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"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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Poetry.

"We would see Jesus."

"We would see Jesus"—for the shadows lengthen,
Across this little landscape of our life,
"We would see Jesus," our weak faith to strengthen
For the last weariness—the final strife.

"We would see Jesus"—for life's hand hath rested
With its dark touch upon both heart and brow,
And though our souls have many a billow breasted,
Others are rising in the distance now.

"We would see Jesus"—the great rock foundation
Whereon our feet were set by sovereign grace,
Not life nor death, with all their agitation,
Can thence remove us if we see his face.

"We would see Jesus"—other lights are paling
Which for long years we have rejoiced to see:
The blessings of our pilgrimage are failing;
We would not mourn them, for we go to thee.

"We would see Jesus"—yet the spirit lingers
Round the dear objects it has loved so long,
And earth from earth can scarce unclose its fingers,
Our love to thee makes not this love less strong.

"We would see Jesus"—sense is all too blinding,
And heaven appears too dim—too far away,
We would see thee, to gain a sweet reminding
That thou hast promised our great debt to pay.

"We would see Jesus"—this is all we're needing:
Strength, joy, and willingness, come with the sight,
We would see Jesus—dying, risen, pleading;
Then welcome day! and farewell mortal night!

The Snowdrop.

"The snowdrop, is the herald of the flowers,
Sent, with its small white flag of truce, to plead
For its beleagu'rd brethren—suppliantly
It prays stern winter, to withdraw its troop
Of winds, and blustering storms—and having won
A smile of promise from its pitying toe,
Returns to tell, the issue of its errand
To the expectant host.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

BAPTIST CHURCH PRINCIPLES.

The substance of a Discourse preached at
Great Village, Londonderry, on the oc-
casion of organizing the Baptist Church
in that place. Feb. 14th, 1856.

"Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build
thou the walls of Jerusalem."—PSALM II. 18.

This is often styled the penitent Psalm. In it the pious monarch of Israel deploras his sinfulness and penitently confesses his deep guilt; and then looking in the direction of the "tender mercies" of God, he begs for forgiveness and earnestly implores restoration to the Divine favor. But while deprecating the state of abandonment by his Heavenly Father, and earnestly pleading for the return of former joys, he does not forget "the cause of God." He felt that he had almost forfeited the privilege of praying for himself as well as for Zion; but he must pray, and so he breathes forth the petition, "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion, build thou the walls of Jerusalem." Here, as he draws nigh to God in prayer, we observe a pleasing oblivion of self, in the larger desire for the prosperity of Zion, whose glory his own guilt had tarnished.

"Jerusalem" was the "city of the Jewish solemnities,"—the city "whither the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord." Its site was Mount Zion, the royal residence, near to which in after days, was the Temple. There were the solemn feasts kept and the religious observances of the nation generally;—there God, the true God was worshipped. To the mind of a Jew, therefore,

our text would be a strong expression of attachment to the cause of God, or of love to the church of God. And we ourselves may adopt the language as expressive of the same sentiment, enlarged to suit the later dispensation and times in which we live.

The word rendered church means a body of people called out, a congregation collected for any purpose. Acts vii. 38.—Then it is applied (1) to the whole redeemed church. Eph. v. 25; Heb. xii. 23.—(2) to an individual church or separate community of believers, however small. Romans xvi. 5.—"The church that is in thy house," Philemon ii.—"The church in thy house." So the phrases, "The church of God which is at Corinth,"—1 Cor. i. 2. "The church of the Thessalonians,"—1 Thes. i. 1. "The church at Jerusalem," at Antioch, &c. When the allusion is to the various Christian communities throughout a Province, Empire, &c., the plural form churches is used. Thus in Gal. i. 2.—"The churches of Galatia." Rev. i. 4.—"The churches which are in Asia." Acts xv. 41.—"Confirming the churches." Consolidation into state churches was the work of later times. The phrases "Church of England," "Church of Scotland," &c., are therefore unscriptural, as also the phrases, "Baptist church," "Presbyterian church," "Methodist church," &c., when used to designate the whole of those bodies respectively. Nor does the term church in the New Testament as too often in modern times, mean only or especially the body of elders, bishops, clergy, representative heads &c., but always includes the whole membership, the common body of believers. The definition of the visible church of Christ found in the "Thirty nine articles of belief," is "A congregation of faithful men in which the pure word of God is preached and the sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance."

I propose now to present "some reasons for attachment to the church of Jesus Christ."

I. Because of the constitution and arrangements which the Saviour has provided for each individual community of his professed followers. It is doubtless true that the apostles seem, in the establishment of churches, rather to have acted according to circumstances as they arose, by providing for emergencies from time to time, than to have been guided by any previous pattern or by any preconceived unbending rules. The notices of their procedure however, though few and condensed, are yet sufficient to indicate clearly the principles by which they are governed. Jesus had taught them the lessons of humanity and fraternal equality. They would instinctively and under the direction of the all-inspiring Spirit, carry out the principles in which they had been so carefully indoctrinated. They would imitate the example of their Lord and Master. Jesus himself gave the germ of church discipline, Mat. xviii. 15-17; and in that "protracted prayer meeting" Acts i. 14. which preceded the Pentecostal Revival, we witness the effect of the Saviour's teaching. Proceeding still further in the history of Apostolic doings, we learn

(a.) What class of persons was admitted to membership in the churches. "Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized." "And the Lord added to the church daily the saved,"—Acts ii. 38, 41, 47. "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints,"—1 Cor. i. 2. "Unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus

Christ,"—1 Thess. i. 1. If, then, we understand by "repentance," not mere anxiety for salvation or transient sorrow for the consequences of sin, but more scripturally, such sorrow for sin as is connected with forsaking it, and the pursuing a new life of righteousness; and if we understand the expressions, "Gladly received the word," "those that should be saved," (or more strictly the saved) &c., as marking the hearty disciples of Christ, we conclude that those persons were admitted to membership and continued as members who professed faith in Christ by submitting to baptism, and who by their conduct gave proof of the sincerity of their profession. In order to account for the silence of the New Testament in reference to infants becoming members, it is sometimes asserted that things at that period were in a forming state, similar to modern missionary stations. But there were christian parents then as now, and if it was correct to bring their children to baptism, why are there no directions on the subject, and no examples of compliance? History in the Bible as elsewhere, records things which transpired, the things done; and since there is no record in this matter, we infer that there was nothing to record.

(b.) From the terms of membership we pass to inquire what were the OFFICERS in a christian church? "And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,"—Eph. iv. 11. "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues,"—1 Cor. xii. 28. The apostles were an extraordinary class, with no successors in their office as apostles, while in their capacity as religious instructors they have successors. The prophets also have not come down to us, except in a similar sense. Evangelists were itinerants, like our missionaries, and there is still use for them; they are general pastors. Miracles (workers of), gifts of healings and diversities of tongues were peculiar to that age. "Helps," aids, would be found in the deacons. The idea in "governments," or directions, would connect with the pastoral office. We have left then as permanent. 1. The one office, variously and beautifully described by the terms PASTOR, BISHOP AND TEACHER; presbyter or elder marking rather the dignity of the office than the work pertaining to it. "Teaching," communicating religious instruction, as in the last passage cited, is the great work of the ministry; in the word pastor the office is viewed as that of a Shepherd, in the word bishop as that of an overseer or instructor. That "elder" and "bishop" applied to the same class of officers is obvious from Acts xx. 17, 28,—the word rendered overseers in the latter verse being the one usually translated bishops. That there were but two classes of chief officers in the churches, and that the other was. 2. That of DEACONS is evident from Phil. i. 1,—"with the bishops and deacons," and 1 Tim. iii. 1, 8,—"the office of a bishop," "Likewise must the deacons be grave." The word elder is not distinctive, being applied to apostles 1 Peter v. 1 and 3 John i.; to ministers generally and to deacons, 1 Tim. v. 17. "Let the elders which rule well be counted worthy of double honor especially they who labor in word and doctrine," a distinction being implied between the class of elders, which labored in teaching; and another class, the deacons, whose duties were different. It is altogether probable that deacons are included in the expressions, "Ordained them elders in every church," "Ordain elders in every city," "the apostles and elders and brethren," &c.,—Acts xiv.

28; xv. 23; Titus i. 5. Some of "the seven" (Acts vi. 3-6,) were probably deacons, and they in common received ordination, as teaching elders were wont to do, and moreover seem to be referred to under the epithet "elders" in Acts xi. 30.

(c.) We now come to the questions what are the rights of members, the powers of officers, and where does church power reside? On this subject we must observe closely the few fuller and earlier notices in the New Testament. When a thing has become customary, has been often performed and become well known, brief summary statements are all we can expect to find in history relating to it. To interpret the earlier and more detailed statements by the later abridged ones would be against all just laws of interpretation. In Acts vi. 3, 5, 6, the phrases—"brethren look ye out . . . seven men," "and the saying pleased the whole multitude and they chose," "whom they set before the Apostles,"—clearly intimate the action of the whole body of members in common. The same fact is equally explicit in the account of the Council held at Jerusalem, (Acts xv. 2, 4; 22, 23,) in which it is said—"They determined," "they were received of the church," "the apostles and elders and brethren send greeting . . ." When therefore we read abbreviated accounts, as in Acts xv. 23, and Titus i. 5, we are warranted in the belief that church action was had in such cases, though the mention of it is omitted. We are then justified in the inference that even the apostles, superior as were their gifts, used merely an advisory power, acting like the elders in conjunction with the churches. It is still competent for pastors wisely to explain scriptural truths as applying to any given circumstances, but when the time for action comes, it is true now as anciently that the fountain of church power is the church itself. True, a sort of ruling pertains to elders, (1 Tim. v. 17; iii. 5;) but this must be by superintendence, presiding, overseeing, advising, teaching, wisdom, goodness and the like. Thus it appears that all the members in churches have equal rights. But it by no means follows that all will have equal influence. The church does not take persons from their civil and domestic relations. The experienced, the wise and the good, will in churches as elsewhere, be the persons of influence. Such a constitution appears evidently adapted to all classes of people, to all states of society; and doubtless the Saviour intended that his religion should spread, under all governments and in all times.

Hence it is that a church may regulate its own meetings and may assemble (1 Cor. xiv.) for mutual edification; that all members in Baptist churches have a voice in calling or dismissing a pastor, and in receiving or excluding members; that laymen have equal powers with ministers; that we do not transact business ordinarily with closed doors; that ordination to the ministry is not undertaken by Associations and the like, called for other and specified purposes, nor by the eldership, except in conjunction with the churches,—pastors having no power apart from their churches; and that in accordance with our broad principles of independence, we are never afraid of having our people attend as they have opportunity, the ministrations of all evangelical preachers, and that we would be ashamed of that Baptist church which should attempt to retain its members by any initiatory vow of adherence,—conviction of the truth of our principles, and love therefore being the only motives we value.

(d.) The ordinances of the gospel require of us here a brief notice. 1. Baptism is the ceremony of initiation into Christian