

Sister Jane Roberts

to

Younger Sisters

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“That they may teach the young women. . .”



Christadelphian Scripture Study Service

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PREFACE

Sister Jane Roberts was the wife of brother Robert Roberts for 39 years, from April the 8th, 1859 to her husband's death in San Francisco in 1898. She was eight years older than brother Roberts which no doubt aided her in that mature spirituality which the young Scottish brother was so eager to find in a companion. Robert Roberts came down from Aberdeen in 1857 to the larger and more sophisticated city of Edinburgh, accompanying a brother Barker who had been appointed by the Aberdeen ecclesia as a delegate to an annual gathering of brethren in Scotland. The first acquaintance was one-sided, but it is of interest to relate as it reflects the minds of both Jane Norrie and Robert Roberts even at this early stage. A proposal had been mooted to publish some articles from Dr. Thomas' "Herald" in a tract form. Strangely there was some strong opposition to this, mainly expressed on the basis that the proposal breached Bro. Thomas' copyright! When all had voiced their opinions and no little confusion had resulted, the young teenager from Aberdeen timorously dared to speak (Shades of Elihu in Job 32:6-12)! Sensibly he proposed that brother Thomas be asked himself if he had any objection, though noting that he scarcely could imagine that the Doctor would object to anything that would extend the knowledge of the Truth! Of this intriguing incident Bro. Roberts later comments:

"My future wife was present. I did not know it, for I had no acquaintance with her; but she has often since remarked that my words on that occasion commended themselves to her as a little young common sense, in the midst of much senior fog"

(My Days and My Ways, p.33)

Bro. Roberts visited Edinburgh twice more before they met, but it is obvious from the above that these two remarkable people had their hearts fixed with a common goal. It has often been commented that Robert Roberts revealed astonishing interest in Divine matters at an early age and a soundness of judgment well beyond his years. These qualities were never more significantly illustrated than in his choice of a companion for this life. He found the girls of his own age 'frivolous', and they on their part found him too taken up with the business of his Heavenly Father. When Jane Norrie came into his life he found remarkable and joyous companionship.

"Meanwhile, I was solaced with the sympathy and love of one sister in their midst. . . When I was introduced to her, I was drawn to her with a power that soon ended in the closest intimacy. She was my senior by eight years; but this, so far from being an obstacle, was the reverse. It imparted to her a weight and sobriety of character that fitted her for the companionship which I desired. Girls of my own age were frivolous. One with whom I had tried to cultivate acquaintance in Aberdeen (a brother's daughter) asked me why I "jawed so much

about the nations". There was no repugnance of this sort to the truth about Jane Norrie. On the contrary, her tastes were all in the line of intellectual and scriptural things. There was an inexhaustible fund of interest in this direction which supplied the material for conversation that never flagged. I met no one like her in this respect; and it was inevitable that our acquaintance should ripen fast, as it did, into the tenderest relation. I was only nineteen when we mutually agreed that we were suited for life companionship. Some of our friends were scandalised at such a result; but we felt sure our decision was a wise one, and therefore, without making a secret of it in any way, we shut our eyes and ears, and went on our way. Time justified our policy."

(My Days and My Ways, pp. 34-35)

These words were written by brother Roberts in 1890, after 31 years of married life. He could clearly remember their acquaintance blossoming rapidly to "the tenderest relation". Here were two younger people properly prepared for marriage in the Lord in which the emotions though profoundly stirred, were subject to and beautified by the eternal truths that were the inspiration of both their lives. It is not surprising that brother Roberts should further write of the abounding success of this marriage:

"Our married experience has been nothing but a pure blessing, spiritually and in all other respects."

(My Days and My Ways, p.54)

Acquaintance with the life and work of Robert Roberts impresses us with the enormous vigour and volume of work that were seen in just one human life. And throughout all that a devoted sister kept up with him, positively stimulating his faith, revelling in his spiritual studies and cogitations, supporting him through the waves of ecclesial strife that swept across his path and succouring him in all the practicalities of this life.

At the end of his life, Jane Norrie's husband would say very touchingly,

"Although I have been married for 40 years I still have a sweetheart in my wife".

(Robert Roberts, p.170)

These quotations reveal the depth of mind of sister Jane Roberts. She was a true companion to her husband, a "help-meet" indeed!

After his decease she continued to play an active and valued role in the Birmingham Ecclesia. Her devout way of life, exhaustive knowledge and warmth of practical love complemented a rich character in Christ. Much of brother Roberts' mind lived on in her and her counsel was sought by many. It was very common for candidates for baptism to be "taken through" under her thorough and competent guidance.

The articles republished in this booklet constitute the quintessence of Sis. Jane Roberts' mind. It is felt that they have much to offer our sisters and young girls in assessing, in this so very different and ungodly age, the way of a woman of God. The reader will be impressed with her great attention to the Word of God; she literally embibed it seriously every day as the well-spring of her life. What a rich lesson lies in this for our sisters in this age of many attractions and vast propaganda through the various forms of media. Then the reader will be equally struck by her application of the Word in all the present chores of domestic life.

Sister Roberts died in October 1919, surviving her husband by twenty-one years and arriving at the 'good old age' of 90, a mother in Israel and a great influence for good in the Brotherhood. Fourteen years before she had written to Bro. C. C. Walker, who succeeded her husband as Editor of "The Christadelphian", to outline some thoughts for "when I die" and her letter, published in the November 1919 "Christadelphian", is here reproduced:

"My Beloved Brother,

"If the Lord delay his coming for some time longer, in the natural order of things I shall have to be laid to rest in Witton, till the time appointed, when the dead in Christ shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth to a joyful order of things, according to his promise.

"It would be according to my mind that you should conduct the funeral service of one whom you may term a weary pilgrim, but one who, all through the wilderness journey, realised that there was a glorious ending to it; and in hope of the promises made of God unto the Fathers renewed her strength in God from day to day, resting on His Word.

"My love I desire to all the brethren and sisters, exhorting them not to faint on the way; but to go on renewing their faith and hope in God by the daily study of His Word, and meditation upon the great salvation which He has provided for us of His own loving kindness and tender mercy in Christ; and in the confident hope of joining them shortly on Mount Zion, in songs of rejoicing and praying the Father to guide and bless them while their pilgrimage lasts. . .

"We shall meet again. Thanks be to God. Amen.

"Your loving sister in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ,
Jane Roberts."

Her requests were at the appropriate time fulfilled and two to three hundred brethren met at Witton where Sister Jane Roberts was laid to rest alongside the aged mother of her beloved husband, who had died 19 years before in her 93rd year. (Bro. Roberts was buried in Brooklyn, New York, near to the grave of Bro. Thomas).

Amongst many letters of respect and affection for the life and ways of Sis. Roberts, the following one written to her daughter from Bro. A. T. Jannaway is chosen as a final summary.

“What a pleasure and inspiration it is to recall and reflect upon her exemplary life. How faithful was she as a wife, mother, and Christadelphian. For close on 45 years I have been impressed with her extraordinary love for the things of God, and her devotion to His service. How many little incidents could one relate bearing upon this. How wise were her counsels, and how great her patience and affection.

“May we not say, without in any way detracting from your father’s excellence, that we are greatly indebted to our departed sister for his invaluable work? What a true help-meet she was. How she supported, encouraged and assisted her partner through dark and toiling hours, and this help was not restricted to her husband, but extended to many others. It is not only you who have suffered a loss, but the brotherhood. Sister Roberts’ influence was great, and it is now no more — except in our remembrance of her sayings and doings. I must give an extract from a letter written not so very long ago:—

“I am going quietly down hill as regard health and strength, and am much cheered by the signs of the times, all indicating that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and that any day we may receive the summons. ‘His will is best, there let it rest.’ ”

The Study Service Committee are thankful to have the opportunity of publishing these writings of our esteemed Sister of old on the one hundredth anniversary of her first address to the young sisters of the Birmingham Ecclesia. The two addresses were delivered in December 1881 and January 1883 and published in serial form in “The Christadelphian” for 1882 and 1883 respectively. We express our thanks to the present Editor of the Christadelphian, Bro. Alfred Nicholls, for his willingness to see the work go ahead and trust, as he expressed it, that many will be helped by this publication.

“Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain;
but a woman that feareth Yahweh, she shall be praised”.

The Committee,
December, 1981.

Christadelphian Scripture Study Service,
17 Braemar Road,
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South Australia.

AN ADDRESS
TO THE
YOUNG WOMEN
OF THE
BIRMINGHAM
ECCLESIA

Sister Roberts

read by
her husband

December, 1881

*“That they may teach the young women
to be sober, to love their husbands, to
love their children,*

*“To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home,
good, obedient to their own husbands,
that the word of God be not blasphemed.”*

—TITUS 2:4-5

AN ADDRESS TO THE YOUNG WOMEN OF THE BIRMINGHAM ECCLESIA

by Sister Roberts

*(Read by her husband at a tea meeting of the said young women,
held in the Athenaeum Hall, Thursday, December 29th, 1881.)*

My dear Sisters and Young Friends,

If the circumstances had admitted of it, I should have liked very much to have visited you each one separately — to have had a serious talk with you. I have not the time at my disposal to do this, nor the strength, if I had the time, for it would be a very considerable undertaking now to visit all of even the younger sisters. We have become such a numerous people. It is perhaps because we are so numerous, that it is difficult for us all to know each other, and still more difficult to pass much time in each other's society, so as to really benefit and influence each other. I have often felt very sorry for my younger sisters when I have thought of their responsibility, and of the great importance of their realising while young, the great — the unspeakably great — matters to which they stand related in the gospel. I have often felt very sorry when I have looked round upon so many young faces, that I have not been able to carry out the purpose I formed at the beginning of this year — to gather them, or as many of them as could come, together once a week, that we might talk over the matters and duties pertaining to our hope, and exercise

ourselves in the contemplation of these most weighty matters in such a way as to practically influence and assist the young sisters in carrying out the principles and precepts of the truth. The idea would have been to find out by our readings and studies, the essentials and necessities pertaining thereto, in the hope of being thereby helped in the work of preparing ourselves for presentation to the Lord at His coming. Not having been able to do this, I thought it might be of some little service if I could now, at the close of the year, put down a few of the thoughts which frequently occur to me, and, through Brother Roberts, give you the benefit of them in a more public way than it would otherwise be possible for me to do.

THE NECESSITIES OF OUR POSITION IN THE TRUTH

Let us consider then for a little some of the necessities that pertain to our position, and let it be understood that my remarks are specially addressed to the **younger** sisters. There are none among them who are not old enough to take hold of

the responsibility which belongs to the household of Christ. It is a **necessity** with you that you be in **earnest** about the work of Christ. Our Lord has told us very distinctly that unless we are very much in earnest, we cannot please him, "Because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." "Be diligent to make your calling and election sure." "Redeem the time." Are you in earnest about your service to Christ? Or are you easy in your mind about it? Do you think to yourself, when any manner of work is to be done in **His** name, "O, someone else will do it; it won't matter about me doing it." Or do you ask yourself, "Can I do anything to further this work? If it is only a little, I **should** like to help." Do you try to help? Do you offer your help? Do you **wish** to help? If you are in earnest you will **wish** to help, and you will **try** to help. If you are in earnest, you will be very anxious to know and to find out what you can do to serve Christ. Well, supposing you are not in earnest, but wish to be so? How can we become earnest about what Christ requires of us? Study the patterns God has given us. We cannot be much in the company of those we admire without becoming assimilated to them. Christ and his apostles are our patterns. Study their lives, with a view to imitating them. You will find they were deeply in earnest always. Try to give your mind more to thinking about what you read, and above all things make it a daily duty to read

the scriptures. Do not be content with having read your portion or portions, but strive to carry away from the reading some of the ideas to meditate upon. Try to be in **earnest**. Try to remember that you **must** be in earnest to please Christ. Try to remember that you will not be able to stand before him with confidence if you have not been in earnest. How can you bear the thought of having to be ashamed before him at his coming!

LOVE CHRIST TRULY

Now in order to be in earnest about the work of Christ, we must truly love him; that is a **necessity**. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." Many people fancy they love Christ, and no doubt they entertain a sentimental love for him, but their love is not acceptable to him, because it is not an obedient love. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." "If ye love me keep my commandments." "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you."

Now, it is possible for some who profess the truth to overlook this very necessary qualification for Christ's friendship. I am sure you all desire to be acknowledged by Christ when he comes. You would — each one of you feel intensely anxious when that dread hour arrived, in which the Lord of glory is revealed to your gaze for the first time, surrounded by his attendant angels, and the righteous of all

ages — a glorious throng. You will then feel intensely anxious to be asked to step forward as one whom he has written in the book of life. Well, supposing before we leave our seats tonight, the announcement were made, the Lord is come, and you must go to enter his presence just as you are. Do you think you would be quite ready to go into his presence? Have you loved him so intensely that such an intimation of his arrival would make your heart leap for joy? Have you had his person so constantly before your mind as to count all things else as dross that you might win him? Or would you have to wonder whether he would regard you at all with pleasure? You have received your talent in receiving the truth; what have you done with it? Have you laid it by as a thing to be looked at occasionally, or have you exercised your mind so much upon it that now you see its value much more clearly than at first, its duties very much more distinctly than when you first obeyed the truth. Is the joy and rejoicing of the hope steadfastly in your heart, so that the report of the Bridegroom drawing near is the most delightful which could fall upon your ear? Has his will, and the desire to do it, been so constantly your study that you can look back rejoicingly at the self denial you have endured for him? And at the patient enduring through which you persevered for his sake? At the labour you have undertaken for his sake? The fatigue, the inconvenience, the

many things you have endured — all for his sake? Then you will be happy indeed, and ready to meet the Lord with joy.

But suppose it is not quite so with you: you want to love Christ, and you know you ought to love him: but you are conscious of a deficiency in your love, and there is a consequent fear that all is not quite right with you for meeting him. Well, the first thing necessary to renew your love or to kindle it, is to become acquainted with, or to renew your knowledge of him. Get nearer to him. Realise what the relationship is that exists between you and him. **His** love is perfect. There is no deficiency in him. The deficiency and the fault lies with you. **He** loves you. **He** desires to present you perfect at his coming, as a constituent of his Bride, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. **He** desires your society in a perfect nature like his own — glorious and incorruptible. **He** is at God's right hand now to plead your cause, to obtain forgiveness for you — for your sins and shortcomings. **He** has provided you with a written statement of all he requires of you, and what he wishes you to be, and what he wants you to do in his absence, that you may be accounted worthy of a place of honour in the rulership of the future age. Surely, such solicitude on his part, besides having laid down his life to make such a future possible for you, should evoke the strongest love on your part, and lead you to enquire daily,

yea hourly, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do? How can I show my love for thee?" The answer will be found daily, yea hourly, in the remembrance of what he has caused to be written for your guidance. All scripture is given for this purpose, and in proportion as you are in earnest in your service of Christ, and in proportion as you truly love him, will be your diligence in studying this written guide that you may know his will, and knowing it, in the doing of it. In proportion as you realise the love which Christ bears to you, will you have your love for him stimulated. "We love him because he first loved us." And you shall be moved, constrained by your love to do what he commands, even when the doing of it is contrary to your own inclination.

The practice of doing things because Christ has commanded them, will bring with them a sweet reward even now. The very consciousness of being thus under law to him — that is to say, the consciousness of submitting ourselves to him, in obedience to his commandments, gives you that confidence and hope in prospect of standing before him, which is so desirable to attain to. Not that you can ever feel that you have done **all** that you ought to have done, or that you have never done anything that you ought not to have done; but the consciousness of a constant **endeavour**, and of an ever present solicitude to do that which Christ requires of you, brings with it a

peaceful hope of acceptance, knowing that you are assured that the sins and shortcomings of such are forgiven in answer to prayer presented in the name of Christ, our High Priest and Intercessor.

AN OBJECT IN LIFE

There is nothing so likely to help us to hold on in an earnest, loving manner, to the work of the truth, as the realising in our own minds of an object in life! For what object do you live? Have you an object? Too many, it is to be feared, have no definite object in life beyond the whiling away of the passing hour; they are satisfied if they have succeeded in passing the day or the hour without being truly miserable, and such will tell you that they do so and so "to pass the time away." If such would only busy themselves in any useful direction with an earnest mind, they would find the time go too quickly with the greatest ease. What result have those accomplished whose chief business in life is to while away the time? None! When the time is gone everything is gone, and there is nothing laid up in store against the day of reckoning.

We have a very distinct object set before us in the gospel. There is a something to be attained, there is a glorious destiny to be reached; but it is not to be attained with folded arms, or with sluggish mind. Surely the great object of our mortal existence is to achieve

— to develop — to possess a character which will gain the approval of Christ when he comes; for if we succeed in this, we shall have gained all that could possibly be conceived of or desired by the heart of man. Ask yourselves then if this be your object in life. Don't take it for granted, but test yourself — prove yourself. Find out for yourself whether it is so, and determine with yourself that it shall be so — that if you have been a little doubtful in the past, you will begin now, with the new year, to be **more** diligent than you have ever been; to be in real earnest — to be real lovers of Christ, and all that belongs to him, to have him before you constantly, as the object of all you undertake — to be quite sure about it — to be no longer in a half-and-half state, in which you were not quite sure whether you were living for him or for yourself. Resolve to rouse yourself from past lethargy, and not only to rouse yourself up, but to help others to rouse up.

“LET CHRIST BE FORMED IN YOU”

Paul said to the early believers that he travailed in birth on their account, that Christ might be formed in them. From this it is quite clear that a work has to be done in every one who has been immersed. Indeed, the work of being formed into Christ's image only **begins** after immersion. I should like my young sisters to ponder this. “It is the will of God

concerning you that you be conformed to the image of his son.” Do not overlook the necessity for this conformity. Forgetfulness will deceive you to your ruin. Conformity to a given example cannot be attained by a passive indifference. It requires a very decided endeavour on the part of every one who shall ultimately stand approved of Christ.

Every one who is striving to attain this likeness to Christ — this perfection of character, **knows the fact**. Each one of you, my dear sisters, knows whether she is so striving — whether she is conscious of a yearning desire to be like Christ — to crucify the old desire of the flesh, and of the natural mind, and to live more under the power of Christ's commands, and to be animated by the same spirit.

It is a step in the right direction, when the necessity is perceived and recognised of our being conformed to the character of Christ, and if you set about this work in earnest, you will find much to help you.

You may find it very difficult, and many times you will feel almost despairing of success. But your difficulties have been all anticipated, and provided for. Your difficulties, and perhaps your failures, should only make you take more diligent heed to the Word, which is your chart and guide. You will find in the warning, “Take heed lest you fall short” a recognition of the danger of falling short after having started, owing to the difficulties in

the way; but, then, there is the cheering word of encouragement on the other hand. "Be of good cheer." "Stand fast." "Be strong in the Lord." "In due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." "If ye suffer ye shall also reign with him."

PLEASING OURSELVES

In trying to imitate the example of Christ, and to follow in his steps, that we may become assimilated to him, it will be well to study the various characteristics which he manifested. He tells us that he came not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him. Paul tells us that Christ "pleased not himself." You belong to Christ, and as he pleased the Father, and made it his meat and his drink to do his will, so you, in like manner, must imitate him in this respect. In this matter, young people, and perhaps, especially young sisters, have to be on their guard. In some circumstances — such as when in company — on special occasions — on holiday excursions, or in pleasant social gatherings, it is very easy to forego your own pleasure and hand it over to another, because the eyes of many are upon you, and it does not cost you any particular effort. There are many who would be willing to follow Christ, if they could do so in public, and be borne along by the approbation of those who look on; but the testing time of our loyalty to Christ is in every day life, when his service (the giving way for his

sake) is often against our desire and inclination, and when, in some cases, none but the Master himself would know how great an effort is required to submit to another's will for his sake. But you **must** accustom yourselves to this kind of submission one to another. If you would please Christ you must "consider one another to provoke unto love." What so likely to provoke unto love as a kind act or a kind word, or anticipating of another's wishes? This is true politeness. In the world there is a great show of politeness on the surface; and even this is only shown where things go smoothly and when all are receiving honour one from another. But let any affront be offered, any indignity practised, or any omission of what is thought due to one's position, and how instantly it is resented! It is in fact a point of honour with them to resent an injury or a slight. But it must not be so with you. You must bear patiently if you think you have been slighted, and rather overcome evil with good, by returning good for evil and continuing in the way of right doing. This you will be able to do if you are striving to please Christ; for you will remember that **he said** ye are my friends, **if ye do** whatsoever I command you, and he commands us: "Resist not evil." "Love your enemies."

The grappling with the difficulties which you will experience in carrying out this feature of the household of Christ, of pleasing

not yourself, will bring this satisfaction with it, that you will be able to recognise that you are on the right track, the **difficult** track, and you will be comforted when you remember that all the family of God are treading and have trod the same path. The continued practice of remembering what you ought to do under this head, and the courageous doing of it, will bring to you the sweetest of all reflections when your race is run and your warfare is over (and you know that might happen any day), that you have denied yourself present gratification to please Christ, and receive from him true and lasting joy.

CHANGED

There must of necessity be a very great contrast between the two conditions of one's life, the one in which the thinkings of the natural mind are in the ascendant, and the other that in which the mind of the Spirit is the controlling power. In the first condition, the mind is in an unchastened state, self-willed, and not subject to God and His authority. The thoughts do not rise to God with any intelligence; but are exercised merely upon created objects, being shaped and controlled and influenced by them in a variety of ways. God seems at a distance — He is in reality at such a period an unknown God. But when, by the entrance of the truth, the good news concerning what God has done in the past, and what He is going to do in the future, we

know God, or rather, as the apostle puts it, **are known of God** (because He takes hold of us by the gospel, and makes us partakers in His most glorious work), then a change sets in; we turn round, so to speak; set our back to the world, and our face towards the kingdom of God. We make the good beginning in being immersed; we thereby enter into covenant with God and His glorious Son, and from thenceforward we are new creatures.

The old nature, with which we were very well pleased, begins to be troublesome, and has to be crucified. This term **crucified** implies a most painful process. How many will be equal to the performance of that mighty achievement? Paul says, "They that are Christ's, have **crucified** the flesh with the affections and lusts." There is nothing required of us, my dear sisters, that we cannot perform, therefore if some of the commands of Christ and his apostles seem **very** hard to obey — remember that it is **possible** to obey them, however hard; but there is a **secret** in the matter. It is not possible for everyone to obey Christ's commands, neither is it possible for everyone to be saved. Christ has said, "**Except** ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God." If you bring the carnal mind into the service of Christ, you cannot obey his commands; you cannot please him. There is a preparation of the heart necessary

before it can be offered to the Lord as an acceptable offering. The offerings under the law (which were shadows and types for our instruction had to be washed and all the inwards cleansed before presentation to the Lord.) David prays "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Now in order to perceive the spirit of Christ's commands, you must be in this willing and obedient frame of mind. This necessitates your constant watchfulness in keeping under the thinkings of the merely natural mind. So long as you are in the present state, this conflict will last. You have to subdue the natural mind by substituting the ideas of the spirit, and allowing them to govern your actions. The apostle's words are, "That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your minds; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

How very dreadful it would be if any of you should fail of the great salvation, because you failed to see the necessity of having your affections set upon Christ and his affairs, and thereby failed to be the subject of that great change which characterizes every one that is born of God.

THE DAILY READING OF THE SCRIPTURES

Without the daily reading of the

scriptures, and meditation thereon, there is no chance of success in the endeavour to put on the new man. There is so much in us by nature to hinder and oppose the work, that we shall certainly be defeated if we do not use amply the aids within our reach in this life-long struggle. First of these aids is the diligent and attentive reading of the word — **daily**. Do not allow a day to pass without reading. You may think it does not much matter, or that you can make it up by reading a double portion tomorrow. It matters a great deal. In the first place, you miss the sustaining power for the day which you would have had if you had read, and you also miss the closer communion with God himself which is brought to you in His word; and the comfort and strength you would have enjoyed in the company of those who are undoubtedly presented to us in the Scriptures as the approved of God. Then if you try to read up, you cannot well digest so large a quantity of mental food; you are liable to have more than you can deal with in one day, and some of the precious words are sure to be overlooked. By far the better way is to **read every day**, and all the appointed portions if you can. They furnish variety and profitable food for thought by day and also by night, if you happen to have any waking moments. The daily reading of the Scriptures need not prevent you from reading other books that would be helpful to you; but be sure that what you read is really helpful. I have heard

of some professing the truth who make a practice of reading light literature — novels and periodical publications of a sensational character.

I cannot, my dear young sisters, too urgently beg of you to refrain from so injurious a habit. You might as well put poison into your food and expect to enjoy good health, as to indulge in such mental food and expect the spiritual welfare of a saint. If you are in earnest about securing Christ's favour, you will not hesitate to cut off that fleshly lust. You will feel repaid for doing so by the much greater ability you will possess to concentrate your mind upon the Scriptures, when unclouded by the highly-wrought images of merely fictitious and sensational stories, which only unfit the mind for grappling with the realities of life. What a very different effect is produced upon the mind by the reading of any of the histories recorded in Scripture.

You feel stimulated by them to courage and perseverance, even in the most obscure occupation of life, because you have your faith quickened in the direction of things unseen at present. You are reminded that your efforts are not in vain though no human eye witnesses them — that God regards those who fear Him, and has their names in remembrance. You are helped by the record of what others have done in the name and in the strength of the Lord, to realise that you also may be thus helped and,

in due time, acknowledged. You find the Scriptures — when you really give your mind to the study of them — in harmony with human experience, and suited to every day wants and necessities. If you are joyful, you find full expression to your joy, and a solid foundation for it. If you are sorrowful, you find in the Scriptures that sympathy and perfect response which you can find in no other book, and a comfort which alone can touch the unapproachable sorrow of an overwhelming affliction.

PRAYER

Next to the reading of the word, and accompanying it, is the necessity of prayer. If the daily reading of the word is a necessary element in the preparation of the heart, and in equipping us for the battle of life — the good fight of faith — prayer also, not only daily, but hourly must characterise the true and faithful follower of Christ. The reading of the word, and the meditation upon what we read, leads the thoughts to God, and the desire arises that we may be led and acknowledged by Him, as were His servants in the days of old. There are many prayers in the Scriptures, and especially in the Psalms that you can make your own, because they express your very thoughts and aspirations, and strong desires. If you are at any loss how to pray, study these prayers; try to realise the feelings they express; ponder the words and their meaning; utter

them as expressing your own request; make a practice of **uttering** the words of your prayer, instead of merely leaving them in your mind. You will find that this will help you to realise that you are speaking to God. Try to realise Him as a living, real person to whom you speak, who can hear what you say, and who does consider the words of your prayer, and who will answer you. Observe in the prayers we have recorded in Scripture that they were appropriate to the circumstances in which they were uttered. Moses, Abraham, David, Solomon, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Jesus himself — our great example — and the apostles, all prayed according to the circumstances in which they found themselves. This is very different from the heathenish practice of praying always a set form of prayer, or the Papal practice of saying so many prayers, that you must count your beads to know when you have said the requisite number. No! Prayer to Jehovah is the uttering before Him the homage of a reverent and grateful heart, and the asking of Him those things of which we stand in need. Our necessities vary as continually as our circumstances. Sometimes it is strength we require, to resist temptation; sometimes wisdom to guide our decisions; sometimes patience with those who annoy us, or in the suffering of wrong. We have many prayers expressed by Paul for the brethren and sisters of his day, which you will find most suit-

able now for presentation to God on your own behalf. Study them, use them, and you will realise in yourselves that result which Paul so earnestly desired when he prayed that the Colossians “might be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience, and longsuffering, with joyfulness.”

We do not always realise how much help there is to be derived from prayer. We are promised help if we ask it. But in these dark Gentile days, when everything is explained without reference to the God of heaven, we are apt to be unconsciously influenced by the surrounding unbelief — the more especially as God’s hand is veiled at present. We cannot point to direct answer to prayer openly seen and recognizable by everyone as in the days when the Spirit of God was visibly present as a witness, working with and confirming the words of the disciples. You must not be moved from the steadfastness of your faith and hope in God. Faith can see what the natural eye cannot. You know that God cannot lie. He has promised to hear and answer your prayers if presented by faith in the name of Christ. You must not conclude that because your prayer is not answered just as you wished or expected, therefore it is not heard and answered. God’s ways are not as our ways. He takes everything into account. This you cannot do, because you do not know what lies before you, and you may be mis-

taken as to what is best for you. He will not, cannot make any mistake, and you may rest satisfied that what he permits or appoints for you is right, though at present it may seem very wrong. Faith holds on in the dark, in strong assurance that in the end all will come out right. Never give up the great privilege of constant prayer. You will find it a source of strength, of comfort and peace, and in the close communion with the Father you will yet find the sweetest, the most satisfying and soul rejoicing experience that human heart can reach.

THE TRUTH IN PRACTICAL MANIFESTATION

Having perceived the truth in the love of it, and having realised the necessity for daily reading and prayer, that you may be built up in it, and firmly established on the true foundation, having God as your Father and the Lord Jesus Christ as your elder brother, and the good hope of sharing with him the glory and honour of the future age, it is well not to content yourself with a general determination, to obey Christ's commandments, but set about finding out some definite way in which you can manifest the truth in practical form, some way in which you can identify yourself with the work of Christ. There are many ways in which you can successfully do this. There are many forms of service in which you can take part. There is

the Sunday School. Can you take part in the teaching? If not, you may be able to attend the Young Women's Class, and help by your earnestness the work going on there. There is the distributing of finger-posts. Can you find time to help in that department of the work? There is room for more workers here, and I would just observe here that the number of sisters on the list at the present time is very small, compared with that of the brethren. It is a work that requires courage; but the courage comes with practice, when it is done "**for Christ's sake.**" Perhaps your occupation does not admit of your having time for this form of service. Well, you can help by proxy. Many of those who take part in this work would be glad to have a larger number of "Finger Posts" at their disposal — none of them have enough for their districts. You could help them in this matter by procuring according to your means what additional "Finger Posts" you may think well, and placing them at Brother Challinor's disposal, who would have them distributed for you, and thus you could identify yourself with this good work of sowing the seed.

There is another department of ecclesial work, specially calling the young sisters into service — that is the singing. You ought to recognise your duty in this matter. Whatever you **can** do, the Master requires of you. And it is the least you can do for him, who has done so much for

you. You ought to consider what part in the singing you can perform, and faithfully perform it. Even when you do not feel that you can sing, owing to cold or other disqualification, you ought to take your place. It does not come hard upon any particular voice when there is a goodly company to sing, and even if you cannot make a sound for the time being, your presence in your accustomed place contributes to the comfort of the rest. They do not suffer so much as they would if you were not with them. You will have done what you can in the circumstances to serve God by your presence. Also you will have helped to cheer your fellow labourers in the truth.

This is a matter which I hope the younger sisters will take hold of with earnest purpose. There is, or could be made, room on the platform on Sunday evenings for 10 or a dozen more than at present come up. Some have been discouraged because they have happened to come up once and could not find a seat. Do not be discouraged by anything in the shape of a difficulty. Try and try again. What we want to see is the seats all full of hearty co-operators, and if there is a vacancy, come up and fill it. It has a good effect upon all concerned to see the singers' seats well filled. It renders the service of praise more effective and much more of a pleasure to those who have to sustain the leading part; it enhances the heartiness of the service, and

presents also to the alien a more hearty co-operation in the work for which we come together, and can we doubt that such hearty co-operation is much more pleasing to God, to whom it is rendered, than when those who ought thus to help together are for their own pleasure scattered among the audience, where they cannot be of the same service in this particular matter? This does not refer to those who conscientiously cannot so help. They can serve in other ways. Try to help in this form of service — not only on practice nights, but on all occasions.

CHOICE OF COMPANIONS

Another very important matter affecting young sisters is their choice of companions. The company you keep, like the books you read, will go a long way in forming your character. You cannot help being influenced by those with whom you associate. There are many natural affinities which draw young people together, and render intercourse pleasurable; but there is need for great care that **pleasure** — mere gratification of the natural mind, or what is called pleasant company — does not bias your minds in this matter. You have been called to be saints, and you are not at liberty to form any friendships which are incompatible with your high calling in Christ Jesus. Even among those who profess the truth, you must distinguish between those whose society is

helpful and those who are of an opposite character. There are some who profess the name of Christ and pass current as brethren and sisters, who do not make you feel that they are such. They are not ready to speak of the hope which has brought us into fellowship.

They are ready enough to speak of the mere accessories, the meetings and the qualities of the various speakers, and any commonplace subject. You will not be helped in the race for eternal life by the companionship of such. You will rather be hindered and deceived to your hurt. For want of a hearty response to spiritual ideas, you will be discouraged from your attempts to give your conversation a profitable direction, and the tone of your own mind will be lowered in consequence.

Just as you would avoid foolish and injurious reading, because of its poisonous tendency, so be on your guard against forming friendships, which would have a similar effect upon your mind. If you can have the society of an earnest, loving companion in the truth, you will find in her society much comfort and help. Be sure that in this respect, you **give** as well as receive. Some people are unhappy and dissatisfied because they make the mistake of expecting others to minister to their gratification; but forget that they must contribute their part in the ministration. When this necessity is recognised, mutual profit is the result. Especially is this the case when

your companion is a brother, and no sister ought to make a companion of one who is not a brother, and one whom you anticipate will be your companion for life. You cannot be too careful in the selection of such a companion, or overestimate the importance of having in such a companion a true helper in the highest sense. See that you both regard its aims and ultimate object; see that your companion is a lover of Christ, and one who desires to please him. Have these important matters well understood now, so that a solid basis may be laid for after years, if life lasts. "Two cannot walk together unless they are agreed," and in no relationship of life is this more true than in that of husband and wife. If you wish to live a useful and harmonious life in the truth, choose a companion who is in earnest to please Christ, and who strives to act out his commandments. In that case, you will be able to continue the same policy of life after marriage as before it. If you seek to serve Christ before marriage, and strive always to let his claims weigh with you in every undertaking, you will **continue** so to do, and your companion being of the same mind, you will be able to do more instead of less, when you become one by marriage. Every brother and sister ought to begin their married life with this distinct purpose — the purpose of living as Christ's servants. For example, I know a brother and sister who on getting married, decided that they should always have a

spare room for the Lord, and they have acted on that principle for nearly a quarter of a century, and mean to keep it up while their probation lasts. If every brother and sister would do so, it would work well in a variety of ways. For one thing, many, whose spiritual needs would lead these to come to Birmingham, would be able to take advantage of such brotherly service, and this would result without doubt to the mutual profit of both the giver and the receiver. You cannot bless others without yourself feeling that it is blessed to

give. And you must always remember that the truth requires that we manifest its power in the spontaneous blessing of others, even as God blesses us of his own goodness in Christ Jesus, and not because of anything in us in the beginning to draw out his love to us. Be generous in all your plans for serving your Lord and Master, remembering that "he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully," and "the Lord loveth a cheerful giver."

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SECOND ADDRESS
TO THE
YOUNG WOMEN
OF THE
CHRISTADELPHIAN
ECCLESIA

Sister Roberts

read by
her husband

December, 1883

“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

“But let it be the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”

—1 PETER 3:3-4

SECOND ADDRESS TO THE YOUNG WOMEN OF THE CHRISTADELPHIAN ECCLESIA

by Sister Roberts

(read by her husband)

My Dear Sisters and Young Friends:

A whole year has rolled away since last we met together in similar circumstances. Our last meeting was held at the close of the year 1881, now we find ourselves in the first week of 1883.

Tonight, as on the last occasion, the meeting is specially convened for the benefit of the sisters who are young in years, and consequently young in the truth, the object being to stimulate and encourage those who are already faithfully working and to induce others to bestir themselves to take part in, or to increase by greater diligence their share in the toil while their day lasts.

We cannot do better, perhaps, in making a fresh start with the new year, than look back upon the year which has just gone, and ascertain whether it has been a satisfactory one to us individually. Try to recall your position at the beginning of last year. You cannot be now exactly what you were then. You are one year older, one year further on in the journey of life; you have added a year's experience to your history; you have had many privileges. Have you made the most of them? Have you been trading with your "talents" and increasing them? Are you nearer the mark of our high calling than you were a year ago? Has your course been steadily onward? Have you been

persistent and courageous in the path of duty, or have you been lax and forgetful? Sometimes mindful, sometimes not?

If it is important for men of business to balance up and ascertain how their affairs stand at the close of the year; whether they have made progress and occupy a satisfactory position; or whether, on the other hand, loss and failure have resulted from their year's endeavours, surely it is much more important for us to reckon up and examine our position; for the matter we have in hand is one of life and death. We have only one chance. Only one short mortal life in which to determine our fate — our status throughout the coming ages. We cannot live last year over again. We cannot recall yesterday to rectify what was wrong or deficient in that day. But we can redeem the future by a wise course in days to come. If the system upon which your present every-day life is framed is faulty, it is not in harmony with the precepts of Christ; you cannot be making progress. The way you are walking will not lead to life. The saints at the coming of Christ are represented as saying, "In the way of thy commandments have we waited for thee, O Lord." None but those who can say this will receive his approval.



AMY WILKES
(SIS. H. GALBRAITH)

ROBERT ROBERTS

SARAH J.
(SIS.

HIS
(SIS. R

from
1 Centenary, 1964.



JANE ROBERTS
(SIS. LADSON)

EUSEBIA ROBERTS
(SIS. FIRTH)

MOTHER
(SIS. ROBERTS, SEN.)

HIS WIFE
(SIS. JANE ROBERTS)

But doubtless there are some who can truly say in looking back, that the past year has been with them a year of progress. There are landmarks visible as they review the year's experiences. There have been triumphs and victories in the good fight of faith. They have added to their treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The light of the truth shines more clearly upon their path. The way of duty seems more plain — though not less difficult. They are more satisfied that they are in the way of life.

FOR EVERY EFFECT, A CAUSE

Well, it does not come by chance that some have made progress in the things of the Spirit while others have not. For every effect there is a cause. If we desire to produce a certain effect, we take pains to ascertain how it is to be produced; and we try and try again, till at last our efforts are crowned with success. Those who have made progress during the past year have doubtless succeeded in doing so, because among other things, they have commenced the year with the **determination** that they should do so. That **determination** was an important element in their success. They realised, perhaps from past failure, that it does not do to be easy in this matter, and that unless a determined attitude is taken to accomplish spiritual ends, failure is inevitable.

Then again, those who resolved that they would give diligent heed to their way, did not make or keep those good resolutions in their own

strength. It is necessary for us to seek and to find our help and our strength in God. Those who trust in themselves, or in mere human support, are sure to fail, but they who truly seek God, are helped to ultimate success.

In our readings in the Old Testament, we have many instances of this. How the fearful Nehemiah, a captive in a strange land, yet trusted in God, and boasted that his God — the God of Israel — was with them that put their trust in Him. And God did help him. Many of the kings of Judah made manifest by their prayers to God, and His direct answers, that God is indeed a living and true God. King Asa, in the beginning of his reign, made God his trust, appealing to Him when surrounded by his enemies, and saying, "Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help whether with many, or with them that have no power; help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on Thee, and God did help him, and a message was sent him from God to say, "The Lord is with you while ye be with Him, and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you."

Here is the secret of much strength. Some of you, I doubt not, dear sisters, have found as King Asa did, that God does help the weak, and gives them strength to carry out the resolution formed to do His will, though difficult, trying, and arduous. There has been an evident increase among us in the desire to be actively engaged in some specific branch of the work of Christ, more especially

those phases of it requiring the sacrifice of time and leisure. Those who have given themselves to the work in this way, in the spirit of service to Christ, have assuredly been in the path of progress.

ONWARD AND UPWARD

We have a goal to which we are advancing. We have a standard to which we wish to attain. "Onward and Upward" is truly our watchword. If we linger in the attractive but destructive surroundings out of which we are called by the Gospel, we are hampered if not altogether hindered in our progress. We are called to "come out" of the world, and to be "not of it". Nothing surely can better help us to go forth outside the camp, than to take part in an active way in some shape or form, in bringing the light of the truth to bear upon the surrounding darkness. Our very act in testifying to the truth, in opposition to the darkness, if done in the spirit of meekness, is also testimony to the world that we are not of it. The world knows us not if we are in the right way. Those who have taken part in handing round 'The Finger Posts' feel this. Their experience is not encouraging in a certain way. They have to encounter many dark looks, besides surly remarks, and the thought, too, sometimes, that many of the papers may never be read. Never mind. It is "God who giveth the increase". That is His department. Ours is to sow the seed. We never know when we hand a Finger Post to a stranger, or drop it in a letter-box, where

that seed may yet germinate. And even if nothing came of it, we have done our duty. Remember Noah, a preacher of righteousness. Humanly speaking, nothing came of his preaching; but that is a mistake. He saved himself by it. He was saved because he was righteous, and part of his righteousness was to do his duty — to do what God had appointed. He obeyed like Abraham, and we must do the same. My dear sisters, shall we not do a great work if we secure for ourselves the favour of Him who is to be our Judge? Even if they receive not our testimony, it matters not. Our testimony, as in the sight of God, is precious to Him, and is remembered to our account at the judgment seat, as truly as Rome's iniquities are remembered against her, thought forgotten by the world, who is in league with her.

LABOUR "IN HOPE"

It is ours to hold forth the light, and to be lights in the dark places of this midnight hour, if all our labour should prove ineffectual upon the outside world. But we labour not without hope, for we are assured by brother Paul that our labour in the Lord shall not be in vain, and we may find (though now it appears not) when the great muster day comes, that some of those who shall be accounted jewels have been developed and polished by our humble endeavours. No doubt the honour will be shared by all who have faithfully "done what they could". Let us notice the use which the apostle

wishes us to make of this hope and this assurance. It is to prevent us being "weary in well-doing", and to make us steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Now we all feel the need of something that has the power to do this. Without some outside assistance we could not keep steadfast and persevering in a work which every day requires self-denying effort, and which most of the time seems of no use; because people by whom we are surrounded, are so callous, and, if interested for a little, soon relapse into their former indifference. So much is this the case, that if we were to be guided by the results — the present results of our labour — we should assuredly give up in despair. But the incentive which is held out to us carries us beyond the present. It leads us constantly in prospect to the time when Christ shall have returned, and the thought that what we are doing now will be inspected then; will have great power. Let us realise that our work will then be rated at its true value by him who invented the work we are engaged in — whose eyes have been upon it all the time — who spent his own life upon the earth in a similar service, in faithfulness to his Father. The thought that he regards our service must surely give the conviction that it is not a vain work; and this conviction nerves us to the doing of it, and keeps us to it, amid the most discouraging circumstances.

SEIZE YOUR OPPORTUNITIES

Those who are in the happy

position of being able to report well of progress during the past year, have been trading to profit with what they have been entrusted with. They have been diligent. None of us are entrusted with very great wealth in any direction at present, and for that reason there is the more need for diligence in using what is in our power. Making the most of little opportunities. A fitting word of wisdom can sometimes be edged in by one who has not the opportunity of doing more. Everyone has opportunities, though some may not see their chance. Everyone sees where their opportunities have been when they are gone forever, and they are face to face with death. How often in such circumstances is it said with awful earnestness, "O, if only I could have another chance, I would do differently". It is very profitable to view our situation from this standpoint. Imagine yourself now told that you must stop just where you are — not another stroke of any kind of work added. Consider, whether you would be quite satisfied to do so, and to hand in your report. You ought to be satisfied. Paul was satisfied. Dr. Thomas was. We are commanded to be "always ready", and if we are not, there is something defective — something that wants rectifying. You will probably find that you have made resolutions enough to do the right thing; but you have not succeeded in carrying out what you resolved upon. The fact that some succeed shows that success is possible. It is true we are all differently constituted, and it may be easy for one

to succeed in one department where it would be difficult for another; still, the one who finds it easy here, has got a difficult task somewhere else. The principle is the same in every case, and because we are different in our mental constitution, our circumstances as greatly, vary. We may rest assured that what we are asked to do we are equal to the performance of, if we accept the guidance which God has provided for us in the Scriptures.

HAVE THE RIGHT RULE OF LIFE

It is everything with us to have the right rule of life before our minds. Natural and spiritual things are for the most part antagonistic in their tendencies. For the most part truly, because there is a place for the natural as well as the spiritual. The great object to be attained is to have them in their proper relations one to another.

There can be no mistake as to which is to have the pre-eminence in our hearts and lives. Our Lord and Master is our authority here, as in everything. "One thing is needful", said he to Martha; and that would be his answer to many of his sisters now if they could hear his voice in reply to many anxieties. Many of the things they think very needful to be done, he would not think needful, that is to say, not indispensable. It is not needful in many cases to bestow all the care upon the things of the present which many — nearly everybody — does. We have to study to get a truer view of the pre-

sent than is presented by our external surroundings, otherwise the sisters of the 19th century are just in as much danger as was Martha of the 1st, of giving too much prominence to that which is of a merely passing nature, and leaving too little time and energy for the things of Christ. How many lament that they have not time to read, and the consequent lack of spiritual vigour. They wish the blessed hope of the glorious time that is coming were greater power with them in every day life, and they have to acknowledge that they do not find time to read as they could wish, yet if any one of that class were to be laid on a sick bed, with the prospect of leaving earthly things for ever, she would see that these earthly things had held too high a place in her thoughts; that less service to the present, with its fleeting concerns, would have sufficed, and she would now have been better prepared for yielding up her mortal life, had she given only a little more of her time to getting acquainted with what she will be face to face with when she emerges from the grave to which she is hastening. She will be likely to think and to say, as I have heard it said in such circumstances, "Oh, if I had my time to live over again I should give more time to reading the Bible", and, again, in another case, "There are many things I should like to do if I had another chance. I wish I could have another chance."

ONLY ONE CHANCE

Well, dear sisters, we have but

one brief life. Today will never return. There is no safety but in making each day just what we shall wish we had made it when we come to look back upon it from a dying bed, or from the judgment seat. Our life is short — no-one knows how short. It is short even at the longest. The young are apt to think there is plenty of time, and that when they get older, they will begin to be more in earnest. The young sister in Christ would do well to be on her guard against this fallacy. You have a great advantage in receiving the truth in your youth, if you wake up to it. Most of you who are young hope to live to be old, if the Lord delays his coming. What age would you like to live to? Fifty? Sixty? Seventy? Eighty? What could you hope to do for Christ at that age? If you put off serving him till you are older, the chances are you will never do anything at all. It is a delusion to think you will serve him by-and-bye — later on in life, when the things of the present will be less attractive. Remember, you will be in the future what you are now, in an intenser degree, according to the direction you are growing in. If you are unconcerned now about being engaged in the service of Christ, you will be more so when you grow old, and you will be less able to begin a different course then, for your energies will be less vigorous, and you will more easily succumb to the difficulties in the way of self-denial. On the other hand, if you are now striving to serve Christ, or are making up your mind that you shall, without delay, proceed to make use of your

opportunities, however small, the probability is, that if you live to be old, you will find yourself still and more actively in his service — busy even in advanced age in some way or other, showing your love, and faith and hope. A life-long accumulation of service will then stand to your account, and you will be able to stand in the day of inspection. You will not be ashamed, for you know you have not been idle or negligent. They may have only been little deeds that you have been able to do, still, you have always been doing the little that was possible. What a satisfaction in retrospect, and what a joy to hear the Master say, "She hath done what she could!" What a reward for present self-denial is the prospect of such an ending to mortal toil! Who would not make the attempt to win in such a warfare?

MANY DIFFICULTIES, DOUBTLESS

There are, doubtless, many difficulties to be encountered which are peculiar to youth, and it is to be feared many are hindered in the path of wisdom by these difficulties. It is well for the young sister to recognise at the outset that the path to the kingdom of God is not a flowery one. There are green spots for the weary pilgrim to be met with here and there; but these refreshing places are only arrived at through the rough and difficult paths of daily duty. Do not make the mistake of expecting the way to be pleasant. If the young pilgrim thinks that by making a wise choice, and picking her steps as it were, she may manage to keep in

the sunshine, and with pleasant surroundings all the time, she is apt to be discouraged, when she finds that much cloud and darkness at times beset her. She is apt to think there is something wrong, because she had imagined that if she tried to do right, she would be sure to be happy, and make others happy, too. And, instead of being happy, she is often very much the reverse. It is well, therefore, at the start, to know what you are to expect, and much depends upon a correct view of this matter.

A WRONG PATTERN

A young sister, in being introduced to the ecclesia, where there are many young people besides herself, is apt to think that she will have in these a pattern how she ought to act, and that she will be safe in doing as they do. The consequence is that in many things she will be misled; for not many of the called are acting in a way to secure their being **chosen** at last, and while thinking she is copying one who is on the way to eternal life, she may only be following an example that will ultimately prove her ruin, because many are deceiving themselves and others, whose true position will only be made manifest at the judgment seat.

If she would find true help — the right pattern — she must seek it where it can, without doubt, be found. The Scriptures alone in our day are to be trusted as an unerring guide; therefore, the daily reading of them is indispensable. There is no chance for those who do not

read the Scriptures. The things of the present are so incessant and pressing in their claims upon our attention, that without this antidote — this rectifying power — the mind, however naturally gifted, must succumb to the power of the present considerations and present pleasures. Apart from the reading of the word, regularly and prayerfully, the young aspirant after eternal life will find she has undertaken an impossible task. In the Scriptures she has her pattern, her guide, her model, by which to shape her life. She will have to be very determined to get this daily help, and the effort will have to be kept up, otherwise the apparent urgency of other things will crowd it out of the programme. Let it, therefore, be a fixed rule of life with her, that come what may, she will have her daily reading of the Scriptures. Let some other matter stand on one side, if it comes to be a question of which is to be done and which left undone — the reading or something else. She will find if she acts on this principle, that what some have pronounced impossible, is not only possible, but at last delightful — the one green spot in the day. We all know how things do get put on one side when anything very important happens. Now this daily reading of the Scriptures ought to be regarded in the light of one of the most important things that could happen to mortals in our day. A message from heaven. Shall you take time to hear it? It is more likely that you will win the battle of life if you do.

Ten minutes, quarter of an hour, or at the most twenty minutes, will suffice to get into your mind something that will remain with you as a power for the coming day. You will be more ready to remember what you ought to do in any circumstance of difficulty if you have listened to the Spirit's voice in this form, than if you have not. You will be better able to rule your temper during the day if you have than if you have not. You may sometimes have to lament that your opportunities for serving Christ are few. Here is one way in which you can serve him. Sit at his feet and listen. He commended Mary for doing this, when her busy, bustling sister wanted her to come and do something else. You may, by the power of his words, glorify God by your manifest subjection to his commands; and the constant reading in the Scriptures of what others have done by faith in God, will no doubt lead you to discover ways and means of serving that you had not thought of.

COMPANIONS

There is one great danger to which young sisters are exposed, and that is the companionship of the young, even in the truth. Folly is so natural to youth, that it is next to impossible for the young to get out of it by themselves. They require help. Next to reading, the most important help is proper companionship. It cannot be too strongly impressed upon the young disciple that she is not too young to obey the commands of Christ, and that if she is to secure his favour

and friendship, she must be careful in this respect. Whatever helps you in this direction is to be sought after. Whatever hinders is to be avoided. There are two ways of carrying out this wise rule. You can leave the society which you find frivolous and vain. But this is not enough. You ought to be brave enough to speak to your companions upon the things which constitute our hope. The day's reading will give you a ready way of doing this. Why not introduce profitable conversation among the young, as well as with the old? Are you to be shamed of your good resolve, because you may be laughed at for being of a serious turn of mind, as it will be called? If you are wise, you will disregard this reproach, and persevere in your endeavours to make wisdom rule among the young. In introducing topics of a profitable nature, do not be afraid to explain that you do so in order that you all may be helped to do what all probably feel and know they ought to do, and to occupy yourselves in a way that will be well pleasing to God, and that you shall not regret at last. If this may not be, rather be silent than join in foolish talking, which is forbidden. You need not be unsocial on this account; but you can choose your company, and you can keep out of company that is hurtful. The young sisters will find it of advantage to get into the company of those who are older than themselves, when they can avail themselves of that privilege, so that they may accustom themselves to sober ways, and by this means they will acquire the power to engage

the attention of their younger companions, and to sustain the effort which this may require. They must be on their guard when in the company of those who are of their own age, not to be drawn into the flip-pant and smart ways of worldly young people, whose manners indicate a total lack of reverence for God or man. It is some time before worldly ways are got rid of, even by those who desire to do so. Be courageous in this matter. You know what is required of you by the Master, who is now your Lord, and will shortly be your Judge.

PEACE OF MIND

Nothing will make you happier at the close of the day than the thought that you have been courageous for him — that is to say if you are truly his. If you have really given yourself to him, and have not merely joined the ecclesia so that you might pass muster as a sister. Some will prove at last to be mere wood, hay and stubble. Such will not continue, if they even begin in the way of wisdom. The parable of the sower explains to us how it is that some who begin in seemingly a right way, do not hold on. They are hindered by the difficulties, and give in when they find that before wearing the crown they must carry the cross. But some will receive the good seed in the right spirit, prepared to go where and to do what their Lord commands. “They bring forth fruit with patience, they endure to the end”. These are they who trim their lamps daily, whose light shines with a steady brightness,

always ready to reflect the truth in some shape or form — in testimony for its maintenance against error, or in rejoicing in the hope which has been enkindled by its loving reception. They are also the class who take the means to have the seed sown in their hearts well watered, both in the attendance of public meeting, and in the private reading and study of the Word. No wonder that the seed withers in some hearts. It has been planted down among so many thorns that it is choked, and the thorns, or things of the present, receive all the moisture, and grow accordingly. The two classes have always existed from the beginning, and they exist today. We cannot always distinguish them while they are in course of development. They require time to be manifested; but meantime the process is going on in each case which will ultimately ripen — in the one case, resulting in acceptance with joy unspeakable, and in the other with rejection in anguish unavailing. No one will be rejected but the disobedient, who might by taking heed have been among the joyfully accepted. Be careful, then, that nothing is left undone by you which you can possibly bring to bear to secure this endless life of well-being which will bring you everything you deem desirable now, or could possibly wish to possess. “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” is the language of the true child of God, and at every stage of life this is the language of earnest desire to do the things that please Him. Get into the right way yourself — be sure you are in it, and then see what you

can do to help others in it. Continue in this endeavour, however long your day may last, and you will not be found lacking when you are called upon to give an account of your stewardship.

COMPANION FOR LIFE

No sister will treat this subject with indifference who has regard to the ultimate issues of life. It is a subject which has often been mentioned, and one would think must be well understood, and yet we are constantly hearing of sisters making alliances with those who are not in the truth. Even during the year that has just gone, we have had cases of this direct disregard of apostolic command, not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. A sister who contracts such a partnership is laying up for herself untold sorrow in the future. She is sure to be greatly hindered in her endeavours to fulfil the law of Christ, and the chances are, as has actually happened in almost every case where a sister has married an alien, she will be turned entirely out of the way. Let the young sister be most careful not to form even an ordinary friendship with any who is not a brother; but above all not to consent to be united for life to a man who is not a brother. Do not deceive yourselves with the idea that it will come all right after marriage. If a sister can help an unbelieving friend it is while yet unengaged. Do not trust to promises of putting matters right after. The matter is too serious to be left to after chances. If there is a chance of your influencing such a

friend, you have a greater chance of doing so if you withhold your friendship until he has first yielded obedience to the truth, then he would be in a position to be your true companion and helper. So much of your future happiness and welfare depends upon a wise decision in such matters, and duty to Christ is so clear in the matter that you cannot be too earnestly entreated to give it your most serious consideration, and as you sow now you will afterwards reap.

PRAYER

Another secret in the growth of the good seed in youthful, but good soil, and next in importance to the reading of the Word, and indeed, to be placed along with it is daily prayer to God. At first it is not possible to realise how great a help this is, nor how great the privilege of being permitted to approach God, as a child of His; in confidence that He will hear and answer our petitions. It is generally some dire affliction or strait to which she is brought that brings the young sister to this, and sooner or later this experience of affliction and chastisement is the lot of all who are born into the family of God. It will be much easier and a sweeter comfort to come to God in affliction, if from the start we make it a rule to pray to Him daily. The very coming to Him, in the spirit of submission, in supplication for forgiveness and guidance, will give tranquility to the mind — a gladness that there is some one very great who cares for you, and

who has promised great things in the future, and asks you to share them. Your knowledge of God will grow, and while your reverence for Him will increase with that knowledge, you will prize more and more the unspeakable boon of being allowed — nay, invited to come near to Him in the name of Jesus. The oftener you take advantage of this invitation, the more likely you will be to appreciate it, until your approaches to God will become seasons of communion, in which you will rise much higher than you could at first, for now you will be able to realize more of His greatness and majesty and of His exalted supremacy as the Creator of all things, His surpassing goodness in all that He has purposed for us in the future, in having called us to be co-workers with Him in His glorious scheme to redeem this earth and its inhabitants, and to fill it with His glory. You will better realise to what a high and holy calling you are called by the gospel, and you will better realise who it is that has called you, and what He requires of those whom He has thus called. And while you will never be beyond the need of all the care which you found necessary at first (for the heart is deceitful, and we are always liable to be drawn aside by the allurements which appeal to the old man of the flesh), still these exercises of reading and prayer to God form a powerful aid to the subjugation of the old man, and the development of the new.

HELP IN TROUBLE

And when trouble comes to you — real afflictive trouble, you will find that there is true help to be found in prayer to God. He does help, He does sustain, He does comfort in trouble. You may think many grievous thoughts about the trouble, how it might have been avoided, and that you have brought it on yourself, and fear that in your case God has had nothing to do with it, and fail to receive the help you so much need, because you do not ask or expect it. Now, in whatever way the trouble may have come, if you belong to God, it has not come by chance. He guides your affairs. He plans your good and your evil. You must have evil. We all scheme to keep out of it, and if we could manage it we should never have any trouble, and we should then not be suitable for God's purpose at last. Human nature requires to be chastened that it may be purified and made meet for the Master's use. It is God's plan, because in His wisdom it is the best, the only plan whereby this erring nature may be perfected for the glorious destiny He has in store for it. Let not the young sister then be cast down when trouble comes, but rather recognise it as God's fatherly dealing with her. Let her seek His presence and ask His strength. He has promised it. It is in times of weakness we require it. Trust Him when things look dark. His power is equal to letting in the light upon your path. "Who is there among you that feareth God and walketh in darkness and hath no light, let him trust in the

name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Wait upon Him, He will hear you and answer you, but perhaps not as you expect or wish at present, still have faith that all will be for the best, though it seems otherwise. His word cannot fail, and that is our confidence. "Come unto me". "Look unto Me". "Cast thy burden on the Lord and He will sustain thee". All who trust Him find it so in the long run.

ORDINARY TIMES

While this is true in a special sense when we are exercised in sore affliction, it is true at all times that God careth for us, and that He wishes us, and asks us, to cast our cares upon Him. He wishes us to acknowledge Him in all our ways. Whatever we undertake, our daily routine of duties or more perplexing engagements should all be undertaken as in His sight. His blessing and guidance asked and desired all the day long. In this spirit we feel that everything we undertake is done to Him, and we shall assuredly often realise that He hears and answers our prayers. When things come out differently to what you purposed or desired, wait before you conclude that it is a pity it is so. Most likely in course of time you will be able to see that His way was best, and He knows better than we do what is best for our ultimate good, and that it is the true standard of goodness. This life is so short that we make a great mistake if we measure the goodness of our experience by what it brings us here. We shall probably

find when we come to look back upon our mortal experience, that, but for the dark and sorrowful passages in it, we should never have attained the crown of life. How well it is for us that God, in His wisdom, has hidden from us what our experience here is to be, and graciously unfolds it to us day by day as we are able to bear it.

If it had been otherwise arranged, and each one had received her programme of all she had to go through from the time she entered the straight gate which leadeth unto life, until the day on which she was to finish her account, it is to be feared very few would feel that they could go through it, but would give it up as an impossible task, and so it does prove in many cases, where the difficulties deter from, instead of impelling to, active exertion. If no progress is made from the time the armour is put on till the time it is put off, the ability to cope with trial and difficulty is never developed. On the other hand, if we obey as far as we can see our way, and seek to know the right way, this practice increases the power to do and to endure what is commanded, and what the young beginner would pronounce impossible is daily practised by the steady student, and brave soldier in the heavenly warfare. How wise, then, to seek daily that help which alone can enable the weak to be strong for the battle of life, and will eventually lead to victory.

MARRIED CARES

Then there comes a stage further

on in life when the sister in Christ, who is still young it may be, finds herself surrounded with many cares from which the young unmarried sister is free. It will be good for her if she has been able to make a right start in the married state, with the companionship of one of like precious faith, for then she can better regulate her life and her house, with a view to making the truth the guiding and predominating motive power in all she undertakes. She will be happy in this most important relationship, if she finds in her husband a helper and a stimulator in divine directions, which he will be if he is a true brother, and not a merely nominal one. It is one of the most pleasant experiences with which one can meet, to find husband and wife happily united on the basis of mutual love naturally, and under the power of the truth individually besides. Sometimes it happens that the husband is very earnest in the truth — trying, in all things to be subject to it, and the wife is not. She has perhaps yielded obedience more for the sake of being at one with her husband, than because she realised the goodness of the message which the gospel brings, and the responsibility of those who have enrolled themselves as candidates for the blessings of the future age, and so she is lacking in enterprise, and is not so helpful as she would be, if she rejoiced, like her husband, in the glorious hope of eternal life in an incorruptible body, and in the highest and most desirable companionship. And in so far as this is the case, her husband is deprived of her valuable

and warm-hearted co-labourship. Sometimes the wife is the one who is warm-hearted in the truth, and the husband is not. The sister in that case is at a great disadvantage. She is without that stimulating help which the husband undoubtedly ought to be to his wife, “nourishing and cherishing her even as the Lord the Ecclesia”, seeking her highest good by taking the initiative, and encouraging her in every good work. She who has the advantage of having made a right start, and had the companionship of a true brother, has all the more responsibility attaching to her position. “To whom much is given of them much is required”. She has as it were unlimited scope for service in the truth, according to her circumstances in life. If we lived in times of persecution, no doubt we should often imagine how zealous we should be if we only had liberty to carry out our desires. We should think to begin with, if we could only secure a Bible all to ourselves, how we would study it — how we should ponder its words — its precepts, and its promises. How we should try to remember the exact words of David when he was in affliction, and his songs of thanksgiving when he was delivered out of trouble. How we should treasure every opportunity of snatching a look at the forbidden book, and make sure that we had a “thus saith the Lord” for all we did. How we should think, too, what we should be prepared to do for Christ’s sake, if only we had a home, and an ecclesial circle in which to serve

him without the fear of being put in prison. It is good for us sometimes to think of these things, and to contrast our surroundings with what it might be if the "Man of sin" still had the power to prevail against the saints as he formerly had.

AT LIBERTY

Now, you dear sister, in the favoured position you occupy, are at liberty to show how you **choose** to spend the opportunity thus afforded. In these times of liberty, you can do as you like. You are at liberty to serve Christ, or you can serve yourself. You can serve him little or you can serve him much. Remember you ought to be an example — you ought to show by your example how you estimate your privilege, and how you choose to use it. If you rightly estimate the advantages of your position you will think of this; you will stir yourself up to do things for Christ because you are at liberty to do it, and because you know that you will surely regret it if you do not. It is a good plan to dedicate yourself every morning to God and His service, asking His guidance and strength. "Give thy strength unto thy servant". So prays David, and every night reckon up whether you have faithfully done what you could. You will almost be sure to find that you have not done all you purposed or wished, but if you have striven all day to do the will of God you have been redeeming the time, and the day will stand inspection at last. Where you have failed you will be warned for

the future, and where you have erred let it be confessed and forgiven. Day by day, day by day, in this way, and step by step, you will at last arrive at your last day, as some of our number have done this year, when your race will be run, and your warfare will be over, and the victory will be won. Be sure that you are not satisfied with less than is possible. We are told to be **perfect**. We are by no means perfect when we begin the race. We have much to learn, and we have to acquire the power to put in practice what we learn. Still, we are told to be perfect — to go on unto perfection. We read of some who were said to be perfect and upright before God. God said to Abraham, "Walk before me and be thou perfect". Abraham believed God, and he showed his faith by his works. We are called upon to do the same; to be the children of Abraham, to be perfect, as he was. "He staggered not through unbelief; but was strong in faith".

SHOW YOUR FAITH

We ought to act as if we believed God in the things He has promised — also in obeying him. The more you try to practice obedience — that is doing things because God has commanded them — the more you will realise the truth of what the apostle John says, that "His commandments are not grievous". You will find that you can do what you thought it impossible to do, and, in your privileged position, you ought to venture beyond what others dare, because you are at liberty to do it if you are

courageous enough to do it. Your love for Christ, and your desire to have his approval when He comes, will suggest many ways in which you can turn your liberty to account. If you make up your mind that you will use your liberty to fellowship his sufferings, to carry his cross, and to be with him in all you do, you will be able to help those who are less fortunately situated, by your example. If they see you set light by the things of the present world, that the things pertaining to the truth may be attended to, they will feel stimulated by your courageous example. If they know that you make it your choice, and your practice to give heed to the voice of wisdom in the scriptures daily, they will be helped in their endeavour to do the same. You may be so situated that you have very little time for deliberate reading, because of the multitude of duties that your family and household and perhaps business, demand of you. Still, you feel and know that you must read some every day, that the lamp may burn steadily, and that you may with all readiness meet the various emergencies of life. You know that your final success depends upon it, and you must have it.

INGENIOUS INVENTION

You will have this reading by some ingenious invention, if it is not to be had any other way. A little at a time perhaps, but you will have it. A little extra, too, if possible — that is, a little enriching to the mental furnishing beyond the daily prescribed portion which is

absolutely necessary for existence. Such books as Eureka, for instance: is it possible for a busy mother ever on her own initiative to attain to the reading and understanding of it? The mind that has received the ideas contained in such a book, or had the ideas contained in it passed through the brain, is in a very different condition from the one who never has. If you would like to have your mind opened up to a higher preception of what God has purposed for you in the future, and how He has been unfolding His plan in the past, let your ambition be to know what that wonderful book contains. A sentence or two at a time will supply you with food for the day when you cannot get more, and there are many ways by which such an apparently impossible task is to be accomplished. Only be in earnest in your desire for the knowledge it contains. That is the first requisite. Then your ingenuity will bring it about. I have heard of many ways. One sister used to read a sentence or two, then go on with her work, thinking about what she had read, then take another chance as soon as possible for another sentence or two in the same way resuming her work. I have it suggested to me that I should tell of another sister who keeps the volume open on her bedroom mantelpiece, so that while dressing, or attending to little matters about the room, she can cast her eye on the page, and in this way carry away a valuable amount of information and food for reflection, and also for conversation.

The same plan might be adopted with reading the Bible or any other book, where it is difficult to get time to sit quietly down without interruption. Several classes have been formed, too, now, for the reading of Eureka, so that anyone who can spare an hour away from the scene of household duties can have the advantage of hearing it read and commented upon. A true sister who appreciates her liberty in Christ, and has the opportunity, will not fail to gain all the information of this sort that is within her reach; for the more she knows of the wind of the spirit, the greater her power in every spiritual direction. The things pertaining to the present life are so urgent in their demands, that if you give in to them, you will have no time or opportunity for taking in and assimilating the things of the spirit.

RECOGNISE THE SITUATION

You have to recognise the situation, and frame your life accordingly. Something must be left undone. Some give the preference to the mere passing requirements of every-day life. They tax themselves to get all the supposed necessary things done. And they, and their houses and children, look like it. Everything is in what is called "apple-pie order". Much time is bestowed on each department, and the verdict is that they have not a minute to spare for reading. It takes them all the time to get through. They must have the children looking nice, and they cannot bear a spot or stain anywhere

on their furniture. What shall we eat and what shall we drink, and how shall we best set out the delicious things we contrive, to please the palate, and wherewithal shall we be clothed, are the all-absorbing themes with them, and any interruption to this regular round of self-imposed slavery is a cause of irritation and loss of temper. I know of one sister who regretted much when she came to die that she had spent her time in this way, and said if she could have her time over again, she would give more time to reading, and especially to reading the Bible. I knew another with whom it was just the opposite. The Scriptures were her constant study and comfort. She gave them an early place in the daily programme, and the future in consequence was an ever present reality to her. She was content to have things in the present befitting a stranger (one not at home) and a pilgrim (one passing through), and when her time came to die, she was ready to lay down her weary head in prospect of a glorious resurrection to a permanent and perfect state of things. Take for instance now, a sister who is delicate in health. She is likely to take a sober view of things. She is not able to do this and that, that perhaps she would like to do, and she says, "I am not able to do so and so. I can manage without", and she gets along. She cannot go through such an elaborate programme as her stronger sister, and she resigns herself to it. She is perhaps forced to have seasons of quiet rest. In these she can read a little and meditate upon what she has read,

and she is inwardly furnished and enriched. Now why should a busy sister wait until forced by illness to take time to read and think? If she would stop to consider, she might as well, and much better, take a little time — make a little time, for taking in the wisdom that is to guide her in the way that leadeth unto life — content to get along in other things in a middling way. Let her make sure of that as a first necessity, and she will be helped to find out what the things are that she can leave out.

NOT OF THE WORLD

Many of the things that worldly women think essential are non-essential with us. And here comes one great advantage of not having friends of this world. By not having worldly friends, we are at liberty to do our part better. Worldly friends are a snare. They look at things from the opposite side from what a woman does who is striving to please Christ. Their thought all the while is what will commend itself to the good taste of the present evil world, and in most cases what a woman of the world would commend and admire is what the true sister cannot. The only safe course is to refrain from friendships with the world, and if you do you will find your way wonderfully relieved from the hampering tyranny of conventionality. You feel outside “society”, so called, and you rejoice in your freedom. Your chief anxiety, too, is to be approved of Christ when he comes, and this strong sentiment will continually come to your aid. Your

dress may not be fit for the promenade, but it is fit to visit the poor in, and for the purposes of the truth generally. You desire to be about your Lord’s business. You are serving him in whatever you do, whether directly or indirectly. “Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever you do — do all to the glory of God”. If in such common place matters as eating and drinking, then in everything else that pertains to this life you can serve and glorify God. If you make this your rule, you cannot be friends with those who are of the world, for your aims will be different, and you cannot afford to give the time and attention to the things of the present which they think necessary. For this reason you will not be regarded favourably by the friends of the world; they will not understand you; they cannot understand you, and you must be content to be misunderstood. God knows your endeavour to please him. Your Lord and Master sympathises with you; for he underwent the same experience and he will be with you and help you. He will give you courage to bear the askance, and perhaps derisive, glance when your neighbours see that you have courage to disregard their standard of what the purpose or object of life ought to be. His words, which you delight to read daily, will be in your mind, a store of ready admonition and counsel, as to your behaviour in all circumstances, whether adverse or otherwise, and you know he has said “If my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done

unto you". If his words abide in you, your requests are likely to be such as he can grant. We can have this confidence that he hears the prayers of those who abide in him, and obey his commandments.

GO FORWARD, WITH MIND STORED

So let the sister who is bent upon pleasing Christ, go forward in the assurance that he is with her, and in that confidence she will astonish even herself at what she will be able to do. With a mind stored with the truth, in loving and longing anticipation of the time shortly to come, when Christ himself will be manifested, she will not quail before any of the tests to which every child of God must be subjected before being pronounced fit for the kingdom of God. She will be ready with her testimony to those who are outside, to whom she may have access. Benevolently making opportunities for their benefit, not caring if she be considered weak-minded or too strong minded. She wishes to earn at her Lord's mouth the favourable verdict that "she has done what she could", and she is only satisfied when she can conscientiously say this of herself. Not that she will ever reach the time when she will have no weakness to lament or shortcoming to regret; but the colour of her daily life will partake of this constant desire and aim. This was the Apostle Paul's attitude in the truth; he says, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

PERFECTION

This pressing toward the mark indicates a definite object in view. Paul prayed that the brethren might be pleasing in God's sight — perfect in all things doing His will. He desired the **perfection** of the believers. We are often exhorted by Him to be perfect. Christ himself taught his disciples to follow a certain course in life that they might be perfect. The Apostle James also exhorts to the same end — "that ye may be **perfect** and entire, lacking nothing". This Scriptural perfection must mean something attainable. We would not be asked to be what we could not possibly be. We have mentioned before Abraham who was told to walk before God and be "perfect". We know what sort of man he was. Then concerning Job, we are told that he was a **perfect** man, in explanation of which it is added, "and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil." There were those in Paul's day who were perfect in the Scriptural sense, among whom he includes himself, saying to the Philippians, "Let us, therefore, as many as be **perfect**, be thus minded;" that is to say, all pressing forward together, with the same ultimate aim, in love to God, and the love of the brethren, striving to be accepted of the Lord, and to attain to a place in the resurrection. We are called to God's kingdom and glory. What for? That we may reflect His glory throughout the ages. If a thing answers the purpose for which it is made, it is a perfect thing. A watch, for instance; if there is a flaw

in the machinery, and it won't go, you say of it, "Oh, it's of no use, it won't go, it's imperfect". But a **perfect** watch gives you the right time, and answers the purpose for which you purchased it. It may not be the handsomest or most costly of watches, but it keeps good time, and in comparison with the one which won't go, it is perfect. So with us. God has made us for His glory; for this purpose He has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. If we walk in the light we glorify Him, and we are perfect in His sight. Justified from our sins and accepted in the beloved.

Perfection of character is not to be attained all at once; but, by taking heed to our way, that we may order it according to the written Word, the progress is steady. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Practice in anything will lead to perfection at last; but there may be much stumbling and disappointment at first; courage and perseverance continued will bring triumph in due time.

SERVANTS

So far, we have traced the course necessary for the young sister, and the sister engaged a stage further on in the midst of busy family life, and surrounded by many cares and responsibilities; in all of which there are many difficulties to be encountered by a true sister of Christ. The source of strength is the same, though the circumstances may differ. Each one will find that if she

only try it, and persevere in the trying, she will always have a strong tower into which to run for safety in trouble, and a counsellor to direct in every emergency of life. The sister who is in the position of servant, need be no exception. Paul especially mentions servants, and gives them the encouraging assurance that they also will be judged on the same principle as all their fellow believers. Obedience under trying circumstances is required of all. A servant's duties are very plainly laid down. If she wants to be strong in her position, and sure of pleasing Christ, who is her master, she will render a humble and faithful service with good will, as to Christ himself, as the apostles commanded. In this spirit her services will be rendered willingly, readily, heartily, not grudgingly. Some young sisters overlook this, and probably for want of studying what their duty is, are unhappy and dissatisfied, because, though sisters in Christ, they are not treated as on a level with those whom they serve. There is a time for everything. There is a time for masters and servants, who are in the truth to be all one, as when they meet to worship God and to remember the Lord Jesus in breaking of bread, or any other gathering on the basis of the truth. All are alike before God, but He asks us to conduct ourselves in certain relations in certain ways towards Him and towards each other. Servants He commands to be obedient to their masters, and masters He commands to be kind and considerate to their servants. Where each has a regard for the word of

Christ, there is sure to be no hitch; even where a servant finds herself under an unreasonable master or mistress, she has a guide to go by. She is not to answer back again in the spirit of retaliation, even when found fault with when doing right, far less when she is in fault. She will find the Scriptural prescription work well. Solomon says, "A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stirreth up anger". How true this is; if you are found fault with, and you give an angry answer, you make matters worse. If you take it patiently and show by your manner that you desire to do the right thing in a pleasant manner, the way is clear for amendment, and probably a better understanding. In this way the sister who is a servant can commend the truth where she may have an unbelieving master or mistress, and she may help her mistress, if she is also a sister of Christ. She may always take comfort from the thought that her present position of hardship, if such it be, will not last for ever; and in committing her way to God in well doing, she is in the way to secure His favour, and in His good time she may find herself in happier circumstances. The great mistake generally made is that of looking at circumstances and individuals, and blaming them all round, instead of endeavouring to perform individual duty as in the sight of God, and being satisfied with the knowledge that He knows and will approve, if His will be done, where it is impossible for any human heart to know or appreciate. Faithfulness through good report and bad report, mak-

ing His commands your guide, will bring you out at last among the approved and chosen. Loving Christ, you will love those who are like him. The characteristic of the family of God is love. Love leads to a tender interest in the object of it. The great aim of those professing the truth should be to develop those qualities which evoke love. Study to provoke love. If you wish to be loved, try to be loveable. Love begets love. A ready and obliging disposition in a servant, makes her valuable to her master and mistress. She has her sphere, and an important one, though limited, in which she can show her loyalty to Christ.

GOOD MANNERS

The truth really helps the development of good manners. It inculcates true politeness. "Honour, to whom honour is due". Some who profess the truth seem to think that this is not required of them. I am not now referring specially to servants or sisters, probably none of that class are present. Only it is well to be warned of the existence of such, for all the precepts of the truth are binding. We are told to "be courteous". "Honour all men". "In honour preferring one another", and many like exhortations. To follow up these maxims is to develop a character which will enable the possessor of it, whatever their position in life. A servant who has a believing master and mistress is asked to give them even more honour than if they were unbelievers. A believing master and mistress are called

upon to be kind and considerate to their servants. They must attend to their part. But a sister who finds herself in difficult and adverse circumstances, is like her other sisters to endure in patience, and not in any way to manifest impatience or resentment. It would be well for both mistress and servants to regard the circumstances of the other. We are told to consider one another. This will lead the servant to honour, in the true sense, those whom she serves for Christ's sake, and the few who may be called from among the rich will, on the same principle, esteem the poor, who have received the love of the truth, and are striving to walk worthy of it. In this way master and servant, each in their sphere, can command the truth, and receive approval from their common Master. The servant, like her mistress, will have to make an effort to get her reading, and she will manage it. It is quite a common thing now to see a Bible on the kitchen table, as in days past it might have been seen daily on a brother's bakehouse trough. "Where there is a will there is a way" in this matter of daily reading, and the difference is manifest even now in those who read and those who do not. Servants in the world honour their masters and mistresses and defer to them according to their wealth, etc. But a sister of Christ will be faithful in her duties from a higher consideration than that. The former do it with eye service, to please man. She not only to please her earthly master and mistress, but that she may please Him who has called her to a high honour in

the future if she is faithful to His commands now. She, like all her sisters, whatever their occupation, for there is no exception to this rule, will have to bear the cross first, before she can wear the crown.

ISOLATED SISTERS

There comes sometimes a note of lamentation from isolated sisters, and with a few words for their encouragement, this address will close. A sister writes to say that she reads with great interest and hearty response, the exhortations from month to month in the "Christadelphian", and she would so gladly take part in the many forms of service therein referred to. She says these duties imply the existence of an ecclesia — a community among whom and by whom the various acts of service recommended can be rendered. But here she is, shut up in a lonely home, with no one to whom she can speak, or give the tracts that have been on her shelf for years. What is she to do, she asks. Well, God is just, He does not ask where service cannot be given. A lonely sister can at least hold fast to the sure word of promise. Abraham was all alone, and his case brings courage to us in these late Gentile times. He held fast, without wavering; our sister must do the same. If she cannot distribute her tracts where she is, let her put herself in communication with some ecclesia where they can be distributed. They will distribute the tracts for her, and thus she will work through them, while they on their

part will feel that in so doing they are helping that lonely sister to do what she cannot do herself. She may find agents for other forms of work. A letter to the sisters who are privileged to have companionship in the truth, would doubtless stir them up to be more hearty in the performance of the many little things in their power, which they could not have the opportunity of doing if they were in complete isolation like their sister. She may, by this means, recall some to a sense of the responsibility resting upon them in consequence of their superior advantages.

Let all who are lonely do likewise, and constitute themselves workers together with those who are associated together in communities. It may be little they can do, but if they do that little, it will be reckoned to their account. If they can do much, then much will be required. And as we sow now, we shall reap afterwards. Nothing could be fairer than that. If we sow sparingly, we shall reap sparingly. If we sow bountifully, we shall reap bountifully. God is bountiful, and when He promises that we shall reap bountifully at His hands, we know that great will be the reward for those who thus honour Him.

It is presumable that even an isolated sister will have some living soul to whom she may show the power of the truth in her own life and conversation. Her children, if she has any, ought to be an object of solicitude to her in such circumstances, taking pains to instruct them and train them up in the fear

of God. This is specially incumbent on parents who have not the opportunity of sending their children to a Christadelphian Sunday School. If, from any cause, they feel necessitated to send them to a school where error is taught, their diligence should be thereby increased to make manifest the contrast between Bible and Orthodox teaching. This will quicken the young minds, and load them early in life, to contend for the truth in its purity. Neighbours, servants, any one at all capable of receiving the truth, may be tried for sowing the good seed. If the soil be barren, you are not responsible for that. Be diligent in what is possible.

Those who, in these days of darkness, whether in isolation or as members of busy communities, seek the light which shines from the pages of the Bible; that they may, by faith in what they read, become conformed to the image of Christ, and walk in his steps — having the same mind as he had — obedient in all things, even unto death, fully assured that what God has promised, He will perform in due time. These brave ones belong to the same class which Paul strove to develop in his day, and whom we are striving to imitate, that we also may be added to their number and be presented perfect in the day of Christ.

Although the apostle of the Gentiles classed himself with the perfect of his day, it was evidently in the sense that they were all of one mind, striving after perfection, for in the same connection he says of himself, "Not as though I were

already perfect;" he had not yet finished the work of perfecting holiness in the fear of God — the process was going forward. Shortly afterwards, in prospect of death, he wrote to Timothy, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them also who love his appearing." He did not need to say in prospect of death, "O, if I had my life to live over again, I would do differently." His motto in life was, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

We cannot do better, dear sisters than imitate Paul in this and make his motto ours through life. Christ before us now, and Christ before us at the end. All who have succeeded in the past in obtaining the approval of God, have been just like ourselves, encompassed with weakness. They were conscious of it, as we are, even to the verge of despair, but they held on. Faith in God gave the victory, and it will make us more than conquerors.

We read of the wonderful things that were done by the Saints in the days of old, and we are apt to think we could not have done as they did, and we are apt to think of them as if they were specially

prepared people for the work they had to do. And so they were. There were thousands of people in the earth at that time that would not, and could not do the things they did — they were specially prepared. They were strong and of good courage, by reason of their faith in God, and God worked with them.

We also, in these latter days, are a specially prepared people. The merely natural mind would not, and could not, do the things that we are called upon to do; but the enlightenment of the truth nerves our hearts and hands to do strange things. By faith we overcome many a hill of difficulty, and endure what the natural mind would not brook for a moment. We are by faith enabled to humble ourselves as little children, that by child-like obedience to Christ's commands we may enter into his kingdom and share his joy.

Let us, dear sisters, all of us — young, middle-aged, and elderly — strive together to make this year, upon which we have just entered, the best of our lives, by the increased heartiness and steadfastness of our love and service in the truth. We may truly salute each other with the Jewish salutation, "May the Messiah come this year", with the additional wish that we may all be found ready.