A Blessed Opportunity.

God gave me something very sweet to be
mine own this day—
A precious opportunity, a word for Christ
to say;
A soul that my desire might teach, a work
to do for Him;
And now I thank Him for this grace, ere
yet the light grows dim.

No service that He sends me on can be so
welcome, aye,
To guide a pilgrim's weary feet within the
narrow way;
To share the Shepherd's quest, and so, by
brake and fen,
To find for him His wandering lambs, the
erring sons of men.

I did not seek this blessed thing; it came
a rare surprise,
Flooding my heart with dearest joy, as,
lifting wistful eyes.
Heaven's light upon a dear one's face
shone plain and clear on mine;
And there an unseen third, I felt, was
waiting—One divine.
So in this twilight hour I kneel, and pour
my grateful thought
In song and prayer to Jesus for the gifts
this day hath brought
Sure never service is so swest, nor life hath
so much zest,
As when He bids me speak for Him, and
then He does the rest.

Margaret E. Sangster.

"Prepare Ye The Way of The Lord."

Many years ago a gracious revival of religion occurred in a Presbyterian church in the State of New York. The work began on this wise: Between two of the leading families in the church a feud had long existed. Members of the church had taken sides in the strife, so that the entire community had been affected by the trouble. For years there had been few conversions and little religious interest among the members. One day one of the principals in this feud arose in the church and said that he had seen evidences of the presence of the Holy Spirit in his own family and among his neighbors recently, and believed that God was giving evidence of His readiness to revive His work. He stated that he did not wish to stand in the way of the work of the Lord, but wished to put away everything which might hinder the Spirit. The other principal in the strife arose, and said he agreed with his brother that God had signified His readiness to come in, and he wished also to remove every hindrance so far as he was concerned. He then told how the strife between him and his brother began, acknowledged that he had been the aggressor, and expressed his sorrow that the families had been estranged and the community had suffered.

When he had concluded the former speaker arose a second time. He was a farmer and a powerful man physically, with a strongly marked countenance, indicating firmness of purpose and strength of character. He confirmed the story of his neighbor concerning the beginning of the trouble, acknowledged the bitterness of his feelings against him and his family, and declared that the time had come when he could no longer live in this way. He was willing there and then to forgive and forget, to be reconciled, to get out of the way of the work of God, and to live a better life. He stood silent for several minutes, while his great bosom heaved with emotion like the throes of an earthquake. Then he left his pew and marched straight to the neighbor whom he had long despised, and took his hand. The two strong men stood before the congregation bathed in tears, while the hearts of the people were melted like wax before the sun. Thus began one of the most sweeping and thorough revivals of religion ever known in that community.

It is no part of the business of the preacher or members of the church to get up a revival or to bring down a revival from heaven. This we cannot do. God will do His own work, and will not tarry. But His people can prepare the way. Make room for the King. Let every valley be exalted, and every mountain be made low, and in the desert prepare a highway for our God. He is not equally near at all times. There are times when He comes among His people with great power. They feel the effects of His presence. Their assurance of salvation is bright and clear; their testimony is definite and confident; their prayers are mighty; their efforts to secure the conversion of sinners are not in vain. They can say with confidence. "The Lord is with us." At other times darkness prevails. The people cry, but God does not hear them; they stretch forth their hands, and He goes not regard them. They try to persuade men to repent, but their labor is in vain. The Lord of hosts is not with them. Has He changed? Not at all. He is the same God that He was aforetime; but His people have changed. They have sinned. They have grieved the Holy Spirit. He has left them to their own ways.

The way of the Lord must be prepared by putting away sin. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper. It will not do to accuse one another and despise one another. All enmity and strife and hatred must be put away. No matter what excuses we may have for the contempt in which we may hold certain brethren; no matter if they are unworthy of confidence, the bitterness must be given up. The Lord will not come into a church which is rent with strife. He will not use men of unclean hands in His work. He will have no fellowship with the works of darkness. Prejudice, worldliness, pleasure which hinders prayer, unbelief, and indifference must all be put away. The Lord stands ready and waiting to enter many a church where there has been no revival for many years. He needs no persuasion. No frantic cries will bring Him near. No long vigils are required to awaken His pity and compassion. He is waiting. Now and then He comes so near as to signify His readiness to enter in. He points to the hindering cause. The sins which grieved Him away must be abandoned. Who is he that stands in the way of the work of the Lord? Who is he that holds the key to the situation? On him rests a fearful responsibility. It may be an official member. It may be two official members. It may be several leading men and families. It may be the pastor. Let each ask himself, "Lord, is it I?" Then let each follow the guidance of the Spirit in answer to that inquiry, and prepare the way of the Lord.—Chris. Advocate.

Personal Religion.

The need is for personal religion. Indeed, there is no religion at all that is not personal, any more than there is anywhere a human life that is not personalized in some individual. In the world of Nature, the highest forms of life are all localized in some particular organisms. Low bred polyzoans indeed may in the promiscuous waters of the deep, living in compound colonies, enjoy a corporate life, but the communism of these crude marine animals is not the norm of life in its higher, ideal development. No man shares his heart, his lungs, or his eyes with another. The individual is physically complete in himself.

Yet when it comes to the sphere of the spiritual, many persons appear to be laboring under the fond delusion that they are not irreligious even though knowing nothing experimentally of personal religion. It seems to be thought that religion is a communal experience, a social asset, a floating credit, belonging to everybody in general, but to nobody in particular, a kind of a disused sentiment, or atmospheric effluence. It is, indeed, an effluence, but one that is made, distinctly generated, only in connection with personal experience of it and in turn only appropriated by the conscience and consciousness of some other soul.

It is a principle of common law and usage, that all property must have an owner, that nothing to which the notion of material value attaches can go floating aimlessly around in human society, unconnected with some party in whom its right of possession inheres, and who is responsible in turn for various public dues that may be assessed upon it. Just so the idea of an unattached, unappropriated religion, is in like manner untenable. Religion, which is the truest value in the world, must have an owner, and simply cannot be considered apart from some individual who is responsible for it. There is no such thing as delocalized or communal religion.

The Bible insists strenuously upon a personal approbriation of its truth and its benefits soul by soul. Faith can never be by proxy; the Christian warfare cannot be fought by substitutes. Each soul for itself, must close with the offer of grace, and be able to exclaim with convinced Thomas: "My Lord and my God!" No amount of discussion, dreaming, sentimentalizing, or ritualistic posing can take the place of a vitalizing contact with the grace of the Redeemer. It is not enough to have heard or to tell a story about the Christ; we must have Him in our souls. "Abide in Me, and I in you," is the true portraiture of personal religion.

The personal appropriation of Jesus is essential. Nothing will afford lasting benefit if that be wanting. Theology, for example, is important, but there is no saving quality in theology abstractly considered. Only the fool scouts the idea of theology, which is but the science of religion, its arranged and tabulated contents. Theology is indexed truth, assorted for ready and exact reference. But while theology is the handmaid or help-meet of faith, it is not all. It is not indeed at variance with Christ, it is at one with Him, but He is the one.

So organization is valuable. The institutional idea is especially agreeable to the genius of this present age, and in every department of life, machinery has been multiplied to a most remarkable, and in many cases, most unnecessary extent. While theology is organization in the realm of the intellect, ecclesiasticism represents organization in the sphere of practical action. But the mechanism is of little worth unless it be the machinery of life, and still, after all has been adjusted and arranged, will come the question: What is the destiny, what is the spiritual problem, of the man behind the method, of the soul that amid all the rituals, the liturgies, the robings, the genuflections and the intricate ecclesiasticisms is hungering still for the divine life and love?

There is only one hope of deliverance from the grinding grasp of a modern mechanism, a present day practicality which reduces everything to a linear dimension asking: "How far will it carry? or to a cold figure reporting: 'So big are its assets,'" and that is a vitalizing of the individual soul with the grace and genius of a Christ, who, offered all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, declared for the spiritual worship and sole service of the Lord God, and who when He might have had the sceptre of the Caesars, and the control of the most closely articulated imperialism of ancient times, preferred instead a spiritual empire, and a heavenly expansion, answering proud Pilate's challenge with the calm rejoinder: "My kingdom is not of this world." That empire of the one despised Nazarene, is an invisible imperialism, and it is made up of individual souls which have one by one come under the sovereignty of the thought and spirit of Jesus Christ. If we are Christians to that extent, we build up that kingdom and constitute that empire. But if the grace and spirit of the Christ be not in us, if we have no personal sympathy with His aims and teachings, no amount of formal adherence to external forms of faith or passive acquiescence in the methods of modern institutionalism, will do ourselves or others any real or lasting good.—N. Y. Observer.

"Am I Clear of the Blood?"

BY C. H. SPURGEON.

Oh! there is one sinner who can look upon this in a solemn light! Who is it that has gone down to the pit? You man yonder—who is it that died but a few days ago? The woman that loved you as she loved her own soul; who idolized you; who thought you an angel. Shall I say it before God, and to your face?—you ruined her. And what next, sir? You cast her off as though she were but dirt, and threw her into the kennel with a broken heart. And, being there, her god having cast her off—for you were her god—she fell into despair, and despair led to dreadful consequences and to direr ruin still. She has gone, and you are glad of it; glad of it, for you will hear no more of her now, you say. Sir, you shall hear of it; you shall hear of it; you shall hear of it! As long as you live her spirit shall haunt you; track you to the filthy joy which you have planned for a future day; and on your deathbed she shall be there to twist her fingers in your hair, to tear your soul out of your body and drag it down to the hell appointed to such fiends as you; for you spilt her blood, the blood of her that trusted you—a fair, frail thing, worthy to be an angel's sister, and you pulled her down and made her a devil's tool! God save you! for if He does not your damnation shall be seven fold. Oh! thou son of Belial, what shall be thy doom when God dealeth with thee as thou deservest! Are these hot words? Not half so hot as I would make them. I would send them hissing into your souls if I were able; not so much to condemn you as with the hope that though you cannot make good the mischief you have done, you may yet turn from the error of your ways to seek a Saviour's blood and find pardon for this great iniquity. Oh! dear friends, let us all take something of our text home. When we think of friends who are dead and gone, are there none over whose corpses we must say, "I did not what I could for this man; I did not what I could for this woman?" I know when I go down to the village where I used to preach, and as I look upon the houses I am apt to question myself, Was I as earnest with the people as I used to be? I can say I hope I never flinched from telling them all the truth, though some imes it had to be very rudely and roughly spoken; but yet God knoweth I do sometimes smite myself to think I did not weep over them more and did not entreat them more to be won to Christ. And you, too, that sit in these pews so often, many of you are joyful converts to Christ, but numbers of you are still unsaved. What if any of you should be able to say at the last, "We trusted our ministers; we hung upon his lips; we were never absent; we loved the Sabbath day, but oh, he did not tell us of our sin; he did not plead with us to be saved; he left us to ourselves; he was cold when his heart should have been hot; he was a man without tears, and had a heart without sympathy for us!" Oh! sirs, God grant that ye may never be able to say that of me. God save you, for my soul longeth for you. He is my witness how earnestly I long for you all in the bowels of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Come unto Him! Let not your blood cry out against me! Oh, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and trust Him; trust Him now that you may be saved, and that at last I may be able to say, "Here am I and the children whom Thou hast given me; Thou hast kept them through Thy power, and they are preserved even to the end; unto Thee be glory forever and ever!"

Grumbling and Grumblers.

Some men are bound to grumble! It is constitutional with them. "They were born that way," and cannot help it. They see the world through blue glasses and think that everything is blue, never once suspecting, as is the fact, that the blueness is in their glasses or their liver, or both.

If the good wife has done her best to prepare a sumptuous dinner, and ventures to call attention to it, the reply is, "Yes, but it is extravagant," or, "There is too much salt in the gravy," or, "There is too little pepper in the tomatoes," or "The coffee is too strong," "or "too weak" or "too hot" or "too cold." The trouble is not in the dinner, but in the grumblers determination to grumble.

If he is a preacher (and there are a few such, but, thank God, only a few), he grumbles because he was or was not sent to a new field, because the presiding elder did or did not do so and so, or because his official board does not run every time he whistles, or because of something else with which no sane man would think of finding fault. He also grumbles because "other churches are better than ours," or "other churches have higher ideals than ours," or "other publishing houses send out better church literature than ours," or "our church organ is not up to date," or "I can get more and better information at a certain church in Chicago in one Sunday than I can get out of my own church paper in a whole week," etc

Alas! what poor, miserable creatures such grumbles are; and, worst of all, they do not know that they are grumblers. They go on grumbling, grumbling, grumbling, and all the time imagning that the people on whom they inflict their disagreeableness think they are zealous, up-to-date reformers, when the fact is, they are only set down as pitiable dyspeptics or incorrigible cranks.

Both the church and the world admire, and gladly listen to fair, square-shouldered, sensible critics; but for the constitutional grumbler, who is ever finding fault where sensible men can see nothing amiss, they have nothing but pity or contempt.

But with all this, in the providence of God, the grumbler has his uses. Just as the total eclipse, as it passes off the sun's disk, causes the light of the king of day to appear more glorious to us than it would or could but for that eclipse, so an occasional, brief contact with the constitutional grumbler intensifies our appreciation of the tens of thousands of sweet-spirited cheerful, appreciative men and women whose noble acts and words of good cheer brighten our pathway through life.—Telescope.

Palm-Tree Christians.

BY C. H. WETHERBY.

The Psalmist says: "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree." This language does not mean that all Christians are as flourishing as a full grown and best sort of palm tree, but it does mean that there are such righteous, such Christians. I think that it is true that all real Christians are in some respects like a palm tree. They have qualities which are like palm trees. Dr. L. A. Banks, in the Homiletic Review, has such informing thoughts on this tree that I quote them:

"The palm has been called the blessed tree, for every part of it has its usefulness for mankind. Certain medicinal qualities are claimed for its roots, and its trunk is easily split into strips, making excellent boards for the siding of houses, benches and even tables. As the trunk is without bark and the center is very porous, increasing in density toward the outer surface, which is nearly as hard as glass, it is only the outside hard shell of the trunk which furnishes these boards. From this hard, fibrous wood some very pretty canes are made, which take a most beautiful polish. The leaves of the palm grow from the center of the trunk, first in the form of a delicate spire shooting up which, gradually unfolding itself, forms a new leaf. These leaves continue to grow from the center spire to a great length, forming a cluster which, in the case of the royal palm, resembles a bunch of enormous plumes. The leaves, when they cannot grow any more, drop to the ground from the bottom of the cluster, thus making room for the new ones, which are always coming out of the center. The bud or root of the center spire, from which the leaves grow, consists of a tender substance buried deep down within the cluster of green leaves, and forms a very palatable food.

One prominent respect in which Christians are like the palm is that of usefulness. If a professed Christian be not spiritually and righteously useful, then I affirm that he is not a Christian. But, while a true Christian is useful in the best sense, yet let us not suppose that one Christian's way of being useful must be taken as a standard for the way in which another Christian should be useful.

There are Christians who undertake to tell other Christians just how or in what way they should be useful, and because they will not follow those directions these Christians are severely criticised. The palm tree has quite a variety of uses, but it does not follow that a Christian should be useful in just such ways, nor in just as many ways. One may be useful in one direction and another Christian will be useful in another way. Let each be true to the type of his ability.

Giving To Something.

Nobody ought to be expected to give to nothing. It is a great mistake for the superintendent to allow the school to remain in ignorance of the cause for which the offerings of the day are to be made. He must not depend entirely on the teachers for this, although teachers are to see to it that pupils do not give up their money without knowing what they are giving it for. Announce it from the desk, or keep it before the school, as a school, on a placard or blackboard. Avoid being too general by calling every object "the missionaries." After the school treasurer has sent the contributions to their destination, find out more or less specifically where the money has gone. From time to time report to the school, and, if possible, bring some tangible proof or evidence that their contributions have done good. There is little inducement to contribute to an abstraction.—S. S. Times.

Each life has its Gethsemane, wherein it must walk alone,—its passion and its peace. Each soul, by faith, may walk upon the waves within, may learn to say to turbulence, "Peace, be still!" And the tossed sea of human emotions, breaking ever with angry roar on the coast of self, shall sink to rest.—Trinities and Sanctities.

Soon Left Her.

"I was taken with a swelling in my feet and limbs. I was not able to walk for four months. I read about Hood's Sarsaparilla and procured a bottle. Before I had taken it all the swelling left me. I took three bottles of Hood's and have not been troubled with swelling since." REBECCA SEEVERS Chatham, Ont.

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