

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XII. No. 21.

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 1867.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXXI. No. 21.

Religious.

Church Worship Essential.

Worship belongs to the church as the bond of its fellowship and the organ of its spiritual development and increase. This is its fellowship—a fellowship in worship. When the church comes together in one place it is for this. Nothing is so near a spiritual union, nothing is so productive of it, as that which unites men in the same prayers and praises. Nothing requires them to be of one mind, no creed or establishment can make them one, like coming before the same God, in one service of devotion. Nothing, more than this, promotes the sympathies as well as the religious experiences which are the common bond of unity in the church. But it is not life only and the sympathetic sentiments, but all religious life which is nourished by worship. It is the appointed minister to all spiritual edification. It is the grand public ordinance for instruction and for all religious culture and quickening. It touches the spiritual life of the church on all sides, to purify and strengthen. It not only operates upon it in the way of impression, as external stimulus, but especially in social worship, in which many have part, all religious feeling and thought goes into active exercise. There are more private methods of spiritual culture, and nothing goes before a personal and inward religion. Its secret life is nourished in the soul's solitary and individual communion with God. But leave all piety to this separate, private, solitary growth, silence preaching, close the churches, let Christians forsake the assembling of themselves together, dry up the streams which take their rise under the altars of God, and where is the church, or even religion itself? It would exist, it would live, it would make its own sabbath and sanctuaries. In some breasts, in strong, self-sustaining souls, it might grow and make its power felt. God's invisible grace would find invisible channels into the life of Christians. But it is through the "means of grace," as by distinction we call all services of the church; through prayers and hymns and sermons; through a day of rest, a house of God, the communion of saints, the influences, conscious and unconscious, of public worship, that this secret life of piety is led. There much of it was born. There carelessness was touched and doubt was convinced. There the world lost its hold for a day, and so by the grace of God forever.—Thither, like a sparrow to its nest, the heart weary and hungry, flies, and shut out from the courts of the Lord is in a desert land.—Thither, as the soul to its closet, must the church go to recruit her power, for comfort, for learning, for all spiritual benefits.—*Dr. Caldwell's Mad. Av. Lecture.*

A Word on Revivals.

President Edwards, in speaking of the great awakening in his day, said that the work was promoted by intelligence respecting it. This, we think will always be so. The supernatural generally moves along the lines of natural law. Indeed we believe a revival may have all the features of a moral epidemic, and yet be, in the main, a gracious work of God, operating through those mysterious forces—call them what we may—whereby moral states among masses in contact come rapidly to assimilate and coalesce.

A revival is no more Divine than it is human; and the Divine ever works within the limitations and acts alongside of the imperfections of the human, and, from the nature of the case, projects on the view of the observer, as well as on the consciousness of its subjects, the latter much more than the former. The holy Spirit, moreover, without violence to the human spirit, and without disregard of its individuality, or its idiosyncracies even, reaches the seat of control and sway by almost any open avenue; sometimes through the action of memory; sometimes through the conclusions of its judgment; sometimes through the suggestions of its fears; sometimes through the movements of its affections; sometimes through the outreach of its desires; and sometimes through the undefinable magnetism of its sympathies.

The discovery, in a revival, of the human,

with its imperfections, never disturbs our faith any more than we are disturbed in seeing God's Spirit working out the sanctification of an individual soul in careful adaptation to its individuality, and in spite of all its long continued and perhaps gross defects. We only feel under greater obligations to guard and guide it on the human side.

We are constantly presenting facts which evince that God's presence is still in His church, and which are adapted, we think, to lead such as have thus far been passed by to exclaim, "Hast Thou not a blessing for me, even for me O my Father?"

Most of these revivals are the results of special efforts. Let a church beware how it thinks to force the Spirit of God into the deep rut of its own weekly routine. A large portion of them, moreover, commenced with the week of prayer. Of old, pentecostal prayer preceded the pentecostal effusion. "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."

Church Hospitality.

The right method is perhaps not very difficult to reach. 1. Let there be a definite rule established with which all the pew-holders are familiar, that at the certain time, if the regular occupant of the seat is not present, the sexton or usher is at liberty to give his place to a stranger. 2. In churches where strangers are liable to come in considerable numbers, let a placard be posted giving a cordial invitation to strangers, and stating at what time the ushers will seat them. 3. Let there be at least one usher for each aisle. The first rule would doubtless put some families to trouble, by making them come in season; but what is hospitality good for if it costs nothing? In this case, indeed, the cost would be fully repaid by the advantage of prompt attendance.

In large places it is not enough to have a good rule known to the initiated; but the public must be informed of it. In the dissenting churches of London, the visitor sees notices requesting the pew-owners to inform the usher, as they enter, what vacancies there will be in their pews. This notifies the stranger that he is expected, and that provision is made for him.

Qualifications for Baptism.

The Catholic theory requires all children to be baptized at birth, to wash away original sin; the Methodist theory, because they have no original sin, but are pure and innocent: the high church theory, because they are regenerated, and God's children, and ought to be declared so by baptism. These theories destroy each other, and are equally without foundation in the Scriptures.

Others teach that the infants of Christians ought to be baptized, in virtue of the Abrahamic covenant, or of an organic life in the church, or in the race. These theories have no Divine authority in the New Testament.

We teach the simple law of Christ, baptism is for believers only, which is plainly the doctrine of the Bible. 1. Christ came to set up a new spiritual kingdom, composed only of newborn souls. 2. All who enter this kingdom receive a special, personal call by His Spirit. 3. Baptism is the seal of this special call, and the confession of those who have received it.

The baptism theory of a converted membership is now generally adopted by evangelical churches; the Scriptures require the conversion before baptism as definitely as before church membership. The two should be held by all who take the Bible as the ultimate law. Pedobaptists feel this, and devise theories to make infants regenerate, either before baptism, or in baptism, or by virtue of baptism.

God's providence confirms His Word, and all attempts to lower His standard and open the door of the church wider, have resulted in disaster, as in the Lutheran and English churches, and among the Puritans in New England. The church can be kept pure and stable only by refusing membership and baptism to all who give no evidence of conversion.

—*Dr. Lincoln.*

True religion abhors violence; she owns no arguments but those of persuasion.

A poor man's wish.

I asked a student what three things he most wished. He said, "Give me books, health and quiet, and I care for nothing more."

I asked a miser, and he cried, "Money—money—money."

I asked a pauper, and he faintly said "Bread—bread—bread."

I asked a drunkard, and he called loudly for strong drink.

I asked a multitude around me, and they lifted up a confused cry, in which I heard the words "wealth, fame, pleasure."

I asked a poor man, who had long borne the character of an experienced christian. He replied that all his wishes might be met in Christ. He spoke seriously, and I asked him to explain. He said, "I greatly desire three things: first, that I be found in Christ; secondly, that I may be like Christ; thirdly, that I may be with Christ."

The Divine Attributes, illustrated from Nature.

"HIS UNDERSTANDING IS INFINITE."

Our Creator has given eyes, ears and other senses—gateways of knowledge, as they have been termed—through which there streams in upon us information concerning the outer world, some of it reaching us from very vast distances. He that planted the ear shall He not hear? He that formed the eye shall He not see? . . . He that teacheth man knowledge shall not He know? We are enabled to see and hear through the medium of waves striking upon our organs of sense—waves that have originated in the vibratory motion of the thing seen or heard—and it seems probable that all other sensations result from similar though slower motions. When a violin string is struck by the bow the vibrations throw the air into waves, the waves strike upon the drum of the ear, and the auditory nerve conveys the motion to the brain. Shorten the string and the vibrations will be quicker, the waves more closely packed, and the pitch of the note higher in consequence. The human ear is fitted to take cognizance of a certain set of these vibrations—according to Dr. Wollaston its range is about nine octaves according to M. Savart it extends from 16 pulsations per second to 24,000—and for any quicker motions or anything less rapid it possesses no sense. A far more rapid series of waves in a far more elastic medium called the ether, are taken note of by a far more delicate organ—the eye. When we gaze at an object whose color is red, the retina of this wondrous instrument pulsates 458 millions of millions of times between two ticks of a clock. When violet light is perceived the retina trembles 727 millions of millions of times in the second.* These last are the quickest waves we can get sensations from, but it is evident that there may be an infinity of motions above them, as well as an infinity below the most languid that any of our senses can take note of, besides a large number to fill up the gaps of the scale. If the philosophers are right that all natural phenomena are resolvable into the motion of matter, then to be able to take cognizance of all its motions would be an approach to omniscience, and we have only to imagine that the Divine eye is situated where it can drink them all in, and we are assisted in our effort to comprehend this attribute.

If this attributing of sensation to the Deity be considered too gross a conception and contradictory of the fact that God is a Spirit there is still something else to say. In order to make the human senses God must have had a knowledge of these vibrations, and the way to make creatures cognizant of them; which amounts to saying that He possesses what is at least equivalent to a sensorium capable of taking cognizance of all things, and a complete staff of sense assistants, to bring in universal information. "Sir I. Newton, to express his idea of the Divine omnipresence, had said that the Deity perceived whatever passed in space fully and intimately, as it were in his sensorium. A clamour was raised by his adversaries, as if he meant that space was to the

* "Lardner's Museum of Science" The numbers are round, and no account is taken of the recent correction in the velocity of light, which would bring them a trifle lower.

Deity what the sensorium is to our minds.—But whoever considers this expression without prejudice will allow that it conveys a very strong idea of the intimate presence of the Deity everywhere, and of his perceiving whatever happens in the completest manner, without the use of any intermediate agents, and that Sir Isaac made use of it with this view only; for he very carefully guards against our imagining that external objects act upon the Deity, or that he suffers any passion or reaction from them. It is commonly supposed that the mind is intimately conscious of the impressions upon the sensorium, and that it is immediately present there and there only; and as we must derive our idea of the attributes of God from what we know of our minds, or of those of others, in the best manner we can by leaving out all imperfection and limitation; so it was hardly possible to have represented to us the Divine omnipresence and omniscience in a stronger light than by this comparison.† Sir Isaac, it will be perceived, takes especial care to guard against our supposing that God really perceives by the intervention of anything like senses, or by means of anything like a brain. Maclaurin also says for himself, "As a blind man knows not colours and has no idea of the sensation of those who see, so we have no notion how the Deity knows and acts."

And yet, as these two great men have set us the example of illustrating God's attributes in this manner, and such illustrations are not without their value, let us pursue this course a little further.

We are enabled to see one another by means of the light that falls on us and is reflected, carrying with it our image or picture to other persons' eyes. These pictures are continually flying off from us in all directions, and are secured sometimes by the photographic artist when he sets his trap to catch the sunbeams. The rapidity with which they fly off from us is, of course, the same with the velocity of light, which according to experiments is 185,000 miles in a second. At this speed they would reach the moon in about a second and a quarter, the sun in eight minutes, the planet Jupiter in 25 minutes, and Neptune, the farthest orb of the solar system, in four hours and a quarter. The fixed stars are so immensely distant that the nearest would not be reached till the expiration of three years, Vega in 45 years, a star of the 12th magnitude in 4,000 years, and remoter orbs after still longer periods. Now, suppose that on these different heavenly bodies beings exist with organs of vision sufficiently acute to read off the pictures as they arrive. At this moment will be seen in one of the stars the image of the cradle from which Caspar Hauser was taken to be enclosed in a living tomb for so many years; in another star glances the flash of the shot which killed Charles XII.; an observer in a star of the 12th magnitude would see the earth at this moment as it existed at the time of Abraham. Let us imagine this last individual moved forwards in the direction of our earth with such speed (say in an hour) he comes to within the distance of a hundred millions of miles. He would then be as near to us as the sun is, whence the earth is seen as it was eight minutes ago; and it follows indubitably that during his rapid journey the entire history of the world, from the time of Abraham to the present day passes before his eye in the space of an hour.

For when the motion commenced he viewed the earth as it was 4,000 years ago; at the half-way, i. e., after half-an-hour, as it was 2,000 years ago; after three-quarters of an hour, as it was 1,000 years ago, and after an hour as it now is. We want no further proof and it is evident beyond the possibility of contradiction, that if an observer were able to comprehend with his eye the whirling procession of these consecutive images he would have lived through the entire history, with all the events and transactions which have happened in the hemisphere of the globe turned towards him in a single hour.

We have here a perfectly intelligible perception of the idea of the omniscience of God with relation to past events. If we imagine the Deity as a man with human powers, but in a far superior degree, it will be easy for us to attribute to Him the faculty and power of really overlooking and discerning, even in the most minute particulars everything which may

† "Maclaurin's Account."