

Communications.

Our Troubles.

NUMBER XXII.

We have seen, in the prophecy of old father Jacob, made when he blessed his twelve sons, that Shiloh or the Christ, was to come. This announcement having been made, Israel was filled with anxiety and expectation, and began to inquire of the Lord, who in his goodness and mercy, condescended to instruct them in that manner most adapted to their capacity. He did not unfold to them the future, in one lesson, their minds were not sufficiently expanded to receive and comprehend its vastness. No more than our eyes would be capacitated to receive the brilliant rays of a vertical sun, were they to burst upon us in midnight darkness. But God has regulated the law of nature so that we are gradually introduced to the light of the sun, by causing it to shine, obliquely, and less obliquely until our eyes were prepared for its most brilliant rays; so by his spiritual law he unfolded the scheme of human redemption to men, giving them intimation after intimation, line upon line and precept upon precept, until the Christ and a greater salvation was fully revealed. So when Israel had learned that Shiloh was to come, in their anxiety, they asked, In what way, Oh Lord? and the Lord answered: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Isa. ix. 6, 7.

Now the decree has gone forth, that the introduction of the Messiah into the world should be by being born, and that he should rule absolutely over his kingdom, both of which is literally fulfilled, notwithstanding the many efforts men have made to lord it over God's heritage. Now all minds turned to Jerusalem as the birthplace of the future king of the Jews. But the Jews were always wont to have the word of the Lord, so they wished to know certainly where their king should be born, and God said: "But thou Bethlehem Ephrathah though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall become forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Mic. v. 2. In the truth of this prediction they did not confide; thinking that no good thing could come out of Bethlehem. But when that memorable day arrived, in which this prophecy was to be fulfilled, the attention of the wise men of the east was arrested by a wonderful star, which led them to Jerusalem, but lingered but a moment there, then moved onward and stationed itself firmly over that small city, fixed by the ordinance of Jehovah, as the place in which his Christ should be born. At the same time "There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ, the Lord." Luke ii. 8-11. A multitude of the heavenly host being present, praised God and said: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Now all who were not influenced

otherwise by the priests, were compelled to believe not only in the prediction made through Isaiah, but in that also made by Micah, with reference to Bethlehem. All anxiety being turned from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, and Israel having waited many years for her promised King, longed to know when they would reap the benefits they expected to flow from his reign. And in their great anxiety they cried, "How long, Oh Lord, how long?" when God heard their supplications and answered. He had before instructed them, that in prophetic language; one week should count for seven years, and seven Sabbaths would be forty and nine years. So he directed Daniel to answer this people, who said: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness and to seal up the vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks and three score and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times." Dan. ix. 24-25.

Now if one week be seven years and seven weeks be forty and nine years, in a vision of prophecy; then seven, three score and two weeks would be four hundred and eighty-three years, and seventy weeks would be four hundred and ninety years.

Cyrus being exalted to the throne of Persia by the secret power of God, in his first year, issued his great proclamation, liberating the Jewish people and permitting them to return to the land of their fathers and rebuild the city and house of their God. Now compute the time from the day that the commandment went forth, to the day that John the Baptist took the Savior by the hand and introduced him to the Jewish people, saying: "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world," and you have four hundred and eighty-three years. Add one year, during which he confirmed the covenant, and in the midst of which he was cut off, and you have four hundred and ninety years, or seventy weeks, the time that was determined in the prophecy.

(Continued next week.)

HENRY THOMAS.

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Our Mission.

In view of the infinite wisdom of God, which we see displayed throughout the length and breadth of the material universe, the importance and also the sublimity of the mission of mankind must be apparent to all.

Nothing was ever created except for some distinct purpose or design. And man, the noblest specimen of God's handiwork, must be regarded as having a most important work to do. This is acknowledged by all, yet properly realized by very few. Many persons, while acknowledging the fact, seem to consider themselves as exceptions to the general rule, and pass on in life, accomplishing nothing.

Notwithstanding the high sphere in which man has been placed, and the noble attributes with which he has been endowed, we find no creature coming so far short of the original purpose for which it was intended.

While we find all species of the brute creation serving the exact purpose for which it was created, we often find immortal man, who is possessed of the image of his Maker, sinking far below the brute, by allowing himself to become the slave of passion and appetite, bringing ruin to himself, and degradation to his posterity.

We frequently see, in the walks of life, defenceless females and tender children dragging out a miserable

existence, made so not by their misdeeds, but through him who should be their protector and guide. They not only suffer for the kind words and fond regards of a husband or father; but are made wretched by having all their means exhausted in satisfying the appetite of their false protector, who lives for himself alone, and cares nothing for home or family. In contemplating this we can not say there is nothing for us to do, but to seek our own enjoyment.

What a sad mistake, for one to hope for personal happiness when surrounded by the woes of others, without striving to alleviate them. The one who thus seeks it, will find it, to be like the foot of a rainbow, always in advance, and receding at every step.

Our mission is a noble one. There is much for us to do, many cheering words to speak to those of heavy hearts, many kind deeds to bestow on the needy; and even a smile seldom fails to illumine the countenance of one overburdened with sorrow. Consider how great may be the influence of a single individual, either for good or evil. If we have been influential in leading some one from the rude traits of ruffianism into the refined circles of society, we have performed a good work; but, on the contrary, if we have caused them to depart from the path of rectitude, by failing to exert a good influence, we have fallen far short of performing our mission aright.

Compare the happiness that an aged person experiences in looking back upon the beautiful field of a life well spent, with the misery of another, who, having sought personal enjoyment alone, shrinks from a review of his past life. The former a friend to himself and humanity, having passed his days in doing and getting good, enjoys a present reward and the anticipation of a greater one hereafter; the latter a detriment to society, having spent many years in chasing the gaudy phantoms that flit across the human pathways has no real enjoyment in the present and no assurance of a heavenly home in the future.

Our mission, though accompanied by many pleasures, is one that requires individual labor, and though we are blessed with all the comforts of life, let us remember there is work for each to do.

We will buckle on the armor,
Into life's battle we will go,
And our motto shall be ever,

There is work for each to do.

And when our work on earth is over, and we're safely through the storm

Great will be our compensation if our mission's well performed.

MISS J. M. O.

No Substitute for the Bible.—Concluded.

BY S. H. HEDRICK.

In concluding these papers on the above subject we feel that the great theme is still almost untouched. We have not attempted to enter into a critical review of the subject, for if we were any way competent the length of these essays is insufficient. Besides all this we are more accustomed to extemporaneous speaking than to writing our thoughts. It is a grand theme to study simply a portion of this grand book; to read its prophecies of the future history of men, of kingdoms and nations, of cities and their fall or perpetuation, and then their subsequent history. The history of the Babylonian, Median, Persian, Grecian and Roman kingdoms, can not be read without noting events, of which the ancient prophets spoke ages before they came to pass. The action of their kings, counsels, generals and armies; the ruins and future conditions of their cities, as recorded in history, are also symbolized by the old prophets with such accuracy as to cause the whole subject to be augmented into one high monument which stands forever before the eyes

of man, a witness to the divine inspiration of those who foretold these events. Such are many of the prophecies of Isaiah and Daniel, fulfilled in the history of these kingdoms, the site of these cities still verifying the truth of the prophecy. No less so is Jerusalem and her inhabitants, whose fall and dispersion verify many of the declarations of the Lord Jesus while walking in their midst. After his ascension to heaven he sent the Holy Spirit to still testify of him. Thereby the apostles fill up the grand supply of truth, foretelling the future, as is seen in all the history since their day, show that "The eye of the Lord is over the righteous, and his ear open to their prayer." "But the face of the Lord is against them that do evils." This is exemplified in the case of Philadelphia and Ephesus. To the church of Philadelphia the Lord said: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world." Rev. iii. 10.

Gibbon, though an opposer of the Bible, was reasonably faithful as a historian, and seems to be astonished as he records the preservation of this city and the noble character of its people, saying: "Philadelphia alone has been saved, by prophecy, at a distance from the sea, forgotten by the emperor, encompassed on all sides by the Turks, her valient citizens defended their religion and freedom above three score years, and at length made terms with the noblest of the Ottomans. Among the Greek colonies and churches of Asia, Philadelphia is still erect, a column in a scene of ruins." How true does this fill the promise of Jesus? "Behold I have set before you an open door and no man can shut it." "For thou hast a little strength, and has kept my word, and hast not denied my name."

Truly, "Righteousness exalteth a nation, and sin is a curse to any people." So the Lord said to Ephesus: "I will come unto thee quickly and remove thy candle stick out of its place except thou repent." Rev. ii. 5. Fully nine centuries pass by, in the mean time sinful men scoff at the Bible, especially this book, yet the Lord rules among the nations of men, and "is mightier than the noise of many waters or the wave of the sea." Time comes at last when in A. D. 1312 the great Ottoman armies sweep down upon this fair city, and it is laid in ruin, and since then none who bear the Christian name dwell there.

Gibbon thus records her fall: "In the loss of Ephesus the Christian deplores the fall of the first angel and the extinction of the first candle stick." Note the great contrast and how true the promise and threatenings of the Lord are carried out. What scoffing infidel or careless professor of Christianity thinks of these things when they are either wholly rejecting his word or claiming for the works of men that they supply its deficiencies.

In conclusion we ask the reader to think on these things, to read the Holy Book by day, and meditate upon its teachings by night, and as soon expect to see man creating worlds or handling the sun, moon and stars as a child does its toys, and directing the revolution of the earth, as the pilot does his ship; expect all this or any other extravagance conceivable, than to see mankind ever able to find in any way a substitute for the Bible. If these imperfect contributions have interested, aided and encouraged the readers who may have perused them, we shall be amply repaid for writing them. If any have been doubting its perfection and seeking a substitute we employ them to more carefully peruse its pages. Be sure you are familiar with its contents before you decide to discard it, lest you should be found among those at last who are as "the foolish virgins," or as the man "building his house on the sand." But if you conform your life to its teaching, there will never be an hour

through life nor death that it will not console you; and when you pass across the river of life to the broad ocean of eternity, its truths will not forsake you, but will conduct you safely through the "golden gates" to the tree of life, where you may bask in the smiles of God forever and ever.

Advice to Preachers.

DON'T BE AFRAID.

There is no doubt that one of the prime sources of strength for a preacher is found in speaking his latest thought. Back of all strong expression is the life of the speaker. This life, through exercise of mind and soul, is continually getting larger and larger development. A man who thinks, grows fast, and his latest growth is always best. It is the best because it is the freshest, and because it represents the ripest experience. The character of the thought decides the quality of the expression, also, in public speaking. Stale thought can never be eloquently expressed. The sympathies of the heart, and the tones of the voice will not respond to it. The best part of pulpit speaking is born of new ideas. Vivid conceptions give illumination to oratory and cause it to brighten and glow as it moves on its puissant course.

Now many preachers keep their latest thought to themselves, through fear of saying something heretical, or strange, or sensational. They dread nothing so much as the charge of unsoundness. They know that if they say only what has been said a thousand times before, they are perfectly safe from all attack and suspicion; so they keep saying it over and over, week after week.

The true way to preach, as we conceive, is to preach your latest thought. Each successive sermon should give indisputable evidence to the congregation that the preacher's mind is growing.

A true sermon is, above everything else, suggestion. It should start lethargy into thoughtfulness. It should act as a spur to quicken the pace of the lazy intellectual life of the people. Be sure you know what you think, and then speak it out.—*Golden Rule.*

Singing in the Family.

Cultivate singing in the family. Begin when the child is not three years old.—The songs and hymns your mother sang—bring them all back to your memory, and teach them to your little ones; mix them all together to meet the similar moods, as in after life they come over to us so mysteriously sometimes. Many a time and oft, in the very whirl of business, in the sunshine and gayety of the streets, and amid the splendor of the drives in a park, some little thing wakes up the memories of early youth—the old mill, the cool spring, the shady tree by the little school house—and the next instant we almost see again the ruddy cheeks, the smiling faces and the merry eyes of school-mates, some gray-headed now, most "liemouldering in the grave." And "the song your mother sang" springs unbidden to your lips, and soothes and sweetens all these memories. At other times, amid the crushing mishaps of business, a merry ditty of the olden times pops up its little head, breaks in upon the ugly train of thought, throws the mind into another channel; light breaks in from behind the cloud in the sky, and new courage is given to us. The honest man goes singing to his work, and when the day's labor is done, his tools laid aside, and he is on his way home, where wife and child, and tidy table and cheerful fireside await him, he cannot but whistle or sing.—*Occident.*

A good heart will at times betray the best head in the world.—*Fielding*

We want downright facts at present, more than anything else.—*Ruskin.*