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"Not slothful in business : fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

A World on fire.

My troubled thoughts will wander far,
To yonder glittering, changing star;
Which men call a sun, a world on fire,
An emblem meet of righteous ire.

Yet centuries might have passed away,
Since that luminous, awful day—
When first its light thro' realms of glory
Passed on to tell the wondrous story.

What thinkest thou of this sight afar
This glittering, brilliant now paling star?
Do visions prophetic seem to merge
And join in *this* world's funeral dirge?

So perchance (amazing riot!)—
When pealing forth the Almighty's fiat,
Our earth—our sun are together hurled
And in terror is seen a burning world.

To the soul in Jesus no fear should come,
For God's own Light shall guide him home
To that shore where storms forever cease;
The Master is there—and there is peace.

But sands of life have yet to run,
Before time close and God's battle be won,
Take courage faint heart work with thy might
Ere a burning world sink in eternity's night!

VIDE.—"Good words 'The atmosphere of a world on fire' by Rev. C. Pritchard, Cantab, April No. 1867.

Religious.

(Bridged from the London Baptist Magazine.)

The Influence of Modern Heresies in our own Denomination.

BY THE REV. J. GREGSON, OF AGRA.

Read at a meeting of ministers at Bootle, Lancashire, on the 4th March, 1867.

In restricting our enquiry to the members and churches of the Baptist denomination, we shall not be understood to imply that they only have altered, or have even passed through greater changes, than other Christian bodies. No one conversant with the course of events can look back through the past fifteen years, and not perceive that all religious bodies have been going through a process of transformation. In the Church of England Rationalism and Ritualism have sprung up with rapid growth, until now they present themselves to view in large and formidable proportions.—Methodism has become less noisy, and has found it necessary to relax or ignore rules that were once regarded as distinctive and essential. Quakerism quiet and unobtrusive, after being agitated and weakened by controversy, has made large concessions to the spirit of the age; and has laid aside much of its ruggedness and peculiarity. Independents and Baptists have come to tolerate and approve much which their sturdy forefathers would have regarded with suspicion and alarm.—Whilst finally, amidst the various changes and divisions of the so called Plymouth Brethren are presented to view, what we may almost designate new forms of Christian life. The Baptist body, then, has only experienced changes in common with all sections of the Church of Christ; and if we confine our attention to it, we do so because our own relation to this body gives it a pre-eminent claim upon our regard, and because the subject as thus restricted, will be more than sufficient to occupy all the time we can give to its consideration.

The more important changes which appear to me have recently passed over our body, may be classed under three heads:—I. Rationalism; II. Ritualism; III. Worldliness.

I. AS TO RATIONALISM.

My observation, since returning to this country, has tended to awaken the suspicion that there is to some extent a diminution in the confidence, reverence, and love, that was felt among us for the Bible. That in some quarters there is a tendency towards a lax and latitudinarian sentiment which has little sym-

pathy with positive and dogmatic teaching, and is disposed to regard with indifference or approval divergencies of belief which at one time would have been looked upon as serious and important. That belief in divine and supernatural influences has lost somewhat in intensity and clearness, and that we may occasionally meet with those who manifest an impatience of mystery, and who reject or stumble at some of the teachings of Scripture because difficult to human comprehension.

All I think must admit that there has crept into our own body some little of that Rationalism which has been so disastrously conspicuous in the Establishment of this country; and which exalts human reason over the ruins of revelation.

Our Nonconformist forefathers were distinguished by their firm belief in the Bible, and their warm attachment to its truths. It was their recognised and sole guide in all matters of faith and practice. Its teachings were to them necessary, authoritative, and final.—They might differ as to its interpretation, not as to its claims. And believing in its divine origin and unspeakable value, to them every word was sacred; its passages were explored with careful and laborious diligence; and its decisions ever received with ample and unquestioning submission. But of late years the literature of our country has presented a new phase of religious controversy. We have had little of the old outspoken infidelity which sneered at the Bible as a whole, and denounced it as falsehood and priestcraft; but we have had much of covert, and though avowedly friendly, yet not the less hurtful assault. The enemies of Christianity have been those of our own household. We have seen men of high positions, of great learning and ability, men who had subscribed to orthodox creeds, and were solemnly pledged to uphold the Christian faith, who yet have not hesitated to impugn the veracity of the Bible. The inspiration of the Scriptures has been doubted, explained away, or denied. The Bible, no longer trust-worthy as a whole, is alleged to contain much that is to be rejected, and man's reason and sensibilities are enthroned as judges to decide this vital controversy, and to separate the true from the false. Some again on other grounds, have come to regard certain books or passages of Scripture as of questionable authority. Collation of manuscripts exposes to suspicion some portion of our authorized version. Biblical criticism throws doubt upon others. Doubts thus thrown upon some portions of the Bible, may create suspicion as to the authority of others and weaken our faith in all.

Now is there not reason to fear that in the midst of contests like these, the minds of many among us have been affected; and that some unconsciously perhaps, yet not less really, have lost something of firm reliance on the veracity and authority of the Bible our fathers cherished? We seriously doubt it.

Is there not reason to believe that the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures has been to a large extent abandoned? Do all among us hold tenaciously to their plenary inspiration? Might not some be found who question the inspiration of the Scriptures at all in the sense in which that phrase has been commonly understood? Are there not some whose views of the inspiration of the Bible are indefinite and hazy, and who would scarcely hesitate to admit that the inspired writers have been led into some errors and mistakes? But whatever may be the real state of the case in reference to these points is there not reason to fear that the Bible has lost something of its hold upon the present generation, that there is not the same firm, unhesitating confidence in it, as a reliable, complete, and exclusive revelation of God's will to man; nor the same deep reverence for its peerless majesty and worth. Now the Bible is the fountain and support of Christian life, and anything that affects its position in our esteem and confidence, must tell with unerring certainty on all our religious views and feelings. And to some such source as this—viz. diminished reverence for the Scriptures—may we not trace much of that difference which many feel distinguishes the teachings and belief of the present day from that which existed among us some years ago. In the preaching of the present day as full of Scripture, and as doctrinal as it used to be former-

ly? Do our ministers keep as clearly, and as prominently, in view the grand distinction betwixt their converted and their unconverted hearers, and are appeals to the latter as frequent, forcible, and earnest in days gone by? Are sermons on doctrinal subjects, such as human depravity, repentance, justification, the atonement, the agency of the Divine Spirit, providence, general and special, and kindred themes, as common as they used to be? Would not the views of many on these topics be found to differ much from those generally held twenty years ago? Is there not a feeling, in some quarters, that the method in which these questions were formerly dealt with was rigid, mechanical or puerile; that Scripture was never intended for such rigorous treatment, and that we must be satisfied with more vague and general views? I cannot but think that all will admit there has been some change in these directions.

Once more has there not arisen among us an impatience of mystery, and a tendency to ignore, explain away, or set aside, at the call of reason some of the teachings of the Bible? I have frequently been surprised, and sometimes shocked, at the way in which estimable Christian people have talked and reasoned on Biblical topics with little or no reference to the Bible. Take, for example the doctrine of the eternal punishment of the wicked. Now it is a very fair question to ask what the Scripture has to say on this subject, and we ought to feel that its teachings alone can guide us to the truth. But when this subject has come up before me for discussion, I found that the feelings are generally appealed to, and that more mention is made of human reason and sensibilities than of Divine revelation. There are in the Bible many mysteries; truths which we can only know through Divine teaching, and which in their very nature surpass the limits of human intelligence.—And I sometimes meet with good people who seem impatient with these mysteries, anxious to get rid of them, as though ignorant or forgetful that the same mysteries meet us in the facts of daily life. The mystery of evil, the mystery of suffering, the electing love of God the depravity and guilt of man, the condemnation of the unbelieving, the misery and darkness of the heathen; these among other themes as set forth in the Scripture, seem to me less palatable to modern taste, and as though faint in them were waning.

To be concluded in our next.

The Stockwell (Spurgeon's) Orphanage for Boys.

The proceedings at the laying of the foundation-stone of the Stockwell orphanage for fatherless boys were a great success. The grounds which are situated behind some houses, opposite Dudley-place, in the Clapham-road, cover three acres; and a more eligible and suitable site could hardly be found for the purpose of an orphanage. At three o'clock hundreds of people lined the pavement in front of the entrances, and in less than half-an-hour there could not have been fewer than four thousand persons present in the grounds, all of whom had been admitted by ticket. The sum of £1,776 was realized by 750 cards. The entrance to the grounds was lined by a double row of Venetian masts gaily decorated by banners. The first temporary building was occupied by Mr. Charles Blackshaw the indefatigable secretary of the Orphanage, and about ten or twelve assistants who received the collecting cards. Further on, on the same side of the grounds was a gaily festooned canvas-covered shed of about 400ft. in length, which was fitted up for refreshments. Opposite this erection were the sites of the three houses to be immediately built for reception of the orphan boys; and these were distinguishable by the poles and pulleys. Long before the proceedings commenced, an immense crowd had assembled around these sites, while hundreds sauntered through the fields, having evidently given up all idea of witnessing the sight which had attracted so many eager spectators. The scene presented at the commencement of the ceremony of laying the stones was an exceedingly picturesque one. A number of men climbed the trees, in order to gain a good view of the proceedings.

After the singing of a hymn, Mr. Spurgeon addressed the assembly. He said:—

My friends, it may be well, that in a few words I should state the business of the afternoon, and what has led to it. I think, in the month of August last year, I wrote an article in the *Sword and Trowel*, suggesting sundry modes of usefulness that might be adopted by the Christian public. That article was read by a sister in Christ who had for some years determined to devote her substance to the work of maintaining fatherless children. She thereupon thought that she had found out the proper individual to whom to entrust her money; and I received a note which, when I read and read again, greatly startled me, as it said: "I have determined to devote £20,000 to the work of maintaining orphans, and would you be good enough to come and see me about it?" (Applause.) I thought perhaps the lady had put down a nought or two too much—(laughter)—or that perhaps some one desired to play me a trick. I thought, however, it was my duty to see about it; and having seen my sister, I found that she was a benevolent, practical woman, desirous to have her money devoted to the maintenance of fatherless children, with a special view to their souls being cared for, and trained in the fear of God and the doctrines of Truth. (Applause.) I hesitated to undertake the work, having, as I thought enough on my hands already; but I afterwards consented to do so, and we are here to-day on a piece of ground purchased for the erection of houses for the care of fatherless boys. Why our sister did not choose fatherless girls I don't know; but that is left open to some one else—(laughter and "Hear")—and I am here quite prepared to assist them in procuring an asylum for fatherless girls also. (Applause.) Inasmuch as I found the money was first fixed so that we could not get beyond a certain interest for it, it was determined that the foundation-stones of three houses should first be laid. Now, the first stone should be laid by Mrs. Hillyard, our sister who gave us the £20,000—(loud cheers)—but unfortunately the work-people have placed the tackle to the wrong house, and consequently I am obliged to begin. The cost of the house of which Mrs. Hillyard will lay the first stone is given by a merchant of London. (Applause.) His name is well known, but it is not to be mentioned now nor at any other time. It will be called the "Merchant's House."—The house of which I shall lay the foundation-stone will be called the "Silver Wedding" House. It is given to us by a sister who has lived happily with her husband for five-and-twenty years. About a month ago her husband said to her, "I will make you a present of £500 on your wedding-day."—She said, "I often wished to have so large a sum to give to Mr. Spurgeon for some of his good works." (Applause.) So she had given him the whole sum. The third house will be called the "Workmen's" House. The workmen in the employment of Messrs. Higgs agreed at a meeting to build a house, the materials being found by Messrs. Higgs. (Cheers.) The workmen will faithfully redeem their pledge, but thinking it would be a long time before they could work their money out, they have given the whole in the shape of that large shed, which will suit for meetings, or for the children to play in. I think our working friends could not make a better investment than subscribe to an institution where their children should have a preference in the house. One workman who had subscribed died last week, leaving two children, who would share in the benefits of the institution which he had helped. Let me say that though only these three houses are now to be built—or their first stones are to be laid—we have promises for others. The family of the Olneys a name that is peculiarly dear to all our friends, have given a cheque for £500 for another house—(Applause)—to commemorate the memory of their sainted mother, to be called "Unity" House. At each stone, a few words of prayer were offered, and a few verses sung. These verses were announced by Mr. Spurgeon to have been the production of "our poor poet," a modest allusion to himself, which was readily understood. The stone of what was quaintly designated "The Silver Wedding House," was first laid by Mr. Spurgeon, and the verses sung were these:—