

ment. But where is there any similar provision for the breaking of the promise voluntarily made with knowledge that it cannot be kept?

There are passages of Scripture which are so far-reaching that an apostle only could appreciate their meaning. There are provisions taking the will for the deed that only the One who sat in judgment upon the widow's mite can administer, but the Puritan in his strength and we in our weakness have formulated these into covenants as solemn as oaths and have bound ourselves to keep them to the letter. This surely is a futile attempt to duplicate our obligations, and that unnecessarily. Ananias and Sapphira undertook to do something which they need not have undertaken and failed in performance. The act that is performed by reason of the pledge and not merely because the Founder of our religion made it a duty, will not greatly benefit the doer. One cannot say that it is indispensable. The Presbyterian layman subscribes no covenant. The Congregationalist does. Laws impossible of performance become unheeded. Even the covenant is rarely produced in some churches. In others it is not pondered over. In the covenant meeting, the place for confession, one would expect each member to say expressly whether he had kept it or not. Does anyone frequently hear such a confession? The repetition of the covenant must become lip service. Surely a consciousness of not keeping promises must be demoralizing. Think of the child who expects milk and on the day he is baptized is asked to partake of meat that the Puritans provided for him, and of which he has perhaps never before heard. Has that been unwholesome for the child?

I cannot see the difference between governing men in their duties by a covenant and by a rule or law, and I thought that the argument of St. Paul shows that the latter had been a failure.

I have tried to discover why the Independents adopted these covenants in their churches. It must have been this—the belief in the necessity of a written constitution for a congregational society and in the insufficiency of the Scriptures for that purpose. If that is valid I do propose that the passages of Scripture having relation to our duties and formulated in these covenants should be formulated in another document and that the members should only be asked to say I believe that the Scriptures teach this. Surely this is obligation enough for the Baptist. If it is objected that this would be a creed let me say that a covenant involves a creed. Indeed the new covenant now proposed expressly contains a promise to "sustain its" (the churches) "doctrines." And that must mean the doctrines as comprised in the articles. This constitutes a much longer creed than the layman is accustomed to in other churches. If you are required to "sustain its doctrines" you are implicitly required to believe them. Instead of shortening creeds we are making them longer. But such as statement I have suggested, recognizing the teaching of the Scripture, is a recognition of the obligation. Anything more is more than a yes, yea, or nay, nay. Any argument I have seen in favor of the subscription to a covenant would be satisfied by requiring subscription to a statement of that character.

I am sorry to write this but I believe it to be a necessary protest on my own behalf, although I am quite well aware that no one will pay the slightest heed to it.

C. C.

Love as an Element of Criticism.

BY PROF. SAMUEL C. MITCHELL.

I have two friends to whom I am devoted. Both are admirable men, strong in their convictions of duty. In all of their characteristics they are unlike, and especially so in their temperaments. Both are ardent Christians, endeavoring to do whatever they can for the cause of truth. It pains me that my two friends are not friendly to one another. There is enmity between them. Neither can understand the actions, much less the motives, of the other. Were it not so distressing to me, it would be amusing to listen to the curious misrepresentations which one makes of the conduct of the other. As I have the confidence of both men, it is easy for me to see how mistaken each is in his construction of the other. Sometimes when Mr. A. has acted from the sincerest motives, and in really the wisest way, Mr. B. has been able to see in all this only another instance of his peccation and chicanery. Loving them as I do, I know there are sterling qualities in each. Why is it that they cannot see these qualities in one another? Love is absent, and love is to the understanding what light is to the eye.

In the Protestant cemetery at Rome, near St. Paul's Gate, is a grave upon whose simple marble headstone is carved: "Here lies one whose name was written in water." It is a spot to which go thousands of English and American travelers, desiring to pay homage to the gifted young

poet who sleeps there. How came this English poet to rest in foreign soil? What is the significance of the singular inscription which he directed should be put above his grave? The sad story of Keats' life is well-known. When his first poem of any length came out it was mercilessly attacked by Jeffrey, the caustic editor of the Edinburgh Review. Keats was young, was sensitive, was just hesitatingly trying his poetic powers. By these unfeeling shafts of Jeffrey he was stung to the quick. His subsequent work met with the same forbidding reception. He withdrew from his island home, seeking refuge in a foreign land. Here, ere long, through sheer mortification, he died. It is now agreed that in Keats England lost a genius of the first order, a poet who some authorities are inclined to rank next to Shakespeare, because of the promise of rare power which the charm of his verse, especially in warmth of imagination, disclosed.

What is the explanation of Jeffrey's cruel onslaught upon this bard whose lute breathed forth unaccustomed melodies? Jeffrey had accepted certain standards in literature, certain tests in poetry. These canons had crystallized in his mind. Here was a new order of writing, a new song, a strange star. In Jeffrey there was found no appreciation, no sympathy, no love for this fresh vein in literature, so narrow had become his vision and so egotistic his judgment. He had in this matter no "hospitality for new ideas." Had there been in him more humility, more generous appreciation of what did not happen to spare with his petty rule, more genuine love for literature and light, Keats would have been spared the rankling wounds that hurried him to the grave, and England would have saved a genius that might have added further lustre to her already splendid roll of writers. That was a wise saying of Augustine, "Nothing conquers but truth; the victory of truth is love."

At Champel, just outside the walls of Geneva, on an October day in 1553, there could have been seen burning at the stake the martyr Servetus, having bound to his body a Christian book which he had written. He had been brought to this fate by a Protestant preacher, Calvin, to whom Europe and America are so indebted for liberty and intellectual leadership. Who was Servetus? A thinker of rare power, who maintained the freedom of the will; who insisted that the Bible is the sole guide in spiritual matters; who said that faith is a prerequisite to baptism and the Lord's supper; who was passionately devoted to the person of Christ; who opposed all persecution for religious opinions; who advanced the sciences of geography and medicine, making the discovery of the circulation of the blood a hundred years before Harvey. No bad man, was he? Would it not seem that these two champions of Protestantism should have stood shoulder to shoulder in the dire struggle at that hour with catholicism? How came then Calvin to consign Servetus to the flames? Calvin had forged a system of thought with which Servetus did not agree in some of its speculative features, particularly as to freedom of the will. Calvin was severely logical, Servetus was somewhat mystical. Servetus desired to persuade Calvin from his metaphorical errors, and Calvin in consequence was bent on burning Servetus for obstinacy in not accepting his opinions. The long drawn-out trial is a sad story. We hardly know which to pity most—Servetus in his loathsome cell and awaiting the faggot, or Calvin perverting his masterful powers in trying to secure the conviction of this Spanish stranger, who had done him no harm. A touch of sympathy on the part of Calvin would have put out those fires on Champel and saved the church of God unending flame. Committed to his own encrusted system, Calvin was unable to brook the slightest divergence from his views. In this tragedy at least, he showed not love for man, but for logic consistently wrought out. Had Calvin's judgment been suffused with love, he would have gripped Servetus to him as an ally and not have bounded him to the stake as a heretic.

In one of his lectures I heard the late Prof. Henry Drummond say that sometime in studying astronomy he had by means of the "finder" directed with precision the great telescope upon the planet which he wished to observe. Then upon looking through the large instrument he could make out no point in the heavens. Again he would adjust the telescope with even greater care, but to no better purpose than before. All was blank darkness. He at last discovered with surprise that he had failed to take the cap off the glass of the telescope. In seeking for truth we must be careful to take the cap of prejudice off the eye.

The above illustrations may serve to explain what I intend by love as an element of criticism. The word "criticism," the too often used of an unfavorable opinion, means properly, judgment, estimation. Criticism is picking out merits as well as picking out faults. Criticism is not censure, it is appreciating any work at its true value. It is the appropriation of whatsoever is true as much as it is the rejection of whatsoever is false. Hence we can see the relation of love and truth. Love enters into right judgment. You must have some affinity for that which you attempt to judge. Sympathy as well as knowledge is necessary to enable you to criticize any book, any character, any institution, any system of thought. Most of the light that comes to our souls is breathed through the affections rather than through the intellect. "All great truths are felt out rather than thought out."

This is the idea underlying the connection in that passage in Phillipians where Paul says: "This I pray,

that your love may abound yet more and more, so that ye may approve the things that are excellent. And, alas! how this power of approving the things that are excellent if needed by our churches at this hour, when new methods of Christian work are being suggested when new truth is being made known to us by history and science, and when mightier opportunities to do good to men and to advance the Kingdom of heaven are daily disclosed to those having eyes to see and hearts to heed the providence of God. Jesus likewise demanded kinship with the truth as a condition of knowing the truth. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching." Obedience, the active operation of the will, implying love as well as intellectual ascent, was that in the mind of Jesus, the only door that leads to the truth. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The pure heart is the prelude to the vision of God. On another occasion he said to those who had believed on him: "If ye abide in my word, ye shall know the truth."

In our criticism of men and measures let us make haste to apply his principle of love which reason, experience and Scripture alike enforce.

Richmond College, Virginia.

A Brief Reply to B. B.

At the request of brethren, the executive committee of the Baptist Sabbath School Convention of Annapolis County, with God honoring intent, the task of writing a paper on "Use and Choice of Sabbath School Literature" was prayerfully undertaken and it seemed that my purpose was accomplished when the brethren both lay and ministerial gave the paper their hearty approval and requested its publication. Words seemed inadequate to thank them at the time for their commendation, but I thanked God and took courage; but now it seems some mortal caught sight of it and being hungry to make an appearance in public print, he could not resist the inclination to rend it in pieces.

B. B. having taken wrong premises arrives at wrong conclusions. The paper had to do with the Sabbath School literature especially, not with general literature so much.

My critic states that the avoidance of fiction was taught. On the contrary, story books, founded on fact and true to life were recommended, and a very careful selection of religious novels, such as Pansies for instance, teaching Bible truth on almost every page, condemning the sins of the time and giving examples of true Christian living, was advocated. B. B. is diametrically opposed to this. Look at what is said in the later clauses of his seventh paragraph. The fifth paragraph with all its sarcasm, is simply nonsense and so we pass it by. Again B. B. has the paper advising the exposure of all works of imagination. Not so, it says mere imagination, meaning of course, writings not founded on fact, not true to life. True, the advice given is "Choose books of fact" in preference to fiction. "Find your delight in the standard religious authors." Who advises anything else except B. B.?

We say again writings of mere imagination are lies, but does it follow, as this splendid logician B. B. states, that the figures of speech are mere imagination? As it is presumed that B. B. is some apt, conscience stricken, lad or lass, let us simplify, or remind of what must be already known. Simile is simply comparison for the sake of illustration much used to make metaphysical truth clear by comparing to things familiar to the senses. Metaphor is simile without the sign of comparison expressed. Parable and allegory are a continuation of similes or metaphors. How does B. B. find mere imagination in these? Our paper deplored the fact that novels and many of the baser sort have captivated our youth as well as many of riper years and are read almost exclusively. The writer who has travelled with books for years knows what is called for. He knows that it is almost impossible to sell biographies. He knows that very few biographies find their way into our Sabbath School libraries.

To show that I am not alone, let me quote the Rev. James W. Cole, B. D., a celebrated author of modern date, "Many books are sweets; most novels are such. If you take them at all take them very sparingly and only the choicest and purest. Our public libraries are making a multitude of mental-dyspeptics who will feed on nothing else but these sweets, some of which are poison."

To P. W., B. B. seems to say to the young people read all the fiction you like, it is good whether fairy tale, ghost story or detective yarn, so long as the language is pure English, do not read fiction that has much of the religious element in it. It is a sin to uncarth Baxter's Saints Everlasting Rest and the biography of Harriet Newell and all the rest. They are not dry bones. They never died and were buried. They live and will forever live.

In "this advanced age" B. B. will soon be saying of the blessed Bible, "It is a dry old book, young friends, let it pass into oblivion." "The Bible with common sense exposition of the Bible is sufficient to supply every need for spiritual food." Let it be said if the book of Job is a drama, as B. B. styles it, it was dictated by the Holy Spirit and every iota of it is a true picture of what actually transpired. But who knows that it is a drama except B. B.? Who dares say that it is not literal fact? Perhaps B. B. will be acting it off on the stage one of these days. In closing we would say as before "To the law and the testimony, let your yea be yea and your nay nay, lest ye fall into condemnation."

Had not B. B. attacked the whole Convention, or had his deductions been truthful or God-honoring they would have been treated to a long chapter of silence. It is in vindication of truth that this reply is written.

PHINKAS WHITMAN.