THE CEYLON CHURCH MISSIONARY GLEANER

APRIL, 1908.

Conference Sermon, January 1908.

"Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory." Ps. cxlviii. 24.

Conference time, and especially this Conference at the beginning of the year is a time of review. We have come together from various parts of the Island, from various kinds of work, and in the next few days we shall be trying to understand the problems which the various members of our body have had to face during the year that is past, and we shall be looking forward together into the New Year, planning that the work of God committed to us may go forward and prosper.

Our review of the past is sure to be tinged with disappointment, and we shall be very conscious of our many shortcomings and failures; and as we look forward into the future there is sure to be a mingling of fear and anxiety with our hopes; but whether we look back or forward, whether our retrospect or prospect is brighter or more gloomy, there is one great stable fact on which to rest, like an eternal mountain to which we lift our eyes, when they are tired and confused with the contemplation of the perpetual changes of time's rapid river; and that great outstanding fact is the faithfulness of God. "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall My covenant of peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." "If we are faithless, He abideth faithful." At a time like this when the perplexities of the work seem to be multiplied because we face those of others together with our own, it is more than ever necessary to encourage ourselves in God.

So such a text as this expressing fullest confidence in God's unfailing guidance and faithful promises is very suitable for our consideration to-day. "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me with glory.

Such was the hope of Asaph, such the repose of his thoughts, such the strength of his heart, when he issued out of his fierce, dark conflict with perplexity and doubt. You remember what a conflict that had been. There are few things quite like it in the Bible (save indeed the great book of Job) for letting us see how fully God's Word understands, so to speak, the workings and tortures of a thoughtful mind, perplexed and baffled by religious mystery. Asaph, a pious worshipper and servant, and follower of the covenant God of Israel, laboured and pined under affliction and earthly loss and looking round him in the world of his own times, he saw man after man who was any- thing but godly, yet who prospered, flourished, heaped up wealth, and drew after him a host of obsequious admirers. And he knew that his God had promised prosperity to the righteous and adversity to the wicked; and he could not square the facts with the promise; and he could not and would not crush his sense of perplexity; and so who can wonder he was tortured with the most dreadful doubts? A whisper told him that religion was vain; that God's promise was a dream. Have you ever known such feelings? If so, you will be tender with Asaph, and tender with minds and hearts that are tried like Asaph's now, as many, many are. It is an awful trial. The first injection into the mind of doubt about God and His Word is a terrible crisis in the story of a vigorous and sensitive mind; it is a scar never quite smoothed away on earth. If you have felt it, you cannot forget it. If you have felt it, you must indeed feel and pray for those who feel it now; asking for them in tender sympathy what you are so glad to experience yourself; that, having tasted Asaph's agony, they may grasp Asaph's rest and joy, through faith.

I do not stay now to dwell on the weak side of Asaph's case. Only observe that a weak side there was. He owned it himself. He uses strong language: "So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before Thee." Phrase expressions. They are not those of a man who thinks that doubt is a thing to be proud of; far from it. They own that clearer thinking and wider observation would have given him a very different view of God's ways. He would have seen more had he looked deeper. He would have realised that the saint, however afflicted, has God, here and hereafter—God, the sole cause of all good—as wholly his Friend for ever. He would have remembered that the sinner, however successful, "in his end shall be a fool," going down, in an eternal failure, among the lost. He would have seen that the saint, at the worst, gets "the best of both worlds," all the real good out of his path on earth, all the resulting glory in his home in heaven. All this, and more, as he owns to us, he might and should have seen. And doubters now may learn from Asaph the useful lesson that not too much thinking makes men sceptics, but too little; that to plume yourself upon thinking doubtful about religion is like being vain of short sight and defective hearing. It is to forget, at least, how totally unable we are to grasp and explain the whole of the Lord's plan and providence. His plan takes in so vast a range. His dealings so "run off into eternity" in their orbit, that it is no wonder that we cannot know now, except in part. "So foolish was I, and ignorant"—so foolish, matched with Thy supreme wisdom; so ignorant, matched with Thy infinite knowledge of all being and all life.

But I do not dwell on this. I take rather this text to let it speak to us about the deepest, yet simplest, secret of Asaph's final peace. That secret was the casting of himself, in perfect personal trust, wholly upon the Lord God, that very God whose providence had so utterly perplexed him. Personal confidence in God—that is to say, faith—brought his soul to its senses; that is to say, brought the man to his knees. Something led him, across all doubts, to look God in the face; that is to say, brought the man to his knees. Something led him, across all doubts, to look God in the face; and then his doubts fled, because the material for them was gone. He could not explain the universe, but he knew its Maker. He could not unravel providence, but he could look straight at Jehovah-Jireh. And, looking at Him, what did he see? Not only the solution of a riddle to his intellect, but the satisfaction of the cravings of his heart. He loved God because he really saw God. That Eternal Being was now to Asaph immensely dear, as well as wholly to be trusted. He not only bowed before Him, but clung to Him. Let Asaph immensely dear, as well as wholly to be trusted. He not only bowed before Him, but clung to Him. Let Asaph's soul turn, though in the darkness, to its Maker. He would have realised that the saint, how- ever confident, has God, here and hereafter—God, the sole cause of all good—as wholly his Friend for ever. He would have remembered that the sinner, however successful, "in his end shall be a fool," going down, in an eternal failure, among the lost. He would have seen that the saint, at the worst, gets "the best of both worlds," all the real good out of his path on earth, all the resulting glory in his home in heaven. All this, and more, as he owns to us, he might and should have seen. And doubters now may learn from Asaph the useful lesson that not too much thinking makes men sceptics, but too little; that to plume yourself upon thinking doubtful about religion is like being vain of short sight and defective hearing. It is to forget, at least, how totally unable we are to grasp and explain the whole of the Lord's plan and providence. His plan takes in so vast a range. His dealings so "run off into eternity" in their orbit, that it is no wonder that we cannot know now, except in part. "So foolish was I, and ignorant"—so foolish, matched with Thy supreme wisdom; so ignorant, matched with Thy infinite knowledge of all being and all life.

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or some doctrine of grace pressed your mind hard, or some difficulty in God's Word made us think, in a whisper, "What if the Bible is a delusion after all?" Well, we cannot, perhaps, see the end of the puzzle. A little clearer thought may yet do it. But we cannot do it yet. Nevertheless we can see even now something still more to the purpose; we see, standing in the midst of the labyrinth, the Lord of Peace Himself. Whatever the trial be, be it of sorrow or of joy—sorrow tempting us to think too narrowly and hardly; joy tempting us to think too vaguely and loosely—amidst all the perplexity, there, in the midst of it, is the Lord Himself; and that is enough for our soul's peace. "I am, nevertheless, continually with Thee. I know not, but Thou knowest. I fly to Thee. I bury myself in Thee. If I must look on what perplexes me, my point of view shall be the bosom of my God." Only observe, in passing, but as a point of first importance, that "my God," in such a sentiment, must mean, not a God imagined, but the God revealed. Other men than Christians may vaguely speak of "the bosom of a Father and a God," but they may be talking all the while, only the soft cloud of their own ideas. God, if you would grasp real consolation, where Asaph went (ver. 17), even to "the Sanctuary of God." Go, that is, to God's own revelation of His Person, and to God's own pledges of His faithfulness. In brief, go straight to Jesus. He is the manifestation of God, for He is God made man; He is, by His blessed death and resurrection, the supreme truth of all true religion, the great Seal of the Empire under every promise. Asaph did not go out wandering with his doubts. He brought them home. He went not to his own philosophy, but to the Sanctuary. There stood the Altar and the Ark; grand pledges and proofs that the Lord God of the prophets had done wonders, real wonders, in past days, for His people, and so might be entirely trusted still. So, too, must it be with you, if you would climb to Asaph's hope. Take the Lord's means. Use His Word. Get acquainted with Him from the Word. And, remember, what He was, He is—the same faithful Father to His believing servant now, as to His banished, or tortured, or martyred people of old time. "Acquaint thyself with Him, and be at peace." So Asaph did, so do thou. In all time of thy tribulation, in all time of thy wealth, acquaint thyself with Him.

But, in pondering our text, I wish specially to observe, not merely the the general frame of Asaph's mind through grace, as he looked around him on human life; not merely his general rest, and peace and patience but his particular, detailed comfort, and strength, and staff, and rod. Come nearer to this man, this saint, so tried, but so triumphant. Come nearer; do not merely watch him on his knees, but hear what he is saying on them. Listen to him; he is speaking very particularly. It not only "All is well " but, "I will trust Thee with myself, for life or death." Listen, and learn, and follow. Observe this "Mr. Standfast," like Bunyan's pilgrim of that name, he is on his knees on the enchanted ground. Do thou likewise, O believer, under any trial of faith in the unseen. Dost thou groan under vexation, pain, loss, solitude? Art thou almost soul-stifled in these glooms and shadows? Go down upon thy knees on the enchanted ground; look to thy God, see Him plain, trust Him, grasp Him, love Him, and be strong again for life and death. Art thou in even greater peril in time of wealth? Is all fair and soft about thee? Has the very bounty of the eternal hand hidden from thee the hand itself? Art thou secretly taking earth to be thy rest, and something less than the Lord to be thy portion? Go down again upon thy knees on the enchanted ground; see the face of thy God again, grasp Him anew, trust Him, put into His hands thy soul, put into His hands thy way. Listen to this praying, conquering saint again. watch him as he flies to the very God whose providence had so distressed him. Mark his two certainties about that God, and make those two certainties, believing man, your very own.

I. "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel." Here is his certainty about God, and his happy resolve for himself, for this present time. His certainty about God:—"Thou shalt guide me." Yes, he is sure of this. This invisible Eternal, with this intricate Universe on His hands, will yet, with those hands, be quite sure to guide me. He will think upon me; He will count my hairs; He will know my soul; He will minutely arrange my circumstances, my duties, my path. And again, here is Asaph's happy resolve about himself: I will let the Lord do it. I will trust Him to do it. Does He offer to guide me? He shall guide me indeed. Does He whisper, "This is the way," when I turn to the right hand in self-will; to the left hand in self-indulgence? Does He indeed offer me His counsel? Then indeed I will take it. I will not verify in my dealings with Him the proverb which says that the easiest thing is to give advice, the hardest is to take it. I will take it, and be glad. I will dare to submit myself under His hand; I will dare to be lifted on by His hand, because it is His hand. I will take His advice, through all seeming reasons against it, because the tender voice, the faithful voice, is His.

Brethren, only grace Divine can do this in us. But grace can. Experience often illustrates the remark that it is harder to trust God with the way than to trust Ilia with the soul. But He, by His promised Spirit, can make you, and make me, honestly trust Him with our way, and really listen to be guided by His counsel. Ask, then, for full power to do it, if you are His indeed. He waits to be gracious; seek and find the grace to let His grace have its way. There will be no peace in your inmost relations with God without this willingness to be guided. But there will be with it. Oh! confide in Him indeed. Make sure that He never willingly gives one unwelcome counsel to His listening people. Man's true willingness to do His will He often meets and crowns with wonderful proofs of His divine willingness to do the will of God, and to His saints, where it is for their good indeed. How profound is the significance of those words, "Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desire of thy heart!" But, however, trust the counsel. Confide your way to Him. Unreservedly ask His advice about the next thing, and the next. Be not like those elders in Ezekiel, who went to ask counsel through the prophet, but kept their heart-idoles standing safe upon the inward throne. Go in sincerity to ask, and to take, His counsel; and indeed you shall find that saying true, "My words do good to him that walketh uprightly."

II. But there is one last clause yet to look at before we close: "Afterwards Thou shalt receive me to glory." Here, let us not doubt it, Asaph looks up and on to an everlasting home with God, after a path of guidance by His hand. I know what doubts and questions are raised about this view. Men have discussed anxiously
how much the old saints knew of the hope of glory. But here is the hope of glory. The whole Psalm implies it. Asaph bases his comfort about God's mysterious ways very much on just this, that the end of the ungodly is darkness, and the end of the righteous is light. And, anywise, for us—we who read this inspired saint's words now—those words are steeped and glorified in the radiance of the Gospel. Jesus and the Resurrection are designed, for us, to shine on the Psalms and to shine from them. Whatever Asaph thought, this is what the inspiring Spirit meant: Jesus Christ and Heaven. Such, then, is the trustful, obedient pilgrim's end, his endless end. The Counsellor, the Adviser, here—the Eternal Friend Who often had here to check his wanderings, and disappoint his mistaken wishes, and cross his ill-laid schemes—will there, after His discipline has done its work, throw off the reserve no longer needed, and become, in all the deep sunshine of eternal happiness, the glorifier of the soul that has followed His counsel. "He hath," says St. Peter, "after ye have suffered awhile, called you to His eternal glory." "Afterward," blessed word, "afterward Thou shalt receive me with glory." "Thou shalt receive me"; "Thou shalt take me"; as Asaph's Hebrew simply runs. "Thou shalt guide me, then Thou shalt take me! The closing act of Thy guidance shall be, not to leave me at the gate, but to take me at it. The result of the process will be, to pass into unutterable nearness with Thee. The voice behind me will become the smile, the welcoming countenance, before me. So shall I be for ever with the Lord. Where Thou art, there shall Thy follower be; for Thou wilt come and take me to Thyself." "Thou wilt receive me with glory." Yes; not with peace only, though it will be with peace; not with rescue or relief only, not with pardon and legal security only. "Whom He justified, them He also glorified!" "The salvation which is in Christ Jesus" is, in its very essence, "with eternal glory." The "patient continuance in well doing," the following on and on, listening to God's advice, doing the next thing which He recommends to be done, is to be followed, as the bud is followed by the flower, by "glory, honour, immortality."

The words in which I have addressed you this morning have been almost entirely the words of another, the Bishop of Durham. Owing to illness I have been unable to prepare a sermon, so I have ventured to pass on to you words which have come with power to my own soul.

**Christ's Full Message.**

"How hard it is to be a Christian," cried Browning in the opening words of his "Easter Day." To-day some people are trying to make it more easy. So they are discreetly silent about the yoke, and the cross, and the denying of self, concerning all of which Jesus spoke so plainly—while they make the most of the Gospel. The experiment does not appear to be very successful. Chivalrous souls would be more drawn by the spirit of adventure in response to a trumpet-call to battle than to listen to these soothing songs of ease. But if it did succeed what would be its worth? What would be the value of a Christianity so one-sided, so enervating, so self-indulgent? In fact I do not see how you can call it Christianity at all. The ship is stranded at the bar of the harbour. What is to be done to float her? You can throw the cargo overboard; but then the very purpose of her voyage will be destroyed. It will be better to wait till the flood-tide, and then the ship will rise in the deep water and sail out to sea, cargo and all. It is vain to float our Gospel ship by throwing cargo overboard. The only wise course is to take Christ's full message. To have the yoke and the Cross as well as the pardon and the peace. Much is asked of Christ's faithful servant. But much is given to inspire and strengthen him in His work. When the full tide of God's love and power is flowing it is possible to live this strenuous life, and at the same time to find the yoke easy and the burden of it light: upheld by the Spirit of His love.

**Professor Adeny.**

**Gotta.**

The monthly meeting of the Gleaners' Union was held on the 19th of March at 4 p.m. in the Cotta church when over 50 were present. Miss Hutchinson of the Girls' Boarding School gave a very nice address on "Pastor His." Of course she could have only touched a very short part of his life in the short time allotted to her, but she made it very interesting and it was wonderful to notice the great change wrought in His life since he became a Christian and still more so the results of his beautiful Christian life. A tract on "Living springs of water" was also read at this meeting, which beautifully showed how Christians should be refreshed and filled with the living water the Lord Jesus provides in order to refresh and strengthen others, and how they should always be ready to be used for the Master's service, in any place and in any way He liked best, not thinking of one's own happiness or usefulness.

The Rev. G. B. Perera, who presided at the meeting offered a few suitable remarks and the meeting came to a close with prayer offered by Mr. W. de Silva of Mirihana.

The two English Schools in the mission compound have just been closed for the long holidays. They were examined last week, the Boys' School by Mr. Strickland and the Girls' School by Miss A. Gibbon, when the results, especially those of the Boys' School were very satisfactory. The Pupil Teacher of the Girls' School passed very creditably, in her first year.

Great satisfaction is felt on all sides at the recent appointment of Mr. R. C. Perera as Head Master of the Boys' School. Mr. Perera who is an old boy of the Cotta English School has made his way most wonderfully and he has not only passed all his examinations very creditably but has just returned with very high testimonials from the Principal of the Training College, where he has been for the last two years. We hope that the school will prosper more and more in every way under the new regime, as Mr. Perera is a very earnest Christian as well as an unassuming worker. We wish him every success in his new work.

Miss Hutchinson is starting for England next month on a well-earned holiday which we hope she will enjoy immensely. She will be greatly missed not only in the G. B. S. but in the whole village where she is a general favourite.

M.A.P.
Latest Notes.

Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Ferrier left for Australia by the “Mongolia” on March 22nd. Mr. Ferrier hopes to return early in June.

Miss Hutchinson of Cotta left for England by the “Syria” on April 14th.

The Home Committee has appointed the Rev. J. Ilsley to the charge of the Tamil work in Colombo. He will be accompanied by Miss Ilsley. Their passages have been booked in the “Kleist,” due in Colombo on May 22nd. This will set free Mr. and Mrs. Booth, and they will probably be leaving for furlough soon after Mr. Ilsley’s arrival.

The Rev. A. E. Dibben is due to arrive on May 25th, and will resume his work as Secretary of the Mission and Incumbent of Galle Face Church. The Rev. H. P. Napier-Clavering, on Mr. Dibben’s arrival, will go as Acting Principal to Trinity College, Kandy, for a few months.

We regret to learn that the Medical Board will not allow Miss Henrys to return to the Mission at present.

The Rev. S. M. Simmons writes that he is recommended to postpone his return to the Mission until the autumn. At the time of writing the question was not decided.

Cotta District.

There were three adult baptisms at Cotta on Sunday March 29th: these are fruits of school work.

The work of rebuilding in a more substantial form the school at Upper Wellikada is now proceeding: the entire cost is being borne by two Sinhalese friends and the school is to form a memorial to a lately deceased member of the congregation.

“I Will Pray.”

The Church in the Wilderness, “Too Much”

Acts vii. 38.

“Evening, morning, and at noon, will I pray.”

Psalm lv. 17

I have been greatly struck in meditating on Exodus xxxv., xxxvi., at the restraint order sent out, even to the few. When shall C.M.S. publish the same request? God had ordered the Tabernacle to be made, and with the order He commanded that “Whosoever is of a willing heart” xxxv. 5; 21. was to give, “every one whose heart stirred him up.” xxxvi. 5, 7. It does not say all the Israelites began to help; no, but only the few, “every man and woman whose heart made them willing.” Christ has ordered His Church to witness for Him everywhere. Alas! it is only the few who are willing.

Just let us think a little of the “restraint order” given to the Church in the wilderness. “The people bring much more than enough.” xxxvi. 6. “The stuff they had was sufficient and too much.” And Moses commanded it to be proclaimed, let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the Sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing.

ing.” We see the Church in the wilderness were willing to give too much to further work for God. How about the Church to-day? Deficits everywhere. All the blessed Societies unable to rush in to open doors, and these doors opened by God through the efforts of the willing few. Islam is rushing in, and countries that are now Pagan and easy to be reached, will, when Islam has prevailed, be as adamant against the Gospel.

Oh! that we C.M.S. lovers may have the willing spirit of the few in the wilderness until we are restrained from giving and going. Giving, certainly, is the greatest joy upon earth, as in Heaven God gave His unspeakable gift, Cor. ix. 15. of His dear Son. Oh! how willingly. But we are only asked to Tell others. Psa. xcvi. 10. P. B. v. the good news. Dear readers, it cannot be told without money—men and money—now, thanks be to God, both these can be had by Prayer. We do not half pray (I am sure I do not). Ask and ye shall receive. Matt. vii. 7. We do not believe it, but let us pray that we may. Nothing Satan so hates as believing prayer.

Many years ago I had the privilege of spiritually ministering to a dear aged lady, a saint of God; she called herself an unworthy sinner; I knew better, (we are all unworthy sinners). Her sins were all forgiven and “Holiness to the Lord.” Exodus xxviii. 36. was written on her brow. She told me one day how Satan always tried to hinder her prayers, but with determined will she cried, “I will pray,” and out she would creep from her bed night after night to pray on her knees. Often and often has her “I will pray” conquered my lazy reluctance to commune with my God, to pray and intercede for others. Dear readers, shall we all say the same, “I will pray,” that God may open my heart to give and give and give prayer that His Gospel may spread everywhere. Let us pray until we are restrained, and that can never be, until He comes to claim His Kingdom.

Then comes the secondary giving—money. Let us be willing to give up to the hilt, not remnants, but first-fruits of life, time and money, for whatever we give now it is only first-fruits of our Future Wealth. Do you think Christ will ever say of us, ye have given too much? He did of the Church in the wilderness.

How was it the “stiffnecked,” Exod. xxxiv. 9. covetous Isaiah lii. 17; people became so willing to give, even too much, in answer to the Lord’s command, their Egyptian jewellery and precious stones, gold, silver, blue, purple and scarlet and fine twined linen; goats’ hair and skins, and the women their looking-glasses (Exod. 38. 8) things they delighted in! (Have we so given?) What made them do it? I believe it was in answer to prayer. Moses went up to God, and for forty days and nights he was either hearing God’s Word or interceding on behalf of the people below; most likely praying that they might be made willing to carry out the Tabernacle, the pattern of which he had received from God.

Shall not we become willing intercessors that enough money may be given to send forth the men and women God makes willing to go? Let us pray the money out of closed coffers, out of hearts now shut to His appeals, and let us give our utmost of money, but specially our prayers. May the dear Saint at Rest be yet speaking (Heb. xi. 4) to each of us and influencing us to continually say I will pray.

E. P. L.