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WHOLE SERIES.
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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.
Union with Jesus.

"My beloved is mine and I am His."
My beloved is mine, and I'm His forever,
And nothing I know can this sweet union sever;
My sins He has freely and fully forgiven,
And made me an heir to the glory of Heaven.
His blood for me once I know freely was shed,
And His merits I trust, so I've nothing to dread;
How great is His goodness, how sweet is His name,
His love never changes, 'tis ever the same.

My pathway looks rugged, life's tempests seem wild,
But I know Jesus loves me and I am His child;
I know I may trust Him, His word He'll not break,
And He's told me He'll never, no never, forsake;
That whatever I ask in His name while below,
From His bountiful stores He will freely bestow.
And when life shall end with its trial and care,
He'll receive me to mansions all glorious and fair.

I believe all the sweet precious things He has said,
On His dear faithful bosom I pillow my head;
O refreshing and sweet is this safe resting place,
My soul cannot fear in His loving embrace.
Freely I tell him each trial and care,
And He listens and helps me my burdens to bear;
O no friend like Jesus on earth I can find,
So tender and loving, so patient and kind.

My pleasures in life are all faded and dim,
But my soul gets its hope and its comfort from Him;
He permits me to suffer, I cannot tell why,
If I patiently wait I shall reach the fair land of the sky.
All pain will be over, and then I shall rest,
Beyond the blue sky, and the night stars that shine
Is the home I am hoping will one day be mine.

O how sweet it will be mid its glories to sing
The praise of our precious Redeemer and King!
The song I shall raise will be free from all sin,
How I wish even now that sweet song to begin!
O when shall I leave this frail casket of clay,
And soar to the city of unending day?
If Jesus should call me, I gladly would go
For a sight of His face I would leave all below.

But while on the earth He permits me to stay,
His grace will be given to cheer the rough way;
I'll cling to Him closely, I know His strong arm,
Will support and sustain me, and keep me from harm.
Though often the tempter may vex and annoy,
He'll not be permitted my soul to destroy.
My beloved is mine, and I'm His forever,
And nothing I know can this sweet union sever.

H. COLE.

Milton, Queens Co.

Religious.

For Christian the Messenger.
Church Polity.

No. 1.

INTRODUCTORY.

My dear Sir,—

I propose, with your permission, to send you some occasional papers on Church Polity. The first paper is introductory.

The word "Church" occurs in our authorized version for the first time in Matt. xviii. 17, "Tell it unto the Church." This is an unfortunate rendering, as the Christian church was not then in existence. The word used (*ecclesia*) was ordinarily employed to denote any society or assembly, and is so used in Acts xix. 41, with reference to the uproarious mob gathered in the theatre at Ephesus; the town-clerk dismissed the assembly. In Matt. xviii. 17, the synagogue is probably referred to.

The first Christian Church was formed at Jerusalem. The record is

very simple. The disciples met day after day for prayer, expecting the fulfilment of the Lord's promise of the Spirit. The blessing came. Peter preached. Three thousand souls were pricked in their hearts. They gladly received his word, were baptized, and "added to the church." The transaction was very simple. There were no long and complicated ceremonies. Indeed, we read of no ceremonies at all. No doubt, every thing was done "decently and in order." There was indescribable solemnity and deep-seated joy; and what a glorious hallelujah ascended from the meeting when they closed the exercises of the day! Were not the streets vocal with the songs of the new-born saints, as they went to their homes or lodging-places, rejoicing in the Lord? The ceremonies attendant on their reception into the Church were few and short. They gave in their names, took their places, and joined in the songs of Zion. Formality was not yet born.

The second church seems to have been formed at Samaria. There is the same silence in the record about ceremonies. It was long before the servants of the Lord Jesus dreamed of uniformity. The same thing might be done in many different ways and all equally valid.

We come to this general inference:—that the Christian Church at the beginning was a society or assembly of Christians, voluntarily associating for high and holy purposes, to be hereafter enumerated and described. Spiritual persons, and such only, were truly members of Christian churches. They were known by their "faith in the Lord Jesus," and their "love to all the saints." There were black sheep at Corinth and a "called a brother" who had no right to that appellation, and will not be acknowledged by the Lord when the saints are gathered together at the last. He will say, "I never knew you." The final separation of the precious from the vile is reserved for that day. This, however, does not affect the actual state of the case. "They are not all Israel who are of Israel."

We are not always able in the present state of society, to use words correctly. We speak of the Greek Church, and the Roman Church, and the Church of England; but, openly speaking, there are no such bodies, the characteristics of a Christian Church according to the New Testament, not being found among them.

M. C.

For the Christian Messenger.

Itching Ears.

A SERMON FOR THE FLECTED.

There are a great many of them in the world, physicians, and hence their cure is difficult and uncertain. The New Testament speaks of the most curious and distressing diseases referred to by Paul in his second epistle to Timothy, fourth chapter, verse, where it is described as "Itching Ears."

It may strike many that even the best medical disorder. The sion to have escaped the attention of the Carpenter, and all the other disciples of Aesculapius. A disease was known in very times, being alluded to, not only in the case just noticed, but also in the seventeenth chapter of the Apostles that the Athenians distemper badly. There is some malady in the sixth verse of his prophecy. It can be little doubt that the "itching ears" is very prevalent world at the present time, many of our church-members are with it to a dangerous extent. It is also reason to fear that it is rapidly spreading, and

that, unless proper remedial agencies are at once set in operation, it will not only become universal but chronic. The great danger of the disease is that it injures the soul rather than the body, by causing its victims to despise "sound doctrine," to abandon "the truth," and to "turn unto fables." This, of course leads to spiritual darkness and ruin.

If anything can be done in the way of describing the symptoms of this terrible malady and suggesting appropriate remedies, it is evident that no time should be lost in doing so for the benefit of suffering humanity. Let us at the outset, therefore, take into consideration

I. THE SYMPTOMS OF THE DISEASE.

Like many other insidious disorders which afflict human nature, this disease may be lurking in the system a long while before the victim becomes aware of its presence. Indeed some patients who have it badly seem to be in entire ignorance of the presence of the fatal distemper, at least they do not recognize it as a disease. For this reason it is necessary to point out carefully the distinctive symptoms.

1. *Dullness of hearing* is the usual precursor of the approach of the disease. Not the outer ear, but the inner ear becomes toughened and "dull of hearing," so that the blessed truths of the gospel which once seemed like sweet music, now seem like a discordant song or an idle tale. Under such circumstances the most faithful preachers is thought to be prosy, and his discourses dry and uninteresting. The story of the Cross loses its charm, and the whisperings of the Holy Spirit to the heart are unheard. Meanwhile the sluggish hearer does not seem to be aware of his spiritual condition and stupidity.

2. *Itchiness of the ears supervenes.* Having lost its normal and healthy tone the ear becomes prurient. It wants to be tickled—seeks for something louder and more sensational than it has been accustomed to hear. The rough scratching of the hay and straw of cant and claptrap are much more disagreeable to such an ear than the gentler touches of the silken threads of gospel truth. Wholesome apostolic preaching is despised; and shouting, ranting and pseudo-religious gibberish are chosen in preference. When the disease has made considerable head-way in the church, there arises a clamor for the dismissal of the faithful pastor, whose only crime is that he has adhered with unswerving fidelity to his Master's commission. A general rush is then made for some Rev. Marvellous Sensation. Sound doctrine is cheerfully abandoned in order that those itching ears may be more satisfactorily tickled by specious fables and startling sensations.

3. *The more the ears are tickled the worse the disease becomes.* This is a peculiarity of most itching maladies. Rubbing only spreads the irritating agencies over a wider area. Even the startling performances of Rev. Marvellous Sensation soon lose their attraction, and a louder rant is demanded. The church of the diseased one's first love now becomes tame and without interest, and a gadding disposition is indulged in. He goes often to other places of worship even when services are held in his own. Indeed he is oftener seen abroad than among his own brethren; and finally, his seat becomes permanently vacant. As the disease advances religious meetings become entirely abandoned, whilst theatres, horse-races and monkey-shows are chosen as more congenial places of entertainment. Then follows death, and after death, judgment.

II. THE CAUSES OF THE DISORDER.

In a great many diseases the causes are obscure and difficult of explanation. The case we are considering is somewhat of this character. The chief sources of the evil are, however, so obvious that we shall have little difficulty in presenting them in such a way as to be easily understood.

1. *The disease of itching ears usual-*

ly arises from *bad general health*, especially of the heart. When the system gets out of order all the bodily organs become affected. A religious dyspeptic, who has lost all relish for wholesome doctrine and who cannot digest the simplest truths of the gospel will invariably prove to be shortsighted and dull of hearing. Hence follows the itching with all its concomitant evils. When the heart loses its first love for Christ and his people, the spiritual constitution becomes weak and diseased, the society of earnest brethren ceases to be attractive, and ordinary religious services become distasteful and even disagreeable. The ear being out of tune, the sweetest gospel songs sound inharmonious and meaningless.

2. *Bad habits bring on this disease.* We shall name some of them. The habit of absenting ourselves from religious meetings on account of mere trifles greatly tends to put our ears out of tune and set them itching. The habit of neglecting prayer and of reading novels instead of studying God's Word, is sure to result in our losing interest in wholesome religious exercises. The habit of unjustly criticising faithful preaching has also a tendency to destroy our spiritual health and to lead us into gadding practices. The habit of chasing after every Tom, Dick and Harry who may come into the community, is partly a result of the disease, and partly its cause. All these bad habits, and many others of a similar kind, are doing much at the present time towards spreading the disease of itching ears.

3. *The disease is infectious.* We sometimes catch it from our neighbors and sometimes they catch it from us. When a father allows himself to stay at home when he should be in meeting, he should be among his people when his children are following in his footsteps. He has contracted the disease of itching ears, and his children have caught it from him. When one member of a church gets into the habit of running off to other churches and of whispering into the ears of brethren something about the wonderful preachers they have seen and the startling sermons they have heard, those brethren will be very apt to catch the itching distemper. In this way this loathsome contagion is spread from ear to ear. There are members in some of our churches so badly infected with this disgusting disease that they are more to be shunned than if they had the small-pox.

III. HOW TO CURE THE MALADY.

It is by no means an easy matter to prescribe a specific remedy for a disorder which is so deeply rooted in the system and so varied in its phases as that of itching ears. A few general directions may be given, however, the observance of which aid greatly in removing the disease or, at least, in restraining it within proper bounds.

1. *Attention to diet* is of prime importance. This direction claims the first place in the treatment of all maladies. The most skillful physician that ever lived on earth said to his pupils "Take heed what ye hear." The meaning is obvious. It is a needful caution to professors of religion to protect their ears from bad air and unwholesome influences, from empty declamation and unscriptural doctrines. Never mind whether a man is eloquent and showy and bland or not. Ascertain first of all whether he is sound in the faith, loyal to his Master, and able to declare the whole counsel of God. If he is deficient in these all-important qualifications do not lend him your ears, lest you catch from him the itching distemper.

2. *Suitable exercise* should be taken by each patient. It is for want of something to do at home that so many members of our churches go roving abroad and thus contract the disease of itching ears. A little exercise in the Sunday-School, in the social religious services, would do much to overcome those itching propensities, and promote the spiritual health of each member. There are too many idlers in the church, and idleness breeds all kinds of abominable disorders, for Satan him-

self takes charge of that business. In a church whose members are all at work and always at work there is never found a single case of the wretched disease we are now considering.

3. *The free use of living water* is indispensable to a perfect cure. Water is a good tonic and an excellent purifier. The water which is obtained from the wells of salvation effectually removes from the system those impure elements which generate disease. The patient who earnestly studies the Word of God, who seeks for continued communion with Jesus Christ, finds his soul daily refreshed and watered as with heavenly showers. To such a person the gospel is always full of interest and sweetness; the ear is ravished by the story of redeeming love, and the soul is fed by the plain and simple preaching of gospel truth. Such a person knows nothing about itching ears, has no desire to gad about from place to place in search of novelty and sensationalism, but feels happy and contented at home among his brethren.

May every afflicted reader be profited by these friendly hints, and may the day not be far distant, when our churches shall no longer be troubled by the plague of "itching ears."

Staying away from the Supper.

That Christian must be in a sad spiritual state, or know little of the real meaning of his covenant vows, who can deliberately turn his back upon the Table of the Lord, when the feast is spread and the invitation given. Yet many church members "in good standing" do this constantly, heedless alike of the admonition of the Lord, "This do in remembrance of me," and of their covenant obligations.

The reasons assigned for this neglect of the Lord's Supper are various, but not one among them all is adequate to excuse so flagrant a breach of Christian duty. Personal disagreement with one or more members of the church; dislike of the pastor; some fancied wrong or slight; a sense of personal unworthiness, real or affected—these and similar weak excuses are given.

But back of these reasons there may generally be found either a wrong conception of the meaning and purpose of the ordinance, or a low state of piety in the offending member. Many, misled by the term "communion," regard the ordinance as solely an expression of Christian fellowship. Thus we often hear it said, "I cannot go to communion so long as So-and-so is a member of the church." The gathering together of God's people at the table is indeed an expression of Christian fellowship, but it is only, in that sense, the outward sign of the fellowship already existing. So that, to escape the reality of the fellowship one must withdraw from the church altogether. But the promotion of Christian fellowship is not the chief purpose of the Lord's Supper. "This do," said Jesus, "in remembrance of me;" and his words suggest the deeper meaning of the ordinance. To partake at this feast is a sacred privilege and a precious means of grace. This believer who stays away from the table because he is at variance with his brother not only deprives himself of a great blessing and a means of growth, but insults the Lord whose broken body and shed blood are set forth in the emblematic bread and wine. No doubt he ought first if possible to be reconciled to his brother; but having done his best to abstain from the communion in case the other refuses to be reconciled.

But others, it may be, remain away because they feel unworthy to participate in so sacred an observance. In this they make a sad mistake. If they are really unworthy to come to the communion they are unworthy to be members of the church. But genuine humility is the best possible state of heart for receiving the full benefit of the Supper; and no service of the church is so well adapted to quicken the spiritual emotions, and lift up the soul toward God, as that which