

Messenger and Visitor

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Our Religious Appliances.

It is not necessary to go far back in memory to see how great is the change that has come over not a few of our religious appliances, as compared with what they were once. This need not cause any surprise. "The Kingdom of God" is the same now as ever. Now, as of old, "it cometh not with observation"—yet methods and measures are changed. These are modified, as "times and seasons" pass over us. It is not wise to assert, nor is it a fact, that former times were better than those of our day and generation. "The golden age" is not behind us—it is not even before us; it is here and now, to him who prays and waits and serves, who does God's will.

It is within the recollection of many who read these pages, when there was an altogether different system of appliances from what we now witness. This is true not alone in the sphere of religion. Steam and electricity and the manifold inventions of science have worked and are now working, commercial and social revolutions. The press has reached a breadth and celerity of influence unknown and undreamed of before. It would be passing strange if these vast, potent forces should not invade the domain of religion. They are doing this, and if we would be the true descendants of Issachar, men who know what the spiritual Israel ought to do, then the lessons which they teach would be learned and pondered by us all.

But when all this is done, we must never forget nor overlook how emphatic is the emphasis laid in the Divine Word, upon such exhortations as, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds." The reign of Christ begins within. The seed of grace never takes root from without. It germinates deep down in the soul of the individual heart. It is true, we are told, "faith comes by hearing," but it is the hearing of the incorruptible Word of God. The ear is the channel thro' which that which regenerates and saves, enters the soul. The waters of salvation never flow through "the golden pipes of the ordinance" nor the outward ritual, though there are those who seem to claim such to be the case. Vitally important is it that Baptists of all people should keep the ordinances as they were committed to us, in their unadorned simplicity and purity. As a means of saving grace, they are positive hindrances instead of helps, to the true religious life.

Thoughtful minds will see the necessity again and again of an appeal to these *first principles* of the spiritual kingdom. There were seductive influences at work in the first ages of Christianity. The great apostle to the Gentiles scented the danger and cautioned those to whom he wrote, to "beware, lest any man spoil you." The philosophy was seductive, and the traditions boastful, which assailed the faith of the first disciples. The Greek with his "wisdom," the Jew with his "signs and wonders," confronted the followers of "the Man of Nazareth," just as now we note similar though changed phenomena. But Paul's caution holds good. It meets our case with the same authority as it met theirs—"Beware lest any man spoil you." Our need then is to prove all things and hold fast only to that which stands the test, to that which is good.

The Church He Wanted.

It is said that an inquirer called upon a minister, the hard-working pastor of a hard-working church, and desired to become one of the minister's flock.

He was willing, he said, to attend the services regularly, and to give liberally, but did not want to be put on committees, or be expected to do any active personal work. The reply came very quietly, but promptly, "You have come to the wrong place, Mr. —, the church you want is around the corner. It is known hereabouts as 'The church of the Heavenly Rest.'" If the story is not true, as somebody has well said—"It is an apt illustration of a condition of things far too common." The spirit rebuked with such kindly wit, is not confined to any one particular church or denomination.

Some time ago a certain journal of some influence made the sneering remark that the churches were getting to be "private religious club-houses, at which the members were elaborately entertained." It was charged that the music and the sermon were made to contribute as much as possible to the enjoyment of the congregation—this enjoyment being of a little higher order, perhaps than that provided in the ordinary club-house, but scarcely differing from it in kind. It was a harsh remark and an unjust remark, but it had just enough truth in it to point the sting of the sneer. There are "churches of the Heavenly Rest" to be found, especially in cities, and in every denomination, and plenty of people in town and country who want to attend them.

There is no one thing that needs more constant reiteration than the duty of every Christian to do some distinctive work for the Master. This duty is conceded, after a fashion, by everybody: but the strangest notions of what Christian work is, not only exist, but are quite common, we might say almost general. How large a proportion of church members consider their whole duty done, when they attend regularly the Sunday services, and the prayer-meeting and give something for the support of the church and for denominational objects; often not much for the latter.

One-half would not be too large an estimate; probably two-thirds would not exceed the truth. And yet all that is perfectly consistent with the ideal of the "Church of the Heavenly Rest." It necessitates nothing more than a club-house type of religious life, a Christian life, the whole object of which is to promote the happiness and profit of one's self.

Here lies the crux of the whole difficulty. The members of the "Church of the Heavenly Rest" may be Christians, but they have never learned the true secret of the Christian life. That secret was well and pithily put by Monod in the phrase "None of self and all of Thee." When that secret is learned work for Christ, soul-absorbing work, will be a joy and a necessity, instead of a task to be shunned whenever possible. Until it is learned, all selfish efforts to secure personal ease and spiritual growth will be vain. The highest type of manhood is not developed in club life, neither can the best type of Christian character be found in the "Church of the Heavenly Rest," though its doors are thronged and its pews filled with adoring worshippers.

A Word About Duty.

A very eminent evangelist is reported to have said "I wish I might never again hear of duty," and this good man only voiced the sentiment which others have felt, if they did not give it expression. We are taught by many instructors of to-day, that we are to do this or that from love, and that duty is to be left out of the question. In our religious meetings, much is made of *feeling, enjoyment, and ecstasies*. When a religious experience is related, it is largely made up of the *happiness* that has come from the change of heart.

In all this we are liable to be misled. Happiness or its absence, is nowhere in the Scriptures (that we are aware) set down as a criterion of true religion. Religion may be accompanied by present happiness, or it may not; but true religion is always accompanied by the discharge of duty.

The same decline in a regard for duty seems to prevail everywhere. In political life, a man is put up and voted for, not because he is upright, honest, faithful, conscientious, clean in speech and morals, but because he has money and is likely to carry more votes than the other man. No man can read the newspapers without being shocked at the revelations of political immorality that comes to the surface from time to time. It is not all in the United States, or in Ontario and Quebec. We need not go outside of our own Provinces by the

sea for evidences of this moral miasma, doing its work among men.

Shall we say, must we say, that there is a good deal of the same thing abroad among the churches? We have known a church to call a minister, aware that he was below par morally, because he would "draw," because he was magnetic, because if he were in the pulpit "the collections would soon be doubled."

We are assured that there is need, and the need is imperative, that every one should take as the guide of his life "This is right, I will do it; that is wrong, I will not do it." In the long run, somewhere, here or hereafter, the discharge of duty will lead to happiness, but whether it does or not, duty is to be done.

We are to pray whether we feel like it or not. We are to read the Bible whether it makes us happy or not. We are to attend upon the worship of God, to practice charity and self denial, and purity, and other Christian virtues because it is *right*.

There is profound wisdom and truth, as well as poetic beauty in Wordsworth's memorable Ode to duty.

Stern daughter of the voice of God!

Oh, Duty! If that name thou love,
Who art a light to guide, a rod
To check the erring and reprove;
Thou, who art victory and law,
When empty terrors over-awe;
From vain temptations dost set free,
And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity.

Stern law-giver! yet dost thou wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace,
Nor know we anything so fair,
As is the smile upon thy face,
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the most ancient heavens, through Thee are fresh
and strong.

A Lesson.

About the most difficult thing to do is to do nothing. And one of the most difficult commands to obey was that which the Son gave to Moses and to Israel: "Stand still and see the salvation of God." We cannot bear to stand still. We feel that we must be doing something. We feel that we must have some part in the crepit of the victory.

Equally hard is it to wait. It must have tested the faith and the obedience of Israel, when morning after morning the sun arose and showed them the pillar of cloud still resting motionless upon the Tabernacle. Perhaps the place of their encampment was uncomfortable. Perhaps there was sickness, and they fancied that a change of location would be a gain. The sun poured down upon them by day, and they hoped that in some other place there might be shade.

And then, too, they were eager to reach their destination, the "land flowing with milk and honey." Every day of delay seemed to make it more likely that they would die in the wilderness. And yet there the unmoving cloud stood.

To advance while the cloud rested still was disobedience, was madness, was suicide.

How often we find ourselves eager to move while yet the cloud of God's providence stands still. We are eager to enter some door, but the door does not open, the way seems blocked. We are eager to leave some field, but the door out is closed. Very often there is nothing to do, but to wait—wait—wait,—until the pillar of cloud advances. Happy is he who is ready to move on when God gives the signal, no less happy is he who works on and lives on, where he is, until the signal is given.

Rev. J. L. Miner on Intemperance

In an address of great power given in Charlestown, P. E. I., just previous to his withdrawal from the pastorate of the Baptist church in that city, the Rev. J. L. Miner spoke on the above subject. The address was the fourth of a series on "The Making of Manhood." The speaker began by referring to intemperance as one of the destructive forces in the life of young men. These forces are like heavy weights which burden the racer; they pull him down like gravitation, when he might run erect and with confidence toward the goal. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews enjoins them to "lay aside every weight." The man who strives for the mastery and desires the incorruptible crown must be temperate in all things.

In the address three thoughts were specially em-