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Poetry.

A CHRISTMAS SONG.

BY JOHN KEBLE.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God." What sudden blaze of song Spreads o'er the expanse of heaven? In waves of light it thrills along, Th' angelic signal given! "Glory to God!" from yonder central fire Flows out the echoing lay beyond the starry quire;

Like circles widening round Upon a clear blue river, Orb after orb the wondrous sound Is echoed on forever! "Glory to God on high, on earth be peace, And love toward men, of love—salvation and release!"

Yet, stay before thou dare To join that festal throng; Listen and mark what gentle air First stirred the tide of song: 'Tis not "the Saviour born in David's home, To whom for power and health obedient worlds should come."

'Tis not "the Christ, the Lord!" With fixed adoring look The quire of angels caught the word, Nor yet their silence broke; But when they heard the sign, where Christ should be, In sudden light they shone and heavenly harmony.

Wrapped in his swaddling bands, And in his manger laid, The Hope and Glory of all lands, Is come to the world's aid; No peaceful home upon his cradle smiled; Guests rudely went and came, where slept the Royal Child.

But where thou dwellest, Lord, No other thought should be; Once duly welcomed and adored, How should I part with thee? Bethlehem must lose thee soon; but thou wilt grace The single heart to be thy sure abiding place.

Thee, on the bosom laid Of a pure virgin mind, In quiet ever, and in shade, Shepherd and sage may find; They, who have bowed untaught to Nature's sway, And they who follow Truth along his star-paved way.

The pastoral spirits first, Approach thee, Babe divine: For they in lonely thoughts are nursed, Meet for thy lonely shrine! Sooner than they should miss where thou dost dwell, Angels from heaven will stoop to guide them to thy cell.

Still, as the days come round For thee to be revealed, By wicket shepherds thou art found, Abiding in the field, All through the wintry heaven and chill night air, In music and in light Thou dawnest on their prayer.

O, faint not ye for fear! What though your wandering sheep, Reckless of what they see and hear, Lie lost in willful sleep? High heavens, in mercy to your sad annoy, Still greets you with glad tidings of immortal joy.

Think on th' eternal home The Saviour left for you; Think on the Lord, most Holy, come To dwell with hearts untrue; So shall ye tread untired His pastoral ways, And in the darkness sing your carol of high praise.

DE NATIVITATE DOMINI.

Puer natus in Bethlehem, Unde gaudet Jerusalem.

Hic jacet in praesepe, Qui regnat sine termino.

Cognovit bos, et asinus, Quod puer erat Dominus.

Reges de Saba veniunt, Aurum, tus, myrrham, offerunt.

Intrantes domum invocant, Novum salutant Principem.

De matre natus virgine Sine virili semine;

Sine serpentis vulnere De nostro venit sanguine;

In carne nobis similia Peccato sed dissimilia;

Ut redderet nos homines Deo et sibi similes.

In hoc natali gaudio Benedicimus Domino:

Laudetur sancta Trinitas, Deo dicamus gratias.

TRANSLATION OF THE ABOVE

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD.

In Bethlehem a child is born, And Israel hails the glorious morn,

Behold Him lying in a stall, Who reigneth ever Lord of all.

The ox and ass acknowledge there, That He is Lord of earth and air.

The kings of Saba Him behold, And offer incense, myrrh and gold.

They enter to Him, one by one, And bow before the royal Son.

He of a virgin born, alone A human father hath not known;

Without the serpent's sinful stain, He comes from our own blood, to reign;

Like unto us in human birth, Unlike no sin hath known on earth;

That He might make our sinful race Resemble Him, the God of grace.

Here in this birthday joy of love Now let us bless our God above:

And in the Trinity rejoice, And sing to God with grateful voice.

—Christian Intelligencer.

THE CHURCH BOND, AND HOW TO STRENGTHEN IT.

BY REV. D. W. FAUNCE.

In a conversation with a brother in another denomination, he was told, "you make too much of the church." And the quick reply was, "and you Baptists make nothing of it." The duty "to believe and to be baptized" is recognized. But the subsequent duty to walk together in "the apostles doctrine and fellowship" and, as members of a church, "to keep the ordinances as they were delivered unto them" is undeniable.

If we have made too little, as Baptists, of the bonds that bind us each to the other in the church relationship, there are some evident reasons for it. One of them is, that we are living at a time of reaction. The church for centuries was held to be organic rather than associational. Talk to-day with Romanist, Episcopalian, or Lutheran, and the word he uses most frequently is the word "Church." The High Churchman in all these denominations thinks faith is good and works are good. It is to be desired that all members of the "one true church" should live according to the Bible, or rather, according to the rules of the church, which is the interpreter of the Bible. But the thing is to be "in the true church"—the one great organic body. Our fathers met this tendency by a solemn protest in favor of individualism as against the organic theory which absorbed the man in the church. They insisted on personal faith, individual experience of God's grace; that the church should not come between the penitent and the Saviour. But all reactions tend to the opposite error. Hence the danger, which I fear we have not entirely escaped—the danger, not of insisting too strongly on personal faith, but of overlooking the fact that personal faith is introductory to associated and compacted membership in a "church of Christ."

Again, certain forms of expression about the church have tended to loosen the church-bond. Good men allow themselves to talk about the "invisible church" and the "universal church," meaning thereby all true Christians, or perhaps all professing Christians on earth. But such a use of the word church is absurd, is anti-scriptural, is mischievous. It is absurd, for the word is a word of bounded and limited meaning. It is as absurd to speak of the "church invisible" or the "church

universal" as to speak of the invisible and universal city of New-York. If a city is visible, it can be seen somewhere and by somebody. If a city, it is not universal. Christians are one body, but not therefore one church, as men are one race, but not therefore one city. Called one "body" the figure is taken from our mortal body, exactly as when called a "family" the comparison is taken from a relation of our social life. Called one "flock" belonging to the "one fold," the figure is taken from the hill-sides of Palestine, where shepherds pastured their sheep. In none of these cases is there reference to a church-relationship. Nowhere are all believers called one church. When Christ prayed that his people "may be one," notice that he does not say one church. The nearest approach, in any verse, to the idea of a great universal church, is in the celebrated passage in Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, where he speaks "of the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven." This verse would be pertinent if the inquiry related to one of the names of the saints above. But the question now is not what Christians are called "in heaven," but about the usage of the word church with relation to Christians on earth. The use here is figurative. The inspired writer takes the church, an earthly institution and uses it to set forth the state of glorified saints above. The verse contains not even a hint as to this phantom of one great spiritual, invisible and universal church.

The usage of which I complain is not only not authorized, but is exactly opposed to the Scriptural usage of the word. In two, and only in two, senses is the word church used in the New Testament. It is used (1st) generically i. e., to describe a certain kind of institution. Precisely in the same way we use the word "jury" to describe an institution ordained by law, or the "Senate" to describe a branch of our government. In neither of these cases do we mean a particular jury or a particular Senate. Much less do we mean one great universal jury composed of all that ever sat in a jury box, or a great invisible Senate composed of all that ever sat in a Senate chamber. We use a word in these cases to describe an institution. So our Lord, foreseeing his followers gathered into churches, says in certain cases, one is to "tell it to the church." But (2nd) the specific use of the word is more common. Each company of baptized believers, according to the Acts, who were near enough to make it convenient, organized themselves, under apostolic direction or permission, into a church, with all the rights, privileges and duties that in the Epistles are laid upon such an organized body. On them was laid the duty of admitting or excluding members, of administering the ordinances, of public worship on the Lord's day, of frequently assembling for prayer and praise, of maintaining doctrine, of walking in fellowship, of promoting the growth of the whole body, of doing each and every church duty the Master had required. To these separate churches Epistles were addressed, and when there were more than one, Paul is careful to use the plural—as in the notice of "the churches in Asia."

The usage of which I complain is mischievous. It tends directly to loosen the church-bond by rendering it indefinite. It will be a phantom bond that binds one to a phantom church. There are men who talk of "the cause" rather than of the church, and glory in the fact that they are not sectarian, but love the whole cause of God, as if a man would love universal mankind the less for loving his own family the more.

Then, too, the church right of discipline is denied. "If," it is said, "a man is a Christian, and so a member of the universal, why expel him for heresy in doctrine? His heart may be right." So, too, it is said, "Why reject a convert for doctrinal unsoundness, even though vital doctrines are denied?" "He is in the spiritual, why

not admit him to the visible church?" So that honest striving for the faith and honest church discipline have come to be regarded as persecution.

Looseness about one's views of the church leads also directly to looseness as to the ordinances of the church. In the formative processes of the church, as seen in the Acts, the ordinances, or rather one of them, was sometimes administered without direct reference to membership in a church. But this was always where the church idea was only half-grown. For the church idea is a growth, and not a thing of creation by any express charter or constitution. It is a growth. It has its acorn form, its sapling form in the Acts, but its full grown form is found in the Epistles. Writing to a church, Paul says, "I praise you that ye keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you." Elsewhere we have directions about the church duty of keeping them. Mark that a church is to keep them. The old form of baptizing "into the fellowship of the church" is warranted by Paul's words about converts who are described as "first giving themselves to the Lord and unto us (the church) by the will of God." When Baptists make a stand for church rights in the church duty of the Lord's Supper, the false theory of a "church universal" furnishes their opponents with a sneer about close communion. Because, as we read the New Testament, this is a church duty to be done at a church meeting, precisely as is the duty of settling a pastor, choosing deacons, admitting or dismissing members—we are not a little reviled. Such revilers forget that it is not us, but the Master, whom they revile;—the Master who took the organized twelve, the church germ, to the upper room. Neither he nor his Apostles invited, or authorized us to invite, all believers or all baptized believers to the church-meeting where we celebrate the Lord's Supper.

A man's church relationship is with him what he makes of it. Hanging loosely by the skirts of the church, it will do him little good. But let him choose his friends among "the brethren of the holy tie," and his profit will appear to all. Let him often sing

"With them numbered may we be Here and in eternity."

And the church-bond is also the bond of charity. There is a good deal of human nature in most churches. And our brother's imperfections leave room for the grace that loves Christ's image, even when that image is somewhat obscured. He is the best Christian in this grace of charity who can forgive the most. And the bond of church labor is also to be strengthened. A church is set to maintain the truth. It is worth exactly what of truth it represents. That truth is God's power unto man's salvation only as it is used by a church in faith and prayer. A church united, and her power concentrated, now lifts up her arms a suppliant for the converting Spirit, and now reaches out her arms across the sea, and drops her beneficence into the hand of a toiling missionary in Burmah. She is always at work in some way for her Master. Living thus: loving each other; forbearing towards a brother's infirmity; praying together, sorrowing and rejoicing, each member is stronger for the church-bond on earth, and better fitted for the final gathering where there shall be one fold and one shepherd.—Ex. & Ch.

THE QUEEN AT THE PAPER-MILL.

The queen was riding out in her grand carriage, the horses tossing their plumes as if they felt themselves a little better than common horses, and the footmen all decked out in red, feeling that they had something royal about them. The queen had always had everything she wanted, and so was quite miserable because she could not think of a want to supply or a new place to visit.

At last she bethought her that they had just been building a new paper-mill a few miles out of the city. Now she had never seen a paper mill, and so she determined to stop a little way off, there leave her carriage, and walk in, not as a queen, but as an unknown common lady. She went in alone, and told the owner she would like to see his mill. He was in a great hurry, and did not know that she was the queen. But he said to himself, "I can gratify the curiosity of this lady and add to her knowledge; and though I am terribly hurried, yet I will do this kindness." He then showed her all the machinery; how they bleach the rags and make them white; how they grind them into pulp; how they make sheets and smooth them, and dry them and make them beautiful. The queen was astonished and delighted. She would now have something new to think about and talk of.

Just as she was about leaving the mill she came to a room filled with old worn-out, dirty rags. At the door of this room was a great multitude of poor, dirty men and women and children, bringing old bags on their backs filled with bits of rags and papers, parts of old newspapers and the like, all exceedingly filthy. These were rag-pickers, who had picked these old things out of the streets and gutters of the great city.

"What do you do with all these vile things?" said the queen.

"Why, madam, I make paper out of them. To be sure, they are not very profitable stock, but I can use them, and it keeps these poor creatures in bread."

"But these rags! Why, sir, they are of all colors, and how do you make them white?"

"Oh, I have the power of taking out all the old colors. You see that 'scarlet' and 'crimson'; yet I can make even scarlet and crimson, the hardest colors to remove, become as white as snow."

"Wonderful! wonderful!" said the queen.

She then took her leave; but the polite owner of the mill insisted on walking and seeing her safe in her carriage. When she got in and bowed to him, with a smile, and he saw all the grand establishment, he knew it was the queen.

"Well, well!" said he, "she has learned something, at any rate. I wish it may be a lesson in true religion."

A few days after, the queen found lying upon her writing-desk a pile of the most beautiful polished paper she had ever seen. On each sheet were the letters of her own name, and her own likeness. How she did admire it. She found, also, a note within, which she read. It ran thus:

"Will my queen be pleased to accept a specimen of my paper, with the assurance that every sheet was manufactured out of the contents of those dirty bags which she saw on the backs of the poor rag-pickers? All the filth and colours are washed out, and I trust the result is such as even a queen may admire. Will the queen also allow me to say that I have had many a good sermon preached to me in my mill? I can understand how our Lord Jesus Christ can take the poor heathen, the low, sinful creatures everywhere, viler than the rags, and wash them and make them clean; and how, though their sins be as scarlet, he can make them whiter than snow; and though they be red, like crimson, he can make them as wool." And I can see that he can write his own name upon their foreheads, as the queen will find her name on each sheet of paper; and I can see how, as these filthy rags may go into the palace and be ever admired, some poor vile sinners may be washed in the blood of the Lamb, and be received into the palace of the great King of heaven.—Sunday School Times.

All that is good and beautiful in the world is made up of the graces, not only of good men and women, but also of little children.