

The Christian Messenger.

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WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXXVIII., No. 18.

Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

"YE ARE MY FRIENDS."
John xv. 14.

Ye are my friends, saith Christ the Lord,
Unto his little flock;
A holy church bought with my blood,
And built on me the rock.

This earth shall melt, all things remove,
Yes, time itself depart;
But you're secured to me by love,
And graven on my heart.

Ye are my friends, then do not fear,
Though trials fierce assail;
For I thy God am always near,
By me, thou shalt prevail.

I am your friend, then take the cross
And follow my command;
Count all your earthly gains but loss
To serve your Living Friend.

Ye are my friends; my precious blood
I freely shed for thee,
Come taste the goodness of your God,
And his salvation see.

In every trial, look above,
To me, your living friend;
Come prove the firmness of my love,
To keep thee to the end.

J. P. N.

Hartford, Yarmouth, April 23th, 1874.

"For if I go not away the Comforter will not come."—JOHN XVI. 7; LUKE XXIV. 50-53.

Love, like the lark, mounting upward from
sight,

The sweeter the song, as the higher she soars,
Till fading, and vanishing, finally, quite,
A flood of invisible melody pours.

W. H. P.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE BODY OF CHRIST.

That is a very suggestive chapter (1 Cor. xii.) in which Paul illustrates the relations, dependence and operations, of the mystical body of our Lord. That body, is the true Church of Christ. And it is a perfect body. There is no schism in it. Its relations, are complete. Its dependence, not only upon its great Head, but also upon the healthy existence and successful workings of the different parts, is orderly, legitimate, and important.

Upon its wise operation, depends the salvation of men, the glory of God. The life of that body, is Christ. He is its heart—its centre—its living Head. His successor, the Holy Spirit, for his sake, is the motive power, which prompts it to every expression of holy thought, desire, and feeling. All religious action is propelled by him, and at once concentrates towards the person and truth of the Redeemer. It is the Spirit that regulates the temper of the whole body. The Apostle says: "God hath tempered the body together." Hence, the gift, and presence, and operation, of the Comforter. He filleth the body with divine warmth, nourishment, and power. But all expressions of that vitality, are not alike.

There are vast differences in the manifest working of that power. But let no one presume to say that the church thus constituted in her nature and practical exhibition, is a fatal contradiction of herself. For, the same spirit worketh and ruleth all in all.

There are diversities of gifts, and differences of administration, but the same Lord and Spirit. And God cannot deny himself. While God repeats himself, he never denies himself. His work, though manifested under different conditions, and through different relations, always proves its reality, and equally, its consistency. It is impossible for God to lie, either by word of his mouth, or by acts of his hand. His providence coincides with his Gospel; and his truth harmonizes with the internal testimony of his Spirit.

And though Christian believers, in organized capacity, do present some singular irregular and conflicting positions in regard to parts of creeds, and

certain practice; yet, by no possible view of rightful interpretation, can it be made to appear, to candid minds, that the body of Christ presents an example of real, self-hostility. Shall we say of the physical body, that, because it is subject to certain indispositions, caused by imperfect government, or injudicious management, it is, therefore, a damaging self-contradiction—an example giving the lie to its professions of reality and consistency? Nay.

And more exaltedly doth the body of Christ maintain a harmonious relationship of its several members, acts and aims. But widely different are the offices of its members. Some are pastors, some are teachers, some are missionaries, and some are evangelists. But let not the pastors say they can get along without the teachers; nor the teachers and pastors say they can get along without the missionaries; nor any say, "We can dispense with the labors of evangelists." God has a divine work for each—for all. They have a place in his affections—his Spirit in their hearts, moving and animating them onward, in the spread of his truth—the advancement of his dear kingdom. All have something to do. There is no excuse for anyone, layman or minister, to say, "The body of Christ has no need of me." Brother, you cannot thus shirk responsibility. You may be the finger only, of the body; but do you point, with that finger, sinners to Christ. If you be a hand, use that hand to labor in field or mine, to gather means for the spread of the Gospel. If you be an eye, help others to see something beautiful or interesting, in divine service. If you be only an ear, let it be consecrated to so hearing the words of Jesus, that not only your own soul shall be filled with a rich knowledge of the truth of those words; but, that others may see that your hearing has been profitable to you, and, by your example, be led to penitently hear for themselves. Let your voice be consecrated to singing for Jesus. Let your lips speak to his praise. And O, whatever relation you sustain to the Christ body, be sure that you let the Spirit of God use your faculties, however weak they are, for the good of the whole. They can't do without you.

C. H. WETHERBE.

THE LATE DR. KIRK.

An article in the *National Baptist* a week or two since, written by a Baptist Minister under a sense of gratitude to this eminent Congregationalist, says:—

"The main events in the history of this eminent servant of God are easily recorded. His life did not abound in changes or startling incidents. Early in his ministry, he labored much and successfully as an evangelist. His pastorate in Albany was a continual revival. Then, as during all his subsequent life, he was deeply alive to the reformatory power of the Gospel. He did not regard religion as an abstraction; he considered it as including within its scope temperance, liberty, missions and all that relates to the elevation of man and the regeneration of society.

In 1842, he became pastor of the Mt. Vernon Church, Boston, which had been formed with a view to enjoying his labors. From that date his life was quiet and uneventful. He led a life of laboriousness, purity, benevolence, and piety, consecrating to the service of God and the welfare of man, his rare gifts of utterance, his singular persuasiveness of speech.

His character was stained by no blemish; it was not even shaded by rumors. He never offered a point to which suspicion could attach itself. His judgment was clear and well nigh infallible. One tries in vain to think of any mistake, of anything that could shake the confidence reposed in his wisdom and counsel.

One feature in his life deserves to be kept before the rising ministry. Many a pastor feels a desire for "a wide field." Dr. Kirk found an ample

sphere of usefulness in the pastorate. Called to all manner of offices, as secretary, professor, and president, he spent his life laboring for the souls that God had committed to him. He did not lose his reward. In the conversion of sinners, in the edification of the church, in the development of a boundless Christian benevolence, in the example shining out from his church, as from a city set on an hill, he wielded an influence bounded neither by space nor time.

Without attempting a formal sketch of his life or character, may we be allowed a reminiscence?

In 1859, a young Baptist minister (who had already entitled himself to be considered the worst speaker in Massachusetts) met Dr. Kirk at a religious assembly which called together ministers of several different denominations. He ventured to solicit from Dr. Kirk some suggestions as to improvement in elocution. The noble man entered most kindly into the matter, and by way of encouragement told this incident. He said:

"A few weeks after I entered Princeton Seminary, it became my turn to declaim in presence of the class and of Dr. Alexander [the first Dr. Alexander, one of the most perfect orators that America has produced.] I was so embarrassed, so hurried, so inarticulate, so faulty in every way, that the class all tittered and not a few laughed outright. I went to my room mortified almost to death. I at once began to practice by myself: "M-y, m-y; n-a-m, name; i-s, is; N-o-r-v-a-l, Norval," etc. I kept on drilling myself. Presently my turn came again. As I sat down after speaking, Dr. Alexander raised his hands and cried: "Is it possible that this is the young man that we all laughed at so the other day?"

The Doctor not only conversed freely with the young brother, but invited him to his study in Boston for further instruction in elocution. Nor was this merely a good natured; unmeaning offer. Shortly after, he appointed by letter an hour for the interview. At the specified time the young brother called on him at his house in Staniford St., and found him in his study. After a few words of greeting, the Doctor said: "Now let us begin by asking the Saviour to help us." He knelt down and said in reverent, and loving tones, which linger in the ears of him who then heard them, "Oh, Lord Jesus, thy young servant desires to learn how to use his voice so that he can be a more useful servant of thine." He then asked in very touching, simple words, for the Saviour's blessing on the effort of the hour. Then with the utmost patience he began at the rudiments, teaching the pupil how to use his hands, how to place his feet, how to modulate his voice, and drawing up a list of directions to guide his efforts at practice in private. Subsequently he took from his already engrossing avocations one or two hours more for the same object. He who admired him from afar for the purity of his life, the dignity of his character and the power of his eloquence, now learned to love him for his absence of assumption, for the sweetness and beauty of his piety, for his kindness to one who had no claim but the tie of a common humanity and a common Christian hope. He to whom he showed this kindness, to-day lays this humble tribute upon his grave.

[From the New York Examiner & Chronicle.]

THAT "NORMAL FACT" IN OUR HISTORY.

DEAR MR. EDITOR: I have waited patiently to hear more about that "normal fact" of open-communion in the historic development of the Baptist denomination; and I have learned what all Baptist history failed to teach me, namely, that "the earliest formulas of our faith assert" open-communion; that "the modern (?) practice of restriction as a test of fellowship be-

tween the churches is itself an innovation on the ancient usage;" that the Freewill Baptist Union "advocates historic Baptist principles"—"stands exactly where the most renowned and representative men of Baptist history stood;" that the Philadelphia Confession allowed latitude upon the communion question; and, in a word, that you "have apostatized from the truth as preached by our Baptist fathers."

These are grand assertions, but unfortunately they have not a particle of truth in them, and are made in an utter ignorance or a wilful perversion of all facts and documents. Any one may assure himself of this if he will read history, and perhaps it is foolish to go through the process of proof, when those who make these assertions cannot establish one of their points; but it may be worth while to show how boldly a man can assert as historic fact that which is directly contrary to it. First, then the "Council of Fifty" affirm that the earliest formulas of our faith assert open-communion. Where do they find this? Absolutely nowhere! They cannot bring a single Confession of Faith from all Baptist history, before the rise of the Freewill Baptists about one hundred years ago, to prove it. They can bring only one in all that history which appears to prove it, and that one excluded Arminians from communion, hence would exclude the authors or the main author of these assertions. All the Continental Baptist bodies from 1521 onwards, except the Socinian, practised strict-communion. The English General Baptists from the beginning of their history, in 1610, were strict. Their Confessions published in 1611, 1660, 1663 and 1678 plainly require baptism before communion. Their early churches would not even allow attendance upon other worship. They said "The whole Scripture is against such Balaamitic and wavering actions." Those who held infant baptism, they said, "we utterly deny, for we are commanded to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." They never allowed open communion until in the last century they became Socinians. Do our liberal brethren find their origin in that direction?

Turn to the Particular Baptists in England. Their Confessions of Faith are emphatic for strict communion. The famous London Confession, printed in 1644, 1646, 1651, 1652, and in Scotland in 1653, expressly places immersion before communion, and says in its appendix, "We do therefore not admit any to the use of the Supper, nor communicate with any in the use of this ordinance but disciples baptized, lest we should have fellowship with them in their doing contrary to order." The same is true of all the Confessions that can be found in Baptist history until 1688. Then the Century Confession of London, which is always pleaded for open communion, appeared. How far did that allow this practice? Not in the Confession itself, which makes communion a church ordinance, and puts it after immersion; but as these brethren avowed their aim to show how little Baptists differed from Presbyterians and Congregationalists, they granted in an appendix that while most of the churches adhered to strict communion some few did not, and they recognized this fact, and would not impose conditions upon these. Do our liberal brethren and the editor of the Freewill Baptist Union comfort themselves with this, the only historic Confession which tolerates any mixed communion? Is this the earliest Confession of their faith? Very well, that Confession inscribed almost on its title, "We—denying Arminianism." How will that please your historic brother editor? In 1719 the churches holding this faith had an offer of £200 if they would admit to fellowship an Arminian church. They refused, because it would violate that Confession. In 1742 one solitary Baptist communed once in the Church of England as a qualification for office: these same churches at once denounced the act, and he was excluded. Under that Confes-

sion they never communed with the Episcopal, Presbyterian or Congregational churches nor with Arminians. They only tolerated in association a few churches which had a mixed membership of Baptists and Pedobaptists. Is this the normal thing in all Baptist history? No, for even when this Confession took this stand, the churches in Wales and the west of England were dissatisfied, and the Somerset churches, a strong body, came out in 1691 with a Confession re-affirming strict communion.

Will your historic (?) Free-Will editor find his earliest formulas in this country? He cannot plead Roger Williams, for he was terribly strict. Perhaps he comforts himself with the Philadelphia Confession, because that was the London Century Confession adopted here. But, alas for liberality! the first churches were rigid close-communicants at the start, and in 1716 Abel Morgan translated the Century Confession into Welsh, adding an article which made even laying on of hands after baptism a prerequisite to the Lord's Supper. And this was afterwards incorporated into the Confession of the Association. Besides, that body declared repeatedly against open communion in their answers to questions in 1740, and in their Order of Discipline in 1743. Nowhere can a Baptist Confession be found in Europe or America which would admit your Arminian historic editor to the Lord's Table, or endorse his views, until the rise of his own denomination, the Free-Will Baptists, in New-Hampshire.

Nowhere in all history will he find any church which required less for admittance to communion than it required for membership, until he comes to the same body. There were indeed a few English Baptists who held to open or mixed communion, but they admitted Pedobaptists to membership, and, arising out of the old Puritan churches, retained Pedobaptists as their members. Such was Bunyan, and such his church at Bedford. Such were a few others. But almost all of these became in time Pedo baptist churches. Bunyan's church was such from the time of his death. Yet Bunyan greatly preferred the strictness of his Baptist brethren to a real open communion. He would have abhorred communing with a Free-Will brother as much as he did communing with the Church of England. He declared that "it polluteh God's ordinances—violateth his law—profaneth his holiness—defileth the truly gracious—provoketh God's judgments." Is that your liberal brother's view?

Robert Robertson long afterwards tried to revive open-communion. But he did it on Socinian grounds, and became a Socinian. Is that the normal thing? Robert Hall renewed the effort in 1815. But he and his biographer Morris own it was an innovation. Is that the old historic liberality, or the modern innovation?

You may have apostatized—for you are after all only human, and an editor—but if so you have apostatized not from, but to, the old formulas of faith and the practice and preaching of the Baptist fathers. If you repent of your misdeeds, let me remind you that there is an under-ground railroad laid from the slavery of strict communion to the Freewill Baptist denomination. Take it, and be happy, be liberal, be famous. Over and over again, one or two ardent souls have appeared in American Baptist history who have come out for free and liberal communion. In a few years they have been found resting peacefully in the ranks of the Freewill Baptist body. What has been the invariable rule in the past will continue to be so. Your Freewill editor knows it, and perhaps by a little falsification of history can promote it. Let us remember Gamaliel's counsel, and be patient.

IRONDIQUOIT.

The Editor of the *Examiner* adds to the above the following remark:—
Solomon said many years ago, that "he who is first in his own cause seemeth just, but his neighbor cometh and searcheth him."