

Contributions.

A Reverie.

PETER ANDERSON.

At times when we are far away from home In some strange city—on some lonely shore— Quick as a flash the consciousness will come, That we have seen it all, long—long—be ore; We turn some corner of the busy street, And every tree that lines the level way, The buildings, that our startled glances greet, Down to the bounding waters of the bay, Revive some picture of this very scene, Stamped on our souls, though never seen before, We feel that with us it has ever been, And with us will remain forevermore; And to our hearts there comes a happy glow, Though homeless strangers in a foreign land, As if some loving friend of long ago Had spoken, and had grasped us by the hand.

Or rambling in some forest, old and still, Far under bright and sunny Southern skies, Where vines go wandering at "their own sweet will," By thousands, through the trees that round us rise, And trailing Spanish moss, from every limb Hangs out its heavy folds of silvery gray; And some deep bayou through the forest dim Goes winding, ever, on its devious way.

We turn some angle of the lazy stream, And every curve along the lonely shore, Waters and woods and skies, all blending seem Into a picture, seen so long before, That a strange terror turns our pulses cold, A touch of mysteries in our spirits hid, An awful sense of being very old, Older than Egypt's oldest pyramid.

But the weird feeling soon fades—far away— And we are young again—as other men— A boon companion of the balmy day, And nature is a bosom friend again; And still we feel that some immense mistake Lies hid in all the things that surest seem, That in such moments we almost awake, And that our waking lives are but a dream,

That when the final call to us shall come, That sets our blind and baffled spirits free, The death we dread will be but going home Where all the good we longed for here, shall be; Where we shall recognize all that we see, All that we vain would learn, find that we know, Where we shall gain, and gain eternally All that we love, and seem to lose below.

Hepworth, Ont.

Christmas Thoughts.

Christmas time has come again, bringing joyous, happy re-unions of loved ones to many a home. In many other homes "There's a minor in the carol, and shadow in the light, And a spray of cypress twining with the holly-wreath to-night." There are many homes to which the loved ones will never more return. With what peculiar sweetness those tender words of the loving Saviour come home to aching hearts: "I go to prepare a place for you, where I am there ye may be also;" and so we feel assured our loved ones who have fallen asleep in Jesus are safely cared for by the One that conquered death. The blessedness of this sweet assurance came home to me very forcibly to day as I looked

on the face of a silent sleeper. In the presence of death one seems to realize more fully the folly of spending our time on those things that end with this mortal life. For many of us the message may come before another Christmas anniversary, and how could the messenger find us better than working and watching for the Master?

Let us specially remember those who have shown their devotion to the Master to such an extent that they have given up home and friends, and have gone afar to tell the story of Jesus and His love. May we not prove unmindful of those at our doors who need our aid and sympathy. The time is so short in which we can work we should be very diligent in redeeming the time. Our Father never forgets us. He knows all about the difficulties of the way for each one of us. He will bring every faithful child safe home at last. I will close with the words of greeting that came to me from a dear sister from afar, "Wishing you a happy Christmas and a useful New Year."

B. S.

The New Year.

Again has dawned the glad New Year With all its mirth and happy cheer, We bid the Old a kind good night, And greet the New with faces bright.

And since we'er spared to see this day, Oh may we all with fervor pray, Father, for all the good we see O teach us how to worship Thee.

Help us to live more in Thy fear Than we have done in the Old Year, Help us by kindness still to prove The nobleness of Christian love.

For aught we know this day may be The last New Year we'er may see, O Father keep us in the way That leads to heaven and endless day.

E. C.

The Commission vs. Denominationalism.

IX.

T. B. KNOWLES.

That the exalted Son of God invested the gospel, as first proclaimed by His apostles, with His own divine and unchangeable authority; and, that neither he nor they gave to anyone permission to alter, add to or take from what is taught therein, as necessary to faith and practice, cannot be denied. Nor can it be shown from the Scriptures that the apostles left the right to any successors to change in any way what they taught; and practised. No man, set of men, or ecclesiastical power may assume therefore to be their successors, or change the terms of forgiveness, or substitute new tests of fellowship and conditions of membership in the church. The apostles, through their own teachings, are their own successors. This was plainly assured them by Christ, when He said to them, "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." With the same assurance He closes the book of divine revelation with the warning: "If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book." These words are the "Cherubim and flaming sword" placed here to protect the way of life contained in the sublime truths and divinely appointed conditions of salvation, from the touch and defilement of the traditions of men. Archbishop Whately has well said: "Successors in the apostolic office, the apostles have none. As witnesses of the resurrection, as dispensers of miraculous gifts, as inspired oracles of divine revelation, they have no successors. But as members, as ministers, as govern-

ors of Christian communities, their successors are the regularly admitted members, the lawfully ordained ministers, the regular and recognized governors of a regularly subsisting Christian church, especially of a church which, conforming in fundamentals . . . to gospel principles, claims and exercises no rights beyond those which have the clear sanction of our Great Master, as being essentially implied in the very character of a community." (Ital. mine.) Now, denominationalism does not "conform in fundamentals . . . to gospel principles," but, "claims and exercises rights beyond those which have the clear sanction of our Great Master;" its teachings and practices are plainly outside of the true succession; out of tune with the apostolic teaching and practice, and most surely tend to detract from the regnant authority of Jesus Christ. For, "he that heareth you, heareth me," said Christ. "And he that rejecteth you, rejecteth me." He will brook no tampering with his word. The commission to the apostles: "Go . . . preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is immersed shall be saved," means precisely what it says, that, and nothing more nor less; and our King will suffer no change to be made by man, or any alteration of the law of induction into His kingdom, thus tersely announced by himself; and the same is true of every duty taught and act of obedience required in the gospel. Yet, denominationalism certainly has worked many changes that contrast widely with the pure, simple gospel of Pentecost. It has not only split the one body into sects, and turned unity into discord, contrary to the prayer of Jesus, "That they may all be one," but it has assumed the right to change the institutions of the gospel to suit the opinions and conveniences of men.

The Catholic church first led the way, and Protestantism has followed in her steps. See this frankly acknowledged in the Douay Bible, with Haydock's notes, in the following style: "Baptized.—The word baptism signifies a washing, particularly when it is done by immersion, or by dipping or plunging a thing under water, which was formerly the ordinary way of administering the sacrament of baptism. But the church, which cannot change the least article of the Christian faith, is not tied up in matters of discipline and ceremonies. Not only the Catholic church, but also the pretended Reformed churches have altered this primitive custom in giving the sacrament of baptism, and now allow of baptism by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person baptized." And when we let such leading men as John Calvin, and Dean Stanley, and the various standards of the churches, speak for themselves on this question, we find that the bold charge thus made against "the pretended Reformed churches," is only too true. Thus, Calvin, while freely admitting that, "The word baptize signifies to immerse," and that "It is certain that the rite of immersion was observed by the ancient church;" and again, in his notes on John iii., says: "It may be inferred that baptism was administered by John and Christ, by plunging the whole body under water. Here we perceive how baptism was administered among the ancients, for they immersed the whole body in water." And after thus acknowledging that immersion was the baptism of the ancient church, yet he says: "But whether the person who is baptized be wholly immersed, and whether thrice or once, or whether water be only poured or sprinkled upon him, is of no importance. Churches ought to be left at liberty in this respect, to act according to the difference of countries." (Institutes, ch. 15.) Again he says: "The church did grant liberty

to herself since the beginning, to change the rites somewhat, excepting the substance." To the same effect is the language of the learned Dean Stanley, in his essay on baptism. He says: "We now pass to the changes in the form itself. For the first thirteen centuries, the almost universal practice was that of which we read in the New Testament, and which is the very meaning of the word 'baptized'—that those who were baptized were plunged, submerged, immersed into the water. That practice is still, as we have seen, continued in Eastern churches" . . . "Even in the Church of England it is still observed in theory. The rubric in the public baptism of infants enjoins that, unless for special causes, they are to be dipped, not sprinkled." . . . "With the few exceptions just mentioned, the whole of the Western churches have now substituted for the ancient bath the ceremony of letting fall a few drops of water on the face." . . . "Not by any decree of council or parliament, but by the general sentiment of Christian liberty, this remarkable change was effected. Beginning in the thirteenth century, it has gradually driven the ancient Catholic usage out of the whole of Europe." . . . "Baptism by sprinkling was rejected by the whole ancient church (except in the rare cases of death-beds, or extreme necessity) as no baptism at all." . . . "And on philological grounds it is quite correct, to translate 'John the Baptist,' by 'John the Immerser.'" And now, what position does the learned Dean take, with respect to this striking innovation? Here is his weak apology: "The practice of immersion, though peculiarly suitable to the Southern and Eastern countries, for which it was designed, was not found reasonable in the countries of the North and West." . . . "It is a striking example of the triumph of common sense and convenience over the bondage of form and custom." "Bondage of form;" indeed! Immersion; "that of which we read in the New Testament, and which is the very meaning of the word 'baptize,' and in which also the church at first followed, no doubt," says the Dean. "The examples of the apostles and of their Masters." To follow then, the positive command of Christ, is to yield to "the bondage of form," and to substitute a mere human invention, for a divine command is "a striking example of the triumph of common sense and convenience!" Let it be marked that this is the highest authority for the change from immersion to sprinkling, that Dean Stanley has produced! And, who can do any better? Doubtless, the Dean intends to stand by the creed of his church, which says, "The church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies," and that, "It is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like; for at all times they have been diverse, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's word." And again, "Every particular or national church hath authority to ordain, change and abolish, ceremonies or rites of the church ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying." Immersion was never "ordained only by man's authority," however, and can never be changed or abolished by man's authority. The language of the Discipline is as follows: "Every particular church may ordain, change or abolish, rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification." The Quakers or Friends, hold and teach as follows: "There are two ceremonies in use among most professors of the Christian name—water baptism and what is termed the Lord's Supper. The first of these is generally esteemed the essential means of

initiation into the church of Christ; and the latter of maintaining communion with him. We hold . . . that the baptism with water, administered by his forerunner, John, belonged, as the latter confessed, to an inferior dispensation, John iii. 30. With respect to the other rite, we believe that communion between Christ and His church is not maintained by that nor any other external performance, but only by a real participation of His divine nature (1 Peter, ii. 4), through faith; that this is the supper alluded to in the Revelation (Rev. iii. 20)." The practice of the Friends clearly shows the meaning of the language here quoted. They reject both baptism and the Lord's supper because, as they say, "That where the substance is attained, it is unnecessary to attend to the shadow, which doth not confer grace," etc. (Ency. R. R. 995). Surely, here is still a more "striking example of the triumph of common sense and convenience over the bondage of form and custom!" Just allow human "convenience" to be the rule, and every divine command and duty required by the gospel, may be swept out of existence without even an apology.

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