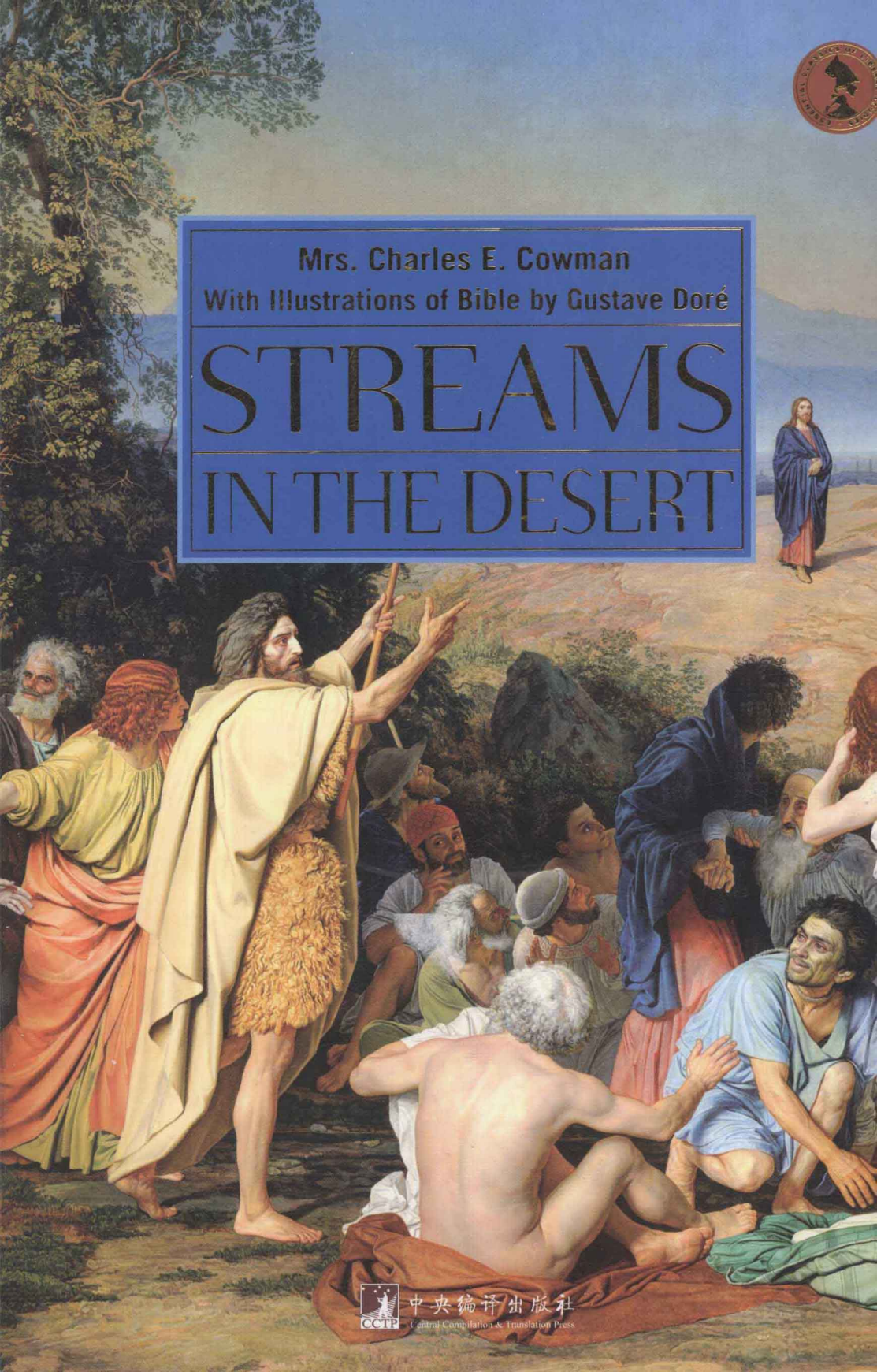




Mrs. Charles E. Cowman
With Illustrations of Bible by Gustave Doré

STREAMS IN THE DESERT



中央编译出版社
Central Compilation & Translation Press

Everyman's Library of Occidental Civilization

Mrs. Charles E. Cowman

Streams



in the Desert

With Illustrations of Bible by Gustave Doré



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January 1

The land whither ye go to possess it is a land of hills and valleys and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: a land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.

—Deut. 11:11,12

TODAY, dear friends, we stand upon the verge of the unknown. There lies before us the new year and we are going forth to possess it. Who can tell what we shall find? What new experiences, what changes shall come, what new needs shall arise? What new experiences, what changes shall come, what new needs shall arise? But here is the cheering, comforting, gladdening message from our heavenly Father, "The Lord thy God careth for it." "His eyes are upon it away to the ending of the year."

All our supply is to come from the Lord. Here are springs that shall never dry; here are fountains and streams that shall never be cut off. Here, anxious one, is the gracious pledge of the heavenly father. If He be the source of our mercies they can never fail us. No heat, no drought can parch that river, "the streams whereof make glad the city of God."

The land is a land of hills and valleys. It is not all smooth nor all down-hill. If life were all one dead level of dull sameness it would oppress us; we want the hills and the valleys. The hills collect the rain for a hundred fruitful valleys. Ah, so it is with us! It



The Creation of Light
Genesis 1:3

001



January



is the hill difficulty that drives us to the throne of grace and brings down the shower of blessing; the hills, the bleak hills of life that we wonder at and perhaps grumble at, bring down the showers. How many have perished in the wilderness, buried under its golden sands, who would have lived and thriven in the hill country; how many would have been killed by the frost, blighted with winds, swept desolate of tree and fruit but for the hill—stern, hard, rugged, so steep to climb. God's hills are a gracious protection for His people against their foes!

We cannot tell what loss and sorrow and trial are doing. Trust only. The Father comes near to take our hand and lead us on our way today. It shall be a good, a blessed new year!

*He leads us on by paths we did not know;
Upward He leads us, though our steps be slow,
Though oft we faint and falter on the way,
Though storms and darkness oft obscure the day;
Yet when the clouds are gone,
We know He leads us on.*

*He leads us on through all the unquiet years;
Past all our dreamland hopes, and doubts and fears,
He guides our steps, through all the tangled maze
Of losses, sorrows, and o'er clouded days;
We know His will is done;
And still he leads us on. —N. L. Zinzendorf*



Streams in the



January 2

AND there was an enlarging, and a winding about still upward to the side chambers: for the winding about of the house went still upward round about the house: therefore the breadth of the house was still upward and so increased from the lowest chamber to the highest by the midst.

—Isaiah 41:7

“STILL upward be thine onward
Course: For this I pray today; Still
upward as the years go by, And seasons
pass away.

*Still upward in this coming year.
Thy path is all untried;
Still upward may'st thou journey on,
Close by the Savior's side.*

The Formation of Eve
Genesis 2:21-22

*Still upward e'en though sorrow come,
And trials crush thine heart;
Still upward may they draw thy soul,
With Christ to walk apart.*

We ought not to rest content in the mists of the valley when the summit of Tabor awaits us. How pure are the dews of the hills, how fresh is the mountain air, how rich the fare of the dwellers aloft, whose windows look into the New Jerusalem! Many saints are content to live like men in coal mines, who see not the sun. Tears mar their faces when they might anoint them with celestial oil. Satisfied I am that many a believer pines in a dungeon when he might walk on the palace roof, and view the goodly land and Lebanon. Rouse thee, O believer, from thy low condition! Cast away thy sloth, thy lethargy, thy coldness, or whatever interferes with thy chaste and pure love to Christ. Make Him the source, the center, and the circumference of all thy soul's range of delight. Rest no longer satisfied with thy dwarfish attainments. Aspire to a higher, a nobler, a fuller life. Upward to heaven! Nearer to God! — *Spurgeon*

*I want to scale the utmost height,
And catch a gleam of glory bright;
But still I'll pray, till heaven I've found,
Lord, lead me on the higher ground!*

Not many of us are living at our best. We linger in the lowlands because we are afraid to climb the mountains. The steepness and ruggedness dismay us, and so we stay in the misty valleys and do not learn the mystery of the hills. We do not know what we lose in our self-indulgence, what glory awaits us if only we had courage for the mountain climb, what blessing we should find if only we would move to the uplands of God. — *J.R.M*

Too low they build who build beneath the stars.

January 3

I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure.

— *Gen. 33:14*

WHAT a beautiful picture of Jacob's thoughtfulness for the cattle and the children! He would not allow them to the overdriven even for one day. He would not lead on according to what a strong man like Esau could do and expected them to do, but only according to what they were able to endure. He knew exactly how far they could go in a day; and he made that his only consideration in arranging the marches. He had gone the same wilderness journey years before, and knew all about its roughness and heat and length, by personal experience. And so he said, "I will lead on softly." "For ye have not passed this way heretofore." (*Josh 3:4*)

We have not passed this way heretofore, but the Lord Jesus has. It is all untrodden and unknown ground to us, but He knows it all by personal experience. The steep bits that take away our breath, the stony bits that make our feet ache so, the hot shadeless stretches that make us feel so exhausted, the rushing rivers that we have to pass





Adam and Eve Driven Out of Eden

Genesis 3:24

through—Jesus has gone through it all before us. “He was wearied with his journey.” Not some, but all the many waters went over Him, and yet did not quench His love. He was made a perfect Leader by the things which He suffered. “He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.” Think of that when you are tempted to

question the gentleness of His leading. He is remembering all the time; and not one step will He make you take beyond what your foot is able to endure. Never mind if you think it will not be able for the step that seems to come next; either He will so strengthen it that it shall be able, or He will call a sudden halt, and you shall not have to take it at all. —*Frances Ridley Havergal*

*In "pastures green"? Not always; sometimes He
Who knowest best, in kindness leadeth me
In weary ways, where heavy shadows be.
So, whether on the hill-tops high and fair
I dwell, or in the sunless valleys, where
The shadows lie, what matter? He is there. —Barry*

005

January 4

Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

—*John 4:50*

When ye pray, believe.

—*Mark 11:24*

WHEN there is a matter that requires definite prayer, pray till you believe God, until with unfeigned lips you can thank Him for the answer. If the answer still tarries outwardly, do not pray for it in such a way that it is evident that you are not definitely believing for it. Such a prayer in place of being a help will be a hindrance; and when you are finished praying, you will find that your faith has weakened or has entirely gone. The urgency that you felt to offer this kind of prayer is clearly from self and Satan. It may not be wrong to mention the matter in question to the Lord again, if He is keeping you waiting, but be sure you do so in such a way that it implies faith. Do not pray yourself out of faith. You may tell Him that you are waiting and that you are still believing Him and therefore praise Him for the answer. There is nothing that so fully clinches faith as to be so sure of the answer that you can thank God for it. Prayers that pray us out of faith deny both God's promise in His Word and also His whisper "Yes," that He gave us in our hearts. Such prayers are but the expression of the unrest of one's heart, and unrest implies unbelief in reference to the answer to prayer. "For we which have believed do enter into rest" (*Heb. 4:3*). This prayer that prays ourselves out of faith frequently arises from centering our thoughts on the difficulty rather than on God's promise. Abraham "considered not his own body," "he staggered not at the promise of God" (*Rom. 4:19, 20*). May we watch and pray that we enter not into temptation of praying ourselves out of faith. —*C.H.P.*

Faith is not a sense, nor sight, nor reason, but a taking God at His Word. —*Evans*

The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith, and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety. —*George Mueller*

You will never learn faith in comfortable surroundings. God gives us the promises in a quiet hour; God seals our covenants with great and gracious words, then He steps back and waits to see how much we believe; then He lets the tempter come, and the test seems to contradict all that He has spoken. It is then that faith wins its crown.



That is the time to look up through the storm, and among the trembling, frightened seamen cry, "I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me."

January 5

Lord, there is none beside thee to help.

—2 Chron. 14:11, RSV

REMIND God of His entire responsibility. "There is none beside thee to help." The odds against Asa were enormous. There was a million of men in arms against him, besides three hundred chariots. It seemed impossible to hold his own against that vast multitude. There were no allies who would come to his help; his only hope, therefore, was in God. It may be that your difficulties have been allowed to come to so alarming a pitch that you may be compelled to renounce all creature aid, to which in lesser trials you have had recourse, and cast yourself back on your Almighty Friend.

Put God between yourself and the foe. To Asa's faith, Jehovah seemed to stand between the might of Zerah and himself, as one who had no strength. Nor was he mistaken. We are told that the Ethiopians were destroyed before the Lord and before His host, as though celestial combatants flung themselves against the foe in Israel's behalf, and put the large host to rout, so that Israel had only to follow up and gather the spoil. Our God is Jehovah of hosts, who can summon unexpected reinforcements at any moment to aid His people. Believe that He is there between you and your difficulty, and what baffles you will flee before Him, as clouds before the gale. —F. B. Meyer

*When nothing whereon to lean remains,
When strongholds crumble to dust;
When nothing is sure but that God still reigns,
That is just the time to trust.*

*'Tis better to walk by faith than sight,
In this path of yours and mine;
And the pitch-black night, when there's no outer light
Is the time for faith to shine.*

Abraham believed God, and said to sight, "Stand back!" and to the laws of nature, "Hold your peace!" and to a misgiving heart, "Silence, thou lying tempter!" He believed God. —Joseph Parker

January 6

When thou passest through the waters... they shall not overflow thee.

—Isa. 43:2

GOD does not open paths for us in advance of our coming. He does not promise help before help is needed. He does not remove obstacles out of our way before

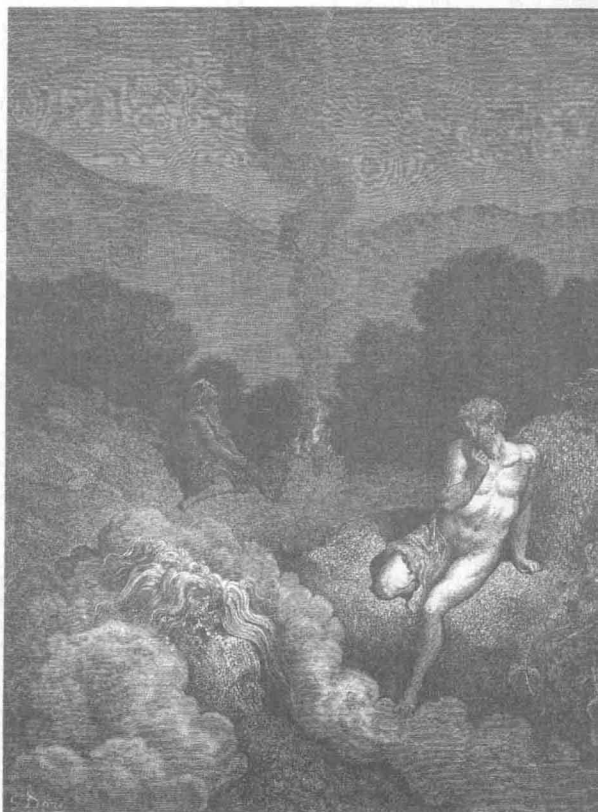


we reach them. Yet when we are on the edge of our need, God's hand is stretched out.

Many people forget this, and are forever worrying about difficulties which they foresee in the future. They expect that God is going to make the way plain and open before them, miles and miles ahead; whereas He has promised to do it only step by step as they may need. You must get to the waters and into their floods before you can claim the promise. Many people dread death, and lament that they have not "dying grace." Of course, they will not have dying grace when they are in good health, in the midst of life's duties, with death far in advance. Why should they have it then? Grace for duty is what they need then, living grace; then dying grace when they come to die.
—J.R.M.

*"When thou passest through the waters,"
Deep the waves may be and cold,
But Jehovah is our refuge,
And His promise is our hold;
For the Lord Himself hath said it,
He, the faithful God and true:
"When thou comest to the waters
Thou shalt not go down, BUT THROUGH."
Seas of sorrow, seas of trial,
Bitterest anguish, fiercest pain,
Rolling surges of temptation
Sweeping over heart and brain—
They shall never overflow us
For we know His word is true;
All His waves and all His billows
He will lead us safely through.
Threatening breakers of destruction,
Doubt's insidious undertow,
Shall not sink us, shall not drag us
Out to ocean depths of woe;
For His promise shall sustain us,
Praise the Lord, whose Word is true!
We shall not go down, or under,
For He saith, "Thou passest
THROUGH." — Annie
Johnson Flint*

Cain and Abel Offering Their Sacrifices
Genesis 4:3-5



January 7

I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

—Phil 4:11

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.”

Paul, denied of every comfort, wrote the above words in his dungeon. A story is told of king who went into his garden one morning, and found everything withered and dying. He asked the oak that stood near the gate what the trouble was. He found it was sick of life and determined to die because it was not tall and beautiful like the pine.

The pine was all out of heart because it could not bear grapes, like the vine. The vine was going to throw its life away because it could not stand erect and have as fine fruit as the peach tree. The geranium was fretting because it was not tall and fragrant like the lilac; and so on all through the garden. Coming to a heart's-ease, he found its bright face lifted as cheery as ever. "Well, heart's-ease, I'm glad, amidst all this discouragement, to find one brave little flower. You do not seem to be the least disheartened." "No, I am not of much account, but I thought that if you wanted an

oak, or a pine, or a peach tree, or a lilac, you would have planted one; but as I knew you wanted a heart's-ease, I am determined to be the best little heart's-ease that I can."

*Others may do a greater work,
But you have your part to do;
And no one in all God's heritage
Can do it so well as you.*

They who are God's without reserve, are in every state content; for they will only what He will, and desire to do for Him whatever He desires them to do; they strip themselves of everything, and in this nakedness find all things restored an hundred-fold.



The Death of Abel
Genesis 4:8-9

January 8

I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.

—Ezek. 34:26

(And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.)

WHAT is thy season this morning? Is it a season of drought? Then that is the season for showers. Is it a season of great heaviness and black clouds? Then that is the season for showers. "As thy day so shall thy strength be." "I will give thee showers of blessing." The word is in the plural. All kinds of blessings God will send. All God's blessings go together, like links in a golden chain. If He gives converting grace, He will also give comforting grace. He will send "showers of blessings." Look up today, O parched plant, and open thy leaves and flowers for a heavenly watering.

—Spurgeon

Thou, O Lord, canst transform my thorn into a flower. And I want my thorn transformed into a flower. Job got the sunshine after the rain, but has the rain been all waste? Job wants to know, I want to know, if the shower had nothing to do with the shining. And Thou canst tell me—Thy Cross can tell me. Thou hast crowned Thy sorrow. Be this my crown, O Lord. I only triumph in Thee when I have learned the radiance of the rain. —George Matheson

*The fruitful life seeks showers as well as sunshine.
The landscape, brown and sere beneath the sun,
Needs but the cloud to lift it into life;
The dews may damp the leaves of tree and flower,
But it requires the cloud-distilled shower
To bring rich verdure to the lifeless life.*

January 9

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

—Rom. 8:18

I KEPT for nearly a year the flask-shaped cocoon of an emperor moth. It is very peculiar in its construction. A narrow opening is left in the neck of the flask, through which the perfect insect forces its way, so that a forsaken cocoon is as entire as one still tenanted, no rupture of the interlacing fibers having taken place. The great disproportion between the means of egress and the size of the imprisoned insect makes one wonder how the exit is ever accomplished at all—and it never is without great labor and difficulty. It is supposed that the pressure to which the moth's body is subjected in passing through such a narrow opening is a provision of nature for forcing the juices into the vessels of the wings, these being less developed at the

009

January





period of emerging from the chrysalis than they are in other insects.

I happened to witness the first efforts of my prisoned moth to escape from its long confinement. During a whole forenoon, from time to time, I watched it patiently striving and struggling to get out. It never seemed able to get beyond a certain point, and at last my patience was exhausted. Very probably the confining fibers were drier and less elastic than if the cocoon had been left all winter on its native heather, as nature meant it to be. At all events I thought I was wiser and more compassionate than its Maker, and I resolved to give it a helping hand. With the point of my scissors I snipped the confining threads to make the exit just a very little easier, and lo! Immediately, and with perfect ease, out crawled my moth dragging a huge swollen body and little shrivelled wings. In vain I watched to see that marvelous process of expansion in which these silently and swiftly develop before one's eyes; and as I traced the exquisite spots and markings of divers colors which were all there in miniature, I longed to see these assume their due proportions and the creature to appear in all its perfect beauty, as it is, in truth, one of the loveliest of its kind. But I looked in vain. My false tenderness had proved its ruin. It never was anything but a stunted abortion, crawling painfully through that brief life which it should have spent flying through the air on rainbow wings. I have thought of it often, often, when watching with pitiful eyes those who were struggling with sorrow, suffering, and distress; and I would fain cut short the discipline and give deliverance. Short-sighted man! How know I that one of these pangs or groans could be spared? The far-sighted, perfect love that seeks the perfection of its object does not weakly shrink from present, transient suffering. Our Father's love is too true to be weak. Because He loves His children, He chastises them that they may be partakers of His holiness. With this glorious end in view, He spares not for their crying. Made perfect through sufferings, as the Elder Brother was, the sons of God are trained up to obedience and brought to glory through much tribulation. — *Tract*

January 10

They were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.

— *Acts 16:6*

IT is interesting to study the methods of His guidance as it was extended towards these early heralds of the Cross. It consisted largely in prohibitions, when they attempted to take another course than the right. When they would turn to the left, to Asia, He stayed them. When they sought to turn to the right, to Bithynia, again He stayed them. In after years Paul would do some of the greatest work of his life in that very region; but just now the door was closed against him by the Holy Spirit. The time was not yet ripe for the attack on these apparently impregnable bastions of the kingdom of Satan. Apollos must come there for pioneer work. Paul and Barnabas are needed yet more urgently else where, and must receive further training before undertaking this reBeloved, whenever you are doubtful as to your course, submit your judgment absolutely to the Spirit of God, and ask Him to shut against you every door but the right one. Say, "Blessed Spirit, I cast on Thee the entire responsibility of closing against my steps any and every course which is not of God. Let me hear Thy voice behind me whenever I turn to the right hand or the left."