

WORK FOR THE MASTER.

The Place and how to fill it ; The Work and how to do it.

These two topics seem to cover the whole ground of Christian responsibility, viewing the disciples of Jesus as labourers in His vineyard. The Church is, by Divine appointment, an organized Society, having a Head, and members, and a field of effort. In these parabolic teachings which fell from the lips of Christ, and which have been left on record for our admonition, their *place* and *work* are both clearly assigned to those who, by their profession, proclaim themselves to the world as followers of Him who "went about continually doing good," and counted it His meat and drink to do the Father's will.

The Church of God is compared under both dispensations to a vineyard in Palestine, with its southern slope, its steep ascent, its rich soil, its careful culture, and its strong wall surrounding and enclosing the vineyard. It is not a place of recreation, where we may recruit our wasted energies, broken down by the wear and tear of life,—neither is it a place of enjoyment merely, where we may revel amid scenes of paradisaical delight, and feast our carnal appetite by drinking of the cup of pleasure, or spend our short day in idle dreamy sentimentalism, even as the lizard basks himself in the summer's sun. But the Church of God is a field of effort, in which those who have tasted of the Divine mercy, and have been lifted out of the miry slough of despond, and had their feet planted securely on the Rock of Salvation,—are called into the vineyard of Christ, to employ their regenerated powers of mind and body in extending the spiritual kingdom of Him, who says to every member of His house ; "Go work to-day in my vineyard." Not from one incidental passage of the Divine word, nor even from one of the sayings and discourses of our Lord, do we gather our duty to labor in the extension of His kingdom. In one of His parables we are taught the lesson of employing our talents in the service of the Master until the second coming of the Son of Man, when He will take an account of our stewardship, saying to us in the meantime, "occupy till I come." In another, the great Teacher impresses the lesson of diversity in the gifts received, or talents communicated, showing how that they who are, equally diligent in improving their stock of religious advantage will meet with equal approval on the Great Day. While, in a third, the encouraging truth is presented, encouraging to such as have not yet commenced to labor, that even they who enter into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, if faithful to Him who calleth them, will receive the reward of labor equally with those who entered in at the first hour of the day, and may even outstrip them by their self-consecration and devotedness to the Master, thus proving that "many who are first" in entering the Kingdom "will be last" in the enjoyment of the reward, and that "many who are last" in entering the vineyard to labour "will be first" in the heavenly reward.

Thus far upon the general truths evolved,—that we are under a Master to whom we are accountable—that a field of spiritual labour has been provided for us, and that as the creatures of God, and still more as His redeemed people; we are called to labour in the upbuilding of Christ's spiritual temple! Now let us ask ourselves the question, 1st. What is *the place* that God has assigned to us and how best shall we fill it? Here we are to follow both the teachings of the Divine word, and also the leadings of Divine providence. In the plenitude of Christ's power, provision has been made for *all* the workers in His vineyard, affording ample scope for all the attainments of His people and all the divers manifestations of His Spirit.