

BACKWARD OR FORWARD.

"Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward."

These are days of looking backward. One says "Look to Wesley," and another, "Back to Calvin, or Luther, or Knox, or Cranmer," some back to the "Fathers, the Primitive Church," and others some still further, "Back to Pentecost, to Calvary, or to Christ." Is this a proper attitude for the people of God? I trow not. It seems to me that whenever they have looked backward the people of God have fallen into sin, or discouragement. The Captain of our salvation is, and always has been, ahead of His people. When Adam and Eve fell God pointed them not back to the happiness they lost, but forward to the Redeemer. When the flood was past, and the earth desolate, and left with only eight inhabitants, Noah's attention was directed away from the former glory, forward to an everlasting. But when men began to multiply upon the earth they looked backward and saw, not the everlasting covenant of mercy, but the flood of judgment behind it, and they set themselves to the fruitless task of preventing a like calamity, thereby bringing upon themselves exactly what they dreaded—the Lord did scatter them abroad upon the face of the earth. Abram never looked back to Haren after he went to Canaan, but fixed the eye of his faith forward upon the promised blessing. When Jacob left Padenaram he set up a pillar in the mountain as a witness that he would not again turn backward from the promised land, for this former looking backward had begun in sin and ended in trouble. The children of Israel looked backward from the Red Sea and beheld the Egyptians marching after them; but soon turned their eyes in the other direction by the command "go forward." At Sinai they withdrew their eyes from the mount where God was, and looking backward saw the gods of Egypt, and desired one like unto them. Repeatedly during the forty years in the wilderness they looked backward and always to fall into the sin of desiring that which God had forbidden. All through the Old Testament we find God pointing forward and his people falling into sin by looking backward. After the resurrection of the Saviour, the disciples looked back without sin because they promptly obeyed the injunction to no more to seek the living among the dead. Henceforth they looked away from the place where Jesus had died, away from the tomb in which they had laid Him, forward to the risen Christ; and where Adam, Job, Abraham, Moses, David and the apostles saw the Saviour pass, still to be found ever before His people.

But some may say, are we not to look back over the Bible story. Yes, verily. All that men moved by the Holy Spirit have written is for our learning that the man of God may be complete and furnished completely. The Bible is not merely history—it is the Christian guide book. Those who have passed over this life's pathways have there marked down the true way we are to walk, and pointed out the pitfalls and bypaths to be avoided, where the soul may find rest, and where if it wander it will get wounding and sorrow. We do not, however, need a

guide book for that which is passed, but for that which is before. It is not for what is behind that we should study the Bible, but for that which is to come. Paul, looking forward, sings, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown." Aforetime we were foolish, disobedient, deceived; but since our Saviour hath saved us, we look forward in the assurance of eternal life. And as God's first assurance to man was a Saviour to whom he was to look forward to, so His last word of revelation is, that we should look forward to His coming again.

ULSTER PAT.

MORE YOUNG ELDERS.

A wide awake elder, now advanced in years, yet, young in spirit, and consecrated and progressive, remarked to us recently that one of the needs of our churches is more elders from the younger class of workers. He said that most of our elders were old men. We told him there was a great advantage in having men of the wisdom born of experience to direct the energies of the church. He admitted the force of this view. But he said that the age is reached by and by in all of us when conservatism displaced enterprise. Everybody however old or young, are prone to run work into ruts, but this is more true of those who carry the weight of many years. Let well enough alone becomes then a fixed policy. Changes are naturally resisted. Despite the proved advantages of new methods the old and tried are retained. It is not so easy, and now and then impossible for them, to handle innovations however more excellent they may be. Step by step they get out of touch with the buoyant and enterprising spirit of the younger element, which might be harnessed with all of its boldness of endeavor and progressiveness, with unspeakable advantage to the activity and growth of the church. There is force in the contention of this esteemed brother. It should furnish food for thought by sessions. They may well consider, we think, the wisdom of looking out other elders from among the younger men to be their colleagues. Then there will come to the church the dash and enterprise of the younger men guided by the soberer judgment of the older men on the session. If it is said, as it will be in some cases no doubt, we cannot put our hands on fit young men for the high office, it may well be recalled that this was a serious question when they were put in office.—Presbyterian Standard.

Westminster College, Cambridge, is establishing, "a record" for the proportion of its men who offer themselves for the Foreign Mission field. Already one-fourth of the Church's mission staff are students (and these perhaps the most scholarly) who have passed through its halls. Another has just been added to the number in the person of Mr. Albert Edward Davies, B.A., a cultured young Welshman, a student volunteer, who was ordained by the Presbytery of London North on Wednesday evening of last week. The ordination service was fittingly held within St. Columba's church, Cambridge, and under the moderatorship of the Rev. Professor Skinner, D.D. Fifteen ministers and elders, including five professors, the Moderator of Synod (Rev. J. G. Train), and the Acting Principal of the College (Rev. Dr. Munro Gibson), took part in the proceedings. There was a good congregation, including all the students and officials of Westminster College.

There are in attendance at Queen's, some 200 students from foreign lands and from distant points in Canada. As they remained in Kingston during the vacation, they arranged to dine together in genuine Christmas style on Christmas Day.

ERRONEOUS REASONING.

(By C. W. Weir)

It is a very common thing for a large number of people to argue that the great misfortunes which afflict certain ones are indications that they are expressing judgments upon them for some kind of evil-doing. The sufferers feel sure that such is the case if they know of some wrong deed which the afflicted one has done, and particularly so if they themselves have unpleasant feelings towards that person. In case that a very unfortunate person is not known to have done any injustice to another one, it is argued by some people that in some secret way he must have done a particularly sinful deed, and therefore that he is now being divinely punished for it. This is doubtless true in many instances, but it is wrong to make a general application of the argument. The very best class of people are frequently the subjects of dire misfortune. They meet with large financial losses. Much sickness, suffering and sorrow visit them. It would be altogether erroneous to argue that they were being punished for some secret sins which they had committed. We should remember that God often disciplines his people by trials and great sufferings for other purposes than chastisement. He uses such means to develop them in character, power and efficiency. By such processes He fits them for greater usefulness.

In many cases God makes some Christians examples to others in respect to patience in tribulation, joy amid sorrow, submissiveness to His will during the stress of anguish. You know that those philosophers who visited Job while he was terribly suffering, declared that he must surely have done some wicked deeds, else he would not be thus afflicted.

They were in great error. God was not punishing Job for any wrong doing. He was making of Job a marked example for all ages to come—an example of steadfast faith in God, of complete trust in Him, of loyalty to great principles, even during most extreme trials and sorrows, losses and pains. The premises which those men laid down were decidedly wrong, and this is why their reasoning was so faulty. Let us avoid making the same mistake.

The United Presbyterian vigorously scores President Roosevelt for his action in having the motto, "In God We Trust," stuck on the new silver coinage which is now being made under an act of congress. Our contemporary says: "This motto was the expression of the nation's trust in God in a most trying and critical period of its history, when our sons and brothers were dying in the trenches of the south and the skies hung darkly over us; when hearts were trembling with fear, and homes were being desolated. It was then that the nation fell on its knees before God and plead with him for victory and placed that reverent motto on the nation's coin. Wherever our specie circulated it bore to friend and foe alike the faith of a mighty people that, while they were pouring out their heart's blood in the cause of civil liberty, they were also trusting in the God of battles to give them the victory. That motto has remained from that day to this as an expression of a genuine trust in God." After ridiculing the President's defence of his action that paper says, "it would justify the striking of temperance laws and Sabbath laws from the statute books of every state from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Because a good law is treated with disrespect by law breakers is no argument for its repeal. The principle advanced would justify the abrogation of the ten commandments."