

Our Contributors.

IF PEOPLE WERE WHAT THEY OUGHT TO BE.

BY KNOXONIAN.

If people were what they ought to be there would be a larger attendance at the prayer meeting. If people were what they ought to be there would not be so many vacant seats in church. If people were what they ought to be there would not be so much trouble in raising money for religious purposes. If people were what they ought to be there would not be so much friction in many congregations. If people were what they ought to be they would not be so hard to please with preaching.

These are remarks that we hear almost every day. Quite frequently they are made by ministers and elders. They are not particularly original remarks, and do not indicate an applied knowledge of the doctrines of the Bible, especially of the doctrine of human depravity. Can there be anything more absurd than the act of a minister who preaches a rousing sermon on the words "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," and when he goes home says to his wife, "If the people were what they ought to be there would have been more of them in church to-day"? Fancy a solid elder confessing all manner of sin in his prayer, and then at the close of the prayer-meeting saying, "If the people were what they ought to be there would have been more of them out to-night."

If all men were honest there would be no cheating. If all were truthful there would be no lying. If everybody had perfect health there would be no sick people. If all men had common sense there would be no fools. If all men had large hearts there would be no mean people.

These profoundly original observations involve exactly the same absurdity as the common remark—If people were what they ought to be they would or would not do so and so.

It goes unsaid that if people were what they ought to be this world would be a different kind of place. Probably those who use this expression most frequently have not meditated on some of the radical changes that would take place if the people suddenly became what they ought to be. If people were what they ought to be there would be no use for preachers. Their occupation would be clean gone. A preacher would be more useless than the fifth wheel of a waggon if the people were what they ought to be. Theological colleges might be turned into sugar refineries if the people were what they ought to be. But even that is doubtful, for if people were what they ought to be perhaps they would not use sugar. They might need no sweetening, and then the sugar refineries would have to go. If people were what they ought to be all our elders and deacons and managers and Sabbath school people and missionary officials might go out of office. If people were suddenly to become what they ought to be perhaps the only thing needed would be a choir. Perhaps even the choir would not be needed; for if people were all they ought to be each one could sing for himself. If people were what they ought to be the whole machinery of the Church would be abolished in an hour and all the preachers and professors would have to turn their attention to something else. When a good brother looks sad and says, "If my congregation were what they ought to be," etc., the correct reply is, "If your congregation were what they ought to be they wouldn't need you."

If people were what they ought to be what would become of editors? Where would the lawyers go if people were what they ought to be? If all men were perfect we would need no parliaments, and no politicians, and no law. A perfect world would be hard on politicians. Professional moral reformers would have to emigrate to some other planet if people were what they ought to be. There would be a large number of persons put out of office in this country if the people were what they ought to be. Some of them would find their bread rather thinly buttered if the people suddenly became perfect.

Would it not be as well to admit that none of us are what we ought to be? That is what ministers preach on the Sabbath. Why begin sentences on Monday

with such words as "If the people were what they ought to be," etc.? There is a remote possibility that even ministers are not what they ought to be. If they mean all they confess in prayer they are not quite perfect. It is conceivable that even elders who moan about the people not being what they ought to be, are not absolutely perfect themselves. There is a tremendous possibility that even a Methodist class-leader may have some slight traces of original depravity in his composition.

Let all those who are trying to do the Master's work stop this senseless talk about people not being what they ought to be. None of us are what we ought to be. There is no man so far from what he ought to be as the Pharisee who thinks and boasts that he is all he ought to be. All work for God and humanity proceeds on the assumption that men are *not* what they ought to be. Sin has made terrible havoc in this world of ours. It has hurt everybody and ruined many. The Church exists for the special purpose of helping to make men who are far from what they ought to be something more like what they ought to be. The special work of ministers, elders and all other office-bearers is to try and make poor, sin-stricken humanity more like what it ought to be. The minister or other Christian worker who has not mastered this elementary fact has not his eye-teeth cut yet.

IS CHRIST OR PETER THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH?

BY THE REV. R. WALLACE.

As the Church of Rome teaches that the Apostle Peter (Matt. xvi. 18, 19) was invested with supreme and infallible authority over all the apostles and over the whole Church, that he was the first Bishop of Rome, and that all the Popes of Rome are his infallible successors, and as she holds that this doctrine must be received as infallible truth on pain of eternal damnation, we should examine this claim with careful study, and seek to ascertain who or what is the foundation of the Christian Church. Now we can best ascertain the import of our Lord's language here by considering the circumstances in which it was spoken. In the context we are told that our Lord, wishing to prepare His apostles for a fuller revelation of His sufferings and death, by which His spiritual kingdom was to be set up in the hearts of men, asked them, "Who do men say that I—the Son of Man—am?" For nearly three years the people had been speaking about Jesus and His mighty works. They admitted that He was a good man—a prophet, or even the forerunner of the Messiah. But they could not conceive that the expected Redeemer of Israel would come in the guise of "the meek and lowly one of Nazareth." Now at the very time that this question was put to the disciples the world held that Jesus was not the Messiah. Yet in the face of this public opinion Peter, naturally forward, but taught in this matter by the Holy Spirit of God, replies, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Peter evidently meant to speak the belief of all the apostles that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Divine Son of God and only Saviour of men. This confession implies the divinity and humanity of Jesus.

Our Lord declares that this was not a discovery of human reason, but a revelation from God. (1) Yet as Peter was the first frankly and openly to confess that Christ's claims were well founded, our Lord puts special honour upon him, and declares that he whose family name was only Simon, son of Jonas (John i. 42), should in future be associated with Himself, the true foundation of His Church, as in a secondary sense—along with the other apostles—a part of the foundation of His Church. (2) The preëminence here given to Peter seems not unlike that which he appears to have in other places. He was a natural leader among the twelve: prompt, forward and ever-ready to speak and act. But he is no more the foundation of the Church than the other apostles, for we are plainly told that in a certain sense the Church is "built upon the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone." The prophets of the New Testament Church share equally with the apostles in being the foundation in the secondary sense intended. But Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone. Thus in Psa. cxviii. 22 we are told "the stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner." This passage is applied by our

Lord Himself to His own Messiahship and divinity. (Mark xii. 10). And so Peter himself applies it to Christ after His ascension before the Jewish Council. "This is the stone which was set at nought by your builders, which is become the head of the corner" (Acts iv. 11). In Isa. xxviii. 16 the Gospel prophet says in regard to Christ, "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation stone a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste" or "shall not be confounded," as Peter renders it when applying this passage to Christ (1 Peter ii. 5, 6). Peter himself, who ought to know the import of our Lord's words to him in the text, says on several occasions that Jesus only is the foundation of the Church. The Christ, the Son of the Living God, confessed by Peter and by prophets and apostles, is the Rock, the immovable living foundation. Peter is only one of the living stones laid on that foundation. But Christ is the "Petra," the Rock or Divine Foundation upon which all believers are built. This corresponds with what both Peter and Paul have said in regard to this foundation (1 Cor. iii. 11; 1 Peter ii. 4-6). We are told by Bengel and Meyer that our Lord spake in the Syriac language, and that the term used in both clauses is the same. "Thou art Kepha, and upon this Kepha will I build My Church." Lange, equally eminent as an expositor, says: "But it is possible, and to my mind almost certain, that Matthew expressed by the slight change of the word what the Saviour intended in using necessarily the same word in Syriac" (as there is only the one word in that language for stone and rock), "namely, that the 'Petra' on which the Church is built by Christ, the Divine Architect and Lord of this spiritual temple, is not the person of Peter as such, but something more deep and comprehensive; in other words, that it is Peter and his confession of the central mystery of Christianity. . . . Peter in Christ, and Peter moreover as representing all the other apostles in like relation to Christ, as in Eph. ii. 20." So also in Revelation xxi. 14, John says of the New Jerusalem, "The walls of the city had twelve foundations and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." The apostles are all equally associated with Christ as the founders of His Church, and as under the guidance of divine inspiration setting forth the way of salvation. But Peter is not represented as superior to the other apostles in that respect.

(To be continued.)

NOTES FROM INDIA.

It is now certain that our Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, will lay down the reins of government, a year before his term of office expires. The news of his resignation has been received with regret by all who are able to appreciate the work he has already done, and can yet do for the good of India. The climate has been somewhat trying to his constitution. Personal considerations are assigned as the cause of his laying down his trust a year before the appointed time.

We are sorry he is so soon to leave us. As a mission we owe him much. The assurance he gave on the voyage out, when the difficulties with Holkar were brought to his notice, that he would remember us and give what help he could to put matters right, has been fulfilled, as the present satisfactory state of things at Indore in reference to liberty for carrying on mission work, bears testimony. The necessary word was quietly spoken, and opposition for the present at least has ceased. The Canadian Presbyterian Church will appreciate this.

Although he holds office for nearly a year yet, the press has already begun to pass judgment on his rule. It is disappointing, though hardly unexpected, to find the native press almost wholly adverse in its criticism. It gives him little credit for the annexation and pacification of Burmah, or for the skill displayed at a crisis when a single false step would have precipitated a war with Russia, but looking to the financial embarrassment due to events and causes over which he had no control, blames him for increasing the taxes, and declining to follow the radical and unsettling policy of his predecessor, Lord Ripon. Many native journals grow violent in their denunciation of his Administration as a disappointment and a failure. But I have no doubt that when later on, the results of his policy are wrought into history, our native friends will take a clear, more dispassionate and more just view. The native chiefs and others who have