

HOPE'S QUIET HOUR

DOES GOD STILL SPEAK TO MEN?

"In holy books we read how God hath spoken
To holy men, in many different ways;
But hath the present world no sign or token?
Is God quite silent in these latter days?"

This is an up-to-date question, is it not? Plenty of people are asking Pilate's question: "What is truth?" Some appear to think it is a riddle with no solution; they know that many claim to be able to go confidently on their way—hearing God's call and following His directions—but they think such people are mistaken enthusiasts. Others are willing to believe that the friends they love and admire are led by God, but they stumble blindly forward themselves, in doubt and unrest. One thing that puzzles many is that the people who declare that God is speaking to them, do not agree in their statements of what He says. They find the same kind of difficulty in the Bible records. For instance, it is hard to reconcile with our Christian ideas, Samuel's order to Saul: "Thus saith the LORD . . . go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." Such an order sounds very vindictive, and utterly opposed to our conception of Him whose name is LOVE. I am not going to attempt the impossible task of explaining this and many similar inconsistencies which cause us to feel sometimes like apologizing for the Bible. No, I feel convinced that God speaks to men to-day as distinctly as He did long ago; and the fact that men who hear His voice are inconsistent in the messages that they deliver is so plainly to be seen now that I should feel very surprised if we found men in old times always infallible. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, declares that God "spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets," and has in these last days "spoken unto us by His Son." If the message delivered to us reveals far more clearly the Father-heart of God than that delivered by the prophets to the fathers, the reason is not far to seek—the Son understands the Father's heart, and can declare it far more perfectly than any other messenger. If a message is a dead thing, just a form of words learned by rote, and recited without expression by the messenger, then it may reach its destination without change. If you wish to send such a message, then the best way will be to speak it into a phonograph. But that is not God's way of sending messages through men. The education and character of the messenger and his methods of delivering it, have their effect on the message—and so also does the character of the hearer and his way of receiving it. When the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, saying: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before Me," he had to deliver his message in the best words he could find; just as certainly as any messenger who is called to deliver God's messages in the pulpit, Sunday after Sunday, is unfaithful to his high commission unless he prays and studies and keeps his eyes open for new lights. A preacher has God's message to deliver now, as he had ten years ago, and yet if he is satisfied to deliver old sermons over and over again, never making use of new light and new discoveries, never going ahead, but always sticking fast to the same old forms of expressing the old truths, then he is not a faithful messenger, and is not listening for God's voice to-day.

And a great deal depends on the

listener. The Sermon on the Mount is perhaps the grandest sermon ever delivered, and yet it would fail to catch the attention of a child of two, and probably would mean very little to a lively schoolboy or a determined atheist. God's method in teaching His children is like that of Jacob, who said: "I will lead on softly, according as the children be able to endure." When our Lord had been patiently teaching the Apostles for years, and was about to leave them without the help of His visible companionship, He said: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." It is always so. He has many things to say to each of us, revelations that He longs to make, but we are not ready for them yet. A mother teaches her child in simple language, and slowly but surely his power of comprehension grows, until he can study and enjoy books which would have been meaningless to him years before. Is there any other satisfactory method of imparting knowledge? To try to cram a soul with spiritual truth, before it has grown strong enough to assimilate it, is as fatal to good results as to feed a baby on meat when it can only assimilate milk. St. Paul wanted to speak about spiritual truths to the Corinthians (1 Cor., iii., 1-3), and explains that he did not do it because

so certain that mistakes will be impossible. A very weak and mistaken religion, that is "a man's own," will bring him nearer God than the most perfect definition of theologians, if it is only accepted by the mind—as one might accept a fact in history—but does not influence the conduct.

God does speak to men to-day, and men hear His voice, though it does not sound the same to all hearers. When a voice from heaven—the Voice of the Father—confirmed the witness of Christ, some thought they heard an angel, but others only caught the roll of thunder. When Saul of Tarsus heard the call of the ascended Jesus, the men who were with him heard a voice (Acts ix., 7), and yet S. Paul said truly: "They that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid, but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me" (xxii., 9). When God speaks, the people who really hear are those who are willing to obey.

In C. L. Drawbridge's "Old Beliefs and New Knowledge," he says that some people have lost faith in God because they say that "Balaam's ass never spoke," and therefore the Bible is valueless as a guide. Others brand as an atheist anyone who dares to suggest that the story may only have been intended as a parable—like Jotham's story of the trees who spoke (Judges ix., 8-15). But, as the writer points out, "it is possible to form a true theory about Balaam's ass, and yet act as Balaam did, namely, disregard the voice of Conscience, and ignore the

When the bird waketh, and the shadows flee;
Fairer than morning, lovelier than the daylight,
Dawns the sweet consciousness I am with Thee!

Alone with Thee—amid the mystic shadows,
The solemn hush of nature newly born;
Alone with Thee in breathless adoration,
In the calm dew and freshness of the morn.

As in the dawning, o'er the waveless ocean,
The image of the morning star doth rest,
So in this stillness, Thou beholdest only
Thine image in the waters of my breast.

Still, still with Thee! as to each new-born morning
A fresh and solemn splendor still is given,
So doth this blessed consciousness awaking,
Breathe, each day, nearness unto Thee and Heaven.

When sinks the soul, subdued by toil to slumber,
Its closing eye looks up to Thee in prayer,
Sweet the repose beneath Thy wings o'ershadowing;
But sweeter to wake and find Thee there!

So shall it be at last, in that bright morning,
When the soul waketh, and life's shadows flee;
Oh! in that hour fairer than daylight dawning,
Shall rise the glorious thought, I am with Thee.
—From The Independent of September 9, 1852.

SWEETEST LIVES

The sweetest lives are those to duty wed,
Whose deeds, both great and small,
Are close-knit strands of an unbroken thread,
Where love ennobles all.
The world may sound no trumpet,
Ring no bells;
The Book of Life the shining record tells.

Thy love shall chant its own beauties
After its own life working. A child's kiss
Set on thy sighing lips shall make thee glad;
A poor man served by thee shall make thee rich;
A sick man helped by thee shall make thee strong;
Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
Of service which thou renderest.
Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

SELECTED RECIPES

Scalloped omelet is a novelty. Soak three tablespoonfuls of stale crumbs in a cupful of milk for two hours. Beat six eggs, the whites and yolks separately, very light. Into the yolks stir the soaked bread-crumbs, and season the mixture with salt and pepper. Last of all stir in with a few light strokes the stiffened whites. Butter a deep pudding dish, pour the mixture into this, set it on the lower grating of a quick oven and bake until light and brown. Sift brown crumbs over the top, and serve the omelet as soon as it is removed from the oven.

Stick Candy.—To 1 pound of sugar add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vinegar, 1 cup of water, 1 small tablespoonful of glycerine. Flavor with vanilla or lemon. Boil without stirring about 20 to 30 minutes all but extract. When ready to pour into greased tins, add half a teaspoonful of soda. When you have poured into tins to cool, pour two teaspoonfuls of extract over the top. When cool, pull until white, pull into sticks the size you wish, and cut with shears into sticks or drops.



ON THE RED RIVER NEAR WINNIPEG.

they were as babes in Christ. He could not explain spiritual truths to carnal minds, any more than an artist could describe a picture properly to one who had no taste for art, or a musician could satisfactorily talk on his favorite subject to a man who did not know one tune from another. It is always true in everything—though on the surface it may seem hardly fair—that "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." Those who already know a little about spiritual things—if they act on their knowledge—will grow in spiritual knowledge. Those who set themselves to do right—fulfilling God's will and obeying His voice as they can understand it—will find the way made plain, little by little. Christ knew that it would be better for the ciples to lose His visible presence, and depend on the still voice of the Spirit, whose orders they might often mistake. How "expedient" it was for them we may judge as we see the shrinking, covering men blossoming out into bold and brave leaders of the infant Church. If you tell a child all he has to learn, he will not really learn anything. Your definitions may be far more correct than his, and yet it is far better for him to puzzle out things for himself, with only the help that is absolutely necessary, even though he may make endless mistakes. And God knows it is better for us to fight our way to faith, rather than to make the way

inspiring Spirit of God."

God does speak to each of us—we all know that we are wrong when we disobey Conscience, even though my conscience may speak very differently to yours. We must receive the Holy Spirit actively, not passively—working out our own salvation, because God works in us. In spite of the wonders which fill the public mind—wonders of psychology and of the influence of a stronger over a weaker mind—each of us will have to answer for ourselves before God. Critics are already declaring that more harm than good results from hypnotic suggestion. It seldom helps people if you make their way too easy, or do all their lessons for them. Growth is usually more healthy, if it is not too rapid. So, if you want to grow spiritually, if you want to hear God's voice and see His face more distinctly, keep on climbing. He says to each of us: "What is thy desire?" and is ready to grant it, if we are willing to pay the price of steady persistence and unswerving determination. Ask and ye shall receive—but one who wavers in his asking must heed the warning of St. James: "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."

DORA FARNCOMBE.

WHEN I AM AWAKE I AM STILL WITH THEE

By Harriet Beecher Stowe.
Still, still with Thee—when purple morning-breaketh,

Hearts

give me your hearts, I

th, if after death
g the lonesome way,
mble with my breath?
s the worst and last,
nd is wholly past.

give me your eyes a

worth, if when I die
s on my face
urs beneath the sky?
the worst and last,
ad is wholly past.

, give me your little

th to ease my heart
ll my days
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s is the worst and last
th is wholly past.
—THE INDEPENDENT

he Wide West

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