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Religious.

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THE GOSPEL IN ROME.

Recent events have necessarily drawn much attention to the spread of the pure Gospel of Christ in Italy, and especially in the city of Rome. On more than one occasion the Society has been urged to enter on this inviting field and to support the labours of two brethren who had become pioneers in this work. From various causes this course has not commended itself to the Committee; but recently, on the question being again raised, it was resolved that the Committee would become the channel for conveying such contributions as may be entrusted to them, for at least one of the brethren engaged. The following is the resolution:—"That the Treasurer be empowered to receive contributions for the spread of the Gospel in Italy, in connection with the movements of Mr. Wall; and that, under the direction of the Committee, information respecting the work be inserted, from time to time, in the pages of the MISSIONARY HERALD."

Mr. Wall has been labouring for the past seven years in Bologna, Modena, and the adjacent districts, where three Churches have been formed, and several preaching stations opened. Within the last two years, between seventy and eighty converts have been baptized, on the profession of their faith. But now Rome is open! The laws of constitutional Italy have replaced the Papal canons and regulations, and soon the seat of government will be transferred from Florence to this ancient seat of empire. Freedom of religious profession is secured under the very shadow of the walls of the Inquisition, and the pure worship of the Gospel, freed from traditions and superstitious ceremonies, may be carried on within the hitherto jealously-guarded precincts of the city.

Mr. Wall has entered Rome. The following extracts from the letters with which he has favoured us, will tell our readers how he has fared:—

"Rome is open to the Gospel though public preaching is not yet permitted, and in all probability will not be until after the entrance of the King, and the assembling of the new parliament."

"The Pope shuts himself up in the Vatican, and does not issue on any occasion. St. Peter's seems left desolate. Yesterday I sat under the dome for nearly an hour, and conversed with some individuals, who listened with interest to the Word of Life."

VISIT TO THE GHETTO.

"I have visited the Ghetto, where the poor Jews reside. It was probably in this same locality that Paul laboured among their ancestors, when by the Appian way he came to Rome. I went to the synagogue, where I found two Israelites, with whom I conversed, on the heavenly seed of Abraham, but they would not see that God had anything better than a carnal people. Coming down from the synagogue, one sees that the Ghetto is the dirtiest part of Rome, which is, perhaps, the filthiest sty in Europe. The Jewish inhabitants number five or six thousand. Soon after the destruction of Jerusalem, there were perhaps a hundred thousand of them; but the calamities which have swept over them have subjected them to periodical decimation. Passing one of their shops—an old-clothes store—at the door of which the man and wife were sitting, the woman, seeing me looking round, said, 'Would the gentleman like to find something?' 'Yes,' I replied; 'I would like to find some one to whom I might speak of One I love.' 'Who is that?' said the woman, with eagerness, while the man solemnly, raised his head. 'His name is Jesus.' The name of Jesus struck them like a sound from the other world; the woman seemed to soften, but the face of her husband flashed with rage, as he said to me, 'Have you confessed yourself?' which signifies, 'Are you ready to die?'—you may expect the stiletto." "Oh

no, I am not a Paptist, to require priestly absolution. I am a Christian, a child of Abraham.' The old man calmed a little, but my conversation there, and in other parts of the Ghetto, seemed to find their hearts veiled and hardened."

THE FIRST MEETING.

"Last night (November 23rd) I had the first meeting in my own hired room. Not being permitted to print and post invitations in the streets, I had to invite individuals. I went to a good number. Some made excuse; some said they would come, but did not; a few said they would, and kept their word. In the evening I prepared my room, and received the few (five in number) who made their appearance. I invited them to pray with me, that the Lord might open their eyes to see His truth. When they rose from their knees, they looked at each other with utter astonishment. Poor people? they, I believe, had never before heard prayer in their own language. When I said I would read out of the very letters of the Apostles, each one came to look at the book, to handle it, and to read a little himself. After reading Paul's journey to Rome, about which they had never heard, I was about to speak to them, but they desired me to read on, which I did, and then spoke; but they had so many questions to ask, that our evening passed in conversation, at the close of which each expressed a desire to come again, and to procure the book for himself."

THE ANCIENT BAPTISTRIES OF ROME.

"You will be glad to know that the baptistries of the early Roman Church are still in existence. Passing last week by the splendid marble baptistry of Constantine, I entered, and asked the priest within the use to which it was formerly dedicated. Having shown me the level the water rose to when the font was prepared for baptism, and the valve in the marble floor whence it issued—'When the rite was finished,' he added, 'this was anciently used for the immersion of proselytes.' 'May I ask why the Church has fallen from the primitive mode?'—'The Church,' he said, 'has thought well to change it.' 'Why does she sprinkle infants?'—'Because the Scripture commands it.' 'Can you point to the passage?' He then quoted (in Latin) from Gen. i. 28—'increase and multiply, and fill the earth.' Yes, the wholesale admission of babes into Church communion has filled the earth, but not with Christians."

A BAPTISTRY IN THE CATACOMBS.

"This morning (November 24th) I went, with two who came to the meeting last Lord's-day evening, to see the baptistry in the Catacombs. About a mile from the walls of the city, we ascended a hill, from which the view of Rome and its vicinity is magnificent. In the side of this hill is a little cave, filled with beautiful ferns, which while it indicates, partially obscures the entrance to this most ancient refuge of the persecuted saints of old. The guide opens the gate, and gives a taper to each, and so we leave the lonely scene without, and enter through narrow passages by heaps of bones and skulls, which look dismal in the feeble flickering of our lights, to the early baptistry. Before descending a flight of steps, the guide directs our eyes to a picture painted above the entrance. It is the head of Jesus, with the cross behind it. This first met the eye of the candidate who came to be mystically buried here with Christ; and the impression made by this picture, on account of the love and tenderness it expresses, must have been great. At the bottom of the stairs, in a small room, is a picture of Our Lord's baptism. John is on one side; an angel, on the other, holds his robe; while Jesus, in the midst, stands to the waist in water, waiting to be immersed. At the foot of this picture, to my great surprise, I not only saw the ancient baptistry, but found it still filled with water, so clear that we could see to the bottom,

though about four feet deep, and so sweet that we drank it with pleasure. Rome has scarcely known of the existence of this; it is scarcely ever visited, even by priests; the guide told me it was almost entirely unknown. He knows where there is another, and some time I hope to visit it with him."

"I have just received 30,000 portions of the New Testament, which I hope to have sent out shortly into all classes of society."

"BORN OF WATER AND OF THE SPIRIT."

John III. 5.

The passage in which this phrase occurs has for many years been a well-contested battle field. What is its true meaning? Is there any reference in the phrase to the ordinance of baptism? And if there is, how are we to guard the verse against teaching the horrible doctrine of baptismal regeneration?

That the words "born of water," refer to baptism, was never doubted by any expositor for fifteen centuries. That all the best modern expositions agree in this reference, is also indisputable. It is evident from the context that Jesus found in Nicodemus a doubting, rationalistic spirit, which could understand neither the nature nor necessity of the new birth. "Born afresh," what can this mean? To urge the necessity of this radical change on all, seemed to Nicodemus as absurd as to speak of the necessity of a second physical birth, v. 4—"Now to lead and enlighten this state of mind, Jesus leads him to think of something with which he was already acquainted. He makes John's baptism the starting point. This is the reason why the phrase "born of water," is mentioned first. Using that divine wisdom which ever characterized him in his conversation with inquirers, Jesus would lead Nicodemus, by means of the known, to an acquaintance with the unknown. It is as if he had said: "except a man have that new birth which he possesses symbolically, when he is born of water in baptism, and efficiently when he is born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The former, the birth of Water, is only the sign; the latter, the birth of the Spirit, is the thing signified. The former is a nullity without the latter; while the two taken together, constitute the qualification for admittance into the kingdom of God. The Forerunner himself declared his baptism to be incomplete. "I indeed have baptized you with water, but He (Christ) shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." Mark i. 8.—*Can. Baptist.*

MR. BEECHER ON FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

The Rev. Henry Ward Beecher has again recently been preaching on the doctrine of future punishment, taking for his text Matt. xxv. 46. In the course of the discourse he said:—

The eternity of punishment, when anything like a conception of its significance and meaning seizes the mind, seems to paralyse many of them with grief. The eternity of future punishment is the point where almost all agonising doubts and struggles of Christian theologians have arisen. And of what are called the *insolve mysteries of Divine Government*, it seems to me that if the doctrine of eternity of punishment were removed, nine out of ten would disappear of themselves. For I believe that they result simply from that one term, *suffering eternity*.

All these reasons, and some others which I cannot pause to enumerate, have conspired to work the change which I say has taken place, and is taking place, on this subject.

We must not think that efforts to escape these views of the eternal punishment of the wicked are wanton, or that they indicate a low moral tendency. On the contrary, they are, in many instances, the result of the very highest moral susceptibility. Nor

must we suppose that they spring up only in ignorant minds. They arise in the most cultivated minds that there are in the church to-day. Nor are we to believe that they are pleaded for the sake of getting larger license among self-indulgent and wicked men; for they are pleaded by men who are models of Christian self-denial and heroism. Contrast these various theories, however, with the sublime simplicity of Christ's teaching, and you will be struck with the difference between inspired teaching and human philosophising—for I now state affirmatively what I understand to be the Scripture doctrine and representation. The whole doctrine substantially rests upon Christ's sole teaching. If we had only the Old Testament we could but guess that there was an existence after death of any kind. The full disclosure belongs to the New Testament; and in the New Testament while there are, especially now in the light of the gospels, passages in which the Apostles teach the truth of dreadful coming punishment, yet the foundation, the main ground and confidence and support of this truth is that our Master taught it. The loving, the gentle, the sympathetic, the sacrificial Saviour who loved sinning men so that He came to die for them—He, calmly, deliberately, over and over again, did teach His disciples in such a way that they at that time, and since then the great body of the Church have believed that He meant us to understand that there was a future state of punishment and that it was so great and dreadful a thing that all men should with terrible earnestness flee from it.

He announced the fact; He did not reason upon it, nor point out its place in a system of moral truth, nor give it philosophical definition, nor consider objections to it, nor attempt to reconcile it with any theory of Divine power. He raised His hand to the sky to draw aside the curtain, and there, right before His hearers, rose the dark grandeur of future retribution. He bore witness to it as a fact. He did not discourse upon it as a philosopher. From the beginning of His ministry to the end, He went about saying, "Repent! Repent!" And the universal sinfulness of man, while it never had so much sympathy, at the same time never had such fidelity of rebuke as in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not teach that the danger of men's sinfulness was in this life; but while doubtless recognising all the incidental penalties that belong to evil doing under material law, He all the time kept open before the eye the great horizon of the future. There is not one thing more characteristic of Christ's teaching than that constant largeness of sphere in His thought—that looking to the great Beyond. It was the cope, of the eternal world under which He seemed to be standing. And one reason of the dignity and authority and power with which He taught, and the grasp that He laid on men's consciousness, as well as on their reason and their sensibilities, was that He spoke as one that came down from Heaven; and His teachings on the subject of penalty, therefore, were not teachings of the facts of natural law in this world, but were teachings in respect to the everlasting constitution of God, from eternity to eternity. He taught that it was a danger that men had in the future so great as to demand from every man the putting forth of his whole strength. Now, I have felt every difficulty that any man has ever felt. In my thought I walk around about the terrific fact of the future, I, too, take into account the Fatherhood of God, and I look upon the unpeopled nations of the globe, and with inexpressible longing and anguish, for which there is no word, I have sought relief. But there is the plain simple testimony of Jesus Christ. I cannot get around that, nor get over it. There it is; I have nothing to say. I cannot fathom the matter. A child can ask me questions that I cannot answer. I find my soul aching. As

it were drops of blood flow for tears. But after all, I do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And I do not believe He would deceive me nor deceive you. And if you ask me for the reason of the faith that is in me, I simply say this—"Jesus says so"—that is all. And I cannot give up His testimony. I preach the love of God, and do not know what the scope of that love is. I do not know where it would logically lead. But I am sure that I am right in preaching that all punitive elements are under the control of love. I am perfectly sure that love will bring everything right in the end. I therefore preach without qualification; and almost without limitation on that side. But I am not to be understood, on that account, as not believing what Christ Himself deliberately says in respect to the peril of sin, or in regard to punishment in the life which is to come. When I doubt the doctrine, therefore, it will be because I doubt the divinity of Christ. As long as I hold to the divinity of Christ, I cannot but hold the truth which He taught me to believe and to teach to others—that sin will be visited in the other life with terrible penalties, such as no man's imagination can pierce. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

It goes to my heart to say these things. This is not the side that I seem to myself called to preach. Yet it is there, and if I am faithful to my whole duty I must preach it. As a surgeon does things that are most uncongenial to himself, so sometimes I do. And I do this with tears and with sorrow. It makes me sick. . . . It seems to me that, instead of dividing ourselves up into pugnacious sects, instead of separating ourselves into contending schools, on this matter, we should constantly have before our minds these most solemn testimonies of Christ in His teaching throughout the gospel, and that they should keep alive and share in every one of us the reality of right and wrong. We ought not to allow the distinction between good and evil to be fused, run together, or to be slurred over. All the world is filled with illusions; and there is nothing that men are in more danger of losing than clear, sharp notions of honour, and truth, and rectitude, and responsibility. And this teaching of Christ brings the whole pressure of the eternal world to bear on the conscience in such a way as to keep it alert, sensitive, and true. It should keep alive in us a sense of our own eternal being. We never live only for the day, and yet we do live by the day. But in the sense of formative power, the feelings that throb and swell in you to-day are master masons, and with their little trowels they are building, building, in your thoughts and impulses; and they never leave you as they found you. You are changing from hour to hour; and that which is building is building for eternity. For our life does not consist in the days that we are spending on earth. Our life runs forward endlessly. And though we do not see what is being done within, the work goes on without cessation.

For the Christian Messenger.

ACADIA COLLEGE MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

It may not be uninteresting to the readers of the *Messenger* to learn something in reference to the Missionary Society that has been recently organized by the students of Acadia College. The utility of systematic effort, which is just as essential in missionary matters as in any other department of christian labor, will be at once apparent.

Many of the students have been deeply impressed with the conviction that young men, who are engaged in fitting themselves for positions of future usefulness, especially those who expect to go forth as religious teachers, should be well informed on the subject of missions, in order that when