

WORK.

REV. J. W. PEDLEY, B.A.

John 5, 17.—“My Father worketh hitherto and I work.”—These words are the Saviour's defence against the charge of Sabbath breaking, and the reply only makes the matter worse. For if it was impious to violate the law, much more impious was it to bring forward the law giver in justification. Moreover the emphasis laid upon the term *Father*, indicated that the Lord gave to it a different meaning from that, in which it could be used by all human beings. He implied that in a special and most intimate association he was linked on to the very being of God. There was the assumption of that absolute authority and control over his life and actions which only God could claim. What was right for God was right for him, and for the same reason. If God worked on during that long Sabbath which began when the work of creation was done, so did he work. As the Creator carried on his work of healing, mending, restoring, building up on all days, in all times and in all ages—so would he.

To the Jews, all this was infinite blasphemy, and they fought him more bitterly than ever. Let us leave the controversy and study the great truth in the reply of Christ, and its bearing upon our lives.

Christ says practically that we have reached the utmost limit of perfection when we have become constant and fruitful workers. God himself who is perfection is a worker. He is not an infinite idler, lounging about in a gorgeous palace, keeping royal state, ministered to by angelic hosts that wait upon his bidding and fly to obey his slightest wish. That is not God. He is a busy worker. With a universe of worlds upon his hands to direct and oversee, with the teeming millions of all forms of life to regulate and control, with the immortal interests of all higher intelligences to provide for, He must work and does. And he does not work indifferently. He is concerned about it. Infinite intelligence, infinite power, infinite wisdom, infinite anxiety and love are all roused and active. But in his nature there is no jarring, no contradiction. All his powers work in perfect harmony. Therefore He needs not to rest. In the heaven of John there is no night, no need of night day: a that never ends—luminous, radiant, resplendent with God's own light, where the work goes on forever without wearying, where no pain, nor sickness, nor age, nor bodily ill can ever come, where clad in the beauty of eternal youth God's children will work with him through eternity.

All work is material and spiritual. I ask your attention first to its material aspect.

By most men work is regarded with aversion, and

this is because it represents to them a life which has in it little of attraction. The name has been so narrowed in its application as to have lost the association of dignity and honor. The term *workmen* has become confined to those classes who engage in manual labor, who work with their hands for a living. To them it signifies a life of toil and drudgery that knows no respite, with little or no culture, education or refinement. It means a treadmill, narrow, self-contained existence with no chance of change. From morn till night, week after week, year after year, earning their bread literally and truly by the sweat of their brow. Where it means that, is it a wonder they view it with dislike.

And sometimes it signifies much more. The sweat of honest labor is not so bad, but sometimes it becomes the sweat of torture. Work, especially in towns and cities, means fighting against fearful odds for every inch along the way of life. It means for thousands of our fellow creatures a struggle for the barest living under conditions so grinding and unfair that they cry out in pain against it. And sometimes they do more than that, they rise in the madness and frenzy and blindness of their despair, and with the mighty strength they have gained in working for society they batter society to the ground and make havoc and ruin and anarchy all about. Before that terrible rage kings have trembled on the throne, governments long established have tottered to their fall, and selfish, heartless aristocracies have been swept away as with a flood. To such toilers there is no music in work, no attraction in labor. The gospel for them is a gospel of rest. Heaven for them is a land “where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest,” and they will have it—rest full and sweet.

But among these classes we find work carried on under improper conditions. They are workers but they are not the only ones. The name workman should not be so restricted. There goes a man down the street roughly clad, in one hand a pail and in the other a shovel. Who is he? What does he do? Oh! you say he is but a laborer, a common workman. His name is Smith. And who is this strolling through the forest—an old felt hat on his head and wearing a grey tweed suit, looking like an old man hunting for a job? That, sir, is Mr. Gladstone. Oh! Mr. Gladstone, a workman too? A workman! No, a statesman and one of the best. And why do you call that man with a shovel a workman and deny the title to him who works harder and more to the purpose than any man in the British empire? It is all wrong. These distinctions are false. There is no degradation in the name. We are all of us, in shop and home and store and school and pulpit and cabinet, we are all workers. In the great busy hive of the world's life we are working in different