saw and heard the rending of the rocks. The mocking and jeering of the chief priests and elders was hushed as Christ commended his spirit into the hands of his Father. The astonished throng began to withdraw, and grope their way in the darkness to the city. They smote upon their breasts as they went, and in terror, speaking scarcely above a whisper, said among themselves, "It is an innocent person that has been murdered. What if, indeed, he is, as he asserted, the Son of God?"

Jesus did not yield up his life till he had accomplished the work which he came to do, and exclaimed with his departing breath, "It is finished!" Satan was then defeated. He knew that his kingdom was lost. Angels rejoiced as the words were uttered, "It is finished." The great plan of redemption, which was dependent on the death of Christ, had been thus far carried out. And there was joy in Heaven that the sons of Adam could, through a life of obedience, be finally exalted to the throne of God. Oh, what love! what amazing love! that brought the Son of God to earth to be made sin for us, that we might be reconciled to God, and elevated to a life with him in his mansions in glory. And oh! what is man that such a price should be paid for his redemption?

When men and women can more fully comprehend the magnitude of the great sacrifice which was made by the Majesty of Heaven in dying in man's stead, then will the plan of salvation be magnified, and reflections of Calvary will awaken sacred and living emotions in the Christian's heart. Praises to God and the Lamb will be in their hearts and upon their lips. Pride and self-worship cannot flourish in the hearts that keep fresh in memory the scenes of Calvary. This world will appear of but little value to those who appreciate the great price of man's redemption.

All the riches of the world are not of sufficient value to redeem one perishing soul. Who can measure the love Christ felt for a lost world, as he hung upon the cross, suffering for the sins of guilty men? This love was immeasurable, infinite.

Christ has shown that his love was stronger than death. Even when suffering the most fearful conflicts with the powers of darkness his love for perishing sinners increased. He endured the hidings of his Father's countenance, until he was led to exclaim in the bitterness of his soul, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" His arm brought salvation. The price was paid to purchase the redemption of man, when, in the last soul struggle, the blessed words were uttered, which seemed to resound through creation, "It is finished."

Many who profess to be Christians become excited over worldly enterprises, and their interest is awakened for new and exciting amusements, while they are cold-hearted, and appear as if frozen in the cause of God. But here is a theme, poor formalist, which is of sufficient importance to excite you. Eternal interests are here involved. The scenes of Calvary call for the deepest emotions. Upon this subject you will be excusable if you manifest enthusiasm. That Christ, so excellent, so innocent, should suffer such a painful death, bearing the weight of the sins of the world, our thoughts and imagination can never fully reach, so that we can comprehend the length, the breadth, the height, and the depth, of such amazing love. The contemplation of the matchless love of the Saviour, should fill and absorb the mind, touch and melt the soul, refine and elevate the affections, and completely transform the whole character. The language of the apostle is, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." And we may look toward Calvary, and also exclaim, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Considering at what an immense cost our salvation has been purchased, what will be the portion of those who neglect so great salvation? What will be the punishment of those who profess to be followers of Christ yet fail to bow in humble obedience to the claims of their Redeemer, and who do not take the cross, as humble disciples of Christ?

Some have limited views of the atonement. They think that Christ suffered only a small portion of the penalty of the law of God, and that while the wrath of God was felt by his dear Son, they suppose that he had, through all his painful sufferings, the evidence of his Father's love and acceptance, and that the portals of the tomb before him were illuminated with bright hope. Here is a great mistake. Christ's keenest anguish was a sense of his Father's displeasure. His mental agony because of this was of such intensity that man can have but faint conception of it.

With many the history of the humiliation and sacrifice of our divine Lord does not stir the soul and affect the life any more, nor awaken deeper interest than to read of the death of the martyrs of Jesus. Many have suffered death by slow tortures. Others have suffered death by crucifixion. In what does the death of God's dear Son differ from these? It is true he died upon the cross a most cruel death; yet others for his dear sake have suffered equally, as far as bodily torture is concerned. Why, then, was the suffering of Christ more dreadful than that of other persons who have yielded their lives for his sake? If the sufferings of Christ consisted in physical pain alone, then his death was no more painful than that of some of the martyrs.

But bodily pain was only a small part of the agony of God's dear Son. The sins of the world were upon him, and also the sense of his Father's wrath as he suffered the penalty of the law. It was these that crushed his divine soul. It was the hiding of his Father's face, a sense that his own dear Father had forsaken him, which brought despair. The separation that sin makes between God and man was fully realized and keenly felt by the innocent, suffering Man of Calvary. He was oppressed by the powers of darkness. He had not one ray of light to brighten the future. And he was struggling with the power of Satan, who was declaring that Christ was in his hands, and that he was superior in strength to the Son of God, that God had disowned his Son, and that he was no longer in the favor of God any more than himself. If he was indeed still in favor with God, why need he die? God could save him from death.

Christ yielded not in the least degree to the torturing foe, even in his bitterest anguish. Legions of evil angels were all about the Son of God, yet the holy angels were bidden not to break their ranks and engage in conflict with the taunting, reviling foe. Heavenly angels were not permitted to minister unto the anguished spirit of the Son of God. It was in this terrible hour of darkness, the face of his Father hidden, legions of evil angels enshrouding him, the sins of the world upon him, that the words were wrenched from his lips, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

We should take larger, broader, and deeper views of the life, sufferings, and death of God's dear Son. When the atonement is viewed correctly, the salvation of souls will be felt to be of infinite value. In comparison with the enterprise of everlasting life every other sinks into insignificance. But how have the counsels of this loving Saviour been despised by many. The heart's devotions have been to the world, and selfish interests have closed the door against the Son of God. Hollow hypocrisy and pride, selfishness and gain, envy, malice, and passion, have so filled the hearts of many that Christ can have no room.

He was eternally rich, "yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." He was clothed with light and glory, surrounded with hosts of heavenly angels awaiting to execute his commands. Yet he put on our nature, and came to sojourn among sinful men "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." Here is love that no language can express. Our souls should be enlivened, elevated, and enraptured with the theme of the love of the Father and the Son. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." The followers of Christ should learn here to reflect back in some degree that mysterious love preparatory to joining all the redeemed in ascribing "Blessings, and honor, and glory, and power unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

March 22, 1883

Deceitfulness of Riches

Some who profess to believe the truth are lacking in discernment, and fail to appreciate moral worth. Persons who boast much of their fidelity to the cause, and talk as though they think they know all that is worth knowing, are not humble in heart. They may have property, and this is sufficient to give them influence with some, but it will not raise them one jot in favor with God. Money has power and sways a mighty influence. Excellence of character and moral worth are often overlooked, if possessed by the poor man. But what does God care for money? for property? The cattle upon a thousand hills are his. The world and all that

is therein are his. The inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers before him. Men and property are but as the small dust of the balance. He is no respecter of persons.

Men of property often look upon their wealth and say, "By my wisdom have I gotten me this wealth." But who gave them power to get wealth? God has bestowed upon them the ability which they possess, but instead of giving him the glory they take it to themselves. He will prove them and try them, and will bring their glorifying to the dust; he will remove their strength, and scatter their possessions. Instead of a blessing, they will realize a curse. An act of wrong or oppression, a deviation from the right way, should no sooner be tolerated in a man who possesses property than in a man who has none. All the riches that the most wealthy ever possessed are not of sufficient value to cover the smallest sin before God; they will not be accepted as a ransom for transgression. Repentance, true humility, a broken heart, and a contrite spirit, alone will be accepted of God. And no man can have true humility before God unless the same is exemplified before others. Nothing less than repentance, confession, and forsaking of sin is acceptable to God.

Many rich men have obtained their wealth by close deal, by advantaging themselves and disadvantaging their poorer fellow-men, or their brethren; and these very men glory in their shrewdness and keenness in a bargain. But the curse of God will rest upon every dollar thus obtained, and upon the increase of it on their hands. Consider the force of our Saviour's words, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Those who possess the ability to acquire property need to be constantly on the watch, or they will turn their acquisitiveness to bad account. Thus many fall into temptation, overreach, receive more for a thing than it is worth, and sacrifice the generous, benevolent, noble principles of their manhood for sordid gain.

Many who profess to be followers of Christ, so love the world and the things that are in the world that they have been corrupted by its spirit and influence; the divine has disappeared from their characters, and the Satanic has crept in, transforming them to serve the purposes of Satan, to be instruments of unrighteousness. Then in contrast with these men are the industrious, honest poor men, who stand ready to help those who need help, who would rather suffer themselves to be disadvantaged by their wealthy brethren than to manifest so close and acquisitive a spirit as they manifest; men who esteem a clear conscience, and right, even in little things, of greater value than riches. They are so ready to help others, so willing to do all the good in their power, that they do not amass wealth; their earthly possessions do not increase. If there is a benevolent object to call forth means or labor, they are the first to be interested in and respond to it and frequently do far beyond their real ability, and thus deny themselves some needed good, to carry out their benevolent purposes.

Because these men can boast of but little earthly treasure, they may be looked upon as deficient in ability, in judgment, and in wisdom. They may be counted of no special worth, and their influence may not be esteemed by men; yet how does God regard these poor wise men? They are regarded precious in his sight, and although not increasing their treasure upon earth, they are laying up for themselves an incorruptible treasure in the heavens, and in doing this they manifest a wisdom as far superior to that of the wise, calculating, acquisitive professed Christian, as the divine and Godlike is superior to the earthly, carnal, and Satanic. It is moral worth that God values. A Christian character unblotted with avarice,

possessing quietness, meekness, and humility, is more precious in his sight than the most fine gold, even the golden wedge of Ophir.

Wealthy men are to be tested more closely than they ever yet have been. If they stand the test and overcome the blemishes upon their character, and as faithful stewards of Christ render to God the things that are his, it will be said to them, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Mark the parable of the unjust steward: "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?"

If men fail to render to God that which he has lent them to use to his glory, and thus rob him they will make an entire failure. He has lent them means which they can improve upon by losing no opportunity to do good, and thus they may be constantly laying up treasure in Heaven. But if, like the man who had one talent, they hide it, fearing that God will get that which their talent gains, they will not only lose the increase which will finally be awarded the faithful steward, but also the principal which God gave them to work upon. Because they have robbed God, they will not have laid up treasure in Heaven, and they lose their earthly treasure also. They have no habitation on earth, and no Friend in Heaven to receive them into the everlasting habitation of the righteous.

Christ declares, "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon"—cannot serve God and your riches too. "The Pharisees also who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him." Mark the words of Christ to them: "Ye are they who justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men [which is riches acquired by oppression, by deception, by overreaching, by fraud, or in any other dishonest manner] is abomination in the sight of God." Then Christ presents the two characters, the rich man who was clothed with purple and fine linen, and who fared sumptuously every day, and Lazarus, who was in abject poverty, and loathsome to the sight, and who begged the few crumbs which the rich man despised. Our Saviour shows his estimate of the two. Although Lazarus was in so deplorable and mean a condition, he had true faith, true moral worth, which God saw, and which he considered of so great value that he took this poor, despised sufferer, and placed him in the most exalted position, while the honored and wealthy ease-loving rich man was thrust out from the presence of God, and plunged into misery and woe unutterable. God did not value the riches of this wealthy man, because he had not true moral worth. His character was worthless. His riches did not recommend him to God, nor have any influence to secure his favor.

By this parable Christ would teach his disciples not to judge or value men by their wealth, or by the honors which they received of others. Such was the course pursued by the Pharisees, who, while possessing both riches and worldly honor, were valueless in the sight of God; and

more than this, were despised and rejected of him,—cast out from his sight as disgusting to him because there was no moral worth or soundness in them. They were corrupt, sinful, and abominable in his sight. The poor man, despised by his fellow-mortals, and disgusting to their sight, was valuable in the sight of God because he possessed moral soundness and worth, thus qualifying him to be introduced into the society of refined, holy angels, and to be an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ.

In Paul's charge to Timothy he warns him of a class who will not consent to wholesome words, and who place a wrong estimate on riches. He says: "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness. From such withdraw thyself. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

Paul in this letter to Timothy would impress upon his mind the necessity of giving such instruction as should remove the deception which so easily steals upon the rich, that because of their riches they are superior to those who are in poverty; that because of their ability to acquire they are superior in wisdom and judgment—in short, that gain is godliness. Here is a fearful deception. How few heed the charge which Paul commissioned Timothy to make to the rich! How many flatter themselves that their acquisitiveness is godliness! Paul declares, "Godliness with contentment is great gain." Although rich persons may devote their whole lives to the one object of getting riches, yet as they brought nothing into the world, they can carry nothing out. They must die and leave that which cost them so much labor to obtain. They staked their all, their eternal interest, to obtain this property, and have lost both worlds.

Paul shows what risks men will run to become rich. But many are determined to be rich; this is their study; and in their zeal eternal considerations are overlooked. They are blinded by Satan, and make themselves believe that it is for good purposes they desire this gain; they strain their consciences, deceive themselves, and are constantly coveting riches. Such have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. They have sacrificed their noble, elevated principles, given up their faith for riches, and if not disappointed in their object, they are disappointed in the happiness which they supposed riches would bring. They are entangled, perplexed with care; they have made themselves slaves to their avarice, and compelled their families to endure the same slavery, and the

advantages they reap are “many sorrows.” “Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.”

April 5, 1883

Christ's Triumph for Us

At the birth of Christ, Satan saw the plains of Bethlehem illuminated with the brilliant glory of a multitude of heavenly angels. He heard their song, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.” The prince of darkness saw the amazed shepherds filled with fear as they beheld the illuminated plains. They trembled before the exhibitions of bewildering glory which seemed to entrance their senses. The rebel chief himself trembled at the proclamation of the angel to the shepherds, “Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” He had met with good success in devising a plan to ruin men, and he had become bold and powerful. He had controlled the minds and bodies of men from Adam down to the first appearing of Christ. But now Satan was troubled and alarmed for his kingdom and his life.

The song of the heavenly messengers proclaiming the advent of the Saviour to a fallen world, and the joy expressed at this great event, Satan knew boded no good to himself. Dark forebodings were awakened in his mind as to the influence this advent to the world would have upon his kingdom. He queried if this was not the coming One who would contest his power and overthrow his kingdom. He looked upon Christ from his birth as his rival. He stirred the envy and jealousy of Herod to destroy Christ by insinuating to him that his power and his kingdom were to be given to this new king. Satan imbued Herod with the very feelings and fears that disturbed his own mind. He inspired the corrupt mind of Herod to slay all the children in Bethlehem who were two years old and under, which plan he thought would succeed in ridding the earth of the infant king.

But against his plans, Satan sees a higher power at work. Angels of God protected the life of the infant Redeemer. Joseph was warned in a dream to flee into Egypt, that in a heathen land he might find an asylum for the world's Redeemer. Satan followed him from infancy to childhood, and from childhood to manhood, inventing means and ways to allure him from his allegiance to God, and overcome him with his subtle temptations. The unsullied purity of the childhood, youth, and manhood, of Christ which Satan could not taint, annoyed him exceedingly. All his darts and arrows of temptation fell harmless before the Son of God. And when he found that all his temptations prevailed nothing in moving Christ from the steadfast integrity, or marring the spotless purity of the youthful Galilean, he was perplexed and enraged. He looked upon this youth as an enemy that he must dread and fear.

That there should be one who walked the earth with moral power to withstand all his temptations, who resisted all his attractive bribes to allure him to sin, and over whom he could obtain no advantage to separate from God, chafed and enraged his satanic majesty.

The childhood, youth, and manhood of John, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah to do a special work in preparing the way for the world's Redeemer, were marked with firmness and moral power. Satan could not move his integrity. When the voice of this prophet was heard in the wilderness, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,” Satan

was afraid for his kingdom. He felt that the voice, sounding forth in trumpet tones in the wilderness, caused sinners under his control to tremble. He saw that his power over many was broken. The sinfulness of sin was revealed in such a manner that men became alarmed; and some, by repentance of their sins, found the favor of God, and gained moral power to resist his temptations.

He was on the ground at the time when Christ presented himself to John for baptism. He heard the majestic voice resounding through Heaven and echoing through the earth like peals of thunder. He saw the lightnings flash from the cloudless heavens, and heard the fearful words from Jehovah, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He saw the brightness of the Father's glory overshadowing the form of Jesus, thus pointing out in that crowd the One whom he acknowledged as his Son with unmistakable assurance. The circumstances connected with this baptismal scene had aroused the most intense hatred in the breast of Satan. He knew then for a certainty that unless he could overcome Christ, from thenceforth there would be a limitation of his power. He understood that the communication from the throne of God signified that Heaven was more directly accessible to man.

As Satan had led man to sin, he had hoped that God's abhorrence of sin would forever separate him from man, and break the connecting link between Heaven and earth. The opening heavens, in connection with the voice of God addressing his Son, was like a death-knell to Satan. He feared that God was now to unite man more fully to himself, and give power to overcome his devices. And for this purpose Christ had come from the royal courts to the earth. Satan was well acquainted with the position of honor Christ had held in Heaven as the Son of God, the beloved of the Father. And that he should leave Heaven, and come to this world as a man, filled him with apprehension for his safety. He could not comprehend the mystery of this great sacrifice for the benefit of fallen man. He knew that the value of Heaven far exceeded the anticipation and appreciation of fallen man. The most costly treasures of the world, he knew, would not compare with its worth. As he had lost through his rebellion all the riches and pure glories of Heaven, he was determined to be revenged by causing as many as he could to undervalue Heaven, and to place their affections upon earthly treasures.

It was incomprehensible to the selfish soul of Satan that there could exist benevolence and love for the deceived race so great as to induce the Prince of Heaven to leave his home and come to a world marred with sin and seared with the curse. He had knowledge of the inestimable value of eternal riches that man had not. He had experienced the pure contentment, the peace, exalted holiness, and unalloyed joys of the heavenly abode. He had realized, before his rebellion, the satisfaction of the full approval of God. He had once a full appreciation of the glory that enshrouded the Father, and knew that there was no limit to his power.

Satan knew what he had lost. He now feared that his empire over the world was to be contested, his right disputed, and his power broken. He knew, through prophecy, that a Savior was predicted, and that his kingdom would not be established in earthly triumph and with worldly honor and display. He knew that ancient prophecies foretold a kingdom to be established by the Prince of Heaven upon the earth, which he claimed as his dominion. This kingdom would embrace all the kingdoms of the world, and then his power and his glory would cease, and he would receive his retribution for the sins he had introduced into the

world, and for the misery he had brought upon man. He knew that everything which concerned his prosperity was pending upon his success or failure in overcoming Christ with his temptations in the wilderness. He brought to bear upon Christ every artifice and force of his powerful temptations to allure him from his allegiance.

It is impossible for man to know the strength of Satan's temptations to the Son of God. Every temptation that seems so afflicting to man in his daily life, so difficult to resist and overcome, was brought to bear upon the Son of God in as much greater degree as his excellence of character was superior to that of fallen man.

Christ was tempted in all points like as we are. As man's representative, he stood the closest test and proving of God. He met the strongest force of Satan. His most wily temptations Christ has tested and conquered in behalf of man. It is impossible for man to be tempted above what he is able to bear while he relies upon Jesus, the infinite Conqueror.

April 5, 1883

Calls to the Camp-Meetings

From Washington Territory and from the East come urgent requests that I attend the camp-meetings. I am compelled to say, I cannot attend camp-meetings this season, either East or West. I am now engaged in important writing that I have for six years been trying to accomplish. Year after year I have broken away from this work to attend camp-meetings. In these meetings I have felt the condition of our people and have labored most earnestly in their behalf, not sparing myself. When I had gone the round of the camp-meetings, I found myself so worn and exhausted that I could not take hold of my writing with success.

The last two summers I was brought very near to the gates of death, and as I felt that it might please the Lord to let me rest in the grave, I had most painful regrets that my writings were not completed. In the providence of God my life is spared, and my health once more restored. I thank the Lord for his mercy and loving-kindness to me. I have felt ready to go east or west, if my duty were made plain; but in answer to my prayer, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" the answer comes to me, "Rest in peace until the Lord bids you go."

I have not been idle. Since the Lord raised me up at the camp-meeting in Healdsburg, I have visited Santa Rosa, Oakland, San Francisco, Petaluma, Forestville, and Ukiah, and have labored in Healdsburg, frequently speaking on the Sabbath and on Sunday evening. In four weeks I gave ten discourses, traveled two hundred miles, and wrote two hundred pages. This was too much for my strength. After laboring Sabbath and Sunday I was unable to write on Monday. I was weary in all my work. I now speak only once each week, and can accomplish considerably more writing.

My brethren who urge me to attend camp-meeting and to visit them are anxiously inquiring, When shall we have Vol. 4, Spirit of Prophecy? I can now answer them, In a few weeks my work on this book will be completed. But there are other important works that require attention as soon as this shall be finished. I am now more than fifty years old. You are not ignorant of the manner of my labors among you. I have taxed my physical and mental powers to the utmost, and I cannot flatter myself that there are yet before me many years of

labor. I may fall at my post at any moment. While I have physical and mental ability, I will do the work which is most needed by our people. The Lord has provided me good assistants. I have when traveling labored at great disadvantage. I have written in the depot, on the cars, under my tent at camp-meeting, often speaking until exhausted and then rising at three o'clock in the morning and writing from six to fifteen pages before breakfast. I dare not longer pursue this course. I cannot now endure taxing labor as in earlier years.

My good brethren send their urgent calls, with promises to pay my fare and to pay me for my time; this is all I expect of them, it is all they are able to do. But they have little idea of the expense incurred by these journeys. To accomplish the amount of writing that I do, I find it necessary to employ several helpers, the best that I can obtain. I have paid their traveling expenses, to the amount of hundreds of dollars. In my absence I pay them for their time, to do what they can, but they necessarily work at great disadvantage. Traveling is expensive. I cannot take my helpers where I go, and should I do so I could not furnish them with work while I am engaged in labor in camp-meetings.

It has been most difficult to obtain the right kind of assistants as copyists and as house-keepers. Cheap and inefficient help would cause me so much perplexity that I could do but little in any capacity. In the providence of God I am now in every respect the most favorably situated that I have ever been during my pilgrimage life. I enjoy the peace of Jesus, and will do what I can. In my husband's death I was deprived of an able helper; but the Lord is good, and I am grateful for his mercy, his care, and his tender love.

It would give me great pleasure to meet my dear brethren and sisters in camp-meeting. I feel the love of Jesus burning in my soul. I love to talk this out and to write it out. My prayers shall be, that God may bless you at your camp-meetings, and that your souls may be refreshed by his grace. If God bids me leave my writing to attend these meetings or to speak to the people in different places, I hope to hear and obey his voice.

Healdsburg, Cal.,

March 26, 1883.

Mrs. E. G. White

April 12, 1883

The Working of Satan

The holy Scriptures inform us that, in the last days, Satan will work with power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness. To those who do not love the truth he even appears as an angel of light. These words are fulfilled in the deceptions and false teachings of the present time. Spiritualists make the path to hell most attractive. Spirits of darkness are clothed by these deceptive teachers in pure robes of Heaven, and they have power to deceive those not fortified with Bible truth.

Vain philosophy is employed in representing the path to hell as a path of safety. With the imagination highly wrought, and voices musically tuned, they picture the broad road as one of happiness and glory. Ambition holds before deluded souls, as Satan presented to Eve, a freedom and bliss for them to enjoy which they never conceived was possible. Men are

praised who have traveled the broad path to hell, and after they die are exalted to the highest positions in the eternal world. Satan, clothed in robes of brightness, appearing like an exalted angel, tempted the world's Redeemer without success. But as he comes to man robed as an angel of light he has better success. He covers his hideous purposes, and succeeds too well in deluding the unwary who are not firmly anchored upon eternal truth.

Riches, power, genius, eloquence, pride, perverted reason, and passion, are enlisted as Satan's agents in doing his work in making the broad road attractive, strewing it with tempting flowers. But every word they have spoken against the world's Redeemer will be reflected back upon them, and will one day burn into their guilty souls like molten lead. They will be overwhelmed with terror and shame as they behold the exalted One coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Then shall the bold defier, who lifted himself up against the Son of God, see himself in the true blackness of his character. The sight of the inexpressible glory of the Son of God will be intensely painful to those whose characters are stained with sin. The pure light and glory emanating from Christ will awaken remorse, shame, and terror. They will send forth wails of anguish to the rocks and mountains, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him who sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

Spiritualists claim superior light and power. They have opened the door and invited the prince of darkness in, and have made him their honored guest. They have allied themselves to the powers of darkness which are developing in these last days in signs and wonders, that if it were possible they would deceive the very elect. Spiritualists claim that they can do greater miracles than Christ did. Satan made the same boasts to Christ. Because the Son of God had linked himself to the weakness of humanity, to be tempted in all points like as man should be tempted, Satan triumphed over him, and taunted him. He boasted of his superior strength, and dared him to open a controversy with him.

Spiritualists are increasing in numbers. They will come to men who have the truth as Satan came to Christ, tempting them to manifest their power, and work miracles, and give evidence of their being favored of God, and of their being the people who have the truth. Satan said to Christ, "If thou be the Son of God, command these stones that they be made bread." Herod and Pilate asked Christ to work miracles when he was on trial for his life. Their curiosity was aroused, but Christ did not work a miracle to gratify them.

Spiritualists will press the matter to engage in controversy with ministers who teach the truth. If they decline, they will dare them. They quote Scripture, as did Satan to Christ. "Prove all things," say they. But their idea of proving is to listen to their deceptive reasonings, and attend their circles. But in their gatherings the angels of darkness assume the forms of dead friends, and communicate with them as angels of light.

Their loved ones will appear in robes of light, as familiar to the sight as when they were upon the earth. They will teach them, and converse with them. And many will be deceived by this wonderful display of Satan's power. The only safety for the people of God is to be thoroughly conversant with their Bibles, and be intelligent upon the reasons of our faith in regard to the sleep of the dead.

Satan is a cunning foe. And it is not difficult for the evil angels to represent both saints and sinners who have died, and make these representations visible to human eyes. These manifestations will be more frequent, and developments of a more startling character will appear as we near the close of time. We need not be astonished at anything in the line of deceptions to allure the unwary, and deceive, if possible, the very elect. Spiritualists quote, "Prove all things." But God has, for the benefit of his people who live amid the perils of the last days, proved this class, and given the result of his proving.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12: "Even him, whose coming is after 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; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

John, upon the Isle of Patmos, saw the things which should come upon the earth in the last days. Revelation 13:13; 16:14: "And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men." "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

The apostle Peter distinctly points out the class which will be manifested in these last days.

2 Peter 2:10-14: "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas, angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption, and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the daytime. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls; a heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children."

God, in his word, has placed his stamp upon the heresies of spiritualism as he placed his mark upon Cain. The godly need not be deceived if they are students of the Scriptures and obedient to follow the plain path marked out for them in the word of God.

The boastful spiritualist claims great freedom, and in smooth, flowery language seeks to fascinate and delude unwary souls to choose the broad path of pleasure and sinful indulgence, rather than the narrow path and the straight way. Spiritualists call the requirements of God's law bondage, and say those who obey them live a life of slavish fear. With smooth words and fair speeches they boast of their freedom, and seek to cover their dangerous heresies with the garments of righteousness. They would make the most revolting crimes be considered as blessings to the race.

They open before the sinner a wide door to follow the promptings of the carnal heart, and violate the law of God, especially the seventh commandment. Those who speak these great swelling words of vanity, and who triumph in their freedom in sin, promise those whom they

deceive the enjoyment of freedom in a course of rebellion against the revealed will of God. These deluded souls are themselves in the veriest bondage to Satan and are controlled by his power, and yet promising liberty to those who will dare to follow the same course of sin that they themselves have chosen.

The Scriptures are indeed fulfilled in this, that the blind are leading the blind. For by whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. These deluded souls are under the most abject slavery to the will of demons. They have allied themselves to the powers of darkness and have no strength to go contrary to the will of demons. This is their boasted liberty. By Satan they are overcome and brought into bondage, and the great liberty promised to those they deceive is helpless slavery to sin and Satan.

We are not to attend their circles, neither are our ministers to engage in controversy with them. They are of that class specified whom we should not invite into our houses, or bid them God speed. We have to compare their teachings with the revealed will of God. We are not to engage in an investigation of spiritualism. God has investigated this for us, and told us definitely that a class would arise in the last days who would deny Christ who has purchased them with his own blood. The character of spiritualists is so plainly described that we need not be deceived by them. If we obey the divine injunction, we shall have no sympathy with spiritualists, however smooth and fair may be their words.

The beloved John continues his warning against seducers: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also)."

In Paul's second epistle to the Thessalonians, he exhorts to be on guard, and not depart from the faith. He speaks of Christ's coming as an event to immediately follow the work of Satan in spiritualism in these words: "Even him, whose coming is after 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; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

In the epistle of Paul to Timothy, he foretells what will be manifested in the latter days. And this warning was for the benefit of those who should live when these things should take place. God revealed to his servant the perils of the church in the last days. He writes, "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, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron."

The faithful Peter speaks of the dangers to which the Christian church would be exposed in the last days, and more fully describes the heresies which would arise and the blaspheming seducers who would seek to draw away souls after them. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."

Here God has worked out for us the proof of the class mentioned. They have refused to acknowledge Christ as the Son of God, and they have no more reverence for the eternal Father than for his Son, Jesus Christ. They have neither the Son nor the Father. And like their great leader, the rebel chief, they are in rebellion against the law of God, and they despise the blood of Christ.

We may rejoice in every condition of life, and triumph under all circumstances, because the Son of God came down from Heaven and submitted to bear our infirmities, and to endure sacrifice and death in order to give to us immortal life. He will ever bear the marks of his earthly humiliation in man's behalf. While the redeemed host and the pure angelic throng shall do him honor and worship him, he will carry the marks of one that has been slain. The more fully we appreciate the infinite sacrifice made in our behalf by a sin-atonement Saviour, the more closely do we come into harmony with Heaven.

We have characters to form here. God will test us and prove us by placing us in positions to develop the most enduring strength, purity, and nobility of soul, with perfect patience on our part, and entire trust in a crucified Saviour. We shall meet with reverses, affliction, and severe trials, for these are God's tests. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver and purge his people as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.

The cross of Christ is all covered with reproach and stigma, yet it is the hope of life and exaltation to man. No one can comprehend the mystery of godliness so long as he is ashamed to bear the cross of Christ. None will be able to discern and appreciate the blessings which Christ has purchased for man at infinite cost to himself, unless they are willing to joyfully sacrifice earthly treasures that they may become his followers. Every self-denial and sacrifice made for Christ enriches the giver, and every suffering and reproach endured for his dear name increases the final joy and immortal reward in the kingdom of glory.

April 19, 1883

Church Festivals

Professed Christians engage in feasting and in scenes of amusement which degrade the religion of Jesus Christ. It is impossible for those who find pleasure in church socials, festivals, and numerous gatherings for pleasure, to have ardent love and sacred reverence for Jesus. His words of warning and instruction have no weight upon their minds. Should Christ come into the assembly of those who were absorbed in their plays and frivolous amusements, would the solemn melody of his voice be heard in benediction, saying, "Peace be to this house?" How would the Saviour of the world enjoy these scenes of gaiety and folly?

Christians and the world unite, one in heart and one in spirit, in these festal occasions. The Man of sorrows, who was acquainted with grief, would find no welcome in these places of amusement. The lovers of pleasure and luxury, the thoughtless and the gay are collected in these rooms, and the glitter and tinsel of fashion are seen everywhere. The ornament of crosses of gold and pearl, which represent a Redeemer crucified, adorn their persons. But the one whom these highly-prized jewels represent, finds no welcome, no room. His presence would be a restraint upon their mirth and their sensual amusements, and would

remind them of neglected duty, and bring to their remembrance hidden sins which caused that sorrowful countenance, and made those eyes so sad and tearful.

The presence of Christ would be positively painful in these gatherings for pleasure. Surely, none could invite him there, for his countenance is marred with sorrows more than the sons of men, because of these very amusements which put God out of mind, and make the broad road attractive to the sinner. The enchantments of these exciting scenes pervert reason, and destroy reverence for sacred things. Ministers who profess to be Christ's representatives frequently take the lead in these frivolous amusements. "Ye are," says Christ, "the light of the world." "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven."

In what manner is the light of truth shining from that thoughtless, pleasure-seeking company? Professed followers of Jesus Christ who indulge in gaiety and feasting cannot be partakers with Christ of his sufferings. They have no sense of his sufferings. They do not care to meditate upon self-denial and sacrifice. They find but little interest in studying the marked points in the history of the life of Christ upon which the plan of salvation rests, but imitate ancient Israel who ate and drank and rose up to play. In order to copy a pattern correctly we must carefully study its design. If we are indeed to overcome as Christ overcame, that we may mingle with the blood-washed, glorified company before the throne of God, it is of the highest importance that we become acquainted with the life of our Redeemer and deny self as did Christ. We must meet temptations and overcome obstacles, and through toil and suffering, in the name of Jesus, overcome as he overcame.

The great trial of Christ in the wilderness on the point of appetite was to leave man an example of self-denial. This long fast was to convict men of sinfulness of the things in which professed Christians indulge. The victory which Christ gained in the wilderness was to show man the sinfulness of the very things in which he takes such pleasure. The salvation of man was in the balance, and to be decided by the trial of Christ in the wilderness. If Christ was a victor on the point of appetite, then there was a chance for man to overcome. If Satan gained the victory through his subtlety, man was bound by the power of appetite in chains of indulgence which he could not have moral power to break. Christ's humanity alone could never have endured this test, but his divine power combined with humanity gained in behalf of man an infinite victory. Our representative in this victory raised humanity in the scale of moral value with God.

Christians, who understand the mystery of godliness, who have a high and sacred sense of the atonement, who realize in the sufferings of Christ in the wilderness a victory gained for them, would see such marked contrast between these things and the church gatherings for pleasure and the indulgence of appetite, as would turn them in disgust from these scenes of revelry. Christians would be greatly strengthened by earnestly and frequently comparing their lives with the true standard, the life of Christ. The numerous socials, festivals, and picnics, to tempt the appetite to over-indulgence, and the amusements which lead to levity and forgetfulness of God, can find no sanction in the example of Christ, the world's Redeemer, the only safe pattern for man to copy if he would overcome as Christ overcame.

We present the faultless pattern to all Christians. Says Christ, "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for

nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.” The light of Heaven is to be reflected through Christ's followers to the world. This is the Christian's life-work to direct the minds of sinners to God. The Christian's life should awaken in the hearts of worldlings high and elevated views of the purity of the Christian religion. This will make believers the salt of the earth, the saving power in our world; for a well-developed Christian character is harmonious in all its parts.

We tremble for the youth of our day, because of the example that is given them by those who profess to be Christians. We cannot close the door of temptation to the youth, but we can educate them that their words and their actions may have a direct bearing upon their future happiness or misery. They will be exposed to temptation. They will meet foes without and foes within, but they can be instructed to stand firm in their integrity, having moral principle to resist temptation. The lessons given our youth by world-loving professors are doing great harm. The festal gatherings, the gluttonous feasts, the lotteries, tableaux, and theatrical performances, are doing a great work that will bear a record with its burden of results to the Judgment.

All these inconsistencies, sanctioned by professed Christians under a garb of Christian beneficence, to collect means to pay church expenses, have their influence with the youth to make them lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. They think if Christians can encourage and engage in these lotteries and scenes of festivities, and connect them with sacred things, why may not they be safe in taking an interest in lotteries, and engaging in gambling to win money for special objects.

It is Satan's studied plan to clothe sin with garments of light to hide its deformity, and make it attractive. And ministers and people professing righteousness unite with the adversary of souls to help him in his plans. Never was there a time when every member of the church should feel his responsibility to walk humbly and circumspectly before God as at the present. Vain philosophy, false creeds, and infidelity, are on the increase. And many who bear the name of Christ's followers are, through pride of heart, seeking popularity, and are drifting away from the established landmarks. The plain commands of God in his word are discarded because they are so plain and old-fashioned, while vain and vague theories attract the mind and please the fancy. In these scenes of church festivities, there is a union with the world that the word of God does not justify. Christians and worldlings are united in them.

But the apostle inquires:

“What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

When we are able to comprehend the temptations and victories of the Son of God while in severe conflict with Satan, we shall have a more correct idea of the greatness of the work before us in overcoming. Satan knew that if he failed, his case was hopeless. If he succeeded, he had gained a victory over the entire race, and his life and kingdom he thought would be established.

In professedly Christian gatherings, Satan throws a religious garment over delusive pleasures and unholy revelings to give them the appearance of sanctity, and the consciences of many are quieted because means are raised by these to defray church expenses. Men refuse to give for the love of Christ; but for the love of pleasure, and the indulgence of appetite for selfish consideration they will part with their money.

Is it because there is not power in the lessons of Christ upon benevolence, and in his example, and the grace of God upon the heart, to lead men to glorify God with their substance, that such a course must be resorted to in order to sustain the church? The injury sustained to the physical, mental, and moral health in these scenes of amusement and gluttony, is not small. And the day of final reckoning will show souls lost through the influence of these scenes of gaiety and folly.

It is a deplorable fact that sacred and eternal considerations do not have that power to open the hearts of the professed followers of Christ to make free-will offerings to sustain the gospel as the temptation of feasting and general merriment. It is a sad reality that these inducements will prevail when sacred and eternal things will have no force to influence the heart to engage in works of benevolence.

The plan of Moses in the wilderness to raise means was highly successful. There was no compulsion necessary. Moses made no grand feast, and he did not invite the people to scenes of gaiety, dancing, and general amusement. Neither did he institute lotteries or anything of this profane order to obtain means to erect the tabernacle of God in the wilderness. God commanded Moses to invite the children of Israel to bring their offerings. Moses was to accept gifts of every man that gave willingly from his heart. But the free-will offerings came in so great abundance that Moses proclaimed it was enough. They must cease their presents; for they had given abundantly, more than they could use.

Satan's temptations succeed with the professed followers of Christ on the point of indulgence of pleasure and appetite. Clothed as an angel of light he will quote Scripture to justify the temptations he places before men to indulge the appetite, and in worldly pleasures which suit the carnal heart. The professed followers of Christ are weak in moral power, and are fascinated with the bribe which Satan has presented before them, and he gains the victory. How does God look upon churches that are sustained by such means? Christ cannot accept these offerings, because they were not given through their love and devotion to him, but through their idolatry of self. But what many would not do for the love of Christ, they will do for the love of delicate luxuries to gratify the appetite, and for love of worldly amusements to please the carnal heart.

May 10, 1883

Power and Humility of Jesus

Jesus, to obtain a little season of repose, and for the benefit of his disciples, proposed that they should go with him into a desert place and rest awhile. There were suitable places for such retirement beyond the sea from Capernaum, and they entered a boat and made their way thither. But some who were searching for Jesus saw him depart from the shore, and the anxious people gathered together watching the slowly receding boat. The news spread from city to city that Jesus was crossing the sea; and many who were eager to see and hear him flocked to the place where it was thought that his boat would land, while others followed him over the water in boats. So when Jesus and his disciples landed they found themselves in the midst of a multitude of people, pressing forward on all sides to meet them.

Jesus, perceiving all this, beckons to Peter, who is in his boat on the sea, to come nigh. The disciple obeys the signal, and comes to shore. Jesus presses through the throng, and steps into the boat, bidding Peter to thrust out a little from the land. He now sits in the rocking boat of the fisherman, and, in full sight and hearing of the crowd, finishes the long and toilsome day by speaking precious truths to them. The Son of God, leaving the royal courts of Heaven, takes not his position upon David's throne; but from the swaying seat of a fisherman's boat, speaks the words of eternal wisdom which are to be immortalized in the minds of his disciples and given to the world as the legacy of God.

As the sun was setting, Jesus saw before him five thousand people besides women and children, who had been all day without food. He inquired of Philip concerning the probability of obtaining bread for so large a number, that they might not return to their homes unrefreshed nor faint by the way. This he did to test the faith of his disciples, for he himself was at no loss how to provide food. He who would not work a miracle to satisfy his own hunger in the wilderness, would not allow the multitude to suffer for lack of food. Philip looked over the sea of heads and thought how impossible it would be to obtain sufficient food to satisfy the wants of such a crowd. He answered that two hundred penny-worth of bread would not be nearly enough to divide among them so that each one might have a little. Jesus inquired how much food could be found among the company. He was told that Andrew had discovered a lad who had with him five barley loaves, and two small fishes. But this was nothing among so many, and they were in a desert place, where no more could be obtained.

Jesus commanded that this meager store should be brought to him. This being done, he directed his disciples to seat the people upon the grass in parties of fifty, and one hundred, to preserve order, and that all might witness the miracle he was about to do. This marshaling of five thousand people into companies, was at length satisfactorily accomplished, and they were all seated in the presence of the Saviour. He then took the loaves and fishes, and, having given thanks, distributed them to the disciples and to the multitudes, in quantities sufficient to satisfy their appetites.

The people had arranged themselves in the required order wondering what was to be done, but their amazement knew no bounds when the problem was solved, and they beheld food portioned out to that vast assembly from the slender store scarcely sufficient for a score of persons. The food did not diminish, as Jesus handed it to his disciples, who in their turn served the people. As often as they returned to him for a fresh supply, it was furnished them. After all had been satisfied, he directed the disciples to gather up the fragments that nothing might be lost; and the broken fragments filled twelve baskets.

During this remarkable feast, there was much earnest reflection among those who were so miraculously served. They had followed Jesus to listen to words such as had never before fallen upon their ears. His teachings had sunk into their hearts. He had healed their sick, had comforted their sorrow, and, at last, rather than send them away hungering, he had fed them bounteously. His pure and simple doctrine laid hold of their minds, and his tender benevolence won their hearts. While eating the food he had provided for them, they decided that this was indeed the Messiah. No other one could do so mighty a miracle. No human power could create from five barley loaves and two small fishes, food sufficient to feed thousands of hungry people. His teachings and work of healing had already nearly convinced them of his divinity, and this miracle crowned their growing conviction with entire belief.

They decided that this was the Prince of Life, the promised Deliverer of the Jews. They perceive that he makes no effort to win the applause of the people. In this he is essentially different from the chief priests and rulers, who are ambitious for titles and the honor of men. They fear that he will never claim his right as King of Israel and take his place on David's throne in Jerusalem. But they decide that what he will not assume for himself, they will claim for him. They need no greater evidence of his divine power nor will they wait for any further proof. They quietly consult among themselves, and arrange to take him by force, and bear him upon their shoulders, proclaiming him the King of Israel. The disciples unite with the people in declaring that the throne of David is the rightful inheritance of their Master. Let the arrogant priests and rulers be humbled, and compelled to yield honor to Him who comes clothed with the authority of God. They begin to devise means to accomplish their purpose; but Jesus discerns their plans, which, if followed out, would defeat the very work he designs to do, and put a period to his instruction and deeds of mercy and benevolence.

Already the priests and rulers look upon him as one who has turned the hearts of the people from them to himself. Already they so dread his growing influence among them that they seek to take his life. He knows that violence and insurrection would be the result of his exaltation as Israel's king. He did not come into the world to set up a temporal kingdom; his kingdom, as he had stated, was not of this world. The multitude do not perceive the dangers arising from the movement they contemplate; but the calm eye of divine wisdom discovers all the hidden evils. Jesus sees that it is time to change the current of feeling among the people. He calls his disciples to him and directs them to immediately take the boat and return to Capernaum, leaving him to dismiss the people. He promises to meet them that night or on the following morning. The disciples are loth to submit to this arrangement. They are ambitious that Jesus should receive his true merits, and be lifted above the persecutions of the priests and rulers. The favored moment seems to have arrived, when, by the unanimous voice of the people, Christ can be elevated to his true dignity.

They cannot feel reconciled that all this enthusiasm shall come to naught. The people were assembling from all quarters to celebrate the passover at Jerusalem. They were all anxious to see the great Prophet whose fame had spread through all the land. This, to the faithful followers of Jesus, seemed the golden opportunity to establish their beloved Master as Israel's king. It seemed, in the glow of this new ambition, a very hard thing for them to go away by themselves and leave their Master alone upon the desolate shore, surrounded by high and barren mountains.

They remonstrate against this arrangement; but Jesus is firm in his decision, and commands them to follow his directions with an authority that he had never before assumed toward them. They obey in silence. Jesus then turns to the multitude, and perceives that they are thoroughly decided to force him into becoming their king. Their movements must be checked at once. The disciples had already departed, and he now, standing before them with a grand dignity, dismisses them in so firm and decisive a manner that they dare not disobey his commands. The words of praise and exaltation die upon their lips. Their steps are stayed as they are in the very act of advancing to seize him, and the glad and eager looks fade from their countenances. There were men of strong minds and firm determination in that throng, but the kingly bearing of Jesus, and his few quiet words of authority, quelled the tumult in a moment and frustrated all their designs. Like meek, submissive children, they obey the command of their Lord, submitting humbly, and without question, to a power that they recognize as above all earthly authority.

Jesus looked upon the retreating multitude with yearning compassion. He felt that they were as scattered sheep without a shepherd. The priests who should have been teachers in Israel, were but machines for performing unmeaning ceremonies and repeating the law they did not themselves understand nor practice. When he was left alone he went up into the mountain, and, for many hours, bent in supplication before the Father with bitter agony and tears. Not for himself were those earnest prayers, but for man, depraved and lost but for redeeming grace. It was for man that the Son of God wrestled with his Father, asking that the poor sinful creature might turn from his guilt to the light of salvation.

The Saviour knew that his days of personal effort for men upon earth were numbered. He who read the hearts of men knew that comparatively few would accept him as their Redeemer, acknowledging themselves lost without his divine aid. The Jews were rejecting the very help that God had sent to save them from utter ruin. They were fastening the chains that bound them in hopeless night. They were bringing upon themselves the certain wrath of God for their blind and obstinate wickedness. Hence the grief of Jesus, and his tears and strong cries for his mistaken people, who spurned his love that would save them from the retribution of their sins. Deep emotion shakes that noble form as he keenly realizes the doom of the people he has come to save. In every trial and emergency, Jesus went to his Heavenly Father for help, and, in those secret interviews, received strength for the work that lay before him. Christians should follow the example of their Saviour, and seek in prayer the strength that will enable them to endure the trials and duties of life. Prayer is the Christian's defense, the safeguard of his integrity and virtue.

May 17, 1883

Labor at the Camp-Meetings

As the importance of our camp-meetings is yearly increasing, it is constantly becoming of greater consequence to adopt such plans of working as shall secure the best possible results. We should remember that union is strength. A serious mistake has sometimes been made, in the attempt to attend as many meetings as possible during the camp-meeting season. The forces were divided, and, of course, weakened, and the efforts made were comparatively feeble. Here is given occasion for the triumph of our enemies, who regard these as our best efforts, and so represent them. If it is necessary to hold fewer general meetings, for want of laborers, let there be a sufficient force where meetings are held, so

that the labor and responsibility shall be shared by several men, instead of falling chiefly upon one. God does not design that any of his servants shall labor to exhaustion.

At our large gatherings more attention should be given to organizing our forces, and enlisting, not ministers only, but all who have an experience, making them feel that they have a responsibility to bear. Wise generalship is needed at the very outset of our meetings to engage all our working forces, that the interest of the meeting, outside of the preaching services, may be maintained.

There has often been more preaching at our camp-meetings than was really necessary. Wisdom and economy should be exercised in this direction as well as in every other. Ministers should not feel that everything depends on their efforts in presenting doctrinal or even practical discourses. They must have a firmer reliance upon Jesus, our mighty helper; they must encourage in their own hearts a faith that will not falter under any circumstances. In short, they must depend more upon Christ's presence, and less upon their own personal efforts.

There is a serious waste of vital energy in long sermons. If our ministers would preach short discourses, right to the point, and then educate the brethren and sisters to work, and lay the burden upon them, the ministers themselves would be saved from exhaustion, the people would gain spiritual strength by the effort put forth, and the result would be tenfold greater than now is seen. Too heavy burdens, both in preaching and in the transaction of business, have rested upon the few who labor in word and doctrine. These men should preserve their strength and vigor, and keep their minds stayed upon God, that human infirmities may not affect their judgment or mar the solemn, dignified, holy character which should mark all their deliberations.

While our leading ministers do too much, our lay brethren and sisters do too little. The rich experience which the latter might gain in earnest, personal labor, is lost to them because they fail to bear the burdens which they can and should bear. They should seek to do all that it is in their power to do, not feeling that they are working for the minister or the Conference, and that they should receive remuneration, but as working for God, unselfishly laboring to make the meeting a success. In so doing they will bring a blessing to their own souls, and will also become a channel of light and blessing to others.

Our ministers must become educators as well as preachers. They should teach the people not to depend upon them, but upon Christ. The minister who preaches two hours when he should not exceed one, would far better serve the cause of God by devoting that extra hour to earnest, careful thought in studying how to direct others, how to teach them to work. Attention should especially be given to teaching the people to labor in the meetings held among the tents' companies. None who come to the meetings should be content to leave it without a deeper religious experience than when they came upon the ground. The people are perishing because they do not put to use the talents which God has given them.

Our brethren and sisters come to camp-meeting hoping to receive the blessing of the Lord; yet it is often the case that they do not know just what to do to make the meeting a benefit to themselves or to others. Many do not realize but that the only object for which they came is merely to hear preaching. Therefore they do not strive for the blessing of God, they do not

from the very commencement of the meeting feel the necessity of confessing their sins, and striving for the earnest of the Spirit. They do not know that the success of the meeting depends largely upon themselves, and therefore do not feel the burden of the work. The very first effort of ministers should be to set them in the way of working for themselves. Let the minds and hearts of the people be enlisted in the work. Let all be taught what they must do to open the door of the heart to Jesus, that they may receive him gladly.

The necessity of a real heart-work for every member of the body must be pressed upon them. The labor should be directed right to the one end,—a more complete putting away of idols, a deeper consecration, a stronger faith, and more earnest personal effort for the salvation of others. Fear should be aroused in every heart because there is so little vital godliness among us; fear lest God will say, “He is joined to his idols; let him alone.”

My brethren, there should be a different kind of labor from what we have yet seen in our camp-meetings. There should be more prayer and weeping, and more confession of sin to God and to one another. Let the indifference be broken up, let the complaining and fault-finding cease, and the time heretofore worse than wasted in this manner be spent in prayers of living faith for the refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Let us arouse as one man, and unitedly call upon God to send down his grace upon the souls of his people, and to revive his work in the midst of the years.

Every tent's company should be set to work for themselves; and they should also be united in larger divisions, with suitable men appointed in each to help to the utmost of their ability, the ones placed under their charge. Men should not be chosen for this work who have so much sermonizing to do, to exhibit themselves, that they are no help to the people. The leaders appointed should be carefully taught how to labor to secure the best results. The wisest generalship is in seeing, not how much we can do ourselves, but how much we can lead the people to do. This is the education which they need in order to grow in grace and the knowledge of the truth. They must be taught, not so much by long sermons as by personal effort, how to secure the blessing of God, the true conversion.

Our camp-meeting should be as a training-school to our younger ministers. Here is the very place for them to be educated as to the best manner of labor. They should learn that all their duty is not comprised in preaching. They need to know how to conduct wisely the social meetings, how to teach the people to work, that there be no idlers in the vineyard of the Lord. While preaching is one of God's instrumentalities, there are other agencies that must be set in operation to prepare the way of the Lord. The church must be made to feel her accountability before the Lord will revive his work.

The preacher himself, must be alive; he must have the earnestness of the Spirit; he must labor through Christ; he must make direct appeals; he must sound the alarm to careless and world-loving professors, though they should be displeased because their ears tingle with the close application of the truth,—“Thou art the man.” It is too late to daub with untempered mortar. There must be plain and faithful dealing. The people must be aroused to do the work which God enjoins upon them, to take up the stumbling-blocks and clear out the rubbish, that the Spirit of God may come in. The guilt as well as the danger of backsliding must be faithfully pointed out. Follow up the word with personal effort. General appeals are often made with little effect. Come close to hearts, stirring up all to act a part. Let not one day be

lost. Engage every influence that can be commanded. Give the people something to do. See that none are idling about, seeing, hearing, and telling some new thing.

The Lord calls upon his people to repent and to do their first works. He admonishes them to examine themselves, whether they are in the faith, whether their hopes are well founded, whether they are not petting and excusing defects of character, when they should be going on to perfection. The worldliness in the church, which is the great cause of spiritual death, is attributable to the influence of selfish, ease-loving members. The progress of this deadly malady must be checked. The surgeon's knife cuts deep when it is necessary to remove festering, pestilent matter; so the word of God, sharper than any two-edged sword, must be made to cut to the heart, or the evil will never be removed. When the plain testimony is given, some will say, My hope is gone; I have no religion; I give it all up. Those who really want to be Christ's will receive reproof, put away their sins, and take their stand on the side of Jesus. If any have no real desire for the truth, because it must purify the soul, their withdrawal is not to be regretted. The fewer we have of such the better.

What we need, what we cannot do without, is the Spirit of God to work with our efforts. All pampering of self must be at an end. There must be an earnest longing, a soul-hunger, for the presence of the Lord. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled."

It is a case of life or death with us. We have been stricken with spiritual paralysis, and every one needs the help of the great Physician. He alone can reach our case. He is only waiting to be invited by us with earnest heart, with sincere desire, If any at the close of the convocation meeting still feel that they are not blessed, the fault is with themselves. God is no respecter of persons or of places. It cannot be because of any reluctance on the part of the great Physician that they are passed by. They did not prepare the way for him. Perhaps they neglected to make humble confessions to those whom they had injured. They have not put away the idols from the soul-temple. They have a work to do to repent of their self-indulgence, of the favorite sins which they are not ready to surrender. Nothing is wanting but a preparation of heart, and earnest, believing prayer, to bring Jesus to our side as a mighty helper. He longs to come. He is only waiting for us to prepare the way, and he will come. When he walked in his humiliation, a man among the children of men, he delighted in doing good to the bodies and souls of all who sought him and trusted him. So he will now verify his promises to his people, if they will do what he has enjoined in his word to prepare the way for his blessing.

May 17, 1883

The Church's Great Need

By Mrs. E. G. White

A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work at our camp-meetings. There must be earnest effort to obtain the blessing of the Lord, not because God is not willing to bestow his blessing upon us, but because we are unprepared to receive it. Our heavenly Father is more willing to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him, than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. But it is our work by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us his blessing. A revival need be

expected only in answer to prayer. While the people are so destitute of God's Holy Spirit, they cannot appreciate the preaching of the word. But when the Spirit's power touches their hearts, then the discourses given will not be without effect. Guided by the teachings of God's word, with the manifestations of his Spirit, in the exercise of sound discretion, those who attend our camp-meetings will gain a precious experience, and returning home will be prepared to exert a healthful influence in the churches.

The old standard-bearers knew what it was to wrestle with God in prayer and to enjoy the outpouring of his Spirit. But these are passing off from the stage of action; and who are coming up to fill their places? How is it with the rising generation? are they converted to God? Are we awake to the work that is going on in the heavenly sanctuary, or are we waiting for some compelling power to come upon the church before we shall arouse? Are we hoping to see the whole church revived? That time will never come.

There are persons in the church who are not converted, and who will not unite in earnest, prevailing prayer. We must enter upon the work individually. We must pray more, and talk less. Iniquity abounds, and the people must be taught not to be satisfied with a form of godliness without the spirit and power. If we are intent upon searching our own hearts, putting away our sins, and correcting our evil tendencies, our souls will not be lifted up unto vanity; we shall be distrustful of ourselves, having an abiding sense that our sufficiency is of God.

We have far more to fear from within than from without. The hindrances to strength and success are far greater from the church itself than from the world. Unbelievers have a right to expect that those who profess to be keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus will do more than any other class to promote and honor, by their consistent lives, by their godly example and their active influence, the cause which they represent. But how often have the professed advocates of the truth proved the greatest obstacle to its advancement. The unbelief indulged, the doubts expressed, the darkness cherished, encourage the presence of evil angels, and open the way for the accomplishment of Satan's devices.

The adversary of souls is not permitted to read the thoughts of men; but he is a keen observer, and he marks the words; he takes account of actions, and skillfully adapts his temptations to meet the cases of those who place themselves in his power. If we would labor to repress sinful thoughts and feelings, giving them no expression in words or actions, Satan would be defeated; for he could not prepare his specious temptations to meet the case. But how often do professed Christians, by their lack of self-control, open the door to the adversary of souls! Divisions, and even bitter dissensions which would disgrace any worldly community, are common in the churches, because there is so little effort to control wrong feelings, and to repress every word that Satan can take advantage of. As soon as an alienation of feeling arises, the matter is spread before Satan for his inspection, and the opportunity given for him to use his serpent-like wisdom and skill in dividing and destroying the church. There is great loss in every dissension. Personal friends of both parties take sides with their respective favorites, and thus the breach is widened. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Criminations and recriminations are engendered and multiplied. Satan and his angels are actively at work to secure a harvest from seed thus sown. Worldlings look on, and jeeringly exclaim, "Behold how these Christians hate one another. If

this is religion, we do not want it." And they look upon themselves and their irreligious characters with great satisfaction. Thus they are confirmed in their impenitence, and Satan exults at his success.

The great deceiver has prepared his wiles for every soul that is not braced for trial and guarded by constant prayer and living faith. As ministers, as Christians, we must work to take the stumbling-blocks out of the way. We must remove every obstacle. Let us confess and forsake every sin, that the way of the Lord may be prepared, that he may come into our assemblies and impart his rich grace. The world, the flesh, and the Devil must be overcome. We cannot prepare the way by gaining the friendship of the world, which is enmity with God; but by his help we can break its seductive influence upon ourselves and upon others. We cannot individually or as a body secure ourselves from the constant temptations of a relentless and determined foe; but in the strength of Jesus we can resist them. From every member of the church a steady light may shine forth before the world, so that they shall not be led to inquire, What do these people more than others? There can be and must be a withdrawal from conformity to the world, a shunning of all appearance of evil, so that no occasion shall be given for gainsayers. We cannot escape reproach; it will come; but we should be very careful that we are not reproached for our own sins or follies, but for Christ's sake.

There is nothing that Satan fears so much as that the people of God shall clear the way by removing every hindrance, so that the Lord can pour out his Spirit upon a languishing church and an impenitent congregation. If Satan had his way, there would never be another awakening, great or small, to the end of time. But we are not ignorant of his devices. It is possible to resist his power. When the way is prepared for the Spirit of God, the blessing will come. Satan can no more hinder a shower of blessing from descending upon God's people than he can close the windows of heaven that rain cannot come upon the earth. Wicked men and devils cannot hinder the work of God, or shut out his presence from the assemblies of his people, if they will, with subdued, contrite hearts, confess and put away their sins, and in faith claim his promises. Every temptation, every opposing influence, whether open or secret, may be successfully resisted, "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

We are in the great day of atonement, when our sins are, by confession and repentance, to go beforehand to judgment. God does not now accept a tame, spiritless testimony from his ministers. Such a testimony would not be present truth. The message for this time must be meat in due season to feed the church of God. But Satan has been seeking gradually to rob this message of its power, that the people may not be prepared to stand in the day of the Lord.

In 1844 our great High Priest entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, to begin the work of the investigative judgment. The cases of the righteous dead have been passing in review before God. When that work shall be completed, judgment is to be pronounced upon the living. How precious, how important are these solemn moments! Each of us has a case pending in the court of heaven. We are individually to be judged according to the deeds done in the body. In the typical service, when the work of atonement was performed by the high priest in the most holy place of the earthly sanctuary, the people were required to afflict their souls before God, and confess their sins, that they might be atoned for

and blotted out. Will any less be required of us in this antitypical day of atonement, when Christ in the sanctuary above is pleading in behalf of his people, and the final, irrevocable decision is to be pronounced upon every case?

What is our condition in this fearful and solemn time? Alas, what pride is prevailing in the church, what hypocrisy, what deception, what love of dress, frivolity, and amusement, what desire for the supremacy! All these sins have clouded the mind, so that eternal things have not been discerned. Shall we not search the Scriptures, that we may know where we are in this world's history? Shall we not become intelligent in regard to the work that is being accomplished for us at this time, and the position that we as sinners should occupy while this work of atonement is going forward? If we have any regard for our souls' salvation, we must make a decided change. We must seek the Lord with true penitence; we must with deep contrition of soul confess our sins, that they may be blotted out.

We must no longer remain upon the enchanted ground. We are fast approaching the close of our probation. Let every soul inquire, How do I stand before God? We know not how soon our names may be taken into the lips of Christ, and our cases be finally decided. What, oh, what will these decisions be! Shall we be counted with the righteous, or shall we be numbered with the wicked?

Let the church arise, and repent of her back-slidings before God. Let the watchmen awake, and give the trumpet a certain sound. It is a definite warning that we have to proclaim. God commands his servants, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." The attention of the people must be gained; unless this can be done, all effort is useless; though an angel from heaven should come down and speak to them, his words would do no more good than if he were speaking into the cold ear of death. The church must arouse to action. The Spirit of God can never come in until she prepares the way. There should be earnest searching of heart. There should be united, persevering prayer, and through faith a claiming of the promises of God. There should be, not as in ancient times, a clothing of the body with sackcloth, but a deep humiliation of soul. We have not the first reason for self-congratulation and self-exaltation. We should humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. He will appear to comfort and bless the true seekers.

The work is before us; will we engage in it? We must work fast, we must go steadily forward. We must be preparing for the great day of the Lord. We have no time to lose, no time to be engaged in selfish purposes. The world is to be warned. What are we doing as individuals to bring the light before others? God has left to every man his work; every one has a part to act, and we cannot neglect this work except at the peril of our souls.

O my brethren, will you grieve the Holy Spirit, and cause it to depart? Will you shut out the blessed Saviour, because you are unprepared for his presence? Will you have souls to perish without the knowledge of the truth, because you love your ease too well to bear the burden that Jesus bore for you? Let us awake out of sleep. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

May 31, 1883

Martin Luther—His Character and Early Life

Through all the ages of papal darkness and oppression, God's care was over his cause and his people. Amid opposition, conflict, and persecution, an all-wise providence was still at work in the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom. Satan exercised his power to hinder the work of God, by destroying the workmen; but as soon as one laborer was imprisoned, or slain, another was raised up to fill the vacancy. Despite all the opposing powers of evil, angels of God were doing their work, heavenly messengers were searching out men to stand as light-bearers amid the darkness. Notwithstanding the wide-spread apostasy, there were honest souls who had given heed to all the light which shone upon them. In their ignorance of God's word they had received the doctrines and traditions of men, but when the word was placed within their reach, they earnestly studied its pages, and in humility of heart they wept and prayed for a knowledge of God's will. With great joy they accepted the light of truth, and eagerly sought to impart light to their fellow-men.

Through the labors of Wickliffe, Huss, and kindred workers, thousands of noble witnesses had borne testimony to the truth; yet at the beginning of the sixteenth century the darkness of ignorance and superstition still rested like a pall upon the church and the world. Religion was made to consist in a round of ceremonies, many of them borrowed from heathenism, and all devised by Satan to lead the minds of the people away from God and the truth. The worship of images and relics was still maintained. The Scriptural ordinance of the Lord's Supper was supplanted by the idolatrous sacrifice of the Mass. Popes and priests claimed the power to forgive sins, and to open and close the gates of Heaven to all mankind. Senseless superstitions and rigorous exactions had taken the place of the true worship of God. The lives of popes and clergy were so corrupt, their proud pretensions so blasphemous, that good men trembled for the morality of the rising generation. With iniquity prevailing in the high places of the church, it seemed inevitable that the world would soon become as wicked as were the antediluvians or the inhabitants of Sodom.

The gospel was withheld from the people. It was regarded as a crime to own or read the Scriptures. Even the higher classes found it difficult to obtain a glimpse of the word of God. Satan well knew that if the people were permitted to read and interpret the Bible for themselves, his deceptions would speedily lose their power. Hence it was his studied effort to shut the Scriptures away from the people, and to prevent their minds from becoming enlightened by the truths of the gospel. But a day of religious light and freedom was about to dawn upon the world, and all the efforts of Satan and his hosts were powerless to prevent its coming.

Foremost among those who were called for God to break the chains of popery, and lead the church into the light of a purer faith, stood Martin Luther. Though, like others in his time, he did not see every point of faith as clearly as we see it today, yet he earnestly desired to know the will of God, and joyfully received the truth as it was made plain to his understanding. Zealous, ardent, devoted, knowing no fear but the fear of God, and acknowledging no foundation for religious faith but the Scriptures of truth, Luther was the man for his time; and through him God accomplished a great work for the emancipation of the church, and the enlightenment of the world.

Like the first heralds of the gospel, Luther sprung from the ranks of poverty. His father earned by daily toil as a miner the means to educate his son. He intended him for a lawyer;

but God designed to make him a builder upon the great temple rising so slowly through the centuries.

Luther's father was a man of strong and active mind, and great force of character, honest, resolute and straightforward. His life was characterized by stern integrity; he was true to his convictions of duty, let the consequences be what they might. His sterling good sense led him to regard the monastic system with distrust. He was highly displeased when Luther, without his consent, entered a monastery; and it was two years before the father was reconciled to his son, and even then his opinions remained the same.

Luther's parents were strictly conscientious, earnest, and zealous in the performance of their parental duties, seeking to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Yet with their firmness and strength of character they sometimes erred by exercising too great severity. Their government was one of law and authority. The mother especially manifested too little love in the discipline of her sensitive son. While she gave him faithful instruction in Christian duty, as she understood it, the austerity and even harshness of her training led him to cherish erroneous views of a religious life. It was the influence of these early impressions that led him in later years to choose the life of a monk supposing it to be a life of self-denial, humiliation, and purity, and therefore pleasing to God.

The life of Luther from his earliest years was one of privation, hardship, and severe discipline. The effect of this training was seen in his religious character throughout his life. Luther himself, though conscious that in some respects his parents had erred, found in their discipline much more to approve than to condemn.

The prevailing sin of parents at the present day lies in the indulgence of their children. The youth are weak and inefficient, with little physical stamina or moral power, because of the neglect of parents to train them in childhood to habits of obedience and industry. The foundation of character is laid at home: no after influence from any earthly source can wholly counteract the effect of parental discipline. If firmness and decision were mingled with love and tenderness in the training of the young, we would see youth coming up, like Luther, qualified for lives of usefulness and honor.

At an early age Luther was sent to school, where he was treated with a harshness and even violence that he had not been subject to at home. So great was the poverty of his parents that he was obliged to obtain his food by singing from door to door, and he often suffered from hunger. The gloomy, superstitious ideas of religion then prevailing filled him with fear. He would lie down at night with a sorrowful heart, looking forward with trembling to the dark future, and in constant terror at the thought of God as a stern, unrelenting judge, a cruel tyrant, rather than a kind heavenly Father. There are few youth at the present day who would not have become disheartened under so many and so great discouragements; but Luther perseveringly pressed forward toward the high standard of moral and intellectual excellence which he had determined to attain.

He thirsted for knowledge, and the earnest and practical character of his mind led him to desire the solid and useful rather than the showy and superficial. At the age of eighteen he entered the University of Erfurth. His situation was now more favorable and his prospects brighter than in his earlier years. His parents having by thrift and industry acquired a

competence, were able to render him all needed assistance. And the influence of judicious friends had somewhat lessened the gloomy effects of his former training. He now diligently applied himself to the study of the best authors, enriching his understanding with their most weighty thoughts, and making the wisdom of the wise his own. A retentive memory, a vivid imagination, strong reasoning powers, and energetic application to study, soon won for him the foremost rank among his associates.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” That fear dwelt in the heart of Luther, enabling him to maintain his steadfastness of purpose, and leading him to deep humility before God. He had an abiding sense of his dependence upon divine aid, and he did not fail to begin each day with prayer, while his heart was continually breathing a petition for guidance and support. “To pray well,” he often said, “is the better half of study.”

While one day examining the books in the library of the university, Luther discovered a Latin Bible. He had before heard fragments of the Gospels and epistles at public worship, and he thought that they were the whole of God's word. Now for the first time he is looking upon the whole Bible. With mingled awe and wonder he turns the sacred pages; with quickening pulse and throbbing heart he reads for himself the words of life, pausing now and then to exclaim, “Oh, if God would give me such a book for my own!” Angels of Heaven were by his side, and rays of light from the throne of God flashed upon the sacred pages, revealing the treasures of truth to his understanding. He had ever feared to offend God, but now the deep conviction of his condition as a sinner takes hold upon him, as never before.

An earnest desire to be free from sin and to find peace with God, led him at last, after many severe conflicts, to enter a cloister, and devote himself to a monastic life. Here he was subjected to the meanest service, being required to act as door-keeper and sweeper, and to beg from house to house. He was at an age when respect and appreciation are most eagerly craved, and these menial offices were deeply mortifying to his natural feelings; but he patiently endured it all, believing that it was a necessary humiliation because of his sins. This discipline was fitting him to become a mighty workman upon God's building.

Every moment that could be spared from his daily duties, he diligently employed in study, robbing himself of sleep, and grudging even the moments spent in eating his coarse, humble food. Above everything else he delighted in the study of God's word. And he often repaired to the Bible which he had found chained to the convent wall. As his convictions of sin deepened with the study of the Scriptures, he sought by his own works to obtain pardon and peace. He led a most rigorous life, endeavoring to crucify the flesh by fastings, watchings, and scourgings. He shrank from no sacrifice to become holy and gain Heaven. As the result of the painful discipline which he imposed upon himself, he lost all strength, and suffered from fainting spasms, from the effects of which he never fully recovered. But with all his efforts, his burdened soul found no relief. He was at last driven to the verge of despair.

When it appeared to Luther that all was lost, God raised up a friend and helper for him. The pious Staupitz opened the word of God to Luther's mind, and bade him look away from himself, cease the contemplation of infinite punishment for the violation of God's law, and look to Jesus, his sin-pardoning Saviour. “Instead of torturing yourself for your faults, cast yourself into the arms of your Redeemer. Trust in him, in the righteousness of his life, in the sacrifice of his death. Listen to the Son of God. He became man to assure you of the divine

favor. Love him who has first loved you." Thus spoke this messenger of mercy. His words made a deep impression upon Luther's mind. After many a struggle with long-cherished errors, he was enabled to grasp the truth, and peace came to his troubled soul.

Oh that there were seen in this day, so deep abhorrence of self, so great humiliation of soul before God, and so earnest a faith when light is given, as were manifested by Martin Luther! True conviction of sin is now rarely experienced; superficial conversions abound, and Christian experience is dwarfed and spiritless. And why is this? Because of the false and fatal education given by parents to their children, and by ministers to their people. The young are indulged in their love of pleasure, and left unrestrained to pursue a course of sin; thus they lose sight of filial obligation, and having learned to trample upon the authority of their parents, they are prepared to trample upon the authority of God. And the people, in like manner, are allowed, unwarned to unite in the sinful pursuits and pleasures of the world, until they lose sight of their obligations to God, and of his claims upon them. They are assured of divine mercy, but permitted to forget divine justice. They expect salvation through the sacrifice of Christ, without rendering obedience to the law of God. Hence they have no true conviction of sin, and without this there can be no true conversion.

Luther searched the Scriptures with untiring interest and zeal, and at last found therein the way of life clearly revealed. He learned that it is not to the pope, but to Christ, that men are to look for pardon and justification. "There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." Christ is the only propitiation for sin; he is the complete and all-sufficient sacrifice, for the sins of the whole world, securing the pardon of all who will believe on him as God hath appointed. Jesus himself declares, "I am the door. By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Luther sees that Christ Jesus came into the world, not to save people in their sins, but to save them from their sins; that the one only way whereby the sinner can be saved is by repentance toward God, because of the transgression of his law, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, both for the pardon of sin and for grace to lead a life of obedience.

Thus he was led to perceive the fallacy of the papal doctrine, that salvation is obtained by punishments and penances, and that men must through hell reach Heaven. He learned from the precious Bible that he who is not cleansed from sin by Christ's atoning blood, can never be cleansed by the fires of hell; that the doctrine of purgatory is but a cunning device of the father of lies, and that the present life is the only period for probation granted to man in which to prepare for the society of the pure and holy.

June 7, 1883

Luther at Wittenberg

After two years in the cloister, Luther was consecrated to the priest's office, and a year later he was called to a professorship in the University of Wittenberg. Here he applied himself diligently to the study of the ancient languages, especially Greek and Hebrew, that he might study the word of God in the original tongues. He began to lecture upon the Bible; and the book of Psalms, the Gospels, and the Epistles, were opened to the understanding of crowds of eager listeners. From all parts of Germany and even from foreign countries, students flocked to the university.

Staupitz, the friend and superior of Luther, urged him to ascend the pulpit, and preach the word of God. But Luther hesitated, feeling himself unworthy to speak to the people in Christ's stead. It was only after a long struggle, that he yielded to the solicitations of his friends.

The pulpit in which he first preached was an old rostrum made of rough planks, in a dilapidated chapel propped on all sides to keep it from falling. Here the Reformation preaching was entered upon. When Jesus came to earth, he was cradled in a manger. And the gospel was not first proclaimed in imposing churches, but from the swaying seat of a fisherman's boat, and upon the mountain side, in the plain, and by the highway.

Already Luther was mighty in the Scriptures; and the grace of God rested upon him. His surpassing eloquence delighted and captivated his auditors; the clearness and power with which he presented the truth convinced their understanding, and his deep fervor touched their hearts. The little chapel could not contain the crowds that sought admission, and he was called to preach in the parish church. So wide-spread had his reputation now become that Frederic the Wise, the Elector of Saxony, came to Wittenberg to hear him.

Luther was still a true son of the papal church, and had no thought that he would ever be anything else. In the providence of God he decides to visit Rome. He pursues his journey on foot, lodging at the monasteries on the way. He passes the Alps, and descends into the plain of Italy, and is filled with wonder as he goes. Visiting a convent in Lombardy, he sees the splendor of the apartments, the richness of the dresses, the luxury of the table, the extravagance everywhere. With painful misgivings he contrasts this scene with the self-denial and hardship of his own life. His mind is becoming perplexed.

At last he beholds in the distance the seven-hilled city. With deep emotion he prostrates himself upon the earth, exclaiming, "Holy Rome, I salute thee!" He enters the city, visits the churches, listens to the marvelous tales repeated by priests and monks, and goes through all the forms and ceremonies required. Everywhere he looks upon scenes that fill him with astonishment and horror. He sees that the same iniquity exists among the higher clergy as among the lower. He hears the indecent jokes from prelates, and is filled with horror at their awful profanity, even during Mass. As he mingles with the monks and citizens, he meets dissipation, debauchery. Turn where he will, in the place of sanctity he finds profanation. "It is incredible," he says, "what sins and atrocities are committed in Rome. If there be a hell, Rome is built above it. It is an abyss whence all sins proceed."

The heart-sickening depravity and blind superstition which he saw on every side led him to press more closely to Christ. On his knees one day Luther was ascending the stairway to St. Peter's, when a voice like thunder seemed to say to him, "The just shall live by faith!" He sprang upon his feet in shame and horror, and fled from the scene of his folly. That text never lost its power upon his soul. From that time he saw more clearly than ever before the fallacy of trusting to human works for salvation, and the necessity of constant faith in the merits of Christ. The truth of God had enlightened his understanding. His eyes had been opened, and were never again to be closed to the Satanic delusions of the papacy. When he turned his face from Rome, he had turned away also in heart, and from that time the separation grew wider, until he severed all connection with the Romish church.

At the age of twenty-nine Luther received at the University of Wittenberg, the degree of doctor of divinity. Now he was at liberty to devote himself, as never before, to the Scriptures that he loved. He had taken a solemn vow to study carefully and to preach with fidelity the word of God, not the sayings and doctrines of the popes, all the days of his life. He was no longer the mere monk or professor, but the authorized herald of the Bible. He had been called as a shepherd to feed the flock of God, that were hungering and thirsting for the truth.

Luther's feet were now planted upon the true foundation,—“the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.” He firmly declared that Christians should receive no other doctrines than those which rest on the authority of the sacred Scriptures. At the sound of these words Rome trembled. They struck at the very foundation of papal supremacy. They contained the vital principle of the Reformation.

In the providence of God, Luther was now to stand as the reformer of the church. He sought to turn the minds of his students away from the sophistries of philosophers and theologians, to the eternal truths set forth by prophets and apostles. He fearlessly attacked the speculative infidelity of the school-men, and opposed the philosophy and theology which had so long held a controlling influence upon the minds of the people. He saw, as we see today, the danger of exalting human theories and speculations above the revealed truths of God's word. He denounced such studies as not only worthless but pernicious, declaring, that, “the writings of the prophets and the apostles are more certain and sublime than all the sophisms and theology of the schools.” “Within my heart,” he adds, “reigns alone, and must alone reign, faith in my Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is the beginning, the middle, and the end of the thoughts that occupy me day and night.”

With deep earnestness he declared his faith in Christ as the basis of his hope,—the beginning and the end, the foundation and crowning glory of the plan of salvation. He was listened to with wonder as he spoke of that faith to the students in the university and to the crowded congregations in the church. He was steadily and surely drawing the minds of pupils and hearers away from trust in men, however high their claims, away from self-righteousness, to Christ.

The burden of his preaching was, “Learn to know Christ and him crucified. Learn to despair of your own work and cry unto him, Lord Jesus thou art my righteousness and I am thy sin. Thou hast taken on thee what was mine, and given to me what was thine. What thou wast not, thou becamest, that I might become what I was not.”

Thus fearlessly and firmly Luther presented those great truths which the apostles of Christ had proclaimed with such power. The voice of Paul, sounding down through the centuries, spoke through Luther, exposing superstitions, refuting error, and uprooting heresy.

Priests and prelates, the professed expositors of divine truth, were perverting the Scriptures by their misstatements and prevarications; wresting the word of God to make it sustain their errors and traditions. They sedulously withheld the Bible from the people, well knowing that should they search it for themselves, their faith would be fixed upon Christ, and not upon pope and priests. The light shining forth from God's word would lead the mind directly away from the Romish faith.

Such had been the experience of Luther. As he saw the terrible apostasy and corruption of the church, he determined to be a faithful steward of God's word, to dispense to others its holy teachings in their purity and simplicity. He knew that unless the people could be led to receive the word of God as their rule of life, there could be no hope of reform. He therefore presented the Scriptures to his hearers as the oracles of God, a divine communication as verily addressed to them as though they heard the voice of God speaking to them from Heaven. With great earnestness he urged upon them the importance of gaining for themselves a knowledge of the sacred word. The Bible was written by holy men under the inspiration of the Divine Spirit, and the aid of that same Spirit was indispensable to an understanding of its teachings. It should be studied in humility and in faith, with unwavering confidence in its supreme authority, and with earnest prayer for divine aid. Only in pursuing such a course could the searcher hope to discern spiritual things. Were the word of God thus studied, it would exert a molding influence upon both the mental and the moral powers, quickening and ennobling the intellect, purifying the soul, thus erecting mighty barrier against the iniquity that was flooding the world.

Luther came not with human ceremonies, traditions, and fables, to impose on the credulity of the people, but with the truth and the power of God to enlighten their understanding, and free their souls from the bondage of superstition and the tyranny of sin. He declared to his hearers that they must individually believe in Christ, if they would receive salvation through him; no priest or pope could take the place of the divine Mediator. Those who came to Jesus as repentant, believing sinners, would find pardon and peace, and would have his righteousness imputed to them. Sanctification is the fruit of faith, whose renewing power transforms the soul into the image of Christ. It was by faith in a crucified Redeemer that souls were saved in the days of the apostles; it was only by the same faith that souls could be saved in the days of Luther. He taught the people that they must exercise repentance toward God, whose holy law they had transgressed, and faith in Christ, whose blood could atone for their sins. He showed them that all who were truly penitent would pray earnestly for divine aid to battle against their evil propensities, and he also urged upon them the fact that the sincerity of their prayers would be evinced by the energy of their endeavors to render obedience to the law of God.

Precious indeed was the message which Luther bore to the eager crowds that hung upon his words. Never before had such teachings fallen upon their ears. The glad tidings of a Saviour's love, the assurance of pardon and peace through his atoning blood, melted their hearts, and inspired within them an immortal hope. A light was kindled at Wittenberg whose rays should extend to the uttermost parts of the earth, and which was to increase in brightness to the close of time.

June 14, 1883

The First Blow of the Reformation

The year 1517 marked the beginning new era for the church and the world. It was a period of great excitement in Germany. To replenish her treasuries, the Roman Church had opened a vast market on earth, and made merchandise of the grace of God. Indulgences was the name given to this merchandise. As the dealer entered a town, one went before him, crying, "The grace of God and of the Holy Father is at your gates." And the people welcomed the blasphemous pretender as if he were God himself come down from Heaven to them.

Tetzel, the leader in this infamous traffic, had been convicted of the basest offenses against society and against the law of God; but having escaped the punishment due to his crimes, he was now employed to further the mercenary and unscrupulous projects of the Romish Church. With shameless effrontery he framed the most glaring falsehoods, and related all manner of marvelous tales to deceive an ignorant, credulous, and superstitious people. Had they possessed the word of God, the unerring detector of sin and Satanic delusions, they could not have been thus deceived. It was to keep them under the control of the papacy, that they might swell the power and wealth of her ambitious leaders, that the Bible had been withheld from them.

Tetzel sets up his traffic in the church, and ascending the pulpit, he with great vehemence extols indulgences as the most precious gifts of God. "Draw near," he cries, "and I will give you letters, duly sealed, by which the sins you hereafter desire to commit shall be all forgiven you." "Even repentance is not indispensable." "But more than all this, indulgences save not only the living but the dead." "The very moment that the money clinks against the bottom of this chest, the soul escapes from purgatory, and flies to Heaven." With such Heaven-daring blasphemy spoke this agent of Satan.

When Simon Magus offered to purchase of the apostles the power to work miracles, Peter answered him, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money." But Tetzel's offer was grasped by eager thousands. Gold and silver flowed into his treasury. A salvation that could be bought with money was more easily obtained than that which required repentance, faith and diligent effort to resist and overcome sin. They could sin as they pleased, and money would purchase their pardon.

The doctrine of indulgences had long been opposed by men of learning and piety in the Romish Church, and there were many who had no faith in pretensions so contrary to both reason and revelation. Yet no bishop dared to lift his voice against the fraud and corruption of this iniquitous traffic. The minds of men were becoming disturbed and uneasy, and they eagerly inquired if God would not work through some instrumentality for the purification of his church.

The traffic in indulgences, subversive as it was of the very foundation principles of the gospel, could not fail to arouse determined opposition on the part of Luther. Though still a papist of the straightest sort, he was filled with horror at the blasphemous assumptions of Tetzel and his associates. Many of his own congregation had purchased certificates of pardon, and they soon began to come to Luther confessing their various sins, and expecting absolution, not because they were penitent and wished to reform, but on the ground of the indulgence. Luther refused them absolution, and warned them that unless they should repent, and reform their lives, they must perish in their sins. In great perplexity, they sought out Tetzel, and informed him that Luther, an Augustine monk, had treated his letters with contempt. The friar was filled with rage. He uttered the most terrible curses, caused fires to be lighted in the public square, and declared that he had orders from the pope to burn the heretics who should dare to oppose his most holy indulgences.

Luther now enters boldly upon his work as a champion of the truth, fighting not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. His voice is heard from the pulpit, in earnest, solemn warning. He sets before the people the

offensive character of sin, and teaches them that it is impossible for man by his own works to lessen its guilt or evade its punishment. Nothing but repentance toward God and faith in Christ can save the sinner. The grace of Christ cannot be purchased. It is a free gift. He counsels the people not to buy the indulgences, but to look in faith to their crucified Redeemer. He relates his own painful experience in vainly seeking by humiliation and penance to secure salvation, and assures his hearers that it was by looking away from himself and believing in Christ that he found peace and joy unspeakable. He urges them to obtain, if possible, a copy of the Bible, and to study it diligently. It is those who do not learn and obey its sacred truths that are deceived by Satan, and left to perish in their iniquity.

A bold blow had been struck for the Reformation. But Satan was rallying his forces to control the minds of the people and maintain the traffic in the grace of God. He aroused such hatred against Luther that many were ready to silence his opposition, even by taking his life. Thus the great controversy between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness went steadily forward.

About this time the elector Frederic had a dream which made a deep impression upon his mind, and which seemed in a remarkable manner to foreshadow the work of the Reformation. "The feast of All-Saints was at hand, and the elector, having retired to rest, lay musing how he should keep the festival, and was praying for the poor souls in purgatory, and beseeching Divine guidance for himself, his counselors, and his people. Thus engaged, he fell asleep, and dreamed that a monk, a true son of the apostle Paul, was sent to him; and that all the saints accompanied him, for the purpose of testifying that he was divinely commissioned. They asked of the elector, that the monk might be allowed to write something on the church door at Wittenberg. The monk began to write, and the characters were so large and brilliant that they could be read at a great distance; and the pen he used was so long that its extremity reached even to Rome, and wounded the ears of a lion which was crouching there, and shook the triple crown on the pope's head. All the cardinals and princes ran to support it; and, as the dreamer himself joined in the effort to support the pope's crown, he awoke in great alarm, and angry with the monk who had used his pen so awkwardly. Presently he fell asleep again, and his strange dream continued; the disturbed lion began to roar, and Rome and all the surrounding States ran to make inquiry; and the pope demanded that the monk be restrained, and demanded this especially of the elector, as the monk dwelt in his dominions.

"Once more the elector awoke from his dream, besought God to preserve the holy father, the pope, and slept again. And still his strange dream continued, and he saw all the princes of the empire crowding to Rome, and all striving to break the mysterious pen. Yet the more they endeavored to break it, the stiffer it became; and when they asked the monk where he found it, and why it was so strong, he replied that he secured it from one of his old schoolmasters; that it belonged to a Bohemian goose [John Huss, whose surname in the Bohemian language signifies goose. Huss proclaimed the truth a century before the time of Luther, and when assailed by persecution, he declared: "The wicked have begun by preparing a treacherous snare for the goose. But if even the goose, which is only a domestic bird, a peaceful animal, and whose flight is not very high in the air, has nevertheless broken through their toils, other birds, soaring more boldly toward the sky, will break through them with still greater force. Instead of a feeble goose, the truth will send forth eagles and keen-eyed vultures."] a hundred years old; and that it was strong because no man could take the pith

out of it. Suddenly the dreamer heard an outcry, and lo, a great number of pens had issued from the long pen of the monk!"

The Festival of All-Saints was an important day for Wittenberg. The costly relics of the church were then displayed before the people, and a full remission of sin was granted to all who visited the church and made confession. Accordingly on this day the people in great numbers flocked to Wittenberg.

On the 31st of October, the day preceding the festival, a monk went boldly to the church, to which a crowd of worshipers was already repairing, and affixed to the door ninety-five propositions against the doctrine of indulgences. That monk was Martin Luther. He went alone; not one of his most intimate friends knew of his design. As he fastened his theses upon the door of the church, he proclaimed himself ready to defend them the next day at the university itself against all opposers.

These propositions attracted universal attention. They were read and re-read and repeated in every direction. Great excitement was created in the university and in the whole city.

By these theses the doctrine of indulgences was fearlessly opposed. It was shown that the power to grant the pardon of sin, and to remit its penalty, had never been committed to the pope, or to any other man. The whole scheme was a farce, an artifice to extort money by playing upon the superstitions of the people, a device of Satan to destroy the souls of all who should trust to its lying pretensions. It was also clearly shown that the gospel of Christ was the most valuable treasure of the church, and that the grace of God, therein revealed, was freely bestowed upon all who should seek it by repentance and faith.

God was directing the labors of this fearless builder, and the work he wrought was firm and sure. He had faithfully presented the doctrine of grace, which would destroy the assumptions of the pope as a mediator, and lead the people to Christ alone as the sinner's sacrifice and intercessor. Thus was the elector's dream already beginning to be fulfilled. The pen which wrote upon the church door extended to Rome, disturbing the lion in his lair, and jostling the pope's diadem.

The sin-loving and superstitious multitudes were terrified as the sophistries that had soothed their fears were rudely swept away. Crafty ecclesiastics, interrupted in their hellish work of sanctioning crime, and seeing their gains endangered, were enraged, and rallied to uphold the pope.

Luther's theses challenged discussion; but not one dared to accept the challenge. By the grace of God, the blow struck by the monk of Wittenberg shook the very foundation of the papacy, stunned and terrified its supporters, and awakened thousands from the slumber of error and superstition. The questions which he proposed in his theses had in a few days spread throughout Germany, and in a few weeks they had sounded throughout Christendom. Many devoted Romanists, who had seen and lamented the terrible iniquity prevailing in the church, but had not known how to arrest its progress, read the propositions with great joy, recognizing in them the voice of God. They felt that the Lord had graciously set his hand to arrest the rapidly swelling tide of corruption that was issuing from the see of Rome. Princes

and magistrates secretly rejoiced that a check was to be put upon the arrogant power from which there was no appeal.

Yet there were some who doubted and feared. The prior of Luther's order, frightened by Tetzel, came to the Reformer in great alarm, saying, "Pray do not bring disgrace upon your order." Luther had great respect for this man, and was deeply affected by his words, but rallying he replied, "Dear father, if the thing is not of God, it will come to naught. If it is, let it go forward."

But the Reformer had more bitter accusers to meet. Some charged him with acting hastily and from impulse. Others accused him of presumption, declaring that he was not directed of God, but was acting from pride and forwardness. "Who does not know," he responds, "that we can seldom advance a new idea without an appearance of pride, and without being accused of seeking quarrels? Why were Christ and all the martyrs put to death? Because they appeared proud despisers of the wisdom of the times in which they lived, and because they brought forward new truths without having first consulted the oracles of the old opinions."

Again he declares: "What I am doing will not be effected by the prudence of man, but by the counsel of God. If the work is of God, who shall stop it? If it is not, who can forward it? Not my will, not theirs, not ours; but thy will, thine, holy Father who art in Heaven."

Luther had been urged on by the Spirit of God to begin his work; but he was not to carry it forward without severe conflicts. The reproaches of his enemies, their misrepresentation of his purposes, and their unjust and malicious reflections upon his character and motives, came in upon him like an overwhelming flood; and they were not without effect. He had felt confident that the leaders in the church, and the philosophers of the nation, would gladly unite with him in efforts for reform. Words of encouragement from those in high position had inspired him with joy and hope. Already in anticipation he saw a brighter day dawning for the church. But encouragement had turned to reproach and condemnation. Many of the dignitaries both of the church and of the State were convicted of the truthfulness of Luther's theses; but they soon saw that the acceptance of these truths would involve great changes. To enlighten and reform the people would be virtually to undermine the papal authority, to stop millions of streams now flowing into her treasury, and thus greatly curtail the extravagance and luxury of the Romish leaders. Furthermore, to teach the people to think and act as responsible beings, looking to Christ alone for salvation, would overthrow the pontiff's throne, and eventually destroy their own authority. For this reason they refused the knowledge tendered them of God, and arrayed themselves against Christ and the truth by their opposition to the man whom he had sent to enlighten them.

June 21, 1883

Luther's Source of Strength

Luther trembled as he looked upon himself, one man opposed to the mightiest powers of earth. He sometimes doubted whether he had indeed been led of God to array against himself the whole authority of the church. "Who was I," he writes, "to oppose the pope's majesty, before which the kings of the earth and the whole world tremble? No one can know what I suffered in those first two years, and in what dejection and despair I was often plunged."

But he was not left to become utterly disheartened. When human support failed him, he looked to God alone, and learned that he could lean in perfect safety upon that all-powerful arm. Steadfastly the Reformer labored to clear away the rubbish beneath which true faith had been buried for ages. The dust of ancient errors sometimes obscured his own vision, so that he could not see the truth with perfect clearness; but as he pressed resolutely on, rays of light flashed forth from God's word, banishing the darkness of superstition, and filling his soul with the brightness of a purer and holier faith. He rose above despondency; his courage and hope revived. Ere long friends began to rally around him. But he did not forget the Source of his strength. To Spalatin, the elector's chaplain, and a true friend of the Reformation, Luther wrote:

"We cannot attain to the understanding of Scripture either by study or strength of intellect. Therefore your first duty must be to begin with prayer. Entreat the Lord to deign to grant you, in his rich mercy, rightly to understand his word. There is no other interpreter of the word but the Author of that word himself. Even as he has said, 'They shall be all taught of God.' Hope nothing from your study and strength of intellect; but simply put your trust in God, and in the guidance of his Spirit. Believe one who has made trial of this matter."

Here we see how Luther came in possession of the truth that waked up the Reformation. It is men of humility and prayer that become mighty men in the Scriptures. They search the word of truth as for hidden treasures. And as they read and pray, and pray and read, they become living channels of light and truth. Here is a lesson of vital importance to those who feel that God has called them to present to others the solemn truths for this time. These truths will stir the enmity of Satan and of men who love the fables that he has devised. In the conflict with the powers of hell, there is need of something more than intellect and human wisdom.

Tetzel, in his rage against Luther, met his theses with antitheses, in which he attempted to defend the doctrine of indulgences, and sustain the power of the pope. Luther advanced with joy to the contest, hoping that the truth, to him so precious, might be revealed to many minds. "Do not wonder," he wrote to a friend, "that they revile me so unsparingly. I hear their revilings with joy. If they did not curse me, I could not be so firmly assured that the cause I have undertaken is the cause of God." Yet Luther loved peace. He possessed a tender, sympathetic heart, and while urged by the Spirit of God to defend the truth, he shrunk from causing strife in the church or in the State. "I tremble, I shudder," said he, "to think that I may be an occasion of discord to such mighty princes."

As Luther, with noble firmness, stood in defense of the gospel, his doctrines spread, and priests and people rallied about him as their standard-bearer. Hard as it was for them to change their opinions, the light of truth was dispelling the darkness of error. Some who secretly rejoiced in the work, took at first no active part in it; but the determined opposition against Luther and the truths he preached, brought these persons to the front, and changed their doubts to the certainty of faith. In the hearts of those who would obey his word, the Lord placed a firmness and decision that nothing could move.

Satan was perseveringly at work to tear down all that God was moving his servants to build up. One of the adversary's ablest instruments was Prierias, the master of the pontifical palace, who also filled the office of censor. The leading men in the Catholic Church were

divided as to the true authority for interpreting the Scriptures. A part believed that the authority rested in general councils, as representatives of the church; while another part steadfastly maintained that to the pope alone was granted the power of interpretation, and that no one had a right to explain the Scriptures contrary to his decree. Prierias was among the most zealous supporters of the pope. "Whosoever does not accept and rely upon the teachings of the Roman Church and the Roman pontiff as the infallible rule of faith, and as that from which Holy Scripture itself derives its obligation and authority, is a heretic." Thus spoke the haughty Prierias, and then he proceeded to attack Luther with the spirit of a buffoon and inquisitor, rather than with the spirit of a calm and dignified defender of the church of Christ.

Luther met this opponent with the same fearless firmness which he displayed toward other adversaries. He had given himself to the service of truth, and the Spirit of truth gave him wisdom, strength, and understanding. Prierias had begun his work by laying down certain principles. "Following your example," said Luther, "I also will lay down certain principles. The first is the passage of St. Paul: 'If any one preach unto you another gospel than that is preached, though he be an angel from Heaven, let him be accursed.' The second is from St. Augustine: 'I have learned to render to the inspired Scriptures alone the homage of a firm belief that they have never erred: as to others, I do not believe in the things they teach, simply because it is they who teach them.'"

Luther adds: "If you rightly understand these principles, you will also understand that your whole dialogue is overturned." To the insinuations and threats of Prierias he responds in these brave words: "Do you thirst for blood? I protest that these menaces of yours give me not the slightest alarm. For what if I were to lose my life? Christ still lives; Christ my Lord, and the Lord of all, blessed forever."

It should be remembered that Luther was attacking with determined blows the institutions of ages. This could not be done without exciting hatred and opposition. No arguments against him could be drawn from the word of God; for his feet were firmly planted upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. When his enemies appealed to custom and tradition, or to the assertions and authority of the Roman pontiff, Luther met them with the Bible and the Bible alone. Here were arguments which they could not answer. Therefore the slaves of formalism and superstition clamored for his blood, as the Jews had clamored for the blood of Christ.

"He is a heretic," cried these Roman zealots; "it is a sin to allow him to live an hour longer! Away with him at once to the scaffold!" But Luther did not fall a prey to their fury. God had a work for him to do, and angels of Heaven were sent to protect him. Many, however, who had received from Luther the precious light, were made the objects of Satan's wrath, and for the truth's sake fearlessly suffered torture and death.

Opposition is the portion of all whom God employs to make an advance move in his work by presenting truth specially applicable to their time. The controversy between Christ and Satan is to increase in intensity to the close of this earth's history. Those who dare to present truths that are not in harmony with the popular churches and with the world, will thereby become the objects of slander, reproach, and falsehood. Many who at first but partially unite with

scoffers, finally lend themselves fully to Satan, to oppose and overthrow what God would build up.

There is today the same disposition to substitute the theories and traditions of men for the word of God as in the days of Christ, of Paul or of Luther. Ministers advance doctrines which have no foundation in the Scriptures of truth, and in place of Bible proof, they present their own assertions as authority. The people accept the minister's interpretation of the word, without earnest prayer that they may know what is truth. There is no safety in depending upon human wisdom and judgment. Said our Savior, "Search the Scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me."

All who possess reasoning powers can know for themselves what is truth. Those who pray and search for light, will receive light. The reason why so many are groping their way in the fog of error is, that they take the assertions of men, instead of searching the word of God for themselves. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Worldlings and superficial Christians will accept nothing which interferes with their selfish love of pleasure; hence they are willingly ignorant of the truth which would save their souls. Satan works with all his deceptive art to present pleasing fables before the people, and he takes thousands in his snare.

The advocates of truth in our day should not expect their message to be received with greater favor than was that of the early Reformers. Nay, rather, they should expect greater difficulties and more determined opposition than were experienced by Luther and his fellow-laborers. Satan's hatred for the truth is the same in all ages; but as he sees that his time is short, he makes one last mighty effort, by signs and lying wonders, to deceive and destroy, not merely the unbelieving world, but the great mass of professed Christians who have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved. In the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul declares that the second coming of Christ 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, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

There was a present truth—a truth at that time of special importance—in the days of Christ, of Paul, of Luther; there is a present truth for the church today. But truth is no more desired by the men of today than it was by the Jews in the time of Christ, or by papists in the days of Luther. Therefore Satan, working now with tenfold greater power, succeeds as of old in blinding the eyes of men and darkening their understanding.

As those who now labor in the cause of reform, experience conflicts and trials, as they find their path hedged in by difficulties, and obstructed by the rubbish of error, let them remember that they are traveling the same road that prophets, apostles, and reformers of every age have traveled before them. Christ himself trod a more thorny path than any of his followers. They may comfort themselves with the thought that they are in good company. One mightier than Satan is their leader, and he will give them strength to be steadfast in the faith, and will bring them off victorious.

June 28, 1883

Luther Summoned to Augsburg

Luther's pen was tracing words of truth that shook the very foundations of the papacy.

"Whatever sermons and instructions do not exhibit and make known Jesus Christ, cannot be the daily bread and nourishment of souls. Therefore we must preach Christ alone." What words were these to come from a son of the Roman Church! Christ was exalted above the pope. Christ was lifted up before the people as the Lamb of God, who alone can take away the sin of the world. What marvel that Satan was enraged, and that all the power of the Roman hierarchy was excited against Luther?

The Reformer continues: "What is it to know Christ? and what good will come of it? I answer, To learn and know Christ is to understand what the apostle declares, namely, that Christ is made unto us, of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." "To believe is nothing else than feeding on this bread from Heaven."

Concerning the power of the church to remit sin, he writes: "The remission of sin is out of the power of pope, bishop, or priest, or any man living, and rests solely on the word of Christ and on their own faith. A pope or bishop has no more power to remit sins than the humblest priest."

To bring the truth more prominently before the people, Luther prepared theses setting forth the new doctrines, and engaged in public discussion of them with his opponents, at one of the leading universities of Germany. This discussion was listened to with deep interest. Educated young men marked with astonishment the force of Luther's arguments from the Scriptures. They sought out the Reformer, and in private eagerly listened to his explanation of the word of God. They honestly desired to know the truth; therefore the entrance of God's word gave light to their understanding. The teacher's work was rewarded. When Luther was called to other fields, these young men, with the Bible in their hands, fearlessly proclaimed the words of life. Crowds came together to hear the truth, and many captives were released from the bondage of papal error. These young men became active and useful laborers in the church, and occupied responsible positions in the great work of the Reformation.

Luther saw that the cause of truth had little to hope for from those who had been educated in error, and he felt that its success must depend upon the rising generation. He says: "I have the glorious hope that as even Christ, when rejected of the Jews, turned toward the Gentiles, so we shall see the rising generation receive true theology, which these old men, wedded to their vain and most fantastical opinions, now obstinately reject."

These words of the Reformer contain a truth that should be heeded by those who are still pressing forward in the work of reform. Men are slow to renounce the cherished errors of a life-time. Many resolutely close their eyes, lest they see the light of truth. Oftentimes the clearest evidence from the word of God serves only to excite their hatred and opposition. Now, as in the time of Luther, the hopes of reform rest with the young, whose habits and opinions have not yet become stereotyped, and who therefore more readily yield to right influences. Converted to God, the youth of our time may, like the young men whom Luther instructed, fill an important place in the cause of truth.

The wide spread interest excited by Luther's teachings aroused the fears of the papal authorities, and efforts were at once put forth to quench the dangerous heresy. A letter was written in the pope's name to the elector Frederic, urging him to withdraw his protection from Luther, and intimating suspicion of the elector's fidelity to the church. The Romanists had misjudged the character of the prince with whom they had to deal. Frederic of Saxony was a devoted servant of the church, but he was also a man of sterling integrity, and he would not sacrifice justice and truth, even to the demands of the pope. To the papal letter he replied, that Luther had uniformly expressed a willingness to defend his doctrines before proper judges, and to submit to their decision if they should be able by the Scriptures to convince him of error.

But the word of God was not the weapon most convenient for Rome to handle. It was the very thing that they did not want brought to light; for they well knew that the truths contained therein would not only condemn their unrighteous course, but would lay their lofty pretensions in the dust. The only weapons which they could safely use were prisons, torture, and death. Ere long Luther receives a summons to appear at Rome to answer at the papal tribunal to the charge of heresy. This command fills his friends with terror.

They know full well the danger that threatens him in that corrupt city, already drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. With indignation they ask among themselves, Shall every man who dares lift his voice against the sins of Rome be silenced by death? Shall we permit this great sacrifice?

Luther's teachings had attracted the attention of thoughtful minds throughout all Germany. From his sermons and writings issued beams of light which had awakened and illuminated thousands. A living faith was taking the place of the dead formalism in which the church had so long been held. The people were daily losing confidence in the superstitions of Romanism. The barriers of prejudice were giving way. The word of God, by which Luther tested every doctrine and every claim, was like a two-edged sword, cutting its way to the hearts of the people. Everywhere there was awakening a desire for spiritual progress. Everywhere was such a hungering and thirsting after righteousness as had not been known for ages. The eyes of the people so long directed to human forms and human mediators, were now turning, in penitence and faith, to Christ and him crucified.

Luther and his friends knew that he could not hope for justice at Rome. They knew that there would be no safety for him on the journey to Rome, and no safety after his arrival. The Romists had not been sparing in their denunciations of him, and once in their grasp no human power could release him. His friends were unanimous in the desire that he should receive his examination in Germany.

This arrangement was finally effected, and the pope's legate was appointed to hear the case. The instructions communicated by the pontiff to this official were as follows:

“We charge you to compel Luther to appear before you in person; to prosecute and reduce him to submission without delay, as soon as you shall have received this our order, he having already been declared a heretic by our dear brother Jerome, Bishop of Asculan.” “If he should return to a sense of his duty, and ask pardon for so great an offense, freely and of his own accord, we give you power to receive him into the unity of the holy mother church.”

“If he should persist in his stubbornness, and you fail to get possession of his person, we give you power to proscribe him in all places in Germany; to put away, curse, and excommunicate all those who are attached to him, and to enjoin all Christians to shun his society.”

The pope goes still farther, and calls upon his legate, in order entirely to root out the pestilent heresy, to excommunicate all, of whatever dignity in church or State except the emperor, who shall “neglect to seize the said Martin Luther and his adherents, and send them to you under proper and safe authority.”

Here is displayed the true spirit of Romanism. Not a trace of Christian principle, or even of common justice, is to be seen in the whole document. Luther is at a great distance from Rome; he has had no opportunity to explain or defend his position; yet before his case has been investigated, he is summarily pronounced a heretic, and in the same day, exhorted, accused, judged, and condemned; and all this by the self-styled holy father, the only supreme, infallible authority in church or State! The spirit of the dragon, “that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan,” is seen in this transaction. Notwithstanding his cunning, he has in his rage forgotten to be wise.

Augsburg had been fixed upon as the place of Luther's trial, and thither the Reformer went. Serious fears were entertained in his behalf. Threats had been made openly that he would be waylaid and murdered on the way, and his friends begged him not to venture. Staupitz entreated Luther to come and take refuge with him until the storm should subside. “It seems to me,” he wrote, “that the whole world is up in arms and combined against the truth. Even so was the crucified Jesus hated. I see not that you have anything else to expect than persecution. Your most prudent course is to leave Wittenberg for a time and come and reside with me. Then let us live and die together.”

But Luther would not leave the position where God had placed him. He must continue faithfully to maintain the truth, notwithstanding the storms that were beating upon him. His language was, “I am like Jeremiah, a man of strife and contention; but the more they increase their contentions, the more they multiply my joy. My wife and children are well provided for, my lands and houses and all my goods are safe. They have already torn to pieces my honor and my good name. All I have left is my wretched body; let them have it; they will then shorten my life by a few hours. But as to my soul, they shall not have that. He who resolves to bear the word of Christ to the world, must expect death at every hour.”

July 12, 1883

Luther Before the Pope's Legate

Upon arriving at Augsburg, Luther immediately informed the pope's legate that he was in the city. The legate heard the news with joy. He felt assured that the troublesome heretic who was setting the whole world astir was now in his power, and determined that he should not leave Augsburg as he had entered.

The legate's attendant, an Italian courtier of insinuating manners, flattered himself that it would be an easy matter to bring the Reformer to a proper position. He therefore called upon him with professions of great friendship, and gravely gave him instruction in etiquette, thinking thus to inspire him with awe for the great man before whom he was to appear. He

urged Luther to accompany him immediately to the presence of the legate; but Luther calmly stated that he must first obtain his safe-conduct.

Irritated at his ill success, the wily Italian exclaimed, "When all men forsake you, where will you take refuge?" "Under Heaven," answered the Reformer, looking reverently upward.

Luther soon received his safe-conduct, and prepared to appear before the legate. On receiving information of the fact, this dignitary was somewhat perplexed to decide what course to pursue with a man of so determined character, and he consulted his friends in regard to the matter. One was decided in the opinion that he should be made to retract; another, that he be arrested and imprisoned. A third boldly advised that he be put out of the way, while a fourth recommended that an attempt be made to win him over by gentleness. It was decided to adopt the last advice as the safest.

At his first interview with the Reformer, the legate was reserved, but civil. He expected Luther to yield every point without argument or question, and waited in silence for him to begin his recantation.

Luther stated that he appeared before the legate in response to the summons of the pope, and at the desire of the Elector of Saxony, and declared himself a humble and obedient son of the holy Christian church. Then he proceeded to the point at issue: "I acknowledge that it was I who published the propositions and theses that are the subject of inquiry. I am ready to listen with all submission to the charges brought against me, and if I am in error, to be instructed in the truth."

The legate commended Luther's humility, and at once made known what was expected of him: "First, you must return to your duty. You must acknowledge your faults, and retract your errors, your propositions, and sermons. Secondly, you must promise to abstain from propagating your opinions. And thirdly, you must engage to be more discreet, and avoid everything that may grieve or disturb the church."

Luther asked to see the credentials of the cardinal, showing his authority to settle the matter. He was refused, and was told that he had only to renounce his errors, and the cardinal would make all right with the church.

Luther then asked to be informed wherein he had erred. With an air of condescension, the cardinal made answer: "Two propositions are put forward by you that you must, before all, retract. First, the treasure of indulgences does not consist of the merits and sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Secondly, the man who receives the holy sacrament must have faith in the grace offered to him." If generally received, these propositions would be fatal to the commerce of Rome, overturning the tables of the money-changers, and driving out of the temple those who made merchandise of the grace of salvation.

The legate had promised to abide by the testimony of the Scripture; but notwithstanding this he applied to the constitution of the popes in favor of indulgences. Luther declared that he could not accept such constitutions as sufficient proofs on subjects so important; "for they wrest the Holy Scriptures, and never quote them to the purpose." The legate retorted, "The pope has authority and power over all things." "Save the Scriptures," answered Luther

earnestly. "Save the Scriptures!" echoed the legate in derision, and he asserted that the pope was higher than councils, and that all who dared to question his authority would receive their deserts.

Concerning the second proposition, which affirmed the necessity of faith in order to grace, Luther stated that to yield that point would be to deny Christ. Said he, "I cannot, therefore, and I will not yield that point, and, by God's help, I will hold it to the end."

The legate replied angrily, "Whether you will or not, you must this very day retract that article, or else, for that article alone, I will proceed to reject and condemn all your doctrines."

Luther answered, "I have no will but the Lord's. He will do with me what seemeth good in his sight. But had I a hundred heads, I would rather lose them all than retract the testimony I have borne to the holy Christian faith."

"I am not come here to argue with you," answered the prelate. "Retract, or prepare to endure the punishment you have deserved." Thus ended the first interview.

The second conference was held on the following day, and attended by many persons of high position. Before this assembly, Luther read a declaration expressing his regard for the church, his desire for the truth, his readiness to answer all objections to what he had taught, and to submit his doctrines to the decision of certain leading universities. At the same time he protested against the cardinal's course in requiring him to retract, without having proved him in error.

The legate's response was, "Recant, recant." He overwhelmed Luther with a perpetual torrent of words, giving him no opportunity to reply. The Reformer therefore begged that he might present in writing his answer to the two charges, the one touching indulgences, and the other respecting faith. The request was reluctantly granted.

In the third interview, Luther submitted his answer, in which he showed that his position was sustained by the Scriptures, and firmly declared that he could not renounce the truth. The legate treated Luther's declaration with little short of contempt. He scolded and thundered on incessantly, leaving Luther, as at the preceding interview, no opportunity for reply. With vehement assertions and repeated reference to the papal constitution, he continued to maintain the doctrine of indulgences and to call on Luther to retract.

The Reformer at last declared that if the principle which was claimed as the very foundation of the doctrine of indulgences, could be proved from the papal constitution itself, he would retract. All were startled at this proposition. The friends of Luther were alarmed and embarrassed. The legate and his sustainers could hardly contain their joy. But their rejoicing was quickly turned to confusion. Luther met the cardinal on his own ground, and triumphed completely.

When the wily prelate saw that Luther's reasoning was unanswerable, he lost all self-control, and in a rage cried out: "Retract, or I will send you to Rome, there to appear before the judges commissioned to take cognizance of your case. I will excommunicate you and all your partisans, and all who shall at any time countenance you, and will cast them out of the

church. Full power has been given me for this purpose by the holy apostolic see. Think you that your protectors will stop me? Do you imagine that the pope can fear Germany? The pope's little finger is stronger than all Germany put together."

"Condescend," replied Luther, "to forward the written answer I have given you to Pope Leo X., with my most humble prayers." In a haughty and angry tone, the cardinal replied, "Retract, or return no more."

Luther bowed, and retired with his friends, leaving the cardinal and his supporters to look at one another in utter confusion at the unexpected result of the discussion. The cardinal and the Reformer never met again.

Luther's efforts on this occasion were not without good results. The large assembly present at the conference had opportunity to compare the two men, and to judge for themselves of the spirit manifested by them, as well as of the strength and truthfulness of their position. How marked the contrast! Luther, simple, upright, firm, stood up in the strength of God, having truth on his side; the pope's representative, self-important, overbearing, haughty, and unreasonable, was without a single argument from the word of God, yet vehemently crying, "Retract, or be sent to Rome for punishment." Yet the legate was deeply impressed by his interviews with the Reformer, and he afterward changed his own views, and himself retracted his errors.

Luther remained in Augsburg but a few days after his last meeting with the cardinal. Before leaving the city, however, he drew up a respectful letter to the legate, stating that it was useless for him to prolong his stay, as he had been denied a further hearing unless he should retract. "Thus I again set out in the name of the Lord, desiring to find some place where I may live in peace." He closes by stating that he had committed no crime, and ought therefore to have nothing to fear. This letter was intrusted to his friends, who after his departure delivered it to the legate.

Luther set out from Augsburg at night, on horseback, and accompanied only by a guide furnished him by the magistrate. With many forebodings he secretly made his way through the dark and silent streets of the city. Enemies, vigilant and cruel, were plotting his destruction. Would he escape the snares prepared for him? Those were moments of anxiety and earnest prayer. He reached a small gate in the wall of the city. It was opened for him, and with his guide he passed through without hindrance. Now they were beyond the limits, and putting their horses to a full gallop, they soon left the city far behind them. Satan and his emissaries were defeated. The man whom they had thought in their power was gone, escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowler.

July 19, 1883

Luther's Royal Protector

At the news of Luther's departure from Augsburg, the papal legate was overwhelmed with surprise and anger. He had expected to receive great honor for his wisdom and firmness in dealing with this disturber of the church, but now this hope was disappointed. He gave expression to his wrath in a letter to the elector, bitterly denouncing Luther:

“Since Brother Martin cannot be brought by parental measures to acknowledge his errors, and continue faithful to the Catholic Church, I request your highness to send him to Rome, or to banish him from your territories. Be assured that this complicated, evil-intentioned affair cannot be long protracted, for as soon as I shall have informed our most holy lord of all this artifice and malice, he will bring it to a speedy end.” In a postscript he begs the elector not to tarnish with shame his own honor and that of his illustrious ancestors for the cause of a contemptible monk.

The elector sent Luther a copy of this letter, to which the Reformer answered: “Let the reverend legate, or the pope himself, specify any errors in writing; let them bring forward their reasons; let them instruct me, who desire instruction, who beg and long for it, so that even a Turk would not refuse to satisfy me. If I do not retract and condemn myself, when they have proved to me that the passages of Scripture that I have quoted ought to be considered in a different sense from mine; then most excellent elector, let your highness be the first to prosecute and expel me; let the university reject me, and overwhelm me with indignation. I will go farther; I call Heaven and earth to witness; let the Lord Jesus Christ himself reject and condemn me.

“These are not words of vain presumption, but of firm conviction. Let the Lord deprive me of his grace, and every creature of God refuse to countenance me, if, when I have been shown a better doctrine, I do not embrace it.” In closing, he says: “I am still, thanks be to God, full of joy, and praise him that Christ, the Son of God, counts me worthy to suffer in so holy a cause. May he ever preserve your illustrious highness! Amen.”

This letter made a deep impression upon the mind of the elector. He had never thought of giving up Luther, an innocent man, to be put to death by the power of Rome. Now he resolved to stand firm in his defense. In answer to the letter of the legate he wrote: “Since Dr. Martin has appeared before you at Augsburg, you ought to be satisfied. We did not expect that without convincing him of error, you would claim to oblige him to retract. Not one of the learned men in our states has intimated to us an opinion that Martin's doctrine is impious, anti-Christian, or heretical.” He declined sending Luther to Rome, or expelling him from his territories. Luther, having seen this letter, exclaimed: “With what joy I read and re-read it; for I know what confidence I may repose in these words, at once so forcible and so discreet.” God in his providence had raised up a man in high position to defend his servant.

The elector saw that there was a general breaking down of the moral restraints of society. The extensive and perfect organization of the Romish Church, and her immense outlay of money, time, and labor to secure order and harmony, was no indication of the real virtue and integrity of her members. A great work of reform was needed. All the complicated and expensive arrangements to restrain and punish crime would be unnecessary if the members of the church individually acknowledged and obeyed the requirements of God and the dictates of an enlightened conscience.

He saw that Luther was laboring to secure this object, and he secretly rejoiced that a better influence was making itself felt in the church.

He saw, also, that as a professor in the university, Luther was eminently successful. All his associates there spoke warmly in his favor. From all parts of Germany flocked students to

listen to his teachings. Young men coming in sight of the steeples of Wittenberg for the first time, would stop, and raising their hands toward Heaven, would praise God that he had caused the light of his truth to shine forth from Wittenberg as in former ages from Mount Zion, thence to penetrate to the most remote countries.

Luther is, as yet, but partially converted from the errors of Romanism. But he is forced to battle constantly in defense of the truth which he has already accepted, and in this warfare he is driven for comfort and support to Christ and the Word. And as he compares the holy oracles with papal decrees and constitutions, he is filled with wonder.

"I am reading," he writes to Spalatin, "the decretals of the popes, and let me whisper in your ear, that I know not whether the pope is anti-Christ himself, or whether he is his apostle, so misrepresented and even crucified does Christ appear in them." Yet at this time Luther was still a supporter of the Roman Church, and had no thought that he would ever separate from her communion.

The Reformer continued searching the Scriptures, praying, preaching, and writing. He knew not how soon his work might close, and he be deprived of liberty or even life; but so long as God should will it, he determined to labor for the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom. The knowledge that precious souls were everywhere receiving the truth, filled him with joy.

It was his work to build in the temple of the Lord. There were living stones buried from sight amid the papal rubbish of false doctrines, forms, and ceremonies, and he must search them out, and lay them on the true foundation. The followers of Christ were not then united as a peculiar and holy people separate from the world. They were mingled with the sons of Belial, and must be separated by the power of divine truth.

Luther was not blinded to his own peril or to the peril of his converts. He knew that the subjects of Prince Immanuel are not called to the enjoyment of ease and honor and riches, of titles and possessions; but to a life of conflict with the prince of darkness; they are to wrestle against principalities and powers, and they must put on the whole armor of God, that they may be able to stand. They are called to endure privation, hardship, imprisonment, torture, and death, even as the Captain of their salvation endured before them. The riches and co-operation of the wicked were subject to his command if he so willed it; but he declares, "My kingdom is not of this world." And again, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." In like manner the servants of Christ have no home, no treasure here. It is only because Jesus reigns, that they are kept from the cruel power of the prince of evil.

Luther's voice as a reformer was no longer confined to Germany. His writings and his doctrine were extending to every nation in Christendom. The work spread to Switzerland and Holland. Multitudes of copies of his writings had found their way to France and Spain, and the truth was working in many hearts, reforming the life, and arousing the understanding to perceive the corruption of Romanism. In England the Reformer's teachings were received as the word of life. In Belgium and Italy also the work was spreading. Thousands were awakening from their death-like stupor to the joy and hope of a life of faith.

In this little moment of calm, Luther works on with renewed hope and courage. His friends urge him to be content with the victories already gained, and to give over the conflict. But he

replies, "God does not conduct, but drives me forward. I am not master of my own actions. I would gladly live in peace; but I am cast into the midst of tumult and changes."

The Reformer pressed on in the path in which God was leading him; and as he continued to defend the truth, it constantly became more clear to his understanding, and he perceived more fully the arrogant assumptions of the papal power. He says: "How hard it is to unlearn the errors which the whole world confirms by its example, and which, by long use, have become to us a second nature. I had for seven years read and hourly expounded the Scriptures with much zeal, so that I knew them almost all by heart. I had also all the first-fruits of the knowledge and faith of my Lord Jesus Christ; that is, I knew that we were justified and saved, not by our works, but by faith in Jesus Christ; and I even openly maintained that it is not by divine right that the pope is chief of the Christian church. And yet... I could not see the conclusion from all this; namely, that of necessity, and beyond doubt, the pope is of the devil; for what is not of God must needs be of the devil." Again, he says: "I do not now give free utterance to my indignation against those who still adhere to the pope, since I, who had for so many years read the Holy Scriptures with so much care, yet held to papacy with so much obstinacy."

The battle went on. Rome was becoming more and more exasperated by the attacks of Luther. And now it was secretly declared by some of his fanatical opponents, that he who should kill Luther would be without sin. One day a stranger with a pistol concealed in his sleeve, approached the Reformer, and inquired why he went thus alone. Luther answered, "I am in the hands of God. He is my help and my shield. What can men do unto me?" Upon hearing these words, the stranger turned pale, and fled away as from the presence of the angels of God.

Rome was bent upon the destruction of Luther; but God was his defense. His doctrines were sounding everywhere; in convents, in cottages, in the castles of the nobles, in the academies, and in the palaces of kings; and noble men were rising on every hand to sustain his efforts.

July 26, 1883

Luther Appeals to Germany

On the 23d day of June, 1520, Luther published an appeal to the emperor and nobility of Germany in behalf of the Reformation of Christianity. In this appeal he declared: "The Romanists have raised three barriers against all reformation. When the temporal power has attacked them, they have denied its authority, and asserted that the spiritual power was superior to it. When any one rebuked them out of the Scripture, they have answered that no one but the pope was able to interpret Scripture. When they have been threatened with a council, the reply has been, No one but the sovereign pontiff has authority to convoke a council."

He writes of the pope: "It is monstrous to see him who is called the vicar of Christ, displaying a magnificence unrivaled by that of any emperor. Is this to represent the poor and lowly Jesus, or the humble St. Peter? The pope, say they, is the Lord of the world! But Christ, whose vicar he boasts himself to be, said, My kingdom is not of this world. Ought the power of the vicar to go beyond that of his Lord?"

Luther writes thus of the universities: "I fear much that the universities will be found to be great gates leading down to hell, unless they take diligent care to explain the Holy Scriptures, and to engrave them in the hearts of our youth. I would not advise any one to place his child where the Holy Scriptures are not regarded as the rule of life. Every institution where the word of God is not diligently studied, must become corrupt."

This appeal was rapidly circulated throughout Germany, and exerted a powerful influence upon the people. The whole nation was roused to rally around the standard of reform. Luther's opponents, burning with a desire for revenge, now urged on the pope to take decisive measures against him. The pontiff and his courtiers yielded against their better judgment, and it was decreed that Luther's doctrines should be condemned immediately. Sixty days were to be granted the Reformer and his adherents, after which, if they did not recant, they should be all excommunicated.

It was a terrible crisis for the Reformation. For centuries Rome's sentence of excommunication had been swiftly followed by the stroke of death. Luther was not blind to the tempest about to burst upon him, but he stood firm, trusting in Christ to be his support and shield. With a martyr's faith and courage he wrote: "What is about to happen I know not, nor do I care to know. I am assured that He who sits on the throne of Heaven has from all eternity seen the beginning, the progress, and the end of this affair. Let the blow light where it may, I am without fear. Not so much as a leaf falls without the will of our Father. How much rather will he care for us! It is a light thing to die; for the Word which was made flesh hath himself died. If we die with him, we shall live with him; and passing through that which he has passed through before us, we shall be where he is, and dwell with him forever."

When the papal bull reached Luther he said: "I despise it, and resist it, as impious and false. It is Christ himself who is therein condemned. No reasons are given in it; I am cited to appear, not that I may be heard, but that I may recant. Oh that Charles the Fifth would act as a man! Oh that for the love of Christ he would humble these demons! I glory in the prospect of suffering for the best of causes. Already I feel in my heart more liberty; for I now know that the pope is antichrist, and that his chair is for Satan himself."

The whole nation waited with intense interest to see what Luther would do. They were not kept long in doubt. With great energy and boldness, he immediately answered in a discourse which he entitled, "Against the Bull of Antichrist."

Yet the word of the pontiff of Rome still had power. Prisons, torture, and sword were weapons potent to enforce submission. Everything declared that Luther's work was about to close. The weak and superstitious trembled before the decree of the pope, and while there was a general sympathy for Luther, many felt that life was too dear to be risked in the cause of reform.

Amidst the general tumult, Luther remains calm and composed. "Be of good cheer," he says to Spalatin. "It was Christ that begun all this, and he will bring it to its appointed issue, even though my lot may be banishment and death. Jesus Christ is here present; and He that is in us is mightier than he that is in the world."

Luther formally appeals from the authority of the pope to a general council of the Christian church. Having stated his reasons for this step he says: "Wherefore I most humbly beseech the most serene, illustrious, excellent, wise, and worthy lords, Charles, the Roman Emperor, the electors, princes, counts, barons, knights, gentlemen, cities, and municipalities of the whole German nation, to adhere to this my protest, and unite with me to resist the antichristian proceedings of the pope, for God's glory, in defense of the church and of the Christian faith, and to uphold the free councils of Christendom; and Christ our Saviour will richly reward them by his everlasting grace. But if there be any who set my entreaties at naught, preferring obedience to the pope, an impious man, rather than to obey God, I do hereby disavow all responsibility on their account, having given a faithful warning to their consciences, and I leave them to the final judgment of God, together with the pope and all his adherents."

His next step was to publicly burn the pope's bull, with the canon laws, the decretals, and certain writings sustaining the papal power. By this action he boldly declared his final separation from the Roman Church. He accepted his excommunication, and proclaimed to the world that between himself and the pope there must hereafter be war. The great contest was now fully entered upon.

Viewed from a human stand-point, the path of duty and righteousness is not a path of peace and safety. By faith we must follow as the Lord leads us onward. But could we always discern the everlasting arms around and beneath us, there would be no occasion for the exercise of faith. The way of God's choosing may seem dark, yet it is the surest way to the light. In the midst of apparent disaster and defeat, God's providence is working out his purposes.

The eagle of the Alps is sometimes beaten down by the tempest into the narrow defiles of the mountains. Angry storm-clouds shut in this mighty bird of the forest, their dense, dark masses separating her from the sunny heights where she has built her nest. For a time her efforts to escape seem fruitless. She dashes to and fro, beating the air with her strong wings, and waking the echoes of the mountains with her cries. At length, with a scream of triumph, she darts upward, and, piercing the clouds, she is once more in the clear sunlight, with the darkness and tempest far beneath. Ever thus, by mighty efforts, have God's chosen servants urged their way upward, breasting opposition, reproach, and persecution, in their conflicts with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places.

When the hand of the Lord was upon the prophet Ezekiel in the vision of the valley of dry bones, he was commanded to prophesy to the wind; and in answer to his word, life was restored to the slain, and they stood up before him, an exceeding great army. This figure was presented before the prophet to show him that no work of restoration can be too hard for God to do, and none who trust in him need ever say, as Israel had said, "Our hope is lost."

Like the eagle, Luther had been shut in by dense clouds of superstition and Romish heresy, and he had been beaten about by the fierce tempest of opposition; but on the wings of a mighty faith he had risen above the storm, and was now grandly free, with the sunlight of Heaven shining upon his soul.

Standing under the broad shield of Omnipotence, Luther was doing a mighty work for God. Amid the war of conflicting opinions, he stood as a guide and a covert to a bewildered and benighted people. The torch of truth, kindled at the altar of God's word, he placed in the hands of princes and peasants, who aided him in his work, dispelling the dense darkness, and awakening all Europe from the slumber of ages.

The mighty conflicts and victories, the great sorrows and special joys, by which individuals and nations are carried forward in the path of reform and salvation, are of too great importance to be permitted to pass from the memory. Such experiences cost the heroes of faith too much to be often repeated in history; they should not be lightly regarded. Those struggles for freedom of conscience, should be a lesson to all, that no truth which involves self-denial and sacrifice will be favorably accepted by the world. A costly effort is required of every soul that will go in an opposite direction from the multitude. All that stand in Christ's name in defense of the truth must have a history of conflicts and sacrifices. They cannot advance in reform, as Christ leads the way, except at the risk of liberty and life.

It is through divine mercy in giving to the world such men as Martin Luther and his co-laborers that we are now free to worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience. We who are living so near the close of time should emulate the noble example of the great Reformer. Like Luther we should seek a deep and thorough knowledge of the word of God. It should be our highest ambition to stand firm as a rock when the strongholds of truth are assailed by an unbelieving world and an ungodly church. In the near conflict, thousands will be called to imitate Luther's constancy and courage. Now is the time for us to receive education and discipline in the school of Christ. Now is the time to cultivate faith and courage. Let the cry pass from one to another of the waiting ones, Stand fast. "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

God will again move mightily upon chosen servants to make terrible charges upon the hosts of Satan. The men whom he will accept to carry forward his work, to fight his battles, must be men of principle, brave and firm and true. The customs, traditions, and doctrines, even of professedly great and good men, must have no weight, until first brought to the infallible test of the law and the testimony. "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." To this test, popes and prelates refused to submit, knowing that it would overthrow at once all their pretended power. It was to maintain this great truth that Luther battled so firmly and fearlessly. His words echo down the line to all the tried and tempted defenders of the truth,—Stand fast. "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

The Reformer found in Christ a hiding-place from the storms of opposition, wrath, and hatred that threatened to overwhelm him. In Christ alone was peace and strength and security. Such will be the experience of every Christian. Amid all the changes and agitations of the world, the Rock of our salvation stands firm. It has been assailed by the combined hosts of earth and hell. For centuries have active minds planned, and strong hands labored, to remove this great corner-stone, and lay another foundation for the faith of the world. The papal power most nearly succeeded in this blasphemous work. But God raised up Luther to cry day and night, as he built upon the walls of Zion. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." That great corner-stone, the Rock of Ages, stands today unshaken. Amid all the tumults and conflicts of the world, Christ still offers rest to the weary,

and the water of life to the thirsting soul. Through the ages his words come down to us,—“I am the way, the truth and the life.”

August 2, 1883

Papal Plots Against Luther

As Luther exalted the word of God, and deposed the human power and authority that had usurped its place, the cry was raised by his enemies that he preached novelties, and that it could not be possible that great and learned men had been in so grave error. To this he answered: “These are not novelties that I preach. But I affirm that the doctrines of Christianity have been lost sight of by those whose special duty it was to preserve them; by the learned, by the bishops. I doubt not, indeed, that the truth has still found an abode in some few hearts, were it only with infants in the cradle. Poor husbandmen and simple children, in these days, understand more of Jesus Christ than the pope, the bishops, or the doctors.”

Luther went steadily forward, rejoicing in his freedom from the shackles of Rome. He spoke and wrote as God moved him, not only confirming all that he had hitherto said, but still more decidedly protesting against the errors and abominations of popery. Every word was a living spark, burning away the accumulated rubbish of ages.

Rome was not idle. Her emissaries hastened to Germany to congratulate the new emperor, Charles the Fifth, and by their flatteries, false representations, and protests, influenced him to employ his power against the Reformation. The emperor gave his consent to the public burning of Luther's writings, beyond the limits of the German States.

The pope's ambassadors were warned that such a step would inflame the wound rather than heal it; that the doctrine of Luther was deeply engraved where it could not be obliterated, in the hearts of the German people; and that a few fagots consuming a few sheets of paper would be of little avail, while it would ill befit the dignity of the emperor. But these scheming Romans were aiming not merely at the productions of Luther's pen, but at Luther himself. “These fires,” said they “are not sufficient to purify the pestilential atmosphere of Germany. Though they may strike terror into the simple-minded, they leave the author of the mischief unpunished. We must have an imperial edict sentencing Luther to death.”

But they found it no easy matter to accomplish this object. The emperor was not prepared to take this step without the advice of his counselors. “Let us first ascertain,” he responded, “what our father, the Elector of Saxony, thinks of the matter. We shall then be prepared to give our answer to the pope.” And the papal delegates were obliged to confer with the good elector.

Here flatteries, arguments, and threats alike failed. To their demand that he destroy Luther's writings; and punish the Reformer as he deserved, or deliver him to the papal power, the elector replied that the matter was one of too great importance to be decided hastily, and that his determination in regard to it should be duly communicated to them.

May God help the elector now; for his position is one of great difficulty. He is partially convinced of the truth; but in his circumstances and surroundings a strong pressure is brought to bear against it. On the one side are the emperor, the princes of the empire, and

above all the pope, whose power the elector was not yet ready to shake off; on the other side stands a poor monk, Martin Luther; for it is against this one man that all this assault is directed.

For a time it seemed that Satan was about to triumph. But God gave wisdom to Luther's defender; his courage, that had seemed to waver, again grew strong. He was filled with horror at the thought of delivering up to torture and death a man whom he believed to have been raised up of God to accomplish a great work. He saw that justice should be regarded above the desires of the pope, and he determined to act upon this principle.

The elector now gave the papal ambassadors to understand, "that neither his imperial Majesty nor any one else had yet made it appear to him that Luther's writings had been refuted, or demonstrated to be fit only for the flames; that he demanded, therefore, that Doctor Luther be furnished with a safe-conduct, and permitted to answer for himself before a tribunal composed of learned, pious, and impartial judges."

This was far from what the ambassadors desired. Every such opportunity granted to Luther had resulted in the weakening of the papal power and the strengthening and spread of the Reformation. To bring their arguments in contrast with the doctrines of Luther, which they knew they could not controvert, would prove a losing game to them. Justice and truth were principles which had no place in their system of faith or practice. The arguments which they could use with greatest effect against all opponents were fire and sword. They had expected the elector to yield to their demands, and without delay surrender the obnoxious monk. But Satan's power was circumscribed, and the cruel plots of Rome were frustrated by Him who is the eternal guardian of truth and justice.

Tidings of all that had transpired reached Wittenberg, and the friends of Luther were filled with joy. The Reformer pressed forward in his labors with fresh zeal. His words awoke new hope and courage in the hearts of the fearful and desponding. Luther stayed his soul upon God. His language was, "We see not the hand that is guiding us; we cannot, like Israel of old, look upon the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, and we hear not the voice that spoke to them from the mount. But if we wait upon the Lord, we shall be satisfied that the great Shepherd of Israel has been leading us all the way in the past, and that the path where he leads will be safe for all who follow him, even in the stormy days of trial and conflict." The first assembly of the German States after the accession of Charles the Fifth to the empire, gathered at Worms on the 6th of January, 1521. Never before had so many princes attended this national council. All were eager to take a part in the first acts of the young emperor's government, and all were ambitious to display their power and grandeur. There were important political questions and interests to be considered by this grand assembly, but all these appeared of little moment when contrasted with the cause of the monk of Wittenberg.

The emperor Charles was placed in a position of great perplexity and embarrassment. On the one hand was the papal legate, urging him to execute the pope's bull; on the other was the elector of Saxony, to whom he was in great degree indebted for his crown, and who entreated him to take no step against Luther until he should have granted him a hearing.

Charles had written to the elector to bring Luther with him to the diet, assuring him that the Reformer should be subjected to no injustice, that he should be protected from all violence, and should be allowed a free conference with one competent to discuss the disputed points.

Upon receiving this letter, the elector was not a little perplexed. Should he take the Reformer to Worms, he might be leading him to the scaffold. The friends of Luther were anxious and troubled; but he himself was calm. His health was at this time much impaired, yet he seemed anxious to appear before the emperor. He wrote to the elector: "If I cannot perform the journey to Worms as a man in good health, I will be carried thither on a litter. For, since the emperor has summoned me, I can regard it only as the cause of God. If they intend to use violence against me, as they probably do, for assuredly it is with no view of gaining information that they require me to appear before them, I commit the matter in the hands of God. He still lives and reigns who preserved the three Israelites in the fiery furnace. If it be not his will to save me, my life is but little worth. Let us only take care that the gospel be not exposed to the insults of the ungodly, and let us shed our blood in its defense rather than allow them to triumph. Who shall say whether my life or my death would contribute most to the salvation of my brethren? It is not for us to decide. Let us only pray God that our young emperor may not begin his reign by imbuing his hands in my blood. I would rather perish by the sword of Rome. You remember the judgments with which the emperor Sigismund was visited after the murder of John Huss. Expect anything from me but flight or recantation. Fly I cannot; still less can I recant."

The news was quickly circulated at Worms that Luther was to appear before the diet. A general excitement was created. Aleander, the papal legate to whom the care of Luther had been specially intrusted, was alarmed and enraged. On his way to the diet, this official had had opportunity to learn for himself how generally the gospel proclaimed by Luther had been received. He saw that it had found acceptance with the wealthy and learned, as well as with the poor and ignorant. Lawyers, nobles, the inferior clergy, many of the monks, and vast numbers of the common people, had embraced it, and received the Bible only as their standard of faith and practice. The supporters of the new faith were firm and fearless, while the partisans of Rome seemed stricken with terror.

The pride of Aleander had been sorely wounded by the reception accorded him on his journey through Germany. So great had been the change in public sentiment that but little honor or even courtesy was shown the representative of Rome. He arrived at Worms in bitterness of spirit, both because of the insults which he himself had received, and because of the wide-spread defection from popery.

The legate saw that Luther's appearance at Worms would result only in disaster to the papal cause. To institute inquiry into a case in which the pope had already pronounced sentence of condemnation, would be to cast contempt upon the authority of the sovereign pontiff. Aleander set himself to prevent this by every means in his power.

Furthermore he was apprehensive that the eloquent and powerful argument of this man, who had already wrought so great mischief, might result in turning away many of the princes from the cause of the pope. He therefore, in the most urgent manner, remonstrated with Charles against Luther's appearance at Worms. He warned, entreated, and threatened, until the emperor yielded, and wrote to the elector that if Luther would not retract he must leave him

behind at Wittenberg. The Reformer was much disappointed that he was forbidden to defend the truth at Worms. Aleander, not content with this victory, labored with all the power and cunning at his command to secure Luther's condemnation. With a persistence worthy of a better cause, he urged the matter upon the attention of princes, prelates, and other members of the assembly, accusing Luther of sedition, rebellion, impiety, and blasphemy. Satan's work bears the same stamp from century to century. The charges against Christ, against Stephen, and against Paul, were the same as the accuser of the brethren now urged against Luther. But in this case his rage brought its own defeat. The vehemence and passion manifested by Aleander, plainly revealed that he was actuated by hatred and revenge rather than by a zeal for religion. It was the prevailing sentiment of the assembly that Luther was innocent.

At this time the pope issued a new bull, and the excommunication which had before been threatened was decidedly pronounced against the Reformer and all who received his doctrines. Thus was broken the last tie that bound Luther to Rome.

August 9, 1521

Aleander's Speech Against Luther

With redoubled zeal, Aleander now urged upon the emperor the duty of executing the papal edicts. Overcome at last by this importunity, Charles bade the legate present his case to the diet. This was just what Aleander had secretly desired. With great care he prepared himself to appear before that august assembly. Rome had few advocates better fitted, by nature and education, to defend her cause. Aleander was not only the representative of the sovereign pontiff, invested with all the outward dignity befitting his exalted position, but he was one of the most eloquent men of his age. The friends of the Reformer looked forward to the result of his speech with some anxiety. The elector absented himself from the assembly, but instructed some of his counselors to be present, and to take notes of the legate's discourse.

There was no little excitement when Aleander, with great dignity and pomp, appeared before the diet. Many called to mind the scene of our Saviour's trial, when Annas and Caiaphas in the judgment-hall of Pilate demanded the death of him "who perverteth the nation."

With all the power of learning and eloquence, Aleander set himself to overthrow the truth. Charge after charge he hurled against Luther as an enemy of the church and the State, the living and the dead, clergy and laity, councils and private Christians. "There are people who tell us," he said, "that Luther is a man of piety. I will not impugn his private character. I will only remind this assembly that it is a common thing for the devil to deceive men under the appearance of sanctity."

A little further on, however, he attacks the Reformer, heaping upon him the most bitter invectives. Then turning to the emperor, he solemnly appeals to him to withdraw his protection from the monk of Wittenberg: "I beseech your imperial majesty not to do that which could only reflect dishonor upon your name. Meddle not with an affair in which the laity have no right to interpose. Discharge the duty that properly devolves upon you. Let Luther's doctrines be proscribed by your authority throughout the empire; let his writings be everywhere committed to the flames. Shrink not from the path of justice. There is enough in the errors of Luther to warrant the burning of a hundred thousand heretics."

In closing, he endeavors to cast contempt upon the adherents of the new doctrines: "What are all these Lutherans? A motley rabble of insolent grammarians, licentious priests, disorderly monks, ignorant advocates, degraded nobles, misled and perverted plebeians. How greatly superior is the Catholic party in numbers, in intelligence, in power! A unanimous decree of this illustrious assembly will open the eyes of the simple, show the unwary their danger, determine the wavering, and strengthen the weak-hearted."

The advocates of truth have in every age been attacked with just such weapons. The same arguments that were urged against Luther, are urged by our opponents today: "Who are these Sabbatarians? They are unlearned, few in numbers, and of the poorer class. Yet they claim to have the truth, and to be the chosen people of God. They are ignorant and deceived. How greatly superior in numbers and influence are our denominations. How many great and learned men are in our churches. How much more power is on our side." These are the arguments that have a telling influence upon the world. But they are no more conclusive now than in the days of the Reformer.

The Reformation did not, as many suppose, end with Luther. It is to be continued to the close of this world's history. Luther had a great work to do in reflecting upon others the light which God permitted to shine upon him; yet he was not to receive all the light which was to be given to the world. From that time to this new light has been continually shining upon God's word, new truths have been constantly unfolding. God is light, and he is ever imparting light to his followers.

Those who refuse to advance as the providence of God leads the way, seek to arrest the progress of those who endeavor to walk in the light. The churches of this generation profess to be holy, but they permit the love of the world to control them. They have united in spirit and fellowship with the workers of iniquity. They choose to depart from the divine commandment, rather than to separate themselves from the friendship and customs of the world. They are joined to the idols they have chosen; and because temporal prosperity and the favor of a sin-loving world are granted them, they deem themselves rich and in need of nothing. Pride, luxury, riches, and popularity are their treasures, and in their spiritual blindness they count these an evidence of the love and favor of God. Was the Romish church in great deception in Luther's day? The Protestant churches are in equally great deception today. They refuse to receive instruction or reproof. Their ministers cry, Peace, peace, and the people love the soothing message. In their willful blindness they believe only that which will not disturb their carnal security. But in every age of the world, God's true people have learned by experience as well as by the word of inspiration that prosperity and learning and worldly honor are no evidence of the favor of God. The life of Christ, the Captain of our salvation, teaches the lesson that on earth the true church cannot enjoy the favor of a wicked world.

The legate's address was three hours in length, and his impetuous eloquence made a deep impression upon the assembly. There was no Luther present, with the clear and convincing truths of God's word, to vanquish the papal champion. No attempt was made to defend the Reformer. There was manifest in the assembly a general impulse to root out the Lutheran heresy from the empire. Rome had enjoyed the most favorable opportunity to maintain the justice of her cause. Her claims had been presented with the utmost skill. The greatest of her orators had spoken in this assembly of princes. All that Rome could say in her own

vindication had been said. Error had presented her strongest arguments. Henceforth the contrast between truth and error would be more clearly seen, as they should take the field in open warfare. The apparent victory was but the signal of defeat. Never from that day would Rome stand as secure as she had stood.

The majority of the assembly were ready to sacrifice Luther to the demands of the pope; but many of them saw and deplored the existing depravity in the church, and desired a suppression of the abuses suffered by the German people in consequence of the extravagances and lies of popery. The legate had presented the papal rule in the light most favorable for Rome. Now the Lord moved upon a member of the diet to give a true delineation of the effects of papal tyranny. With noble firmness Duke George of Saxony stood up in that dignified assembly, and specified with terrible exactness the wrongs, the deceptions, and abominations of Rome, and their dire result. He exposed the utter corruption of her ecclesiastical system and its workings. His speech closed with these words:

“These are but a few of the abuses which cry out against Rome for redress. All shame is laid aside, and one object alone incessantly pursued: money! evermore money! so that the very men whose duty it is to disseminate the truth, are engaged in nothing but the propagation of falsehood; and yet they are not merely tolerated but rewarded; because the more they lie, the larger are their gains. This is the foul source from which so many corrupted streams flow out on every side. Profligacy and avarice go hand in hand. The officials summon women to their house on various pretenses, and endeavor either by threats or presents, to seduce them; and if the attempt fails, they ruin their reputation. Oh! it is the scandal occasioned by the clergy that plunges so many poor souls into everlasting perdition. A thorough reform must be effected. To accomplish that reform, a General Council must be assembled. Wherefore, most excellent princes and lords, I respectfully beseech you to give this matter your immediate attention.”

A more able and forcible denunciation of the abuses of Rome could not have been made by Luther himself; and the fact that the speaker was an opponent of Luther, gave greater influence to his words. The assembly proceeded to constitute a committee for the purpose of drawing up a list of popish grievances. The list, when completed, was found to number one hundred and one. The report was presented to the emperor with the earnest request that he would do what was just in so important a matter. “What a loss of Christian souls,” said the committee to the emperor, “what injustice, what extortion, are the daily fruits of those scandalous practices to which the spiritual head of Christendom affords his countenance! The ruin and dishonor of our nation must be averted. We therefore very humbly, but very urgently, beseech you to sanction a general reformation, to undertake the work, and to carry it through.”

Had the eyes of the assembly been opened, they would have beheld angels of God in the midst of them, shedding beams of light athwart the darkness of error, and opening minds and hearts to the reception of sacred truths. It was the power of the God of truth and wisdom that controlled even the adversaries of the Reformation, and thus prepared the way for the great work about to be accomplished. Martin Luther was not present; but a Greater than Luther had made his voice heard in that assembly.

Charles could not disregard the appeals of the diet, so utterly unexpected both by the legate and himself. He immediately withdrew the edict for the burning of Luther's writings, and ordered that they be delivered into the hands of the magistrates.

The assembly now demanded Luther's appearance before them. "It is unjust," urged his friends, "to condemn Luther without having heard him, and without having ascertained from his own lips that he is the author of those books which it is proposed to burn."

"His doctrine," said his opponents, "has taken so fast hold on men's minds that it is impossible to check its progress, unless we allow him a hearing. There shall be no disputing with him; and in the event of his acknowledging his writings, and refusing to retract them, we will all, with one accord, electors, princes, and states of the holy empire, in firm adherence to the faith of our ancestors, give your majesty our unsparing aid to carry your decrees into full effect."

The legate Aleander is greatly troubled by this proposal. He knows that he has everything to dread from Luther's presence before the diet. He therefore appeals to the princes known to be most favorably disposed toward the pope: "There shall be no disputing with Luther, you say; but how can we be sure that the genius of this audacious man, the fire that flashes from his eyes, the eloquence of his speech, the mysterious spirit that animates him, will not suffice to excite a tumult? Already there are many who revere him as a saint, and his image is everywhere to be seen encircled with rays of glory, like those which surround the heads of the blessed."

And now a Satanic thought enters the mind of this agent of the great adversary, and he adds: "If he must needs be cited to appear, beware, at all events, of pledging the public faith for his safety." Aleander hoped that, should Luther appear at Worms, the Romanists might obtain possession of his person, and silence forever that reproving voice, even before it should utter a word in the assembly.

The priests and Pharisees were actuated by the same spirit in their opposition to Paul. Whenever the apostle's words in vindication of the truth were allowed to influence the people, the cause of the Jewish leaders suffered loss; therefore the same Satanic subtlety was employed to silence Paul's voice. Those Jewish leaders knew, as did Aleander, that if truth were presented before the people, it would appear in so striking contrast to error that none could fail to see the distinction.

The same motive led the Jews to destroy Stephen. It was the words of truth which the priests and elders could not controvert that inspired those wicked judges with such madness against this man of God that even while his countenance was shining with the glory from Heaven, they dragged him from the judgment-hall, and silenced his eloquence, not with arguments from the law and the prophets, but with stones.

August 16, 1883

Luther's Journey to Worms

Luther at Wittenberg hears of the exciting scenes transpiring in the diet. Soon he receives a note of the articles which he will be required to retract. But, like Daniel of old, he purposes in his heart that he will maintain his fidelity to God. He writes to Spalatin: "Never fear that I will

retract a single syllable, since the only argument they have to urge against me is that my writings are at variance with the observances of what they call the Church. If our Emperor Charles sends for me only to retract, my answer shall be that I will remain here, and it will be all the same as though I had been at Worms, and returned again. But if the emperor chooses then to send for me, to put me to death as an enemy to the empire, I shall be ready to obey his summons; for, by Christ's help, I will never abandon his word in the hour of battle. I know that these blood-thirsty men will never rest until they have taken my life. God grant that my death may be laid to the charge of the papists alone!"

Notwithstanding the entreaties, protests, and threats of Aleander, the emperor at last determined that Luther should appear before the diet. He accordingly issued a writ of summons, and also a safe-conduct insuring Luther's return to a place of security. These were borne to Wittenberg by a herald, who was commissioned to conduct the Reformer to Worms.

This was a dark and threatening hour for the Reformation. The friends of Luther were terrified and distressed. But the Reformer remained calm and firm. He was entreated not to risk his life. His friends, knowing the prejudice and enmity against him, feared that even his safe-conduct would not be respected. And it had been reported that the safe-conduct of heretics was not valid.

Luther replied: "The papists have little desire to see me at Worms; but they long for my condemnation and death. No matter. Pray not for me, but for the word of God. My blood will hardly be cold before thousands and tens of thousands, in every land, will be made to answer for the shedding of it. The 'most holy' adversary of Christ, the father, and master, and chief of man-slayers, is resolved that it shall be spilled. Amen! The will of God be done. Christ will give me his Spirit to overcome these ministers of Satan. I despise them while I live; I will triumph over them in death. They are striving hard at Worms to force me to recant. My recantation shall be this: I said formerly that the pope was Christ's vicar; now I say that he is the adversary of the Lord, and the apostle of the devil."

Luther was not to make his perilous journey alone. Besides the imperial messenger, three of his firmest friends determined to accompany him. With deep emotion the Reformer bade farewell to his associates. Turning to Melancthon, he said: "If I never return, and my enemies should take my life, cease not, dear brother, to teach and stand fast in the truth. Labor in my stead, since I can no longer work. If thy life be spared, my death will matter little."

A multitude of students and citizens, to whom the gospel was precious, bade him farewell with weeping as he departed. The imperial herald, in full costume, and bearing the imperial eagle, led the way on horseback, followed by his servant. Next came the carriage in which rode Luther and his friends. Thus the Reformer set out from Wittenberg.

On the journey they saw that the minds of the people were oppressed by gloomy forebodings. At some towns no honors were proffered them. As they stopped for the night at Naumburg, a friendly priest expressed his fears by holding up before Luther the portrait of an Italian reformer who suffered martyrdom for the truth's sake. With trembling voice the priest bade Luther, "Stand fast in the truth, and thy God will never forsake thee."

Upon arriving, the next day, at Weimar, they learned that Luther's writings had been condemned at Worms. In the streets of the city the imperial messengers were proclaiming the emperor's decree, and urging all men to bring the proscribed works to the magistrates. The herald, in alarm, asked Luther if, under the circumstances, he still wished to go on. He answered: "I will go on, though I should be put under interdict in every town."

At Erfurth, Luther was received with honor. Several leagues from the city, the rector of the university, with senators, students, and citizens, met him on horseback, and welcomed him with joyful acclamations. Great numbers of the population thronged the road, and cheered him as he was about to enter the city. All were eager to see the intrepid monk who had dared give battle to the pope. Thus, surrounded by admiring crowds, he entered the city where, in his earlier years, he had often begged a morsel of bread.

He was urged to preach. This he had been forbidden to do; but the herald gave his consent, and the monk whose duty it once was to unclosethe gates and sweep the aisles, now ascended the pulpit, while the people listened, as if spell-bound, to his words.

The bread of life was broken to those hungry souls. Jesus was lifted up before them as above popes, legates, emperors, and kings. Said Luther: "Christ, our Mediator, has overcome. This is the great news! and we are saved by his work, not by our own." "Some perhaps will say, You talk to us much about faith; teach us then how to obtain it. Well, agreed. I will show you how. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, 'Peace be unto you. Behold my hands!' That is to say, Look, O man, it is I, I alone, who have taken away thy sin and redeemed thee, and now thou hast peace, saith the Lord." "Believe the gospel, believe St. Paul, and not the letters and decretals of the popes."

Luther makes no reference to his own perilous position. He does not seek to make himself the object of thought or sympathy. In the contemplation of Christ, he has lost sight of self. He hides behind the Man of Calvary, seeking only to present Christ as the sinner's Redeemer.

As Luther proceeds on his journey he is everywhere regarded with great interest. An eager throng constantly accompanies him. Friendly voices warn him of the purpose of the Romanists. "You will be burned alive," say they, "and your body reduced to ashes, as was that of John Huss." Luther answers, "Though they should kindle a fire whose flames should reach from Worms to Wittenberg, and rise up to heaven, I would go through it in the name of the Lord, and stand before them; I would enter the jaws of the behemoth, break his teeth, and confess the Lord Jesus Christ."

The news of Luther's approach to Worms created great commotion among the supporters of the pope. His arrival might result in the defeat of their cause. An artful plan was at once laid to prevent him from finishing his journey. A troop of horsemen met him on his way with the message that a friendly knight desired him to proceed immediately to his fortress. The emperor's confessor was said to be there, awaiting a conference. His influence with Charles was unbounded, and everything might be harmoniously arranged.

The messenger urged that there be no delay. Luther's friends knew not what course to take, but he did not hesitate for a moment. "I shall go on," he answered, "and if the emperor's

confessor has anything to say to me, he will find me at Worms, I repair to the place of summons."

At length Spalatin himself became alarmed for the safety of the Reformer. He heard it reported among the papists at Worms that Luther's safe-conduct would not be respected, and he immediately sent out a messenger to warn him of his danger. As Luther was approaching the city, a note from Spalatin was handed him, containing these words, "Abstain from entering Worms." Luther, still unshaken, turned his eyes on the messenger, and said, "Go tell your master that though there should be as many devils at Worms as there are tiles on its roofs, I would enter it." And the messenger returned, and repeated the amazing declaration.

Splendid was the reception granted Luther upon his arrival at Worms. The crowd that flocked to the gates to welcome him was even greater than at the public entry of the emperor himself. "God will be my defense," said the Reformer, as he alighted from his carriage.

Yet the news of his arrival was heard with alarm by both friends and foes. The elector feared for Luther's safety, Alexander for the success of his own iniquitous schemes. The emperor immediately convoked his council. "Luther is come," said he, "what must be done?" One of the bishops, a rigid papist, responded, "We have long thought of this matter. Let your majesty rid yourself at once of this man. Did not Sigismund bring John Huss to the stake? One is under no obligation either to give or to observe a safe-conduct in the case of heretics." "Not so," said the emperor, "what we promise we should observe and keep." It was therefore decided that Luther should be heard.

All the city were eager to see the Reformer, and he had enjoyed but a few hours' rest when counts, barons, knights, gentlemen, and citizens flocked eagerly about him. Even his enemies could but mark his firm courageous bearing, the kindly and joyous expression upon his countenance, and the solemn elevation and deep earnestness that gave to his words an irresistible power. Some were convinced that a divine influence attended him; others declared, as had the Pharisees concerning Christ, "He hath a devil."

August 23, 1883

Luther Before the Diet

On the day following his arrival at Worms, Luther was notified to appear in the afternoon before the emperor and the members of the diet. This was the day that he had long desired; but to human appearance there was great danger before him.

On that day came a letter from a courageous knight, whispering in the Reformer's ear the words of an ancient prophet: "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; send thee help out of Zion; grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfill all thy counsel."

He added: "O beloved Luther, my venerated father! fear not, and stand firm. The counsel of the wicked has laid wait for you, and they have opened their mouths against you, like roaring lions. But the Lord will arise against them, and put them to flight. Fight, therefore, valiantly the battles of Christ. As for me, I, too, will combat boldly. Would to God that I were permitted to see how they frown. But the Lord will purge his vineyard... May Christ preserve you!"

At the appointed hour a herald appeared to conduct Luther to the presence of the diet. The streets were so thronged as to be impassable, and it was only through back ways and gardens that the Reformer and his attendants reached the town-hall. The roofs and the pavements, above, beneath, on every side, were covered with spectators. When they arrived at the hall, the crowd was so great that the soldiers were obliged to clear a passage. Within the outer inclosure every place was crowded. More than five thousand spectators, German, Spanish, and Italian, thronged the ante-chamber and recesses.

As Luther approached the door which was to admit him to the audience-room and the presence of his judges, an old general, the hero of many battles, touched him upon the shoulder as he passed, and shaking his head said to him kindly, "My poor monk, my poor monk, thou hast a march and a struggle to go through, such as neither I nor many other captains have seen the like in our most bloody battles. But if thy cause be just, and thou art sure of it, go forward in God's name and fear nothing! He will not forsake thee."

The doors are thrown open, and Luther enters. Never had any man appeared in the presence of a more imposing assembly. An emperor whose kingdom extended across both hemispheres; his brother, the archduke; the electors of the empire, most of whose successors were crowned heads; dukes, among whom were those fierce and bloody enemies of the Reformation, the Duke of Alva and his sons; archbishops, bishops, and prelates; the ambassadors of foreign nations; princes, counts, and barons; and the pope's ambassadors,—in all two hundred persons. Such were the judges before whom Martin Luther was to answer for his faith.

A signal victory was won for the truth, by the very fact of Luther's appearance before that princely council. That a man whom the pope had condemned should be judged by another tribunal, was virtually a denial of the pope's supreme authority. The Reformer, placed under ban, and denounced from human fellowship by the pope, had been assured protection, and was granted a hearing, by the highest dignitaries of the nation. The pope had commanded him to be silent; but he was about to speak in the presence of thousands assembled from all parts of Christendom.

In the presence of that powerful and titled assembly, the lowly-born Reformer seemed awed and embarrassed. Some princes who were near him, observing his emotion, approached him kindly and one of them whispered, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." Another said, "When you are brought before kings, it shall be given you, by the Spirit of your Father, what you shall say." Thus the words of Christ were brought by the great ones of earth to strengthen the Reformer in his hour of trial.

Luther was conducted to a position directly in front of the emperor's throne. All eyes were fixed upon the man who had dared with pen and voice to resist the authority of the pope. A deep silence fell upon the crowded assembly. Then an imperial officer arose, and in a clear voice addressed the Reformer thus:

"Martin Luther, his sacred and invincible Majesty has cited you before his throne, acting on the opinion and advice of the States of the holy Roman Empire, to require you to answer two questions; First, Do you acknowledge these writings to have been composed by you?" and

the speaker pointed with his finger to about twenty volumes placed on a table in the center of the hall, immediately before Luther. "Secondly, Are you prepared to retract these works and the propositions contained therein, or do you persist in what you have therein advanced?"

The titles of the books having been read, Luther answered. "Most gracious emperor, princes, and lords! his imperial majesty puts to me two questions. As to the first, I acknowledge the books just named to be mine. I cannot deny them. As to the second, whether I will maintain all these or retract them, seeing it is a question of faith and of one's salvation and of the word of God, which is the greatest treasure in Heaven and earth, and deserving at all times our highest reverence, it would be rash and perilous for me to speak inconsiderately, without reflection. I might affirm either more or less than is consistent with truth; in either case I should fall under the sentence of Christ. 'He that denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in Heaven.' Therefore I beg of your imperial majesty time for reflection, that I may be able to reply to the question proposed, without prejudice to the word of God or to my own salvation."

In making this request, Luther moved wisely. His course convinced the assembly that he did not act from passion or impulse. Such calmness and self-command, unexpected in one who had shown himself bold and uncompromising, added to his power, and enabled him afterward to answer with a prudence, decision, wisdom, and dignity, which surprised and disappointed his adversaries, and rebuked their insolence and pride.

The different orders of the diet withdrew for consultation, and when again assembled, they agreed to grant the Reformer's request, on condition, however, that his answer be returned by word of mouth, and not in writing.

As Luther was conducted to his lodgings, a rumor was circulated through the city that the pope had triumphed, and the Reformer would be brought to the stake. Both threats and expressions of respect and sympathy greeted him as he made his way through the crowded streets. Many visited him at his lodgings, and declared themselves ready to defend him with their lives. In the midst of the excitement, the Reformer alone was calm. A letter written by him at this time reveals his feelings:

"I have just made my appearance before the emperor and his brother Ferdinand, and been asked whether I would retract my writings. I answered, The books laid before me are mine; but concerning the revocation, I will say what I will do tomorrow. This is all the time I asked, and all they will give. But Christ being gracious to me, I will not retract an iota."

The next day he was to appear before the diet to render his second answer. At times his heart sunk within him as he contemplated the forces that were combined against the truth. His faith faltered as his enemies seemed to multiply before him, and the powers of darkness to prevail. In anguish of spirit he threw himself with his face upon the earth, and poured out those broken, heart-rending cries which none but God can fully interpret. In his helplessness, his soul fastened upon Christ the mighty deliverer. It was not for his own safety, but for the success of the truth, that he wrestled mightily with God; and he prevailed. He was strengthened with the assurance that he would not appear alone before the council. Peace returned to his soul, and he rejoiced that he was permitted to uphold and defend the word of God before the rulers of the nation.

As the time for his appearance drew near, he approached a table on which lay the Holy Scriptures, placed his left hand upon the sacred volume, and raising his right hand to Heaven, he vowed to adhere constantly to the gospel, and to confess his faith freely, even though he should be called to seal his testimony with his blood.

August 23, 1883

The Foundation of Character

Never did greater responsibilities await the youth than await them now. Never was it more important that a right mould be given to the character of the rising generation. Upon every youth, God has bestowed varied capabilities, mental, moral, and physical; and he requires that those be cultivated and improved. We are formed for activity; every power of mind and body must be developed, strengthened, and increased by use. No one should feel that he is his own master, and can do as he pleases with his time and his intellect. Time and talents belong to God, and he has intrusted them to us, to be employed for his glory.

Christ has purchased us with an infinite price. All that we are, and all that we possess, is his. His mercy and tenderness have been exercised toward us throughout our life, and he justly claims our gratitude, our reverence, and love. He claims our obedience also. We should respect his laws in every particular. They are given, not to deprive us of any good, but to guide our feet into safe paths,—the paths of peace and happiness.

Furthermore, our love and obedience are due to God as our Creator. He who has bestowed upon us every blessing which we enjoy, he who has formed us, who understands our needs, and who rejoices in the happiness of the creatures he has made,—he is entitled to our implicit faith and ready obedience. To obey God is to accept the guidance of infinite love and wisdom. It is to pursue a course which will ennoble the character and strengthen the intellect, and which alone will prepare us for a life of true enjoyment and real usefulness. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

We are not placed in this world merely to seek the enjoyment of the present life; but, by forming a true and noble character, we are to prepare for the future, immortal life. Dear youth, you have a work to do which no other can do for you. Be determined that you will possess a right character. You cannot receive this as a birthright, you cannot buy it with money, you cannot procure it by fraud; but you may have it, if you will seek it in the right way. A noble character must be formed, must be built up by your own patient, painstaking effort, while you rely in faith upon the merits of Christ your Saviour.

None should look with indifference upon this important matter. We must not leave our character to be formed by circumstances. The farmer who through indolence or neglect leaves his field uncultivated, reaps a harvest of briars and thorns. So the youth who slothfully neglects the cultivation of mind and heart, will possess a deformed, unlovely character. He will not respect himself, and he will not be happy, try hard as he may.

The youth cannot afford to float carelessly along, exposed to the many influences that are ready to draw them away from the truth, from religion, from peace, and happiness, receiving any impression that Satan may choose to make upon the mind. There are stern battles to fight against hereditary and cultivated faults of character and disposition. Satan watches

every opportunity to divert the mind from thoughts of God. He seeks to prevent us from searching the heart, from studying the law of God and comparing our life and character with its perfect standard. We must guard against his wiles. We should ever remember that life is short, and if we would attain to that perfection of character which Christ requires of us, every hour of our probation must be wisely improved as a treasure more precious than gold.

The formation of a good character involves hard work and severe self-denial; but it richly repays the effort. It is a resistance of the devil. It is the obtaining of daily victory over selfishness, pride, and folly, and the daily cultivation of love, mercy, and beneficence.

Satan is constantly seeking to strengthen the evil traits of character, that your influence may be exerted to lead others to a wrong course. Resolve in the strength of God to defeat his purpose. Set your mark high, and conquer self at any cost. Persevering, well-directed labor will succeed.

While excellence of character can never be attained except by your own exertion, do not forget that at every step you need and may obtain help and grace from Christ. He himself passed through all the experience of childhood and youth, and he knows how to sympathize with the young. He will never forsake a soul that trusts in him. He will listen to the prayer of the contrite, and will be a present help in every time of need. Do not, then, become discouraged in your efforts. Labor more earnestly for a symmetrical character than for silver or gold. You will meet with disappointments and discouragements. Your efforts may not be appreciated, your failures may call forth severe censure. But do not yield to discouragement. The Saviour pities your weakness, he reads the desire of your heart, and he marks every sincere effort to do the right.

Then be of good courage. Look in faith to Jesus. Be much in prayer. While you are engaged in your work, at home, or at school, or even while walking in the street, let the heart's silent petitions ascend to God. Have also regular times for prayer, and let them not be neglected. In this course you may be successful in overcoming the evils of your nature; you may enjoy peace, hope, and joy in Christ, and by words and example you may exert an influence to encourage others in the right way.

Do not fear to stand firm for the right under any and all circumstances. Do not think it uncourteous to meet with a decided "No," those who would suggest evil thoughts, or would urge you to any act which God would not approve.

"When sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Do they sneeringly call you a coward, tell them that if it is cowardly to fear to do wrong, then you are a coward. The bravery that is evinced in sacrificing principle, for fear of ridicule, is a low, Satanic spirit that you should ever hold in contempt.

"Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known!"

August 30, 1883

Luther's Second Answer Before the Diet

When Luther was again ushered into the presence of the diet, his countenance bore no trace of fear or embarrassment. Humble and peaceful, yet grandly brave and noble, he stood as God's witness among the great ones of earth.

The imperial officer now demanded his decision concerning the second question,—whether he was prepared to defend his books as a whole, or desired to retract any part of them.

Luther made his answer in a subdued and humble tone, without violence or passion. His demeanor was diffident and respectful, yet he manifested a confidence and joy that surprised the assembly.

After imploring the indulgence of the diet if by reason of his secluded, monastic life he should neglect any of the customary proprieties of courtly address, he observed that his published works were not all of the same character. In some he had treated of faith and good works with such plainness and Christian simplicity that even his enemies were obliged to confess them not only harmless but profitable. To retract these would be to condemn truths which all parties confessed.

The second class of these works were directed against popery, exposing those who by their teaching and example were corrupting all Christendom, both in body and soul. No one, said he, can deny nor conceal that by the laws and doctrines of the popes the consciences of Christians are held in bondage, burdened and tormented, and that the property and wealth of Christendom, especially of the German nation, are devoured by the incredible rapacity of Rome. Were I to revoke what I have written on this subject, what should I do but strengthen this tyranny, and open a wider door to so many and great impieties?

The third class of his books were written against individuals who undertook the defense of Romish tyranny, and the overthrow of the doctrines which he had inculcated. Concerning these he said, I freely confess that I have been more violent than was becoming. I do not think myself a saint; but even these books I cannot revoke, because in so doing I should sanction the impieties of my opponents, and they would then take occasion to crush God's people with still greater cruelty.

But, he continued, as I am a mere man, and not God, I will defend myself as did Christ, who said, "If I have spoken evil bear witness against me." By the mercy of God, I implore your imperial majesty, or any one else who can, whoever he may be, to prove to me from the writings of the prophets that I am in error. As soon as I shall be convinced, I will instantly retract all my errors, and will be the first to cast my books into the fire.

What I have just said, I think will clearly show that I have well considered and weighed the dangers to which I am exposing myself; but far from being dismayed by them, I rejoice exceedingly to see the gospel this day as of old a cause of disturbance and disagreement. It is the character and destiny of God's word. Said Christ, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." God is wonderful and awful in his counsels. Let us have a care lest in our endeavors to arrest discords we be found to fight against the holy word of God, and bring down upon our heads a frightful deluge of inextricable dangers, present disaster, and everlasting desolations. Let us have a care lest the reign of the young and noble prince, the Emperor

Charles, on whom, next to God, we build so many hopes, should not only commence, but continue and terminate its course, under the most fatal auspices. I might cite examples drawn from the oracles of God. I might speak of Pharaohs, of kings of Babylon or of Israel, who were never more contributing to their own ruin than when, by measures in appearance most prudent, they thought to establish their authority. God removeth the mountains, and they know not.

In speaking thus, I do not suppose that such noble princes have need of my poor judgment; but I wish to acquit myself of a duty that Germany has a right to expect from her children. And so, commending myself to your august majesty, and your most serene highnesses, I beseech you, in all humility, not to permit the hatred of mine enemies to rain upon me an indignation I have not deserved.

Luther had spoken in German; he was requested to repeat the same words in Latin. The German tongue did not please the emperor, nor was it readily comprehended by the Spanish and Italian courtiers. Though much exhausted by the previous effort, Luther complied with the request, and repeated his speech in Latin with the same clearness and energy as at the first. God in his providence directed in this matter. The minds of many of the princes were so blinded by error and superstition that at the first delivery they did not see the force of Luther's reasoning, but the repetition enabled them to perceive with great clearness the points presented. The Spirit of God set home the truth, and a deep and lasting impression was made. The Reformation had gained a victory which would tell with great power against the papacy.

But those who stubbornly closed their eyes to the light, who were determined not to be convinced of the truth, were enraged at the power of Luther's words. Of this class was the spokesman of the diet. As Luther ceased speaking, this official said angrily, "You have not given any answer to the inquiry put to you. You are not to question the decision of the councils; you are required to return a clear and distinct answer. Will you, or will you not retract?"

Luther answered firmly, "Since your most serene majesty and your high mightiness require of me a simple, clear, and direct answer, I will give one; and it is this: I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the councils; because it is as clear as day that they have often erred and contradicted each other. If, then, I am not convinced by proof from Holy Scripture or by cogent reasons; if I am not satisfied by the very texts that I have cited; and if my judgment is not in this way brought into subjection to God's word, I neither can nor will retract anything, for it cannot be right for a Christian to speak against his conscience." Then turning his eyes upon the assembly before which he stood, and which held his life in their hands, he said, "Here I stand, I can do no other. May God help me! Amen!"

So stands this righteous man upon the sure foundation, the prophets and apostles, Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. Firm and fearless at his post of duty is the great Reformer. Faithful among the faithless, unheeding the storms of malice and revenge, he stands a mighty cedar of Lebanon among the trees of the forest. While the passions and pollutions of the multitude surge around him like waves of the great deep, he stands, a Heaven-sent beacon, to warn the imperiled mariner of the hidden shoal and the rocky shore.

Luther knows not what may be his fate; but he knows that the cause of truth can never fail, and he is ready to die, if need be, knowing that by death he may serve the truth better than by his life. Light from the throne of God illuminated his countenance. His greatness and purity of character, his peace and joy of heart, were manifest to all, as he testified against the power of error, and witnessed to the superiority of that faith that overcomes the world.

When the Reformer ceased speaking, the whole assembly were for a time motionless with amazement. Several of the princes were charmed with his frankness and nobility of soul. The emperor himself, deeply impressed, exclaimed, "The monk speaks with an intrepid heart and unshaken courage." The Spaniards and Italians were confounded, and began to ridicule that moral grandeur which their base and unprincipled minds could not comprehend.

The partisans of Rome had been worsted; their cause appeared in a most unfavorable light. They sought to maintain their power, not by appealing to the Scriptures to show Luther the error of his course, but by a resort to threats, Rome's unfailing argument. Said the spokesman of the diet, angrily addressing Luther, "If you do not retract, the emperor and the States of the empire will proceed to consider how to deal with an obstinate heretic."

Luther's friends, who had with great joy listened to his noble defense, trembled at these words; but the doctor himself said firmly, "May God be my helper! for I can retract nothing."

Luther then withdrew, while the princes consulted. When he was called in again, their orator thus addressed him, "Martin, you have not spoken with that humility which befits your condition. The distinction you have drawn as to your works was needless; for if you retracted such as contain errors, the emperor would not allow the rest to be burned. It is absurd to require to be refuted by Scripture, when you have been revising heresies condemned by the General Council of Constance. The emperor therefore commands you to say simply, Yes, or No, whether you mean to affirm what you have advanced, or whether you desire to retract any part thereof."

Luther replied calmly, "I have no other answer to give than that I have already given."

They understood him perfectly. Firm as a rock he stood, while the fiercest billows of worldly power beat harmlessly against him. The simple energy of his words, his fearless bearing, his calm, speaking eye, and the unalterable determination expressed in every word and act, made a deep impression upon the assembly. There was no longer the slightest hope that he could be induced, either by promises or threats, to yield to the mandate of Rome. The monk had triumphed over the rulers of this world.

Charles the Fifth rose from his seat, and the whole assembly rose at the same time. "The diet will meet again tomorrow morning to hear the emperor's decision," announced the chancellor. There were many in that company actuated by the same spirit which inspired the Pharisees of old. They thirsted for the blood of him whose arguments they could not controvert. Yet Luther, understanding his danger, had spoken to all with Christian dignity and calmness. His words had been free from pride, passion, and misrepresentation. He lost sight of himself, and of the great men surrounding him, and felt only that he was in the presence of One infinitely superior to popes, prelates, kings, and emperors. And Christ, reigning in Luther's heart, spoke through his testimony with a power and grandeur that for the time

inspired both friends and foes with awe and wonder. The converting power of God was in that council, impressing the hearts of the chiefs of the empire.

The pope's adherents, feeling that they had been defeated, angrily asked why the chancellor of the diet had not sooner interrupted the guilty monk. Several of the princes openly acknowledged the justice of Luther's cause. Many were convinced of the truth; but with some the impressions received were not lasting. The seed sown had not much deepness of earth, and the heat of opposition caused it to wither away. There was another class who did not at the time express their convictions, but who, having searched the Scriptures for themselves, at a future time declared with great boldness for the Reformation.

The Elector Frederic had looked forward with anxiety to Luther's appearance before the diet, and with deep emotion he listened to his speech. He rejoiced at the doctor's courage, firmness, and self-possession, and was proud of being his protector. He contrasted the parties in contest; on the one hand the world and the church, in all their pride and power, and on the other a single obscure monk; and he saw the wisdom of popes, kings, and prelates brought to naught by the power of truth. The papacy had sustained a defeat which would be felt among all nations and in all ages.

September 6, 1521

Charles V. Against Luther

Aleander, the papal legate, clearly perceived the effect produced by Luther's speech. He feared, as never before, for the security of the Romish power, and resolved to employ every means at his command to effect the Reformer's overthrow. With all the eloquence and diplomatic skill for which he was so eminently distinguished, he represented to the youthful emperor the folly and danger of sacrificing, in the cause of an insignificant monk, the friendship and support of the powerful see of Rome.

His words were not without effect. On the day following Luther's answer, Charles Fifth caused a message to be presented to the diet, announcing his determination to carry out the policy of his predecessors to maintain and protect the Catholic religion. Since Luther had refused to renounce his errors, the most vigorous measures should be employed against him and the heresies he taught. Nevertheless, the safe-conduct granted him must be respected; and before proceedings against him could be instituted, he must be allowed to reach his home in safety.

"I am firmly resolved to tread in the footsteps of my ancestors," wrote the monarch. Thus he took his position, refusing to accept any light in advance of what his fathers had received, or perform any duty that his fathers had not performed.

He seemed to feel that a change of religious views would be inconsistent with the dignity of a great king. There are many at the present day thus clinging to the customs and traditions of their fathers. When the Lord sends them additional light, they refuse to accept it, because, not having been granted to their fathers, it was not received by them. We are not placed where our fathers were, consequently our duties and responsibilities are not the same as theirs. We shall not be approved of God in looking to the example of our fathers to determine our duty instead of searching the word of truth for ourselves.

Were our fathers engaged in an evil work? We are not to do wickedly because they did. Were they devoted to a good work? We can imitate them only by performing our duty as faithfully as they performed theirs; by heeding the light granted to us as faithfully as they heeded that which shone upon them; in short, by doing as they would have done had they lived in our day, and enjoyed our privileges and opportunities. Our responsibility is greater than was that of our ancestors. We are accountable for the light which they received, and which was handed down as an inheritance for us, and we are also accountable for the additional light which is now shining upon us from the sure word of prophecy. The truth that has convinced the understanding or convicted the soul, by whatever means it may have been given, will judge us at the last great day. No one will be condemned because he did not believe that which was never presented to his understanding or urged upon his conscience. Said Christ of the unbelieving Jews: "If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin."

The same divine power had spoken through Luther to the emperor and princes of Germany. And as the light shone forth from God's word, his Spirit pleaded for the last time with many in that assembly. Had not this appeal been presented to their understanding, their sin had not been so great. But the truth had stood forth in direct and unmistakable contrast with error; therefore their rejection of it sealed their condemnation.

The emperor decides that he will not step out of the royal path of custom, even to walk in the ways of truth and righteousness. Because his fathers did, he will uphold the papacy, with all its cruelty and corruption. With this decision, his day of mercy forever ended.

As Pilate, centuries before, had permitted pride and love of popularity to close his heart against the world's Redeemer; as the trembling Felix bade the messenger of truth, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee;" as the proud Agrippa confessed, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," yet turned away from the Heaven-sent message,—so had Charles Fifth, yielding to the dictates of worldly pride and policy, refused his last call from God.

Charles had announced his decision in the case of Luther without previous consultation with the diet. This hasty and independent act of the youthful emperor excited the displeasure of that august body. Two opposite parties at once appeared. Several of the pope's adherents demanded that Luther's safe-conduct should not be respected. "The Rhine," they said, "should receive his ashes, as it had received those of John Huss a century ago." In after years it was a cause of regret to Charles that he did not act upon this base proposition. "I confess," he said toward the close of his life, "that I committed a great fault by permitting Luther to live. I was not obliged to keep my promise with him; that heretic had offended a Master greater than I,—God himself. I might and I ought to have broken my word, and to have avenged the insult he had committed against God. It is because I did not put him to death, that heresy has not ceased to advance. His death would have stifled it in the cradle." So great was the darkness which came upon the mind that had willfully rejected the light of truth.

The proposition of the Romanists excited great alarm among the friends of the Reformer. And even one of his inveterate enemies, a duke of Saxony, denounced the infamous suggestion, affirming that the German princes would not tolerate the violation of a

safe-conduct. "Such perfidy," he said, "befits not the ancient good faith of the Germans." Other princes also, who were attached to the Roman Church, supported this protest, and the peril that threatened the life of Luther gradually disappeared.

Two days were spent by the diet in the deliberation upon the proposition of the emperor. Rumors of the designs against Luther were widely circulated, causing great excitement throughout the city. The Reformer had made many friends, who, knowing the treacherous cruelty of Rome toward all that dared expose her corruptions, resolved that he should not be sacrificed. More than four hundred nobles pledged themselves to protect him. Not a few openly denounced the royal message as evincing a weak submission to the controlling power of Rome. On the gates of houses and in public places, placards were posted, some condemning and others sustaining Luther. On one of them were written merely those significant words of the wise man: "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child." The popular enthusiasm in Luther's favor throughout all Germany convinced both the emperor and the diet that any injustice shown him would endanger the peace of the empire, and even the stability of the throne.

There were many who loved and honored the Reformer, and wished to secure his safety, while at the same time they were desirous not to break with the Roman power. Hoping to accomplish this object, the German princes came in a body to the emperor to request time for further efforts for a reconciliation. "I will not depart from what I have determined," said he; "I will authorize no one to have any official communication with Luther." "But," he added, "I will allow the man three days' consideration, during which time any one may exhort him privately as he may think fit."

Many of the Reformer's friends hoped that a private conference would prove successful. But the Elector of Saxony, who knew Luther better, felt assured that he would stand firm. In a letter to his brother, Duke John of Saxony, Frederic expressed his anxiety for Luther's safety, and his own willingness to undertake his defense. "You can hardly imagine," he continued, "how I am beset by the partisans of Rome. If I were to tell you all, you would hear strange things. They are bent upon his ruin; and if any one evinces the least interest in his safety, he is instantly cried down as a heretic. May God, who forsaketh not the cause of the righteous, bring the struggle to a happy issue."

Frederic maintained a studied reserve toward the Reformer, carefully concealing his real feelings, while at the same time he guarded him with tireless vigilance, watching all his movements and all those of his enemies. But there were many who made no attempt to conceal their sympathy. Princes, barons, knights, gentlemen, ecclesiastics, and common people surrounded Luther's lodgings, entering and gazing upon him as though he were something more than human. Even those who believed him to be in error could not but admire that nobility of soul which led him to peril his life rather than violate his conscience.

September 20, 1883

Proposed Compromise With Luther

No sooner had the consent of the emperor been obtained, than an attempt was made to effect a compromise with Luther. The archbishop of Treves, a staunch Romanist and an intimate friend of the Elector Frederic, undertook the office of mediator. The Reformer was summoned to the residence of this prelate, where were assembled several dignitaries of the

church, with secular nobles and deputies, among the rest one Cochlaeus, who was there simply as a spy for the pope's legate.

The spokesman of the company was himself desirous of a reformation in the church, and was therefore favorably disposed toward Luther. With great kindness he addressed the Reformer, assuring him that all the princes present were in earnest to save him, but if he persisted in setting up his own judgment against that of the church and the councils, he would be banished from the empire, and would then have no shelter.

To this appeal Luther made answer: "It is impossible to preach the gospel of Christ without offense. Why, then, should any such fear separate me from the Lord and that divine word which alone is truth? No; rather will I give up body, blood, and life itself."

Again he was urged to submit to the judgment of the emperor, and then he would have nothing to fear. "I consent," said he in reply, "with all my heart, to the emperor, the princes, and even the humblest Christian's examining and judging of my writings; but on one single condition; namely, that they take God's word for their guide. Men have nothing to do but render obedience to that. My conscience is in dependence upon that word, and I am the bounden subject of its authority."

The company soon broke up and withdrew. Two or three remained, however, greatly desiring to accomplish their object. But Luther was firm as a rock. "The pope," said he, "is no judge in things pertaining to the word of the Lord. It is the duty of every Christian to see and understand how to live and die."

The failure of this effort was communicated to the diet by the archbishop of Treves. The surprise of the young emperor was equaled only by his indignation. "It is high time," he said, "to put an end to this business." The archbishop pleaded for two days more, and all the diet uniting in the request, the emperor consented, much against the will of the legate.

Another effort was made to effect a compromise. Cochlaeus was ambitious to accomplish what kings and prelates had failed to do. Dining with Luther at his hotel, he in a friendly manner urged him to retract. Luther shook his head. Several persons at the table expressed their indignation that the papists, instead of convincing Luther by arguments, should seek to control him by force. Cochlaeus then offered to dispute with him publicly, provided he would forego his safe-conduct. A public discussion was what Luther most desired; but he well knew that to forego his safe-conduct would be to imperil his life. The guests suspected that the proposition of Cochlaeus was a stratagem of popery for delivering Luther into the hands of those who sought his destruction, and in their indignation they seized the terrified priest, and hurled him out of doors.

The archbishop of Treves desired another interview, and invited to supper the persons who attended the previous conference, hoping that in the midst of familiar intercourse the parties would be more disposed to a reconciliation. These repeated efforts to move Luther from his steadfastness remind one of Balak conducting Balaam from one point to another, in the vain hope that he might be induced to change the blessing of Israel into a curse. The bishop succeeded no better than did the king of Moab. Human applause and the fear of man were alike powerless to shake the Reformer's decision. He was sustained by a divine power.

Still another trial was made. Two officials of high rank, one of whom had manifested much affection for Luther, called upon him at his hotel. The elector sent two of his counselors to be present at this interview. The two first mentioned were desirous, at any sacrifice, to prevent the great division that seemed about to rend the church. Earnestly they entreated Luther to commit the matter to their hands, assuring him that it should be settled in a Christian spirit.

"I answer at once," said Luther, "I consent to forego my safe-conduct, and resign my person and my life to the emperor's disposal; but as to the word of God... . Never!" One of Frederic's counselors then stood up and said to the envoys, "Is not that enough? Is not such a sacrifice sufficient?" and after protesting that he would hear no more, he withdrew.

The two envoys did not even yet understand the inflexible firmness of the man with whom they had to deal. Thinking that they could more easily succeed with him alone, they seated themselves by his side, and again urged him to submit to the diet. He met these solicitations as Christ met his great adversary,—with the word of God. Said Luther, "It is written, 'Cursed is he that trusteth in man.'" They pressed him more and more, until Luther, weary and disgusted, arose and signified to them to retire, saying, "I will allow no man to exalt himself above God's word."

At evening they returned with a new proposition,—a general council. They asked him only to consent to the proposition, without entering into details. "I consent," said he, "but on condition that the council decide according to the Holy Scriptures."

Thinking that this would of course be accepted, they hastened joyfully to the archbishop of Treves, and informed him that Dr. Luther would submit his writings to the judgment of a council.

The archbishop was on the point of communicating the glad tidings to the emperor when a doubt crossed his mind. He had found Luther so firm and confident in his faith, that he decided it would be safest to hear the statement from his own lips. He accordingly sent for him.

"Dear Doctor," said the archbishop with much kindness, "my doctors assure me that you consent to submit your cause without reserve to the decision of a council."

"My lord," said Luther, "I can endure anything except to abandon the Holy Scriptures."

The archbishop saw that his messengers had not fully explained the facts. Never would Rome give her consent to a council which should take the inspired word alone for its guide. "Well then," said the venerable prelate, "let me hear your own remedy for the evil."

Luther was silent for a moment. Then he spoke with respect and great solemnity: "I know of none but what is found in the counsel of Gamaliel: 'If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God!' Let the emperor, the electors, and the States of the empire, return that answer to the pope."

The archbishop was at last convinced that further effort was useless. Luther had set his feet upon the sure foundation, and he could not be moved.

The Reformer was convinced that there was nothing to be gained by a longer stay at Worms. Before retiring from the presence of the archbishop he said, "My lord, I beg you to request his majesty to send me the safe-conduct necessary for my return whence I came."

"I will attend to it," said the archbishop, and they parted.

Luther had refused to exchange the yoke of Christ for the yoke of popery. This was his only offense; but it was sufficient to imperil his life. The attention of the whole empire had been directed to this one man, and all their threats and entreaties had failed to shake his fidelity to God and his word. Luther had not without help maintained his steadfastness. A greater than Luther was with him, controlling his mind, sanctifying his judgment, and imparting to him wisdom in every hour of peril.

Had the Reformer yielded a single point, Satan and his hosts would have gained the victory. But Luther's unwavering firmness under the iron hand of the pope was the means of emancipating the church and beginning a new and better era. The influence of this one man, who had dared to think and act for himself in religious matters, was to affect the church and the world not only in his own time, but to all future generations. His firmness and fidelity would strengthen all who should pass through a similar experience, to the close of time. This was the work of God. Luther's defense before the diet of Worms was one of the grandest scenes recorded in history. The power and majesty of God stand forth above the counsel of men, above the mighty power of Satan.

Shortly after Luther's return to his hotel, two high officers of State, accompanied by a notary, presented themselves. The imperial chancellor addressed him, stating that the emperor, the electors and princes, having vainly exhorted him, his imperial majesty, as defender of the Catholic faith, found himself compelled to resort to other measures. He commanded Luther to return home in the space of twenty-one days, and on the way to refrain from disturbing the public peace by preaching or writing.

Luther was aware that this message would speedily be followed by his condemnation. He answered mildly, "It has happened unto me according to the will of the Eternal. Blessed be his name!" He continued: "And first I humbly, and from the bottom of my heart, thank his majesty, the electors, princes, and States of the empire, that they have given me so gracious a hearing. I neither have, nor ever have had, a wish but for one thing; to wit, a reformation of the church according to the Holy Scriptures. I am ready to do or to suffer all things for obedience to the emperor's will. Life or death, honor or dishonor, I will bear. I make but one reservation, the preaching of the gospel; for, says St. Paul, the word of God is not to be bound.

September 27, 1883

Walk in the Light

[Addressed to those assembled at the camp-meeting at San Jose, Cal., and read upon the camp-ground, Friday morning, September 14.]

The present is a time of dense darkness to the world; but the true light is shining, and God, in his great mercy, has permitted us to behold its brightness and to walk in its guiding rays. We are favored above any other people upon the earth. Our spiritual blessings are more and greater than have been granted to the church in any previous age.

What makes me tremble for the professed believers in present truth, is the fact that they do not appreciate the light, and follow its guidance. With all our opportunities for spiritual advancement, we are not, as a people, wise, humble, and holy. As the Lord caused the pillar of fire to shine upon ancient Israel, so has he shed upon us the light of his truth. He requires us, as rational, accountable beings, to walk in the light. If we refuse to do this, our light will become darkness, and the darkness will be in proportion to the light rejected.

We are living in the time when Christ is about to close his work of mediation in our behalf. All should now closely examine their hearts to see whether they are in the faith. Instead of indulging doubt and unbelief, they should humble themselves before God, cultivate faith in his word and his work, and labor earnestly for the salvation of souls. It is no time now for caviling, dissension, and disunion. Where these exist, we may know that self is not dead. Those who have received the truth into the heart will be so filled with joy and gratitude, and so absorbed in the desire that others may share its great blessings, that they will lose sight of petty doubts and evil surmisings. In their disinterested labor for the salvation of souls, they forget self and selfish interests. Instead of acting the part of Judas the betrayer, or of Peter when he denied his Lord, they earnestly seek to follow the example of Christ, and carry forward the work which he came on earth to do.

When I think how strong we might be if we would take hold of the strength of the Mighty One, and then see how weak we are, because we do not claim the promises of God, my soul cries out in anguish, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach;" "wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?"

There are among us many who profess the truth, but who refuse to be crucified with Christ. The Author of our salvation labored and suffered for us. His whole life was one long scene of toil and privation. He could have done as many of his professed followers choose to do; he could have passed his days on earth in ease and plenty, and appropriated to himself all the pleasures and enjoyments of this life. But he sought not his own comfort or gratification; he lived to do good, to save others from shame, suffering, and ruin. "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."

Can those who are partakers of this great salvation, who are objects of this wondrous condescension, this infinite love, cherish one feeling of dissatisfaction or indulge one murmuring thought, because they are not free from trials, toils, and conflicts? Do we desire a better portion in this life than was given to our Lord? Can we not yet comprehend the great privileges which are ours through the grace of Christ? If Jesus had not died as our sacrifice, and risen again as our Mediator, we could never have known peace, never have felt joy; we must have experienced the horrors of darkness and the miseries of despair. Then let only praise and gratitude to God be the language of our hearts. All our lives we have been partakers of his heavenly benefits, recipients of the blessings of Christ's atonement; therefore it is impossible for us to conceive the hopeless state of ignorance and misery into

which we had fallen and from which the Saviour raised us. When we feel the pains, the sorrows, the bereavements to which we are all subject, we should not, by one murmuring word or thought, dishonor our Redeemer. In the hour of trial and affliction let us consider that we cannot tell how much greater our sufferings would be, had we not a compassionate Saviour; we cannot determine how much less we suffer than our sins deserve.

Oh that we might, as a people, seek the Lord as never before! Oh that we might renounce our sins, break down our pride, and with contrition of soul cast ourselves unreservedly upon Christ, believing that he accepts us just now, not because we are worthy, but because he died for us. God grant that all who have named the name of Christ may depart from iniquity! All that God could do for us has been done. Jesus is now looking upon the people for whom he suffered and died, and is saying, What more can I do for my vineyard than I have already done? Can we wish to be free from trials and reproach for the truth's sake? Can we look upon Him whom our sins have pierced, and not be willing to share his humiliation?

Our sins mingled the bitter cup which he drank in our stead, that he might put to our lips the cup of blessing. He endured the cross, despising the shame, that he might reconcile us to God, that whosoever would come unto him might take of the water of life freely. In view of the cross of Christ, can you, my brethren and sisters, wish or expect to enter his kingdom in any other way than through much tribulation? We have a work to do which we have neglected. We do not love to follow where Jesus leads the way. Our Heavenly Father requires of his church and people according to the grace and truth given them; and his requirements are just and right. All these must be fully met, or in the Judgment they will condemn the transgressor.

All who profess Christ are accountable for the talents committed to their trust. Christians must stand on that elevated ground which the truth has for ages been preparing for them. To meet the mind of the Spirit of God, we must exhibit to the world, in character and works, that union with Christ which is in accordance with the light of sacred truth now shining upon us. It is not the lack of knowledge and understanding that at the last day will condemn Seventh-day Adventists, and banish them from the presence of the Lord; but it is the truth that has reached the understanding, the light that has illuminated the soul, which will witness against us, if we turn away and refuse to be led by it. If we were blind, we would have no sin; but the Lord has given us great light, sacred truth has been unfolded to our understanding; yet we have not been wise unto salvation, we have not advanced in knowledge and true holiness according to the light and truth which has been bestowed upon us.

God has been very merciful to you, my brethren and sisters in California. Great light has been shining upon you; but you have a great work to do for yourselves before you can share largely of his blessing. Many are seeking to smooth over and excuse sin, instead of striving, with all their hearts, to put it away. Such must be thoroughly transformed in character and in life. When they seek earnestly to meet the high standard of the Bible, then will the Lord be to them a present help in every time of need. But how few will bear the test when examined by the light which God has given them. A deeper heart-work must be experienced by many, or they will drift into the deceptions of Satan. Their works must be wrought in God.

Oh that my dear brethren and sisters would make sure work for eternity! There is no hope, no remedy, except in confessing and forsaking our sins, and with full purpose of heart turning unto the Lord.

The time has come for us to take advance steps. We should beware lest a selfish, covetous spirit shut out the blessing of God. The Lord calls upon us to give of our means to support his cause. He requires more of us than merely the payment of the tithe. The message is to go forth, "Sell that ye have, and give alms." Those who have large farms should begin to cut down their possessions. There is earnest work to do for God, and we are far behind his opening providence. Recall all the mercies and blessings that the Lord has bestowed upon you, and consider that he has made you stewards of his goods: Then let each one examine himself and see if he is honoring the Lord with his substance. We should come before him with both thank-offerings and sin-offerings. Our obligation to God is endless. His work must not languish for want of means. His claims must be met first, at whatever cost or sacrifice. It is time for those who have large possessions to cut down the principal, that God's work may be extended in foreign lands. Throughout our own country also there are fields that have not yet been entered, and where the truth should be proclaimed.

John Wesley once preached a powerful sermon on the use of money. He laid down three rules: "Make all you can; save all you can; give all you can." To acquire and not save is improvidence. To hoard up money, adding land to land, and house to house, is covetousness and idolatry. To make and to save in order to give in support of the cause of God, is obeying the command of Christ, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

Those who have not hitherto felt the claims that God has upon them, should now begin to act. God calls for all to act a part in the closing work for sinners. Let every needless ornament, every extravagance, every selfish indulgence, be given up, and let all these little outgoes, these tiny streams, flow into the Lord's treasury. Let us remember continually what Jesus has done for us. He for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. Let us do our duty faithfully, and then trust ourselves and all we have to the hands of God. He wants not only ours but us. None can render effectual service unless they do the work he has left for them to do, and then leave the result wholly with him.

Oh that those to whom have been intrusted so great and solemn truths would manifest corresponding faith! They should trust their work in the Lord's hands, pleading upon their knees for wisdom and guidance, and then, instead of taking the burden all back, and seeking to plan and execute in their own strength, and groaning because they are overburdened, let them leave it with the Lord. Amid a life of constant activity they will thus find rest to their souls. That which they trust with him they are not to fret and worry about. Those who really trust in God will find the rest he has promised, will find his yoke easy and his burden light.

If the Lord had a company of workers who would rely wholly upon him, he would accomplish a great work through them. One could chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight. The Lord is a mighty helper. If we trust in him, we shall have rest and peace. The language of the soul should be that of joy and gratitude. If we have dark chapters in our experience, let

us not keep their memory fresh by repetition. Forgetting the things that are behind, let us press forward to the things that are before. Cultivate only those thoughts and feelings which produce gratitude and praise. If you have been wronged, forget it, and think only of the great mercy, the loving-kindness, the inexpressible love of Jesus. Learn to praise rather than to censure. If you meet with insult and abuse, do not become discouraged, for Jesus met the same. Go forward, doing your work with fidelity. Store the mind with the precious promises of God's word, and hold sweet communion with him by frequently repeating them. Cease fretting, cease murmuring, cease finding fault, and make melody to God in your hearts. Think of everything you have to be thankful for, and then learn to praise God. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth God."

If all our mourning, and fretting, and complaining were presented before us as written in the book of records, what a sight would we behold! How astonished we would be to see and understand our real thoughts and feelings—naught but unhappy complainings.

I entreat you never to utter one word of complaint. Weave into the warp and woof of your experience the golden threads of gratitude. Contemplate the better land, where tears are never shed, where temptations and trials are never experienced, where losses and reproaches are never known, where all is peace, and joy, and happiness. Here your imagination may have full scope. These thoughts will make you more spiritually minded, will imbue you with heavenly vigor, will satisfy your thirsty soul with living water, and will impress upon your heart the seal of the divine image. You will be filled with hope and joy in believing, and the Comforter will abide with you forever.

October 4, 1883

Christian Privileges and Duties

It is the privilege of every soul to seek and find peace in Christ. Yet this peace is granted only upon conditions. We must surrender our own ways and wills and plans, and thus put off the grievous yoke which we have bound upon our own necks, and we must take upon us the yoke of Christ, which will bring rest to our souls. "Learn of me," says the Divine Teacher; "for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

We each need to learn in the school of Christ; and it is because we are not more humble and diligent students that we are so slow to manifest meekness and lowliness of heart. It is only when we cherish these precious graces that peace and rest can abide in the soul. Only the humble and contrite ones find shelter in the promises of God; only these obtain a saving knowledge of the Scriptures, and a rich experience in trusting God and obeying his precepts. In our own strength we are indeed feeble; but in the strength of our Redeemer we may be strong. In the midst of tumult we may have quietness and peace. We must believe in him, even though darkness envelop the soul; we must work from principle, rather than from feeling. By this continual, unwavering trust, Satan is baffled and disappointed. Says the psalmist, "Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies." "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

If we would maintain our fidelity to God, in this time of danger and deception, we must constantly rely upon the power of Christ. We must be often before God in prayer, holding every emotion and every passion in calm subjection to reason and conscience, banishing all

unholy imaginings, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. By earnest prayer and living faith we can resist the assaults of Satan, and keep our hearts unspotted from pollution.

The strongest temptation is no excuse for sin. However great the pressure brought to bear upon the soul, transgression is our own act. It is not in the power of earth or hell to compel any one to sin. The will must consent, the heart must yield, or passion cannot overbear reason, nor iniquity triumph over righteousness.

I appeal to you who profess to be followers of Christ to depart from all iniquity. You must do this, if you would represent the truth as it is in Jesus. God wants whole-hearted, thorough-going men. These only can stand the test of the Judgment. If those who have received the light were but true to their trust, what a flood of light would be poured upon the world! But how is it, not only with the members of the church, but with those who stand as ministers of the gospel? Do their habits and experience correctly represent the purity and simplicity of a holy, cross-bearing life?

The true toilers in the Lord's vineyard will be men of prayer, of faith, of self-denial,—men who hold in restraint the natural appetites and passions. These will, in their own lives, give to the world evidence of the power of the truth which they present to others; and their labors will not be without effect. "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."

Fellow-workers for Christ, time is short; we have no moments to idle away. Are you watching for souls as they that must give an account, or are you yourselves drowsy, ease-loving, and lukewarm? Have you a living faith? Are you every day increasing in the knowledge of Christ? Do you possess practical godliness, Christian meekness, and deep love for the souls for whom Christ died? Search the Scriptures. Do not depend upon the little knowledge which you already have. Pray for clearer light. Dig for the precious gems of truth as for hid treasure. Thus will you be enabled to bring forth from the storehouse of God things new and old.

In this age of conflicting doctrines, when fables abound, and there is so much sensational preaching on the one hand, and so great formality on the other, it is a difficult matter to arouse the people. Our only hope of success is to reach them through God. We must give evidence of earnestness, zeal, and devotion commensurate to the importance and solemnity of our work. There should be no exaltation of self. We are not to call attention to the instrument, but to present Christ and the sacred truths that are to test the people of God. If these truths sanctify our own hearts, if they purify and ennoble our own characters, we shall be living epistles, known and read of all men.

The ambassadors of Christ must learn where their strength lies. They must themselves drink of the living water, before they can guide others to the fountain. We must learn by experience what it is to lean upon the arm of our Beloved. There is no evil more fatal to the prosperity of the church than the influence of professed teachers and ministers of the gospel who are deficient in Christian experience, in faith, self-denial, self-control, and in the tact and energy essential for skillful warfare.

My brethren, you should be constant learners in the school of Christ, obtaining from the heavenly Teacher precious lessons to impart to others. You have lost much in your labors because you have not constantly felt the necessity of vital connection with God. There is earnest solemn work to do in every branch of the cause of Christ. You need the Spirit and power of God, that your testimony, like a sharp, two-edged sword, may cut to the heart of those who hear.

The faithful witnesses for Christ will keep themselves unspotted from the world. Those who seek to be popular with the world, will not love the testimony of the Spirit of God. They are not sanctified through the truth; and after a brief period of half-hearted service, they will make a decided move toward uniting with the enemies of God. They reject the light, and it is withdrawn from them. In time it will be seen that they are in utter darkness.

Many retain a form of godliness and a connection with the church, when they bring no strength, help, or blessing to the church. They seek to make the narrow way broad and pleasant for the multitude to walk in. Such are destitute of spiritual eyesight. They have put out their own eyes, and they stumble at every step. The word of God has not widened the narrow way; and if the half-hearted and pleasure-loving choose a path where they need not bear the cross or suffer tribulation, they are in a path where the Saviour did not walk.

In all parts of our country, during the summer and autumn, large companies assemble in the tented grove, to worship God and to listen to words of warning and instruction from his servants. Great privileges are afforded by these yearly convocations. The Lord Jesus himself comes up to the feast. We have a precious opportunity to humble our hearts before God, and to become settled and grounded in the truth. Are these opportunities wisely improved? They will prove to us either a savor of life unto life or of death unto death. After these seasons are over, and those who met together have returned to their homes, will they be prepared to let their light shine forth to the world? Will their works correspond with the faith which they profess? If we continue to love the world, to have fellowship with the works of darkness, or to find pleasure in unrighteousness, then we have put the stumbling-block of our iniquity before our face, and have set up idols in our hearts. If we do not heed the word of the Lord, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean," we are in a worse condition than if we had not listened to the words of truth.

The Scriptures clearly set before us the high and holy position which we should occupy as sons and daughters of God. If all who attend the camp-meetings would seek earnestly to attain this position, and would receive the spiritual benefit which it is their privilege to receive, they would be prepared to do good when they return home. If the love of Christ is kindled afresh in their own hearts, if they have drunk anew from the heavenly fountain, their cheerful testimonies and their prayers, sent up in faith, will be as great a help to the church as ministerial labor. The Spirit of God will come into their meetings, and the hearts of believers will say, It is good to be here.

Every church, be it large or small, should be taught not to depend on ministerial labor. Therefore, fellow-Christians, there is the greater need that you kindle your tapers at the divine altar, that the light may shine forth to all around. However weak you may be, you can become a help and blessing to others, if you will keep your own souls in the love of God, and

search the Scriptures for a clear understanding of the truth. It is not only your privilege but your duty to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. You may rejoice in a living Saviour, and may show to all connected with you that he is the center of your affections and your hopes.

Would that all might view this matter of daily, practical Christianity as it has been presented to me; would that they could see what we might be in spiritual power, and what we are because we neglect the light which God has given us! Many will have to combat intellectual slothfulness and spiritual stupor, before they can be a blessing to themselves or to their fellow-men. We are living under the most solemn message of warning ever given to our world. We are altogether too near the closing scenes of this world's history to be inattentive, to occupy a neutral position. It behooves us now to be wide awake, ready for every good work, ready to give a reason for the hope that is in us.

Brethren, you must come closer, closer to the bleeding side of Jesus. Instead of yielding to every passing influence, seek earnestly to know the truth, and then endeavor to form a character consistent therewith. Seek to be like Christ, meek and lowly of heart, and, like him, be resolute also; in principle be firm as a rock; be pure, sincere, and holy. Be ever cheerful, humble, grateful. Keep yourselves separate from the spirit and influence of the world. Let not sin find a sanction in your position. Give no occasion for evil-doers even to imagine that they have your sympathies. Let not irreligion find in your lax principles a pretext to excuse itself.

God calls upon you to be zealous and repent of your half-heartedness. Strive to walk wisely, in a perfect way. Begin and end each day with earnest prayer and close self-examination. Compare your life and character with the law of God, mark where its precepts condemn you, and set to work at once to correct the wrong by repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Wash your robes of character, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. Let your words be well chosen. Put away all lightness, trifling, and irreverence.

Those who really desire to advance in the divine life will cherish every ray of light, and heed every warning given by the servants of God. The Holy Spirit admonishes those who preach the gospel, "Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." If the Lord has given this command, there is certainly a work of reproof, rebuking, warning, and correction to be done. Let all be careful, then, how they allow their hearts to rise up against the reproofs of God through his servants; for in so doing they rise up against God.

Like the Pharisees of old, the self-deceived, the self-sufficient, the self-righteous, refuse to be warned. The Lord points out their dangers, but they do not heed his voice. As they assimilate to the world, they become the friends of evil-doers. While God reproofs the transgressor, they feel inclined to excuse and encourage him. Thus they say to the sinner, It shall be well with thee. Such persons call good evil, in that they oppose and denounce those who faithfully deliver the messages of warning and reproof committed to them of God. They call evil good by extolling those who have no reproofs to bear and no warnings to give, who pass along in a careless, indifferent spirit, excusing sin, and by their own course encouraging worldliness and backsliding. All these are sanctioning a deception which has proved the ruin of many. The blood of souls is upon them. Their course is more offensive to God than is that of the open sinner. Anciently, the Lord always had among his people faithful prophets, whom, he sent to reprove sin. He has never removed these from his church.

Those who rise up against warning and reproof, and seek by their jests, their smart speeches, or their deceptions, to make of no effect the plain words of reproof prompted by the Spirit of God, will find, in the great day of final reckoning, an account against them which they will not wish to meet.

To be a Christian is to be Christ-like, a man of faith, a man of principle. The Christians most serviceable in the church are those whose convictions are so firm, whose characters are so strong, that nothing can sway them from their faith or deter them from their duty. As a people, we are altogether too much like the world. We are not the separate, holy people that God requires us to be. When we come up to the high standard of God's law, then shall we be indeed the light of the world.

The professed church of Christ has wandered from her privilege, her duty, and her God. Like ancient Israel, she has forsaken the covenant, and joined herself in harmony with the world. Pride, luxury, and pleasure are invited into the sanctuary, and her holy places are defiled. Those who have pledged their allegiance to God, enjoy the company and spirit of his avowed enemies. Their choice determines their character. Strong is the Lord God who judgeth them.

But, thank God, in every age he has had men who were not time-servers, men who would stand firm for the right, and risk all consequences. In the strength of God, Martin Luther fearlessly proclaimed the truths of the Bible. In vain earthly potentates sought to intimidate him. In vain they attempted to break his hold on God, and drive him to seek the favor of the pope or the protection of the emperor at the sacrifice of his faith. His one answer was, "God and the right will triumph." Neither men nor devils could silence him. Gold, ambition, honors, could not win him from his work of exposing error and declaring truth. In like manner Huss, Jerome, Ridley, and many others, counted not their own lives dear unto themselves that they might keep the testimony of Jesus. Amid torture and flames, amid dungeons and horrible deaths, these faithful standard-bearers held aloft the banner of the cross of Christ.

We also, who are called to stand in these last trying days of peril and conflict, must be willing, for the truth's sake, to sacrifice our ease, our time, our reputation, yea, even life itself. At whatever cost, we must be true to principle and to God.

October 11, 1883

Luther in the Wartburg

On the 26th of April, 1521, Luther departed from Worms. Threatening clouds overhung his path, yet as he passed out of the gate of the city, his heart was filled with joy and praise. "Satan himself," said he, "kept the pope's citadel; but Christ has made a wide breach in it, and the devil has been compelled to confess that Christ is mightier than he."

"The conflict at Worms," writes a friend of the Reformer, "resounded far and near; and as the report of it traversed Europe, from the northern countries to the mountains of Switzerland and the towns of England, France, and Italy, many seized with eagerness the mighty weapons of the word of God."

Luther left, the city at ten o'clock, with the friends who had accompanied him to Worms. Twenty gentlemen on horseback surrounded the carriage, and a great crowd attended him beyond the walls.

Upon the journey from Worms, he determined to write once more to the emperor, being unwilling to appear to him as a guilty rebel. "God is my witness, who knoweth the thoughts," said he, "that I am ready with all my heart to obey your majesty through good or evil report, in life or in death, with one exception—save the word of God, by which man liveth. In all the affairs of this life my fidelity shall be unshaken; for in these, loss or gain has nothing to do with salvation. But it is contrary to the will of God that man should be subject to man in that which pertains to eternal life. Subjection in spirituals is a real worship, and should be rendered only to the Creator."

He also addressed to the States of the empire a letter of nearly the same purport, recapitulating what had transpired at Worms. This letter made a deep impression upon the minds of the German people. They saw that Luther had been treated with great injustice by the emperor and the higher clergy, and their feelings were strongly aroused against the arrogant assumptions of the papacy.

Had Charles V. understood the real value of such a man as Luther to his empire, a man who would not be bought or sold, who would not sacrifice principle for friends or foes,—he would have cherished and honored instead of denouncing and proscribing him.

Luther journeyed toward home, receiving, as he went, the most flattering attentions from all classes. Dignitaries of the church welcomed the monk upon whom the pope's curse rested, and secular officers honored the man who was under the ban of the empire. He decided to turn aside from the direct route, to visit Mora, his father's birthplace. His friend Amsdorff and a wagoner accompanied him, while the remainder of the party proceeded on their way to Wittenberg. After spending a day with his relatives, enjoying a peaceful rest in marked contrast to the turmoil and strife of Worms, he resumed his journey.

As the carriage was passing a narrow defile, the travelers encountered five horsemen, completely armed and masked. Two of the men seized Amsdorff and the wagoner, while the other three proceeded to secure Luther. In profound silence they forced him to alight, threw a knight's cloak over his shoulders, and placed him upon an extra horse. Then the two in charge of Amsdorff and the wagoner released them, and the five all sprang into their saddles, and disappeared with their prisoner in the thick gloom of the forest.

Through winding and intricate paths they made their way, now advancing and now retracing their steps in such a manner as effectually to elude pursuit. When night fell, they struck into a new road, and swiftly and silently pressed forward, through dark, almost untrodden forests, to the mountains of Thuringia. Here, on a lofty summit, reached only by a steep and difficult ascent, stood the castle of Wartburg. Within the walls of this isolated stronghold, Luther was conducted by his captors, and the heavy gates closed after him, effectually shutting him from the sight and knowledge of the world without.

The Reformer had not fallen into the hands of enemies. A vigilant eye had followed his movements, and as the storm was about to burst upon his defenseless head, a true and

noble heart had resolved upon his rescue. It was plain that Rome would be satisfied with nothing short of his death; only by concealment could he be preserved from the jaws of the lion.

Upon Luther's departure from Worms, the papal legate had procured an edict against him, to which was affixed the emperor's signature and the seal of the empire. In this imperial decree Luther was denounced as "Satan himself, under the semblance of a man in a monk's hood." It was commanded that as soon as his safe-conduct should expire, measures be taken to stop his work. All persons were forbidden to harbor him, to give him food or drink, or by word or act, in public or private, to aid or abet him. He was to be seized wherever he might be, and delivered to the authorities. His adherents also were to be imprisoned, and their property confiscated. His writings were ordered to be destroyed, and finally, all who should dare to act contrary to this decree were placed under the ban of the empire.

The emperor had spoken, and the diet had given their sanction to the decree. The whole body of Romanists were jubilant. Now they considered the fate of the Reformation sealed. The superstitious multitude were filled with horror at the thought of Luther as the incarnate Satan whom the emperor had described as clothed in a monk's habit.

In this hour of peril, God prepared a way of escape for his servant. The Holy Spirit moved upon the heart of the Elector of Saxony, and gave him wisdom to devise a plan for Luther's preservation. Frederick had caused it to be intimated to the Reformer while still at Worms, that his liberty might be sacrificed for a time to secure his own safety and that of the Reformation; yet no hint had been given as to the manner in which this might be accomplished. With the co-operation of true friends, the elector's purpose was carried out, and with so much tact and skill that Luther was effectually hidden from friends and foes. In fact, both his seizure and his concealment were so involved in mystery that even Frederick himself for a long time knew not whither he had been conducted. This ignorance was not without design; so long as the elector knew nothing of Luther's whereabouts, he could reveal nothing. He had assured himself that the Reformer was safe, and with this knowledge he was content.

Spring, summer, and autumn passed, and winter came, and Luther still remained a prisoner. Aleander and his partisans rejoiced that the light of the gospel seemed about to be extinguished. But instead of this, Luther was but filling his lamp from the unfailing storehouse of truth, to shine forth in due time with brighter radiance.

It was not merely to secure his own safety that Luther was, in the providence of God, withdrawn from the stage of public life. Infinite Wisdom overruled all circumstances and events for the accomplishment of his deep designs. It is not the will of God that his work should bear the impress of one man. There were other workers who in Luther's absence must be called to the front, to give character to the Reformation, that it might develop proportionately.

Furthermore, in every reformatory movement, there is danger that it will receive the stamp of the human rather than the divine. As men rejoice in the freedom which the truth brings them, they are inclined to exalt those whom God has employed to break the chains of error and superstition. These leaders are honored, extolled, and revered, and if they are not truly

humble and devoted, unselfish and incorruptible, they gradually lose sight of their continual dependence upon God, and begin to trust in themselves. Soon they seek to control the minds and restrict the consciences of others, seeming to regard themselves as the only channel through which God will communicate light to his church. The work of reform is often retarded because of this spirit indulged by its supporters.

In the friendly security of the Wartburg, Luther for a time gave himself up to repose, and rejoiced in his release from the heat and turmoil of battle. From the castle walls he looked down upon the dark forests that shut him in on every side, then turning his eyes to heaven, he exclaimed, "Strange captivity! a prisoner by consent, yet against my will!" "Pray for me," he writes to Spalatin. "I want nothing save your prayers. Do not disturb me by what is said or thought of me in the world. At last I am quiet."

The solitude and obscurity of this mountain retreat had another and still more precious blessing for the Reformer. Here he was saved from becoming too greatly elated by success. He was removed from every human prop, shut out from the sympathy and praise which are so often unwisely given, and which so often lead to the most deplorable results. It is Satan's studied object to direct men's thoughts and affections from God, who should receive all praise and glory, and fix them upon human agencies; to exalt the mere instrument which God employs, and ignore the Hand that directs all the events of providence.

Here is a danger against which all Christians should constantly guard. However much they may admire the noble, self-sacrificing deeds of God's faithful servants, they should remember that God alone is to be exalted. All the wisdom, ability, and grace which men possess, has been given them of God. To him should be all the praise.

Luther could not long find satisfaction in quiet and repose. Accustomed to a life of activity and stern conflict, he could ill endure to remain inactive. In these solitary days, the condition of the church rose up before him, and he felt that there was no man who could stand upon the walls and build up Zion. Again his thoughts returned to himself, and he feared being charged with cowardice in withdrawing from the work. Then he reproached himself for his indolence and self-indulgence. Yet at the same time he was daily accomplishing more than it seemed possible for one man to do. He writes, "I am going through the Bible in Hebrew and Greek. I mean to write a discourse in German touching auricular confession, also to continue the translation of the Psalms, and to compose a collection of sermons as soon as I have received what I want from Wittenberg. My pen is never idle."

While his enemies flattered themselves that he was silenced, they were astonished and confused by tangible proof that he was still active. A host of tracts issuing from his pen, circulated throughout Germany. For nearly a whole year, sheltered from the wrath of all opposers, he exhorted and rebuked the prevailing sins of the time.

He also performed a most important service for his countrymen by translating the original scriptures of the New Testament into the German tongue. Thus the word of God was opened to the understanding of the common people, so that all might read for themselves the words of life and truth. Thus he labored most effectually to turn all eyes from the pope of Rome to Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness.

October 18, 1883

The Reformation During Luther's Imprisonment

While Luther was safely hidden in the fortress of Wartburg, how did his strange absence affect the world? All Germany was thrown into consternation. Inquiries concerning him were heard everywhere. Even his enemies were more agitated by his absence than they could have been by his presence. The wildest rumors were circulated. Many believed that he had been murdered. There was great lamentation, not only by his avowed friends, but by thousands who had not openly taken their stand with the Reformation. Said the people, "Never more shall we behold him. Never again shall we hear that bold man whose voice stirred the depths of our hearts." Many bound themselves by a solemn oath to avenge his death.

The Romanists saw with terror to what a pitch had risen the feeling against them. Though at first exultant at the supposed death of Luther, they now desired to hide from the wrath of the people. Those who were enraged against him when he was at large, were filled with fear now that he was in captivity. "The only way of extricating ourselves," said a Roman Catholic, "is to light our torches, and go searching through the earth for Luther, till we can restore him to a nation that will have him."

The edict of the emperor seemed to fall powerless. The papal legates were filled with indignation as they saw that it commanded far less attention than did the fate of Luther. "The ink of the signature," said they, "has scarcely had time to dry, when, behold, on all sides the imperial decree is torn to pieces."

The Reformation was constantly gaining in strength. Increasing numbers joined the cause of the heroic man who had, at such fearful odds, defended the word of God. The people said, "Has he not offered to retract if refuted? and no one has had the hardihood to undertake to refute him. Does that not show that he has spoken the truth?"

The seed which he had sown was springing up everywhere. Luther's absence accomplished a work which his presence would have failed to do. Other laborers felt a new responsibility, now that their great leader was removed. With new faith and earnestness they pressed forward to do all in their power, that the work so nobly begun might not be hindered.

But while the Reformation was progressing steadily and surely, Satan was not idle. Baffled in all his previous efforts to destroy the work, he adopted another plan of operation. He now attempted what he has attempted in every other reformatory movement,—to deceive and destroy the people by palming off upon them a counterfeit in place of the true work. As there were false christs in the first century of the Christian Church, so there arose false prophets in the sixteenth century.

A few men, deeply affected by the excitement in the religious world, imagined themselves to have received special revelations from Heaven. Refusing to be guided by the word of God, they gave themselves up to be controlled by feelings and impressions. Instead of heeding the apostle's injunction to walk by the same rule, and mind the same things, seeking to be in harmony with those whom God was leading, they determined to move out independently. They claimed to have been divinely commissioned to carry forward to its completion the Reformation but feebly begun by Luther. In truth, they were undoing the very work which he

had accomplished. Luther had presented to the people the word of God as the rule by which their character and faith should be tested. These men substituted for that unerring guide the changeable and uncertain standard of their own feelings and impressions.

“What is the use,” asked they, “of such close application to the Scriptures? Nothing is heard of but the Bible. Can the Bible preach to us? Can it suffice for our instruction? If God had intended to instruct us by a book, would he not have sent us a Bible direct from Heaven? It is by the Spirit only that we can be enlightened. God himself speaks to us, and shows us what to do and what to say.” Thus did these men seek to overthrow the fundamental principle on which the Reformation was based,—the word of God as an all-sufficient standard of faith and practice. By this act of setting aside the great detector of error and falsehood, the way was opened for Satan to control minds as best pleased himself.

In the town of Zwickau arose one claiming to have been visited by the angel Gabriel, and instructed concerning matters which he was forbidden to reveal. A former student of Wittenberg joined this fanatic, and at once abandoned his studies, declaring that he had received from God himself the ability to explain the Scriptures. Several other persons who were naturally inclined to fanaticism, united with these men; and as their adherents increased, the leaders effected an organization, being desirous, they said, to follow the example of Christ, and claiming that in them prophets and apostles were restored to the church.

The proceedings of these enthusiasts created no little excitement. The preaching of Luther had aroused the people everywhere to feel the necessity of reform, and now some really honest persons were misled by the pretensions of the new prophets. Those especially who had a love for the marvelous, united with the fanatical party. But the heresy was promptly met by workers in the cause of the Reformation. The pastor of the church of Zwickau was a man who exemplified in his own life the truths preached by Luther. He tested all things by the word of God, and therefore was not deceived by these pretenders. He resolutely resisted the delusions which they were seeking to introduce, and his deacons supported him in the work.

The fanatics, opposed by the officers of the church, set themselves against all the established forms of order and organization. Their passionate appeals aroused and excited the people, who, in their zeal against the Romanists, proceeded to violence. A priest bearing the host was pelted with stones, and the civil authorities, being called upon to interfere, committed the assailants to prison.

Intent upon justifying their course, and obtaining redress, the leaders of the movement proceeded to Wittenberg, and presented their case before the professors of the University. Said they, “We are sent by God to teach the people. We have received special revelations from God himself, and therefore know what is coming to pass. We are apostles and prophets, and appeal to Dr. Luther as to the truth of what we say.”

The professors were astonished and perplexed. This was such an element as they had never before encountered, and they knew not what course to pursue. Said Melancthon, “There are indeed spirits of no ordinary kind in these men; but what spirits? None but Luther can decide. On the one hand, let us beware of quenching the Spirit of God, and on the other, of being seduced by the spirit of Satan.”

Doctrines that were in direct opposition to the Reformation were put forth by these men, and the fruit of the new teaching soon became apparent. The minds of the people were diverted from the words of God, or decidedly prejudiced by against it. Both the University and the lower schools were thrown into confusion. The students, spurning all restraint, abandoned their studies, and the States of Germany recalled all that belonged to their jurisdiction. Thus the men who thought themselves competent to revive and control the work of the Reformation, succeeded only in bringing it to the very brink of ruin.

Luther at the Wartburg, hearing of what had transpired, said with deep concern, "I always expected that Satan would send us this plague." The Romanists now regained their confidence, and exclaimed exultantly, "One more effort, and all will be ours." A prompt and determined effort to check the fanaticism was the only hope of the Reformation.

And now there rose throughout all Wittenberg a cry for Luther. Never were his sound judgment and inflexible firmness more greatly needed. Neither the mild and peace-loving elector nor the timid and youthful Melancthon were prepared to cope with such an enemy. Professors and citizens alike felt that Luther alone could guide them safely at this important crisis. Even the fanatics appealed to his decision.

Luther received numberless letters describing the different phases of this new evil, and its baleful results, and earnestly entreating his presence. He perceived the true character of those pretended prophets, and saw the danger that threatened the church. All that he had endured from the opposition of both the pope and the emperor had not caused him such perplexity of mind or anguish of soul as did this deceptive work now linking itself with the Reformation. From the cause itself had arisen its worst enemies. Pretended friends were tearing down what he had labored at tremendous odds to build up. The very truths which had brought peace to his troubled heart had been made the cause of dissension in the church.

In the work of reform, Luther had been urged forward by the Spirit of God, and had been carried beyond himself. He had not purposed to take such positions as he did, or to make so radical changes. He had been but the instrument in the hands of infinite power. Yet he often trembled for the result of his work. He had once said, "If I knew that my doctrine had injured one human being, however poor and unknown,—which it could not, for it is the very gospel,—I would rather face death ten times over than not retract it."

And now a whole city, and that city Wittenberg itself, is fast sinking into confusion. The doctrine taught by Luther had not caused this evil; but throughout Germany his enemies were eagerly charging it upon him. In bitterness of soul he sometimes asked "Is this to be the result of the great work of the Reformation?" Again, as he wrestled with God in prayer, peace flowed into his mind. "The work is not mine, but thine own," he said; "thou wilt not suffer it to be corrupted by superstition or fanaticism." But the thought of remaining longer from the conflict in such a crisis, became insupportable. He determined to go forth and meet the disturbing element that threatened so great damage to the cause of truth and righteousness.

October 25, 1883

Luther Returns to Wittenberg

On the third of March, 1522, ten months after his capture and imprisonment, Luther bade adieu to the Wartburg, and through the gloomy forests pursued his journey toward Wittenberg.

He was under the ban of the empire. Enemies were at liberty to take his life; friends were forbidden to aid or even shelter him. The Imperial Government, urged on by the determined zeal of Duke George of Saxony, were adopting the most stringent measures against his adherents. So great were the dangers threatening the Reformer's safety, that notwithstanding the urgent demand for his return to Wittenberg, the elector Frederick wrote entreating him to remain in his secure retreat. But Luther saw that the work of the gospel was imperiled, and, regardless of his own safety, he determined to return to the conflict.

Upon arriving at the town of Borne, he wrote to the elector, explaining his course in leaving the Wartburg. "I have sufficiently shown my deference to your highness," he said, "in withdrawing from the public gaze for a whole year. Satan knows that it was not from cowardice that I did so. I would have entered Worms, though there had been as many devils in the town as there were tiles upon its roofs. Now Duke George, whom your highness mentioned as if to scare me, is much less to be dreaded than a single devil. If what is passing at Wittenberg were occurring at Leipsic [the usual residence of Duke George], I would instantly mount my horse, and repair thither, even though—your highness will, I trust, pardon the expression—it should rain Duke Georges for nine days together, and every one should be nine times as fierce as he! What can he be thinking of in attacking me? Does he suppose that Christ my Lord is a man of straw? May God avert from him the awful judgment that hangs over him!

"Be it known to your highness that I am repairing to Wittenberg under a protection more powerful than that of an elector. I have no thought of soliciting the aid of your highness; and am so far from desiring your protection, that it is rather my purpose to protect your highness. If I knew that your highness could, or would, take up my defense, I would not come to Wittenberg. No secular sword can advance this cause; God must do all, without the aid or co-operation of man. He who has most faith, is the most availing defense; but, as it seems to me, your highness is as yet very weak in faith.

"But since your highness desires to know what to do, I will humbly answer: Your electoral highness has already done too much, and should do nothing whatever. God neither wants nor will he endure, that you or I should take thought or part in the matter. Let your highness follow this advice.

"In regard to myself, your highness must remember your duty as elector, and allow the instructions of his imperial majesty to be carried into effect in your towns and districts, offering no impediment to any one who would seize or kill me; for none may contend against the powers that be, save only He who has ordained them.

"Let your highness accordingly leave the gates open, and respect safe-conducts, if my enemies in person, or by their envoys, should come to search for me in your highness' States. Everything may take its course without trouble or prejudice to your highness.

"I write this in haste, that you may not feel aggrieved by my coming. My business is with another kind of person from Duke George, one who knows me, and whom I know well."

It was not to war against the decrees of earthly rulers, but to thwart the plans and resist the power of the prince of darkness, that Luther returned to Wittenberg. In the name of the Lord he went forth once more to battle for the truth. With great caution and humility, yet with decision and firmness, he entered upon his work, maintaining that the word of God must be the test of all doctrines and all actions. "By the word," said he, "we must refute and expel what has gained a place and influence by violence. I would not resort to force against the superstitious, nor even the unbelievers. Whosoever believeth, let him draw nigh, and he that believeth not, let him stand afar off. Let there be no compulsion. I have been laboring for liberty of conscience. Liberty is the very essence of faith."

The Reformer had no desire to meet the deluded men whose fanaticism had been productive of so great evil. He knew them to be men of hasty and violent temper, who while claiming to be especially illuminated from Heaven would not endure the slightest contradiction, or even the kindest admonition. Arrogating to themselves supreme authority, they required every one, without a question, to acknowledge their claims. Two of these prophets, Stubner and Cellarius, demanded an interview with Luther, which he deemed it best to grant. He determined to expose the pretensions of these impostors, and, if possible, rescue the souls that had been deceived by them.

Stubner opened the conversation by showing how he proposed to restore the church and reform the world. Luther listened with great patience, and finally replied, "Of all you have been saying, there is nothing that I see to be based upon Scripture. It is a mere tissue of fiction." At these words Cellarius in a violent passion struck his fist upon the table, and exclaimed against Luther's speech as an insult offered to a man of God.

"Paul declared that the signs of an apostle were wrought among the Corinthians in signs and mighty deeds," said Luther. "Do you likewise prove your apostleship by miracles?" "We will do so," answered the prophets. "The God whom I serve will know how to bridle your gods." rejoined Luther. Stubner now fixed his eyes upon the Reformer, and said, in a solemn tone, "Martin Luther, hear me while I declare what is passing at this moment in your soul. You are beginning to see that my doctrine is true."

Luther was silent for a moment, and then said, "The Lord rebuke thee, Satan."

The prophets, losing all self-control, shouted in a rage, "The Spirit! the Spirit!" Luther answered, with cool contempt, "I slap your spirit on the mouth."

Hereupon the outcries of the prophets were redoubled; Cellarius, more violent than the others, stormed and raged until he foamed at the mouth. As the result of the interview, the false prophets left Wittenberg that very day.

The fanaticism was checked for a time; but a few years later, it broke out with greater violence and more terrible results. Said Luther, concerning the leaders in this movement: "To them the Holy Scriptures were but a dead letter, and they all began to cry, 'The Spirit! the Spirit!' But most assuredly I will not follow where their spirit leads them. May God in his

mercy preserve me from a church in which there are none but saints. I wish to be in fellowship with the humble, the weak, the sick, who know and feel their sins, and sigh and cry continually to God from the bottom of their hearts to obtain comfort and deliverance.”

Thomas Munzer, who was the most active of these fanatics, was a man of considerable ability, which, rightly directed, would have enabled him to do good; but he had not learned the very first lessons of Christianity; he had not a knowledge of his own heart, and greatly lacked true humility. Yet he imagined himself ordained of God to reform the world, forgetting, like many other enthusiasts, that the reform should begin with himself. Erroneous writings which he had read in his youth had given a wrong direction to his character and his life. Furthermore, he was ambitious of position and influence, and unwilling to be second, even to Luther. He charged the Reformers with establishing, by their adherence to the Bible alone, a species of popery, and with forming churches that were not pure and holy.

“Luther,” said he, “has liberated men’s consciences from the papal yoke; but he has left them in carnal liberty, and has not led them to depend on the Spirit, and look directly to God for light.” He considered himself as called of God to remedy this great evil, and held that manifestations of the Spirit were the means by which this was to be accomplished, and that he who had the Spirit possessed the true faith, though he might never have seen the written word. “The heathen and the Turks” said he, “are better prepared to receive the Spirit than many of those Christians who call us enthusiasts.”

It is easier to tear down than to build up. It is far easier to trig the wheels of reform than to draw the chariot up the steep ascent. Men are still to be found who will accept just enough truth to pass as reformers, but who are too self-sufficient to be taught by those whom God is teaching. Such are always leading directly away from the point to which God is seeking to bring his people.

Munzer taught that all who would receive the Spirit must mortify the flesh, wear tattered clothing, neglect the body, be of a sad countenance, and, forsaking all their former associates, retire to desert places, and there entreat the favor of God. “Then, said he, “God will come and speak with us as formerly he spoke with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If he were not to do so, he would not deserve our attention.” Thus was this deluded man, like Lucifer himself, making terms for God, and refusing to acknowledge his authority unless he should comply with these terms.

Men naturally love the marvelous and whatever flatters their pride, and Munzer’s ideas were received by a considerable part of the little flock over which he presided. He next denounced all order and ceremony in public worship, and declared that to obey princes was to attempt to serve both God and Belial. Then marching at the head of his followers to a chapel which was the resort of pilgrims from all quarters, he demolished it. After this act of violence, being compelled to leave that region, he wandered from place to place in Germany, and even went as far as Switzerland, everywhere exciting a spirit of rebellion, and unfolding his plan for a general revolution.

The minds of men, already beginning to throw off the yoke of the papacy, were also becoming impatient under the restraint of civil authority. Munzer’s revolutionary teachings, claiming divine sanction, led them to break away from all restraint and to give loose rein to

their prejudices and passions. The most terrible scenes of sedition and strife followed, and the fields of Germany were drenched with blood.

The anguish which Luther had so long before experienced in his cell at Erfurth, now pressed with redoubled power upon his soul as he saw the results of fanaticism charged upon the Reformation. The princes constantly repeated, and many believed, that Luther's doctrine had been the cause of the rebellion. Although this charge was without the slightest foundation, it could but cause the Reformer great distress. That the work of Heaven should be thus degraded by being classed with the basest fanaticism, seemed more than he could endure. On the other hand, Munzer and all the leaders in the revolt hated Luther because he had not only opposed their doctrines and denied their claims to divine inspiration, but had pronounced them rebels against the civil authority. In retaliation they denounced him as a base pretender. He seemed to have brought upon himself the enmity of both princes and people.

The Romanists exulted, expecting to witness the speedy downfall of the Reformation, and they blamed Luther even for the errors which he had been most earnestly endeavoring to correct. The fanatical party, by falsely claiming to have been treated with great injustice, succeeded in gaining the sympathies of a large class of the people, and as is usually the case with those who take the wrong side, they came to be regarded as martyrs. Thus the ones who were exerting every energy to tear down the work of the Reformation were pitied and lauded as the victims of cruelty and oppression. All this was the work of Satan, prompted by the same spirit of rebellion which was first manifested in Heaven.

It was Satan's desire for the supremacy that caused discord among the angels. The mighty Lucifer, "son of the morning," claimed the right to honor and authority above the Son of God; and this not being accorded him, he determined to rebel against the government of Heaven. He therefore appealed to the angelic host, complaining of God's injustice, and declaring himself deeply wronged. His false representations won to his side one-third of all the heavenly angels; and so strong was their delusion that they would not be corrected; they clung to Lucifer, and were expelled from Heaven with him.

Since his fall Satan has continued the same work of rebellion and falsehood. He is constantly laboring to deceive the minds of men, and lead them to call sin righteousness, and righteousness sin. How successful has been his work! How often are censure and reproach cast upon God's faithful servants because they will stand fearlessly in defense of the truth! Men who are but agents of Satan are praised and flattered, and even looked upon as martyrs, while those who should be respected and sustained for their fidelity to God, are left to stand alone, under suspicion and distrust. Satan's warfare did not end when he was expelled from Heaven; it has been carried on from century to century, even to the present year of our Lord 1883.

The fanatical teachers gave themselves up to be governed by impressions, calling every thought of the mind the voice of God; consequently they went to great extremes. "Jesus," said they, "commanded his followers to be as little children;" therefore they would dance through the streets, clap their hands, and even tumble one another in the sand. Some burned their Bibles, at the same time exclaiming, "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." Ministers indulged in the most violent and unbecoming behavior in the desk, sometimes

leaping from the pulpit into the congregation. Thus they gave practical illustration of their teaching, that all forms and order proceeded from Satan, and that it was their duty to break every yoke, and to act just as they felt.

Luther boldly protested against these extravagances, and declared to the world that the Reformation was wholly distinct from that disorderly element. These abuses, however continued to be charged upon him by those who wished to stigmatize his work.

Fearlessly did Luther defend the truth from the attacks which came from every quarter. The word of God proved itself a weapon mighty indeed in every conflict. With that word he warred against the usurped authority of the pope, and the rationalistic philosophy of the schoolmen, while he stood firm as a rock against the fanaticism that sought to ally itself with the Reformation.

Each of these opposing elements was in its own way setting aside the sure word of prophecy, and exalting human wisdom as the source of religious truth and knowledge. Rationalism idolizes reason, and makes this the criterion for religion. Roman Catholicism claims for her sovereign pontiff an inspiration descended in unbroken line from the apostles, and unchangeable through all time, thus giving ample opportunity for every species of extravagance and corruption to be concealed under the sanctify of the apostolic commission. The inspiration claimed by Munzer and his associates proceeded from no higher source than the vagaries of the imagination, and its influence was subversive of all authority, human or divine. True Christianity receives the word of God as the great treasure-house of inspired truth, and the standard and test of all inspiration.

November 1, 1883

Triumph of the Reformation

Upon his return from Wartburg, Luther gave his attention to the work of revising his translation of the New Testament, and the gospel was soon after given to the people of Germany in their native tongue. This translation was received with great joy by all who loved the truth; but it was scornfully rejected by those who chose human traditions and the commandments of men.

The priests, who themselves knew little of the Scriptures, were alarmed at the thought that the common people would now be able to discuss with them the precepts of God's word, and that their own ignorance would thus be exposed. Rome summoned all her authority and power to prevent the circulation of the Scriptures; but decrees, anathemas, and tortures were alike in vain. The more she condemned and prohibited the circulation of the Bible, the greater was the anxiety of the people to know what it really taught. All who could read were eager to study the word of God for themselves. They carried it about with them, and read and reread, and could not be satisfied until they had committed large portions to memory. Seeing the eagerness with which the New Testament was received, Luther immediately began the translation of the Old, and published it in parts as fast as completed.

About this time there appeared a new foe of the Reformation. Tidings reached Wittenberg that Henry VIII., king of England, had written a book supporting the Romish doctrines, and violently attacking Luther. Henry was one of the most powerful monarchs of Christendom, and he vainly imagined that he could, without difficulty, annihilate the Reformation. He drew

no arguments from the Scriptures in support of his position, but cited instead only the authority of the church and the traditions of the Fathers. He also resorted to contempt and ridicule of his "feeble adversary," as he termed Luther, styling him also a wolf, a poisonous serpent, a limb of the devil.

The appearance of this book was hailed with great delight by the partisans of Rome. Its superficial reasoning and harsh denunciations suited well a people who willfully rejected the truths of God's word. It was lauded by princes and prelates, and even by the pope himself, and Henry VIII. was revered as a prodigy of wisdom, even a second Solomon.

Luther read the work with astonishment and contempt. Its falsehood and insulting personalities, as well as its tone of affected contempt, excited his indignation, and the thought that the pope and his partisans had exulted in so weak and superficial a production, inspired him with a determination to silence their boasting.

Again he took up his pen against the enemies of the truth. He showed that Henry had sustained his doctrines only by the decrees and teachings of men. "As to me," said he, "I do not cease my cry of, 'The gospel, the gospel! Christ, Christ!' and my enemies continue to reply, 'Custom, custom! Ordinances, ordinances! Fathers, Fathers!' St. Paul says, 'Let not your faith stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.' And the apostle, by this thunder-clap from Heaven, at once overturns and disperses, as the mind scatters the dust, all the foolish thoughts of such a one as this Henry."

"To all the decisions of Fathers, of men, of angels, of devils, I oppose," says he, "not the antiquity of custom, not the habits of the many, but the word of the eternal God, the gospel, which they themselves are obliged to admit. It is to this book that I keep; upon it I rest; in it I make my boast; in it I triumph and exult... The King of Heaven is on my side; therefore I fear nothing." And with arguments drawn from the word of God did Luther demolish and scatter to the winds all the sophisms of his opposers. It was with the new doctrines and their advocates as with the Israelites in Egypt,—"the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew."

Luther's writing were eagerly read alike in the city and in the hamlet. At night the teachers of the village schools would read aloud to little groups gathered at the fireside. With every effort some souls would be convicted of the truth, and, receiving the word with tears of gladness, would in their turn tell the good news to others.

The words of inspiration were verified, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." The study of the Scriptures was working a mighty change in the minds and hearts of the people, not only reforming the morals, but arousing the intellectual powers to a strength and vigor heretofore unknown. The papal rule had placed upon the people an iron yoke which held them in ignorance and degradation. All their instruction and discipline had been of a character to encourage a superstitious observance of forms; the prescribed routine of worship was scrupulously maintained, but in all their service the heart and intellect had little part. Yet many of these worshipers possessed dormant powers that needed only to be awakened and called into action. The preaching of Luther, setting forth the plain truths of God's word, and then the word itself, placed in the

hands of the common people, had not only purified and ennobled the spiritual nature, but had imparted a new life to the intellectual powers.

Persons of all ranks were to be seen with the Bible in their hands, defending the doctrines of the Reformation. The papists who had left the study of the Scriptures to the priests and monks, now called upon them to come forward and refute the new teachings. But ignorant alike of the Scriptures and of the power of God, priests and friars were totally defeated by those whom they had denounced as unlearned and heretical. Unhappily," says a Catholic writer, "Luther had persuaded his followers that their faith ought only to be founded on the oracles of Holy Writ." Crowds would gather to hear the truth advocated by common men, and even discussed by them with learned and eloquent theologians. The shameful ignorance of these great men was made apparent as their arguments were met by the simple teachings of God's word. Persons of little education, women and laborers, were able to give from the Scriptures the reason of their faith.

The success that attended the Reformation excited the most bitter opposition. As the Romish clergy saw their congregations diminishing, they invoked the aid of the magistrates, and by every means in their power endeavored to bring back their hearers. These efforts were but partially successful. The people were hungering for the bread of life; they had found in the teachings of the Reformation that which supplied the wants of their souls, and they turned away from those who had so long fed them with the worthless husks of superstitious rites and human traditions. Sometimes the people, irritated at the thought that they had so long been deceived by fables, compelled the priests to leave their positions.

When persecution was kindled against the Reformers, they gave heed to the words of Christ, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." The light penetrated everywhere. The fugitives would find somewhere a hospitable door open to them, and there abiding they would preach Christ, sometimes in the church, or, if denied that privilege, in private houses, or in the open air. Wherever they could obtain a hearing was a consecrated temple. The truth, proclaimed with such energy and assurance, spread like fire in the stubble. No effort could stay its progress. In the city of Ingolstadt, where was a university, and where, also, lived one of the most learned opponents of the Reformation, a young weaver read Luther's works to a crowded congregation. In the same city, the university council having decided that a disciple of Melancthon should be compelled to retract, a woman volunteered to defend him, and challenged the doctors to a public disputation. Women and children artisans and soldiers, had a better knowledge of the Scriptures than learned doctors or surpliced priests.

In vain were both ecclesiastical and civil authorities invoked to crush the heresy. In vain they resorted to imprisonment, torture, fire, and sword. Thousands of believers sealed their faith with their blood, and yet the work went on. Throughout Germany, particularly in the Saxon States, in France and Holland, in Switzerland, in England, and in other countries, the Lord raised up men to present to the benighted minds of the people the light of God's word. Persecution served only to extend the work; and the fanaticism which Satan endeavored to unite with it, resulted in making more clear the contrast between the work of Satan and the work of God.

The cause of truth was destined to triumph. God's faithful builders were not toiling alone. Could their eyes have been opened, they would have seen as marked evidence of divine presence and aid as was granted to a prophet of old. When Elisha's servant pointed his master to the hostile army surrounding them and cutting off all chance of escape, the prophet prayed, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see." And, lo, the mountain was filled with chariots and horses of fire, the army of Heaven stationed to protect the servant of the Lord. Thus did the angels of God guard the workers in the cause of the Reformation. God had commanded his servants to build, and the combined forces of earth and hell were powerless to drive them from the walls. Saith the Lord, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night."

November 15, 1883

The All-Important Lesson

During the entire day after Christ had cleansed the desecrated courts of the temple, he was healing the sick and relieving the afflicted. Nicodemus had seen with what pitying compassion he had received and ministered unto the poor and the oppressed. With the demeanor of a loving father toward his suffering children, he had wrought cures and removed sorrow. No suppliant was sent unrelieved from his presence. Mothers were made glad by the restoration of their babes to health, and voices of thanksgiving had taken the place of weeping and moans of pain. All day, Jesus had instructed the restless, curious people, reasoning with the scribes, and silencing the caviling of the haughty rulers by the wisdom of his words. Nicodemus, after seeing and hearing these wonderful things, and after searching the prophecies that pointed to Jesus as the looked-for Messiah, dared not disbelieve that he was sent of God.

When night came on, Jesus, pale with the weariness of his long-continued labors, sought for retirement and repose in the Mount of Olives. Here Nicodemus found him and desired a conference. This man was rich and honored of the Jews. He was famous throughout Jerusalem and for his wealth, his learning and benevolence, and especially for his liberal offerings to the temple to carry out its sacred services. He was also one of the prominent members of the national council. Yet when he came into the presence of Jesus, a strange agitation and timidity assailed him, which he essayed to conceal beneath an air of composure and dignity.

He endeavored to appear as if it were an act of condescension on the part of a learned ruler, to seek, uninvited, an audience with a young stranger at that unseasonable hour of night. He began with a conciliating address. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him." But instead of acknowledging this complimentary salutation, Jesus bent his calm and searching eye upon the speaker, as if reading his very soul; then, with a sweet and solemn voice, he spoke and revealed the true condition of Nicodemus. "Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The Pharisee was surprised out of his self-possession by these words, the meaning of which he partially comprehended; for he had heard John the Baptist preach repentance and baptism, and also the coming of One who should baptize with the Holy Ghost. Nicodemus had long felt that there was a want of spirituality among the Jews; that bigotry, pride, and worldly ambition guided their actions in a great measure. He had hoped for a better state of

things when the Messiah should come. But he was looking for a Saviour who would set up a temporal throne in Jerusalem, and who would gather the Jewish nation under his standard, bringing the Roman power into subjection by force of arms.

This learned dignitary was a strict Pharisee. He had prided himself upon his own good works and exalted piety. He considered his daily life perfect in the sight of God, and was startled to hear Jesus speak of a kingdom too pure for him to see in his present state. His mind misgave him; yet he felt irritated by the close application of the words to his own case, and he answered as if he had understood them in the most literal sense, "How can a man be born when he is old?"

Jesus, with solemn emphasis, repeated, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The words of Jesus could no longer be misunderstood. His listener well knew that he referred to water baptism and the grace of God. The power of the Holy Spirit transforms the entire man. This change constitutes the new birth.

Many of the Jews had acknowledged John as a prophet sent of God, and had received baptism at his hands unto repentance; meanwhile he had plainly taught them that his work and mission were to prepare the way for Christ, who was the greater light, and would complete the work which he had begun. Nicodemus had meditated upon these things, and he now felt convinced that he was in the presence of that One foretold by John.

Said Jesus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 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." Jesus here seeks to impress upon Nicodemus the positive necessity of the influence of the Spirit of God upon the human heart to purify it preparatory to the development of a righteous and symmetrical character. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." This fountain of the heart being purified, the stream thereof becomes pure.

This new birth looks mysterious to Nicodemus. He asks, "How can these things be?" Jesus, bidding him marvel not, uses the wind as an illustration of his meaning. It is heard among the branches of the trees, and rustling the leaves and flowers, yet it is invisible to the eye, and from whence it comes and whither it goeth, no man knoweth. So is the experience of every one who is born of the Spirit. The mind is an invisible agent of God to produce tangible results. Its influence is powerful, and governs the actions of men. If purified from all evil, it is the motive power of good. The regenerating Spirit of God, taking possession of the mind, transforms the life; wicked thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced, love, peace, and humility take the place of anger, envy, and strife. That power which no human eye can see, has created a new being in the image of God....

The conversion of the soul through faith in Christ was but dimly comprehended by Nicodemus, who had been accustomed to consider cold formality and rigid services as true religion. The great Teacher explained that his mission upon earth was not to set up a temporal kingdom, emulating the pomp and display of the world, but to establish the reign of peace and love, to bring men to the Father through the mediatorial agency of his Son.

Nicodemus was bewildered. Said Jesus, "If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" If Nicodemus could not receive his teachings illustrating the work of grace upon the human heart, as represented by the figure of the wind, how could he comprehend the character of his glorious heavenly kingdom should he explain it to him? Not discerning the nature of Christ's work on earth, he could not understand his work in Heaven. Jesus referred Nicodemus to the prophecies of David and Ezekiel:

"And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new a spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." "And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence." "Therefore, I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit." "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

The learned Nicodemus had read these pointed prophecies with a clouded mind, but now he began to comprehend their true meaning, and to understand that even a man as just and honorable as himself must experience a new birth through Jesus Christ, as the only condition upon which he could be saved, and secure an entrance into the kingdom of God. Jesus spoke positively that unless a man is born again he cannot discern the kingdom which Christ came upon earth to set up. Rigid precision in obeying the law would entitle no man to enter the kingdom of Heaven.

There must be a new birth, a new mind through the operation of the Spirit of God, which purifies the life and ennoble the character. This connection with God fits man for the glorious kingdom of Heaven. No human invention can ever find a remedy for the sinning soul. Only by repentance and humiliation, a submission to the divine requirements, can the work of grace be performed. Iniquity is so offensive in the sight of God, whom the sinner has so long insulted and wronged, that a repentance commensurate with the character of the sins committed often produces an agony of spirit hard to bear.

Nothing less than a practical acceptance and application of divine truth opens the kingdom of God to man. Only a pure and lowly heart, obedient and loving, firm in the faith and service of the Most High, can enter there. Jesus also declares that as "Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life." The serpent in the wilderness was lifted up on a pole before the people, that all who had been stung unto death by the fiery serpent, might look upon this brazen serpent, a symbol of Christ, and be instantly healed. But they must look in faith, or it would be of no avail. Just so must men look upon the Son of man as their Saviour

unto eternal life. Man had separated himself from God by sin. Christ brought his divinity to earth, veiled by humanity, in order to rescue man from his lost condition. Human nature is vile, and man's character must be changed before it can harmonize with the pure and holy in God's immortal kingdom. This transformation is the new birth.

If man by faith takes hold of the divine love of God, he becomes a new creature through Christ Jesus. The world is overcome, human nature is subdued, and Satan is vanquished. In this important sermon to Nicodemus, Jesus unfolded before this noble Pharisee the whole plan of salvation, and his mission to the world. In none of his subsequent discourses did the Saviour explain so thoroughly, step by step, the work necessary to be done in the human heart, if it would inherit the kingdom of Heaven. He traced man's salvation directly to the love of the Father, which led him to give his Son unto death that man might be saved.

November 15, 1883

Good Counsel

We received an encouraging letter from sister white which is worthy of more than a passing notice. The following words will be appreciated by our people in California at this time:

"We are not doing all we might do to encourage workers in the great harvest-field. We must encourage simplicity; we must not degenerate into formal service. We must lay responsibility upon humble, God-fearing men. I know God will accept their efforts if they will dedicate themselves to him. If they will place themselves in the channel, the light from the throne of God will shine through them. Jesus will work through their disinterested efforts. The Bible readings will be a means of getting the truth before a large number. Men and women may do a good work here. Our sisters are not excusable in letting the talents God has given them rust from inaction."

We believe that in many cases the sisters could find openings for bible-readings where men could not. Why should they not improve them?

November 22, 1883

A Solemn Appeal

The Lincoln, Nebraska, State Journal kept a reporter in the field every day during the camp-meeting of seventh-day adventists at Crete. His reports were very favorable, even complimentary, and the synopses of discourses quite liberal. From the Journal report of a discourse by Mrs. E. G. White, we take the following:

We are standing as a brand in the burning. What a position we are in! The whole world is in darkness. Deception is prevalent everywhere; and here is the remnant church taking its stand on an important truth. I wrote these great truths out in my fourth volume, I felt that we are not ready and I said to my son, I must go. He argued that I ought not, when my health was so poor, but I felt that I must go and talk once more at our meetings. If I could only tell you how my heart is stirred when I feel that the time is at hand, and so many are unprepared. We have no time to devote to frivolity, to backsliding from God. We must be preparing to walk through time and eternity. The work is going on in the sanctuary, yet how sensual, how sleepy, how indifferent we are. How much our young men and our young women could do! What rich experience they could have! It seems sometimes as if there were a paralysis upon our people; that they do not realize how near they are to the end of

the earth. We need more standard-bearers. We need more missionaries to go forth into the world.

We feel at this hour we ought to understand our position in history and prophecy. We want to know if you understand this as well as you do your wheat-fields and your cattle and your hogs; whether you are purifying yourselves line upon line and precept upon precept. So many look upon confession of Christ as a step down. But O, what could be a greater privilege than to be a child of God, children of the heavenly King. This is not taking a step down, not making a sacrifice. I have been engaged in this work forty years. I have fainted down upon the floor for want of food, with an infant in my arms. I have known poverty. I have laid dear ones in the grave, but I have never made a sacrifice. I have been letting treasures go here, but I have put them in the bank in Heaven.

But Christ has made a sacrifice for us. Christ, the majesty of Heaven. We make no sacrifice. His yoke is easy and his burden is light. I have proved it for forty years.

Mothers and fathers there is a great work devolving upon you—to instruct your children aright. When you do not do this, you have imposed a terrible burden upon them. They grow up with their characters deformed and crooked, and they must be all made over again. In allowing children to be disobedient you are teaching them to be rebellious against the commands of God. The first missionary duty you have is your families. You will see the power of God when you begin the work in your families. It will do more than all the preaching. A family that has moral backbone will sway and not be swayed. Work just as earnestly with your family as with those outside. Are you afraid to talk with your children because your fretful and impatient disposition has alienated you from them? Then mend. Bind them to you by the golden words of love. All this fretting and fault-finding is the work of Satan. What a world this would be if we were all true Christians.

November 29, 1883

Nehemiah Desires to Restore Jerusalem

Nehemiah, the Hebrew exile, occupied a position of influence and honor in the Persian Court. As cup-bearer of the king, he was familiarly admitted to the royal presence, and by virtue of this intimacy, and his own high abilities and tried fidelity, he became the monarch's counselor. Yet in that heathen land, surrounded by royal pomp and splendor, he did not forget the God of his fathers or the people who had been intrusted with the holy oracles. With deepest interest, his heart turned toward Jerusalem, and his hopes and joys were bound up with her prosperity.

Days of peculiar trial and affliction had come to the chosen city. Messengers from Judah described to Nehemiah its condition. The second temple had been reared, and portions of the city rebuilt; but its prosperity was impeded, the temple services disturbed, and the people kept in constant alarm, by the fact that its walls were still in ruins, and its gates burned with fire. The capital of Judah was fast becoming a desolate place, and the few inhabitants remaining were daily embittered by the taunts of their idolatrous assailants, "Where is your God?" The soul of the Hebrew patriot was overwhelmed by these evil tidings. So great was his sorrow, that he could not eat or drink; he "wept and mourned certain days, and fasted." But when the first outburst of his grief was over, he turned in his affliction to the sure Helper. "I prayed," says he, "before the God of Heaven." He knew that all this ruin had come

because of the transgressions of Israel; and in deep humiliation he came before God for pardon of sin and a renewal of the divine favor. He addressed his petitions to the God of Heaven, "the great and terrible God;" for such the Lord had shown himself to be in the fearful judgments brought upon Israel. But with a gleam of hope, Nehemiah continues, "that keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and observe his commandments." For repentant and believing Israel there was still mercy.

Faithfully the man of God makes confession of his sins and the sins of his people: "Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee; both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses."

And now, taking fast hold, by faith, of the divine promise, Nehemiah lays down at the footstool of heavenly mercy his petition that God would maintain the cause of his now penitent people, restore their strength, and build up their waste places. God had been faithful to his threatenings when his people separated from him; he had scattered them abroad among the nations, according to his word. And Nehemiah finds in this very fact an assurance that he will be equally faithful to fulfill his promises. His people had now returned in penitence and faith to keep his commandments; and God himself had said that if they would do this, even though they were cast out into the uttermost part of the earth, he would gather them thence, and would cause the light of his countenance again to shine upon them. This promise had been given more than a thousand years before; but it stood unchanged through all the centuries. God's word cannot fail.

Nehemiah's faith and courage strengthen as he grasps the promise. His mouth is filled with holy arguments. He points to the dishonor that would be cast upon God, were his people, now that they have returned to him, to be left in their state of weakness and oppression.

Nehemiah had often poured out his soul thus before God in behalf of his people. Day and night had he offered this prayer. And as he prayed, a holy purpose had been forming in his mind, that if he could obtain the consent of the king, and the necessary aid in procuring implements and material, he would himself undertake the arduous task of rebuilding the ruined walls of Jerusalem, and seeking to restore the national strength. And now in closing his prayer he entreats the Lord to grant him favor in the sight of the king, that this cherished plan may be carried out.

Four months he was compelled to wait for a favorable opportunity to present his request to the king. During this period, while his heart was oppressed with grief, he constantly endeavored to carry a cheerful and happy countenance. In his seasons of retirement, many were the prayers, the penitential confessions, and the tears of anguish, witnessed by God and angels; but all this was concealed from human sight. The regulations of Eastern courts forbade any manifestation of sorrow within them. All must appear gay and happy in those halls of luxury and splendor. The distress without was not to cast its shadow in the presence of royalty.

But at last the sorrow that burdened Nehemiah's heart could no longer be concealed. Sleepless nights devoted to earnest prayer, care-filled days, dark with the shadow of hope deferred, leave their trace upon his countenance. The keen eye of the monarch, jealous to guard his own safety, is accustomed to read countenances and to penetrate disguises. Seeing that some secret trouble is preying upon his servant, he suddenly inquires, "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart."

This question fills the listener with apprehension. Will not the king be angry to hear that while outwardly engaged in his service, the courtier's thoughts have been far away with his afflicted people? Will not the offender's life be forfeited? And his cherished plan for restoring the strength of Jerusalem—is it not about to be overthrown? "Then," he says, "I was very sore afraid." With trembling lips and tearful eyes he reveals the cause of his sorrow,—the city, which is the place of his father's sepulcher, lying waste, and its gates consumed with fire. The touching recital awakens the sympathy of the monarch without arousing his idolatrous prejudices; another question gives the opportunity which Nehemiah has long sought: "For what dost thou make request?" But the man of God does not reply until he has first asked the support of One higher than Artaxerxes. "I prayed," he says, "to the God of Heaven."

A precious lesson is this for all Christians. Whenever we are brought into positions of difficulty or danger, even when surrounded by those who love and fear not God, the heart may send up its cry for help, and there is One who has promised that he will come to our aid. This is the kind of prayer that Christ meant when he said, "Pray without ceasing." We are not to make ejaculatory prayer a substitute for public or family worship, or for secret devotion; but it is a blessed resource, at our command under circumstances when other forms of prayer may be impossible. Toilers in the busy marts of trade, crowded and almost overwhelmed with financial perplexities, travelers by sea and land, when threatened by some great danger, can thus commit themselves to divine guidance and protection. And in every circumstance and condition of life, the soul weighed down with grief or care, or assailed by temptation, may thus find comfort, support, and succor in the unfailing love and power of a covenant-keeping God.

Nehemiah and Artaxerxes stand face to face,—the one a servant, of a down-trodden race, the other the monarch of the world's great empire. But infinitely greater than the disparity of rank is the moral distance which separates them. Nehemiah has complied with the invitation of the King of kings, "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." He has enlisted in his behalf a power in whose hand is the heart of kings, even as the rivers of water, and who "turneth it whithersoever he will." The silent petition sent up to Heaven was the same that he had offered for many weeks, that God would prosper his request. And now taking courage at the thought that he has a Friend, omniscient and all-powerful, to work in his behalf, the man of God calmly makes known to the king his desire to be released for a time from his office at the court, and be authorized to build up the waste places of Jerusalem, and to make it once more a strong and defended city. Momentous results to the Jewish city and nation hung upon this request. And, says, Nehemiah, "the king granted me according to the good hand of my God upon me."

While Nehemiah implored the help of God, he did not fold his own hands, feeling that he had no more care or responsibility in the matter. With admirable prudence and forethought he

proceeded to make all the arrangements necessary to ensure the success of the enterprise. Every movement was marked with great caution. He did not reveal his purpose even to his own countrymen; for while they would rejoice in his success, he feared that they might, by some indiscretion, greatly hinder his work. Some would be likely to manifest a spirit of exultation which would rouse the jealousy of their enemies, and perhaps cause the defeat of the undertaking.

As his request to the king had been so favorably received, he was encouraged to ask for such assistance as was necessary to carry out his plans. To give dignity and authority to his mission, as well as to provide for protection on the journey, he secured a military escort. He obtained royal letters to the governors of the provinces beyond the Euphrates, the territory through which he must pass on his way to Judea; and he obtained, also, a letter to the keeper of the king's forest in the mountains of Lebanon, directing him to furnish such timber as was needed for the wall of Jerusalem and such buildings as Nehemiah proposed to erect. Nehemiah is careful to have the authority and privileges accorded him clearly defined, that there may be no room for complaint that he has exceeded his commission.

The example of this holy man should be a lesson to all the people of God, that they are not only to pray in faith, but to work with diligence and fidelity. How many difficulties we encounter, and how we hinder the working of Providence on our behalf, because prudence, forethought, and painstaking are regarded as having little to do with religion. This is a grave mistake. It is a religious duty to cultivate and to exercise every power which will render us more efficient workers in the cause of God. Careful consideration and well-matured plans are as essential to the success of sacred enterprise today as in the time of Nehemiah. If all who are engaged in the work of God would realize how much depends upon their fidelity and wise forethought, we would see far greater prosperity attend their efforts. Through diffidence and backwardness we often fail to secure that which is attainable as a right, from the powers that be. God will work for us, when we are ready to do what we can and should do on our part.

Men of prayer should be men of action. Those who are ready and willing, will find ways and means to work. Nehemiah does not depend upon uncertainties. The means which he has not he solicits from those who are able to bestow. All the world, with its riches and treasures, belongs to God, although it is now in the possession of wicked men. If his servants take a wise and prudent course, so that the good hand of God may be with them, they can obtain the means they need to advance his cause.

December 6, 1883

Nehemiah Secures the Co-operation of the People

The royal letters to the governors of the provinces along his route, secured to Nehemiah an honorable reception and prompt assistance. And no enemy dared molest the official who was guarded by the power of the Persian king and treated with so marked consideration by the provincial rulers. Nehemiah's journey was therefore safe and prosperous.

His arrival at Jerusalem, however, with the attendance of a military guard, showing that he had come on some important mission, excited the jealousy and hatred of the enemies of Israel. The heathen tribes settled near Jerusalem had previously indulged their enmity against the Jews by heaping upon them every insult and injury which they dared inflict.

Foremost in this evil work were certain chiefs of these tribes, Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian; and from this time those leaders watched with jealous eye the movements of Nehemiah, and endeavored by every means in their power to thwart his plans and hinder his work.

Nehemiah continued to exercise the same caution and prudence which had hitherto marked his course. Knowing that bitter and determined enemies stood ready to oppose every effort for the restoration of Jerusalem, he concealed the nature of his business until by previous observation he had been enabled to form his plans. Thus he was prepared to secure the co-operation of the people and set them at work before his enemies had opportunity to arouse their fears or their prejudice.

Yet, although he had been so highly favored of God, Nehemiah did not move out in an independent, self-sufficient manner, as if able to carry everything by his own ability. He selected a few persons whom he knew to be worthy of confidence, and to them he made known the circumstances which had led to his visit, the object to be accomplished, and the plans which he purposed to employ, and secured their assistance in his important undertaking.

On the third night after his arrival, the burden weighing so heavily upon his mind as to preclude sleep, he rose at midnight, and with a few trusted companions went out to view for himself the desolation of Jerusalem. Mounted on his mule, he moved about by moonlight, surveying the ruined walls and broken gates of the city of his fathers. Painful were the reflections that filled the mind of the Jewish patriot. Memories of Israel's past glory stood out in sharp contrast with the marks of her present degradation. Because she had not taken heed to the word of God, because she had not received reproof, and corrected her ways, she had been left to be thus reduced in power and honor among the nations. The people for whom God had wrought wondrously, had trifled with their privileges, set at naught his counsels, and joined themselves to idolaters, until he had withdrawn from them his special presence and protection.

With sorrow-stricken heart, that visitant from afar gazes upon the ruined defenses of his loved Jerusalem. And is it not thus that angels of Heaven survey the condition of the church of Christ? Like the dwellers at Jerusalem, we become accustomed to existing evils, and often are content to do nothing to remedy them. But how do they appear to the eye of one divinely illuminated? Would he not, like Nehemiah, look upon ruined walls, and gates burned with fire?

Are not every where visible the shameful tokens of backsliding from God and conformity with a sin-loving and truth-hating world? In these days of darkness and peril, who is able to stand in defense of Zion and show her any good? Her spiritual state and prospects are not in accordance with the light and privileges bestowed of God.

The same reproofs are applicable to her today as to the people of Israel when the Lord said by his prophets, "Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the Lord doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity and visit their sins."

In secrecy and silence, Nehemiah completed his circuit of the walls. He declares, "The rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work." In this painful survey he did not wish to attract the attention of either friends or foes, lest an excitement be created, and reports be put in circulation which might defeat, or at least hinder, his work.

Nehemiah devoted the remainder of the night to prayer; in the morning there must be earnest effort to arouse and unite his dispirited and divided countrymen. Although he bore a royal commission requiring the inhabitants to co-operate with him in rebuilding the walls of the city, he chose not to depend upon the mere exercise of authority. He sought rather to gain the confidence and sympathy of the people, well knowing that a union of hearts as well as hands was essential to success in the great work which he had undertaken. When he called the people together on the morrow, he presented such arguments as were calculated to arouse their dormant energies and to unite their scattered numbers.

They knew not, neither did he tell them, of his mournful midnight circuit while they were sleeping. Nevertheless that very circumstance contributed greatly to his success. He was enabled to speak of the condition of the city with an accuracy and minuteness that astonished his hearers, while the actual contemplation of the weakness and degradation of Israel, deeply impressing his heart, gave earnestness and power to his words. He presented before the people their condition as objects of reproach among the heathen. The nation once so highly favored of God as to excite the terror of all surrounding countries, had now become a by-word and a hissing. Her religion was dishonored, her God blasphemed.

He then told them how, in a distant land, he had heard of their affliction, how he had entreated the favor of God in their behalf, and how, while praying, the plan had been formed in his mind, of soliciting permission from the king to come to their assistance. He had asked God that the king might not only allow him to go to Jerusalem, but invest him with authority and render the help needed for the work. His prayer had been answered in such a manner as clearly to show that the whole thing was of the Lord. And having thus laid the matter fully before them, showing that he was sustained by the combined authority of the Persian king and the God of Israel, Nehemiah put to the people directly the question whether they would take advantage of this favorable occasion, and arise with him and build the wall.

This appeal went straight to their hearts; the manifestation of the favor of Heaven toward them put their fears to shame. With new courage they cried out with one voice, "Let us rise up and build."

The holy energy and high hope of Nehemiah were communicated to the people. As they caught the spirit, they rose for a time to the moral level of their leader. Each, in his own sphere, was a sort of Nehemiah; and each strengthened and upheld his brother in the work.

There is need of Nehemiahs in the church today,—not men who can pray and preach only, but men whose prayers and sermons are braced with firm and eager purpose. The course pursued by this Hebrew patriot in the accomplishment of his plans is one that should still be adopted by ministers and leading men. When they have laid their plans, they should present them to the church in such a manner as to win their interest and co-operation. Let the people

understand the plans and share in the work, and they will have a personal interest in its prosperity.

The success attending Nehemiah's efforts, shows what prayer, faith, and wise, energetic action, will accomplish. Living faith will prompt to energetic action. The spirit manifested by the leader will be, to a great extent, reflected by the people. If the leaders professing to believe the solemn, important truths that are to test the world at this time, manifest no ardent zeal to prepare a people to stand in the day of God, we must expect the church to be careless, indolent, and pleasure-loving.

Among the first to catch Nehemiah's spirit of zeal and earnestness were the priests of Israel. From the position of influence which they occupied, these men could do much to hinder or advance the work. Their ready co-operation at the very outset, contributed not a little to its success. Thus should it be in every holy enterprise. Those who occupy positions of influence and responsibility in the church, should be foremost in the work of God. If they move reluctantly, others will not move at all. But "their zeal will provoke very many." When their light burns brightly, a thousand torches will be kindled at the flame.

A majority of the nobles and rulers of Israel also came nobly up to their duty; but there were a few, the Tekoite nobles, who "put not their necks to the work of their Lord." While the faithful builders have honorable mention in the book of God, the memory of those slothful servants is branded with shame, and handed down as a warning to all future generations. In every religious movement there are some who, while they cannot deny that it is the work of God, will keep themselves aloof, refusing to make any effort to advance it. But in enterprises to promote their selfish interests, these men are often the most active and energetic workers. It were well to remember that record kept on high, the book of God, in which all our motives and our works are written,—that book in which there are no omissions, no mistakes, and out of which we are to be judged. There every neglected opportunity to do service for God will be faithfully reported, and every deed of faith and love, however humble, will be held in everlasting remembrance.

Against the inspiring influence of Nehemiah's presence, the example of the Tekoite nobles had little weight. The people in general were animated with one heart and one soul of patriotism and cheerful activity. Men of ability and influence organized the various classes of citizens into companies, each leader making himself responsible for the reaction of a certain portion of the wall. It was a sight well pleasing to God and angels to see the busy companies working harmoniously upon the broken-down walls of Jerusalem, and it was a joyous sound to hear the noise of instruments of labor from the earliest dawn "till the stars appeared."

Nehemiah's zeal and energy did not abate, now that the work was actually begun. He did not fold his hands, feeling that he might let fall the burden. With tireless vigilance he constantly superintended the work, directing the workmen, noting every hindrance, and providing for every emergency. His influence was constantly felt along the whole extent of those three miles of wall. With timely words he encouraged the fearful, approved the diligent, or aroused the laggard. And again he watched with eagle eye the movements of their enemies, who at times collected at a distance and engaged in earnest conversation as if plotting mischief, and then drawing near the workmen attempted to divert their attention and hinder the work. While the eye of every worker is often directed to Nehemiah, ready to heed the slightest

signal, his eye and heart are uplifted to God, the great overseer of the whole work, the one who put it into the heart of his servant to build. And as faith and courage strengthen in his own heart, Nehemiah exclaims, and his words, repeated and re-echoed, thrill the hearts of the workers all along the line, "The God of Heaven, he will prosper us."

December 13, 1883

Efforts to Hinder Nehemiah's Work

Those who were restoring the defenses of Jerusalem did not go forward in their work unmolested. Satan was busy in stirring up opposition and creating discouragement. The principal agents in this movement were Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian. These idolaters had exulted in the feeble and defenseless condition of the Jews, and had mocked at their religion, and ridiculed their devastated city. And when the work of rebuilding the wall was entered upon, they with envenomed zeal set themselves to hinder the undertaking. To accomplish this, they attempted to cause division among the workmen by suggesting doubts and arousing unbelief as to their success. They also ridiculed the efforts of the builders, declared the enterprise an impossibility, and predicted a disgraceful failure.

"What do these feeble Jews?" exclaimed Sanballat mockingly; "will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?" Tobiah, endeavoring to be still more contemptuous and sarcastic, added, "Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall."

The builders on the wall were soon beset by more active opposition. They were compelled to guard continually against the plots of their sleepless adversaries. The emissaries of the enemy endeavored to destroy their courage by the circulation of false reports; conspiracies were formed, on various, pretexts, to draw Nehemiah into their toils; and false-hearted Jews were found ready to aid the treacherous undertaking. Again, the report was spread that Nehemiah was plotting rebellion against the Persian monarch, intending to exalt himself as king over Israel, and that all who aided him were traitors.

Emissaries of the enemy, professing friendliness, mingled with the builders, suggesting changes in the plan, seeking in various ways to divert the attention of the workers, to cause confusion and perplexity, and to arouse distrust and suspicion. And the plans formed for the advancement of the work were reported, by these spies, to the enemy, and thus they were enabled to labor with greater effect to thwart the purpose of the builders.

But Nehemiah continued to look to God for guidance and support, and the work went forward until the gaps were filled, and the entire wall built up to half its intended height. As the enemies of Israel saw that all their efforts had been unavailing, they were filled with rage. Hitherto they had not dared to employ violent measures; for Nehemiah and his companions were acting by the king's commission, and any active opposition might bring upon themselves the monarch's displeasure. But now, in their blind passion, they themselves became guilty of the crime of rebellion of which they had so eagerly accused Nehemiah. Having assembled for united counsel, they "conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem."

The experience of Nehemiah is repeated in the history of God's people in this time. Those who labor in the cause of truth will find that they cannot do this without exciting the anger of its enemies. Though they have been called of God to the work in which they are engaged, and their course is approved of him, they cannot escape reproach and derision. They will be denounced as visionary, unreliable, scheming, hypocritical,—anything, in short, that will suit the purpose of their enemies. The most sacred things will be represented in a ridiculous light to amuse the ungodly. A very small amount of sarcasm and low wit, united with envy, jealousy, impiety, and hatred, is sufficient to excite the mirth of the profane scoffer. And these presumptuous jesters sharpen one another's ingenuity, and embolden each other in their blasphemous work. Contempt and derision are indeed painful to human nature; but they must be endured by all who are true to God. It is the policy of Satan thus to turn souls from doing the work which the Lord has laid upon them.

Proud scorers are not fit to be trusted; yet as Satan found in the heavenly courts a company to sympathize with him, so these find among professed followers of Christ those whom they can influence, who believe them honest, who sympathize with them, plead in their behalf, and become permeated with their spirit. Those who are at variance in almost everything else, will unite in persecuting the few who dare to pursue the straightforward path of duty. And the same enmity which leads to contempt and derision, will, at a favorable opportunity, inspire more violent and cruel measures, especially when workers for God are active and successful.

Some of the leading men among the Jews, becoming disaffected, sought to discourage Nehemiah by exaggerating the difficulties attending the work, and representing the people as already exhausted by their excessive labor. Said they, "The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall."

Again, they attempted to intimidate the people by the report that large armies were preparing for a secret attack upon the city: "And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease." It was the help and encouragement received from traitors in the camp that emboldened the enemies of Israel to make those threats. And traitors reported the threats for the sole purpose of terrifying and disheartening the builders on the wall.

"And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us, they will be upon you." These alarms were given by those who were taking no part in the work. They were gathering up the statements and reports of their enemies, and bringing these in to the workers to weaken courage and create disaffection. Then every word of complaint, distrust, suspicion, or unbelief dropped by the workmen, with all the additional conjectures and conclusions of the news-carriers, was eagerly reported outside the walls, and circulated among those who despised the Jews, and sought to hinder their prosperity.

The same difficulties are experienced by those who are now seeking to make up the breach in the law of God. The servants of the Lord must expect every kind of discouragement. They will be tried, not only by the anger, contempt, and cruelty of enemies, but by the indolence, inconsistency, lukewarmness, and treachery of friends and helpers. As we seek to advance the cause of truth, and prepare a people to stand in the day of God, we are led directly away

from the customs and practices of the world. But there are among us pleasure-seekers, who are not laboring to meet the high standard of the divine requirements, who love the spirit and influence of the world more than they love the truth or the prosperity of God's cause. These unconsecrated elements are used by Satan to accomplish his purposes. While still connected with the people of God, they unite themselves with his enemies, and thus the Lord's work is laid open to the attacks of its bitterest foes, and the arguments furnished by professed friends of the truth are employed to destroy the confidence, courage, and faith of workers who are too easily discouraged.

Even some who seem to desire the work of God to prosper, will yet weaken the hands of his servants by hearing, reporting, and half believing the slanders, boasts, and menaces of their adversaries. Those who appear to be honest souls are sometimes deceived through the influence of ambitious and turbulent men. Satan works with marvelous success through his agents; and all who yield to their influence are subject to a bewitching power that destroys the wisdom of the wise and the understanding of the prudent. Hence they allow themselves to be prejudiced, misled, and deceived. For this reason, many whose lives are a reproach to the cause of truth, will yet succeed in arousing distrust and suspicion of those through whom God is working.

How busy, in a crisis, is the rebellious spirit, the evil tongue! How eagerly will they gather up floating rumors, and send them to the bitterest enemies of God, to be sown broadcast, like thistle seed, to produce their harvest of evil! And when the result is seen, in desolation, backsliding, and apostasy, then those who have done the very work which Satan prompted them to do, are ready to charge the result upon the faithful workers whom they have hindered, burdened, and distressed. But every man's work stands registered in the books in Heaven, and no disguise can there conceal the motives that prompt to action. Those who obey God will be honored of him.

Amid great discouragements, Nehemiah made God his trust; and here is our defense. A remembrance of what the Lord has done for us, will prove a support in every danger. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" And "if God be for us, who can be against us?" However craftily the plots of Satan and his agents may be laid, God can detect them, and bring to naught all their counsels.

The most bitter opposition, the boldest threats of the enemy, seemed only to inspire Nehemiah with firmer determination, and to arouse him to greater watchfulness. "Nevertheless," he declares, "we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night." "Therefore, set I in the lower places, behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them; remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses. And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to naught, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons." "They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every

one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded.”

Beside Nehemiah stood a trumpeter, and on different parts of the wall were stationed priests bearing the sacred trumpets. The people were scattered in their labors; but on the approach of danger at any point, a signal was given for them to repair thither without delay. Then the priests sounded an alarm upon the trumpets as a token that God would fight for them. “So we labored in the work,” says Nehemiah, “and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.” Those who lived in towns and villages outside Jerusalem were required to lodge within the walls, both to guard the work and that they might be ready for duty in the morning. This would prevent unnecessary delay, and, furthermore, would cut off the opportunity which the enemies would otherwise enjoy, of attacking the workmen as they went to and from their homes, or embittering with prejudice or discouraging by threats.

Nehemiah and his companions did not shrink from hardships, or excuse themselves from trying service. Neither by night nor by day, not even during the brief time given to slumber, did they put off their clothing, or even lay aside their armor. “So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing.”

Nehemiah was engaged in an important work, one which concerned the prosperity of the cause of God: Every effort previously put forth to accomplish that work had failed because of a lack of true faith and union of effort among the Jews. The Samaritans, disguising their enmity and cloaking their slanders under a pretense of fidelity to the king of Persia, had succeeded in causing a discontinuance of the work. The zealous and true-hearted among the Jews had again and again been disappointed in their purposes. But in the strength of God, Nehemiah determines that the adversaries shall not again hinder the work. The despisers of the God of Heaven shall be disappointed. Their Satanic policy cannot succeed if the people of God will bar the doors against the enemy, and work harmoniously to carry out the divine will. The foe cannot enter unless the gates are thrown open by traitors within. If we are but loyal and true, every attack of the enemy will lead us to a firmer reliance upon God, and to more determined effort to carry forward his work, against all opposing influences.

December 20, 1883

Nehemiah Rebukes Extortion

The wall of Jerusalem had not been completed, when Nehemiah's attention was called to the unhappy condition of the poorer classes of the people. In the unsettled state of the country, tillage had been, to some extent, neglected. Furthermore, because of their separation from God, his blessing had not rested upon their lands. A scarcity of grain resulted. To obtain food for their families, the poor were obliged to buy on credit, and at an exorbitant price. They were also compelled to raise money by borrowing on interest, to pay the tribute to the king of Persia. The people of Israel were not now enjoying prosperity as when the Lord blessed them for their obedience. Because of their sins their defense had been removed, and the Lord had allowed other nations to overcome them. Under the rule of idolatrous kings, heavy taxes were imposed upon them; property, liberty, and life seemed at the mercy of these godless powers.

While they had no thought of revolting against the king of Persia, they had hoped, by repenting and reformation, to regain the favor of God, and to be restored to their former liberty. As yet their hopes were not realized. The tribute money for the king must be forthcoming in its season. To add to the distress of the poor, the more wealthy took advantage of their necessity, obtaining mortgages of their lands, and adding them to their own large possessions. They also required usury for all money loaned. This course soon reduced the unfortunate debtors to the deepest poverty, and many were forced to sell their sons and daughters to servitude. There appeared no hope of improving their condition, no way to regain either their lands or their children, no prospect before them but that of perpetual slavery. And yet they were of the same nation, children of the covenant equally with their more favored brethren. They had the same affection for their children as had the others. Their distress had not been caused by indolence or prodigality. They had been compelled to contract debts because of the failure of crops, and to pay heavy taxes.

As a last resort, they presented their case before Nehemiah. The soul of this man of God was filled with indignation as he heard of the cruel oppression that existed among his own people. He resolved to see that justice was done; yet he did not move rashly in the matter. He felt that God had laid upon him grave responsibilities, and he must be faithful to his trust. "I was very angry," he says, "when I heard their cry and these words. Then I consulted with myself." He took time to weigh the whole matter, and to form his plans. Then with characteristic energy and determination he exerted his influence and authority for the relief of his oppressed brethren.

The fact that the oppressors were men of wealth, whose support was greatly needed in the work of restoring the city and its defenses, did not for a moment turn him from his purpose. Having first sharply rebuked the nobles and rulers, he presented the matter in an assembly of the people, clearly showing what were the requirements of God touching the case, and urging them upon the attention of his hearers.

He cited the people to events that occurred in the reign of the apostate Ahaz, and to the message which God then sent to Israel rebuking their cruelty and oppression. The children of Judah, because of their idolatry, had been delivered into the hands of their more idolatrous brethren, the people of Israel. The latter had indulged their cruel enmity by slaying in battle many thousands of the men of Judah, and seizing all the women and children, intending to keep them as slaves, or sell them into bondage to the heathen. Because of the sins of Judah, the Lord had not interposed to prevent the battle; but by the mouth of the prophet Oded he rebuked the cruel design of the victorious army: "Ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you; but are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" And the prophet assured them that the fierce anger of the Lord was upon them, and that their course of injustice and oppression would call down his judgments. Upon hearing these words, the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the congregation. Then certain leading men of the tribe of Ephraim "took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brethren."

After relating these facts of history, Nehemiah proceeded to the case under consideration. He wished to bring the offenders to see the real character of their oppressive work, and to be ashamed of it. Said he, "We, after our ability, have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us?" Nehemiah and others had ransomed certain of the Jews who had been sold to the heathen, and he now placed this course in contrast with the conduct of those who for worldly gain were enslaving their brethren. The fear of God should restrain them from such injustice. Nehemiah declared to the Jewish rulers—some of whom had been guilty of these practices—that instead of judging and punishing other criminals, they should investigate their own work, and cease at once their iniquitous extortion, lest they should become a reproach, even among the heathen.

He showed them that he himself, being invested with authority from the Persian king, might have demanded large contributions for his personal benefit. Instead of this, he had not taken that which justly belonged to him, but had liberally contributed to relieve the people in their great necessity. Those extortioners had no more reason than he had to pursue the course they did. He urged them to cease at once their oppression, to restore the lands of the poor, and also the increase of money and provisions which they had exacted from them, and to lend them without security or usury.

"Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest." "Then," says Nehemiah, "I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise."

These portions of sacred history teach an important lesson. Those who profess to love and fear God should cherish sympathy and love for one another, and should guard the interests of others as their own. Christians should not regulate their conduct by the world's standard. In all ages the people of God are as distinct from worldlings as their profession is higher than that of the ungodly. From the beginning to the end of time, God's people are one body.

The love of money is the root of all evil. In this generation the desire for gain is the absorbing passion. If wealth cannot be secured by honest industry, men seek to obtain it by fraud. Widows and orphans are robbed of their scanty pittance, and poor men are made to suffer for the necessaries of life. And all this that the rich may support their extravagance, or indulge their desire to hoard. The terrible record of crime daily committed for the sake of gain, is enough to chill the blood and fill the soul with horror. The fact that even among those who profess godliness the same sins exist to a greater or less extent, calls for deep humiliation of soul and earnest action on the part of the followers of Christ. Love of display and love of money have made this world a den of thieves and robbers. But Christians are professedly not dwellers upon the earth; they are in a strange country, stopping, as it were, only for a night. They should not be actuated by the same motives and desires as are those who have their home and treasure here. God designed that our lives should represent the life of our great Pattern; that, like Jesus, we should live to do others good.

The customs of the world are no criterion for the Christian. He is not to imitate their sharp practice, over-reaching, and extortion, even in small matters. Every unjust act toward a fellow-mortal, though he be the veriest sinner, is a violation of the golden rule. Every wrong done to the children of God, is done to Christ himself in the person of his saints. Every

attempt to advantage one's self by the ignorance, weakness, or misfortune of another, is registered as fraud in the Ledger of Heaven.

He who truly fears God, would rather toil day and night, and eat the bread of poverty, than to indulge a passion for gain which would oppress the widow and the fatherless, or turn the stranger from his right. Our Saviour sought to impress upon his hearers that a man who would venture to defraud his neighbor in the smallest item, would, if the opportunity were favorable, over-reach in larger matters. The slightest departure from rectitude breaks down the barriers, and prepares the heart to do greater injustice. By precept and example, Christ taught that the strictest integrity should govern our conduct toward our fellow-men. Said the divine Teacher, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Just to the extent that man would advantage himself at the disadvantage of another, will his soul become insensible to the influence of the Spirit of God. Gain obtained at such a cost, is a fearful loss. It is better to want than to lie; better to hunger than to defraud; better to die than to sin. Extravagance, over-reaching, extortion, indulged by those professing godliness, are corrupting their faith, and destroying their spirituality. The church is in a great degree responsible for the sins of her members. She gives countenance to the evil, if she fails to lift her voice against it. The influence from which she has most to fear is not that of open opposers, infidels, and blasphemers, but of inconsistent professors of Christ. These are the ones who keep back the blessing of the God of Israel.

All who would form characters for Heaven must be Bible Christians. They must be diligent in the study of the Chart of life, and must carefully and prayerfully examine the motives that prompt them to action. The business world does not lie outside the limits of God's government. True religion is not to be merely paraded on the Sabbath, and displayed in the sanctuary; it is for every day and for every place. Its claims must be recognized and obeyed in every act of life. Men who possess the genuine article will in all their business affairs show as clear a perception of right, as when offering their supplications at the throne of grace.

God cannot be excluded from any transaction in which the rights of his children are concerned. Over every one that is serving him in sincerity, his hand is spread as a buckler. None can wound the humblest disciple of Jesus without smiting that hand which holds the sword of justice.

The apostle James, looking down to the last days, addresses a solemn and fearful warning to those who have heaped up riches by fraud and oppression: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

