

The Christian Visitor,

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NOTICE.

To Correspondents, Subscribers and Others.

Items of Religious Intelligence are solicited from all parts of the world; also, communications upon other subjects of interest, especially educational, social, and industrial topics. Correspondents should write upon only one side of the paper, and make their letters as brief as the facts and circumstances will permit. As a rule, all matter to ensure being published the week of issue, should reach us not later than Monday noon.

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The Christian Visitor.

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CATECHISMS WON'T GROW AMONG BAPTISTS.

In theory the Baptists of these provinces have not only favoured the making of Catechisms, but practical steps have been taken to reduce the theory of practice. A very general public sentiment has been awakened and formed in favour of their use in our households and Sunday-schools, but notwithstanding the discussion in the newspapers and at associations we are still doing our work without the help of Baptist Catechisms. Even among Presbyterians, if our judgment is right, the place held by this instrumentality has been to some extent lost.

Why have not the reasonable efforts made by Baptists to make Catechisms serve their purpose been successful? In judgment they have been convinced that it was a just means to a good and desirable end, but some unseen power has resulted in defeating them. What has been the cause of the failure? Had the demand been a real one, growing out of the word of the Lord and in harmony with the genius of the Baptist faith, enough has been done to fill our homes with a work of this kind. We shall assume that it is not natural for Baptists to employ a Catechism as a means of advocating and advancing their doctrines and piety. Our impressions in respect to this subject are received from the following considerations:—The Bible ignores all system in its revelation of doctrine and duty. If we look for what are called the doctrines of revelation they will be found throughout the entire Scriptures. Every form and phase of moral truth are also found without order from Genesis to the Revelation. Over all these pages are scattered the revealed attributes and perfections of Deity, but they are never given as abstract truths but are found connected with God's practical dealings with the children of men. The principles of God's government are seen in his treatment of men and nations. The devotional instruction also of the Scriptures is found rather in illustrations than in abstract rules. In fact the Scripture mirrors human life. We see there the perfection of evil and the perfection of good—absolute wickedness and absolute holiness. In the biographies and histories every phase of moral conduct is presented to the reader. God is seen dealing with individuals and communities in every condition and in all surroundings possible in life. A natural reading and studying of the Bible brings one face to face with his Maker and one has only to look about him to see the treatment that he is sure to receive under the divine government. Principles and precepts are found in what God has said and done to men and women who have lived before us. A knowledge of doctrine and morality, gained by a study of the sacred Scriptures, is vitalized and wrought

into the spirit and life as it could not be were it obtained by questions and answers set high and dry in a Catechism. Doctrines and precepts, taken from their warm and natural surroundings given to them by inspired writers, are better adapted in their systematized order for the intellect than for the heart. Baptist doctrines when culled from the word of the Lord where they should be read and studied prove to be too dry and too cold for those who make the preparation. They may enlighten the minds but they do but little to warm and refresh the heart. Catechisms will not grow in Baptist gardens. More says:—"God has not made Scripture like a garden, where the fruits are ripe and the flowers bloom, and all things are fully exposed to our view; but like a field, where we have the ground and seeds of all precious things, but where nothing can be brought to maturity without our industry; nor then, without the dew of heavenly grace." "I find in the Bible," says Cecil, "a grand peculiarity that seems to say to all who attempt to systematize it, I am not of your kind, I stand alone. The great and the wise shall never exhaust my treasures; by figures and parables I will come down to the feelings and understandings of the ignorant. Leave me as I am, but study me incessantly."

THE TREND OF PRAYER BOOKS AND RITUALS.

No desire for a prayer book so far as we know has ever settled itself in the Baptist heart. In only a few instances have we known of attempts to add to the simple forms now used in our churches. In this case it is good to let well enough alone. The slightest beginnings might lead to forms which would have a deadening effect on our church life. The prayer book and its ritual has in the Roman Catholic church ruled the Bible out of court. The people are encouraged to refrain from the study of the word of God, and to satisfy themselves with the contents of their prescribed service and the instruction of the priesthood. In this case a printed and acknowledged service has borne ripe fruit. Had the prayers and services found in this book been in perfect accord with the Scriptures then it is fair to say that the results would not have been what they are. We wish we could illustrate this by a reference to the prayer books of the Episcopal churches; but we can not do it because they contain the seeds of Romanism. If, however, these books were purged of their heretical elements, their tendency would be in the wrong direction. God knew what was in man when he caused the Bible to be written as it is; and Christ knew what was in man when he gave his simple forms of worship to the New Testament churches. The Bible and the ministration of the Bible by men called for that purpose, and worship in prayers, exhortations, psalms, hymns, spiritual songs and the simple ordinances of the gospel are the sum total of the provisions made by the authors of religion for public worship. All this is in perfect harmony with the forms and relations in which Scriptural truths are found. They seem to be the spontaneous outgrowth of the divine word. They are no substitute for it, they in no way hinder it, they are rather the natural channels through which the word of God finds its way into the hearts and lives of the children of men. But so soon as a prayer book and a ritual are made the idea of supplementing or improving God's arrangement is suggested. In practice it is found that this book of human origin, even though it should contain nothing contradictory to the Scriptures, gets in the way or in the place of the Scriptures. It gets between the Christian and the Christian's Bible. In practice it is known to repress the unction of public worship, and to lessen the familiarity and knowledge of the holy Bible. My prayer book and my Bible is the order it takes in the sympathies of those trained to its use. A ritual leads to ritualism and a prayer book tends to formality. The trend of the ritual is in the wrong direction.

BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY.

Last week we published evidence of the rejection of the overtures of the British and Foreign Bible Society by the Missionary Conference of Calcutta, India. This week we have a further instalment of rejection. The missionaries in Bengal and Burmah decline the compromise proposition of the British and Foreign Bible Society, to transfer baptismal words in the translation of the Scripture into Foreign tongues and put in the margin the note, "Some translate immerse." They say that is "tantamount to a request to come out from an impregnable position, the strength of which is becoming daily more manifest, to accept—practically nothing."

The few Baptists in this country who give to the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the smaller number of Baptist ministers who will consent to appear on its platform while it deals so unjustly with Baptist translations, will now have to confront the fact that Baptist missionaries will not consent to compromise measures even if some in the home land do.

There is now a loud and imperative call coming from our missionaries in Teluguland for the word of God. They do not want the compromise version circulated by the British and Foreign Society. They wish what they consider the purer version of Dr. Jewett. Shall we say, no, to them. You must accept the compromise version of the British and Foreign Bible Society. We have given our funds and advocacy to it. We much misjudge our people if any such message is sent to Teluguland. We believe when the facts are known that Baptists will save their dollars for their own Bible work. Several brethren have already expressed a desire that some plan be devised by our Missionary Board by which every year a general canvass of our churches will be made at the time the British and Foreign Bible Society make their appeal. There are some Baptists who think when they give a dollar to the British and Foreign Bible Society that some how it works its way to our missionaries. Let them be undeceived from henceforth. Neither Dr. Carey's nor Dr. Judson's, nor any other Baptist translation receives a dime from the British and Foreign Bible Society. All its contributions go to the support of its compromise versions which our missionaries say they cannot in conscience circulate while they have faithful versions made by their brethren that do not shun to declare the whole council of God.

CONDENSED SACRED HISTORY.

The tenth chapter of the Genesis contains thirty-two verses. Into these thirty-two verses are compressed volumes of history. Here we have the account of Noah's three sons and their descendants—the only account which has come down to us from the old world—the account of the founding of a mighty kingdom and the building of eight cities.

The learned have been accustomed to apply all kinds of tests to every word of this brief chapter. Antiquarians, linguists, historians and theologians have examined its every word and every letter. The result is babel-confusion; but that short chapter stands, and there it is likely to stand. It is going into every language of the earth, and demanding acceptance of the whole world. Much speech and many books have been employed for and against the truthfulness of these words. There however they remain, the names of men, tribes, places and cities.

The inspired writer begins by making the last first:—Japheth is introduced with his seven sons: Gomer, one of the seven, has three sons: Javan, another of the seven, has four sons: with these names ethnologists go in search of the people of Western Asia and Europe—Greeks, Romans, Germans, French, English, Welsh, Scotch and Irish. "From these," the Bible says, "were overspread the coasts of the Gentiles, in their lands, each according to his tongue, according to their families, in their nations."

Then comes Ham with his four sons: Cush, one of the four, has six

sons; Raamah, one of these six, begat two sons: Nimrod, another of the six, is a noted adventurer, a mighty hunter. In him seems to be concentrated the bravery, the daring and the enterprise of the new race of man. He aimed at nothing less than a kingdom. Eight great cities, including Babylon and Ninevah, rose as a substantial part of it.

Mizraim, another of Ham's four sons, was the ancestor of seven distinct tribes: Canaan, another of the four, and the fourth in order, and the one on whose head Noah, after awaking from his drunken sleep, pronounced a curse, became the father of eleven tribes, some of which appear in the subsequent history of God's people. They occupied the land of Canaan, spreading east as far as Sodom and Gomorrah.

At this point Shem and his descendants are introduced. Shem has five sons: Aram, the last of the five, begat four sons, Arphaxad, another of the five, had one son—Salah. Eber was Salah's son. To Eber were born two sons, Peleg and Joktan. Joktan had twelve sons. Ham then appears to have scattered his seed over the East and West and into Africa. Shem flowed toward the South and into a region of country about the upper waters of the Tigris and Euphrates.

The Hamites, and the descendants of Japheth and most of the seed of Shem are here dismissed. Here is the connecting link with the peoples whose names are dropped. Thus they stand—Shem, Arphaxad, Salah, Eber and Peleg.

These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations. And from these were the nations spread abroad in the earth, after the flood.

God might have caused the history of these peoples to have been written, and preserved to world their languages and geographical limits; but it must be kept in mind that secular learning and science are not ends contemplated by revelation. The object of God's revealed will is the communication and development of the plan of redemption. History, geography, language, and all other branches of human knowledge are tributary to this great end. Where they help, they are used, where they would have been useless, they are not found. The fall of man and his deliverance through Christ are ever kept in view. In selecting the material through which to communicate the facts and principles, necessary to a right understanding of the divine plan, God consults no created being. He chose the time, the men and the means for carrying out this purpose. The doctrines and facts of Scripture are liberally criticised even to this day. There is at present boastful ciphering going on to prove the dates of Scripture untrue. One after another comes out with his chronological table, and requests the world to accept it, and reject the one found in Scripture. But their testimony, like that of the witnesses suborned at the trial of Christ, do not agree. The critics war among themselves, and the word of the Lord stands sure.

In the case of Noah, the reason for choosing him, out of all the living at that time, is very apparent. He was a just man, a man who walked with God and preached righteousness. All the world had departed from the right way, therefore the reason for selecting Noah was evident; but why did God pass over the sons of Ham and Japheth and select a certain son of Shem as the man to whose descendants He would commit His revelations and around whom He would throw the shield of His protection? Here we face the inscrutable mystery of God's sovereignty. But we know that the judge of all the earth does right. His plans are all laid and executed in wisdom, mercy and love. Even so Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight. Through this catalogue of names we thread our way, and find ourselves at last led to the ancestral line of Christ. His pedigree, according to the flesh, is traced. These are the preliminaries for the advent of the Son of God. Every generation brings the fullness of time nearer. What is a name in these old lists? It may be the name of one of the Saviour's ancestors. Let not even a name be despised.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

THE *Independent* says, "Once more the Baptists are leading American scholars in studies connected with Biblical archaeology."

DR. JOHN HALL recently stated that the churches of New York city cost \$3,000,000 a year, its amusements \$7,000,000, and its police, courts, etc., \$13,000,000.

THE Harvard University services on Sunday are now held in the evening, and ministers of different denominations preach. The daily morning prayers are limited to twelve minutes for the whole service.

THE effort to raise \$300,000, for the Chicago Theological Seminary has been successful, through the generosity of Mr. J. A. Bostwick and other friends in New York, who supplied the deficiency of over \$16,000.

WM. H. VANDERBILT OWNS \$47,050,000 in United States registered four per cent. bonds, a draft for the interest on which is mailed to him quarterly from the Treasury. The interest on these bonds amounts to \$1,882,000.

ONE of the wise and kind things Captain Ebenezer Morgan has done has been to offer one hundred dollars to any Baptist church in Connecticut that will provide a parsonage free of debt. He has been made happy by being called on for his money in several cases.

LONDON papers report that King Thebaw, of Burmah, has reformed. Till lately he has been remarkable for his intemperance and cruelty. It is said among the more enlightened men of his kingdom there is a growing loyalty to him. It is to be hoped his reformation is permanent.

On Sunday morning a "stranger" who visited the new Calvary Baptist church, New York, told Dr. MacArthur he would contribute five thousand dollars toward the debt on the edifice. At this rate this splendid building is sure not to be "ornamented" with a mortgage.

THE Germans have been engaged in discussing the question of Bible revision. It is not true that Luther's was the first translation. A revision of the New Testament was begun in 1865 and completed in 1870. Then a committee was appointed to revise the Old Testament. Their work has been so far done as to put it before the public, but not in its final form.

SOME distinguished person from the United States has been visiting Toronto. In writing to *The Examiner* he says:—"It must not be allowed to detract from others, when it is said that Dr. McVicar is a most extraordinary teacher. A better one than he, in whatever he teaches, probably cannot be found in Canada, or in the States. God has wonderfully endowed him with teaching ability."

THE *Christian Messenger* quoting from *The Watchman* says "the idea of a miscellaneous headship of a newspaper is not well sustained by experience;" and again, quoting from the *New York Evening Post*, says, "a newspaper must have one responsible editor, and only one, who shall conduct the debates as to its policy in the secret chambers of his own interior consciousness." We think, judging from some deliverances, there must be funny debates in some "Secret Chambers." At least two editors are better than one.

It has been supposed that society in the United States is free from the distinctions so common in the old country. It is just now however greatly exercised over the question of precedence. It appears that custom has given the lady who receives visitors with the President on New Year's day precedence over all others for the year. President Arthur elected Mrs. Carlisle, wife of the speaker of the House to that position this year. Now there is a flutter among the wives of the cabinet officers and of the justices of the supreme court. They are not disposed to yield the first place to Mrs. Carlisle. Hot words and heart-burnings are the result. The trouble everywhere is who shall be the greatest.

Advance payments lift a heavy load from the shoulders of the "Visitor" proprietor.

OBITUARY.

At Manchester, England, on Dec. 8th, Mrs. Captain Arthur Nobles, aged 28 years. The deceased professed religion a little over a year ago and was baptized upon a profession of her faith by the Rev. J. B. Hopper, and united with the Brussels Street Baptist Church. At the time of her baptism she was greatly reduced by the disease of which she died—consumption. Her desire to obey the Lord was supreme and her obedience was blessed to her spiritual comfort. She was a happy Christian and bore her sufferings with a sense of dependence on the Lord Jesus, her all sufficient helper. She wished to end her days in the old home, and with wonderful bravery bore up against the advances of disease and made the journey to England. She will be remembered by many as a devout and patient follower of the Master, for whom is reserved the joys of the First Resurrection.

For the Visitor.

BIBLE SOCIETIES.

BY REV. W. J. STEWART.

One of the most important questions now before the minds of the Baptist people is the publication and circulation of sacred scriptures throughout the entire world. In order to show up why this is a matter particularly concerning the Baptist denomination, it will be necessary for me to review the history of Bible Societies. To England belongs the credit of originating the present system of circulating the Bible throughout the world. Like all other great enterprises, it had a small beginning. In the year 1780, a little more than a century ago, a society was formed in England called "The Bible Society," the object of which was to distribute Bibles among soldiers and sailors. And it will be not a little interesting to know that the first distribution of Bibles made by this society was on board the ill-fated *Royal George*. This society, although doing excellent work in its own line, was soon found to be insufficient to meet the demands for the Word of God. In the year 1802 a deep impression was made on the mind of Rev. Thomas Charles, of Bala, in Wales, by the destitution of the sacred scriptures everywhere he went. Mr. Charles relates a very interesting anecdote which illustrates the destitution of Bibles in Wales. Meeting a girl in one of the streets he enquired if she could repeat the text from which he preached on Sunday. She hesitated a moment, then bursting into tears, said: "It has been so rainy this week that I have not been able to go and hear the Bible read." She told him on further enquiry, that she, with many others, were accustomed to go seven miles to hear the Bible read. Only one Bible in seven miles. This wrought deeply upon the good man's mind, and he resolved that something must be done to supply this distressing want in Wales. He at once set out for London, brought the matter immediately before the Religious Tract Society, and urged upon them to do something for Wales. Rev. Joseph Hughes, a prominent Baptist Minister in London, and member of the Tract Society rose up in one of their meetings and said: "Let us give the Bible to Wales and to the world." On the suggestion made by that Baptist man, the British and Foreign Bible Society was formed. Article 3 of that Society originally read as follows:—"The exclusive object of this Society is to diffuse a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures by circulating them in the different languages spoken throughout Great Britain and Ireland, and also, according to the extent of the funds by promoting the printing of them in foreign languages, and in the distribution of them in foreign countries." The first year the society spent £600 in printing and distributing the Word of God among the poor. Soon, however, contributions poured in from all parts of the Christian world until the annual receipts now amount to over £200,000 and the Society's issue of Bibles annually amounts to over 2,000,000 copies. Auxiliary societies sprang up in England and the colonies, which amount to over 6000. The