

THE BAPTISTS IN SUSSEX.

Re-opening of the Sussex Baptist Church.

SERMON BY REV. MR. HOPPER, EDITOR OF THE "CHRISTIAN VISITOR."

As reported by G. H. Wallace, Esq., the Sussex Correspondent of the St. John Daily Telegraph.

The re-opening of the Sussex Baptist Church took place on Sunday, the Rev. Mr. Hopper, editor of the CHRISTIAN VISITOR, preaching in the morning and evening. This church, which may be considered the pioneer church in these parts, having received a thorough overhauling, is now amongst the finest in the place. It is somewhat remarkable that Mr. Hopper should be present on this occasion, as he was, your correspondent believes, the first Baptist minister that preached here in connection with this church, and to-day its original founder must have felt more than glad at the success that has been met with. In the morning the attendance was quite large.

The Sermon.

The preacher took for his text Nehemiah, 2nd chap. and part of 17th verse: "Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach."

INTRODUCTORY.

Some three and twenty centuries, said the preacher, have unfolded their history since the Persian Empire, at the summit of power, extended from Egypt to India. The world renowned cities of Memphis, Babylon, Tyre and Sidon shorn of their regal splendour, paid tribute to the successors of Cyrus the Great. In the Persian capital was concentrated the magnificence of the world. Artaxerxes was supreme ruler, and servants from every land did his bidding. A young Israelite, Nehemiah, had secured the royal favor and lived amidst the splendour of this eastern court. One day he heard of the sad condition of his fatherland and the ruin of its solemnities. He mourned and wept before God. The King discovered his grief and, at his urgent solicitation, gave him permission to return to Jerusalem and seek its welfare. He found everything in as sad a state as he feared. A foreign people were within the walls of the sacred city, and the unfinished temple was a ruin. His soul was filled with bitterness, but he determined to right the difficulty, and calling upon his disheartened countrymen he exhorts them, "Come and let us build up the walls of Jerusalem."

COMPARISONS.

Jerusalem was the earthly centre of every Jew's religious interest. The church of Jesus Christ shares equally the affection of every child of God. To it his thoughts turn. For it his prayers ascend, and with all the impassioned earnestness of the Psalmist, he says: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning! If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

And just as Jerusalem was in a down-trodden state, and her enemies held her in derision, so now Christianity, if not down-trodden, has certainly a multitude of opposers, and the church of Jesus Christ founded for the conservation of the truths and ordinances of God is disesteemed by many of her professed friends and ridiculed by her enemies. And just as Nehemiah lived in the day of the literal sorrow of his fatherland, so we live in the day when we are, perhaps, called upon to encounter the fiercest and most deadly opposition to the church that has ever been witnessed. We do well not to underestimate the difficulties arrayed against us, they are truly formidable for they are varied and adapted to ensnare our youths by their seductiveness and specious plausibility.

TACTICS OF THE ENEMIES OF THE GOSPEL.

The enemies of Jesus Christ represent Christianity as a system aged and effete, as having served its day, and as now being thrown aside, as a child approaching manhood casts away his toys and boyish sports. Such is the assumption, but facts are sadly at war with it. There are difficulties also within. Some make too much of ordinances; some too little; some substitute for doctrines the commandments of men. These difficulties with which we have to contend should lead us more closely to study the Word of Truth and know by experience the way of the Lord. The lives of God's ancient servants abound with useful lessons. Our lasting prosperity will depend upon the fidelity with which we hold the Truth, not only in theory but in practice.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE TIMES.

1st. The example of Nehemiah should cause us sorrow in view of the low state of

religion in our midst. He said "Jerusalem is laid waste." The Psalmist said "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." Jesus Christ's people and His cause are so essentially one that when one suffers the other must sympathize and suffer. If the fair name of Christianity is maligned, if it is wounded by professed-friends, we should be sorrowful with a manly sorrow. By this I mean that it should not be merely sentimental, poetic, short lived, but intelligent, absorbing, practical and faithful, such as Nehemiah's; such as Paul's at Athens; such as was Knox's sorrow for Scotland. Here Knox's firmness in withstanding difficulties in Scotland was very graphically described. Every day life shows to what an extent the interests of the church absorb our time, thoughts, means, prayers and entreaties. The littleness of our work betrays the character of our sorrow.

2nd. Nehemiah accused himself and his fellows of sin before God. It is an easy thing to accuse the age, to paint declension and death. It is easy to mutilate and tear down—to daub a splendid picture, to deface works of art, etc., but how to gather materials and build up is vastly more difficult. Oftentimes a person settles down into a complaining mood in order to shirk his responsibilities. No amount of complaining will build up God's Kingdom. Our Lord complained but little, and who had so much right to complain much? He busied Himself with those teachings and acts that tended to build up His Kingdom. Men, to-day, will be found indulging in chronic complaint who lightly estimate human responsibility. Effort within the province God has assigned to it will make us cheerful, because we shall see His blessing accompany it. We ourselves are largely to blame for the low state of religion concerning which we complain. "Sin lieth at our door" was God's word to Cain. If we would have a better state of things we must fully realize our obligations to God and our short-comings.

We have not prayed as Nehemiah did bringing the sin home to our own door, or as the Canaanitish woman for her daughter, or as Paul for his kinsmen according to the flesh. "I could wish that myself were accursed from God," etc. When thus we feel and pray, Zion shall be built up.

Nehemiah made sacrifice for the cause of God. He left Shushan. So God has ever called His servants to sacrifice. To Abram He said: "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred." David would not offer unto the Lord that which cost him nothing. Our religion becomes a blessed thing to us when it touches and tightens upon us in every realm of our nature and resources. We are not apt to prize that that comes easily. God has arranged that through hardships we shall be blessed and that after the toils of life every tongue shall find sweet employ in the eternal world of joy.

Our children are dear to us for we have had care, sleepless nights and toilsome days to provide for their wants. Our religion will be dearer to us when it not only touches but fastens upon us, when it takes our time in planning, our means in sacrificing, our tears in sorrowing, and our joys in blessed hope of the coming of the Lord. When the Lord's people feel the pressure of the sins of men, and bear them to Gethsemane for sorrow, and to Calvary for sacrifice, then shall the Lord Himself see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

4th. Nehemiah showed great faith. Before him were great obstacles. With him were little resources. Against him were forbidding precedents; Zerubbabel and Ezra had failed some thirteen years previously. Yet he went to work. The enemies were put to shame. The material was forthcoming. The men were in abundance. The temple began to rise in beauty. And in the end the house of the Lord was completed and the praises of Jehovah resounded within its walls.

Before us there are great obstacles to be overcome. The carnal mind is enmity against God. The worldly spirit is opposed, and Satan goes about as a roaring lion. With us are little resources, and yet great because God is with us. Against us there may be precedents which in their baneful influence cast their dark shadow over us. But if we go forth in the name of our God, working only to glorify him the spiritual house shall arise and the top stone be added with shoutings of grace, grace unto it.

As Christians we are often full of distress when we ought to be at work. We may be praying when we should be marching forward. Occupy till I come, is the Lord's command, and the pattern of the occupancy is the life of Christ.

Obedience is ours; success is God's. God effects His plans through our obedience. Let us have a strong faith in God, and that faith more beautifully illustrated in works worthy of our Great Master.

Do we mourn over the desolations of Zion? Have we faith in God that a better state of things can be inaugurated? Are we willing each to bring his gift and labor over against his own house? If so, Zion shall arise built upon the foundation of Christ and His apostles and the song shall swell forth: "Rejoice O earth and ye heavens burst forth into songs of triumph, for the Lord has visited His people. Say to the daughter of Zion, lo! thy God reigns and all nations shall serve Him forever." Reference was made to the faith of a talented missionary amongst the Teloo-good, and to the massacre at Cabul. The Rev. gentleman also made allusion to the growth of the church in this place. It was about 15 years ago when he was present at its inauguration and he paid a touching tribute to the goodness of Mrs. Charles T. White and Henry Hayward, who he said had gone before, but their usefulness would long be felt. He urged the members to press forward, in a strain that caused many to weep at his well told peroration.

The sermon was very eloquent and effective.

In the evening Mr. Hopper again preached to a crowded house.

The sermon was one containing much practical information and was attentively listened to. The people highly appreciate Mr. Hopper's services. Much credit is also due to Messrs. Jas. Titus, John S. Trites, Chas. T. White and other members for the improvements that have been made in this church as well as for its successful working. With a good church, a good choir and a faithful minister, good results are expected under the Divine blessing.

SUSSEX, Nov. 17.

Wine at the Supper.

It would seem difficult to put the matter more fairly and conclusively than is done by the following, which we cut from the Evangelist:

Shall we give up the use of wine such as was used in the days of old, and by our Divine Master, at the table of the Lord? And especially have the officers of the church a right, without the vote of the body, to substitute unfermented wine in the administration of that ordinance?

1. We have—as our readers very well know—ourselves no doubt that the wine which the Saviour employed at the institution of the Supper (as that which he created from water at the wedding at Cana), was fermented wine: and we have no doubt, whatever that the enlightened Christianity and scholarship of the future will agree in affirming such to be the fact.

2. Such, and so great, has become the adulteration of what are called the "wines" of the present day, that we regard it as beyond the limits of possibility for our churches now to supply themselves with a pure fermented grape juice wine, such as that of Palestine in our Lord's time.

3. What are known and sold in these days as "wines" (which are largely alcoholic as well as fermented) are clearly not an equivalent for that Palestine beverage, besides being open to objection, in themselves, as harmful, and, to many full of temptation.

4. All of which seems to be required for literal compliance with the (implied) statute of the Supper, is that what is drunk be the "fruit of the vine."

5. Under these circumstances—since anything called "wine" which cannot be bought of the wine merchant is not only not that which Christ and his disciples used, but is saturated with an alcoholic poison which had not been discovered when he was on the earth; and since unfermented liquor which is known to be the "fruit of the vine," and which contains none of this poison can be had—we believe and have often said, that it is a reverent and suitable, and therefore (in many cases and places, at least) an expedient thing to employ unfermented grape juice for sacramental purposes. It surely comes much more nearly to being the "fruit of the vine" in a fair and honorable sense, than do those decoctions of alcohol, logwood, and we know not what abominations besides, which are apt to be sold under the name of wine.

6. Usually however, (and surely in all cases where there is a decided difference of opinion and preference), such use should be settled by the vote of the church, and not the will of its officers.

The rite of Christian baptism, if it be a rite, is confessedly the chief ordinance of the gospel. Nowhere does the Saviour assert, "He that believes and partakes of my Supper shall be saved." Nor does Peter ever urge sinners to "repent and receive the Holy Communion upon the name of Jesus Christ, unto remission of sins." Nowhere is the doctrine of the Lord's Supper declared to be, as is "the doctrine of baptism," a foundation principle of the gospel of Christ. Before, then, we accept a "theory" which influences this great ordinance of Christ out of the New Testament, we may well pause, and meanwhile listen to a few thoughtful words from Henry Alford's comments on "the great commission" (Matt. xxviii 19). "As regards the command itself (baptizantes), no unprejudiced reader can doubt that it regarded the outward rite of baptism so well known in this gospel as having been practiced by John, and received by the Lord himself. And thus it was immediately, and has been ever since, understood by the church. As regards all attempts to explain away this sense, we may say,—even setting aside the testimony furnished by the Acts of the Apostles,—that it is in the highest degree improbable that our Lord should have given, at a time when he was summing up the duties of his church in such weighty words, a command couched in figurative or ambiguous language; one which he must have known would be interpreted by his disciples, now long accustomed to the rite and its name, otherwise than he intended it." It would appear that this distinguished commentator was utterly ignorant of the now asserted fact, that the water-rite of John was not a baptism!—"Studies on Baptism," by Rev. D. B. Ford.]

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