

an evil world. As long as persecution lasted, the line that separated the Church from the world was distinct and clear. To become a Christian meant to abandon all existing ties and friendships. It involved the sacrifice of that which was previously held dear; it was necessary to forsake all to follow Christ. Hence there was little or no temptation to strike a bargain with the world. A Christian must make his choice of God or Mammon, but he could not serve both.

But when persecution ceased and Christianity became popular, then arose the danger that always attends prosperity—the danger of a mere lip-service, of a discipleship that was only nominal. Numbers there were willing to profess the name of Christ so long as they might retain their old heathen habits—numbers then as now. What wonder that the more earnest spirits, sick of a world of empty professions and shams, should desire to seek God's presence in deep seclusion and free from distraction; and so the life of a recluse was much sought after.

Lastly, was it *right* that these people should seek to be thus alone for their religious exercises? And we may answer, Yes. In a measure the instinct was a true and noble one. There are times when the spirit needs to go out into silence and solitude to hold communion with the Eternal Father, disentangled from all earthly influences. It is well—nay, it is necessary—for us at times to be beyond the sound of human voices and away from the hubbub of crowds. Even Jesus was wont to seek the mountain-top in the darkness of night or the still hours of the early morning. And we have not that power of keeping our thoughts elevated that

He had. We are single, solitary, erring souls—

Each in his hidden sphere of joy or woe

Our hermit spirits dwell and range apart;  
Our eyes see all around in gloom or glow—

Hues of their own, fresh borrowed from the heart.

Our trials and our temptations are our own, not shared with others. The path each treads has been marked out for no other feet, and our prayers and our thoughts must be our own—

And all alone, so Heaven has willed, we die.

It is solitude that may teach us this; that may, when nothing else can, bring us into a right relationship with the God who created us.

But there is an aspect of the Christian life which Antony and his followers strangely forgot as they retired into the wilderness. It is an aspect represented in the New Testament, not by the quiet contemplation and devotion of S. John, but by the eager activity of S. Paul. Both contemplation and action go to make up the perfect Christian life. We have a duty to others as well as to ourselves. The disciples were to be in the world, though not of the world. Their mission upon earth was to bear the burden and heat of the day, in labour for God among the souls of men; to bring heavenly influences down from the mountain-top into the market-place. This means no mere wilderness retirement, but much unthankful toil here; much worry and little repose. The rest and sweet communion of heaven is, for most of us, hereafter.

J. H. M.

## Trust in God.

**T**HE Rev. J. Robinson, of Leicester, tells this anecdote of a poor widow who used regularly to attend a week-day service at S. Mary's Church:—

She was very poor, and one day had spent her last penny. It was the evening for the

service at S. Mary's; the bells were ringing, but she still sat in the window diligently sewing.

The children came in from play. 'Mother, there's the bell,' said the eldest, 'aren't you going to church?'

'No, dear,' she answered wearily, 'if I