

on the advice given by Dr. Brookes in his 'Truth' to one of his correspondents, *i.e.*, they meet by themselves (of course without any ordained minister) and sing, and pray, and preach, and administer the Lord's Supper.

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LEAVES FROM A NEW SHORTER CATECHISM.

What is God? The effectual cause of the phenomena of the universe; an entity whose existence is scientifically unpleasant to assume, but logically impossible to deny.

NOTE.—Whereas, God was once very much of a man, now Man is very much of a God.

What is Man? The supreme product of the development forces acting on organic forms.

NOTE.—Originally Man was simply a cell, now he is a complex one.

Of what is Man made? Of protoplasm.

NOTE.—Formerly organisms were supposed to be made of dust, now we know dust to be made of organisms.

At death, to what does Man return? To gas.

NOTE.—Spiritualism would make this a verb in the infinitive; science shows that this supremest product of cosmic forces drops at once into its first elements.

What is the Chief End of Man? To attain "sweetness and light."

NOTE.—This only applies to the upper classes.

What is true Morality? Complete adaptation to one's environment.

NOTE.—This rule makes up by its universality for the limitations of the previous one. It reaches from man to the polype.

What is Religion? A form of sensibility, the expression of a class of emotions (affecting especially women) developed by the desire to know our origin, destiny and moral nature.

NOTE.—Religion is universal, and will always be indispensable, except to those who have attained sweetness and light.

What is Faith? Faith is an emotion clinging to the high things which reason has not yet demonstrated.

NOTE.—There are two kinds: (a) Religious faith, the belief in an ennobling supernaturalism; (b) Scientific faith, the belief in an alluring hypothesis.—C. L. Dana in *January Scribner*.

THE *Nonconformist*, alluding to the shameless barter in Church-livings in England, makes the following assertion, which will bring a smile to the countenance of any one who reads it:—"When a living is sold by auction at Tokenhouse-yard it is not unusually sandwiched between the sales of public-houses and the shops of tallow-chandlers or other like trades; and so in this index Mr. Beck's name is immediately preceded by Allen's hot-air baths, and followed by Brown and Polson's corn flour and Cockle's pills." Just fancy, public-houses, tallow-chandler shops, hot-air baths, Cockle's pills and the Cure of Souls, all jumbled together in an advertisement column! What next?

It is significant that those who are loudest in their denunciations of creeds, and claim for themselves the broadest liberality in departing from established usages, are most likely to vibrate between the antipodes of faith. It is from the preaching of a disintegrated Bible that many of the contradictory statements in regard to the truth arise. When the Scriptures are mastered as a system of truths, each having its proper relation to and bearing upon the other, there is little danger of denying in one sermon what has been previously preached. Let the study of systematic theology be emphasized as an antidote to preaching on two sides of one truth. Far better for the pulpit than all the "helps" which are advertised so freely in our religious periodicals would be greater familiarity with the Word, along with the mastery of some system like the Assembly's Shorter Catechism, which would at least suggest a starting point and a stopping place.—*United Presbyterian*.

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

THE GOSPEL IN ITALY.

MR. EDITOR,—By the end of the year 1850, a small meeting, consisting of a minister who had lately come from the Waldensian Valleys, and some forty or fifty hearers, were gathered in the upper room of a shoemaker's shop in the City of Turin, then capital of the kingdom of Piedmont. There they sang a hymn, they prayed, then the first *Gospel Sermon* in the Italian language was preached by the father of him who has the privilege of writing this statement. Now the shoemaker's shop has been transformed into a splendid church, erected on one of the main streets of the town; the small gathering has become a large congregation, and the same minister, now a gray-haired man, is still engaged in the same field of labour. And if any reader of your paper had entered the church on the morning of the 28th of August of this year, he should have heard a loud hymn of praise rising up to the throne of God from the hearts of sixty-five ordained ministers, fifteen lay evangelists, and the representatives of thirty-nine congregations and twenty-four missionary stations spread all over Italy from the Alps to Etna. Who were these, and what was the occurrence that gathered them in such place?

1. These were the results of twenty-eight years of labour, and of blessing. As soon as the new era of liberty had dawned for our country, as soon as the door was thrown open by the providential hand of the God of their fathers, the Waldensian people felt called to bring the Gospel to the sons of those who had brought to them fire and persecution. And as the provinces still under the dominion of Austria and Bourbon were brought under the sceptre of King Victor Emmanuel, and the Italian troops entered amidst the cheers of a whole population, first Milan, then Florence, Naples, Palermo, Venice and lastly Rome. They, the soldiers of a heavenly captain, entered also the towns and villages of those provinces, and preached therein the Gospel of truth, sometimes amidst mockeries and petty persecutions, instead of cheers. Thus the sixteen parishes of the Waldensian Valleys became sixty-three churches great or small; the number of ministers, formerly nineteen, was quadrupled, and 2,530 communicants belonging to the daughter churches, were the first offspring of the blessed work which the Lord had entrusted to His servants. Along with the labourers in the field, are also to be numbered fifty-two teachers, with 1,840 children in the day-schools connected with the mission and which may be considered as the nurseries of the church, and 103 Sabbath Schools, with 1,749 children, the half of whom were Roman Catholics.

2. The second question which I must answer is: What was the purpose of the gathering above mentioned? As long as the different congregations were only small gatherings of Christian people, it would not have been wise to think of an ecclesiastical organization. The period of preparation had just begun; the foundations had been laid; but it would have been premature to build up at once the whole edifice of the church. The work was then under the superintendence of a Mission Board appointed by the Waldensian Synod, to which they must give a yearly account of what has been done in the field. In the year 1870, Dr. Revel, then president of the Mission Board, seeing that the stations numbered already thirty-five, and that some of them had grown to a membership of 100, thought it advisable to gather all the delegates of the various churches, in order to strengthen, by such intercourse of brethren, the bond of union between the different congregations, and to discuss matters of importance connected with the work of evangelization. However, he was prevented by premature death from carrying out his plans. He was succeeded by Rev. M. Prochet, who carried it into effect in the year 1872, when twenty-three ordained ministers, twelve lay-evangelists, and 31 representatives of the churches met in Florence, and interesting papers were read on the following subjects: The Waldensian Church and the work of evangelization, the Church and the Divinity school; How to evangelize a town; How to strengthen a church; The Sabbath schools. This meeting was such a blessing that it was soon followed by another one. Meanwhile the congregation had felt the need of organizing themselves into regular churches, with a ruling power, not in a congregational, but in a Presbyterian form of government, as it has been for cen-

turies the wont in the Church of the Valleys. This desire was made manifest in the second Conference which took place at Florence, in April, 1873. Some people feared that what they called an *act of independence*, would create an ill-feeling between the young churches and the mother church, but the danger was entirely avoided, inasmuch as the members of the conference, while expressing their gratefulness to the church of the Valleys for having been, in the hands of God, the instrumentality through which the Italian churches had come into existence, declared their willingness to yield to the principles which she held both in doctrinal and ecclesiastical questions, and to submit the scheme of organization to the sanction of the Synod, although in her General Assembly of 1855 the Waldensian Church had decided to have solely in view the evangelization of Italy, and by no means the *Waldensification* (if such expression be allowed), of those who knew the Gospel through her agents. A preparatory scheme, carefully drawn up, after thoroughly Presbyterian principles, in the name of the Mission Board, by Prof. A. Revel, was revised by the Synod, and then submitted to the perusal of the various congregations. Italy had been divided into five districts: Piedmont, Lombardy, Tuscany, Naples and Sicily; and in the 3rd conference, which took place in Genoa, August 1875, each Presbytery gave its advice as to the scheme, proposing various alterations which were finally adopted and sanctioned by the Waldensian Synod of the same year. Thus the Italian churches were finally organized, and had an ecclesiastical life of their own. These are the main principles on which the scheme was laid: 1. No person is admitted into membership except those who recognize the Holy Scripture as the only authority in matters of faith, and live according to its commands. 2. No Church is considered as such, unless it has its church-session and a regular system of contributions. 3. The church session is composed of the minister of the congregation, of elders and deacons who are appointed "*pro tempore*" by the assembly of the congregation. Every year this assembly is called upon to examine the account given by the Church session, of the congregational work. 4. To the church-session belongs the superintendence of the church, the exercise of discipline; the admission of new members and the administration of funds. 5. Three churches or more form a Presbytery, which meet at least once a year, and is composed of the ministers of each congregation along with an elder or a deacon, or any other member of the congregation, appointed by the church session. 6. To the Presbyteries belong, (1) to superintend the churches of the district, (2) to examine the appeals forwarded by any member of any church in cases of discipline, (3) to discuss the questions of general interest to be brought before the General Conference. 7. The Presbyteries form by their union a General Conference, to be held once every three years, of which are members *all* the ministers of the Waldensian Church (valleys included), a delegate from each church session, and a delegate from each congregation. To the General Conference belongs the superintendence of the several Presbyteries, the final decision as to appeals of every kind, and the discussion of all the questions brought forward by the Presbyteries. However all the proposals with which a legislative power is connected, are to be submitted to the sanction of the Waldensian Synod.

After the scheme had been for three years in full operation, it was thought advisable and lawful to hold a 4th Conference, where the practical results of the new organization might be made manifest. Turin was chosen as a place where the Assembly should meet, and the time proposed, the end of August, was a very suitable one, for if, on the one hand, the place was so near to the Waldensian valleys that all the ministers of the parishes were enabled to come and take part in the proceedings, (and only two were lacking, I am happy to say), on the other hand, all the Evangelists and delegates from the mission-field were enabled at less expense to be present at the Waldensian Synod, which was to be opened on the first Monday of September. With such arrangement it would have been easy for a stranger to see the mother and the daughters almost at the same time.

On the evening of the 27th August all these people began to flock in, and to apply for lodgings, which were found at the houses of some of the church members. Many more would have been happy to enter-