

dependence upon secular means and the use of organization. "Let all things," says Paul, "be done decently and in order." "Order is the sanity of the mind, the health of the body, the peace of the city, the security of the state"; and, we may add, "heaven's first law" for the conduct of the church. Ezra organized in careful detail the perilous and wearisome return journey over the unproductive desert. Had he not done so, he would have been responsible for the needless hardships and fatal mishaps that otherwise would have overtaken them on these lonely wastes. Nor should any missionary be sent to a heathen country, nor any preacher to outpost work in the homeland, without regular arrangements to make provision for his inevitable wants, and to save him from many a needless hour of worry or privation. Organization alone, like the body without the spirit, is dead, but, on the other hand, a handful of disciplined troops are a hundred-fold more effective than a mob.

*Ye are holy unto the Lord*, v. 28. Holiness, both as definite consecration and in its more ordinary signification of pious character, is an indispensable requisite in all who are engaged in the Lord's work, even if they be members of only some seemingly unimportant committee. As in the old Grecian games, the athletes anointed themselves with an unguent, that they might be quick, agile and nimble in their movements, so there is for the Christian an unction in holiness that gives his efforts a definiteness and a power for which no substitute can be found. The words of an acknowledgedly holy man are always heard with respect, however stammering his utterance may be; whereas the most eloquent periods of the polished orator are received only with incredulity, when they fall from lips notorious for falsehood and insincerity.

*Until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests*, v. 29. Ezra marked down what each carrier received at the start, and the amount

he handed in at the end of the journey was checked off by the high priest. The carrier had to watch carefully lest, through heed-

lessness or a temptation to dishonesty, or sheer laziness in carrying so heavy a burden, he should lose any of it. Nor ought we at any time to be less exact in the business work of the church. Surely the Lord's work should be a model to the world, of punctuality, exactness and scrupulosity in its conduct. Strictness in accounts is not only profitable to the work itself; it is a safeguard against all unjust and thoughtless suspicion in handling "the free-will offerings unto the Lord," that may arise from the utterances of irresponsible persons. And the principle should be applied to every department of life. Any appearance of dishonesty should be avoided, and above all things the evil itself. "Give me good measure: your master is not in," urged the customer with a sly wink. "My Master is always in." was the deserved rebuke from the honest employee.

*He delivered us from the hand of the enemy*, v. 31. Sometimes God's providence is quiet and unseen, and sometimes it surprises in startling fashion. A voice sounded in Augustine's ears in the critical struggle of his life.

Cargill was restrained by another such voice when on the brink of suicide in the misery of a sinful life. The covenanting Saunders, when surrounded by the implacable dragoons on a narrow hill, cried out, "Twine them about the hill, O Lord, and cast the lap of Thy cloak over us." Scarcely was the prayer uttered when a mist arose and concealed them from their enemy. But whether openly or unobserved, God is ever present to deliver His own from all their perils. Consecration, fasting, prayer, method, honesty, are like trumpets calling to our side the protecting hosts of heaven. Against these no enemy can fight. Shielded by them, no danger can prove fatal.

*And we came to Jerusalem*, v. 32. We need never be afraid to put God to the test. The foes that seek to hinder us may be a great multitude, and the obstacles like mountains; but if

we place ourselves and our affairs in His keeping He will bring us safely through. From the beginning of the journey, right on to the end, we may count on His protection and help.