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A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

Christian Union.

There are few subjects upon which more is being spoken and written at the present time than upon this. Much of what is being spoken and written upon this subject is being done by self-opinioned persons, whose principal object seems to be to reproach others, and justify themselves; or at best very piously to lament over the divided state of the Christian world and sigh for "Union."

In the first place before there can be any such union as they contend for there must be oneness of belief;—common principles received by all, else there will be schism. How can this be secured among men differing widely in their sentiments, and yet all thinking they are right? It is answered: "Let all take the Bible for their guide." But will this secure the desired end? Will not different persons receive different views from the same inspired declaration? Sabbath School teachers, meeting together to study the same lesson often differ very widely in their opinions upon the Scriptures before them; and what is true of them is true of all others who attempt to learn what to believe and practice from the Bible. A more prayerful and unprejudiced study of the Scriptures would doubtless bring the seats of Christendom nearer to each other, but that of itself cannot secure "Visible Union." If the Creator had done that which he evidently has not done, viz., made all men to see the same truth in the same light, and feel alike in relation to it, then the foundation would have been laid for that "glorious Church," after which our unionist friends are sighing in vain. As men are now constituted, before this result can be realized, they must sacrifice their independence of thought, and often their convictions of duty, neither of which can one do and respect himself, and please God.

Again; it seems to be taken for granted that if all denominational lines were taken away, that Christians would necessarily love one another. The supposition appears to be that all Christians belonging to the same communion will make them love as brethren. Is this supposition well founded? It is, then the Bible, Ecclesiastical History, and my own observations have greatly deceived me. Nothing is plainer than that persons may, and often do, belong to the same church, without loving each other as the Saviour has loved them. Hence if all the Christian world were united as one church, this of itself would not suffice to make all professing Christians kindly affectioned one to another. On the other hand, the fact that persons belong to different denominations does not necessarily prevent their Christian fellowship. This is evident from the fact that such persons are frequently very warm friends. A fair understanding of each other's sentiments, and a willingness to do by others as we want them to do by us, will in most cases secure a satisfactory union.

But it may be objected that "The Saviour's prayer that His people might be one has not been answered." But this is denying His own words, for He says "Father I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I know that thou hearest me always." Here we are plainly told that His prayers do not go unanswered. But it may still be said that "He prayed for the cup to pass from Him, and yet it did not." Nevertheless His prayer was answered, for an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen Him. It must, therefore, be concluded that Christ did not pray in vain that His people might be one;—that the answer to His prayer, in some form or other, is with His people. May we not take this as the answer? He and His Father were united as one in providing salvation for the world; the Father so loving the world as to give His son, and the Son delighting to do His Father's will. As they were thus united, He prayed that His people might be similarly united in feeling, purpose, and action to labor to save men, and build up Zion. In this regard His prayer has prevailed. The efforts of all evangelical bodies are tending to one result.—Christ's having "dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth."

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but

the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."

A. W. Rochester, N. Y.

The Luminous Side of Revelation.

A Sermon preached at the N. S. Eastern Baptist Association, July 8, 1867.

By Rev. D. A. Searles, A. B.

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"Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.—Psalm cxix. 105. (Concluded.)"

Very perspicuous is the Word, in reference to what may be termed the adjuncts of salvation.

First, our reference is to baptism. It may be objected that we are on debatable ground. But it is not so, if we allow the Bible to decide. Human ingenuity and perversity alone have rendered it such. The mode is definitely fixed by the most precise and copious language ever written. There are not two or twenty ways, but one. Had it been otherwise it would have been indicated.

I am lost in wonder, when, with the specific teachings of the New Testament, I find a multitude of my fellow men condescending to receive as a doctrine of Christ the old wives' fable of infant baptism. In the simplicity of my soul, when I joined the Church, I looked for the warrant to admit the infants to this ordinance. I need not say, that I could not discover it, but when I do I shall gladly comply. Search the Scriptures and you cannot find a single instance of a babe being brought to the font. Now the Bible is no ways misty on this subject. "Men and women," intelligent candidates were the recipients of this ordinance in primitive days, and we suppose must be so still. We have but to open our eyes to behold the light.

Some one may say that upon such an occasion it is undignified to keep on these minor strings, to be dwelling on these jobs and titles. We reply, perhaps you have false notions of dignity, and we would remind you of one that as the symmetry and finish of the original language of Revelation depended upon these jobs and dots, as the knowledge of requirements of Jehovah must in no small degree depend upon the formation of single letters, as the grace and beauty of the law-scheme were incomplete without the faintest of its types, so the full idea of the Redemption scheme can scarcely be grasped apart from its simple emblems. To have the perfection of Christ's christianity, we need its significant embellishments. And further, we cannot but be anxious in reference to these "minor matters," when we call to mind the solemn injunction of our Lawgiver. "Whoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." The true dignity of servants consists in doing as they are bidden.

The second of these adjuncts, and one springing from the very nature of the case, is union with believers, that the baptized individual shall adhere to a baptized church.—Strange that there should be confused notions upon such a plain matter, yet we have known christian teachers who have practised the dangerous expedient of baptizing converts in the vicinity of Baptist churches, without adding them to any church, and have sometimes found individuals, who were endeavoring to make themselves believe they were under no obligation to unite with their brethren. Let us for a moment consider this, and see what light is shed upon it.

Observe, that Christ founded His church in exact accordance with the human constitution. In the words, "where two or three are gathered together in My name," there is the recognition of the social element of Christianity. Wherever men are actuated by common interests or inspired by common feelings, the natural impulse is to meet together, and speak of those things; there is an inevitable ten-

dency to meet, and see each others' faces, hear each others' voices, and "grasp each others' hands."

Further we cannot live except as communities, we are each dependent on each other. "None of us liveth to himself." No form of government, no civic polity, can be carried out except by united action. Hence combinations, societies of all arts. What would be thought of an isolated politician, an isolated citizen, an isolated soldier?

Observe again,—the church is founded in exact accordance with the necessity of the case. Religion is a thing to be spread.—When any great enterprise is got on foot, the bridging of a river where angry currents fall, the connecting of two continents by the electric wire, men meet together and combine their experience, capital, and resources. Now the reclaiming of a fallen world the most gigantic enterprise ever planned, the church is simply a society to carry this out.

Put these things together, and what becomes of the notion just mentioned? Bring this idea to the light of God's Word, and how will it appear? The commission of our ascending Saviour speaks of "teaching the disciples to observe all things," &c., and we might presume there is implied "in a collective capacity." We are left in no doubt, however, for the word in the Acts distinctly tells us "The Lord added unto the church (daily) the saved ones."

Isolated christianity, could it obtain, were an anomaly among men; caricature of the Divine model,—a notion without a reason, contradictory to the principles of our nature, as to the teaching of the Bible. When a man says, "I can be religious alone, can enjoy myself alone," he gives pretty sure evidence that he knows little of the spirit of Jesus.—He is selfish to the bottom of his being, unwilling to bear his share of the burden, and do his share of the fighting, whilst expecting to share the rest and reward of the victors, thus proving that the gospel has either not fairly seized him, or inadequately shaken him. He perpetrates a manifest absurdity, he does not enjoy himself religiously. Shew us one who spends his days thus, apart from the church, and we will show you one on whose lips hosannas have long since languished, and whose devotion has long since been dead; and contrarywise show us a man who is a constant attendant and participator in the meetings of the church and other things being equal, we will shew you one whose faith is firm, and whose hopes are bright. Almost the first impulse of a new-born soul is to join the community of Christians. "Gathering together," follow as surely as conversion from the principles we have stated. The lamp of God guides every subject of the Spirit's influence into a church to be watched over, to be fed, to be stimulated and, on his part, to co-operate in the evangelization of the world.

Amid many lights of men shed upon the ordinance of the Lord's Supper the New Testament is by far the clearest. I think it possible to peruse catechisms and commentaries, and explanations, and rise from such perusal with its significance very much bedimmed.—The Holy Spirit wrote the Testament by way, faring men to the same class; it is especially plain concerning these adjuncts of salvation. Do we ask, is the Eucharist a sacrifice? It is worse, that cannot be, for Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. "By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified."

Jesus our Great High Priest, Hath shed His blood and died. Our guilty conscience needs No sacrifice beside, His precious blood did once atone And now it pleads before the throne.

What then is its true significance? Listen to the simple record, "The Lord Jesus the night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He brake and said, take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner, also, the cup, when new He had supped, saying, this is the covenant in My blood, this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me; for as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come." Can this be made plainer? Who are the par-

takers? Shall we argue the matter. Shall we make spasmodic efforts to clear ourselves of the charge of intolerance? Shall we lay down a law of our own, and invite "all who love the Lord" or shall we honestly take our friends by the hand, and bid them follow in the way the torch leads, to wit, "When they that gladly received His word, were baptized, and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers."

Neither our patience nor our plans will permit us to do more in this connection than to remark, that the light of the Bible is sole and self-sufficient in reference to the belief and action of Christians. We appeal to no form of words except such as those here laid down. We are trammelled by no laws other than Christ has given. Here is our summary of doctrine our rule of faith. Here we are instructed to proceed in the most delicate matter connected with an ecclesiastical organization. Here is our Book of Discipline, we know no other. Heartily every Baptist subscribes to the sentiment of the Presbyterian Chalmers, "The Bible is our great Church Directory and Statute Book."

A query very pertinent to this discussion, is, does not the lamp need trimming? Its rays should not be permitted to be obscured by the mists of antiquity or prejudice. Let us as overseers steadily seek to introduce the best translations of God's Holy Word. No absurd veneration for King James' Bishops should be allowed to control us.

In the consideration of such a passage we have necessarily presented a wide extent of thought, and as necessarily have been counselled to treat each idea somewhat summarily; indicating, rather, than expatiating upon our positions. Many of our observations will, no doubt, seem trite enough to elder brethren, but of course they will bear in mind that the younger brethren are chiefly connected with first principles, and must expect these as the staple of any discourse we may be called on to deliver. It has been our aim to shew, that by means of the Divine lamp, apparent mysteries are placed in such a light that we are enabled trustfully to acquiesce, instancing as illustrations of the point, the prosperity of the wicked, the removal of the useful, and the want of success, in Christian effort. Secondly, that the Bible is probably luminous, where it is sometimes deemed obscure, referring specially to the probability that there is here sketched a distinct and unique form of church in contradistinction to the multiform religious societies bearing that name. Thirdly that the Bible is superlatively clear when referring simply to the grand theme and its adjuncts, Baptism, the union of the saved ones, the Lord's Supper, and Christian belief and practice. Having hinted at the acknowledged necessity of a Revision of the sacred word, it but remains to conclude with one or two brief general observations.

One of the prime offices of Scripture is to serve as a light of warning, and as such it throws its rays on error broad and burning. Unlike the ever-confident charity of modern times, it says, "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, nor bid him God speed." Is it any wonder that the priests forbid its use? What marvel that they take pains to shew that it is a dark Book, unfit for the people?

The eternal punishment of the wicked is the most terrible doctrine ever set forth, and perhaps the most salutary. It shews us on the primitive side, the Divine conception of the desert of sin. None but the Deity could ever have revealed it, commensurate as it is with His own being. The most ferid imagination never conceived anything akin to it.

Merciful God! merciful in the very forbidding of thy justice! Slow to anger, thou hast pointed to the limits of forbearance the time of swift retribution. When in the flaming fire thou shalt take vengeance on those who know thee not! Since thy creature unrepentant must suffer, blessed be thy name for having assured them of the fact! Blessed eternally that in prophetic vision, we view thy glittering sword! Everlasting thanks for such a warning, set in the light of the livid flames of the pit!

In reference to the multiform phases of error appearing and re-appearing in the history