

Our Contributors.

A TREATY—NOT ABOUT FISH.

BY KNOXONIAN.

For a long time back there has been a serious quarrel between the kingdom of Duty and the kingdom of Careless. The quarrel began about the time that Adam and Eve were banished from Eden, and has been going on ever since. The people of the kingdom of Duty take as their guide a book containing many precepts and laws which they have always contended should be respected and obeyed. The people of the kingdom of Careless pay very little attention to this old book. Some of them question its authority. Others say it is flatly contradicted by modern science. Not a few consider the book old-fashioned and behind the age. The most violent opposition to the old book comes from men who never read it. That may seem strange, but it is fact nevertheless. The few people in the kingdom of Careless who care anything about the old book put an interpretation on many of its chapters entirely different from the interpretation put upon them by the people of the kingdom of Duty. In fact there are more and wider differences of opinion about the proper interpretation of some things in this book than about anything in any other book in the world. The reason why the people of the kingdom of Careless do not like the book is because it does not suit them. They are in exactly the same position as the Chicago man who told a preacher that he did not believe in the doctrine of human depravity because it was opposed to the Constitution of the United States. The doctrines of this old book do not agree with the moral constitution of the people of the kingdom of Careless. The principal reason why the American fishermen did not like the old Treaty of 1818 was because it shut them out from Canadian fish. The main reason why the people of the kingdom of Careless do not like the old book is because it shuts them out from a good many places in which they would like to enjoy the so-called pleasures of sin.

Steps have been taken to settle this dispute between the kingdom of Duty and the kingdom of Careless.

Sir Paul Conscience acted as plenipotentiary for the kingdom of Duty. The kingdom of Careless was represented by Sir Gallio Regardless.

The plenipotentiaries first took up the question of attendance at worship on Sabbath. Sir Paul showed that for many years the people of the kingdom of Careless had been very irregular in their attendance; that they remained away for the most trifling excuse, and often without any excuse; that many of them complained of being sick on Sabbath while they were quite as well on Saturday and at their usual work on Monday morning; that the least sprinkling of rain kept them from church, while they often went through heavy showers to business or pleasure; that some would go occasionally if the preacher suited them, but paid no attention to the fact that man should worship his Maker apart from all considerations about preachers. Sir Paul then proved conclusively that it was the duty as well as the privilege of every man to worship, and showed that it was a good thing for the man himself and for his family to do so.

Sir Gallio made some observations on the points raised by Sir Paul, but finally admitted Sir Paul's main positions, and agreed to sign a treaty, one article of which would be that the people of the kingdom of Careless should attend church more regularly.

The plenipotentiaries then took the question of contributing toward the support of the Church. Sir Paul showed that the people of the kingdom of Careless paid very little, and some of them nothing at all. Many of them, he said, were quite able to contribute, but were not willing. He gave some figures which showed conclusively that one leading family in the kingdom of Careless often spent more money on one evening party than the people of the whole kingdom paid toward the support of the Gospel in a twelve-month. He then proved that it was the duty of every man to give of his means to support this good cause, and asked Sir Gallio if he thought the people he represented would enter into a treaty to do better in future.

Sir Gallio admitted that this was a tender point with his people. The most sensitive spot in their

whole make-up was their pocket. Many of his people, he admitted, were fairly well off, but they spent so much on themselves that they could not afford to give much to religion. It was quite true that they owed the Church more than they owed any other institution, but the Church never sued them nor protested their notes nor anything of that kind, and therefore they paid to the Church just as little as possible. Knowing how sensitive his people were on money matters, Sir Gallio said he could not sign a treaty on the question at present, but he "would take the matter into consideration."

The plenipotentiaries then took up the questions of family worship, Sabbath breaking, home training, sending children to the Sabbath school and several other matters, and discussed them at length. Sir Gallio agreed to sign a treaty promising amendments on all these points. The treaty will be submitted to the people of the kingdom of Careless. Perhaps they may ratify it and perhaps they may not. Even if they did ratify it they might not carry out its provisions. They never had much regard for treaty obligations.

MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH AND THEIR RECEPTION.*

BY THE REV. R. WALLACE.

The Shorter Catechism says that "the outward and ordinary means by which Christ communicates the benefits of redemption are the Word, sacraments and prayer; all of which are made effectual to the elect for salvation." The importance of a knowledge of the great fundamental truths of the Bible is often set forth in God's Word. Our Lord Himself says "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me." (John v. 39) And He also prays the Father, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." And the apostle Paul says, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Rom. x. 19.) The Holy Spirit shines down upon the sacred page when it is studied with a desire to learn the way of life, and impress its sacred truth upon the heart and conscience, and thus leads the sinner to believe on Christ to his salvation.

It is the will of Christ that when once the sinner is converted he should confess Christ before men, and attend upon those ordinances which are specially appointed for this end. Christ says, "If ye love Me keep My commandments." One of these is to attend upon the ordinance of the Lord's supper, which is the special way appointed to confess Christ as our Saviour. The sacraments are means of applying Christ's purchased redemption to those who believe on Him, in order to their growth in grace and preparation for heaven. In order to attend upon the sacraments in a proper manner, we must join ourselves to the Christian Church; for it is only those who have been specially set apart for this purpose by ordination that have a right to administer these ordinances. (Acts xiv. 23; xx. 28; 1 Tim. iii.; 2 Tim. ii. and iii.) The sacraments belong to a social religion. They are the sacraments of individuals as members of the Christian Church—the sacraments of the Church of God as a visible society of saints. Receiving the sacraments implies a covenant relationship to the Church and her Great Head. It is the actual connection of the individual with this society professing godliness that entitles him to the solemn seals of the covenant; but social relations influence the intellect, the feelings and the conduct of believers; and these social ordinances affect the personal attainments of Christians in godliness.

Three things are necessary in those who would partake of the sacraments, or be received as worthy members of the Christian Church,—intelligence, experience and practice. (1) They should know the character of the covenant of grace, of which these sacraments are seals; that is, they should know the character of Christ as the divine Son of God and only Saviour of men. They should understand the nature of His mission to our world; to make an atonement for our sin, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matt. xx. 28.) (2) They should have experience of the power of religion on their own hearts through faith in Christ and the acceptance of Him as their Saviour, and reliance on Him alone for salvation, taking Him

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at His word and relying on His own offers and promises, according to His gracious assurance that all who trust in Him shall assuredly be saved. (Isa. xlv. 23; John iii. 14; vi. 37, 47; Rev. xxii. 17.)

All this is evidently implied in the reception of converts by the apostles and evangelists of the Church at the beginning. Take the case of the 3,000 at Pentecost. When Peter told them who and what Jesus was, they were pierced to the heart by deep conviction, and only wanted to know what to do in order to be saved; and as soon as they knew they believed on Christ, trusted in Him, and were made new creatures. So with the Ethiopian eunuch, he was an anxious inquirer when he met Philip, and as soon as he knew who and what Jesus was, he believed on Him and was converted, and asked for baptism as a token of his interest in Christ as his Saviour. So was it with the Philippian gaoler, and all other cases. They were received on the profession of their faith in Christ and love to Him, and where they were not truly converted they were soon detected and exposed, and cast out of the Church, as in the case of Ananias and his wife, and Simon Magus and others, as the incestuous person at Corinth (1 Cor. v.), plainly showing that conversion or regeneration was esteemed requisite for membership in the Apostolic or Primitive Church.

Only those who have received the grace of God should come to the table of the Lord. And then their conduct and practice should correspond to their profession of and interest in Christ. Only those who profess to be in covenant with God, and who appear to be so, by their walk and conversation, should be members of the Christian Church. What God said to Abraham concerning circumcision is equally applicable to each sacrament of the New Testament. "It shall be a token of the covenant between Me and you." (Gen. xvii. 11; Rom. iv. 11-13) By the reception of the sacred symbols in the Lord's supper, there is given a public, explicit pledge both of our embracing the provisions of the covenant of grace for our own salvation and of our engagement, along with our brethren in the sanctuary, to walk in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blameless. When I see the sacred symbols of the body and blood of Christ, my once crucified but now exalted Redeemer, I have most vividly brought before me the great evil of sin, which when laid on Christ as our substitute, caused His agony in Gethsemane and on Calvary—in awful propitiatory death for us—I see also the highest possible proof of the wondrous love of Christ for me, in giving His life to save me from eternal death, and I hear Him saying "I have suffered thus for you; see that you show your love to Me by living ever to My glory." Thus the Lord's supper is fitted to mortify sin in the believer, and show forth love and gratitude to Christ and to lead to holy obedience to all His commandments.

Now, how do I apply these principles in the reception of members into the Church? I encourage them to attend all the means of grace in private and in public—such as the preaching of the Word, Bible classes, etc. Then I explain to them the way of salvation, that we obtain an interest in Christ by faith. I show them that this is set forth equally in the Old Testament and the New. I give them also illustrations of faith. (1) As when Christ as Messiah says in Isa. xlv. 22, "Look unto Me, and be saved," etc., and Christ when on earth used the same illustration of faith when in John iii. 14, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," etc.

I explain the reference to show that the conduct of the bitten Israelites implied both faith and obedience. (2) Another illustration we find in Isa. lv. 1-3, "Ho, every one that thirsteth." Our Lord uses the same illustration of faith when, at the close of the Feast of Tabernacles, as the priest carried the pitcher of water past, to pour it out before the Lord, to remind them that their fathers were supplied with water from the flinty rock, Jesus said, "If any man thirst spiritually let him come to Me and drink." I explain that these words were spoken under the burning sun of Syna, where water was scarce and where thirst implied great suffering, and Christ there offers relief to the soul longing for deliverance from the guilt of sin and the misery caused thereby. (3) Then I apply Matt. xi. 28-30, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and I will give you rest for the soul, pardon, peace, happiness—deliverance from the burden of sin." Then I show that Christ sets forth the necessity of the new birth as well as faith in Him in John iii. 1-6, and