

The Christian Messenger.

Halifax, N. S., January 2, 1884.

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL.

We yesterday entered on a New Year
ONE THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FOUR.
Having completed the cycle we start afresh for another revolution around the great central orb. These measures of time have not always been so near in accord with our cycles as they are at present. The year did not always commence on the 1st of January. The Jews commenced their sacred year in what is now our March; the Athenians in our June, and other peoples at other months. In 1564 Charles IX of France ordered that for the time to come the 1st day of January should be the beginning of the Year, which date the Christian nations have generally adopted.

New Year's Day has long been memorable for the important events which have occurred upon it. We find that it was on New Year's Day that Noah removed the covering from the ark and prepared to come out and start the world afresh. On New Year's Day it was too that, in the wilderness, Moses commenced setting up the Tabernacle. We have none of the European nations now that attempt to give any idea of its designs on New Year's Day, as the late Emperor Napoleon did. Attempts are often made to forecast the future. At the opening of the year there is a wish in many minds to know what is to be. It is however better that we should commit our way to the Lord and if we do this he has promised to direct our steps. If this is done it will be better than knowing what will come to pass. If we are endeavouring to give happiness to others we most effectually secure our own. In this endeavour we may depend upon it being not only a Happy New Year but a happier year all through than any of its predecessors. We trust it may be so to all our readers.

THE MAGI.

Of all the incidents connected with the advent of our Lord to this earth—the story of the pilgrimage of these “wise men from the east to Jerusalem” that they might worship the new-born King, as related in the 2nd chapter of Matthew's Gospel, most strongly and strikingly elicits our sympathy and interest. We are curious to know more of their history, the kind of life and civilization in which they lived and moved, and what awakened in them the knowledge and interest in the great event transpiring in the land of Judea; their number and rank and what moved them to make the long journey with the rich offerings which they bore. It would also be interesting to know what report they carried back to their distant homes, and what effect their mission had upon society in that eastern land. Upon all these matters the Scripture narrative is silent.

Very early in the history of the church we find in mythology and legendary lore, many very plausible attempts were made to satisfy this laudable inquisitiveness. Both the western and the eastern church literature have traditionary accounts of these interesting wise men. Many books have been written about them and the legends attached to their traditionary history. In western mythology their number has been fixed at three doubtless from the gifts mentioned, gold, frankincense and myrrh. Later German folk-lore has represented them as three princes and has given them good German names: Gaper, Melchior and Balthasar, each bearing his appropriate offering.

The eastern church however has quite another and certainly more probable legend respecting these worthies. There they are represented as twelve notable Persians, said to be descendants of Ham the son of Seth. Tradition has assigned each a typical Persian name and character, and relates that they were accompanied by a retinue of about one thousand followers, when they came to the city and appeared over against it. This formidable array would seem to account for the consternation and “trouble” with which both king Herod and all Jerusalem were filled by their presence.

While the German-Latin legend, popular as it is in the West is rude and even childish, and bears evidence of fabrication in every feature, the Syriac tradition has at least the merit of bringing all the circumstances into accord with the facts of history and has the stronger claim upon those who take pleasure in oriental legends, and early traditions.

While these myths and legendary details are only of passing interest to us as literary curiosities, may we not take encouragement and comfort from the fact that God's word does not always and in every particular fully satisfy our curiosity. May we not see in this evidence of its Divine origin? No mere man in relating such an incident, as the visit of those wise men, would have failed to have supplied all the details whether true or imaginary to satisfy the most speculative fancy. The scriptures were given to us for other far higher and nobler purposes. May we not learn from the incident of these Magi a lesson of consecration? They sought the Saviour, they were ready to make long pilgrimages and sacrifices that they might find Jesus. Having found Him, they gave him their hearts in worship and adoration—their service and their treasures in gold frankincense and myrrh. We do not need to make pilgrimages to find the Saviour, He is near, revealed to us by His spirit. He has purchased us and shall we not render to him our bodies and our spirits as a reasonable sacrifice, our service, our property, our all—to His church, His cause, His missions, His poor and suffering ones, and thus fulfil His will.

THE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION.

The recent discussions in connection with the visit of the missionaries (so called) to two of the Episcopal congregations of our city has brought into prominence the old question: What constitutes true apostolic succession? The theory of our Roman Catholic and Anglican neighbors is this: Bishops succeeded the Apostles in the government of the church, the Apostles appointed all the first bishops, they ordained others, and so the succession has been preserved until the present day. No person is authorized to preach the gospel who has not been ordained by a bishop, who can himself prove that he is in the succession!

In the Jewish religious services every priest was careful to preserve his pedigree, and no one was allowed to officiate in the temple services who could not produce unquestioned proof of his direct descent from Aaron. In the destruction of the temple which followed the siege of Jerusalem, A.D. 70, by the Romans, the records of the priesthood were destroyed, and so the pedigree was irrevocably lost. This has been regarded as a Divine interposition in closing up forever the old dispensation, and annulling the order of the priesthood beyond recovery.

It is also a remarkable fact that those who aim to establish a regular succession from the Apostles are met at the very beginning with insurmountable difficulties. The records of all the first churches have been lost, or so imperfectly kept that it is impossible even to find a full, complete, and reliable list of the pastors or bishops of any one church during the first two centuries. It cannot even be proved that every bishop in the first churches was appointed by an Apostle. Even in later records the chain of succession has been interrupted and broken off in various ways,—by uncanonical appointments; by forcible intrusions; by official acts without ordination; by the acts of persons whose own claim to episcopal dignity was invalid, &c.; so conclusive is the evidence of church history that the chain of the succession has been irretrievably broken and lost, that the late Archbishop Whately—a high authority in the Church of England—has left on record the statement that “there is not a minister in all Christendom who is able to trace up with any approach to certainty his own spiritual pedigree.”

The gospel dispensation is spiritual, and all arrangements made under its authority must be in harmony with that view. The Apostle Paul says: “Henceforth know we no man after the flesh. Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.”

When it is claimed that Christ maintains the succession, the true meaning is that ministers are called and made by Him, not by man, and that the succession is entirely spiritual—not dependent upon any supposed transmission of virtue, power, or authority from one human being to another, but rather on the possession of those gifts and graces which it is the Saviour's exclusive prerogative to bestow.

We believe in the true Apostolic succession. But we understand it to be a succession of Apostolic men, holding and preaching Apostolic truth, leading Apostolic lives, and thus exemplifying the true Apostolic character. Such are to be recognized and honored always—everywhere. No others are in the succession, however regularly and properly, as human laws and customs declare, they have been ordained and appointed.

The existence of the church proves that the true succession has been maintained, and by the spiritual line it can be traced all the way down through the ages. The faithful Lord will carry on His own work. He will continue the succession till the end of time. All is secured by that precious promise, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

THE WEEK OF PRAYER.

On another page will be found the invitation of the Evangelical Alliance to unite in meetings for thanksgiving, prayer and praise during the days of next week, with the places where the meetings are to be held in Halifax.

In Dartmouth there will be meetings held each evening, alternately, at the three—Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian—churches, commencing on Monday.

Arrangements are also made for similar meetings in most of the larger towns and villages of the province. Some of them will also be of a union character. That is, however, of less importance than the meetings themselves. The list of subjects suggested will supply abundant variety for meetings every evening where it is possible to hold them, and doubtless every church and every family and every individual will experience the blessing that invariably follows waiting on the Lord in His house.

The Church Guardian says:—

“It is a strange thing that the sects admit the canon of Holy Scriptures, some practice Infant Baptism, and all observe Sunday as a day of sacred rest, while they reject Episcopacy, and yet the evidence for each and all of them is precisely of the same kind. As Archdeacon Evans tersely puts it: Seeing that the Episcopacy, or the threefold ministry of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, rests upon the one and the same, and even stronger testimony, than that on which rests the canon of Holy Scripture, viz., the evidence of the Visible Church: we cannot reject the one without sooner or later undermining the authority of the other.”

We can afford to smile at the superciliousness of the use of the term “the sects,” as applied by the Anglo-Catholics to the other bodies of Christians. The New Testament “Bishops” were evidently the pastors of the separate congregations of baptized believers; the “Deacons” were those elected to perform the duties clearly shown in the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles to Timothy and Titus, and are also noticed in a few of the other epistles.

As for “Priests,” there is no such thing known in the Christian Scriptures as an order of Priests, except as all Christians are described as a “holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter ii. 5, Revelation i. 6; but, on the contrary, there is abundant evidence in the epistle to the Hebrews to show that there being no sacrifice to offer, there is no priest required, but we have the great High Priest who has passed into the heavens to present Himself the sin-offering, and the burden-bearer for all His disciples to the end of the world. See Hebrews vii. 17; ix. 11, 12, 24, 25.

This is Leap Year, when “February's days are twenty-nine,” and the year has 366 days—this will give us 53 Wednesdays in the present year. We remember some years ago the same thing occurred and our Subscribers received 53 papers for the year.

In addition to the Letter from Rev. G. Churchill, on another page, we were glad to receive the following Postal Card from Rev. J. R. Hutchinson:

CHICACOLE, Nov. 9th, 1883.

Dear Brother,—

One baptised at Chicacole on Oct. 7th and three at Akalatampara on Nov. 4th. Others are waiting. Since the beginning of this year (1883) fifteen in all have been added to the church of Christ on this field. Ten of these additions were by baptism. I start to-morrow on another tour in the direction of Tekkali expect to be out about two weeks. “Pray without ceasing.”

Yours Sincerely

J. R. HUTCHINSON

We also learn from Rev. G. Churchill that he and Mrs. C. purpose returning to Nova Scotia early in the approaching spring.

The Marriage Notice of Rev. I. C. Archibald with Miss Carrie Hammond on the 25th of October, will interest many of our readers, Miss Hammond has now been five years in the Mission work and has done excellent service, for a large portion of the time she has had too heavy a strain on her physical nature, but she has borne it bravely, she will we doubt not, be able to render even greater service to the mission in her new relation. Mr. and Mrs. A. had gone for a week or so to Kylassa, a mountain station, and would return to Bimlipatam. We heartily congratulate both Bro. A. and his wife, and the friends of the mission on this arrangement.

All the missionaries were present at the wedding, and two missionaries belonging to other Societies, together with about 30 English and Eurasians, and as many natives. The Maharajah of Vizianagram, gave them the use of his house for a week or two at Kylassa.

OUR YOUNG PEOPLE, published by our Baptist Publication Society, 1420 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, is constantly gaining in popular favor. It is carefully edited by A. J. Rowland, D.D., and adapted to the older element in Baptist schools not otherwise provided for in this direction. It proves to be a great favorite wherever introduced. It is published monthly, its price being 25 cents a year, when ordered in clubs of four or more. There is room for such a paper, and we are glad to learn that it is meeting with great success.

In Memoriam.

DEACON Z. HENRY BENNETT.

The news of the death of Z. Henry Bennett, who died at Alberton, P. E. Island, November 24th, spread an unusual gloom through the large circle in which he moved and was known. Brother B. was born in Cornwallis in the year 1818. There his youth was passed in preparation for the battles of life, but he did not depend on his own preparation or strength for victory, for when quite young he was brought to a saving knowledge of Christ, and in him he trusted. He buckled on the gospel armor and went forth in the strength of the Lord, through whom he at last conquered.

In 1836 he was baptized and began his life of usefulness in the church. Soon after this he removed to Calais, where he remained two years. In 1839 he removed to Pembroke, Maine, and the many friends whom he gathered round him during his ten years' stay there will read with grief these lines to the memory of one whom they loved and respected. In 1840 he was married to the noble hearted lady who, now a widow, mourns the loss of her untiring affectionate husband.

Brother B. spent a short time in Mascarene, Charlotte Co., N. B., then he removed to Pennfield, where he remained until 1872, when he removed to Alberton P. E. I.

Soon after coming to Alberton he joined the Baptist Church here, and took an active part in advancing the cause of Christ, and as there were few male members of the church much of the work fell on him; but it was his greatest delight to be found in the service of Christ.

He was chosen to the deaconship about two years ago, and honored the confidence of the church placed in him by his consistent walk and untiring efforts for the advancement of the kingdom of his Lord.

He continued in the active discharge of his duties until November 22nd, when, engaged in some work on his house, he fell and received injuries which caused his death. But although he was so suddenly called away, he was ready, with his lamp trimmed and burning.

Before he died he called his family to his bed-side and told them he was going home, and shortly after his spirit took

its flight to God who gave it. No pain disturbed his parting hours, but he calmly sank down as into sweet sleep. For him death was disarmed of its terrors, and his spirit passed away in breathings of unutterable love and immortal hope.

Brother B. leaves four sons and three daughters. One son is away on the sea, and one daughter is in Eastport, Maine, the rest of the family are settled in Alberton.

We extend our sympathy to the widow and family in their bereavement, and ask the blessing of the Lord to rest upon them.—Com.

The following Obituary should have appeared in our columns some weeks ago, but a circumstance occurred in connection with the manuscript, and it was mislaid. The parties concerned will please pardon the delay.

MRS JAMES ILLSLEY

widow of James Illsley senior, died on the 8th July, near Berwick. The funeral services were conducted by the Rev. E. M. Saunders. The text used was that which proved the means of her conversion.

The following paper in question was written five years ago:—

“APRIL, 1878—Forty-eight years ago I obtained a hope in Christ, and as I think my dear children have never heard me relate particularly the special dealings of God with my soul at the time when I was brought to Jesus and enabled to put my trust in him, I will briefly write a few of the most important parts which may give them some satisfaction to read when their ever-loving mother shall have bid adieu to all below and entered that rest which remains for the people of God. During the days of my childhood I was often under deep concern of mind and felt the necessity of a change of heart; I knew I was a sinner unfit for heaven. Oftentimes my heart was filled with sorrow under a sense of my guilt; but when I was sixteen years of age I felt a much deeper impression that I must obtain the pardoning mercy of God, but I seemed to be in darkness. I could not see the way clearly until I heard Mr. John Cogswell preach from the text “Unto you, therefore, that believe, he is precious.” He told of the preciousness of the Saviour to the poor sinner, convinced of his helpless condition, fearing the wrath of God; but when he brought to view Christ in all his fulness and willingness to save, then indeed Jesus was precious to the soul. And when the believer was left to wander from the fold, and then brought back to Christ again, then the Saviour was truly precious. And at last when called to leave this world and pass into the eternal world, if he could feel that Christ was his friend he could leave this world without a tear, save for the friends he held so dear. Oh the preciousness of the Saviour to a dying saint! I believe that sermon was blessed of God to the salvation of my soul. I thought I must seek such a Saviour as he represented Christ to be, so I attended the next conference meeting. There I saw the Rev. Edward Manning standing with his arms extended and the tears glistening in his eyes while he told of the love of Jesus. He closed his speech by saying, “He is the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely.”

His mind seemed to be overflowing with love to the dear Redeemer. The next day was the Sabbath. I heard a very appropriate sermon and determined to seek Jesus as my friend. On Monday I heard a sermon from the words, “The Lord loosed the prisoners.” That seemed to just suit my case. It seemed as if the minister almost knew my thoughts as he told of the feelings of a sinner under deep conviction of his sin, and without hope in Jesus. I did indeed feel myself to be a prisoner of hope. After returning home my convictions became so vivid, that I thought surely God must be striving with me by His Spirit. I said in my mind, it is God, I dared not resist his Spirit any longer, but felt to yield myself to his power. The next day was spent in trying to find the way, and crying, O for repentance, O for repentance. On Wednesday my heart was so burdened that I could not work. I retired to a grove to be alone in the presence of God. I took my Bible and hymn-book with me determined to seek till I should find the Saviour. On my way I read these words:

“In heaven He lives to intercede Before His Father's face, Give Him my soul thy cause to plead Nor doubt the Father's grace.”

A gleam of hope seemed to rise in my soul that God would hear my cry, but soon I felt that my heart was hard and must undergo a great change. As I walked, and read, and thought, my sense of guilt became deeper and deeper until I felt that I must try and pray for forgiveness. I knelt but could not utter a word. I arose with my burdened sinful heart, fearing that my sins could not be

forgiven, because I had sinned against so much light. I felt as in the presence of the heart searching God, and thought “Thou God seeest me.” There he showed me the sinfulness of my heart, that hell was my portion if I did not repent and believe in Christ my Saviour. My distress still increased, I thought if God should call me away then, I must sink in eternal despair, so I knelt once more, saying, if He saves me, it is mercy, if He condemns me it is justice. Whilst I was praying for forgiveness and confessing my sins before God, I had such a view of Jesus presented to my mind, as dying on the cross for sinners, that my thoughts seemed to be taken from myself to view the Saviour in all his loveliness. My mind was so absorbed in thinking of his love and condescension that my burden seemed to fall away. As I was returning to the house I thought

“Well might the sun in darkness hide And shut his glories in, When Christ the mighty Maker died, For man, the creature's sin.”

The family saw the change in my countenance, for I now had a little hope that I would be forgiven. A Christian friend prayed with and for me. Then my dear sister went with me to the barn, and there she poured out her soul in prayer in my behalf. I could then believe that Jesus was able to save me, and said, He is able. Bless the Lord. I rejoiced that I had found mercy. The next day God was pleased to give me hope that all my sins were forgiven. I now felt that Jesus was both able and willing to save my soul from hell, which I knew must be my portion if my sins were not pardoned. I saw such a fullness in Christ's love and mercy that I said “If I had a thousand souls I would trust them all with Jesus.” I thought God had by his Spirit showed me how sinful I was in his sight. He had also showed me the only hope of pardon. There is no name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus. My heart was full of love to the blessed Saviour. “My heart broke forth in unknown strains, And sang surprising grace.”

I was so happy that I could not keep silent. I must tell my young companions of the love of Jesus and entreat them to come to him and be saved for he has said, “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” This was the commencement of a general revival in the neighborhood. There were quite a number converted during the revival. After searching the Scriptures faithfully for myself as to the right mode of baptism, and asking God's guidance, I felt it my duty to own my blessed Saviour in his own appointed way. Accordingly I was baptised in that beautiful baptistry—then called the Little Lake—by the Rev. Edward Manning, and was received into the church in Billtown, May 23rd, 1830. The text preached from that day was very appropriate, Rom 6:22, “And now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” My father and two of my brothers, and a number of my companions were baptized on the same day. It was a blessed season of joy. That was one of the happiest days I ever spent in my life. I believed that God was my reconciled Father and that Jesus died to save my soul from sin, and that eternal punishment was due me for my sin against a Holy God. I could say, “He hath brought me up out of a horrible pit and the miry clay. He hath set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. He hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God.”

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