

The Christian.

ST. JOHN. N. B. AUGUST, 1892

EDITORIAL.

And behold there was a man which had a withered hand; and they asked Him, saying: Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days? that they might accuse Him. And He said unto them: What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it and lift it out? How much better then is a man than a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days. Then saith He to the man: stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth and it was restored whole as the other.

Then the Pharisees went out and held a council against Him, how they might destroy Him. But when Jesus knew it He withdrew Himself from thence, and great multitudes followed Him and He healed them all and charged them that they should not make Him known, &c.—Matt. xii. 10

The reader's attention is called to this narrative for the best of reasons—because it contains the food of the undying Spirit. We use food and take exercise to prolong, as far as possible, our present life—a life so dear to all. But this food perisheth with the using, and, after a little, the life it prolongs will perish with it. The working machinery will wear out or be stopped, and life shall cease. But our Creator has in keeping for us a life of joy and love; a life eternal; and He has graciously told us how and by what means we gain it. Jesus, in prayer to His Father, said: "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."—(John xvii. 3) Neither the Jews nor His own disciples understood how they were to eat His flesh and drink His blood, until Jesus told them that His words were spirit and life, and that these words would eternally feed and satisfy the spirits of those who received them. When he asked the twelve if they also would go away as did the rest, Peter, horrified at the thought, exclaimed: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."—(John vi. 60, 67, 68.)

John, the last of Jesus' biographers, tells God's purpose in having these things written: "That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through His name."—(John xx. 31) From these different statements we learn that the knowledge of God and of Christ is eternal life; that Christ gives us this knowledge by His words and actions; and that His history was written that we might believe in Him as the Son of God, and believing, have life through His name. A constant and believing study of Jesus' history increases our love for Him, which is the foretaste of eternal life.

We here see Jesus on the Sabbath day with the rest of the people in the synagogue. A man is there with a withered hand. Such a helpless person is no favorite in or out of the synagogue. He sees Jesus there; He cannot be hid. He had heard of His attention to the poor, and of His many cures, and with imploring look wonders if the "Son of David" would have mercy on him. A sweet smile from the Great Healer inspires hope. The eager Pharisees catch these glances as they pass to and fro, and the indication is that He will heal the man. How can they persuade the people that so good and gracious and glorious an action is wrong? They can see no other way than to make it a breach of the Sabbath. He has no regard for the sacred day and works against the God of Israel. Their business requires haste, and in advance they ask Him: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" He appeals to their conscience, and that of all present, whether it is better to save life or destroy it on the Sabbath? It even a sheep fall into a pit on the Sabbath, which is better, to let it die or lift it out? If God is more honored in saving a sheep

than in letting it die, is it better to let a man die on the Sabbath than to save his life? All His hearers knew which was better. Then He healed the man.

But, says one, could not Jesus heal the man without telling him to do anything? This is not denied. We cannot limit Jesus' powers. But would it be a better way for Jesus to do so than to heal him in His own way? If it would not, why object to it? We think the man was happy in obeying Jesus, and thus having an opportunity to prove to himself and show to others his respect for Him, and his heartfelt confidence in His power and goodness. But suppose the man was persuaded by others to try another action, and he put his hand behind him, or held it by his side, would he thus obey Christ? Jesus told him to stretch forth his hand. He told him to do a very simple and plain thing. The man knew what he was to do and did it. He loved Jesus and obeyed Him in all confidence. Can any one condemn what Jesus told the man to do? or condemn the man for doing it? Jesus sends salvation to all men through the gospel; tells men what they are to do, and waits to save all that will believe and obey Him. Though heaven and earth pass away, His word never will. When the man heard Jesus' command he stretched forth his hand, it was as whole as the other. He was the happy man, and Jesus the honored healer. Jesus spoke the word and the man was made whole. When a man undertakes even a small work it is only accomplished by planning and labor, and money and time. Not so with God. If it is to create a world, "He speaks and it is done, He commands and it stands fast." As the Father doeth so doeth the Son. He healed diseases by His word. He spoke to the winds and sea and they obeyed Him. He said: Thy sins be forgiven thee!—and it was so; and all that are in their graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth unto the true resurrection. Let us be sure that we now hear Him and believe and obey Him.

The Pharisees could not answer Jesus' questions nor condemn His mighty work, and they went out and consulted how they might destroy Him. They had truth and justice and God against them, but if it came to a vote of the people they would have ten to one in their side. The people saw and admired Jesus' miracles, but they could, by intimidation and prejudice, turn them against Him, and the speediest and best way to put Him to death is what they now wished to ascertain.

But Jesus knew what the Pharisees intended to do and withdrew Himself. Why would He hide Himself from the enemies, whom he could so easily crush with a word? Was he afraid to meet His foes? His hour was not then come, and instead of working a miracle in self-defence, He quietly disappears to labor in other fields. He would save others by miracles, but would not save Himself nor ask His Father for an army of angels to destroy His foes and defend Him. When He retired from the sight and power of His enemies multitudes followed Him to be cured. He knew how easily the chief priest would persuade these multitudes to condemn Him, and even plead for the life of a notable murderer that Jesus might be crucified, yet He healed them all. Not a few friends and favorites—He healed them all. His favorites were the poor and needy, and such as had no helper. The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost. He came not to destroy but to save.

When Jesus made the lame walk, the deaf hear, the blind see, He charged them not to make Him known. As if He had said to each: "This is a gift from me to yourself, let it be a secret." His voice was not heard proclaiming His works of love and power. When reviled and His life eagerly sought by men, He was moving among the mourning, the sick and dying, with a gentleness that would not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking

wick, till His great work was finished and a righteousness was established on the earth suited to the wants of all its lost millions. In this narrative Matthew records the fulfillment of what Isaiah predicted in his forty-second chapter: "Behold My Servant Whom I have chosen, My Beloved in Whom My soul is well pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him and He shall show light unto the Gentiles. He shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench till He send forth judgment unto victory; and in His name shall the Gentiles trust."

Original Contributions.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH.

We see the necessity of the Church from its great design. In Eph. iii. 10, we learn that the manifold wisdom of God is to be made known by the Church. The wisdom, and knowledge and power of God must be manifested to the world through the Church of Christ. The Church is the body of Christ; the fullness or the completeness of Him who filleth all in all. All legislative power is in Christ, who is the head; and all executive power is in the Church, which is His body. We see by this that the great work of the world's salvation must be accomplished through the Church. The prayer of Christ corroborates this fact. His desire that all who believe on Him might be one, was because that this condition of the union of God's children would be the means of the world's salvation. This is also seen in His memorable sermon on the Mount, where He makes known to His disciples that they are the light of the world, that to them is given, not only the keeping of the lights along the shore, but the shining of them. This duty, to let the light shine, is the salient point of this revelation, and the epitome of the grand mission of the Church. Whatever failure there may be in the conversion of the world, it cannot be attributed to any inefficiency of the light, but the failure on the part of the Church to have it shine. Neither can we say that the seeming failure to reach the world is because of the indifference of the world, as we are assured that His word will not return void, but will accomplish that for which it is sent. It is not enough to possess the light. The Church may claim she has the light, which is the truth, and all the truth and nothing but the truth; but if the truth, or light, is not seen, does not so shine that it can be seen, it is of no value whatever. I may prove beyond a doubt that my watch is complete in the works and the movement and that it keeps perfect time, but if it is without a dial so the time cannot be seen, it is no good as a watch. The design of the Church is not in the possession of the truth, or light, but in the manifestation of it. The command of the Saviour to the man whom He had restored to his right mind was, not that he should return to his home and tell his family how well he was, but go home and "show what the Lord has done for you." Here is seen the demand of the age, something that can be seen. The demand that Philip made: "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," is a universal human cry. Christ was the manifestation of the Father. He is not here now for the world to see, but He has left us this divine light to reproduce in the world. The Church is to complete the work begun in the manifestation of the wisdom and glory of God.

It is in this important mission that we see the weakness and consequent mistake of the light-bearers, now as in the Saviour's time, about which His instruction was very emphatic. The tendency was then as it is now to cover the light, to be satis-