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Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE CHURCH OF NINETEENTH CENTURY.

The publication of volumes of Essays on related subjects is a novel feature of the ecclesiastical literature of this Century. The notorious Essays and Reviews led the way; and these were followed by "Replies to Essays and Reviews," and "Aids to Faith," which have been succeeded by "Principles at Stake," "Essays on Church Policy," "The Church and the World," and several other Collections, mostly of the High Church stamps. In all these cases we have the application of the modern theory of the division of labour, and the substitution of the portable for the massive. The ponderous volumes of Cartwright and Hooker are replaced by sleek octavos, not too closely printed. The work which then used to be done by one laborious man is now distributed among many. Whether, what we have lost in prolixity has been gained in accuracy and thoroughness, is a question which we will not stop to answer.

The English press teems with treatises of various kinds:—some, deep—some, shallow; some, courteous—some, insolent; some, honestly impartial—some, bigoted and unfair; but all designed to commend and magnify hierarchical principles, and to pave the way for union to Rome. Nonconformists have been hitherto too slow and slack in this matter. Confident of the soundness of their position, they lift the cause to work its own way, forgetful, perhaps, to some extent, of the tendency of fallen man to prefer his own plans and works to God's, and especially to depend on the supposed power of a human priesthood. It cannot be doubted that thousands of souls perish every year through this misplaced trust in the human. They imagine that they were regenerated by the intervention of the priest. They rely on the priest's absolution. In one community they ascribe to the priest the power to change the bread into the body of the Lord, the reception of which, as the people are taught, imparts pardon and secures eternal life. Small account is taken, in corrupted Christianity, of repentance, faith, and holiness. The outward has supplanted the inward. For "the Bible and the Bible only," we have multifarious traditions, by which the word of God is "made of none effect"; and instead of "spirit and life" the Church is supplied with the modern-antique, in style, and dress, and gesticulation, and colour. "How is the gold become dim! How is the most fine gold changed!"

The appearance of the volume now on our table * is opportune. The intention of the writers was to present a comprehensive view of Congregational principles, as now held and professed; and as opposed to the Papal and the Protestant Episcopal systems. Their purpose has been very successfully accomplished.

The Rev. Dr. Stoughton is the author of the first Essay. The title is, "Primitive Ecclesia: Its authoritative principles, and its modern representations." Those who know Dr. Stoughton as an author will be prepared for lucid statements and powerful reasonings. Their expectations will be gratified. Dr. S. shows that a Church according to the New Testament must be, as the Church of England expresses it, "a congregation of faithful men," empowered to maintain the interests of Christianity, in obedience to the laws of Christ, and in harmony with general principles, applicable to all times and countries. He thinks that there was only one Church in any town or city, and that there was always a plurality of elders, pastors, or bishops, the number varying with the number of Christians in the place. Regarding Con-

gregational Churches as the nearest approach to the apostolic pattern, he is still not unwilling to acknowledge the existence of certain defects, which, by the way, are not defects in the original plan, but imperfections in the modern execution. He says—

"Power pecuniary, social, intellectual, and spiritual, existing in our Churches is not, to adopt a current phrase, adequately utilized. Strength among us often lies unemployed, and runs to waste. Existing societies, and methods of working, in connection with Free Churches, whether by schools, district visitation, or the like, do not exhaust available resources. The temporal wants of the poor and the sick, not merely such as are identified with our communities, but such as lie in the moral wastes reaching up to our very doors; the intellectual and social wants of large numbers in the same position; and the political aspirations of multitudes, needing to be educated and guided in the use of rights for which they crave, require from us, in common with all Christian men, far more attention than they have ever yet received. The time, too, is come for pious people, particularly pious women, to combine almsdeeds with almsgiving; and not only in Dorcas Societies to make garments for the poor, but as individuals, by wise, kindly, and genial intercourse, to teach ignorant and inexperienced heads of families, how in a hundred little ways they may help themselves."

The Rev. J. Radford Thomas, M. A. treats of "The idea of the Church regarded in its historical development." This is a learned and accurate paper, in the historical line. Mr. Thompson traces the gradual development of Church principles, or rather the departure from the primitive order, from Congregationalism to the Papacy, and then shows the necessity of return to the spiritualism of the New Testament.

"That the visible Church shall consist, as far as wisdom and vigilance can secure such a result, of those who are members of the Church invisible,—this is our first great principle. A society framed upon this law will contain those and only those who offer the fair evidences of personal religion;—cordial belief of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, devout habits and a holy life. As none but God can search the heart, profession must be taken as the criterion of faith: with reference to the remaining qualifications, our Lord's test must be applied, 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Respect for Scripture, the practice of prayer, attendance upon the means of grace,—these are the outward signs of devotion. The pure and righteous life is to be witnessed by the knowledge of men. Devotion may be simulated, sins may be secret: but God and God only looks upon the heart, and to His judgment undetected hypocrisies must be left. In order to purity of Communion, discipline must be maintained, and, in case of sin requiring such treatment, must take the form of censure, and even of excommunication. Unspiritual men will naturally detest principles which imply the duty of Church-discipline: it is well that they should detest them, and it is also well that the Church should disregard their detestation." p. 125. It is afterwards shown that the "Second principle is that of self-government."

Having remarked that Presbyterianism and Congregationalism are very nearly alike, and that "the qualifications for membership are, in the view of the two systems, substantially the same," Mr. Thomson states that "even the Presbyterian definition that the visible Church includes the children of Christian professors, would be accepted by the majority of Pædo-baptist Congregationalists." We are not able to affirm or deny the correctness of the statement. But if the children are members of the Church, why are they not admitted to its privileges? If they are qualified for baptism, are they not qualified for the Lord's supper? Where do we find in the New Testament, that members of a Church,

not disqualified by being under censure, may be rightly excluded from the Lord's Supper?

"The 'Religious Life and Christian Society' is the title of an Essay by the Rev. J. Baldwin Brown, B. A. This, too, is a learned article, the product of extensive reading and laborious research. By "the religious life," monachism is meant; and the Essayist, if he does not apologise for that mode of profession, endeavours to account for it, believing that it originated in evangelical experience and fervour; although in the lapse of ages it degenerated into folly and vileness. His ultimate conclusion is thus expressed:—

"On the whole, we must say, to sum up the matter, that nothing in the long run and on a large scale succeeds in God's world but God's law. Extremes on either hand are ultimately fatal. 'In the beginning God made them male and female, body and soul, man and the world. All rebellion against His institution is in the end futile and ruinous. The man who stands open all around him to the influences, and bound with the bonds of both worlds,—that is, the man who stands in Christ at the point where they are one,—is the religious man, and his life alone is the 'religious life.' To bring forth this man is the great problem of Christian history; and I often think that humanity has to be shaped for it much as a sculptor moulds his clay. Much has to be taken into the first rude shape, which will be pared off and toned down into the harmony of the form as the development proceeds. Masses have to be added here and there to make an organ or a muscle, which are destined to vanish and yet to leave an invaluable line as a legacy. Were the monastic orders attached thus to the great body of Christian society not to be permanently wrought into it in their integrity, but to leave, as Time pares them away, some clear line, some essential feature, in the living body, which shall survive the process, and shall stand up on the complete humanity in the day of the manifestation of the Sons of God?"

(Conclusion next week.)

THE GOSPEL AT ATHENS.

A letter in the *Watchman and Reflector* gives a very interesting account of Christian labor at Mars Hill, and of a Tour for preaching the gospel in Thessaly, Macedonia and Epirus.

A few months ago Rev. Geo. Constantine, a native Greek, a missionary of the American and Foreign Christian Union in Athens, preached on Mars Hill, taking as his text a part of the sermon which the Apostle Paul preached in the same place more than eighteen hundred years ago; "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands." Acts 17: 24. It was on one of the feast days of the Greeks, and a large crowd, partly drawn by curiosity, gathered around him. "For an hour," he says, "I stood in the midst of Mars Hill, preaching to the people 'Jesus and the resurrection'; and they listened with marked attention; not that all approved; some might have derided afterwards; yet they listened respectfully, and when I lifted my voice in prayer, the entire throng stood up, and with uncovered head bowed in reverence to our God." He adds this testimony: "In the providence of God I began six years ago to preach, at a time when the country was very unsettled, and there was no native preaching. My house has been but a stone's throw from the market and the barracks, an organ and congregational singing announce every Sabbath the place and hour of the service,—the Lord has blessed this work with conversions, has favored us with an audience respectable both as to numbers and intelligence; and I owe it to this people to declare that I have never been molested, hindered, or in any way abused; and should we fail, I truly believe it will be owing, not to opposition from the people, synod or government, but to our own insufficiency."

In the course of the last summer, our Baptist brother, Rev. Demetrius Sackellarios, who is now an independent missionary in Athens, made a tour of exploration, accompanied by his wife, through Thessaly, and parts of Macedonia and Epirus. The journey occupied three months. They found the most favorable points for establishing new missionary stations to be Yanina, the capital of Epirus, and Saranina, in Macedonia. This last was the native region of the missionary, where his kindred still reside. In happy contradiction to the ancient proverb, however, our Macedonian prophet was "accepted in his own country." After an absence of twenty-two years, he was kindly received by his relatives and fellow-townsmen, though most of them had formerly indulged strong prejudice and bitter animosity against him. He preached twice every Sabbath, and held meetings nearly every day in the week, for several successive weeks. His congregations were always numerous, except on one Sabbath, when the concurrence of thirty weddings drew away many of his usual hearers. When the missionary left, he was accompanied, he says, by hundreds of people, for nearly three miles, with many expressions of sorrow for his departure, and even with tears. There was, as might have been expected, some opposition. One preacher began to inveigh against him publicly in the church, but was promptly and severely rebuked by a prominent lawyer, who had been a frequent attendant upon the meetings. An abusive article appeared in one of the Athenian papers after his return misrepresenting the facts entirely, stating that the people were very indignant, and "committed the books which he distributed to Vulcan, and the missionary himself to his master, Satan." But he himself writes, that, far from burning the Scriptures, they eagerly sought them, and inquired for them in vain, with a willingness to pay for them, after he had left. Our excellent missionary brother is laboring on in faith and self-denial, with abundant encouragement in his field, but very little sympathy or support from his Baptist brethren in this country. For eight months after his ordination, in May last, he received only two hundred dollars for his family expenses and his missionary work. Yet he writes cheerfully, in spite of his embarrassments and straits. "Our hope is in God," he says, "and we are determined to spend our lives in serving the Lord's cause among the Greeks."

A letter from Rome assures us (says a Romanist contemporary), on indubitable testimony, that there is a set of fiends in Rome who have had the Holy Crucifix tattooed on the soles of their feet, in order that they may thus perpetually trample on the Cross. There are also numbers of persons who have had the Devil's name engraved on their arms. "I myself saw one," writes our informant, "after he was dead at Mentana, and one of the chaplains told me it was very common."

A new society is being formed having for its object the investigation of the archæology, history and chronology of ancient and modern Assyria, Palestine, Egypt, Arabia, and other Biblical lands; the promotion of the study of the antiquities of those countries, and the preservation of a continuous record of discoveries now or hereafter to be in progress. The society is to be called the Society of Biblical Archæology.

It is stated that Dr. Pusey is founding a new community of Anglican nuns, who are to be entirely clad in habits of pure and spotless white.

RITUALISM.—The observance at St. Alban's, Holborn, on New Year's-day were on an imposing scale. There was full orchestral accompaniment, in addition to the organ and choir—violins, drums, and trumpets told with great effect.

WATCH UNTO PRAYER.

How often it happens that when night comes a man prays rather from force of custom than from a sense of need. He has no prescribed form of prayer, and yet he finds himself continually repeating the same things. His applications lack variety and force and definiteness. He is "as one that beateh the air." This comes in a great measure from the fact that he does not "watch unto prayer." He has taken little notice of his own spirit, and, therefore, he knows his own weakness and his own necessities. The events of the day are not so remembered as to give form and colour and life to his evening supplications. The prayer that suits one day cannot effectually serve for all other days. Changes in ourselves and in our circumstances call for changes in our petitions. If a man pass through the day observing himself and increasing his self-knowledge, his devotions cannot always keep in old formal and familiar ruts, but they sometimes flow with new vigour along the new channels which the new facts have made for them. We frequently confess that we know not what to pray for. Sometimes this ignorance is a weakness for which we are to be pitied. We cannot tell what to-morrow will bring forth, and, therefore, cannot tell what special grace to pray for. But sometimes our ignorance is our sin. We know not what to ask for because we have not by watching acquired the wisdom which guides supplication.—Vince.

THE PRESBYTERIANS ON MR. GLADSTONE'S LETTER.

Mr. Gladstone's letter about the Pope's independence was brought before the Edinburgh Presbytery of the Free Church by Dr. Candish, and a resolution was agreed to which, acknowledging the right of Roman Catholics to civil and religious liberty, went on, "most emphatically and solemnly" to protest against the doctrine or opinion that the rulers of this Protestant country may or ought to charge themselves with taking any concern about the dignity, freedom, or independence of the Pope, even on the ground of there being so many in the country willing to own his spiritual supremacy. Dr. Candish, in his speech stated that at the request of a few friends he had written to Mr. Gladstone upon the subject, and had received a most courteous reply, in which Mr. Gladstone referred him to a letter privately sent to another friend a week or ten days ago, a copy of which had been sent to him (Dr. Candish), and after reading which the impression left on his mind was that the language used was capable of a more favourable interpretation than had been put upon it. That letter was almost, to his mind, though not altogether, satisfactory. Mr. Gladstone, in his letter to him stated that at one time he intended to publish that private letter, but that afterwards, by the advice of his colleagues, he thought it better to abstain from such a course, and rather to await the meeting of Parliament, when he would be prepared to offer any explanations which any party in the House might think proper to require.

THE BAPTISMAL CONTROVERSY assumes but small dimensions when compared with the great battles between Philosophical truth and error now raging in the world of mind. It has no attractions for the Rationalist, or the Pantheist, or the Materialist. It is not avowed, on either side, in the general campaign for God and his word against the world and its philosophy. Even the Ritualist affects to consider us merely as peculiar mountain fortresses which may be disregarded and left in the rear. The indifference of the multitude is aided by our own courtesy. We have ceased firing, at any rate for the present. A drapping shot now and then just serves to reveal and recal our existence. Yet it has a real indissoluble relationship

* Ecclesia: Church Problems considered, in a series of Essays. Edited by Henry Robert Reynolds, D. D., President of Chestnut College, Fellow of University College, London.