

Trouble and Trust.

BY REV. W. W. DAWLEY.

And I said, this is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.—Ps. 77:10. Bitterness of life often banishes belief in God, and misery not infrequently ministers to mistrust. It was not when their enemies were fleeing before them, when food lay round about their habitation, when flinty rocks opened their mouths to send forth crystal streams to slake their thirst, that the Israelites in the wilderness proposed to turn back into Egypt, being distrustful of Jehovah's power to feed and clothe them; but it was when their foes pressed upon them, when hunger gnawed at their hearts, and the way became tedious, tiresome and long. Difficulties and doubt travelled together a long way in those days. A heroic soul with heart buoyed up with implicit confidence in the Son of God, and eyes fixed upon him walking on the waters, dared to step from the wave-tossed and wind-rocked fishing-smack into the distended jaws of the yawning billow, but soon he began to go down, and when the divine hand caught him the friendly voice did not say: "Wherefore didst thou sink?" but it did say: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" What occasioned that doubt that caused him to sink? The touch of the cold surges that assailed him. Contact with actual difficulties in his way disturbed Peter's serene trust in Jesus' ability to make him walk on the waters. The two disciples with distressed looks, voicing their unbelief on their way to Emmaus, were in gloom because things had not gone the way they had calculated they would. They "trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel," but they had been disappointed, and that disappointment had made them doubt their loved friend. When wading through the deep waters or climbing the rugged mountains of difficulty, we are most prone to question God. When buffeted with opposition, perplexed with insoluble problems, and harassed with inability to "make both ends meet," like the people of Malachi's day, we feel, if we dare not say it, "It is vain to serve God, and what profit is there in our religion anyway, for the ungodly around us seem to prosper even while we are plagued." It is when sick in body, disappointed in business, weighed down with cares, afflicted with sorrow or worn out with work, that we need to guard most carefully against unbelief, for then, as at no other time, will the evil one attempt to turn us from a conviction that all things are working for good. How did the questioner of God escape from his distrust? He was haunted at night by his troubles, and his anguish had stricken him dumb. He could neither sleep nor speak, but he could think. Yes, that was what turned night into day with him, for he could not stop thinking. Could he have silenced his "thinker" sweet slumber might have refreshed his wearied mind and body. At last he changes the object of his thoughts. Instead of brooding over these misfortunes, he says of himself "I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times" (vs. 5). He recalled the past only to learn that the things that tortured him were not new under the sun, but the vexations that disquieted him had many a time before pressed heavily upon others. Ah, it is a discovery of no slight worth to come to the consciousness that the fiery trials that make us hesitate in duty's path have been safely passed through by those before us! It is frequently a deliverance from the thralldom of the "blues" to awake to the fact "that there hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear," (1 Cor. 10:1, Rev. Ver.) Then, he also finds something in the reminiscences of the past to encourage him. He exclaims: "I call to remembrance my song in the night," (vs. 6). He is on the way out of mistrustful forebodings, when he begins to recall God's helpfulness in the days gone by, pondering over the encouragements and comforts experienced in former trials affords a mighty easement in present heaviness. So, reviewing the past years and by-gone experiences, he comes to two conclusions that change the whole tone of his song. The first conclusion is that this is his appointed time of trial. In his meditation upon things that have been and his examination of ancient days, he discovers that others have had their day of stress, and that probably this is his; that those before him have had their dilemmas that have tested them and that probably this is his testing period; that, if it is, he ought to trust to carry him through it the same God who has delivered others in their trying circumstances. When he receives to his heart the thought that this pinch in his life is due to the mysterious things that an all wise Providence allows to come for ultimate good, he is well-nigh through the "slough of despond" far up the precipitous and tortuous roadway to the restful summit of the faith-crowned mount. Trials are "more precious than gold" and "better than rubies," but most of us would prefer the gold and rubies, for we no more than our own children properly appreciate the inestimable value of the discipline that we gain through our distresses. It is as unprofitable for us to be without our ordeals as it is for our children to go unfutured and undisciplined. God seeks in his all round ordering of life to introduce into our life fabric enduring worth, strength and beauty; to re-invest

us with the very likeness to himself in which we are created, but which sin, Satan and selfishness have marred, obscured and distorted. It is because he discovers the possibility of this grand consummation that he permits burdens and tribulations that in our short-sightedness dishearten us, but which in his ampler knowledge and wider vision are designed to work out for us an eternal benediction. Not every metal that is excavated from the earth is thrown into the smelter, but only that in which the experienced eye discovers desirable minerals in quantities large enough to compensate for the working. It is the perceptible value in it that leads to the putting of it into the mill and die that shall mill it into coin. "Whom the Lord loves he disciplines," for the word "chasten" (in our version) means "discipline" (Heb 12:6). If he is putting us under the yoke that seems galling, and into circumstances that almost crush us, it is because his infinite foresight has detected in us something of great worth that he would develop and beautify by those very conditions in which he places us. The summer rays that make the leaves curl, shrivel and fade, also mature the fruit on the same tree, filling it with luscious juices, and painting in celestial colors. The storms of life that try our health and our hope, our strength and our success, making us question whether life is worth the living or not, are working in us qualities of soul and elements of character that would never have been produced by sunshine and prosperity alone. Sounding boards of pianos that catch the sounds of the strings and throw them out in delightful melodies, we are told, cannot be made of every kind of wood. "It has been found that wood grown in the swamp, where it has been protected, and richly nourished, will not do. Its fibre is too coarse and soft. It has been having too easy a time. The best results come from wood grown in the open upland, where it has had to battle with the storms that have tightened its fibre and made it dense and fine. Such wood is vibrant and musical. Its pores are full of melody." Methinks that our God would have us fit to catch the melodies of heaven and throw them out into the world full of discords and discouragements, but it takes much time and work to render us suitable for so glorious a use.

When the Almighty gets done with our schooling we will be fit for more exalted stations. Jehovah wanted a prime minister in Egypt to see to the caring for and housing of his people in the day of famine, but he did not go into the king's household and take a youth, brought up amidst the luxuries and associations of the regal family. He searched for and found a nomadic shepherd's boy, and educated him for the place. After he had been sold as a slave, exposed to the temptations of a lustful and unprincipled woman, falsely imprisoned, domiciled in a dungeon and set at a felon's task for years, he was found capable of loftier service, and God set him at it at the king's side. It was one, hidden among the reeds at the river bank to save his life, carried to a heathen's home, sent out into the wilderness for years, whom God chose when he would lead a nation out of serfdom. It was a man who had gone through the lion's den and who had been the victim of envious foes who was promoted in the reigns of Cyrus and Darius. It was a maligned, scourged, ostracized and crucified Christ, made perfect through sufferings, who was fitted to be "a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, and to make reconciliation for the sins of his people."

Surely we of our own day need to remember that the "right hand of the Most High can change" all that is amiss in our lives when he perceives that we are no longer in need of the training. At one time, years ago, the Sultan of Turkey declared that on a certain day all the missionaries should be banished from his realm. When the Christians had met for prayer one of the missionaries arose and said: "The great Sultan of the universe can change all this." And he did, for on the very day appointed for the expulsion of the missionaries the Sultan of Turkey died, and the missionaries remained. Our sorrows are not eternal. There is help in God when trials have done their work for us. Our hopes are not to be forever unrealized. Daniel did not stay long in the lion's den. Joseph went through the dungeon to the throne. While Jacob was mourning for his son, forces were actually at work for his weal, and circumstances shaping themselves so as to bring the two together. Dearly beloved, "to those who love God, all things are working together for good" (Rom. 8:28, Rotherham's translation) It does mean that the day will come when all turn our way, but it is God's own declaration that all things are now at work in our interests, even while we are in trouble and feel as though all things were going against us. We do not understand it, but God does, and we ought to trust him and rejoice even in our tribulations. Things are going our way when we cannot see how it can be. Hear discouraged old Jacob lamenting in his tent the loss of his sons: "Joseph was torn to pieces by the wild beasts, and I shall never see him more in this life, and now they have taken my poor little Benjamin down into a foreign land, and I am sure that the only child I have alive to keep my beloved Rachel's image before my face will never come back.

Alas, alas, all things are against me, and will bring my gray hairs in sorrow down to the grave! Woe is me!" At the very time he was bewailing his hard fate, Joseph was actually preparing a home for him; and the wagons that were to take him into Egypt were almost at his door. Everything was working together for his happiness, but he knew it not. Just as mysteriously "all things are working together for good" to us who love and serve God, although the heavens be dark above us, and all things seem to be going against us. Ah, heart of mine, look up, keep up, and trust when thou canst not see.

"All faithless murmurs leaving,  
Bid them a last good-night,  
No more thy vexed soul grieving,  
Because things seem not right;  
Wise thy scepter wielding,  
God sits in the regal state,  
No power to mortals yielding,  
Events to regulate.

"Trust with a faith untiring  
In thine omniscient King,  
And thou shalt see admiring,  
What he to light will bring.  
Of all thy griefs the reason  
Shall at last appear;  
Why now denied a season,  
Will shine in letters clear."

—The Standard.

Heretical Orthodoxy.

BY REV. J. B. GAMBRELL.

Orthodoxy is a good word. The common word for the same thing is soundness, and every man is sound according to his own ideas. Nevertheless, when we apply certain doctrines to certain standards accepted among us as a people, and find them to agree, we are not necessarily to conclude that those who hold those doctrines are correct. A man may hold a right doctrine in a very wrong way. Men can hold the truth in unrighteousness. There is such a thing, even among Baptists, as the form of sound words, with little or nothing but the form.

The truth is, many of the most pronounced advocates of soundness have been themselves most unsound. Many of the most orthodox Baptists are dreadfully wrong. It is the object of this article to start a thought in that direction.

There is such a thing as heresy of proportion. To illustrate the point strongly, let us suppose a man is painting a picture of General Lee, and suppose he makes the nose two feet long and all the other features ordinary size. That would very poorly exhibit the face of the first of all Americans. Or, suppose again, a man's face is drawn two-thirds mouth. That would admirably illustrate some people, but it would not make a good picture.

Now take these illustrations and apply them to preaching. Here is a man who makes a specialty of being sound, but he rings the changes on baptism all the time. All roads for him lead to Jordan. That is the staple article of his preaching. Is such a ministry as that orthodox? No. It is a burlesque on God's system of divine truth. Such a preacher—and we have many of them—not only is heterodox in proportion, but he becomes heterodox in order. There is a divine order of things. The order is laid down in the commission. He is a heretic who attempts to work the commission wrong end foremost. In my time I have seen many a champion of orthodoxy who spent all of his time on baptism, and on the kingdom, and the church, and the Lord's Supper, and on church discipline—all of it lean, skimp and taut; but this man never baptized anybody. Nobody joined the church, and except for the ministry of other men, there would have been nobody to give the Lord's Supper to, and nobody upon whom this superorthodox brother could have practised, to him, the exhilarating art of church discipline. He undertook to work the whole commission wrong end foremost. Another man hard by preached repentance, faith, salvation through Christ. People were converted, and without saying one-tenth part as much about baptism as the superorthodox brother, he baptized multitudes of people. This last brother might also be heterodox, in a large measure, by refusing to go on and teach the "all things commanded."

What I am striking at now is a one-sided ministry. It does not matter what the particular fad of the brother is, if he is a one-sided preacher he is not in any good sense orthodox. I have known a man who spent all of his days on some particular feature of prophecy, elaborating and trying to explain some dark saying. I have known another to get up on the rock of predestination and turn around and around and around on it all of his days until it was evident that it was predestinated that his ministry should come to no good.

There is a solemn responsibility put on all ministers to preach a rounded gospel, to observe the divine order, and to give to every doctrine its place and its proportion. Hence, the great necessity of a careful study of systematic theology.

There is an orthodoxy that is heterodox because of the spirit of it. All sound worship goes on two points, spirit and truth. Not spirit without truth, not truth without spirit, but spirit and truth together. They