

The Christian Messenger.

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WHOLE SERIES.
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Poetry.

A COMMUNION HYMN.

"This do in remembrance of me."—LUKE 22: 19.

Remember thee? Yes, dearest Lord,
While mem'ry holds her place,
Will, heart and soul, in sweet accord,
Rehearse thy wondrous grace.

As thus I see thy table spread,
May thought all turn to thee,
Who took the crown from thine own head,
To give a crown to me.

The broken loaf reminds me now
Of Jesus crushed and slain;
Again the thorns entwine His brow,
He groans with keenest pain.

The ruby drops the grape has spilt
Remind me of His blood,
Shed to atone for my deep guilt,
And give me life with God.

I do discern my Saviour near,
His flesh is meat indeed;
This sacrifice to God so dear,
Gives all my soul in need.

Let friends and kindred all depart,
Though dear a life they be;
Take every idol from my heart—
Leave Christ alone with me.

My dearest Lord—and wilt thou dwell
In least as vile as mine?
Yet thou canst all its passions quell,
And make my life like thine.

Central Baptist.

Religious.

OUR DENOMINATIONAL ANNIVERSARIES.

We have had so much of the reports of the denominational Annual Meetings in London that it has been a difficult task to decide what portion to place before our readers and what to omit.

THE BAPTIST BUILDING FUND.

was not so largely attended as some of the more popular society meetings. The report, the forty-eighth, revealed the pleasant fact that last year the income was £870 in excess of the previous. There were no arrears in the repayment of loans, of which twenty-two were granted during the year, being with one exception, the largest sum ever voted by the society. An increasing number of churches pay off their loans before actually due—many of them before half due.

The fund is now nearly £19,000, and many others have started on account of it! There are now Mr. Spurgeon's, the Welsh, the Yorkshire, the Devonshire, and the General Baptist, and one and all are doing a good work—one important result being the wonderful difference between the social position of the denomination now compared with twenty or thirty years ago.

Mr. J. A. Spurgeon referred both to the direct and indirect claims of the fund, and explained from his own experience the good it was capable of doing. He had had to do with the rearing of three chapels—three had he borrowed from the fund—and he had found the work sift out the dross, and afford the best possible opportunity for bringing in working-men to labour in God's cause. Prayer and self-sacrifice were often brought about, and the people doubly blessed.

Mr. Dunlop commenced by asking whether there could be anything spiritual about wood and stone and plaster, and begging letters, which ever accompany the work of chapel-building? May not the higher life be smothered between bricks and mortar? It may; but it need not be, should not be. It was while performing the humblest duties that Abraham received the most blessed spiritual manifestations. It was while the disciples were mending their nets that Jesus met with them. Paul in the workshop of Aquilla, handling the hammer and plying the needle, as noble as Paul standing on Mars Hill, preaching to the ancient philosophers, or sitting writing his epistles to the early Christians and the Christians

of all ages. Referring to those who plead that one can read sermons or worship at home, Mr. Dunlop quoted the quaint but effective lines of Quarles, addressed to the "Chamber Christians" of his day:—

Some there be who say,
"Why go to church? I'll stay at home to pray,
Smith's dainty morsels have in plenty stored
With better stuff than pulpits can afford me."
Small store of manners, when thy Prince says,
"Come,
And feast at Court," to say, "I've meat at home."

Besides, there are blessings specially promised to united worship. There is an atmosphere in the house of prayer that cannot be found elsewhere.

THE WELSH ANNUAL MEETING.

on behalf of the Foreign Missionary Society was held at the Mission House. After a Welsh hymn such as only Welshmen know how to sing, Mr. Roberts offered prayer, and the Chairman a few sympathetic words in English, concluding however in Welsh, for the language of the hills was decidedly *de rigueur* throughout the evening.

Mr. Millard gave a statement from personal knowledge of the progress of mission work in Jamaica. The Jamaica Baptist churches at the present time embrace 23,400 members, and there are also 3500 inquirers. Taking one year with another, there have been added to the churches by baptism, during the last forty years, 13,000 annually, and 15,000 have died consistent Christians during that period. There are now 108 chapels, all self-supported and not a chapel debt throughout Jamaica.

THE BAPTIST UNION.

The annual session was opened at the Mission House, Castlestree, Holborn, by the usual devotional services.

Dr. Thomas, of Pontypool, the retiring chairman, in a few graceful words, congratulated the Union on the choice of Dr. Underhill as incoming president. He had the advantage of having watched the work of the denomination in foreign lands. He had been to Western Africa, to Jamaica, to the United States; and he was well able, therefore, to occupy the position from which he (Dr. Thomas), with great pleasure, as well as gratitude to them, retired.

Dr. Underhill then took the chair, a vote of thanks to the retiring president referred to the fact that, as a denomination, we have yet much to learn in respect of Christian unity. We were not so compact a brotherhood as we ought to be, and should strive to be. If we do not set up formally a standard of union, let us see that we interpose no unnecessary barriers to so desirable an end.

Dr. Underhill then rose to deliver his address on

BAPTIST PRINCIPLES AND BAPTIST PROGRESS.

Dr. Underhill commenced by saying that the hesitation and diffidence he had felt in acceding to the request that he would preside over the annual assemblage of the ministers and delegates of the Baptist Churches of Great Britain and Ireland, had been overcome by the consideration urged upon him that his occupancy of the position would bear practical illustration of a principle dear to us as a body—viz., that in the true Church of Christ the distinction of clergy and laity has no rightful existence, and that all believers, to whatever office they may be called, are one in Him. He then proceeded to remark:—

But this is only one of the many important principles to the assertion of which the Baptist denomination owes its existence and continuance. Both in doctrine and polity we affirm truths of the highest value. If, in one aspect, our position is that of protest and dissent, in another it is one of affirmation—the avowal of truths necessary for the salvation of the souls of men; and, as we believe, conservative of the honour of our Saviour and Lord. I do not claim for the Baptist denomination that it is the sole representative

among the churches of Christendom of the principles it maintains. It is freely and gratefully admitted that, with a few exceptions, the truths dear to us are held, in greater or less degree of fulness, by other Christian communities. In all Protestant bodies, and even in the Roman Catholic Church itself, from which our departure is the greatest, we recognise, wherever they are held or taught, the fundamental verities of the Christian faith, although in some cases they are overlaid with error, or their brightness is dimmed by human tradition, unscriptural ordinances, and unauthorised ecclesiastical claims. It is, nevertheless, the object of the baptised churches of Christ fully to represent and purely to teach all the doctrines, commandments, and ordinances of Christ. In a word, it is their aim to embody, in its breadth, completeness, and purity, the religion of the New Testament—the truth as it is in Jesus. Whatever is characteristic by way of affirmation or denial among the Baptists, springs from one source—attachment to the Bible—for they consider it to contain, in the words of the eminent Robert Hall, "an immediate revelation from God, and as an inspired guide in the conduct of life, and, in the pursuit of immortality," a light shining in a dark place "to direct us in the paths of salvation."

From a body so corrupt as the Church of Rome, it is no wonder that we have long received the familiar designation of "heretics," with whom there can be no communion, whose only desert is the anathema and the stake. But we may express some surprise that from co-religionists, professing to take the Bible as their only law of conduct and church life, Baptists have, without exception, received scanty courtesy, and been subjected to unjust exclusion from civil rights and fraternal regard. The progress of time has done much to soften asperities, to remove unjust disabilities, to bring Christian men of every church to a better understanding of the rights of conscience, and to a fuller recognition of the laws of the Gospel in relation to ecclesiastical polity and Christian liberty.

After referring to the present position of the Established church towards Non-conformists Mr. Underhill proceeded to speak on

BAPTIST ALLEGIANCE TO THE BIBLE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

Unquestionably, this conception of our allegiance to our Lord, our reverence for every "jot and tittle" of His Word, and our adherence to the principle that "the Bible, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants," have brought us into the arena of controversy with the manifold errors of the Churches of Rome and England, and with the polity and doctrines of all other Protestant communities professing to follow Christ, so far as they departed from the clear teaching of the Divine Word. Many a hard contest has had to be borne by us on behalf of the crown rights of our Redeemer, and for the supremacy of His Word over the life and conduct of men. But I am bold to say, on behalf of my brethren in the ministry, who, in many instances are called to "endure hardness" for Christ Jesus, and of my brethren, the members of the churches, who, at a great cost of money and social obloquy, maintain our sanctuaries and various religious and charitable organizations existing in our midst—that we are moved by far other motives than love of singularity or strife, by envy of the unattainable honours and wealth of a State alliance, by self-will, or by contempt for authority. We love our Bibles, we love and obey the Lord Jesus Christ. We seek to know what the will of God is, and, knowing it, strive to do it. The one absorbing object of the ministry amongst us is the conversion of men to God; its constant labour—the guidance of Christ's people into the way of holiness. Our ministers do not enter the service of Christ as a learned and respectable profession, for its literary leisure, or its gainful benefices and professorships.

It is the one object of our ministry to testify to men of every name the duty of "repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Hence the growth of our churches: hence our missionary organizations for the propagation of the Gospel at home and abroad. Hence the "vast activity" which the Baptist lecturer signalizes, that has made our body the most numerous of all the denominations of the United States, and the "noble liberality" of spirit which has characterised some of our greatest modern preachers; so that, even in his judgment, "our faults" have been amply redeemed by the blessed results that have followed our earnest ministrations.

WHY AND WHEREIN WE DIFFER FROM OTHER CHURCHES.

But, while the primary object and the essential feature of our position is the promotion of the kingdom of God in the souls of men, it is not to be denied that, in another aspect, our attitude is one of antagonism to every departure from that which we conceive to be the teaching of Holy Writ. We recognize no authority over our conscience in councils, oecumenical or otherwise, or in the infallible utterances of popes, or in the variable and varying decisions of ecclesiastical synods and courts. The Holy Scriptures—the revelation of God's will and plan of salvation contained therein—is with us the sole guide and authority in matters of religion. Appeals to other authorities, however venerable, however learned, however gifted, however ancient, are irrelevant and frivolous. We seek for divine authority, and to none other can we conscientiously or rightfully bow.

THE SPECIAL VALUE OF OUR TESTIMONY IN THE PRESENT DAY.

If, for the utterances of holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, we may substitute creeds, the decrees of councils, articles of religion, and the authority of the church in matters of faith—the conclusions of men who have erred, and may err—history abundantly shows that we pave the way for wide departures from the faith, for the accumulation of errors, and for the final subversion of all written revelation. The wildest fanaticism, the most perverse teaching, monstrous legends, and doctrines and practices as injurious to morality as they are destructive to the souls of men, are free to run their mad career; and men, in sheer disgust, will cast off the restraints of religion altogether. And such in our own day is the result. In striking contrast with the definite statements of Scripture stand the conclusions of the most advanced school of the philosophical thinkers of the age. At the best, they say "that theism and theology, under certain conditions, still are, and ought to be, allowed to remain open questions. No sure conclusion can be reached. There may be a God; there may not. Philosophy and science are impotent to determine the momentous question. Nothing can be known but phenomena. Each man must be his own judge, and his opinions are of value to himself and to none other.

In vain has philosophy toiled at its problems of being, and science explored the wondrous cosmos around us; in vain has a mighty voice uttered its thunders from Sinai, or the lips of the Son of God told us of "Our Father in Heaven," from whose presence He came forth, unveiling the life to come. Men are still without hope and without God in the world. They are no better off than the ancient seeker after truth. Xenophanes, who, six centuries before Christ, closed his studies on nature with these remarkable words: "No man has discovered any certainty, nor will discover it concerning what I say of the universe; for if he uttered what is most perfect, still he does not know it, but conjecture hangs over all." "Only one thing," said the elder Pliny, "can be certain, namely, that there is no certainty." What better are the latest utterances of this sceptical age? The

revelation of Christ being set aside, as nothing more than the dreamy imaginations of a Jewish peasant, to whom shall we go? On what principles of morals or philosophy are we to govern our conduct? By what rule must we walk, with all the interests of time pressing upon us, and in ignorance of our futurity? Here is the answer: "We must come, says a recent writer in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, for the practical direction of our social and political life to our trust "creed," one which is already the creed of "the enormous majority of rational men." And what is that? "That religion is matter of opinion and probability; that whoever claims to know much more about it than other people, and in particular whoever claims to be the exclusive guardian and authorised interpreter of Divine revelation, is condemned *ipso facto*, and that the fact that he makes such pretensions dis-entitles him to any advantages which he may claim from public authority." Thus the modern sceptic is as ignorant of God and the future life as the ancient sophist, and the world is thrown back upon its old heathenism, only tempered by the material gains of science and of a truer physical philosophy. For this dreary creed we are asked to give up the Bible, with all its wonderful revelation of things unseen. Scepticism and sacerdotalism are one in this—they dislike the Bible, and are alike enemies to those who cleave to it. Let the Baptist denomination closely adhere to the great formative principle of their existence, and they will preserve for the world the true knowledge of God, the record that He has given us eternal life, and that this life is in His Son.

THE BIBLE AND MODERN SCIENCE.

The progress of society, the experiments of science, the researches of history and archaeology, may yet throw, as they have in times past thrown, new light on the sacred page. All such discoveries are most welcome. Willingly, to use the words of a recent writer, would we let go "every foreign element which has attached itself to Christianity through the ages, and realise to the utmost possible extent the conception of the Divine Author of Christianity, in the actual religion of the present hour." This is the very essence of our church life, the end of which we desire to attain. Conformity to Christ, to the will of Christ, to the law of Christ, as unveiled in the Scriptures, is our governing principle. "Here we stand, and God helping us, we can do no other."

Whatever efforts may be made to discredit this sacred record, we hold it to be the most powerful instrument of modern civilisation, its morality indestructible, and its religious teaching the only source of knowledge of the true God and of the life hereafter. Christ *hath* brought life and immortality to light. The empire He has established over human thought and emotion can never be broken, and the highest interests of humanity are dependent on the continued acceptance and circulation of the record which contains His revelation. "The Bible," says the eloquent Robert Hall, "is the treasure of the poor, the solace of the sick, and the support of the dying; and while other books may amuse and instruct in a leisure hour, it is the peculiar triumph of that book to create light in the midst of darkness, to alleviate the sorrow which admits of no other alleviation, to direct a beam of hope to the heart which no other topic of consolation can reach; while guilt, despair, and death vanish at the touch of its holy inspiration. To maintain the truth, to extend the influence, to enforce by every moral power at our command, the teachings of this holy volume, is the one great duty to which we are called, and by argument, by intellectual gifts, by philosophical acumen, and, above all, by a holy life, to illustrate the salvation that it brings. We are set for the defence of the Gospel and to point men to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."