

THE TWO MYSTERIES.

We know not what it is, dear, this sleep so deep and still; The folded hands the awful calm, the cheek so pale and chill; The lips that will not lift again, though we may call and call; The strange, white solitude of peace that settles over all.

Visitor Pulpit.

SERMON

Preached before the Southern N. B. Baptist Association, by Rev. H. Foshey, Susex, N. B., and Published by Request of the Body.

And I also say unto thee that thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.—Matt. 16: 18.

The church of Christ is spoken of in the New Testament as a building. "Ye are God's husbandry, God's building." 1 Cor. 3: 9. "Ye also as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2: 5. The design of the building is one of stupendous magnificence. As the temple of Solomon, in its day, was the admiration of all, so the church of Christ shall be the wonder of men and angels throughout eternity.

How hopefully he speaks of the increase of his kingdom, even in times of its greatest weakness. The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is greater than herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of heaven come and lodge in the branches thereof.—Matt. 13: 31-32. With the same confidence, knowing his almighty power, did he use the language of the text. To him the foundation had been already laid, even then the building had begun to rise. Before his vision the hellish legions moved in dark and dreadful lines against the building and the workmen. In vain the storm of diabolic wrath burst upon the solid structure; it fell not; it was founded on a rock. The battle over, through the lifting smoke of the conflict, the gerial sun of happier days cast his rays upon the worn workman and the strong tower. Yea, the church is all the more grand to-day, and firmer, by reason of her many struggles.

How honored is the place Where we are standing, Zion the glory of the earth, And beauty of the land.

As may be inferred from these introductory remarks, it is the purpose of this discourse to speak of the foundation and triumphs of the gospel church. Without further delay, therefore, let me lay my plan before you.

I. Explain the text.

II. Show the composition of the gospel church.

III. Speak of her triumphs.

In the light of the context, the true meaning of this passage seems easy to learn. By beginning to read at the 13th verse, we can see the method by which Jesus brought from Peter the confession of his divinity. "Whom do men say that I, the son of man am?" That is equal to asking, "What is public opinion concerning me?" The reply came quickly. "Some say John the Baptist, others Jeremiah

or one of the prophets." But it is evident that the asking of this question was not the real purpose of our Lord. In the next he comes nearer to it. "But whom say ye that I am?" There seems to have been a pause. To the first question it is said they replied, but here the outspoken Simon breaks the silence, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." That this was satisfactory to Jesus, we gather from the blessing pronounced in the 17th verse. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Now, this being the answer sought for, must be the expression which contains the meaning of this whole conversation. The discourse will therefore be, manifestly, not about Peter nor with reference to him, but his glorious confession. The first part of this passage is "if we may so say" a compliment paid by our Lord to Peter. In the latter part Jesus resumes his remarks begun in the 17th verse. Leaving out the complimentary reference to Peter, the meaning of the discourse seems quite easy. "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my father which is in heaven; and upon this utterance of thine, petra, I will build my church." Still further, the words rendered rock in two places in this passage, do not agree with one another, and therefore, cannot refer to the same person or thing. The petros of the first clause being masculine, naturally refers to Peter. The word petra of the second clause being feminine must refer to something further back in the discourse. Liddell and Scott distinguish between these words as to their meaning, petros means a stone by itself; a hard flint stone; petra, means a ledge of rocks. Peter was the rock whose hardness would qualify him to break in fragments the prejudices of the people, and thus become a chief instrument in building on the rock-bed petra the eternal building of the eternal God. That Peter was a not the chief instrument in laying the foundation of the gospel church is shown by the fact that, on several occasions, his judgment was set aside, and on one particular occasion, Paul declared that he was worthy of blame withstanding him to the face. It is evident, therefore, that the divinity of Christ is the foundation on which the church is built. "Other foundation can no man lay." We are thus led to speak, in the next place of the composition of the gospel church.

Baptists are accustomed to speak of the churches rather than of the church, when they mean the whole denomination. This practice can be easily justified from the New Testament being in accordance with the apostolic idea of the independence of local churches. I think, however, we are equally justified in sometimes using the singular form of the word when we wish to signify a number or the whole body of local churches. Paul in the 5th chapter of Ephesians at the 25th verse seems to use the word thus, "Christ loved the church ecclesian, and gave himself for it." It seems to me that our Lord also so uses it here. He was speaking of that kingdom society church which was to have a visible form and order among men, which was to be worked at and completed by human agency and which was to rest on the rocky foundation doctrine of Christ's divinity. Whatever, therefore, may be said of the invisible church—said to be composed of all believers, but having no form nor order agreeing with that of the society, Christ here calls My church without controversy—our duty terminates upon that church whose visible order and structure can be traced in the New Testament. This does not make it necessary that those who are not incorporated into this body are denied heaven. We acknowledge the piety of a Joseph of Aramathea or a Nicodemus and believe that they will be saved. On the other hand, our belief concerning such persons does not weaken in the least, our zeal in contending for the prosperity of gospel-church order. That institution, whose laws and ritual are given in the New Testament, is that which has the promise of Christ's presence unto the end of the world, and against which the gates of Hell shall not prevail.

This is not contention for mere form, but for the spirit as well. It is useless to talk of retaining the spirit while rejecting the form. The form contains the spirit, as the body the soul. As the Mosaic ritual embodies the spirit of Judaism, so the christian ritual embodies the spirit of christianity. Now, if a church can be found in the world whose order and doctrines accord with the teachings of the New Testament, that, and that only, is the church of Christ and the subject of the cheering statement, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. This claim we do not seek to establish by any reference to councils, creeds, or parliaments, but from the Word of God, that single ground from which any and all have the right to establish their claims to

believe this or that. A clear idea of the material out of which we believe a gospel-church must be composed, may be best given by quoting the words of the 13th article of Baptist faith, as adopted by the churches composing the Association. We believe the Scriptures teach that a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the ordinance of Christ, governed by his laws and exercising the gifts, rights and privileges invested in them by his word, that its only scriptural officers are bishops or pastors and deacons whose qualifications, claims and duties are defined in the epistles to Timothy and Titus.

That the church of Christ must be composed of spiritual persons or believers, may be shown by reference to passages of Scripture descriptive of the character of the saints:—1 Thess. 5: 5—"For ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness"; 1 Peter 2: 5—"Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"; Ephesians 2: 19-22—"So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." The salutations used by the apostles in their epistles, would be untrue and out of place unless the churches addressed in them, consisted of regenerated persons. 1 Peter 1: 3-5—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"; Ephesians 1: 1—"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus."

But a gospel-church is not only composed of regenerate persons, but regenerate baptized persons that such only as professed faith in Christ were baptized into the fellowship of the apostolic churches, may be seen by reference to the law and to the testimony. Acts 2: 41-42—"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and the prayers"; Acts 8: 12—"But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ they were baptized both men and women." When the apostles addressed the disciples in their epistles concerning practical godliness, they were accustomed to remind them of their baptism as the act by which they pledged themselves to live lives of holiness to the Lord. Romans 6: 3-4—"Are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? We were buried, therefore, with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life"; Galatians 3: 27—"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." We find an agreement between churches thus formed by the apostles of our Lord, and the instructions given by the Master in Matthew's gospel, 28th chapter—"Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Thus we have seen the composition of the first churches of our Lord. Such, we believe, are the regular Baptist churches of today. Such they have ever been since the days of the founder. Such shall they ever be till he comes, who has said, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church." This brings us to speak, in the third place, of the triumphs of gospel-church order in the world. The expression "gates of hell" means simply the councils of the devil. Ancient cities were generally walled, and were entered by gateways. In these gateways the councils of the people were generally held. Alluding to this custom, our Lord states that the evil designs of Satan, who would instigate men to oppose his cause on earth, should not prevail. That this promise has been remarkably fulfilled, we will attempt to show, as briefly as we can. It will be interesting to notice how proudly the church stood

amid the storms of her infant existence. For a short time after Peter's sermon, the church at Jerusalem had rest and favor with all the people. The apostles went in and out before the disciples, preaching the kingdom of God with boldness and success to all the dwellers at Jerusalem and strangers, the Lord adding to the church daily, such as were saved. This state of things, however, was not destined to last. Those doctrines which so enraged the rulers against Christ, were likely to produce the same effect when set forth by his disciples.

Jesus had forewarned them that they should be persecuted even as he was, for the servant said he is not above his Lord. Even when the church enjoyed her day of sunshine, the sky gave tokens of a gathering storm. Soon the storm burst in all its fury. The building trembled; nothing more. The miracle in the temple taught the christians to expect trouble, but the bold language of Stephen was the immediate cause of the first persecution. The followers of our Lord were now scattered abroad. They were homeless and friendless, but not forsaken; neither was the building of God in danger. They went everywhere preaching the word; revivals followed, and many embraced the doctrines of the Saviour. The persecuting Saul was converted to the faith, and the marvellous energies of his soul turned toward building up that, which he sought to tear down. Thus the councils of hell prevailed nothing, but served, rather, to deepen and widen the foundation of the church of God. In a few years there were churches in Asia Minor, in Rome and Corinth. While Galio cared for none of these things; while the Jews stumbled and the Greeks laughed at the preaching of the cross, the disciples were at work among the masses, exhorting, praying and preaching. The multitude of the disciples increased so fast, in an astonishingly short period of time, as to make the Roman Emperor tremble on his throne. Yet he had no need to fear, for the kingdom preached by the ambassadors of Christ was not of this world.

New dangers had now arisen. The storm was more furious than before, but the building also was firmer. Again it trembled, but nothing more; yea, it grew stronger. In those days men were baptized for the dead, when, for every fallen brother another took up the burden and stepped into his place. Fire and sword and the mouths of lions were not sufficient to separate these christians from the love of God. The victory was again on the side of the disciples. The building grew faster than its enemies could destroy it. So numerous had the christians become and so powerful were they soon after these persecutions ceased, that the Emperor Constantine thought it wise to embrace the new religion. This was the most deadly blow ever dealt the cause of Christ. An enemy in disguise is always most to be dreaded. Such was the friendship of this sinner. Christianity now became a state concern. Wealth and honor were hers to bestow. To be a dignitary of the church now was a thing to be desired by all. Vain and heartless persons pressed forward to fill positions in the church, whose pale was filled with equally vain and worldly people. All the evils which have ever followed upon the unholy alliance of church and state, began to appear. The member of the state was synonymous with the member of the church.

Clinic and child baptisms were among the inventions of the day. The ordinance instituted as a profession of faith in a buried and risen Lord, was set forth as the condition of salvation by the pompous ecclesiastics of this period. What now shall become of the church which the Son of the living God established in the world? The gates of hell seem to prevail, but God is gracious. There are, in this worldly mass, the true and pure in heart, who weep over the sad state of affairs. They consult; they protest; they separate themselves. Here, are the first Protestants; they were brave and true. The woman is driven into the wilderness from the flood proceeding out of the dragon's mouth. In the wilderness we must look for the church. The christian writers of the world, have followed the majority and have ever been hunting evidences of apostolic authority in the papal hierarchy, where, alas, they cannot be found. Then followed years of darkness and sin and ignorance. A sable robe is thrown over the world, dead in trespasses and sins. But there dwells a people in obscure retreats, in France, in Switzerland, in the forests of Germany, who hold and practice the doctrines and ordinances of God, as they were delivered to the world by the apostles of our Lord. Here is the church of Christ, and it will be interesting to observe how courageously did she emerge from the gloom of the dark ages, and how little did the councils of hell prevail to stamp out the martial fire of those veterans

of the cross. Sin defeated its own purpose in the Papal Apostasy. The nation's groaned, being weighed down by their burdens. Sickened with blood and goaded to madness, by the constant appeals for money, from the indolent and luxurious clergy, the people began to look about for light. The reaction at last came, Luther, Calvin and others, set themselves resolutely against the tyranny of Rome, and soon gathered a host of men about them who were ready to follow any person who would show them a way out of spiritual and political bondage. In the meantime, the church in the wilderness was not asleep. While the conflict between the two great parties was engaging the attention of the powers, the disciples were at work gathering strength and numbers. It soon became evident that the reformation was little more than a struggle to see which should sit in high places and exercise authority among the nations; the church of Luther or the church of the Pope. These men were as much political as religious reformers. Servetus met his death at the hands of the pitiless Calvin, and Memo Simon was driven into the wilderness. The church, however, had come from her retreat to remain forever more among the civilized nations of the world. No sooner did the quarrel cease between the Pope and his enemies, than the worn and weary people of God began to attract the attention of the lords of the sword and of the faggot. The great Anabaptist persecution now set in vigorously. In this, all parties buried their differences, the more effectually to exterminate the independent churches of our Lord in the world. This persecution spread over the face of Europe, but raged with greatest fierceness on the British Isles. In this persecution such men as John Bunyan and Benjamin Keach suffered, because they advocated a separation of church and state, and taught that the church of Christ is a body of baptized believers. Truly, the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church; good seed it was and plenteous the harvest. The night was long and dark. On the free shores of the American continent the sound of the headsmans axe, of cracking faggots and of broken-hearted sobs died away gradually, as the sound of the roaring sea when the storm has ceased to rage. The gates of hell have not prevailed against the church. Here, in this free soil, the tender vine has grown strong. The grain of mustard seed has indeed become a tree. In little more than a century, we have increased to the number of three million souls, and over. For a complete account of the astonishing growth of New Testament church order in the last hundred years, I refer you to Professor Curtis' "Progress of Baptist Principles." For a knowledge of our increase at home, you are referred to Dr. Bill's "Fifty Years with the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces." But we have not only to look at our record in civilized lands, but let us turn our eyes toward India. Here, a most gratifying spectacle presents itself. God has put the stamp of his approval upon the preaching of his word, and thousands, in the very empire of hell, are turning to the Lord. Also the condition of the christian world today tells how the scales will turn, respecting these controversies which have vexed the world. Statistics are at hand to show the decline of infant baptism. A converted church membership in some way, by nearly all the Protestant bodies of Christendom. Church and state is repudiated in America and is declining in Europe. Certainly we can see the dawn of the millennial day. It is but for us to speak those things which are surely believed among us; God has promised to give them success.

I have taken you over a great deal of ground while speaking of the triumphs of gospel-church order, but I could not seem to avoid it. If any wish to know whether we have a historical record from the apostles down, let them read Dr. Cramp's Baptist History. But, be it known to all, that we are less careful about our history than to be able to prove an agreement between our doctrines and practices, and the new Testament. To the law and to the testimony if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

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