

weaken and unfit men for stern, hard work. It is said sometimes that the reins are drawn too tight. But no one who had stood by as many death-beds as he had seen would say that the reins could be drawn too tight.—*Standard of the Cross.*

### A FAREWELL CHARGE.

BY REV. JOSEPH ELLIOTT.

In immediate connection with the charge we are about to consider, Moses said unto all Israel, "I am 120 years old this day; I can no more go out and come in; also the Lord hath said unto me, thou shalt not go over this Jordan."

On the anniversary of his birthday, in the land of Moab near to the river Jordan, in the vicinity of Mount Nebo where he was about to die—locking back to an earthly pilgrimage of 120 years, upward to the eternal God "as seeing Him who is invisible," and onward to life everlasting, he addressed to the people this farewell charge "choose life." (Deut xxx. 19.)

The opinion has been advanced by some that the doctrine of a future life is not taught in the Pentateuch. But surely, without referring to any other parts of the writings of Moses, that opinion is sufficiently opposed by his farewell charge—which clearly proves that he believed in a higher life than merely natural life on earth, a life to be perpetuated beyond this state of existence. When he said "Choose life," he could not possibly mean natural life on earth. That life they had, previous to any possibility of choice of their own. Or, can we suppose that when he said "choose life," he was calling on them to choose whether they would go up with him to Mount Nebo and die, or remain yet longer on earth? And, assured as they all were that man is mortal, we cannot suppose that he called on them to choose whether they would continue to live without tasting of death.

The life he called on the people to choose was the life he himself had chosen long before the 40 years' journey in the wilderness.

When he was a young man, in the palace of Pharaoh, surrounded by the splendors of the Egyptian court, and a recognized member—by adoption—of the Royal family; then it was that "by faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of reward."

When Moses said "choose life," he evidently felt that man must be of a co-operative spirit if he would be saved; that it is necessary to choose life if we would have it. What the poet Cowper wrote respecting the cross of Christ, may be said of the farewell charge of Moses, "No mockery meets you, no deception there," but with equal appropriateness it may be added, *no thralldom meets you, no compulsion there.* All the heavenly host were originally placed—holy and happy—in a sphere of moral freedom; but, part of their number abusing that freedom, "kept not their first estate." Our first parents whom God created in His own image—pure and happy—occupied in Eden a sphere of moral freedom "sufficient to have stood, though free to fall;" and, from the very dawn of the revelation of the purposes of Divine mercy, the ways of the Lord have fully recognized the freedom of the human soul. Led by the Spirit, Moses said "choose life;" Joshua said, "choose ye this day whom ye will serve;" Paul said, "we beseech you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." The "Eternal Godhead" ever recognizes the free agency of man. The Father says, "Why will ye die?" The Son says, "ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." The Spirit says, "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." It is not more true that the saved are "saved by grace," than that God our Saviour makes them "willing in the day of His power." True conversion involves a change of thought, feeling and choice. Whilst "salvation belongeth to the Lord," if we would have it we must "accept the reconciliation"—must "choose life." Not so, as to death, "the second death." A

person in a boat under the influence of the current above Niagara Falls would need to make prompt and vigorous efforts if he would escape, but, remaining unthoughtful as to his perilous position would, as certainly as if he had chosen it, meet a sudden death. So a soul, not making in any one way a decided choice, would move to ruin just as certainly as a neglected vessel out at sea would sooner or later strike against rocks, run into quicksands, be swallowed up of the mighty deep, or be dashed against some unfriendly shore.

The farewell charge of Moses was enforced by the consideration that their treatment of it would affect *not themselves only.* "Choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." As surely as "the attraction of gravitation" is a law of all-pervasive influence throughout the material universe, so certain is it that no planet or star could run out of its right orbit without seriously affecting other worlds of matter; and, as surely as "no man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself," so certain is it that human character in its progress on earth spreads an influence around it for good or for evil; that "one sinner destroyeth much good," and that a mighty influence for good may be exerted by those who cherish the spirit of Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Over the farewell charge of Moses is uplifted the great doctrine of man's accountability to God. "I call heaven and earth to record that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life." In that mode of dealing with the minds of the people there was true benevolence. Never man spake with such benevolence and compassion as the great Teacher—the Lord from heaven. His faithfulness to souls was as great as his compassion was strong and tender; and his very compassion for souls often prompted him to the utterance of language and the expression of sentiments which, in the first stage of their influence, were calculated not so much to cheer the spirit as to awaken the conscience and to arouse the minds of the persons addressed. True, He delighted to speak of the love of the Father, and to invite sinners to Himself; but he spake also of the accountability of man, proclaiming *e.g.* to Chorazin and Bethsaida. "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you." The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by His actions are *weighed*," having regarded not only to the motives from which they may spring, but to the circumstances favourable or unfavourable, under which they are performed. "Life and immortality," dimly recognized in the days of Moses as the sun behind thick clouds, "is brought to light by the gospel," and "how shall we escape" if amid the light of gospel day, we neglect the great charge "choose life?" For such a choice the way is grandly and graciously clear. The encouragement to choose life is great beyond expression. John iii. 16; x. 10; Rom. vi. 23. Regarding place of abode, occupation in which to engage, and many other matters, there is often much difficulty felt before arriving at any satisfactory conclusion. But, in regard to the charge "choose life," there is no reasonable occasion for hesitation or faltering or delay. It is a matter of "life or death, blessing or cursing." "On reason build resolve—that pillar of true majesty in man—" and "choose life."

To choose life is to choose Christ, 1 John v. 12. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life," John vi. 68. "Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

No folly is greater than that of impatience. Time passes swiftly, and even while we lament, it is hurrying us on towards an end from which we will shrink, yet shrink in vain.

The strongest argument for the truth of Christianity is the true Christian, the man filled with the spirit of Christ. The best proof of Christ's resurrection is a living Church; walking in new life, and drawing life from Him who has overcome death.—*Ch. istlieb.*

JOHN BROWN, Jr., son of Ossawatomi Brown, publishes a letter in which he declares his intention of volunteering his services to aid the suffering coloured refugees of the South. He states that in his opinion the time has come for another grand rescue of the coloured race, and though he is fifty-eight years old, he is ready to devote his remaining energies to the cause which was so dear to his father.

### THE CHURCH SCOLD.

The apple-tree has its inchworm, and the ox its gadfly; husbands sometimes have their curtain lectures; Murry had his deacon; so almost every church has its scold. There is the church debt, the church music, and the church croaker, these three, and the greatest of the three is the church croaker.

A pious scold in the church is a dispensation of mercy, to keep the brotherhood from worldly vanity and proud-flesh, and to prevent Christians from having their good things in this life. God permits this grumbling these days of fine churches and eloquent ministers and excellent music, that the attention of the saints may be recalled to their own faults and infirmities, that they may take their turn with the elder prophets, at sackcloth and ashes.

The church is always painfully aware that not all its interests are managed in the best way, that not all its departments of work and service are complete, notwithstanding it has tried to do its best. Conscious that defects inhere in all human endeavour, it hopes that there will be a little blindness toward some errors and mistakes, that time will be given to mend that which is amiss, and a general charity exercised. But the chronic scold, like a hungry fly, is sure always to dive for the sore spot, and stick. Point out other things to him, that are hopeful and inviting, and he is silent and soon manages to get round to the weak point, and put in his complaint. It is impossible to get this kind of a buzzard far away from the carcass, although it has been put aside and buried.

The grumbler in the church is not the person to be put off or silenced. No short-coming will be let pass unnoticed. He has a high and holy mission, self-constituted, by the laying on of hands upon all his imperfect brethren. He cares little for the truth. It is error that it gratifies him to get hold of. A conscience has he that never sleeps nor slumbers. It is a wasp's nest in the path of evil doers. He is set on high for the defense of the jots and tittles. On all the questions that belong to the mint and anise and cummin of the church, he is bound to lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet. Never mind the camel; he will see that the gnat is strained out of all church affairs.

If you ever wish to know what is going wrong in the church, go to the church complainer. He will show you how far off the millennium is, without telling half the bad things he knows.

You can get all the faults and frailties of the members, and learn who is remiss in duty, and who does too much, what feet miss the path, and what faces carry crock. He will call attention to each screw loose, and point out every fly-speck on the chariot wheels. He has the failings of every letter in the alphabet down through the whole catalogue, at his tongue's end, and can intone them with great feeling and solemnity, as he makes confession for them. In prayer, he makes confession that he and all men are miserable sinners, and goes out and does the best he can through the week to prove it. The children that come into the fold are too young to understand the steps they are taking; the adults have too little conviction of sin. The Sabbath school spoils home instruction. The young people are made too much of, and the singing is not like what Noah had in the ark. The benevolence of the church fails to go to his pet object, and the wrong men are promoted to office. There is a fable of a pig who visited a palace. He went into the grounds, and snuffed through the scullery, an back yard and stables, putting his nose in the slop pails, turning over barrels of refuse, and keeping his eyes on the ground rooting up whatever waste matter he came upon, and finally went out disgusted. He said he had heard there were pearls and gold in that palace, and beautiful paintings and statuary, and richly furnished apartments, but he had been all through, and stuck his nose into everything, and found nothing like that whatever. He had seen more offal and garbage there than a little, and no rubies or diamonds and magnificent rooms.

Most unfortunate is it, when the church scold is the minister. Many things may annoy and tempt him; the salary may drag behind unpaid; the prayer meeting may be thin and cold; certain evils may go through the church like a contagion, members failing to give their share, and do their part in the common work. But a complaining, scolding manner corrects none of these abuses, and is a sore evil. Men will not be driven to duty. They cannot be growled and snarled in a service. A sour, fault-finding way leads none into the kingdom of heaven. Salvation cannot be forced on men. The Holy Spirit does not abide with a murmuring ministry. The love of Christ does not stay where there is peevishness and rasping of the sensibilities. There is no good done this way. A church that is wrong cannot be scolded into the right. When a minister lectures his people harshly, the ones who deserve it are never there to hear it. The faithful ones, who do not need it, are hurt by it. Scolding in the conduct of the church interest, is always a cold shoulder thrust into the glad and glorious gospel feast, only aggravating the evils. Many a minister has lost his influence and place by it. It may as well be understood that if one cannot get a by other means, he certainly cannot by this. It ought to be agreed all round in the church, by pastor and people, "No grumbling and complaining done here." When any matters get cross-grained, let them be kindly met to the spirit of "sweetness and light." What this will not do in setting things to rights, will not be easily righted.—*Advance*

A LITTLE girl of nine years arrested last week for picking pockets in a Roman Catholic church, revealed the fact that she and other little girls had been trained for thieving by another little girl of fourteen.