

The Light.

When darkness thick reigned over all the deep,
When mist and chaos over earth did keep
Their formless shadows ever veiled in night
God said, "Let there be light!"

When men in sin and shame were weighted down,
And groveled like the serpent on the ground,
O'er all gross darkness, with its deadly blight,
God said, "Let there be light!"

When in the fullness of the glorious day
Christ came, the sting of death to take away,
The angels gladly sang o'er Bethlehem's height,
He comes! Behold the light!

Rejoice! Rejoice, O men of earth, and sing,
Hosannas shout for tidings that we bring;
No more need you in sadness sit; and, night,
A wake! Behold the Light!

—New York Observer.

Zion Languishing.

A good cause may languish. Religion may sometimes decline. Although it is the special charge of the Almighty and He stands pledged for its final triumph over all the earth, yet there have been times when Christianity reached a very low ebb. This may occur again, and it is true now of many places that the work of the Lord is in a languishing condition. Professing Christians do not like to be reminded that religion is at a low ebb in the Church to which they belong. Sometimes they resent such a declaration when it is true. Few persons are willing to hear that the work which has been especially committed to them has been neglected. It is best, however, to face the facts.

There are different degrees of spiritual decline. In some cases Zion languishes, but still much of the life and power of God remain in the hearts of her people. In other cases the Church is almost dead. Error has taken the place of truth, faith has declined and love grown cold, prayer is neglected and the Bible almost forgotten. Christian people yield to the tide of worldliness and are carried downward. The Church is covered with reproach. Infidels mock at the inconsistent lives of those who profess to be children of God. The beauty and strength of Zion are gone and her garments are defiled.

One symptom of a decline in religion is seen in the pulpit. When preachers leave the pure word of God and begin to speak on the Sabbath day on purely secular topics, merely to attract a crowd and arrest the declining interest of the people, the case is serious. It is right that the ministers and churches should take an interest in political and civil affairs, but the opportunities of the Sabbath are too important and too few to be laid aside for secular matters. There are preachers among us who preach the preaching which the Lord tells them as faithfully as the best of the prophets ever did, but there are others who do not. The painful straining of the pulpit after something popular in these days tells a sad story.

Symptoms of a languishing condition may be seen among laymen as well as ministers. There are laymen in the churches now who are as true and good as any that ever lived. If they should die to-day they would go straight to heaven, and if they live long they will continue to live to the glory of God. But this is not true of all. Some do not love their brethren. The Bible says, "Little children, love one another." Jesus said, "Hereby shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one toward another." But some do not act kindly toward their brethren nor speak charitably of them. They have no confidence in one another, no respect for one another. They bite and devour one another. They hate one another. Many also walk not as the disciples of Christ, but as the children of the world.

Another symptom of spiritual decline may be seen in the small increase of church members. A mere increase in numbers without an increase of spiritual life is not desirable. But where the tree is in good health it will bear much fruit. When the fires of the Pentecost were burning on the altars of the infant Church converts were multiplied with amazing rapidity. So it will always be when God is in His holy temple. But when the Church scarcely holds its own from year to year, or when there is an actual loss, then we may know assuredly that the life of the Church is at a low ebb. The middle wall of separation between the Church and the world has been broken down. The Holy Spirit has been grieved. It is time for Zion to awake and shake herself from the dust.

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"No One Spoke to Me."

One often hears this remark from members who have come into a congregation after the congregation has been for some time organized. I went to the church services, I went to the prayer meeting, I have been attending both for some months, and "not one has spoken to me." Now that, if true, indicates a lamentable condition of affairs in that congregation, or in the character of that person, or both. If the person who speaks in this way has been approachable, and has not, by look and gesture, repelled every approach, then there is something wrong with that minister and that people. But if five cases out of six there has been a "I-want-to-be-left alone, air about the new-comer, that other people have felt bound to respect."

There is a tendency, especially in large congregations, to separate, and seek congenial companions in church work. Just as in a large field filled with workmen, those who are kindred spirits will inevitably gravitate to one another, so in Christian work, where it is not necessary that every one on the force should lay hold to help along each enterprise, the workers will instinctively group themselves to their individual tasks. So there comes to be what are sometimes called "cliques," formed with no attention of carrying a particular point, or of some individual out, but unconsciously formed because those who form it have been kindred spirits.

One of another kind, coming into the congregation hears a certain band of workers everywhere spoken of as being among the nicest people in the church, and at once resolved that she will make one of their number. She has nothing in common, she finds herself out of her element, she chooses to consider that she has been snubbed, when it may be that she has been treated with forbearance and consideration, but the offended member takes herself off, with sundry uncomplimentary remarks about church members in general and their group in particular.

The blame is not by any means with the new member alone. The few friends who have worked together resent the incoming of a stranger, and take little pains to conceal it, at times. But the Lord wants all to work who can work, and in a congregation that is thoroughly alive to this fact, the advent of a fresh worker is hailed with delight. The different groups vie with each other to secure the additional help, and the new-comer speedily finds the one that is congenial. But this is possible only where the desire is for Christ's gain and not for personal pleasure in the common work of the congregation.

Dom. Presbyterian.

Martyrs and Martyrs

There are martyrs and martyrs. Some are burned at the stake, some starved in dungeons, some pierced through by the tongue of slander, some pinioned by the pen of criticism, and some thrust through the heart with the pangs produced at their received envious censure and depreciation right where they had expected commendation.

But what of all this? To the devout, faithful servant of the Lord it only proves the truth of his Word: "Because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." "In the world ye shall have tribulation."

It is not a pleasant thing to be a martyr. Great as it is to die for God and the truth, the flesh shrinks from the ordeal. On having faithfully done duty, spoken your convictions, delivered the message of God to the people, who would not prefer the applause of the crowd to its hiss?

But let God be obeyed and duty discharged "though the heavens fall," though the people applaud or hiss. What will human approval avail in the judgment if secured at the sacrifice of conscientious convictions of duty? What will the condemnation of the multitude amount to in the great day, provided the King shall say, "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 joys of the Lord?"

Oh, that to-day men in church and state were anxious to be popular with God as they are to be popular with the people. Said Cardinal Wolsey on his death-bed, "If I had served my God as faithfully as I have served my king, he would not have forsaken me in this awful hour." How many to-day are giving all their ability to securing the applause of men and neglecting the service of God!

Brother, sister, are you discouraged because your services are not appreciated by the people? Have you been receiving censure where you expected praise? Let not anything of this kind dishearten you, provided you have done all to the glory of God and

the salvation of men. The time of reward is not yet. This is service time. Let it be faithfully improved. What though men do fail to appreciate your work? What though the world do frown and tribulation be your portion? The time of triumph will come by and by. For "these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."—The Telescope.

Indigestible Religion.

It requires a great deal of ingenuity to build a house or fashion a ship, but more ingenuity to build the temple of a child's character and launch it on the great ocean of time and eternity. Where there is one parent that seems qualified for the work there seems to be twenty parents who miserably fail. Here is a father who says, "My child shall know nothing but religion." The boy is aroused at six o'clock in the morning to recite the Ten Commandments. He is awakened off the sofa on Sunday night to see how much he knows of the Westminster Catechism. It is religion morning, noon, and night. Passages of Scripture are plastered on the bedroom wall. He looks for the day of the month in a religious almanac. Every minister that comes to the house is told to take the boy aside and talk to him, and tell him what a great sinner he is.

After a while the boy arrives at that period in life when he is too old for chastisement and too young to know and feel the force of moral principle. Father and mother are sitting up for the boy to come home. It is nine o'clock at night—ten o'clock it is twelve o'clock—it is half-past twelve o'clock, and they hear the night key jingle in the door. They say he is coming. George goes very softly through the hall, hoping to get upstairs before he is accosted. The father says, "George, where have you been?" "Been out!" Yes, he has been out, and he has been down, and he is on the broad road to destruction for this life and the life to come. Father says, "There is no use in the Ten Commandments; the Catechism seems to me to be an utter failure." Ah, my friend, you made a very great mistake. You stuffed that child with religion until he could not digest it; you made that which is a joy in many households an abhorrence in yours.—Christian Herald.

What Are You Giving?

To the church? How much of your time and energy? How much of your best thought in planning her work? Do you exhaust your strength in business so that you are almost too tired on the Sabbath to think clearly? You are "given money." Well but the church of Christ needs consecrated brains, energy and personal service.

To the unfortunate? What a large number of our brothers and sisters are crippled in one way or another worse than physical blindness or lameness! Crippled by sinful heredity with vile appetites and sins, or crippled by narrow, cramping environment. What are you feeling for them? Sympathy? Well; but what are you doing? Have you found some good movement you can help which relieves and redeems these unfortunates?

To the great, wide world? It is getting close together, and we can see now the needs of China, Africa, Cuba, the Philippines. We are shocked and stunned by awful revelations. What are you doing? Getting into personal relations with workers to encourage and materially help them? Praying for them daily?

What can we do? As Saul did—let us ask the Lord. He will speak to us concerning it. He will direct to a place of usefulness, and if we are his, there will be real work we can do.—Selected.

In Good Standing.

The meaningless nature of the term "in good standing" is aptly described thus in Church Life: The ice-cold Christian may be a member of the church "in good and regular standing." Yes, and a contributing member, too. He attends church quite regularly and sings in the choir. When he gets his "Sunday best" on he looks quite like a Christian, but how does he live?

No daily Bible reading.
No blessing asked at the table.
No family prayer.
No Bible instruction for the children.
No religious conversation in the home.
No private prayer.
No attendance at the week-day services.
No attendance at the Sunday-school.
No Christ in his choice of reading matter.
No Christ in his favorite amusement.
And only a little of Christ in his head.

Well, what has he, then, which the commonest sinner has not?

1. He has his name on the church roll.

2. He has his name on the list of contributing members.

3. He has a pew or an occasional sitting in the church.

The three things, and nothing more, to entitle him to the glorious name of Christian.

If he should suddenly die he would be given a Christian burial, and these three things about him would be sure to be mentioned in the funeral sermon, and held out to the bereaved family as reasons for a blessed assurance that he has gone straight to glory, with an abundant entrance.

A Midsummer Christian.

A beautiful instance of Christian integrity is given of a distinguished Christian lady who was spending a few weeks at a hotel at Long Branch.

An attempt was made to induce her to attend a dance in order that the affair might have the prestige bestowed by her presence, as she stood high in society. She declined all the importunities of her friends.

Finally, an honorable senator tried to persuade her to attend, saying, "Miss B—this is quite a harmless affair, and we want the exceptional honor of your presence."

"Senator," said the lady, "I cannot do it; I am a Christian. I never do anything in my summer vacation, or wherever I go, that will injure the influence I have over the girls of my Sunday-school class."

The senator bowed, and said: "I honor you; if there were more Christians like you, more men like myself would become Christians."—All Aboard.

The Need of the Hour.

To your closets, O church of the living God! The great and overwhelming need of the hour—of our country and church—of our souls, is the fresh and immediate baptism of the Holy Spirit—a baptism which shall set every heart on fire of God to possess this land for Christ. At the close of this century we face a future of great unrest—of reconstruction—of marvelous and rapid changes. And the church must lead and control these changes or be overwhelmed by them.

"We are living, we are dwelling
In a grand and awful time—

We are living in one of the great crises of the world's history. The age demands consecrated men and women; consecrated time, consecrated energies and consecrated wealth. Shall it have them? "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."—Rev. Sheldon Jackson, D. D.

The Foot-path to Peace.

To be glad of life, because it gives you the chance to love, and to work, and to play, and to look up at the stars; to be satisfied with your possessions, but not contented with yourself until you have made the best of them; to despise nothing in the world except falsehood and meanness, and to fear nothing except cowardice; to be governed by your admirations rather than by your disgusts; to covet nothing that is your neighbor's except his kindness of heart and gentleness of manner; to think seldom of your enemies, often of your friends, and every day of Christ; and to spend as much time as you can, with body and with spirit, in God's out-of-doors—these are little guide-posts on the foot path to peace.—Rev. Henry Van Dyke, D. D.

A Merited Rebuke.

The hospitality exercised toward ministers in the United States is proverbial. In the early days, in many parts of the country, a preacher was received and entertained heartily and cheerfully, and never expected to settle his bill at the inn when he left on the morrow.

Acting upon this knowledge, a young travelling preacher presented himself, gave himself some airs, and when morning came said, "Farewell," and was about to leave, taking no notice of his account.

"You have not settled," said the landlord.

"I am a minister on my way to my station," explained the novice.

"Ah, indeed," said the landlord. "Well, you came in last night, and you never said a word of peace to any of us; you had your supper, and it seemed to me you never asked God's blessing on it; you never said, 'Let us have a word of prayer,' before you went to bed; you called for your light,

went upstairs, and it strikes me you spent very little time in prayer yourself, for I know your light was soon out, and you were soon in bed; and when you came down this morning, never a word you said of prayer, or of a chapter, before the beginning of the day; and you sat down to breakfast, and never a word of blessing again."

"No, you go on just like any other sinner; you come in like a sinner, you eat and drink like a sinner, you go to bed like a sinner, you get up like a sinner, you are going off like a sinner; you must pay like a sinner!"

Redeeming the Time.

The words, "redeeming the time," are not fairly translated. They mean "buying up the opportunity." The saddest part of our record, I fear, is that we have let precious opportunities flow by us, never to be recalled. Think of the opportunities you have had to say a word to an impenitent soul, or some word of comfort to a friend, or to testify for Christ. The spectre I most fear is the ghost of lost opportunities. Be on the lookout for lost opportunities, and you will never know just what blessing is going to burst on you—Theodore L. Cuyler.

Well, I am not a Christian, but I never put anything in anybody else's way." Yes, but you do. You are putting yourself in the way of all that are behind you. You are standing right in the doorway and "shutting up the kingdom of heaven against men." Christ said so: "Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for (because you are blocking up the door) ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." (Matt. 23: 13.) Does any one need to do any more than to wedge himself into the very wicket-gate through which others must pass?

We have no gratitude for those reformers who would force upon us a doctrine which has not sweetened their own tempers or made them better men than their neighbours.

STREET CAR ACCIDENT.—Mr. Thos. Sabin, says: "My eleven year old boy had his foot badly injured by being run over by a car in the Street Railway. We at once commenced bathing the foot with Dr. THOMAS' ELECTRIC OIL, when the discoloration and swelling was removed, in nine days he could use his foot. We always keep a bottle in the house ready for any emergency."

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