

A CHEAP LOYALTY.

By C. H. Wetherbe.

The cheapest kind of loyalty is that which consists in mere words. The subject of it speaks in favor of a person or institution, and one might suppose, in hearing the speaker, that his loyalty was of a very high order; but when one obtains a fuller knowledge of the man he discovers that his acts do not correspond at all with his words. There are members of churches who are tremendously orthodox in their abstract beliefs, and although they are well able to give much money for the support of their church and missions, yet they slowly dole out a mere pittance for the church, and nothing for missions.

Rev. Dr. J. R. Gambrell, of Texas, says: "I have known a number of brethren to meet and talk in a high and mighty way about loyalty to Christ, when not one of them had ever developed a church in missions. I have a picture of one man with a great voice and an unblushing face, who, in the presence of a great Baptist assembly, spoke unctuously of his great, rich, black land church, 'missionary to the core,' when the records showed that his church had given but \$6.40 to missions. And yet that man was so devoid of humor that he could not see any fun in what he was doing."

This is a fair illustration of very cheap loyalty, and there is a great deal of it spread around in the most of churches, and not at all thin. If foreign missions had to depend upon that kind of loyalty for their maintenance they could not maintain anything, not even a dog. Indeed, they could never have gotten established, nor even well started. It ill becomes any professed Christian to talk fervently in favor of missions, while at the same time he gives but very little, if anything, to financially sustain them. He is far more inconsistent than is the professed Christian who says that he does not believe in missions, and therefore does not give a cent for their support. And how absurd it is for one to declare great loyalty in behalf of his church, yet gives only a hundredth part of what he is able to give for its services. Such a person has no true love for Christ, else he would have pleasure in giving, according to his ability, to help along Christ's great Kingdom.

DEFEATING DISHONOR.

It is hard to realize that we have in us the very characteristics which, in Peter and Judas, denied and betrayed Jesus Christ. But every lowering of our standard, every failure to choose the best that we know, is evidence of this. When we debated that question, yesterday, which we knew all the time was not debatable, we turned our backs on our Saviour.

"The brave man chooses, while the coward stands aside
Doubting in his abject spirit, till his Lord is crucified."

And we need never do so again. The crucified Lord is risen, to give us the strength that shall put our betrayals and denials to rout. But his strength is ours only when we admit that we need it.

A new year—that is what we seek. The old year has been a disappointment. We are glad to turn from the old year. But this is to be a new year—new in its victories, new in its accomplishments, new in its obedience, new in its holiness, new in its surrender to our Guide and Master, Jesus Christ. His presence makes all things new.

The gospel is not a problem, but a solution; not a proposition, but a demonstration.

INDOLENCE CRAVING AUTHORITY

"It is very pleasant in some minds to be told exactly what to do—to have every question resolved, so that there may be no trouble in deciding; and perhaps the power which Popery gets over some minds is as much to be attributed to that natural indolence or timidity which shrinks from deciding—or, rather, is glad to be spared the exercise of conscience in deciding—certain questions as before God, as to the spiritual dominion which is claimed by the priest. The priest pleads the authority of the church, and the people love to have it so, because by the authority of the church they are spared exercise of conscience in judging of what is right and what is wrong, and so they come to look upon themselves as not responsible for the truth of what they believe. Such texts as 'Search the Scriptures,' 'Take heed what ye hear,' 'How read ye?' 'Prove all things, hold fast that which is good,' are altogether set aside; and when to this is added the dogma of infallibility, the conscience is left perfectly easy.

"But we, as Protestants, must remember that if we claim and maintain the right of private judgment, we must accept the responsibility connected with it. Indeed, the habit of having things decided for us is neither edifying nor safe. Its tendency is, first, to make an arm of flesh, and then to lean upon it; whereas our only foundation must be God—our only guide, the Lord, in His Word by His Holy Spirit; and people should be striving to live in intercourse and communion with the Lord; for this, if you are so striving, will keep in diligent exercise the habit of studying the Word of God to know what the will of the Lord is. This will stimulate to prayer for the teaching of the Holy Spirit on the Word, as well as for communications of light and knowledge from a throne of grace. This will help to maintain the habit of steady obedience to the Word of God, for 'If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.' This will also maintain communion with God, for 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.' This will secure holiness, for 'If we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' And, though last not least, this will maintain peace; for 'If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.'"

THREE SONGS.

(By Edward Rowland Sill.)

Sing me, thou Singer, a song of gold!
Said a careworn man to me:
So I sang of the golden summer days,
And the sad, sweet autumn's yellow haze,
Till his heart grew soft, and his mellow gaze
Was a kindly sight to see.

Sing me, dear Singer, a song of love!
A fair girl asked of me:
Then I sang of a love that clasps the Race,
Gives all, asks naught—till her kindled face
Was radiant with the starry grace
Of blessed Charity.

Sing me, O Singer, a song of life!
Cried an eager youth to me:
And I sang of the life without alloy,
Beyond our years, till the heart of the boy
Caught the golden beauty, and love, and joy
Of the great Eternity.

The man of one victory may be an accident or he may be a genius, but a series of victories admits of but one judgment.

THE DUTY OF MAKING GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

It is not an open question as to whether we will form new resolutions. We are bound to do that. We are doing it all the time. Each time we find that a certain course of action results unfavorably we say: "Well, I will not do that again." When pleasure and profit follow some other course, we say, "That ended well. That is the way to act next time." Resolutions like these we are making every day. To make them earnestly and about the deepest and most vital things is the proper duty of each true soul at the beginning of a new year.

We ought especially to purpose that the new year shall be better than the past. "If I cease to become better," Cromwell is said to have written in his Bible, "I shall cease to be good." We are meant to advance always upon our past. All that we gain each year is meant to be, not a level on which we will stop, but a new plane from which we will ascend.

It is a good thing each year to pick out particular directions in which we ought to make gain during the year. Benjamin Franklin once devised a scheme for self-improvement which involved a sort of book-keeping in character. Accounts were to be kept with different virtues and one by one they were to be taken up and developed. It was a fine device, but it is not in that way that character can be manufactured. Nevertheless, it is a good thing to start out for something and to work out concrete tasks. What are our weaknesses? What requirements of our work are we meeting least effectively?

Purposes are better and more likely to be fulfilled if they are turned into promises. A promise to pay is better than a mere purpose to discharge a debt. Some of our purposes should be made promises to men, and all of them that are worthy should be made as promises to God. "This—the better control of my temper, more loving consideration of others, more energy in work, less fear of man—this, which is my duty, O God, I will do in thy strength." There is more body and hope in a resolution like this than in a mere undefined, undeclared purpose of the heart.

The noblest of all purposes is to serve God wholly. That ought to be, whatever the cost, the one great resolution. God should be first in the new year. He will be first with all his true servants, whatever the sacrifice. "While she has devoted her whole affection and life to me," said Bishop William Taylor of his wife, when he was made Bishop of Africa in 1884, "It has been with the distinct understanding that the claims of God on me as an ambassador for Christ are supreme, and that she should never hinder but help me to fulfill them. In our happy union of forty-nine years I have never failed to fulfill an appointment for preaching or other ministerial duty on her account. My foreign work has cost us a separation more distressing to mind and heart of both of us than the pains of many deaths, with occasional meetings and partings which have tended to increase the agony. Yet to this day I have never heard her object to my going or staying, or murmur on account of my absence."

Are we purposing to serve God alone this new year?

What definite advance step in character and service do we propose?

If a man be gracious to strangers, it shows that he is a citizen of the world, and his heart is no island, cut off from other islands, but a continent that joins them.—Bacon.

*Y. P. S. Topic for Sunday, Jan. 3, 1909. The duty of making good resolutions. Acts 11; 19:24; Josh 24: 14-25.