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The Evolution of the Religious Reformation

A Reply to the Reviews By Wren J. Grinstead.

No. 2.

3. THE EDITORIAL REVIEW IN THE CHRISTIAN OF OCT. 8.

This is not so much a criticism of the essay as it is a separate and parallel article upon the general themes presented in the essay, to whose argument it is occasionally tangent. In the main, it is not hostile; though issue is here and there taken with what it conceives to be the essayist's positions. After approving the purpose of the essay, and its adaptation to that purpose, the review expresses agreement with the essayist's conception of the church. It comments:

"The ecclesiastical idea of unity is of a cast-iron kind that is destructive of true liberty. . . . The unity of which we have dreamed, and which the Scriptures contemplate, is not of this kind. It is rather a unity of thought in relation to the fundamental truths of Christianity. And this unity of thought is best expressed and maintained in the congregational idea, which does not exclude but rather demands that unity shall reach its perfect flower in co-operative effort for the evangelising and uplifting of the world."

This is a lucid and felicitous statement of the ideal of the essay; and the essayist is constrained to add, that those points in which he criticises his brethren are points in which he thinks they are unscripturally and unnecessarily marring this ideal.

The reviewer next takes up and criticises the scientific principle which the essayist makes the basis of his warning. In common with some of the other critics, he seems to think it was used merely as an illustrative analogy, and suggests that reversion to type would be a more apt illustration. But it was not illustration that the essayist sought

in his choice of a theme—it was the literal exemplification of a principle. The essayist by no means endorsed the early Darwinian view of natural selection, nor accepted it as accounting for all changes in organisms. He only endorsed it so far as it sets forth the alternative—that decline and ultimate extinction is the lot of any community which cannot or does not meet the exigencies of environment. It should be noted too that the terms here used are no longer confined to biology—they are quite as much applied to-day in history and religion. Of course the introduction of a supernatural element may effect the preservation of a race or community in apparent defiance of this law, as in the case of the Jews; but the facts of prophecy and history in connection with them so manifestly point to divine interposition in that case that their excepting only confirms the rule by emphasising the necessity for such divine interference if the rule is to be evaded. Now in the case of the church as a whole, God has promised preservation in spite of nature; but in the case of us as a religious movement (since we certainly are not the whole church, else where were the Baptists, immersed Methodists, and such, to say the least of it?) he has made no such promise. Hence we cannot expect to escape this law, and the third alternative, which the reviewer says was overlooked by the essayist, does not exist.

But this anticipates. The reviewer summarises the essay in a way which is not unfair, but which misses the point. He says: "The special environment of the churches of Christ in this case is made up of the various denominations by which they are surrounded." Not so. It is the entire religious and non-religious world, in which these denominations

THE AUSTRAL PUBLISHING CO
... 528 · ELIZABETH STREET · ... MELBOURNE ...

are only an important element. Current social and political ideas, altogether ignored and often denied by many of the denominations, but tending to their disintegration, and to the establishment of religious democracy, are great factors as well. The reviewer seems to exaggerate, too, the extent to which the essayist would be willing to see the peculiarities of individuals and congregations preserved in their coming to our position. The essay commended this process so far as it has been exemplified in America, but no farther. There it has always included the surrender of sprinkling, infant baptism, and open membership. With these modifications, the statement of the essay's argument is correct.

In the next paragraph the reviewer labors under two handicaps. He contends against scientific facts for his imaginary third alternative; and he seems to have put "conformity" into the essayist's mouth instead of "adaptation." He says: "The 'broad and catholic movement' advocated must have a more solid foundation than some fancied analogy in nature." This is true. The foundation must be the expressed will of God; and, as already shown, this necessity is distinctly and unequivocally recognised at the proper point in the essay. Farther on he says: "Adaptation to environment or to the times seems a strange argument to use in connection with a reformation movement." If the reviewer had consulted a dictionary, *sub* "adaptation" and "conformity," he would have been spared the utterance of this pointless and misleading sentence, and would probably have omitted most of this paragraph. Again, he says: "If Jesus Christ had adapted himself to the times, he would not have been crucified"; and the next sentence shows that, in the reviewer's mind, an element of this "adaptation" would have been "pleasing the religious teachers of his day." But that would have been conformity, not adaptation. Jesus did not conform himself to anything that was evil in his day; nor should we. But he did adapt himself—that is, he furnished in his person and office precisely what the world needed, and he made every effort to present himself in the most acceptable light to all earnest seekers after truth. Again: "He (Jesus) elected to perish." This is news. The essayist has always been under the impression that Jesus did not perish—that he still lives and reigns. Further, the reviewer says (what seems meant for a correction of the essay, but what is really its exact position): "The question to be settled here is not one that can be determined by our essayist or by the practice of our American brethren, or by anything that we may say, but it is one that can be settled by the clearly expressed will of the Holy Spirit himself." The Holy Spirit has explicitly sanctioned our being all things to all men—that is, our disregarding our private views, except such as are explicitly laid upon us by Christ himself, in order to disarm prejudice and win as many as possible.

What the reviewer adds concerning the Scriptural basis of unity is good; and if the essay had intended to discuss that phase of the question, it could have included nothing better than the quotation and most of the comment of the review. The reviewer states

the essayist's position exactly in these words: "To insure this end (the restoration of baptism and general unity), it is urged that the practice of 'open communion' should be adopted—that thus by the free interchange of thought the Scriptural idea might be made to prevail." But the reviewer dissents thus: "Viewed merely as a matter of policy, experience has shown us that the idea is not workable." This statement is hardly borne out by the facts. Open communion, as divorced from open membership, has never been given a thorough trial in Australia: so that no conclusion can be drawn from experience here. But it has been given a thorough trial in America—so much so that it has in most places constituted the crowning triumph of the disciples over the Baptists, until the latter have been driven to a virtual surrender, and the two bodies are now just at the point of fusion upon the apostolic basis of open communion and "close" membership. This position has also won the respectful attention of the religious world, so that the accession from paedobaptist bodies of reputable preachers by the dozen, and of an occasional congregation, is constantly reported. In spite of this large influx of divergent elements, *not one of our ten thousand churches makes any compromise of apostolic baptism as a condition of membership*; yet a free exchange of pulpits with Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists is the rule. Does this look as if "the idea is not workable"? We would heartily endorse and emphasise the following conclusion to the review:

"We will not make our influence greater by agreeing to be silent in regard to our views of Scripture truth, while they on their part claim and exercise untrammelled speech in their presentation of the claims and conditions of the gospel. If we are true to our Master and to his teachings, and true to ourselves, the day is not far distant when we shall not only deserve respect, but command it."

4. J. PITTMAN'S REVIEW.

This reviewer's criticism is chiefly based upon a misunderstanding of the essay. In fact he seems hardly to have grasped the essay at all; and he seems to be very much at sea as to what he himself is trying to say. He reminds one very much of the old darky's dogs, that "smelled somfin', but couldn't ezac'ly locate it." In this, however, he is not alone amongst the reviewers. His first criticism has been answered in the first section of this reply. In his second, he apprehends an "unprofitable confusion of tongues" as the result of pulpit exchange. But this confusion of tongues might just as reasonably result from the exchange of pulpits now practised within the brotherhood, since every speaker must preach the Scriptures as he understands them, and no two understand them exactly alike. The present suppression of this "confusion of tongues" is due to the "care of the legitimate overseers"; and the extension of this care, with increased tact and caution, would prevent the confusion in the wider field proposed—just as it does in America, where the practice is followed.

The reviewer objects to the "unscriptural use of the term *church*." He is shocked at

the idea that "these denominations, with all their errors of doctrine and practice, divided and antagonistic," should receive in the essay the terms which the Scriptures apply to the church; and in the excess of his horror he declares that this usage "is nothing less than monstrous and utterly foreign to the teaching of the Book." If our brother had recovered from his hysterics before penning the question "Is there the ghostly shadow of such a church or body of Christ in the New Testament?" it might have occurred to him that there is—perhaps not the ghostly shadow, but certainly the substance of such a church in that at Corinth, to which he immediately afterward refers. The members of this church were *not* "united in sympathy, harmony and co-operation," as the reviewer states, but were divided (1 Cor. 1: 11, 12) and carnal (3: 3). They were tolerating fornication (5: 1), brethren were going to law with brethren (6: 1), the strong were disregarding the consciences of the weak (8: 12), the Lord's Supper itself was shamefully perverted and made a cause of division (11: 17, 22), and the very teaching of the apostles on one of the fundamental facts of Christianity was disregarded and nullified (15: 12). Yet this church, "with all its errors of doctrine and practice, divided and antagonistic," is called by the apostle "the church of God" (1: 2)! The essayist is quite content to be in Paul's company here, at the risk of exciting the reviewer's horror; especially when the following terms are added: "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1: 2), "called into the fellowship of Jesus Christ our Lord" (1: 9), "God's husbandry, God's building" (3: 9), and "a temple of God" (3: 16).

The reviewer is thanked for this assurance: "I do not for a moment think that our essayist means to suggest this" (a sacrifice of principle). If he thinks however that the essayist's "desire to open his loving arms to all" has led him to overlook principle, or to forget that he might compromise it unwittingly, he has utterly mistaken both the spirit of the essayist and his purpose in the essay. It is a deep-felt conviction that some of the attitudes now assumed by many in the Australian brotherhood are unscriptural and divisive that has induced him to launch the present discussion—not in the least a mere sentimental desire for friendly feeling. Nor should it be imagined that the essayist is an irresponsible free-lance, with nothing at stake. He is a stranger in a strange land, with no human friends in ten thousand miles except those whose good-will and confidence he might have forfeited by taking serious issue with them. In his own land, too, his reputation for success in the ministry will depend upon what the Australian brethren say of him; since his brief experience gives him no past prestige to fall back upon. But all these considerations, involving as they do literally his daily bread, weigh but as a feather in the scale. He would rather lose them all than abate one jot or tittle of what he finds himself required to do and say by the Scriptures and his present duty. He trusts this personal reference will be pardoned as a pertinent vindication of the earnestness and conscientiousness of his purpose. The essayist can hardly gather what the reviewer is trying to say in his next para-

graph. He seems to be dissenting from the position of the essay that we are only a movement in the church, and seems as if he would affirm that we are *the* church. Yet he devotes the paragraph to proving the totally different proposition that we "are as truly churches of Christ as those planted by the apostles." That we are churches of Christ in the New Testament sense, and in that sense only, we gladly agree; but if we are *the* church, what has become (to say the least) of the immersed believers in the other religious bodies?

Finally, "I think the best thing we can do is to love all men and strive by all lawful means to save them and do them good," but *not* "to let the denominations as such alone to look after themselves," since there are thousands in them too good and faithful and earnest to deserve being left in the hands of the harlot Babylon.

5. JOHN T. T. HARDING'S REVIEW.

The essayist approached the reading of this review with some trepidation. The reviewer's ponderous and formidable way of opening the discussion was calculated to command attention, and lead the reader to expect a complete demolition of the essay. The essayist wishes to turn aside for a moment, however, in order to express his thanks to this reviewer, not for any fairness in criticism, but for lending the essayist some apt and well-rounded phrases by which to describe the attitude and style of the review.

Despite the "drag-net general indictment" with which the review "is rhetorically rounded up to a well-balanced conclusion"—despite his poor opinion of the essay's worth, and his conviction that it "cannot hope for success"—he occupies six columns (by far the longest review) in attempting to combat the imaginary fallacies and assumptions of the essay. The calm assurance with which he claims to have read the essay "with the most generous of critical eyes," while not allowing one jot of room for the slightest misreading on his part, and dipping the shafts of his criticism in the poison of innuendo, can find no better epithet than his own—"boundless audacity." With an "absolute and unsubstantiated assertiveness" he attributes motives and implications to the essayist, of which there is not the slightest intimation in the essay; and he carries these "gratuitous assumptions" to the point of omitting precautionary phrases manifestly intended to obviate the very misconceptions into which he falls. The minute and merciless assault which he makes on every portion of the essay, the manner in which he selects the most obnoxious and unintended of all possible meanings from every innocent sentence, and sometimes from no sentence at all, the "attractive assertiveness, which at first sight might pass for strength," with which he pounces upon these men of straw and demolishes them—these things suggest that the review was "conceived and originated in a spirit of unadulterated bigotry," and certainly show that it is "not in any sense worthy of the reputation and ability of its talented author."

Although the most protracted and verbose, this review not only shows the least fairness, but the least discrimination as well. After a

two-column introduction, full of undeserved accusations (to which we will presently revert), the reviewer specifies seven alleged defects in the essay, and says they are "only a few," and are put forth as "samples of the whole." This method of attack is quite common with controversialists whose cause is consciously weak, and it has much more the appearance than the substance of logic. With the exception of the sixth charge (which, the essayist will admit, shows marked ingenuity and originality), these "defects," on close inspection, dwindle to two—ambiguity and dogmatism. For instance, the first "defect" is "absolute and unsubstantiated assertiveness"; the fourth is "the gratuitous assumption of essential premises"; and the seventh is a "want of sympathy with the modes of thought of those to whom it (the essay) appeals," as manifested in the failure to cite Scripture in support of the positions advanced. The essayist is obliged to confess that he fails to perceive the subtle distinction between these alleged defects. To his mind they seem to be merely different ways of charging one and the same thing—dogmatism. The other class of "defects" is handled in precisely identical fashion. The second "defect" is "vague generalities," under which there are two counts; the third is "ambiguity"; and the fifth is "the equivocal position which the essay takes up in respect to the ordinance of baptism." Is the essayist's mind at fault in failing to see anything more than "ambiguity," under different names, in these three charges? The reviewer's logic reminds us of the divisions in the "kid preacher's" argument against infant baptism—that it was "First, unscriptural; second, not found in the Bible; and third, unsupported by the Word of God!" The essayist will not say that the reviewer intended to prejudice the readers unfairly against the essay in thus discovering two "defects" and multiplying them by three; but it certainly would tend to have that effect upon minds not apt at discerning arguments and detecting fallacies. The reviewer is thus guilty of a thoughtless and misleading use of his reputation for discrimination. These two charges of ambiguity and dogmatism have already been refuted in the second section of the reply; so we may now turn to the consideration of minor points in the review.

The reviewer says: "The essayist seems to underestimate the degree of his divergence from the generally entertained views of the brotherhood"—this in comment upon the essayist's avowal of such divergence from "many of the brotherhood." But without dwelling on the fact that there is no numerical specification in "many," the essayist would remind the reviewer that he may have overestimated his own ability and opportunity to know the general views of the brotherhood. The older brethren, and those who have in the past come prominently to the front, have been committed, it is true, to close communion and a restricted platform, and to the preservation of the solidarity of the brotherhood upon these and kindred questions. But this very commitment to solidarity—the confidence with which they have enunciated these arguments, and the care with which they have encouraged the

young men who showed proficiency in them—has made dissent timid about asserting itself in their presence; so that these conservative brethren do not know how far their opinions are shared on these points, and how far they are merely tolerated for the sake of peace. Of all those in the brotherhood from whom the essayist has heard any expression on these points, a vast majority are more in sympathy with his views than against them; and the essayist's name was not associated with any particular view of the matter, to prevent his hearing a full expression of all views. Again, the reviewer need not conclude from the tenor of the other reviews that the sentiment of the brotherhood is against the essayist, since every man who finds his opinions opposed in the essay will feel strongly disposed to take a hand in the discussion; while those who agree with the essayist will, for reasons already stated, hesitate to speak, feeling that he can fight his own battles. The first voices to be raised on behalf of a new departure have always few supporters until men begin to perceive that it will succeed. The general attitude of mankind seems to be: "Don't know him—heave half a brick at him!"

One of the most vicious and unworthy elements of this review is the gratuitous attributing of obnoxious motives to the essayist. He says: "They (the views of the brotherhood) are entitled to be taken into account as *honest* views until the contrary has been established." This remark is quite true; but if it is not absolutely pointless, it means to imply that the essayist has not given his brethren credit for honesty; when the fact is that not one word or line can be pointed out in the essay that could even squint at such an imputation. Again, the reviewer quotes the "catalogue of specified peculiarities" with which the essay described our reputation amongst our religious neighbors, ending with the words: "and the general Ishmaelish air with which we move." But instead of heeding the warning which the essay immediately utters, that "we are not now raising the question of the justice or injustice of our reputation; we are merely noting what it is"—the reviewer omits this sentence, unjustly charges us with bringing an "indictment" against the brotherhood, and says that many "would joyfully plead guilty to the whole series, and then join issue with the essay as to who is to be held responsible for the existence of the peculiarities." But the essay made neither statement or implication as to who is to be held responsible. Although the essayist makes no pretensions to scholarship, he confesses that he would rather be well trained and scholarly than ill-trained and crude-minded; though he implied no slur (God forbid!) at the host of godly and earnest preachers amongst us who have not had the advantages which the American brethren enjoy. He confesses that he likes instrumental music, prefers a handsome chapel to an unsightly one, and would rather sit on a cushion than a bare board. On the other hand, he "pleads guilty" to a feeling of glory in our willingness to pay our own way, in "our marked avoidance of the style of evangelism that Christendom in general accepts," and in the iconoclastic energy which

was termed in the essay "the general Ishmaelistic air with which we move." Where now, O bogie "indictment," is thy sting? The question as to which of these peculiarities are Scriptural and which are not is avowedly not raised here, because it is not the author's purpose in the paragraph or the essay to justify or condemn them *seriatim*. What is not Scriptural, the essayist would certainly have us surrender at once; and what is not condemned by the Scriptures, but not necessitated by them, we should certainly be willing to surrender, if thereby we could the better win attention to our presentation of the essentials of faith in Christ.

Still other examples of the attributing of false motives to the essayist abound in the review. In discussing what he mistakenly conceives to be the essay's attitude on baptism, he says: "Some care is taken to show that there are two ways in which uniformity may be reached"—and quotes the essay at length in substantiation. Well, are there not two ways? Would not sprinkling be a uniform practice if all adopted it? and would not immersion be a uniform practice if all adopted it? The essay expressly limited the dilemma to the one point of uniformity by saying that it could be obtained either way, "so far as the immediate point is concerned." But the reviewer does the essayist a great injustice in the following words: "The one thing advocated is a uniform practice; so that this goal be reached, the form of the practice seems to be a matter of indifference." This is a total misreading of the essay. It does not even *seem* to be a matter of indifference, except to those who read the essay, as this reviewer appears to have done, with a hawk's eye for faults, but a mole's for clear and candid statements. That the form is *not* a matter of indifference (though the essay did not propose to discuss immersion *pro* and *con*), witness the essay's plea for "a solution that shall accord with God's will in the matter." And why does the reviewer attribute to the essayist "a suggestive leaning towards abandonment of that which is *merely* scruples . . . rather than . . . a surrender of liberty?" The italicised word was read into the text by the reviewer, and gives a totally different meaning to the essayist's language. Are we not agreed that liberty may be surrendered where conscience may not? and did the essayist intimate anything to the contrary?

But for the ingenious detection of microscopic faults the reviewer's charge of a "latent bigotry" in considering only Protestants in the essay is certainly entitled to the prize cake. Of course there are sincere followers of the Lord Jesus Christ amongst Roman and Greek Catholics, Armenians, Syrians, and all other bodies who profess Christianity at all. Nor did the essay in any way suggest that there were not. But it was uncompromisingly founded upon the presupposition of the plea, whose two arms are the absolute and sole authority of the Scriptures, and the obligation of every man and congregation to learn them and apply them to practice. On such a platform as this none but Protestants could have been taken without an exposition and vindication of the plea, which would have carried the essay altogether out of its line of argument. We trust that not many thousand Catholics were

offended by the neglect. Yet, in spite of this obvious explanation, the reviewer accuses us of latitudinarianism where (as he thinks) we surrender the plea, and of bigotry where we presuppose it! His consistency is like that of the woman who borrowed the kettle, and, on returning it, was sued by the owner on the ground that she had cracked it. Her defence was, first, that she had not borrowed the kettle at all; second, that it was cracked when she borrowed it; and third, that it was whole when she returned it!

It would require several pages to answer all the reviewer's quibbles as to the ambiguity of terms used in the essay, and several more to advance the syllogistic proofs of the several propositions with which he finds fault on the ground of insufficiency. But we will not affront the intelligence of the readers by pointing out these A B C's of reading, since no one else seems to have been seriously puzzled by the difficulties; we will merely suggest that if the reviewer will read the essay again, using a little common sense (the review has surely not greatly depleted his stock of that commodity), he will see the meaning which the disputed terms are intended to bear, and will also see that the sentences in question, interpreted in the natural and necessary light of the context, require no proof.

On the whole, however, perhaps we have expected too much of this review. Its author seems to know nothing of the essential principles of interpretation, which forbid a man to disregard the context, and require him to interpret any partial statement in the light of the whole discourse; and he seems to think that criticism consists in picking minute flaws and raising quibbles worthy of mediæval scholasticism. This extended attention has been given it, not because of any depth or strength or sincerity that make it a worthy antagonist, but for fear a less detailed notice might be taken by the unthinking and word-loving as a confession of defeat.

6. A. R. MAIN'S REVIEW.

The spirit of this review is well expressed in the following words: "In any comments which I make, I trust it will not be imagined by any that I wish to impugn either the merits of the composition or the motive which prompted it, or reflect on the vision beautiful of a church united and restored." This spirit is well maintained throughout; but the review is hardly less at sea than the preceding in its misconception of the essay, and this misconception is probably responsible for some near approaches to the imputation which the reviewer disclaims, as well as for some hypercriticism of the essay's argument.

The review says: "There is an uncomfortable impression created that the writer believes that, if the disciples of Christ in these Southern lands just go on as they are going, they will one day awaken to find they are dead." The essayist is sorry if this impression has been created, and, to obviate it, begs leave to quote from the conclusion of the essay: "Let us hope and believe and pray with all our hearts that the spirit of the world-loving Christ will abide in us forever, and lead us into all the ways of truth—that we will accomplish our glorious destiny."

It is true that the essay was meant to warn against a spirit which might result in atrophy, but he does not believe that spirit is essentially dominant in the brotherhood, and he does not think that it will prevail. In speaking of this apprehension, the reviewer says that "our numerical increase and progress hardly support this opinion." But numerical increase and progress are not in themselves safe criteria. The diversity of social and theological elements attracted to any new movement, and the power of the movement to unify and consolidate these diverse accretions, are considerations equally essential to a correct and far-sighted judgment. We may here apply a quotation from the essay to other than its original connection, and say that any new and strong movement may continue to grow, and perhaps to grow rapidly, until "the limits of the sect" coincide with "those who will tolerate it." This has been true of the Methodists, and might possibly prove true of us.

In discussing the essay's contention for uniformity of baptism, the reviewer indulges in a bit of what seems like hypercriticism. The sentence which he criticises is as follows: "It is manifestly within the right of each congregation to follow its own policy as regards the terms of admission to fellowship (membership); at least, the congregations will follow their own policy; so we must reckon with this as a condition." Now it is evident that, taking this sentence as a whole, "it is the condition, and not the theory, that confronts us." The right assumed (as implied by the point of view in this portion of the essay) is in contrast to the authority of the denomination, not to the authority of the Scriptures. Yet the reviewer quotes the first clause of this sentence, and, mistakenly assuming the latter contrast, takes "much pleasure in emphatically denying" it. After giving a reason (which would be pertinent to the contrast he assumes, but is not to the intended contrast), he quotes the remainder of the sentence, introducing it with the words: "But Bro. Grinstead felt that the words italicised above ('It is manifestly within the right of each congregation to follow its own policy as to the terms of admission to fellowship') were saying too much, so added what was meant to be a transition and explanation, but what is really miles away from the former statement." Just herein lies the hypercriticism. As the reviewer says, the additional clause was meant to be a transition. But, by the very meaning of the word, a transition always takes one away from the former statement; and whether "miles" away, or only a few hundred yards, the reviewer should have interpreted the whole sentence in the light of the completed statement; especially in view of his recognition that it is an "explanation." This would have been nothing more than fair to the essayist, besides being much better exegesis. In this connection, too, the reviewer denies any "true" and "rightful" liberty on the part of the congregation "to practise sprinkling at all." The essayist did not say anything as to the truth or rightfulness of their liberty. He simply did not raise the point that it is a false liberty which they now exercise, because he was not preaching a sermon in advocacy of immersion, but was merely

talking to a people with whom he agrees thereon, about their attitude on other things. The reviewer fears that "the effect of the essay may be to confirm some in their disobedience." The essayist would be exceedingly sorry if this should occur, but does not think it will.

The reviewer has a peculiar and significant paragraph on the question of "regarding the paedobaptist as a brother in Christ." Assuming the essayist's attitude to be absolutely described in this phrase, he says that "some of our prominent brethren in Australia find it more than difficult; they simply cannot do it, consistently." In exemplification, he quotes a passage from an editorial in the CHRISTIAN of August 27th, which pledges us, in preaching the gospel, to the apostolic view of baptism; which is stated thus: "They tacitly assumed that there was no Christian life short of baptism." The reviewer presses this point home with peculiar insistency. Now if this citation, and the appeal for the essayist's opinion of it, have any point at all, that point lies in the fact that the editorial in question was written by the author of the essay, and that his positions in the two articles do not agree. It is a fair presumption that the reviewer knew the authorship of the extract, and meant to convey a veiled charge of inconsistency. If this presumption is incorrect, the essayist hopes that the reviewer will correct him. Apart from the fact that the essayist could have had no conceivable motive for such double-dealing, would it not have been more fair in the reviewer—more like a critic, and less like an accuser—to presuppose the essayist's consistency, and try a little harder to interpret the two utterances in harmony? This would not have been difficult, for the editorial extract is plainly on the subject of baptism, while the extract from the essay is just as plainly not on that subject. Hence it is unwarrantable to draw from the latter any inference at all in regard to baptism; but it is inexcusable if such inference is in conflict with the unequivocal utterance on baptism in the editorial. Here again the reviewer shows himself a blunderer at exegesis.

The reviewer unconsciously approaches near to throwing odium upon the essayist's motive in styling our present attitude a "timid conservatism," by classing that expression with a number of more or less opprobrious, discourteous, and unworthy epithets, though conceding that it is "the mildest." This is hardly fair to the essayist, when he has used no such epithets himself, and is always careful to refrain from any approach to such an undignified method of controversy with sincere opponents. The essayist conceives that one reason for our past isolation has been the fear that the younger adherents of our movement might have their zeal chilled and their faith in our plea shattered by too free intercourse with those who do not see as we do. If (as the essayist's experience leads him to believe) this fear is unfounded, then his characterisation is apt. The adjective remains. Moreover, the opposition which has confronted the efforts of the essayist and others in the brotherhood to be faithful to their under-

standing of the Scriptures hardly justifies the statement that "it requires more bravery to withstand these assaults (of the sectarians) than to 'adapt ourselves to the times.'"

The reviewer says: "Loyalty to the Word is more essential even than that we should be in the van of a catholic movement towards unity." This can be restated in two ways with improvement: "Loyalty to the Word is essential to *our being* in the van," and "Loyalty to the Word *requires* us to be in the van." We fear many of the brethren have been so rapt in a rigid loyalty to some minor things which they imagine to be taught by the Word that they have overlooked some of the grand and broad and catholic ideals which the Word holds out for us. The mistake was not intentional, but it was none the less real.

The essayist repeats, it was not his primary purpose to discuss the plea, but the method of presenting it. While this is affected by the attitudes variously characterised in the conclusion, in what the reviewer is kind enough to term "fit and well-sounding phrases" (which, we would remind the reviewer, may be found in the mouth of the critic, as well as of the advocate)—while the presentation of the plea, we say, is affected by our attitude, it must never depart from the real question, which (to quote the reviewer) "is primarily this: *are the Scriptures to be our standard of appeal, our guide, or not?*" We answer, Yes; because (1) these only are authoritative, and are our only revelation of the will of God; (2) if these are not a standard, nothing is; if these tell us not, we cannot know."

7. D. A. EWERS' REVIEW.

This is altogether fair, and written in a most excellent, discriminating, and commendable spirit. The reviewer is much more in accord with the essay than he thinks. Some of the misconceptions which underlie his judicious comments have already been met, and the whole is written in such a lucid style that there are few points which need attention.

The reviewer says that the arguments of the essay, if true, "not only prove that those known as disciples in Australasia are wrong, but those in America as well." While the essayist is not contending for anything simply because it is American, he thinks Bro. Ewers' conclusion is a mistake. The American brethren do not as a rule practise close communion—indeed, the essayist never heard such a position taken by any of their churches; and the exchange of pulpits with other religious bodies is quite frequent. But the reviewer truly adds: "Even this, however . . . is a small matter compared with what, to my mind, appears conclusive—that if the essayist is right the New Testament disciples were wrong." It might be well to note here that not even this is the true standard, but only those principles and practices of the New Testament disciples which were inaugurated and approved by the apostles. The essayist thinks that this test will not condemn him.

The reviewer quotes the essay's triple characterisation of the ideal restored church—namely, as catholic, uncredal, and con-

gregational—but suggests some difficulties in practical application. Of course difficulties will arise; but the essayist sees no ground for disagreement with the reviewer on the points which the latter raises. The reviewer doubts the accuracy of the essay's statement that the congregational polity "commends itself to the common sense of men." If he had noted the following clause, "whether they recognise it or not," he might have perceived that the essayist did not mean that absolutely every man is theoretically and practically committed to congregationalism. As we have seen, none but Protestants are directly in view in the essay. The Methodists, so far as their polity is concerned, are not at all of recent origin. Yet even amongst them it must be confessed that the great mass of laymen are growing restless under episcopal control—that the conferences "really rule by the sufferance of their congregations; and their sway is far more lax than a few years back, and growing more lax every year." The same is true of the great so-called orthodox bodies of Dissenting Protestantism, and of the Episcopal Church in America. As to the other bodies named as exceptions, they are not of sufficient age and influence, or their zeal too far overbalances their common sense, for them to be reliable data on which to base an induction. The movements of a millennial tidal wave are not to be measured by the ripples of a few decades.

The reviewer endorses the essayist's plea for congregational liberty in details, but adds: "Is not this already recognised? . . . There is perfect congregational freedom." The essayist wishes he could say this with as much confidence. He knows of one case in which a new congregation, seeking the truth, was driven to look with disfavor upon our plea, and ultimately to become a Baptist church, by the refusal of one or two neighboring congregations to recognise them or have fellowship with them on the ground that they accepted willing offerings from the unimmersed, and sat with them at the Lord's table. Yet this congregation had as much authority to read the Scriptures for itself as the others had, and it was acting up to its understanding of them. The essayist is not at all sure that a congregation which conscientiously differed from the brotherhood on these points, and in its entire method and form of worship, although consisting entirely of immersed believers, pledged to the Scriptures alone, and wearing no unscriptural names, would be quite cordially welcomed into one of our Conferences. He would be very glad, for the brethren's sakes, to know that he has misjudged them in these points. He is certain too that some of these things—which are purely matters of congregational preference—are so vigorously insisted upon that the public necessarily associates our name with certain unessential peculiarities, and so cannot help thinking of us as a "minor sect." Nor is the public wholly to blame in this matter.

Another matter which the reviewer raises is food for pointed comment. He says:

"A large proportion of the American brethren oppose missionary societies, and scarcely one-third of the churches contribute through them;

many oppose organs and Endeavor Societies, while others object to Sunday Schools, and some advocate the re-baptism of Baptists, and other fads."

Although we do not know Bro. Ewers' history, we venture to assert that he has not a close personal acquaintance with the American brotherhood. It is not true that "a large proportion of the American brethren oppose missionary societies." The opposition is confined practically to the State of Tennessee, the southern counties of Indiana, and a few scattered congregations in Kentucky, Texas, and (very sparsely) other southern States. Even in these congregations it is very often a minority—sometimes not more than four or five per cent—that holds the church back, the majority yielding for the sake of peace. The fact that so large a proportion of the congregations do not contribute to the missionary activities is usually due to apathy, not to opposition; and this apathy is largely explained by the larger percentage of struggling country churches there than here, and to the fact that their missionary conventions are not associations of churches, but assemblies of individual Christians. Moreover, these so-called "fads" are not advocated by different elements of the brotherhood, but by *all the same element*, with rather indistinct boundaries, and a variety of emphasis. The term "fad" is hardly an appropriate name for the earnest and settled conviction that animates these pious brethren; and one of them—the rebaptism of Baptists—is as logical a deduction from the second chapter of Acts as is close communion. But it is on the general attitude of this school that the essayist wishes to point a moral. The fundamental principle upon which these brethren build seems to be that the New Testament church was a divinely prepared model, to be followed by the church in all ages; and consequently we are not only obliged to conform to its outlines wherever they can be traced, but are also prohibited from supplying features of our own where the Scriptures are silent. We must give them credit for a high degree of consistency in the application of this principle, since they reject the organ in all sacred music, and the creation of any religious organisation within or without the congregation. We hasten also to pay a tribute to their zeal, their piety, their diligence in Scripture study, and the high degree to which they often develop a personal sweetness and amiability of character. It is to be regretted that individual temperaments and qualities so excellent do not attain to a more beneficial use in the religious world. So intent are they upon tracing and restoring the faintest outlines of the church in the first century that they utterly miss the requirements and opportunities of the church in the twentieth century. Thinking that they perceive the Scriptural plan so clearly themselves, they look upon all who do not conform to it—for whatever reason—as apostate with Rome, and frequently go to the length of denying them any Christian standing whatever. A church of this school, highly commended by its sister churches in opinion as apostolic in its zeal for the faith, once withdrew its support from a very needy mis-

sion point at which the essayist was laboring, on the sole ground that part of his salary was paid by an Endeavor Society! Their periodicals (of which, by the way, there is only one of sufficient influence to deserve notice, and it a very minor one, as compared with the other publications of the brotherhood) do not publish news from those congregations which use instrumental music, pay the preacher a fixed salary, maintain the Endeavor and Sunday School, and contribute to missionary societies. The result of all this is that they have no influence in the brotherhood or in the religious world. Their services attract few outsiders, and denominationalism simply ignores their plea for union. The restoration movement has passed them by, and they have been "left behind, a narrow, dwindling, moribund sect." Their way has led, or is rapidly leading "to a hard and exclusive and stunted life—to an encrustation of tradition, and the development of a rancorous controversialism. These is no life in it, no faith, no hope, no love, no fellowship with the living and breathing spirit which will animate the restored and united church—only the cold and fruitless self-satisfaction of a shrivelled up logic."

This school is the fruit of the theory which demands absolute and unreasoning conformity to every petty detail of first century Christianity, and ignores the practical need of the adaptation of methods to current needs. The same theory has a strong hold upon a large portion of the brotherhood in Australia. There are two differences, however—the theory has had forty years longer to develop in America, and it has taken some more extreme and absurd positions there than here. Still, there are some points in which the positions of this school have dictated the policies of the brotherhood here, and have carried them to an attitude as rigid and repellant as any adopted by the adherents of this view in America. Close communion is one of these. The exclusiveness of platform and pulpit is another. The refusal to accept a voluntary and unsolicited offering from a conscientious unimmersed believer or an innocent child is still another. The brethren are perfectly sincere in these positions, but their sincerity did not prevent them from assuming a position that was not only unwarranted by the Scriptures, but was also a prejudice to the cause. It was for the purpose of contributing to the neutralisation of this tendency, encouraging growing minds in the brotherhood to depart from it, and accelerating our present rate of growth toward a larger, a more charitable, a more consistent view—in a word, a more Scriptural application of the plea—that the essay was written.

Several of the reviewers and critics have joined with Bro. Ewers in taking exception to the essayist's statement that it manifests a sectarian spirit for us "to suppose that we are right and other religious bodies are wrong." Those who so except practically charge the essayist with the bald absurdity of condemning a man for believing that his beliefs are true. Of course, if a man believes a thing, he thinks his belief is true. This is such a self-evident proposition that common sense should have told the reviewers they were on the wrong tack. But if

our beliefs—especially in matters of opinion and precarious interpretation—are so immovably rooted in our minds as not to admit of a fair re-examination, are we not prejudiced? If we condemn a man, and call him "disobedient" (the very word of some of the reviewers), and refuse him our Christian fellowship and fraternity, while he is perfectly honest in his lack of obedience, and that lack is due to his never having seen the force of our premises, and not to any wilful disloyalty—is not this a sectarian attitude? and is not this the natural meaning of the language of the essay? We would sound a warning, too, lest any should think again that the essayist is here fighting a man of straw. It is much easier to say that we should have this open mind for the position of our opponents, than it is to have it. It is very easy to declare our willingness to receive truth from any source; but the declaration is stultified by our ignoring the great degree in which we may learn of divine sovereignty from Calvin, of divine grace from Knox, or of the Spirit-filled life from Wesley.

The reviewer is "obliged to dissent" from the essayist's statement: "The only safe ground on which we can close our pulpits to a pious and wise paedobaptist preacher would be the assumption that he is more liable to error than we; and what a world of conceit is there in that assumption!" But (lame dissent!) the reviewer presents no other ground, and pleads guilty to the conceit in the assumption! He urges that the paedobaptist would be more liable to error than we in estimating the importance of arguments in favor of infant baptism. The essayist admits that he thinks so too; and he also admits that there may be a good deal of unconscious conceit in his thinking so. On the other hand, he thinks that nine of our preachers out of ten would find allusions to immersion where none existed, and would often overestimate their value; and that they would be likely to underestimate the points of similarity between the old and new covenants. But does the one instance cited by the reviewer, in which the paedobaptist would be a less safe guide than we, prove that he would be so in other instances? Does one swallow make a summer? Again, would a paedobaptist be likely to preach a sermon on infant baptism in one of our pulpits? or if he did, would he be invited again? The same courtesy would be due from either side to the other in this case. The paedobaptist's allusions to baptism, in any sermon which he might preach in our churches, would presuppose his view of the ordinance; just as our allusions would presuppose our view. But it would be entirely unnecessary, to say the least of it, for either to preach a formal and explicit sermon, presenting his view of the matter, when visiting the other party. Common sense and courtesy would easily regulate these things.

In conclusion, we would quote the comment of the reviewer, which is exactly in line with the positions really taken in the essay:

"Our view of the whole subject will depend upon our conception of the plea. If this is simply the union of believers, everything must be subservient to that cardinal idea. But if our plea

is the restoration of primitive Christianity in order to Christian union, we shall seek to ascertain and occupy the New Testament platform. This does not mean 'a hard, stunted life, an encrustation of tradition, and the development of a rancorous controversialism,' or 'the cold and fruitless self-satisfaction of a shrivelled-up logic.' It means the glad recognition of all that is Christ-like among believers of all parties, hearty co-operation with them in all matters wherein all occupy common ground and have a common object, and even rejoicing, like Paul, *however* Christ is preached, 'whether in pretence or in truth.' It means the cultivation of the *spirit* of unity as well as, and in order to, the advocacy of organic union, and at the same time a loving but uncompromising presentation of the New Testament teaching on the importance and practicability of such union."

8. W. L. JOHNSTON'S REVIEW.

This is in unison with the purpose of the essay at every essential point. Its fundamental position is a negative paraphrase of that positively expressed in the essay: "Unless, however, the church embraces the plea of the disciples of Christ, it cannot become acceptable to God as his universal church." The reviewer emphasises the essayist's warning concerning our general attitude. He points out the growth of the catholic spirit, and adds very pertinently: "Let this progress continue and it will be found that the Christian world will presently consist of two classes with but one distinguishing doctrine—immersion." He gives the current movement credit for a portion of this progress—rather too modestly, we think, if the reflex influence of American thought upon British and Australian theology be taken into consideration.

Near the close of the review he says: "The scheme (of the essay) appears to be one of intellectual devisement only, seeing the arguments are nowhere backed up by divine revelation." Pausing only to note the fact that the essay presented no "scheme" at all, but only an appeal, we must say that we do not see how the proposals advanced could have had other than "intellectual devisement," even if they had been "backed up by divine revelation" explicitly quoted. Intellect is necessary to apprehend and apply the Scriptures, and to shape our course in matters not covered by the Scriptures. Intellect is nothing but common sense. When the use of the mind departs from common sense, it ceases to be intellect, and becomes nonsense. The drawing of a contrast between intellect and the Scriptures, as if the two were naturally in antagonism, has been responsible for half the errors and divisive hobbies of Christendom.

We would repeat the reviewer's exhortation:

"Let us be diligent and vigilant then in the performance of our high and glorious trust, lest the great court of heaven should pass a motion of no-confidence in us, and supplant us by others who will administer the constitution of the church as divinely enacted."

9. M. W. GREEN'S REVIEW.

This cannot be called a review—at least, not in any complete sense of the word. It is

rather an attempt "to see a way through the difficulties." Discussion of it is needless; and so, as a strict reply, this section of the review should end here at the beginning. But the essayist cannot refrain from comment upon the spirit of this review, and from using this as the text for some further comment upon the general tenor of some of the other reviews.

As Bro. Green read the essay, he perceived an apparent inconsistency between the disclaiming note and the outspoken advocacy of open communion in the body of the essay. Instead of disregarding the note, tacitly accusing the essayist of deliberate inconsistency, and assailing what would seem to him, without the note, to be the essayist's position, Bro. Green very wisely and judiciously takes it for granted that the essayist means to be consistent, and suspends judgment pending a fuller explanation. It is very evident that the reviewer fully grasps the general tenor and purport of the essay, realises with the essayist that great difficulties stand in the way of union—difficulties only aggravated by excommunicating those who disagree with us—and heartily sympathises with the essayist's effort to approach those difficulties appreciatively. In this case at least the essayist does not seem to have "shown a lack of sympathy with the modes of thought of one to whom he appealed." This reviewer may disagree with the essayist as to close communion; but if he does, the disagreement will not be of the *a priori* kind which presupposes that one's opponent is *ex ipso facto* guilty of every sin in the logical calendar. We thank this reviewer for his hearty, manly and courteous, albeit too brief review.

His judiciousness is in such marked contrast to the hasty condemnation visited upon the essay and essayist by some of the other reviewers that this is deemed a fitting occasion for pointing a warning in regard to them. As has been seen, some of the reviews—particularly those in the *CHRISTIAN* of Oct. 15—abounded in the most glaring misinterpretations and misapplications of the essay's language. Again, and once for all, the essayist avows his willingness to bear the blame, wherever an inadvertent use of ambiguous or inapt terms, or a faulty rhetorical and logical construction, has really been responsible for this misinterpretation. So far as the essay in its *It* is concerned, the essayist is willing to rest his case with this section of the review. If the readers condemn it, it must stand condemned. Neither the essayist's reputation nor the position for which he is contending is staked upon the published essay. That may now live or die upon its own merits.

But there were many misinterpretations for which neither the language nor the rhetoric of the essay was responsible. Hastily and unwarrantably, propositions have been attributed to the essayist which were utterly foreign both to the context and to the meaning of the words. In nearly every instance, this error has arisen from the reviewer's considering the essay while having in his mind a contrast different from that in the mind of the essayist, and *reading this false contrast into the text of the essay*. This is a very common logical and exegetical blunder, and one utterly

fatal to correct and impartial interpretation. The frequent commission of it shows a lack of that poise, caution, and judiciousness of mind which men have a right to expect in a public teacher.

Now when we come to consider the question of close communion upon its own merits, we shall see that two of the fallacies which lie at the basis of that practice are of this kind—the fallacy of false contrast. The mind that is prone, through injudiciousness or traditionalism, to read false contrasts into the text of a secular writer, is apt to do the same with the Scriptures. The essayist tries to speak with due modesty in saying that he has never before been accused of lacking either the willingness or the ability to say what he means. If then we find his utterances so misinterpreted by the reviewers, chiefly through this blunder of false contrast, need we be surprised to find their interpretation of the Scriptures fallacious in the same respect? and should we not be rather cautious about following their lead in inferences from the Scriptures, without first carefully examining the contrasts from which their inferences are drawn? We think this warning is a pertinent and necessary one before proceeding to a detailed consideration of the question of close communion.

(To be continued.)

The Querist.

Avoid foolish questions . . . for they are unprofitable and vain.—Titus 3: 9.

G. B. MOYSEY.

QUERY.—Please explain Gen. 4: 16, 17. If Adam and Eve were the only two persons on the earth, where did Cain get his wife from?

REPLY.—There is nothing in the narrative to show that Adam and Eve were the only persons on the earth save Cain, and the fact that the latter is said to have married a wife is fairly clear evidence that there was at least another person on the earth at that time. No doubt Cain did what hundreds of better men did in those ancient days, as witness the case of Abraham himself (see Gen. 5: 12), viz., married his sister. The fact that no daughters are mentioned as born to Adam and Eve during the first 130 years of their lives is no proof that they were daughterless. In the line from Adam to Noah, during a period of over 1000 years, and in the course of ten generations, no daughter is mentioned as having been born before the particular son, who because of some pre-eminence is named. Yet surely this does not prove that in none of these generations was a daughter born before a son. The same peculiar fact is noticeable in the ten generations from Noah to Abraham (Gen. 11). Doubtless, when Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod he took his wife with him, and that she was one of his sisters. There is no evidence whatever that he found her in the land of Nod.

QUERY.—What authority have we for electing elders and deacons?

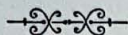
REPLY.—An answer to this question is found in the editorial of the *CHRISTIAN*, No. 47, present year.

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The Leader.

Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths.—Jeremiah 6: 16.

Denominational Union.

The current number of the Wesleyan Spectator has a short article on "Baptists and Union," in which it says that "a somewhat curious illustration of the saying 'extremes meet' is afforded in the feeling which exists that the two great hindrances to union are the Baptists on the one hand, and the High Church party on the other. The Baptists cling tenaciously to a particular mode in the administration of an external rite; and the High Church makes claim to special prerogatives, which admit of no compromise. These sheet anchors hold, and offer powerful resistance to the great tide, which flows towards denominational union." That this is a fair statement of the case as it now stands appears

to us very much open to question. We have watched the "flowing of the tide" in the direction of union, but have not been able to discover that the position assumed by the two bodies mentioned has had any material effect in stopping the flow of the tide in the direction in which it was seen to be moving. It has been evident to those who have been observant of the trend of things that the movement in the direction of union has been chiefly confined to three religious organisations known as Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists. Outside of these, there has been no practical evidence of any intention of going with the flowing tide. Only optimists of the most vivid kind had any expectation that the union movement, for the present at least, would extend beyond the three bodies mentioned. That union might be achieved with them was felt to be possible in the near future. The differences that separated them were not regarded by the impartial observer as being insuperable. The conferences that had been held by their representative men had been of the most favorable kind, and altogether the outlook seemed very promising. And this is the point we are desirous of emphasising, namely, that the attitude of the Baptists and the High Church party cannot offer any powerful resistance, or any resistance at all, to the consummation of the union of the three bodies alluded to.

It is true, of course, so far as the wider union is concerned—a union embracing the whole of Christendom—that every opposing section to this idea makes the possibility of this union increasingly difficult, and it may be that the holding aloof of the Baptists and High Church party form the two greatest hindrances to it, but it is well to remember that there are other forces to be reckoned with before the union of Christendom can be said to be within measurable distance of realisation. The tendency to ignore this fact is not a very hopeful sign of the realisation of a wider union in the years to come. Leaving this thought for the present, we are confronted with another phase of the subject that finds expression in the words "denominational union." This idea, at the present time, seems to have come from Mr. Pearce Carey, the Baptist preacher, and is offered as a sort of compromise. What is understood as organic union not being possible, denominational union is suggested as a substitute. That is to say, that a federation of churches should be formed in which all the denominations concerned preserve their distinctive differences. It is quite possible, of course, to conceive of such a thing and call it a union, but it would not be unity. And this is where many people make a mis-

take in confounding union with unity. They do not understand that there may be union without unity.

For instance, the Austrian empire is composed of a union of different nationalities, but it would be a mistake to suppose that because of this union the people are united. The very reverse of this is true. Austria is a notable example of a disunited people. The union is a political one and only maintained by force. Race hatred is the great disturbing element and may eventually lead to the disintegration of the empire. Here, it may be observed, we have a union brought about and maintained by force in which, of necessity, the idea of unity is impossible. The illustration, however, will serve to show that it is not safe to use the words, union and unity, as equivalent terms. Even a union voluntarily agreed to for a specific purpose cannot be regarded as unity if the parties concerned have only agreed to a temporary truce. It is the wise Lord Bacon who quaintly says:—"There be two false peaces or unities: the one, when the peace is grounded upon implicit ignorance; for all colors will agree in the dark; the other, when it is pieced up upon a direct admission of contraries in fundamental points. For truth and falsehood, in such things, are like the iron and clay in the toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image; they will cleave, but they will not incorporate." In the Christian conception of things it is the higher thought of unity that is presented before us as the goal to be attained. Christ himself gives us the true definition of unity. "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Here, the unity of believers is presented to us as being like the unity of the Father with the Son. Unity of disposition, of thought and of purpose. And this Christian unity is the great moral miracle that will conquer the world.

It must never be forgotten that this unity has a definite purpose in view. As an expression of Christian oneness it is to "convince the world." In order to do this it must be genuine. No "make believe," such as denominational union, can be expected to produce such a wonderful result. The world is shrewd enough to see the difference between the true and the false. It is the existence of denominations as such that is an offence to it. It is not a mere external union that it demands, but a unity that expresses oneness of thought, more particularly in regard to matters pertaining to salvation. When it asks how men are to be saved, it expects, and expects rightly, to hear one voice and not a Babel. It wants no discordant voices and

diverse practices in such questions as that of baptism. If the Bible is a revelation from heaven, it says, such questions should not be a matter of dispute. Nor should they be. If the plain teaching of the New Testament were accepted upon the subject, the dispute would be ended at once. Unfortunately it is not. The responsibility for any diversity that exists rests with those who make the church and tradition higher authorities than the New Testament. Some day the churches may see alike on these questions. When they do, unity may be possible, but not till then. Canon Henson has said many wise things on the question of union, and not the least wise is the following: "The reformation of the church must be slowly reached by the reformation of its several members; the reunion of the church must be the crown and climax of its reformation. Therefore, apart from all schemes of ecclesiastical reunion which, as matters now stand, are wholly chimerical, and perhaps even mischievous, there is a duty plainly laid upon us as members of the church of Christ. We are to reform ourselves, to get at peace among ourselves, to realise our own responsibilities; and thus we are to work towards better relations with our separated brethren. If we are fanatical contenders for or against mere non-essentials. . . . we are the abettors of division. If we are indifferent to truth we are the champions of schism. . . . We need the cleansing grace of God, we need his winnowing fan, we need his purging fire. What right have we to prate of reunion while we cling to our corruptions and hallow our heresies?" Let this process of cleansing, winnowing and purging go on, and unity will come, for truth will then be triumphant.

From The Field.

The field is the world.—Matt. 13: 38.

Queensland.

CHARTERS TOWERS.—We had the pleasure of baptising a sister on her own confession into the blessed name of Jesus on Saturday night, Nov. 21st. On Lord's day evening, Nov. 22nd, one elderly man stood up in the gospel meeting and confessed Jesus as the Son of God, and was immersed into his name. We believe there are more to follow shortly.

Nov. 23. J. SMITH.

ROMA.—A baptismal service was held last Wednesday evening, when Sister Long was immersed by James Saunders before many witnesses, and was received into fellowship Lord's day morning. At the evening service Bro. Saunders preached an able address on "Temperance," which was greatly appreciated.

Nov. 23.

L. A. HOSKINS.

BRISBANE.—The average attendance at morning meetings is higher than ever, and at gospel meetings fairly good, and at our Wednesday prayer

meeting the attendance is improving. We have also to welcome from Maryborough, Q., our Bro. Bell, who is a good worker and acceptable speaker. The church at Maryborough has suffered a loss by his removal, but the cause in Brisbane has gained. Our brother, though only a few weeks in Brisbane, has addressed the church at morning meeting, took the platform at gospel meeting, and last Lord's day visited Zillmere, speaking there. He also gave an interesting address on Wednesday last, which was listened to with rapt attention by those present.

Nov. 22.

A.S.W.

New South Wales.

SYDNEY.—On Thursday, Nov. 19th, a Foreign Missionary meeting under the auspices of the Sisters' Conference Committee was held at Mrs. Hindle's house, Cavendish-street, Stanmore. The subject for the afternoon was, "The Islands." A large number of sisters were present, and all were much interested in the subject. In the absence of Mrs. Gole (who was called away), Mrs. Walden read Mrs. Gole's paper on the subject, describing the habits of the heathen natives, also a letter from missionary John Thompson, in Pentecost. The description of the interior of the native huts, and their way of disposing of their dead, was particularly revolting. We had with us a Miss Price, a Baptist sister who has always been interested in Foreign Missions and who spent some time among the islands and stayed at several Presbyterian mission stations there. Her descriptions were very interesting, and after giving us a short address, she answered a number of questions about the islands, put by those present. We also had the pleasure of listening to solos by Miss Walker (Petersham), Mrs. Lee (Marrickville), and Mrs. Shearston (Paddington), while Miss Kingsbury (Enmore) presided at the piano. Votes of thanks were passed to Miss Price for her address, the sisters who supplied the music, and Mrs. Hindle for her kindness not only in lending her drawing-room and giving us afternoon tea, but in getting up such an enjoyable and instructive programme. A collection was taken up by the only brother present—Mr. Walden—and amounted to £1/16/-, which will be donated towards a boat for Bro. Thompson in Pentecost Island.

Nov. 22.

SYDNEY.—The annual flower service of the City Temple Bible School was held on Sunday, Nov. 22nd. The chapel was nicely decorated with flowers and green foliage. The service of song, "Hidden Treasures," was rendered by the scholars, while D. R. Hall read the narrative, of which he was the author. After the service the flowers brought by the scholars were distributed to the poor of the neighborhood, and a hearty invitation to the gospel meeting extended to them. Bro. Dickson preached a special sermon in the evening, when more choruses were given by the scholars. The collection in aid of the hospitals amounted to £4/5/6.

Nov. 23.

S. GOLE.

MARRICKVILLE.—Large attendance at worship yesterday morning. D. R. Hall, M.L.A., gave an instructive address on "Ministry." One received into membership. Very fine meeting at night. One baptism and one confession.

Nov. 23.

ROBERT C. GILMOUR.

COROWA.—The church held a social evening on the 17th inst., to bid farewell to E. Griffiths, E. J. Waters, and Sisters E. J. Waters and M. Morley. Bro. Way occupied the chair and spoke in highest praise of the departing brothers and sisters. He was sorry that the church was losing such valuable

workers. A good programme of songs and recitations was gone through. Presentations were made to E. Griffiths, Sister M. Morley, E. J. Waters and Sister Waters. The presentations were suitably acknowledged, and a very enjoyable meeting was brought to a close by singing, "God be with you till we meet again," after which light refreshment was handed around.

Nov. 22.

W.S.P.

New Zealand.

KAITANGATA.—We have had a send-off social to Bro. and Sister Greenhill, who are leaving for Melbourne through ill-health. We had a very enjoyable evening on October 27th. Bro. Greenhill was presented with a very nice umbrella from the Home Mission Executive; Sister Greenhill, a pair of butter knives and case, also from Executive. Bro. Greenhill was also presented with a small token from the church. We have had a visit from Bro. Alcorn of Invercargill, also Bro. Rix of Burnside. The officers decided to hold a short mission while Bro. Alcorn and Rix were with us, which resulted in four additions by faith and obedience, and three restored.

Nov. 15.

E. ROGERS.

NELSON.—We are sure that the brotherhood generally, and very many readers of the CHRISTIAN, will be anxious to hear the latest news concerning J. J. Franklyn. We are thankful to say that he is now recovering from a long and serious illness. The trouble was in the first place a severe cold, turning to pleurisy. When the doctors were called in, they discovered that he was suffering from hydatids. For ten weeks he had to lie on his bed, but he is now able to walk a little. We pray for his complete restoration to health. Bro. Lewis is doing most of the preaching while our brother is laid aside. There are some on the point of deciding for Christ. The Wednesday night meeting is well attended.

Nov. 16.

W.R.G.

AUCKLAND.—Our mission at Mount Roskill is progressing favorably, a contract having been let for a building to seat 150 at a cost of about £300, and we expect to have the opening services early in the New Year. As a number of members live in this district, the branch church will start with a nucleus of good members. Several additions by faith and obedience have to be reported, under the preaching of C. Watt, who with the advent of fine weather has already held the first of this season's Park meetings, and purposes holding them fortnightly during the fine season. Last year they were productive of good. Leslie Hadfield, of Dunedin, has accepted the offer to labor in this field as second evangelist, in conjunction with Bro. Watt, beginning with the New Year.

Nov. 14.

H.N.B.

DUNEDIN.—At the close of M. W. Green's discourse on the "Sinner's Friend" this evening (Nov. 22nd), an elderly and a young woman made the good confession.

SPRING GROVE.—On November 9th the annual tea in connection with our Bible School was held. At the public meeting in the evening the room was found to be too small to accommodate the crowd. John Griffith, the superintendent, presided, and a capital programme of recitations, singing, etc., was rendered. F. V. Knapp and Elijah Griffith gave excellent addresses. J. Griffith was presented with a Teacher's Bible and a large print New Testament by the teachers and the Bible Class. Bro. Griffith has been connected with this school for the past twenty-eight years, most of the time as superintendent.

tendent. On the following Wednesday evening a social was held for the benefit of those unable to get to the tea. Bro. Lewis presided, and a most enjoyable evening was spent. On November 8th, after an address to the young by Bro. Griffith, two Bible School scholars confessed Christ.

Nov. 16.

A.G.K.

CHRISTCHURCH.—Since I last wrote four have been baptised. We are now called upon to part with our esteemed evangelist, Bro. Manifold, who has done much good work amongst us. He leaves in about a month's time to work at Pahiatua. Bro. Judd will carry on the gospel meetings until we secure the services of another evangelist. A successful social and sale of work was held recently. Last Lord's day we had with us Bren, Walker and Williams, from Sydney, and Bro. Binney, from South Australia.

Nov. 20.

G.P.P.

Victoria.

BARKER'S CREEK.—We have again started a week-night gospel meeting at Faraday. On last Tuesday night Bro. Connor gave a splendid sermon, and after the meeting a young man decided for Christ, and on Lord's day morning he was baptised into Christ.

Nov. 16.

A.E.G.

SOUTH YARRA.—Since last report we have had 12 additions, 6 by faith and baptism, and 6 by letter. The preaching has been done by several brethren, lately by D. Pittman, E. F. Ryall, and H. Carter. The audiences have been good, and there seems to be a good amount of interest. On Nov. 3rd we held our church and school picnic at Clayton. Bro. Stewart allowed us the use of his paddock there, and did all he could to make it a pleasant day's outing for us.

J.T.E.

SEVILLE.—We had the pleasure of a visit from Bro. and Sister Rutledge from North Richmond, and we spent a profitable hour around the table of the Lord. Bro. Rutledge gave us a short address. There are only five of us meeting regularly now; sometimes three members come from South Wandin, a distance of seven miles. We hold our meetings in the afternoon to suit all parties; so as we have a train running on Sundays now, if any of the brethren or sisters would like to spend a day with us we would be glad to see them, as the train returns in the evening about 7 o'clock from here.

Nov. 29.

W. J. PARKER.

NEWMARKET.—The tent mission closed on Sunday night, when there was one confession. The actual additions during the five weeks' mission were 8 by faith and baptism, 2 by restoration, and 3 more are to be baptised; total, 13. This is not what we expected, but we must be content. On Monday evening a farewell social was held to bid God-speed to Bren. Harward and Pittman, and the prayers of the church at Newmarket go with them to S. Richmond.

Dec. 1.

A.W.S.

South Australia.

LONG PLAIN.—Three of our young people were baptised last Lord's day morning, and were added to the church. Previous baptisms have taken place at Mallala, ten miles away; but we are now able to bear witness for Christ in this ordinance in our own meeting house.

Nov. 25.

R. W.

MALLALA.—Our chapel was the scene of a very interesting event on Nov. 18th, when D. Thorpe and A. Harris were united in marriage, in the presence of

a large assembly, by R. Woolcock. The bridal pair are members of the church at Balaklava, but as this is the bride's parental home, and the place where she early united with the Christian church, it was most appropriate that the marriage should take place here.

Nov. 25.

R.W.

KADINA.—One received into fellowship. Two from Moonta were baptised in the evening. We visited Bews again last week, and had another decision. Two who have made the confession at Moonta are waiting till the new baptistry is ready.

Nov. 29.

W. MOFFIT.

BROMPTON PARK.—The meetings have been continued each Sunday evening with a fair amount of success. Last night two lads from the Hindmarsh Sunday School confessed their faith in Christ.

Nov. 30.

S.

PROSPECT.—After a good meeting to-night one confessed Christ. Splendid sermon by P. Pittman. General regret is expressed at his early departure from S.A.

Nov. 29.

J.C.W.

West Australia.

SUBIACO.—Large audiences assembled on Lord's day, Nov. 1st, the occasion being the opening of the enlarged buildings and celebration of the fifth anniversary. Brethren Lucraft (morning), Hagger (afternoon), and Banks (evening), were the speakers. The chapel is now 70ft. x 30ft., still it was found impossible to accommodate all who attended. At the close of the evening service there was one confession. On Wednesday, Nov. 4th, the opening tea was held. It was a success. After some hundreds had partaken of the good things provided, a large audience listened to addresses from Brethren Ewers, Payne and Hagger on "Church Extension." The secretary's report showed that good work had been done during the year, over 100 members having been added by faith and obedience. The present membership is 209.

H.J.B.



Home Mission Sunday.

Annual Collection.

Special Thankoffering on
 LORD'S DAY,
 3rd January, 1904

EXPENSES, £125 MONTHLY.
 £350 REQUIRED. £350

Please enclose your contribution in this Envelope, and hand in on above date. If you cannot be at the meeting, send to your Church Treasurer, or to the Conference Treasurer,

W. C. CRAIGIE,

259 Little Collins-st., Melbourne.

Austral Print, Melbourne.

Here and There.

Here a little and there a little.—Isaiah 28 : 10.

One confession at Brunswick, Sunday night. Paddington mission closed with 74 confessions. For College of the Bible meeting see Coming Events.

One confession Sunday night, City Temple, Campbell-street, Sydney.

There were three confessions at Petersham, N.S.W., on Sunday evening last.

Our usual Almanac is now ready for sending out, and we shall be glad to fill all orders promptly.

Lake-street, Perth, reports another addition by faith and baptism, being the husband of one of the members.

Campbell Edwards met with the church at Paddington, N.S.W., last Sunday week, and gave a splendid address to the Sunday School.

The church at Cheltenham intend giving Bro. and Sister Mahon a grand farewell tea and public meeting on Thursday, December 17th. Brethren everywhere invited.

A brother in West Australia sends us an order with cash for five hundred "On the Rock" for free distribution in that city. These books are going off like hot cakes.

The Annual Conference of the West Moreton churches of Christ will be held in the Christian chapel, Rosewood, Queensland, at 12 o'clock noon, on New Year's Day.

We understand that H. Mahon will close his work in Cheltenham on Dec. 20, and will leave shortly afterward for Dunedin, New Zealand, where he will take up the work in the Tabernacle, Great King-st.

We would like to remind all Victorian Sunday Schools which may require First Principle Leaflets that we must have the order by December 16th. We cannot undertake to supply them after that date.

Notwithstanding that 14,000 copies of "On the Rock" have been sold in Australasia, the new and cheap edition is selling well. Remember that we have a large edition now ready which we are anxious to send out.

Western Australian brethren, remember Bunbury mission needs your prayers to uphold the workers on the spot, and your cash to pay the bills—not either, but both. Be as prayerful, sincere and practical as you can. Golden Offering for H.M. funds—Sunday, January 3rd, 1904.

By the steamer leaving Sydney last Monday Cecil McCallum, of Kaniva, Vic., and A. Marshman, of Dalkey, S.A., took their departure for the College of the Bible, Lexington. We wish them God-speed. On their arrival there will be twelve students in the college from Australia.

Owing to Bro. Moysey's approaching departure for South Australia, he has resigned his position as a member of the Home Missionary Committee. His resignation was accepted with very much regret. Joseph Pittman, who was next highest on the voting at the last Conference, has been invited to fill the position, and he has consented to do so.

RESCUE AND PREVENTIVE HOMES.—The funds of our institution are nearly exhausted. Unless help comes speedily the year will close with a balance on the wrong side. We shall be glad to receive Christmas gifts from any who believe we are doing good in this department of the Lord's work. The homes are full of inmates.—J. PITTMAN, Armadale.

Any of our readers owing the Austral for Books, Tracts, Printing or Subscription for the CHRISTIAN are asked to give the matter their immediate attention, as we need the money to straighten up accounts for the year.

A brother asks: "Would it be right to allow a young unbaptised person to officiate at the organ during gospel services, provided none of the members are able to play it?" We do not think it right. To ask a person to engage in a gospel invitation which he has not accepted is to say the least ridiculous. If none of the members can play, it had better be left alone.

E. Griffiths and Sister Rose Crisp were married on November 25th at the residence of the bride's parents, in Dandenong. There were present Mr. and Mrs. J. Proctor, Misses Ninnies (2), Mrs. Gillespie, Mr. and Mrs. Brown, Miss Moysey, Mrs. and Miss Mann, Misses Griffiths (2), Mr. J. Griffiths, Mr. D. Griffiths, Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Crisp, Mr. G. Love, Mrs. Spottiswood, Miss Stewart, Misses Morley (2), Miss Horton, Mr. Jabez Thurgood, and A. B. Maston.

The following little incident shows how that a wide awake secretary can, by taking prompt action, very materially assist the Home Missions. Hugh Gray, secretary of the church at Port Fairy, writes to the Conference Secretary as follows:—"Seeing the state of the Home Mission funds, I brought the matter before the brethren on Lord's day. We made up the sum of £3/8/3; cheque herewith. We may be able to do more at the beginning of the year." This prompt action to relieve the exchequer is very commendable.

A very sad incident is reported from America. The preacher of a church was charged with "the excessive use of intoxicants," and when announcing his resignation, told his congregation that "he had learned to drink in their homes. The first time he ever tasted wine, he said, was at the home of a member of the congregation, who was now one of his accusers." No man, whatever his position, can afford to play with evil. Preachers, in themselves, are as weak as other men, and those who tempt them, never dreaming that they can come to any harm, may find too late that Satan has used them to destroy a soul. "It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" Matt. 18: 7.

We trust that all of our readers who during the past three years have been preaching temperance will at the forthcoming elections for the Commonwealth Parliament vote for temperance. We have nothing just now to do with politics in general, but a great moral question like that of the drink trade should lift itself above politics, and all should vote for men who will in Parliament vote for temperance. J. G. Barrett has been a life-long temperance advocate, and can be depended upon to do his best in this direction. Besides, he is one of our own brethren, and we trust that when our Victorian readers are selecting their four for the Senate they will give Bro. Barrett one vote. W. Wilson is standing for the Yarra electorate for the House of Representatives, and we trust that any of our readers who may live in that constituency will give Bro. Wilson their vote and influence.

The following came too late for classification:—

PADDINGTON, N.S.W.—Our fifteen days' mission closed last night, and we had a glorious time. God's blessing has attended the work all along. We held open-air meetings every night in the week, and we

consider they have helped to make the indoor meetings the success they have been. There have been confessions at every service, and a deal of interest manifested by the numbers of questions put in the question boxes and answered the following nights. We are now better known in Paddington as a church than ever before. On Sunday, November 29th, the morning meeting was well attended by members and visitors, and Bro. Bagley welcomed into fellowship 29 who had been baptised during the week. At night we had a large open-air meeting, and when the workers got to the building it was soon filled to its utmost capacity. The choir was in full swing, and sang well. Bro. Bagley preached with great earnestness, and at the close pleaded with the people to accept Christ, and our hearts rejoiced to see 12 accept the loving invitation. Truly God has blessed our united efforts. The church has almost unanimously worked and prayed for success, and God has prompted 74 precious souls to confess Jesus as their Saviour. Bro. Bagley has never failed to declare the whole counsel of God, to point out God's will to man and man's duty to God, and we believe we shall continue to reap, because of the faithful manner in which the good seed has been sown. We are all rejoicing together because the Lord has been good to us and has blessed us abundantly.

Nov. 30.

A. W. SHEARSTON.

Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales and West Australia Home Mission Collections, January 3, 1904.

January 3, 1904.

Love is always costly. It will withhold nothing from the object loved. Love finds no adequate expression save in sacrifice. A cheap ointment would not have expressed that woman's love for Jesus. Anything less than the best she could offer would not have sufficed. Nothing done out of pure love for Christ is ever wasted. The fragrance of that spikenard poured out upon the head of our Lord has filled all the world and all the Christian centuries. The heart of Jesus hungered for human love then as it no doubt does to-day—a love that finds expression in deeds of sacrifice in his name for the welfare of humanity. Shall we count that too costly which is necessary to the progress of his kingdom? Not if we love according to the amount forgiven us.

January 3, 1904.

New South Wales wants £100,
Victoria £350, Sth. Australia
and West Australia
all the churches can give.

We have now a few copies of Canright on Seventh Day Adventism Renounced which we can send to those needing them. Two copies in paper, 3/- post free; cloth 4/-, by post 4/6.

We have now our cheap edition of **ON THE ROCK** ready for sending out. The price is 3d., by post 4d. Anyone buying 50 copies and over we will send them for 3d. post or carriage paid. Anyone taking 500 copies we will place them on board steamer carriage paid to nearest seaport for 2d. each. Just imagine a book of 194 pages for 2d. It is neatly gotten-up, so that you need not be ashamed to give a copy to the Governor-General.

Coming Events.

Observe the time of their coming.—Jeremiah 8: 7

DECEMBER 4 & 5.—There will be a Sale of Work, in connection with the Ladies' Dorcas, in Lygon Street Chapel, on December 4 and 5, Afternoon and Evening, commencing at 3 o'clock. All members of the neighboring churches cordially invited.

DECEMBER 7.—A HOME MISSION RALLY will be held on Monday next, December 7th, at Swanston-street Chapel, 8 p.m. Speakers: H. G. Harvard, A. B. Maston and J. W. Baker. Musical items by Lygon-street Quartette Party.

DECEMBER 8.—Y.P.S.C.E., North Fitzroy, celebrate their first Anniversary on Tuesday, December 8th. Good speakers. Bright meeting. Come and spend a pleasant and profitable evening.

DECEMBER 15.—FAREWELL to H. MAHON, in Temperance Hall, Russell-st., Dec. 15th, at 8 p.m. Chairman, J. Pittman. Speakers: Senator Barrett, J. Hunt, Wm. Wilson and F. W. Greenwood. Selections by Lygon-street Quartette Party and others. Free Collection.

DECEMBER 15.—COLLEGE OF THE BIBLE. The Annual Demonstration and Presentation of First Diploma will take place at Lygon-st. Chapel, Carlton, on Tuesday, December 15th, at 8 p.m. Representative Student speakers.

DECEMBER 17.—JOHNSTON STREET.—A Monster Valedictory Tea Meeting to terminate the work of the church at the above address, and celebrate the opening of the new chapel, corner of Gore and Greaves Street, Fitzroy, will be held at the Tabernacle, Johnston Street, on Thursday evening, December 17th. Tea on Tables at 6.45. Public Meeting at 8 p.m., when addresses will be given by leading speakers. Please come early and avoid the crush.

JANUARY 3, 1904.—Home Mission Sunday. Annual Collection.

JOHANNESBURG, S. Africa.

Church of Christ Meeting-place:—84 KERR ST. Lord's days, Breaking of Bread, 11 a.m. Secretary's Address—WILLIAM BLAKE, Stand 388, Bertram Rd., Troyeville, Johannesburg.

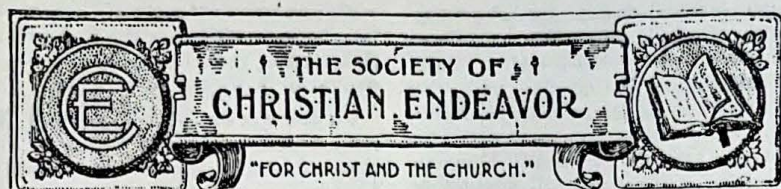
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CHRISTMASTIDE.

A Visit to Bethlehem.

Topic for Dec. 22nd.

SUGGESTED READINGS.

Read all pertaining to the birth and infancy of Jesus; Matt. 1: 1-2; 12; Luke 1: 1-2; 20; John 1: 1-18. The topic deals with Matt. 2: 1-12 and Luke 2: 8-20 especially.

BIRTH OF JESUS.

The Place.—Bethlehem is five or six miles south of Jerusalem. The mother of Jesus lived in Nazareth of Galilee. Divine providence is seen in thus guiding Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem at this time; it was not their own planning, a decree beyond their control was the moving cause. It was fitting that Jesus should be born in the city of David, his royal ancestor. It was also in accordance with prophecy (Micah 5: 2). Matt. 2: 5 shows that the Jews were familiar with this prediction. Later, some, knowing the prophecy and believing that Jesus came out of Galilee, denied that he could be the Messiah (John 7: 41, 42).

The Time.—The Saviour was born probably about 1907 years ago. The Christian era, as we reckon it, was fixed by the monk Dionysius Exiguus in the first part of the sixth century, and he made a mistake of four years. As to the time of year, some will say that one of the things most certain is that it was not December 25th. Very well, then it was some other date; it does no harm but much good for men at some season to have their minds turned heavenward and their hearts filled with goodwill to men.

The Event rather than the date is important. It was the greatest thing that ever happened since the world was made. "If you want to understand Bethlehem, you must go into time before Bethlehem." John, who does not record the birth, tells us its meaning: "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." Maclaren says: "The surface of the fact is the smallest part of the fact. They say that there is seven times as much of an iceberg under water as there is above the surface. And the deepest and most important fact about the nativity of our Lord is that it was not only the birth of an Infant, but the Incarnation of the Word." How little the men of the day understood the event! We have of old exemplified the attitude of different classes towards Jesus:

Seeking the Saviour ... Wise Men, and Shepherds
Neglecting the Saviour ... Priests
Opposing the Saviour ... Herod
May he not be to us, as to them, "The Unrealised Christ."

For only the wise men knelt and praised,
And only the shepherds came to see,
And the rest of the world cared not at all
For the little Christ in the oxen's stall;
And we are angry and amazed
That such a dull, hard thing should be.

How do we keep his birthday now?
We ring the bells and we raise the strain,
We hang up garlands everywhere,
And bid the tapers twinkle fair,
And feast and frolic—and then we go
Back to the same old lives again.

Are we so better, then, than they
Who failed the new-born Christ to see?
To them a helpless Babe—to us
He shines a Saviour glorious,
Our Lord, our Friend, our All—yet we
Are half-asleep this Christmas Day!

THE SHEPHERDS' VISIT.

Luke alone records this. These men were "the representatives of the peasant people, with the 'honest and good heart,' who afterwards formed the bulk of his disciples." God led the shepherds by angels, the Magi by a star, each class while engaged in, and according to nature of, their work. Revelations, it has been said, are never made to idle men. Goethe pointed out that Saul found a kingdom while looking for his father's asses. "Life is full of angels singing to us the songs of heaven, and of stars guiding us to the Redeemer." The adoration of the shepherds is not stated, though probably implied. Their proclamation of the good news is an example to us (Luke 2: 17, 18).

THE WISE MEN.

Who were they?—The name "Magi" originally meant "a sect of Median and Persian scholars; it was subsequently applied (as in Acts 13: 6) to pretended astrologers, or Oriental soothsayers." Simon was of this "caste" (Acts 8: 9). These wise men were "the repositories of science, philosophy, medical skill, and religious mysteries in the countries beyond the Euphrates." They represented the culture of the East. They must have worshipped the true God. They were not Jews; the narrative is that of the Epiphany, or manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. There is much tradition and conjecture regarding their number, names, rank or country. Isa. 60: 3 and Psa. 72: 10 may have suggested to some that they were kings from Arabia. There are still exhibited in Cologne Cathedral the skulls of these three kings, each circled with its golden crown! So if any dispute either the rank or number, we shall point to the skulls!

Why had they come?—They saw a star. Was it natural or supernatural? Kepler calculated that at this time there was visible a brilliant star—or rather the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn appearing as a single star of special brightness. Some have found in this a confirmation of their faith; for my part, I would be chiefly impressed by the wisdom of men who could say Jupiter or Saturn stood over the particular place in Bethlehem where Jesus was. Again, you may ask, Did others see the star, or the wise men only? We do not know. If seen by others, apparently it meant nothing to them. Many people saw apples fall, before Newton learned so much from one. Some have thought that the prophecy of Balaam about the star (Num. 24: 17) may have influenced the Magi. We know that at that time throughout the East men were expecting and looking for a great king to arise among the Jews. Hence the query in Matt. 2: 2.

The earnestness and faith of the wise men are worthy of note—"faith leading to action; faith shown by perseverance; faith overcoming obstacles;

faith humbly accepting God's plan; faith following God's direction." The greatness of the faith is most seen in this, that in the humble house in Bethlehem—not a royal palace, but a lowly cottage—they recognised and adored the King! As was customary for those approaching an Eastern monarch (see 1 Ki. 10: 10; Psa. 72: 10, etc.), they offered him their gifts. Early Christian writers interpreted the gifts as signifying—gold, the king; frankincense, the burial; myrrh, the suffering; others, "myrrh to a mortal, gold to a king, frankincense to God." It may have been that in the providence of God the treasure helped the infant Jesus to escape the hate of those who would murder him by providing means for the journey into Egypt.

"They gave to thee
Myrrh, frankincense, and gold;
But, Lord, with what shall we
Present ourselves before thy Majesty,
Whom thou redeemedst when we were sold?
We've nothing but ourselves, and scarce that
Vile dirt and clay; [neither,
Yet is it soft, and may
Impression take.

Accept it, Lord; and say, this thou hadst rather:
Stamp it, and on this sordid metal make
Thy holy image, and it shall outshine
The beauty of the golden mine."

Notes and News.

The syllabus for 1904 will probably be ready next week.

It is proposed to hold a grand C.E. picnic and camp-meeting at Eltham on February 1st, 1904.

Christmastide gives an opportunity for the Sun-shiners. "A Gift Night" would well suit the topic.

Our Union is still increasing. Kaniva applies for affiliation. Its membership is, 18 active, 13 associate, and 6 honorary. Miss Violet Lloyd is secretary.

F. E. Clark, the founder of the C.E. movement, is expected to land in Auckland on January 20th, 1904. The Victorian Union promises good meetings during March and April.

The Marrickville Society intends having a musical and literary entertainment on January 12th, to celebrate the president's fortieth year of discipleship. Proceeds go to the Marrickville Cottage Hospital. They desire to clear about £20. The Congregationalists have placed a large school-hall at their disposal.

The secretary of our Victorian Union acknowledges the receipt of copies of the *Missionary Intelligencer* and the *Missionary Tidings*, two splendid papers issued by our American brethren. The Union recommends that every society should endeavor to subscribe for at least one copy for its Missionary Committee. F. M. Ludbrook, Collins-st., will be glad to supply.

OUR BIBLE DATING PLAN.

Date.	O.T.	N.T.
December 15	... Amos 1,2,3	... Revelation 6
" 16	... " 4,5,6	... " 7
" 17	... " 7,8,9	... " 8
" 18	... Obadiah	... " 9
" 19	... Jonah 1,2,3,4	... " 10
" 20	... Micah 1,2,3	... " 11
" 21	... " 4,5	... " 12

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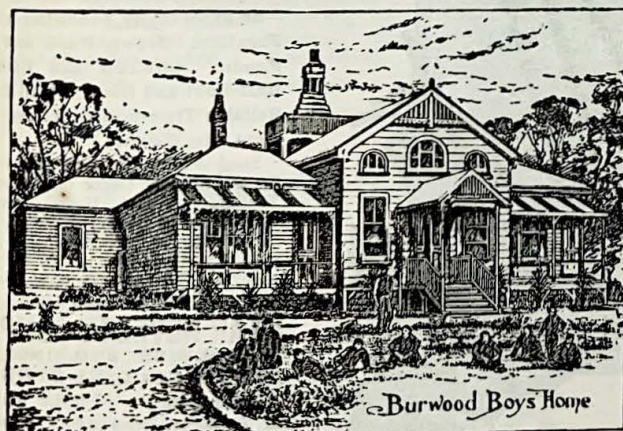
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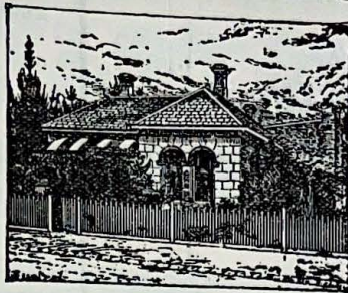
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