

the age which has seen the rise of this society has also seen the decline of the reading of the Bible. It may be a coincidence merely, but it is a singular one. But that must wait for another time. Some way must be found by which the church, as the local expression of the divine life, shall control the offices, the finances, the interest and the work of the various societies and thus share in the responsibility and joy of their gifts and blessings. This note of reality and power alone can save the church from disintegration."—Congregationalist.

**Wrestling With God.**

The wrestling of Jacob recorded in the Book of Genesis was, in part at least, a struggle with God, but it was not because Jehovah begrudged the patriarch the blessing which he sought. It was rather because the gate through which Jacob sought to enter was narrow, and he had much to unload before he could go in. His struggle was chiefly with himself, although he was not conscious of the fact. Returning from his long sojourn with Laban, he sought to enter the land from which his own sin had banished him: His brother, against whom he had sinned, came out with an armed force to dispute his right, to oppose his march, and to take vengeance on him for his wrong-doing. Jacob, the supplanter, the wily manager, deems himself able to overcome his brother's wrath by his gifts and his wits. He is not the man to flee, but, disposing his company with the skill of an eminent tactician, he prepares to march right on.

At this juncture he suddenly becomes aware of the presence and antagonism of another far more powerful than Esau. God laid His hand on him. God was not unwilling that Jacob should enter the land and inherit the blessing, for He had promised them to him. But Jacob must not enter in his present temper. The gate is too narrow. There was a struggle. Jacob was made to know himself and his weakness. No sooner did he realize what he was than he began to cry to his antagonist for a blessing worth far more than any his father could bestow. "I will not let Thee go unless Thou bless me." "And He blessed him there." Jacob's body was made weak, but his soul was made stronger. He became a new man. He prevailed with God, but first he prevailed with himself.

The penitent sinner engages in a similar struggle at the gate of the kingdom of God. But he is mistaken when he thinks God delays to bless him because He is not ready or willing to do so. It is the sinner that is not ready or willing. It is his own reluctance to submit to God, his own selfishness, that causes the struggle. The young ruler came to the threshold of the kingdom and halted. When Jesus laid hold on him as the angel laid hold on Jacob, the young ruler declined the contest. He slipped away. He saw the struggle coming on, but refused to wrestle. The narrow gate frightened him. What struggles, what defeats, what tragedies, what victories have been witnessed at the threshold of the kingdom!

What shall be said about the the Syrophenician woman? Her case was different. Jesus had just left Jerusalem, where the people worshiped God with their lips, while their hearts were far from him, and had gone away to the borders of Tyre, where the people worshiped idols. Coming out from the borders of heathendom, one met him who knew how to pray with the spirit and the understanding also. To her first piteous cry, he answered not a word. When she persevered, he said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and give it to dogs." How unlike him who never breaks the bruised reed nor quenches the smoking flax! His answer borders on cruelty. It is a denial emphasized with a blow. The issue is joined. She wrestles like a true heroine, and prevails. Why did he act so?

He was not reluctant to grant her request. This struggle was not required to awaken his pity, to inform his mind, or to persuade his will. What then? Jesus saw in her heart something which he wished to bring out for her good, for the good of his disciples, for the good of that generation and all generations. He saw in her the true Israelite, as contrasted with the nominal and formal Israelites who filled Jerusalem with their abominations. He saw in her the spirit of faith which takes no denial. Blessed woman! Thou art a true child of Abraham. Thou has taught men more than many prophets. It is not race nor blood nor family, but character, that counts in the kingdom of God. It is not the word and the form of prayer, but the genuine struggle of soul, that prevails.

Those who, like the young ruler, decline to wrestle with God shall go away to wrestle all their lives with the devil. One who will not struggle shall perish. The labor of the husbandman is a struggle with God for the harvest. God is not unwilling to give him a harvest. He would like it on the easiest terms, but God gives it on the best terms. He does not give it to the idle. The toll of the scientist is a species of wrestling with God for possession of the secrets of the universe. God never gives them to the indolent. The inventor is a wrestler. So also is the poet, the painter, the author.

To wrestle with God and to labor together with God are one and the same thing. It is good for physical development, for intellectual improvement, for the progress of civilization, for increase of spiritual health and strength, to struggle. Let us be careful to wrestle with God, not to change his mind, not to persuade him to fall in with our way, but to change our own minds and to enter into harmony with him in all things. Satan challenges each soul to a wrestling match. The temptation to engage in such an encounter is great. Men are confident that they shall win. But it is all a delusion. "When Satan challenges you to wrestle with him, turn about and wrestle with God for a blessing."—New York Christian Advocate.

**Effect of the Inward on the Outward.**

BY GEORGE MATHESON, D. D.

"When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee its strength."—Genesis iv. 12.

The words were spoken to Cain after he had lost his joy. What connection was there between his sadness and the soil's barrenness? It is not said that the soil should become barren. The words are, "It shall not yield to thee its strength." That really means, "You shall not yield your strength to it." When a man falls in spirits, he declines in power of work. The soil was exactly what it was before; but Cain was not what he was before. The work which yesterday was easy had today become difficult because the mind of the worker was oppressed with care. The deepest changes in outward things are changes in us. There is no such thing as a refreshment-room in nature; there are not certain articles which are warranted to stimulate. The stimulative quality of nature's articles depends on the state of the mind. Many a physical impression which was a pleasure yesterday becomes a pain to-day. Nobody revels more in wood and field than the happy lover; but the lover unhappy is offended by that which once made him glad, and cries:—

"Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,  
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair!"

It is not that the object has lost its beauty; it is the beauty itself that has palled; less loveliness would be more pleasing. The song which thrilled me in life's morning smites me in life's afternoon. It was the beauty that thrilled; it is the beauty that smites. That which makes the difference is with me; I have exchanged the bowes of hope for the wastes of memory. The ancient bird is warbling in a new sky, and the vanished sky makes me sad.

My soul, thy rainbow must be renewed from within. It has no need of renewal in the heavens; these declare the glory of God as much as they ever did. It is in thee that the flood has come; it is to thee that the promise must be given. If there be a bright color in thy heart, the old colors in the sky may remain. Hast thou thought of that night when the disciples toiled and caught nothing! After long hours of useless labor, they resolved to go home. Suddenly a voice said, "Try again;" It was the voice of Jesus. Was there any reason they should try again? Outwardly, none. It was the same sea, the same net, the same boat; what made the difference? A new color in the heart—Jesus was there. It was not so much because Jesus commanded as because Jesus was there; it was his presence made them win. Hast thou failed on life's sea; try again—with Jesus! There may be nothing else to bid thee try. The night may be as dark, the waves may be as high, the boat may be as frail; but try again—with Jesus! Try by a new light—an inner light! Try by a light of happiness; try by the glimmer of gladness; try by the lamp of a heart at rest! The most stormy sea may be glassy when the harpers make music thereon.—Christian World.

**God's Work and the Mother's.**

God himself does many things similar to those mothers have to do; if you clothe your children, He clothes the earth with grass and flowers; if you feed your children, he feeds the young ravens when they cry; if you watch night and day occasionally over the couch of a sick child, afraid to stir from its side or take your eyes off it for a moment, He never slumbers nor sleeps in watching over His slumbering children. If you try to manage well and to make the best of whatever happens, for the sake of those who love you and look up to you, He also maketh all things work together for good to them that love Him. Thus God counts nothing beneath him, nor derogatory to His character, which is really required by any of His creatures or needful in any part of His creation. He doeth all things, little and great, ordinary and extraordinary, in the same god-like manner, acting always in character, whether He sustains a sparrow or creates a world. Nothing in His glorious holiness holds Him back from doing ordinary things well, because they are but ordinary things; He acts like Himself whether displaying the tenderness of a parent or the majesty of a judge and carries out His great principle into all His operations.

If then He be not less holy, nor less beautiful in holiness, whilst attending to the minutest claims of His universal family, why may not "holiness unto the Lord" be written upon all the details of the mother's duties? Heaven as it is revealed in the Bible is a family-house, where it may be well with us and our children forever.—Rev. Robert Phillip, in Evangelist.

**The Twenty-Third Psalm.**

BY REV. LIVINGSTONE PARKER.

There are two pictures in the 23rd Psalm. In the one Jesus is set forth as a shepherd, in the other we see him as a host. Let us study these pictures for a little while.

We no sooner glance at the first picture than we see the shepherd leading his sheep with rod and staff through the gloomy gorges of the hills to shelter. We look more closely and we notice that one of the sheep has gone astray and we see the shepherd leaving the rest of the flock and going in search of that one, until he finds it. When the earth became the wandering one of worlds it was the Son of God—the Good Shepherd—who travelled after it so far and went so deeply into all its wretchedness and brought it back into the favor and smile of its Creator. Now what the world did you and I are doing continually—going astray, and Christ not only brings us back again and again, but he also brings us back to a higher point than the one from which we had set out. Thus it is that the restored life is sweeter than the life which has never been clouded. "He restoreth my soul," says David, and the question arises: in what way were I to ask you, you would tell me of the thornes that pierced your tired feet, and of the husks that did not satisfy your hunger, and perhaps, some of you would tell me of the longings you had for the old home. But let us study the picture more carefully. Do you not see a path winding in and out through "the green pastures and beside the still waters," and here and there a sheep passing over that path and plunging into a great dark valley? But notice he is not alone, the Shepherd is with him even there. And as we turn again to our work the verse that sprang out of the great Hebrew King's experience finds an echo in our hearts: "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Let us now glance at the other picture. God supplies our wants in the very midst of strife. Before, in the other picture, it was food and rest first, work afterwards. Now it is more than work—it is conflict. Every life has its struggle, each heart has its own battle field, and on these battle fields are being fought greater battles than were ever fought on the plains of Waterloo or on the passes of Thermopylae. Ah, yes, life is a sure fight, but, thank God, to the Christian man in spite of all the tumult it is a festal banquet.

**Happy Faces.**

Do you notice happy faces,  
As you pass along your way?  
In this life's uneven pathway,  
Leading to eternal day?

Can you see the Saviour's presence,  
In the faces that you meet?  
Can you tell where Christ is dwelling  
Giving happiness so sweet?

If you do not, look more closely,  
In the faces hard by sin;  
You will see by lines of trouble,  
Jesus does not dwell within.

Look at others! Happy faces,  
Smiles for every one around!  
There no worry lurks behind them,  
Jesus surely there is found!

And tho' God may send us trials  
They will soften sin's deep lines;  
In the heart will be more Christ love,  
From the heart, through eyes it shines.

As sin marks its victims plainly,  
As each day they older grow;  
So Christ's mark is on His dear ones,  
And a Christian we soon know.

Let us pray to Jesus daily  
For more love to Him to give;  
And our faces then will index  
The bright, happy lives we live.

—E. M. B.

**Did Jesus Live for Fame?**

Did Jesus live for fame? for glory die?  
It cannot be! He never thought of fame  
Or glory; but he wrote his living name  
Upon the hearts of men,—it cannot die!  
Unnumbered eyes are lifted to the sky,  
And hearts are bowed, because he lived and died  
For love and truth alone; because he cried  
Upon the cross, Forgive, O Father high!  
His sympathy is writ upon the years;  
His every smile is sunlight for the soul;  
And O the healing balm—His sacred tears!  
He wept because he loved, and saw the scroll  
Of being plain; and read its hopes and fears,  
And many sorrows thickening to the goal.

—ARTHUR D. WILMOT.

Salisbury, N. B., June 18, 1899.

The lessons only which have cost us pain, which we have learned in struggle, which have been born out of anguish of heart, will heal and really bless others. It is when we have passed through the bitterness of temptation, wrestling with evil and sore beset, victorious only through the grace of Christ, that we are ready to be helpers of others in temptation. It is only when we have known sorrow, when the chords of our love have been swept by it, and when we have been comforted and helped to endure, that we are fitted to become comforters of others in sorrow.—J. R. Miller.