

score and ten, and spoke of the pastor of his youth with the most reverend love. The chief thing that he remembered was that McCheyne, a few days before his death, met him in the street, and laying his hand on his shoulder, said to him kindly, "Jamie, I hope that all is well with your soul. How is your sick sister? I am coming to see her again shortly." That sentence or two had stuck to the old Christian for nearly half a century! McCheyne's hand was on the old man's shoulder yet. This little incident gave me a fresh insight into the secret of McCheyne's pastoral fidelity and personal power. I commend that incident to young ministers who underrate the work of a faithful pastor who keeps in touch with every member of his flock.

It is fifty-nine years since McCheyne was borne to his grave in Dundee. His fatal sickness was brought on by visiting the victims of a prevailing epidemic. During the wanderings of his mind, in the delirium of the fever, he kept repeating, "O God! my people, my dear people! this whole place?" It was the ruling passion for souls—still strong in death. I am one of many hundreds of ministers who owe a debt of immeasurable gratitude to Robert Murray McCheyne, and I hope to thank him in heaven for many things. Among other things I thank him for once exclaiming "Go on, dear brother, only an inch of time remains, and then eternal ages roll on forever—only an inch on which we can stand and preach the way of salvation to perishing souls!" That is his message to every minister of Jesus Christ who reads this article.—Sel.

The Waldensian Church in Italy.

BY REV. BRADLEY GILMAN.

Every student of Christian history has read about the preaching of Peter Waldo, the well-to-do merchant of Lyons, who was led, in 1180, by the sudden death of a friend into the vivid life of a personal religious experience; and all the world is familiar with the privations and perils of the struggling churches in the south of France and the north of Italy, as they tried to maintain their corporate existence, for five centuries, against the authority of Rome, under most cruel and continuous persecution. About thirty distinct persecutions the Waldensian writers name as the glorious record of this dauntless little church; and its history abounds in stories of heroism, as the "pastors" and their flocks maintained, against terrible odds, their independence of Roman authority. Who has not read about the woman who hid her Bible in the loaf of bread which she was baking when the search-party came to her house? And, when nearly all the Bibles of that region had been seized and burned by papal emissaries, bands of young people were formed whose members learned, memorized, chapters and entire books of the blessed volume, and, at regular intervals, repeated them to eager ears and hungry hearts. It was during one of these savage persecutions of the Waldenses that Oliver Cromwell collected over £30,000 for their relief, and his private secretary, John Milton, wrote the famous sonnet, beginning,—

"Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold."

The motto of the titled family which held the valley of Luserna, in the Cottian Alps,—one of the then Waldensian valleys,—was "Lux in tenebris lucet;" and the armorial bearings were a star on a dark background. The Waldensian church or chapel in Italy has on its walls or windows or pulpit a picture of a lighted candle, surrounded by seven stars in a black sky; and underneath is printed, "Lux lucet in tenebris." Often the lighted candle is represented as standing on an open Bible; and this fitly expresses the fundamental position of the devout but not critical Waldensian Church, which seeks warrant for the entire conduct of human life in the holy Scriptures.

The Waldensian Church of to-day is Presbyterian in its form of government, and its chapels are to be found in nearly all the cities and larger towns of Italy and Sicily; its strong hold is in the valleys of Upper Italy, where the ground is saturated with the blood of its heroic dead. Its list of communicants includes about seven thousand names; it has fifty self-supporting churches, and over a hundred preaching stations which need outside aid. It maintains day schools, and imparts instruction to three thousand pupils; also it shows that it has felt the ethical or humane spirit of our time—in distinction from the strictly theological—by its maintenance of three hospitals.

I attended Sunday services of worship nine times in Waldensian chapels at Naples, Rome and Florence. As might be expected of a church which strongly protests against ecclesiastical and liturgical excesses, it restricts itself to simple exercises of devotion, makes much of the sermon by the "pastor" and the singing by the congregation. These congregations are small in lower Italy, but their public worship is most devout and earnest, and their "pastors" five of whom I have heard seemed sincerely religious men. The minister in the Waldensian church at Rome, "Pastor Giovanni Rostagno," is one of the best preachers I have ever heard; he has vital, religious, and moral truth to impart and knows how to impart it. He is a far stronger preacher than many much heralded monks and friars to whom I have listened. These speakers often owe much of their impressiveness to the grand architectural and ecclesiastical setting in which they are placed.

The order of Sunday services in these Waldensian churches is, first, a formal exhortation to devotion, recited by the pastor; next singing by the congregation; reading from the Bible follows; again the congregation sings; after this comes an extempore prayer, during which most of the congregation stand; then is preached the sermon, about a half hour in length; again hymn singing by the congregation, followed by a brief prayer and the benediction.

Entering these churches for several Sundays, but always as a stranger, I asked myself what it was which most attracted me, and I could specify three things: first, the devout and earnest spirit of the leader; second, the sincere character of the congregation; third, the hearty hymn singing of the congregation, sometimes led by a chorus choir, in other cases led by an organ only, and in some cases led solely by a precentor, unsupported by any musical instrument. The music sung was of good quality, and the people—with that unconsciousness of self which is easier for Italians than for New Englanders—sang heartily and helpfully. Thus the secret prayer which resides in "group life" was evoked, and individual souls were comforted and strengthened.

The Waldensian church in Italy seems, to the outside observer, to have preserved that element of religious fervor which is so difficult of preservation in any protesting body. Planted, as it is, in the land which has been sapped by the hungry roots of the "Green Bay Tree" of the papacy, the Waldensian church stands firm in its historic protest against arrogant ecclesiastism and in its plea for individual right of appeal to the holy Bible. Yet it also has remembered how to worship, how to open its heart like a child to the influence of God's spirit. Nevertheless, I fear that it has no great future of numerical ascendancy; it is a feeble religious current amid the great secular tides which are sweeping away from the Vatican the masses of the indignant, liberty-loving Italian people. The members of that church with whom I talked spoke solemnly, though not enthusiastically, of the "great work" which lay before them. But I suspect that the general "Statute of Emancipation," which was announced in 1848 by King Charles Albert, was, conversely, a subdued but pervasive death-knell to the Waldensian churches, for it marked the end of their persecutions and martyrdoms; and in no religious body has the old maxim held truer than in the church of Peter Waldo and Joshua Janavel, and Henry Arnaud,—that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church. This danger of an unheroic future of numerical and vital declension was probably foreseen by the remarkable Englishman, John Charles Beckwith, whose name is closely associated with the Waldensian church of the last half-century. At the end of his life, in 1862, after thirty years of work for the Waldensian cause, he enjoined, as his dying counsel, that the church keep up its missionary activity. "The Waldensian church must be a missionary church or it will be nothing," he said repeatedly. And his words to-day are often upon the lips of devoted Waldensians.—Christian Register.

Timely Prayers.

There is encouragement to pray. There is command to pray. Prayer enters into the Christian life as an essential element. It springs out of our relation to God as dependent on him, and also as allied to him in our nature. We are more than supplicants for favors, we are in fellowship with God; there is such a relation to him, we are in such measure partakers of his nature that we may hold fellowship with him, and the full measure of our development requires such fellowship. Prayer for what we need, the expression of the desires of the heart, grows out of this relation, and takes character from it. While it expresses our desire and our need as we feel it, it has regard to his will. Its spirit is, "Thy will be done."

Hence there is a timeliness in prayer which should always be regarded, if we would receive the answer. In detail we do not know the will of God, but we know certain bounds and limitations. There are the general laws of nature which are God's fixed methods of working. There are measures and limitations to his grace which are made known to us. The sphere of prayer is within these limits. "Ask what ye will" is the general privilege and command, but this is bounded by the limitations of our nature, by the fixed laws of God's providence and by the sphere of grace in Christ. The word of the Lord to us is, "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain, it is not given at any other time, and it is not proper for us to ask it another season of the year. It is our privilege to ask for it in its season; that it be not withheld, but given in a suitable abundance at the time when it may be given. So praying we may look for an answer. We may give this a wide application. It is proper to pray for grace and the blessings we need in advanced years, but it is not proper to pray that the movement of time be suspended and we cease to become older. We may pray for life, but a prayer that we never die will fail. We may not neglect our duty and then pray for the results of duty performed. There is a season in which the sower should go forth to sow; if he fails to do this, he may not murmur if there is no answer to his prayer for a harvest. If one folds his hands in easy indifference to the work of the kingdom of God, he should not afterward complain that

the kingdom of God is not advancing in the world. There are times in which the providence of God brings important issues before us; such times are seasons for prayer. When we need rain, we should pray for it; when it comes we should pray for wisdom to use the divine waters aright according to the law of the life giving grace of God.

There is the earlier rain; the first manifestations of the Spirit of God; the quickening grace in the beginning of the new life; the first unfolding of the new forces in the soul. As time advances, there are other needs of the soul. There is the need of a maturing life; of that wisdom, grace and strength required in advancing years, deeper experience more responsible duties, and a larger and more complete enjoyment of the grace of Christ and the exhibition of his life within us. For that we should pray. There is, thus, progress in prayer, a widening of the field of supplication and fellowship, a deepening of the desires of the soul, and an ever-growing confidence in and reliance upon, the promises of God, and a wiser use of the grace given. We should ever go on unto perfection; pressing on to that which is before, grasping for the greater things, seeking for the "fulness of God." In the season of the latter rain in the time of maturing character we may ask for the outpouring of the Spirit promised for that time.

It will add very much to our comfort in prayer if we have regard to the bounds which God has marked for us, the bounds beyond which we may not go with the expectation of an answer, and up to which we should go in the confidence that a gracious answer will be given, either in the specific blessing sought, or in that form and measure of good which He who loves us is ever ready to give to those who live in fellowship with him.—United Presbyterian.

"Like as a Father."

BY WILLIAM S. C. WEBSTER, D. D.

Who was it that first of mortal men, as far as least as we know, spoke out this sublime thought and led men to call God, Father? "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

This is not father in any vague metaphorical way as when Jubal is called "the father of all such as handle the harp and organ." No, it is a picture of home life; a father who loves his children, yearning over them, pitying them in their ignorance and error, weeping over them in their sickness and sufferings "refusing to be comforted," when they are not. Some one, a man of like passions with us, a brother of our own souls was prompted by the Spirit of God to look out from the scenes of homelike and say, As it is in earth, so it is in heaven, like as a father he pitieth. So Jehovah pitieth.

Think of the severe discipline through which he must have passed whose sorrows taught him this song. Was it as a father or as a son that he spoke? Was it an old man, like Jacob, whose life was bound up with the lad's life? Perhaps it was one, who like Abraham, had seen his son, his only son, whom he loved, caught by some awful catastrophe and bound hand and foot. It may have been one whose son had long been in the far country, wasting his substance in riotous living; but now the prodigal has come home again. Or was it one who had the distressing experience of David and who might have said, "I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me." May it not have been David himself, as the title to the Psalm asserts? He stands by the wayside grave of the son for whom he would willingly have died and cries, "God be pitiful!"

But it may well have been that he who speaks to us in these last days by the Son, spoke in this Hebrew psalm also by a son, rather than by a father. Read the verse from that standpoint. A father's unwearied love has broken down the hard hearted son, Absalom, just suppose it, lives; loyal, penitent, obedient; his father's pitying love has saved him. Here is the confession of faith of one who has been over the dark ground sketched in the parable of the prodigal son. Like as a father pitieth his children—I did not understand it while I was a child, much in the home life, I was too dull even to notice, but now I have become a man and am acquainted with "the majestic pains" which refined the lives of my father and of my mother, now I look up and say from what I know of their love and of their compassion "so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him."

We need not know who wrote it, we rejoice that it is written. May the Spirit, who moved some holy man thus to write, make our home-lives in their graciousness, in their patience, in their helpfulness true emblems of the life which is lived in our heavenly Father's house.

"If thou canst get but thither,
There grows the flower of peace,
The rose that cannot wither,
The fortress and thy ease."

Christian Intelligencer.

We can only give what we have. Happiness, grief, gayety, sadness, are by nature contagious. Bring your health and your strength to the weak and sickly, and so you will be of use to them. Give them not your weakness, but your energy—so you will revive and lift them up. Life alone can rekindle life.—Amiel.