

discover that during twelve months, we have made no progress in the Divine life?

Do you, my reader, ever make this periodical investigation into the state of your soul's account with Heaven? If you do not, be concerned, I beseech you, lest you become bankrupt before God! When the merchant has an inward consciousness that he is going back in the world—that it is all loss and no profit in his business—he shrinks from an investigation of his ledger, lest it should too certainly reveal to him the dreaded truth!

Better to pause in time, and ponder, and investigate, and place thyself, my brother, under Divine guidance, lest, when it is too late, a balance be found struck against thee in the book of God's remembrance. At this year's end let there be in every home and in every conscience a careful reckoning, so as to determine, if possible, what is the result—what the ingathering which arises from the providences and privileges of the past.

THIRD. The ingathering at the year's end implies fruitful LABOUR. The ingathering of harvest implies the scattering of seed-time. Had the Jew of old merely gazed in listless admiration on the setting sun and the falling shower without tilling the soil or sowing the precious seed, would it not have been a fool's expectation for him to look for the ingathering at the year's end? So it is in the spiritual world. There must be no idle recumbency on the goodness of God. We must sow if we would reap. There must be toil, and struggle, and sacrifice, with earnest prayer and humble dependence on the God of all grace, if we would have the spiritual increase: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

What ground have you, my reader, to look for such an ingathering? What seed have you been sowing? What tilling of the soil of the heart—what pruning of the excrescences of folly and sin—what works of faith and labours of love—have engaged your attention during the year? *There is the good seed of the Word*, which has been liberally scattered, as God has enabled His servants. Some of this has fallen by the wayside, and some on stony ground. How much on good ground? Can the increase be estimated at thirty, or sixty, or a hundred fold? What harvest of souls appears as the fruit of your labours or mine—as the fruit of all the evangelistic labours of the Presbyterian Church, in its ministry and its membership, during the twelve months now so near a close?

There is the good seed of religious training among the young. This seed is now scattered more profusely than half a century ago. The virgin soil is cultivated with more assiduity and skill. "Train up a child in the way in which he should go," is an injunction now more generally attended to than it was a generation since. The Christian husbandman is now sowing beside all waters, and surely some will prosper, either this or that.

There is the seed of Christian beneficence. "Do good to all men, as ye have opportunity," is part of the law of Christ; and, in obeying this law, we are scattering seed which will one day yield an abundant ingathering.

Have you been sowing any of this good seed, my Christian brother? If so, be assured God will give the increase. We may not see it all at once, but we have laboured, and it shall not be in vain. Nothing done for Christ is lost. Not the widow's mite, not the Bible lesson, not the simple fervent prayer, not the word in season to the aged or the young, shall fail of some good result. We see it not now perhaps, but let us wait for the appointed weeks of harvest, and cry for the former and latter rain. Souls will be saved, and set as priceless gems in the Redeemer's diadem, and you and I may yet see in some of these trophies the fruit of our own

labours. O what a glorious ingathering shall there be when all the ransomed of the Lord shall meet and mingle at the world's harvest-home! Meanwhile we must labour and pray for the smaller local ingathering at the year's end, as the prelude and earnest of that universal ingathering when God shall bring His sons from afar and His daughters from the ends of the earth.

FOURTH. A good ingathering is ground for GRATITUDE AND JOY. There was not only an ingathering but a feast at the year's end. It was a season of much comfort and satisfaction. The barns were filled with plenty, and the presses burst forth with new wine.—We notice three features of these Jewish feasts suggestive of instruction to us.

Joy, exuberant and enthusiastic, was a prominent feature in the demonstration. "Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast," was the Divine injunction, and most earnestly was it obeyed. It lasted for seven days, and the last day was the greatest. On this day the white-robed priest poured water on the altar, and the people shouted for joy. So intense was the festive gladness that it has been said, "He who never saw the rejoicing of the drawing of water on the last day of the feast never saw rejoicing at all."

And shall not we, too, rejoice before God with all the joy of harvest, if at the close of another year we have some tokens from God Himself that He has greatly blessed our own souls, and established the work of our hands?

Favour-seeking from the rulers of the land was another accompaniment of the Feast of Ingathering. The subject was free to ask some special boon from the sovereign, as when Esther made her petition to the king, and it was granted, even to half the kingdom.

And why should not we imitate the spirit, if not the letter, of this ancient custom? Why not go at this year's end with some urgent and special petition to the King of kings? For thyself, my brother—or for thy household—or for thy minister—or for the Church of Christ—improve the present season—prefer thy special request, and thou shalt not be sent empty away.

Thank-offering to the Lord was another peculiarity of this festive season. All the Divine injunctions for the regulation of the Jewish solemnities were concluded with the words, "And they shall not appear before the Lord empty." "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God, which He hath given thee."

And what better demonstration can we give of our gratitude than to come into God's house, and bring an offering at our feast in the year's end! If there is amongst us any true gratitude for blessings, personal or public, to families or to churches during the year, let it be expressed by some special thank-offering to the Redeemer's cause. The claims of Christ are not less pressing or paramount now than were the claims of Israel's God under the old economy. The command is not less binding now, to "honour the Lord with our substance, and with the first-fruits of all our increase." The spirit of the command is greatly enlarged and liberalized. We are not now assessed, and tied down to particular offerings, or a particular percentage of income for religious purposes. But it is said, "Every man, as he is able, so let him give." More is required, and more, not less is expected of us than of the Jews, and shall we abuse our liberty by laying less upon God's altar? Shall we hold more than is meet, because the appeal is now made, not to the letter of the law but to a large, loving and cheerful heart? Stinted and stipulated contributions, of so much or so little each month, and just as much or as little as a neighbour may give, without respect to comparative abil-

ity, is one of the defects of our Christian benevolence. Stated and stereotyped giving, without reference to increase or decrease of means, has long been, and still is, one cause of much shortcoming in the charitable and religious contributions of God's people.

Let the dull level monotony of our usual routine be broken, and let the termination of this year and the coming dawn of another be signalized by some generous and free-hearted thank-offering to one of the charitable or religious institutions of the Church—to her mission, or to such an excellent scheme as that for the "support of ministers incapacitated for official duty by disease or otherwise." Thus will our Church strike her roots deeper than ever into our soil, secure the increased affection and confidence of many who have spent their best days in her service, draw down the blessing from Heaven, and mark by a noble act of Christian duty "the feast of the ingathering at the year's end."

THE SUPPORT OF THE MINISTRY.

We had proposed preparing an article on the support of the Ministry, which, as laymen writers in a lay journal, we could most fittingly and impartially do, when our attention was directed to the ensuing forcible article, which we extract from the "Presbyterian Magazine," Philadelphia, an able and valuable periodical. We had thought of suggesting the appointment of a Synodical Committee on Visitation, to proceed gradually through the friends of the Church; but the plan adopted in New Jersey, U. S., is perhaps a more practical one, though one or two elders and ministers might well be associated from another presbytery with that acting within its own bounds on such an occasion. We hope that at the next meeting of Synod some such plan will be adopted. Meanwhile we ask our readers to give the article in question a candid perusal.

VARIOUS Synods and other Judicatories of the Presbyterian Church have taken action lately on the support of the Christian ministry. The action of the Synod of New Jersey seems to us to be as effectual a way of promoting the object as any that we have seen:—

Resolved, That, in view of the inadequate support of many of the ministers within our bounds, this Synod enjoin it upon the Presbyteries to take order directing their sessions to inquire whether the ministers of their churches receive a sufficient temporal maintenance, and to report to this Synod at its next meeting what they have done, together with the result of their inquiries.

The efficiency of this action, in promoting the object in view, consists in these particulars:—

First. The authority of the higher Judicatory is brought to bear upon the question. The Presbyteries, whose organization is confined to a small district, often shrink from the full discharge of their duty in regard to the salaries of pastors within their bounds. The injunction of the Synod renders the investigation of the subject imperative. No true or false delicacy will be accepted in justification of its neglect.

Secondly. The Presbyteries are the proper bodies to urge upon the Churches the maintenance of the ministry. The Sessions are under their direct supervision, and can be used to great advantage in instituting inquiries of this sort. Although the temporal affairs of the Churches are under the care of the trustees