

THE ONE NEEDED PRESENCE.

By John Clark Hill.

Christ is needed in the gatherings of believers. He is always present, but, alas, His presence is not always recognized by all who gather.

What do we come to church for anyway? Why do we attend prayer-meetings? The very pernicious notion is widespread that people go to hear sermons. Of course where this notion prevails; people don't care whether they are late or not, so long as they arrive in time for the sermon.

A service of public worship, if properly conducted, is a unity, and if any one part is ignored or dodged, the whole service suffers. Where the majority of the congregation regard the sermon as the main thing and a thing presented to them on which they are to pass judgment of approval or disapproval, then the service is to them empty of true worship, and it is a professed thing.

Since this idea of worship as a "preaching service" is so widespread, we cannot wonder that so many cold-hearted, indifferent church members really prefer to stay at home and occupy themselves with that modern literary atrocity, the metropolitan Sunday paper, or their magazines and books. If it is literature they are after, they can easily find something far more meritorious than the preacher's sermon. No preacher, however great, would put his sermons in competition with the Sunday paper, the popular magazine or the "best seller."

No, no, that is not what the gatherings of the church are for, not preaching so much as associating with Christ and with each other for mutual helpfulness, that we may become better fitted for the service of Christ and of each other.

We have, to a very unfortunate extent, lost sight of the real thing in worship and in church association, and it should therefore be our renewed and constant aim to restore the church to its proper place in our own lives and in the lives of others.

We meet, we are drawn together, really by Christ, to meet with him. We are called into the fellowship of the Son of God and to receive the direct impress of his gracious Spirit. There can be no true communion of saints if Christ is not with them.

It is a good thing then to associate together in Christ's name, for we have the assurance of His presence. It is a good thing to meet in the mid-week informal service, because there we have the great advantage of each other's help, encouragement and prayers.

It is a great, a valuable privilege to be in this association. In this view of it, church membership is a very real, practical, tangible thing. Let us then not forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, and so much the more as we see the day approaching.

Rev. James Rollins, of London, speaking on "How to Meet Temptation," said: "Our Lord's method is the only safe method, that is to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation. To be a good man or a good woman is a serious business in a world like this, and it must have some attention and endeavor. We must understand ourselves and the seasons and the times when we are liable to be tempted, and we must meet the temptation before we really come to it."

The greater our conception of God, the greater will be our own life.—W. Dale.

There are thoughtless people who seem never to be aware of the truth that every time we pass judgment upon others we also pass judgment upon ourselves.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BOOK.

By Ian Maclaren.

If a preacher with the Bible in his hands is not positive, he has fallen short of his vocation. It is within his function to instruct and to defend, but he is chiefly a prophet with a message to the world from God. He is a witness to the supremacy of the soul, the reality of the unseen, the glory of the religious life—affirming with unflinching voice those things which all men wish to believe and which they hold dimly in their minds. For the preacher of the gospels the first qualification is not that he be learned or eloquent, but that he believe; and whatever be the case with other men, he must believe with the narrowness of his bones. If this be impossible, let him become anything he pleases, but not a preacher; and if doubt settles upon him, let him face and master it in secret—in the wilderness with God, and stand before his fellow men with unclouded face. There are enough men to ventilate doubts without the preacher's assistance. From him the world expects faith, and the dynamic of one man believing with all his mind and all his heart, is incalculable; it is a reservoir of life in the midst of a bloodless and worn-out society. Doubt can be got anywhere; faith ought to be supplied by the pulpit.

OFT HAVE I CRAVED.

Oft have I craved, dear Lord, it had been mine
With sight and sense Thy presence to adore,
My costliest hoard of ointments rare to pour
Upon Thy feet wash them in the brine
Of my repentant tears. Hath earth a shrine
To hold the homage of my heart's best store,
Or all the world a lure to tempt me more
Once having looked upon Thy face divine?
Yet Faith's sure vision shames our mortal eyes
Since I, because I have not seen, am blest—
No vases fragrant with their prisoned sweet,
I break for Thee, but Thou wilt not despise.
A broken heart, weary of life's unrest.
Make it Thine own, I lay it at Thy feet.

—Congregationalist.

WAR OR PEACE?

Sin is a state of war. Peace comes only through right doing,—sin's victor. It is not hard, therefore, to read in the faces of men whether their lives are at peace or at war. One who has stopped warring against God by complete surrender to Jesus Christ has a different look in his face from him who is holding on to sin. There is a peace in the life of the surrender man that no one can know save on those same terms. There is a restless misery in the life of the man who is putting his will over against God's that is a foretaste of hell. The man who has won God's peace on God's terms still has fighting to do; but now he is fighting with God on his side, and he knows that victory is absolutely sure. There is joy and exultation in such a fight. The man who prefers his own will to God's is fighting, too, but with what a difference! He knows that the end is sure, and that it is eternal defeat. The most miserable of all those who fight God are those who are really on God's side,—who have put their hand to the plow and are looking back. Why should we choose misery, when we may have peace?—Sunday School Times.

LESSONS FROM THE SEA.*

Some Bible Hints.

The sea is three times the size of all the land; yet God holds it in His hand as a dewdrop (v. 24).

Man is helpless in a storm at sea; but the most terrible storm is helpless before God's least whisper (v. 25).

In the midst of any storm there are always two calms: God's heart, and the heart of God's child (v. 26).

Not all men come to their desired haven, but all that wish God's will, though their haven may be the bottom of the sea (v. 29).

Suggestive Thoughts.

A ship's company is a little world. How little do the first-cabin passengers and the steerage know of one another! Yet they all are in the same boat.

You will be less seasick if you do not give up to it, if you stay on deck and keep moving around. So with your health on the sea of life.

When you leave the sea, carry its leisure and restfulness with you to the land.

How eager we grow for home when on the sea, and how we count the days and the hours! Are we as eager for our home above?

A Few Illustrations.

No line is drawn on the sea, yet the helmsman steers the course as truly as if he moved between stone walls. Thus is it with God's providence on the sea of human life.

Head-winds help as much as they hinder, because they brighten the furnace fires.

It is only recently that the wireless telegraph could follow a ship across the ocean; but life's ocean has always had prayer.

The sea has shores; but ah! the wideness of God's mercy! There are no shores: to that!

To Think About.

Do I trust God as I trust the captain of my ship?

Is my life course true?

Have I seen my Pilot?

A Cluster of Quotations.

He that will learn to pray, let him go to sea.—George Herbert.

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests.—Byron.

Mystery of waters, never-slumbering sea!

Impassioned orator, with lips subdued.—Hume.

Whose waves are arguments to prove a God.—Robert Montgomery.

Surely oak and threefold brass surrounded his heart who first trusted a frail vessel to the merciless ocean.—Horace.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.

- M., Aug. 10.—God controls the sea. Ex. 14: 15-21.
- T., Aug. 11.—Christ calmed the sea. Matt. 8: 23-27.
- W., Aug. 12.—The sea praises God. Isa. 24: 12-15.
- T., Aug. 13.—Seafarers in His hand. Acts 27: 21-26.
- F., Aug. 14.—The sea God's instrument. Jonah 1: 22-15.
- S., Aug. 15.—The sea God's school. 2 Cor. 11: 23-27.
- Sun., Aug. 16.—Topic—Lessons from the sea. Ps. 107: 23-32.

Christ's friendship must become the soul of pleasure as well as the strength of the heart in patience and in pain.

* Young People's Topic, Aug. 16: Lessons from the Sea. Penn. 107: 23-32.