

[Oct. 14, 1886.]

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DOMINION CHURCHMAN.

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of the Synod that arrangements had not been made for more perfect by reporting its proceedings.

Guelph, 27th Sept., 1886. Yours truly,
GEO. ELLIOTT.

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

SIR,—As a consequence of your long experience in the editorial chair, your senses are, no doubt, through reason of use, exercised, to discern what is good, and what is evil. The article I now submit to your keen criticism, is on a topic much abused by some, less so by others, and not well understood by many. In it you will find a new aspect, which has hitherto, so far as I know, escaped the enquiries of sound theologians. But unless the most High open our understanding, we shall remain in darkness. In the Lord's prayer is contained the petition, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Commenting on it the Lord says, "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." Now if He forgive, can a priest condemn? Again He says, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." If He condemn, can a priest forgive? Thus, you see, auricular confession coupled with priestly absolution, is very sinful, inasmuch as it betrays a want of confidence in the Redeemer's teachings, set forth in Matt. vi. 6-15. Perhaps you will say, he also says, "Who soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them," John xx. 23. It may be shown this power refers to church discipline, see 2 Cor. ii. 1, 10. We perceive by this passage, and also by Jas. v. 15, this power is transferable. In the latter case, as the contingent sentence shews, both forms of forgiveness may be required. It is evident the Lord forgives the sick, when he raises him up, see Mark ii. 9. Whether it is easier to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," or to say, "Arise and walk?" The sick probably may have been an open profligate, and cut off from communion, in which case they are to forgive him. Suppose the contingent sentence to be, "If he have not committed sins," there would be no need for apostolic or priestly forgiveness. Unless the Lord had given this power of punishing the impious, and of restoring the penitent, where would church government be?

Wallacetown, Sept. 23rd, 1886. WM. MONSON.

DEFECTS IN THE CHURCH SYSTEM.

SIR,—I have read with much interest the letter of your correspondent, "A Priest in Ontario Diocese." The defects in the church's system he there refers to, are not confined to his own diocese, they are felt by the people in the rural districts throughout the province of Ontario. The field is indeed large, the willing labourers, I believe, are not few, but the fathers of the church refuse to empower the men to do the work.

I too, "have had a little experience," a few months ago, I started holding services in a village ten miles from any church, with no little success. Though Dissent had become thoroughly founded in the place, I found family after family ready, and willing and able too, (so far as finances were concerned) to establish a flourishing mission. The weekly offertory more than paid expenses, we even paid into connectional funds, and had begun to think of building a house for the Lord to dwell in. But what encouragement did we receive from the church? When I came to the Bishop to get his sanction, I am merely told that he will not recognise the mission, and though it is beyond his jurisdiction to forbid me reading the church service in a hall, he refuses to give me his episcopal authority. True I may go on and hold the services, the people will be only delighted to have the beautiful service read by anyone, but what encouragement is there for a man who is desirous of receiving holy orders, when his Bishop will recognise neither himself or his work, but will rather abuse his divine office and misuse his apostolic authority by forbidding men to officiate in his churches for no greater crime, than that they preach true Catholicity.

I (unlike your correspondent) am unincumbered. I am anxious, yea, I am determined by God's help, to enter the Christian ministry, and I am willing to offer myself for just such work as he refers to, if the "horse and buckboard" are not forthcoming, I will accept instead, a supply of shoelather, and trust to God for food and raiment, on conditions that the Church will recognise my work, and when it is completed, if I have proved myself worthy, lend me a helping hand in preparing myself for the holy priesthood. And I believe I am only one of hundreds. Among my own personal acquaintances, there are a number of talented young men who would enter the ranks at once, if the church would open up some channel by which they could work their way into office, but who are driven to accept a more hospitable reception in some other of the learned professions.

I do sincerely pray that God, in mercy to His holy Church, will open the eyes of those men who have

been appointed to the apostolic office, that they may see the spiritual starvation of the Canadian nation in the rural districts.

True the service conducted by a layman lacks the sacraments, but it is at least better than a schismatic meeting.

A LAYMAN IN HURON DIOCESE.

THE PROVINCIAL SYNOD—THINGS UNSAID.

No. 1.

SIR,—Under the above head, I will by your permission, make some comments on the proceedings of the late Synod. I begin with the opening services. There was much to be thankful for in the order and dignity of the Eucharist, the excellence of the music, the power and eloquence of the sermon, the large number of communicants. Yet there were some things open to criticism. Not all liked the elaborate music of the creed. Personally I have no fault to find on that score, quite the contrary, but the kind and, perhaps, wiser friends, that it inconvenienced, hope that at another Synod there will be a creed in which they can audibly join. A graver error, of which I am ashamed to write, lest churchmen in other lands should chance to read of it, was the omission of the prescribed oblation of the bread and wine, which were on the Holy Table from the beginning of the service, covered as if after communion. This and the lesser matter of the entire absence of altar ornaments were the more noticeable in view of the general character of the service.

In this first letter, one may also say a word about the newspaper reports. They cannot be said to have been made for the dignity of the Synod, or illustrated the dignity and independence of the press. It would seem more dignified to reserve all party comments for leading articles, and not to let anything of the sort mar a "report," and members find it disagreeable to be misrepresented as having said some silly thing ludicrously unlike what one did say, or as having supported what one voted against, or suggested something of which one disapproved. The reports might have very appropriately ended with the commercial formula E. and O. E. Of course a large part of the trouble is through accident for which it may be that the reporters are not to blame. Let us hope that the official report that is to be made at the next session, and furnished to the papers, may prove impartial and accurate.

I pass on to notice the surprise with which one heard the memorial from the Synod of Toronto on the subject of the Revised Version. That body had resolved "That a memorial from the Synod of this diocese be presented to the Provincial Synod, at its next session, praying that the Provincial Synod shall consider the expediency of authorizing the use of the Revised Versions of the Old and New Testaments in reading the lessons at morning and evening prayer, in all churches in this ecclesiastical province, beginning on such day as the Provincial Synod may appoint, and that the Lord Bishop be requested to nominate a committee to draft such memorial," *Journal*, 1886, pp. 58. At the time I took this as a resolution to request the Provincial Synod to consider the matter, a harmless motion enough, which might be let pass unchallenged by men who would not for a moment concur in a petition to adopt those versions. The memorial which I have not before me, seemed to argue in favour of the new versions. Perhaps I misapprehended, at the time, the force of the Toronto resolutions, and it may be that the majority were prepared to petition in favour of the authorization. With all respect to the excellent Torontonians responsible, I venture to say that it is a pity the Synod of Toronto should be placed in that position before the world. Otherwise the resolution did no harm. The early rejection of the proposal by the Upper House saved us from what might have been a long discussion, leading by a less painless path to the same result. To the good men who suffered disappointment, it may be suggested that the excellencies of the Revised Version of the New Testament were generally, if not universally, within the power of two or three educated divines and scholars, or perhaps of one, to have produced; its defects, or, if our good friends prefer the expression, its questionable features, grow out of radical theories about manuscripts and translation, which, at the best, can only claim that they are still *sub judice*; theories which must be either sound or very perverse and ridiculous. Now, surely such excellencies cannot be a reason for giving our imprimatur to a version which, to put it mildly, lies under suspicion of such defects, just as the neatness and expertness of a servant would not, as to the question of engaging him, counterbalance the opinion of good masters that he was habitually dishonest, and had occasional fits of drunkenness, and that even his manner was not suited to the position he desired. Nothing but the victory of the underlying theories in question, could justify the solemn Synodical authorization of the Revised Version for the sake of the cases of

clearer or more accurate translation. The version to be desired may be in the womb of the future. Haste would be equally dangerous and impolitic. It is an old proverb: "*Canis festinans cecos parit catulos.*"

Yours,
O. P. FORD.

Notes on the Bible Lessons

FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS, ON
THE INSTITUTE LEAFLETS.

Published under authority of the Sunday School Committee of the Toronto Diocese.

Compiled from Rev. J. Watson's "Lessons on the Miracles and Parables of our Lord" and other writers.

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BIBLE LESSON.

"The Wicked Husbandmen."—St. Matt. xxi. 33, 45.

This parable, like that of the two sons, was spoken to the chief priests and scribes. By it our Lord foreshadowed the rejection of the Jews and the call of the Gentiles. St. Luke tells us in chapter xx. 19, that they saw that it was spoken against them. The figure of a vineyard is again used as in last parable.

1. *The Vineyard.* The Jewish Church is here represented. "The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the House of Israel." God is the owner of it, see what he did with it, verse 33. He planted it, fenced it in, so as to keep out intruders; made a wine press for treading out the grapes, built a watch tower in the midst for security. Similarly described in Isaiah v. 2. All this is a picture of what God did with the Jewish people, chose them out of all the nations of the earth, separated them, taught and trained them, gave them His Word, a good land, too, good laws, teachers, victory and protection from their enemies, so that it could be truly said, as in Isaiah v. 4, "What could have been done more for the vineyard?"

2. *The Husbandmen.* Having planted the vineyard, we are told in the parable, that the Master having rented it to certain husbandmen, goes away for a time. This is meant to represent God's seeming absence, as shown by His ceasing to reveal His will so directly after he had brought his people into the Promised Land. At the vintage time a Messenger comes, and then others, to see that all is going on well, and to receive the portion of the grapes specified as the rent. The Master had a right to expect fruit, every necessary had been provided by him, but the husbandmen had been careless, and had no fruit to send. So God had a right to expect from the Jewish nation fruits, Isaiah v. 7. Righteousness, gratitude, obedience, faithful service. Did He get them? See what these husbandmen did, verses 35, 36; not content with cheating their Master, they ill treated His messengers, and even killed some of them. And yet the Lord of the vineyard was patient, and sent another messenger, His only Son, saying "they will reverence my Son," but no, verses 38, 39. The Son murdered, His body cast out of the vineyard. Having finished this parable our Lord asks His hearers what punishment such ingratitude would merit, verse 40. They answer without hesitation that they would deserve to be turned out and to be put to death. Strange that in giving this answer they should be condemning themselves. For they were the wicked husbandmen. No people had made so bad a return as they had for all the blessings bestowed upon them. See 1 Kings xviii. 4; 1 Sam. xxii. 18; 1 Kings xix. 10; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, 16; Neh. ix. 26; St. Matt. xxiii. 31, 37; Heb. xi. 36, 37. And yet see how long-suffering God had been with them, sent messages of love again and again, see Jer. xlii. 4; vii. 25; xxix. 10. At last, in the fullness of time, God sent His Son, and how had they received Him, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." They dealt with Him just as the husbandmen did with their Master's son. "This is the heir, come let us kill him." "They took counsel together for to put him to death," St. John xi. 53. Before another Sabbath came the Heir had been crucified "without the gate," Heb. xiii. 12; St. John xix. 17. This parable was a warning to the Jews of their coming punishment, the Jewish Church was now to make way for the Christian dispensation, a great Church to aid and which should embrace all nations. "The Holy Catholic Church," see the Creed. And who was to be the Head of it? verse 42. "The Son" they "cast out," the "stone" they rejected, Acts iv. 11; Ephes. ii. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 6, 7. Has the parable any lesson for us? We are in God's vineyard. He expects fruit from us. Are we yielding any? Not necessarily any outward violence, but St. Paul mentions in Heb. vi. 6, some that "crucify the Son of God afresh," many do that now, every wilful sin men commit is doing it. May we never be ranged among the rejectors of Christ, but rather may we listen to His voice, and accept His message of salvation.