

Messenger and Visitor

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Denominational Spirit.

There is such a thing as cultivating the denominational spirit to an inordinate degree, and thereby becoming thoroughly sectarian in mind and heart. That is not, however, in our opinion, a danger to which Baptists are in our day especially exposed. The Episcopalian, even of the milder sort, cleaves to "the church" and its precious prayer book with uncompromising and often supercilious devotion; the Presbyterian finds the most complete satisfaction in the Westminster confession and the prime orderliness of his denominational system; the followers of Wesley rejoice in the elastic method and broad liberality of his section of the church militant, and are sure there is nothing quite so good in all the world. But with the average Baptist there is apt to be an inclination to under-estimate the characteristic excellences of his denomination, and pride himself rather on his superiority to the denominational spirit than on his possession of it.

We do not, indeed, like to hear men boasting about their own denomination, as though, like pictures we have seen, the frames of which were more highly prized than the painting. But we do like to have a man heartily glad that he is a Baptist, and honestly proud of the faith and traditions of his denomination—not simply because he is a Baptist but because he clearly comprehends what it is to be one, and because he has acquainted himself with the grand history and high mission of the body to which it is his privilege to belong.

Of all Christians, the Baptist has the most reason to be proud of his denomination. Not through an "apostolic succession" of more than doubtful authenticity, but through a spiritual succession that cannot be justly questioned, his church is the legitimate heir to that primitive body founded by the immediate disciples of the Lord. It has had an inspiring history. Its roll of noble confessors, who were Baptists in the days when it cost something to avow a connection with the despised sect, is a long and glorious one. Its "testimony" in behalf of soul liberty and of freedom of religion from State control has been fruitful of blessing to men of every creed. Above all its constant witness to the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, against the worldly tendencies of State and infant sprinkling churches, has leavened and uplifted the entire body of modern evangelical denominations. It is today a vast, growing and vigorous communion, doing great things, and capable, if it had the hearty love and could command the best service of all its members, of far greater achievements than have marked its glorious past. We say, then, that Baptists have every reason to take an honest pride in their denomination. Without forgetting that they are Christians first and Baptists afterward, they should steadily give their best thought and energy to its prosperity and wide extension, as the truest representative in the earth of the New Testament ideal of a Christian church. A moderate infusion of the right kind of denominational spirit is, we sincerely believe, much needed. It would impart new life and vigor to the great work to which the denomination has been divinely called.

The Covetous Man—Who is He?

Covetousness is an inordinate desire for gain. We generally think of it in connection with dishonesty, as when a man is so anxious to make money

that he cheats—so anxious to increase his own property that he does not pay due regard to what belongs to his neighbor. But a man may be covetous without this. He may shrink from defrauding his neighbor, and yet be willing to cheat himself. If a man is so anxious to increase his worldly store that he cannot rightly attend to his eternal interests, that man is covetous. He may not rob his neighbor but he does rob his own soul.

Many a man does this. His mind is so absorbed in business that day after day, week in and week out, he cannot give a single deliberate thought to the things of eternity. He neglects the interests of Christ's kingdom; neglects the religious interests of his children; neglects the cultivation of his own religious nature; and all because he is so intent on amassing worldly goods. Such a man is too busy; he is honest to his neighbors, it may be, but he is not honest to himself. He is covetous—is ever desirous to increase his worldly store.

And the Master says "Take heed—beware of covetousness." Of other sins a man knows when he is guilty. He cannot commit theft or falsehood without intending to commit them. But covetousness is an insidious fault, creeping upon a man unawares, gaining possession of his soul, when as yet he has no idea of the danger. A man may properly be anxious to increase his wealth, and may not see just when he is becoming over-anxious. You ask a brother to come to the week-day prayer-meeting; you tell him that he used to come regularly, but now it is a long time since you have seen him there; his excuse is that he has been very busy of late. He really has not had time. And of course he must attend to his business; a prayer-meeting is a good thing, but a man must not neglect other duties to attend it; the best way for one to serve God is to set an example of industry, etc. You cannot say anything in answer to the brother. You may not be competent to declare positively that it is his duty to give up business on the prayer-meeting-night, but still you may feel that the brother is getting to be too much absorbed in the things of this world, and the worst of it is that he himself cannot see it. The eager desire to increase one's store is an insidious evil. It is something a man must watch against—beware of for "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." A brute's life does. If the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, they have all they can desire. But a man has moral and spiritual relations. Though he have an over-abundance of all things of this world, his happiness is not yet secured. He is a fool who bids his soul "be merry" on the things of this life, for the soul has a hunger which the "fruits and goods" of this world will not satisfy. A man may have more than his barns will hold and yet be wretched. On the other hand, though he be destitute of this world's wealth, though he have not where to lay his head, his life may be a life of the highest excellence—of the fullness of glory and of joy.

The story of the man who wanted Jesus to speak to his brother to divide the inheritance with him, is one that is well worth studying.

Why did Jesus rebuke the man? He asked only for what belonged to him. He certainly could not have expected that Jesus would aid him in any injustice, and there were doubtless neighbors present who could have exposed him if he had attempted any deception. Doubtless the man had been wronged by his brother; at least he thought he had been wronged, and he sought merely to get that portion of the inheritance which he believed was rightfully his own.

The man's error was just here. Jesus was discoursing of eternal life—the most momentous of themes treated by the wisest of teachers. This was, what we might say, the great day of that man's life, the day when the gates of salvation were flung open most widely to him. Now when he can learn the way of life from the Great Teacher's own lips, instead of seizing the opportunity to discover the way of peace with God, he is thinking all the while of that old trouble about the father's estate. That offense has been on his mind morning, noon, and night—all the time. It has banished every other thought and care from his mind. And now when he hears Jesus speak—Jesus who can show him the way of eternal life—all that he can think of in con-

nection with Jesus is that here is one who can help him get his share of the estate!

It is not pleasant to be cheated. It is not pleasant to see another man in possession of property that ought to be reserved to shelter your head in age, or to educate your children, or start them in the world. It is hard to be robbed. But a man may think too much about such a thing; and this man was letting the loss of his property come between him and eternal life. He had become more anxious to get his share of the inheritance than to obtain the salvation of his soul. And so Jesus rightly calls him a covetous man.

Editorial Notes.

—Rev. H. R. Hatch, the pastor of the Wolfville church, has been granted leave of absence in order that he may work in the counties of Lunenburg and Queens in the interest of the 20th Century Fund. Rev. J. D. Spidell is spending some time in the county of Halifax in the same work, and Rev. D. E. Hatt of Canard has been away from his church for three Sundays in the interest of this fund. These brethren are to be commended for their zeal in the prosecution of this work and their churches for permission to do so. Their pulpits were and are to be supplied by brethren who are always ready to extend the helping hand.

—The zeal and devotion of children have often put to shame the older "far-away-from Christ" Christian, as did poor crippled Maggie, who, touched by the fire of the minister's appeal for money to send the gospel to the needy, godless heathen, gave her crutch—her all. The sublimity of the deed unnerved for a moment the minister. "Do you see that, my people," he faltered at last; "little Maggie's crutch—all that she has to make life comfortable, she has given it to the Lord and you." That stylish, worldly congregation was moved. Some cash and pledges equivalent to \$6.00 were piled over the crutches on the table. Verily it is true that often "a little child shall lead them."

—It is said that the Bible publications of the Oxford University press have been issued for 300 years and are published in 150 languages and dialects. Every year fully 600 tons of paper are used for this purpose alone. It is quite a common experience to have single orders for 100,000 Bibles. The supply of printed sheets is so great that an order for half a million copies can be readily filled. On an average, from thirty to forty bibles are furnished every minute. When it is borne in mind that this is only from one publishing house some idea will be gained of the vast number of Bibles published and sold. This does not look as if the "Old Book" had lost its hold of the people. The more men study the Bible, the more they love to do so. The entrance of His word gives light.

—The Old Testament and the New both bear record of earnest godly women who, with willing hearts, ready hands and consecrated tongues, gave their substance, their labors and words for the glory of God and the uplifting of humanity. The Saviour's precious words of commendation of a women's service have been ringing down the ages, inspiring faith, zeal, courage and loving offerings, from women of all times. But not until the 19th century was "the fullness of the time" in which she heard and heeded the Master's voice which summoned her to untried, enlarged and systematic endeavor. Nowhere has she shone more brightly than in her efforts to bless the women and children of pagan lands by giving them a knowledge of "the way of life" through Jesus Christ.

—The effective preacher is the man who believes in his Bible. To him, from cover to cover, it is the Word of God, to be believed, trusted in and followed. The appeal must be constantly to the law and the testimony. The exegesis may be faulty, but if he convince his hearers of the sincerity of his conviction, of his unflinching faith in God's Word, he will have hearers. People are tired of quibbles and doubts and hesitation and half-beliefs and open repudiation of parts of the sacred Scriptures. They like positive statements of doctrine. Something like this was affirmed of a Baptist pastor in New York and may apply equally to places remote from this great metropolis. One may not always agree with some things that he hears; but he cannot help being drawn to a man who has some positive utterances to make, and makes them.

—Dr. John Watson (Ian MacLaren) in "The Mind of the Master," in speaking of the Kingdom of God, uses these forceful and expressive words: "Loyalty to Jesus was to be the spinal cord to the new body and the sacraments were to be the signs of the new spirit. Each was perfect in its simplicity—a beautiful poem. One was baptism when the candidate disappeared into the water, appeared again with another name. This meant that he had died to self and had risen a new creature, the child of the divine will. The other was the Lord's Supper