

seem to have lasted two nights and the day between.

(1) *Abram questioning*, verses 2 and 8. Abram did not doubt God, but his faith was tried; he was blessed with riches, but he had no son, he must have sometimes felt puzzled and sad. God knew he needed to be encouraged, so he hears the mysterious voice, "Fear not, I am thy shield and thy reward exceeding great." Thus He would show Abram that He would keep him safe in every danger, so he might rest in Him. And so it is with the believer now; no dart of the enemy can penetrate the shield which covers the weakest believer in Jesus, Ephes. vi. 16. Abram had looked to God, not to man for "reward;" this word bids him trust on in God Himself, Prov. xi. 18. Abram ventures to ask God to tell him a little more, verses 2, 3. Abram was childless, and what could God give him more, if the gift of a child was not God's will. He does not murmur, but he is a little despondent. His question is a prayer for more light, as afterwards in verse 8, he asks for some token from God to assure him. He felt that he "lacked wisdom," and so "asked of God," see St. James i. 5, 6.

(2) *Abram Believing*. What did God do? verse 5. He led Abram outside the tent, and bid him to count the stars, shining with Eastern splendour overhead; his descendant should be as numerous as the stars. In thus beholding the glory of the creation, he was to learn that God was able to perform what He had promised, Isaiah xl. 26; Ps. cxlvii. 4. It was not easy for Abram to believe that; years had passed since he left his native country, and still he was childless; but God had said it, and that was sufficient; Abram knew it must come true, Num. xxiii. 19. Verse 6 tells us Abram "believed," and God was pleased with him. This faith then was simply trusting God's word; it accepted God's promise without curiously enquiring how it could be. Abram was justified by faith. Here is implied the great gospel principle of *Justification by Faith*. Faith is at the root of all "good works," which as our twelfth article says, "do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith."

(3) *Abram assured*. God, to encourage Abram, gave him special orders about a sacrifice, verse 9, which was to be a solemn sign or pledge of the covenant between God and himself. Abram obeyed, the sacrifice was prepared, laid in order, and Abram waited and watched. At last a "deep sleep" comes upon the watcher, verse 12, and in his sleep God speaks to him, and tells him what would happen to his seed many years afterwards, verses 13 to 16, and then Abram awoke from the trance, and God allowed him to see a symbol of the Divine Presence, verse 17, like the pillar of the cloud by day, and of fire by night, Exod. xiii. 21. The lamp of fire passed through the pieces, as Abram had passed between them before, thus ratifying the covenant, compare Jer. xxxiv. 18.

Let us learn from this record of Abram's faith to "wait on the Lord," Psalm xxvii. 14, Isaiah xl. 31. We do not see visions now, or hear God's voice speaking to us "with our outward ears," because we have God's Word to guide us, full of messages from Him, and, as we gaze at God's glory, mirrored in the Gospel of His dear Son, we may behold a wondrous future before us: peace in the hour of death, and then life eternal.

Lord give me such a faith as this,
And then, whatever may come,
I'll taste e'en here the hallowed bliss
Of an eternal home.

Correspondence.

All Letters containing personal allusions will appear over the signature of the writer.

We do not hold ourselves responsible for the opinions of our correspondents.

THE BARK OF CHRIST AND LITTLE SHIPS.

SIR.—In a notice, inserted in a recent issue of the "Globe," the Toronto Clerical Association published a synopsis of a paper read at their meeting, on the future of the sects. I was much struck with the purport of that paper, and felt assured that the DOMINION CHURCHMAN, the faithful warder on the battlements of our Zion, would notice it, not from any ill feeling towards those who, unfortunately, still differ from us, but to strengthen the faith of those who believe in the "Holy Catholic Church," and to point the members of that Church on to the fast approaching time when brethren, (alas, now divided from us) shall, by the good spirit of God, cease rending the seamless garment of Christ. In reading the history of the Church, from the earliest days of her historians to the present time, I often wonder why those excellent Christian men, who have left the Church, are not led to see, and ask the question, what become of all those restless spirits, who have abandoned the Catholic

Church, and either originated some human society, in which their peculiar idea of religion held a prominent place, or joined some already existing body, who held religious opinions agreeable to the state of their mind at the period of secession.

We have a grand symbol of the Church in St. Mark iv. 36 and following verses, in the ship tossed on the waters of Gallilee's Lake, we have that ship, out-riding the storm, and getting safely into port with all her crew, because she carried the Saviour of the world "the Lord was in the midst of her." Now at the end of the 36th verse we read: "And there were also with Him other little ships," we read no more of them than this, they were either lost in the storm or put back, whichever fate befell them they are completely obliterated, no more mention is made of them or of those on board. The good old craft, the Church, with Christ on board, cleaves every billow and wave that the spirit of the power of the air raised against her, and conveys in safety to the shore, every soul that was on board. The waves raised by Satan may beat against and threaten to engulf her, but when, with our prayers we awaken the "high and holy One," "Who may be asleep on the pillow," the good old craft, the Church, then, as she is doing now, rights herself, and nothing can swamp her, nothing can sink her, the other little ships are lost, nothing is said of them, you sweep the horizon of the ocean of time, and find them not.

Yours, etc.,

A READER.

Toronto, March 20th, 1885.

CONVERSION.

SIR.—I have read very carefully the letter of Cleric and noted that mere "opinion" of his expressed in its first sentence, and which he cannot help being impressed with. Well there are now and have been in days gone by, a very large number of people sadly affected by that "cannot help" sort of feeling, which is simply the result of a long and determined refusal to attend to things which by a little mental and physical application of a genuine character, they can help very well and could have often helped very effectually. I should certainly feel in duty bound to thank Cleric, not only for his opinion referred to, but for all the other mere opinions contained in that very brief letter, were it not that every one of them is wholly void of any value either to myself or anybody else. By way of exchange for his sage suggestion as to "the exegetical ability of our writer layman," I have a very respectful suggestion to make to "our" Cleric, viz: that he pay less attention to things which he "cannot help" and a good deal more attention to things which he can help. If some such suggestion as this, had been faithfully acted upon long ago by even one half of all the clerics of the Church of England, "our" cleric should in all probability not now have found it necessary to make any such suggestion as he made. Among the various things which in future he can help (avoid), is the very inexcusable inattention and reckless carelessness displayed in his letter and manifested in both misstatement and false statements in one so brief on Conversion. He could have helped such a misstatement as is contained in the following: "Having read some of the articles on Conversion by layman which, etc.," and instead thereof correctly and truthfully have said "letters against popular modern conversion, etc." He can help, or ought to be able to help, such absolutely misleading and untrue statements as are contained in the next three sentences of his short letter. In flat contradiction to what he says in the second sentence about good churchmen, I tell "our" Cleric that while it is quite true that "good churchmen differ but little on the real nature of conversion," the great mass of them absolutely deny "its necessity on the part of every one, etc." But when I say this, two things at least must be borne in mind. First, that such churchmen do not deny the necessity of true conversion for certain individuals, nor do they deny the necessity of some other spiritual change for the better, in the case of many other individuals, which change however is not by any means conversion. And the second thing to be noted is that "our" clerics idea of "good churchmen" is probably very different from mine. He very likely uses here the word "good" in the goodey, goodey sense; while I never use it in that sense and never shall. In the third sentence "our" cleric tells us what he is able to "perceive" in one of my letters. If he can "perceive" in it what he here imagines he does, then certainly nobody need envy him his perceptive powers; and any one who depends upon them will be grievously misled and deceived. A cleric who in a letter containing only six sentences, on the subject of Conversion, can say that "that this which has always appeared to me (cleric) as a teacher of these doctrines, essential to all," and then half a dozen lines further down also say, "there are many subjects of far greater importance which might be discussed with much more profit and advantage every way, etc.," had better keep clear of the word technicalities until he has learned what it means and when and where it may be properly used. In point of fact it has no more sense

or true and legitimate application, where he introduces it than would have the word temporalities. In the DOMINION CHURCHMAN of the 26th Feb. last, "our" cleric will find one of my letters in which I challenge proof for certain things which most certainly ought to be proved if they can be, for so long as the proof is not forthcoming, "our" cleric's idea and view of conversion has no more authority to rest on, than has the doctrine of the immaculate conception of the blessed virgin Mary, which has no authority at all. Possibly when "our" cleric writes his next letter he may think it well to remember that fiction is not fact, and twaddle is not truth, and so govern his pen accordingly.

LAYMAN.

CONVERSION AND REPENTANCE.

SIR.—I am indeed sorry to have been the innocent cause of "Layman's" two letters, and in answering his second, I hope the more learned of your readers will overlook the milk-and-water style, that an answer to such a production must necessarily assume. When I wrote my first letter, I had not read any of "Layman's," so it was in no sense an attack upon his position; had I read them and intended it to be, it would have been perhaps more to the purpose. I am well aware that anyone consulting an English-Latin Dictionary, would find "to convert" translated "convertive," but am at a loss to understand, what that has to do with my having given the Latin Verb from which "convert" is derived in the Present Tense of the Infinitive Mood. It matters very little in this controversy, what the derivation of "conversion" is, I only gave it in my first letter to show (our translators of the authorized version of the New Testament having rendered the Greek verb *epistrepho* in its many forms, sometimes by "convert," and sometimes by "turn") that these two renderings were synonymous; and also the folly of anyone trying to read a technical meaning into this Greek verb, wherever it happens to be translated by the verb "convert" and not "turn." We see that, in some cases, the revised version has the verb "turn" where the verb "convert" is used in the Authorized Version. See Acts iii. 19 verse.

I cannot follow "Layman" into the Astronomical and top spinning by-paths into which, with Dr. Authon's aid, he has wandered, but have a word to say as regards "repentance" in its connection with "conversion." We are told of St. John Baptist, "That he should be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb, and many of the children of Israel shall he convert (see Greek text) unto the Lord their God." In the account we have of his ministry in the 3rd chapter of St. Matthew, we find the word "repentance" and nothing said of "conversion."

I should not say, as "Layman" insinuates, that "to repent" and "to be converted" are synonymous, for in such passages as Acts iii. 19, Acts xxvi. 20, we should have a useless repetition, but yet one of these verbs may sometimes very well presuppose the other, as in the case of the account of the Baptists mission, in which we read only of repentance, although we were told he was to "convert."

I am inclined to agree with Oosterzee, where he speaks of "an *epistrophe* visible to others, the result of an inward *metanoia*." The word *metanoia* implies change of mind and purpose, whereas our word repentance, which has its root meaning in a sense of pain, does not fully render the Greek word.

I find Alford defines *epistrophe* thus: "The general New Testament sense is returning to God as a penitent after sin."

Theophylact, and Beza (no mean authorities on the meaning of a Greek word) explain the word translated "converted" in Luke xxii. 32 by the word "repent." I have examined some of the leading modern divines of "The Church" on this subject. I will quote Plumptre, having read your opinion of him in the DOMINION CHURCHMAN of 2nd April. "The English word (viz., conversion) expresses the force of the Greek, but the "conversion" spoken of was not used in the definite half-technical sense of later religious experiences (on Matthew xviii. 3). See Greek text of James v. 19, 20: "My brethren, if one of you be led away from the truth and one convert him, know ye, he that converteth (turneth) a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." St. James is addressing "Brethren in this passage, members of the kingdom of God, viz., the Church of Christ, they have been converted to the Church, and he tells them, if a brother sees a brother churchman, dashing headlong to ruin, and lays hold upon the rein and literally "converts" him, i. e., turns him around; he shall cause the forgiveness of a multitude of sins, the converted penitent's sins, I presume. When "Layman" says "it is alas! quite true that the great majority of these need some very important spiritual remedy and spiritual change for the better," I cannot understand him, after the study of this passage of St. James, adding, as he does, "other than conversion." Yours truly,

W. B.