

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS.

INDECISION.

"How long halt ye between two opinions."—1 Kings xviii. 21.

There are two great competitors for the human soul—the eternal God and Satan. And when the soul is saved, as it passes through the gates into the great city of God, is there not heard from the millions of saints and angels a shout like the voice of many waters, "Victory! through the blood of the Lamb." On the other hand, when a soul is condemned, does not Satan and his hosts exult, crying we have another of the redeemed ones, another that might have been a gem for his crown, whom we hate. Need I remind you, gentle reader, that every soul in the universe will soon be the property of one or other of these claimants.

At the great controversy on Mount Carmel there was a large class on the side of Baal, a small class on the side of Jehovah, a third class halting between the two. A plan was proposed to decide who was the rightful claimant. The altar was built, the sacrifice placed upon it, the priests of Baal gathered. Listen to them (v. 26); hear the taunts of Elijah, "Cry aloud," &c. (v. 27). No fire came. Now Elijah erects his altar, &c. See the fire flashing over the sacrifice—all is consumed. Listen to the shout, "The Lord he is the God! the Lord he is the God!"

Now let us apply this Scripture to the middle class of the present day—the halters. Scholars tell us that the literal rendering of this verse is, "How long hop ye about on two boughs"—a metaphor taken, doubtlessly, from a bird hopping from bough to bough, not knowing on which to balance. The people in Elijah's day were balanced between the worship of an idol and the worship of the God of heaven. Multitudes in our day are balanced between the service of the living God and the dead works of Satan. Two contrary influences seem acting on them; as though God and heaven and holy beings were pulling one way, and the fiends and hell pulling the other, and they halt which to serve.

1. Some are hesitating between infidelity and Christianity. On the one hand, there are all the arguments from prophecy, miracles, the effect it has produced, the testimony of martyrs and of dying beds, the uniformity of Christian experience, with all the influence of education and convictions of conscience. On the other hand, there is the force of difficulties which many acknowledge to exist in the Bible, the influence of the pride of heart, love of fancied independence, power of corrupting passion, desire of indulgence in sin, love of the world, the force of the fact that multitudes of the worldly great, the rich, the scientific, are understood to have cast off Christianity, or to have doubts about its truth; and between these two there are multitudes hesitating; they are in secret doubt whether Christianity be true or false, and whether to embrace the one or the other.

2. There is another class who halt whether they shall live to God or live to themselves. These are convinced of their guilt, their exposure to the wrath of God; they express no doubt of the truth of Christianity, of the importance and even the necessity of religion, perhaps even wept, prayed, and desired religion. Many of these have been trained up in the Sunday-school, even in pious families. These know they "must be born again" or perish; but they hesitate; there is some cherished sin, fear of shame, secret unwillingness to be saved by the mercy of God through the merits of Christ, absorption in worldly affairs, love of youthful mistaken pleasures and vanities, or perhaps the influence of worldly companions—and they halt.

3. There is a third class who halt whether to give their hearts to God now or defer it to some

future time. They intend becoming Christians, resolve hundreds of times, but opportunity after opportunity goes by, they are still undecided. They often think of their sinful state, of death, judgment, and eternity—of the awful responsibility of caring for their eternal welfare. They know that shortly their bodies will lie in the cold, cold grave, and return to their native elements and leave only dust and ashes. The passers-by will read their names on the tombstone, but when time shall have crumbled that monument into dust, and their little lives are buried in the ocean of forgetfulness, when thousands of centuries have passed away, will those bodies bear the image of the Redeemer and be rejoicing on through eternity, or howling in outside darkness? They know that wealth, station, honor, must one day be consumed with the lumber of creation, but religion would make them grow brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. They determine to make a profession of religion, but—but—not just now—soon at a future time. Like Felix, they wait for a more convenient season. They halt.

Oh! reader, if this description suits your case, decide immediately.

1. Because the things are few in number and easily determined. They are whether you will worship God or Mammon? Whether you will depend on Jesus for salvation or on your own morality? Whether you will forsake your sins or not? Whether you will live to God or yourselves?

2. Because it is yours to decide to live in bondage or be the freeman of the Lord. You have the capacity to choose. Do you ask for proof of this? There is a Bible; it comes to you with threats, invitations and promises. There is consciousness. This is the highest source of argument. You may set aside all argument but consciousness is an authority which no man disputes. God has placed before you the objects of choice and made for you every possible provision.

3. Because decision is the element of true greatness. There is no power on earth equal to its force. The man of decision is daunted by no difficulties, he bids mountains depart from his path. Circumstances cease their opposition. He makes his own fortune, steps to his own place, and men honor him. The great mechanic, the philosopher, the hero, the scholar, have reached the eminence they occupy by the power of decision. "Oh, how the ground will clear around an earnest man."

*Then choose now. Say, Lord, I have broken Thy law, I am a condemned sinner, but Jesus has died for my sins. I renounce them and take Jesus as my Saviour—my able, willing, present Saviour. I will obey and follow Him. Do you think if you were to make this offer to God He would refuse you?
T. F. DWYER.

"THERE REMAINETH, THEREFORE, A REST."

Rest! A little word, but full of blessed meaning to earth's weary workers; full of blessed meaning to those bowed down beneath the accumulated cares of a lifetime; full of blessed meaning to the Christian, young or old, whether just entering on the narrow path or far advanced on the road that leads to glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life. "They rest from their labors and their works do follow them," may be said of all those who have honestly endeavored to serve God in their day and generation, and have crossed over the dark river to join the "silent majority" on the other side.

"There is no rest for the wicked," is an expression frequently used in a half-jesting manner. No doubt it is true enough, but so far as this present life is concerned, there is little difference, in this respect, between the wicked and the righteous. Both have to endure sorrow, disappointment, and the many ills that flesh is heir to. Both have to toll and struggle for the bread that perisheth; and

both have to fall at last before the scythe of the inexorable Reaper. But here the parallel must end. The wicked can have no well grounded hope of rest hereafter. For them is reserved no blessed period of rest after life's close. They have no claim to a place in any one of the "many mansions" which "My Father's house" contains. The Scriptures, full of promise of a blessed hereafter for the Christian, contain no promise of rest for them. Sadly and solemnly let it be said, "There is no rest for the wicked." For the Christian, on the other hand, there "remaineth a rest." There is no conjecture about it, no "perhaps," but it is a sure and certain fact, founded upon the immutable promise of Him who cannot lie. Christian, rejoice in the prospect that opens before you as with the eye of faith you look beyond the present into the mysteries of the future. In a little while you shall rest from your labors. In a little while you shall behold the King in His glory. In a little while you shall hear the heavenly harpers, and you shall join their ever-new and triumphant song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive glory, and honor, and blessing."

St. John, February, 1884.

W. H. F.

A SERIOUS QUESTION.

"What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"—Matt. xxvii. 22.

This question was asked by Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea, when placed in a very responsible and trying position. He was forced into this perplexing position by virtue of his office as ruler of the Jews, and by their accusations against Jesus. He perceived that it was through envy that they had delivered Jesus into his hands. He believed Him to be innocent. His wife also had sent a message to him that same day, saying, see that you have nothing to do with that just person; for I have suffered much this day in a dream on His account. Thus his perplexity was intensified, while the Jews were clamoring to have Jesus crucified. Pilate found himself in a hard place that day. He had something to do with Jesus; and he could in no way shift his responsibility. He must either justify or condemn Jesus. The Jews would have put Jesus to death, and would not have given the Governor any trouble on the subject if they had dared to do so. But they were at this time under the Roman Government, and were not allowed to put any man to death. They had arrested Jesus and tried Him before their own judges, called the Sanhedrim, and condemned him for blasphemy. But this complaint would be of no account before a Gentile ruler. So they must get up an accusation which would accomplish their design. The accusation is this: He says he is a king. This is high treason. They say to Pilate, if you let this man go you are not Cæsar's friend. As much as to say, you are here to represent Cæsar in the administration of the government; and here is a man opposed to Cæsar, raising himself up in the minds of the people. We do not want any king but Cæsar; but this man is opposed to Cæsar. Now put this man out of the way, crucify Him, if you are a friend to Cæsar. Pilate saw and felt that he had got into a hard place. And yet he wished to release Jesus, for he believed him innocent. He says: You have a custom that a prisoner should be released about the time of your passover. I will release Jesus. They say, release Barabbas. The multitude had been persuaded by the chief priests and elders, to ask that Barabbas should be released, and that Jesus should be crucified. When they answered, release Barabbas; then Pilate asked, "What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?" Then all the multitude cried out: Crucify Him! Crucify Him! The Jewish people had chosen that Barabbas, a murderer, should be let go free, and that Jesus the Saviour of life should be crucified. Now we see what a hard place Pilate found himself