

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

THE NEW YEAR.

In wishing the readers of THE CHRISTIAN "a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year," we may glance at some of our reasons for joy and gladness.

This season points us to the most important event on record, the birth of our Saviour. On different occasions angels came to earth to proclaim God's righteous judgments against transgressors and to punish them for crimes. On such an occasion one angel seemed sufficient for the gloomy task, but when an angel announced to the humble shepherds of Bethlehem the good tidings of great joy to all people he was suddenly joined by a multitude of the heavenly hosts in the song of "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men, and strange, very strange would be our infatuation if we refused to "join the cheerful song of angels round the throne."

Our provinces have enjoyed many temporal favors in the past year while many of our neighbours through pressure of hard times are unemployed and suffering in want. We have had a good harvest and fair trade so that the willing and obedient have "bread enough and to spare." This with the blessings of peace call for our hearty thanks to the bountiful Giver.

The Columbian Exposition has made 1893 famous. Instead of "nation lifting up sword against nation," millions from all parts of the world have met as brethren to show each other the blessings of civilization, that all may be benefited by the progressive skill of each. It would be altogether too much to expect that such crowds from all places and from all sorts of society would be together without some exhibitions of lawlessness and immorality, but when there was so little of this compared with what was feared and expected, it is truly astonishing. Persons who attended the Fair from day to day, report that they never saw a man intoxicated or saw rowdyism of any kind, but on the contrary when anyone in the crowd was jostled or fell accidentally he was immediately assisted with a brother's friendship.

Last spring many were in anxious fears for the outcome of the Exhibition. It was expected that vice of every kind would be rampant and that though religious efforts would be made they would be swallowed up by the high tide of iniquity; but how vastly different has been the result.

After the managers of the Fair had broken their pledge to Congress and opened the gates on Sunday to accommodate the irreligious and get their money, they found it would not pay and closed the gates for want of patronage. Theatres which were prepared for their patrons had to be closed and were rented to Mr. Moody and others for preaching places where many thousands heard from the mouths of the most talented men the story of the cross.

One of our own brethren preached the gospel to learned and influential men from Japan, who like the Corinthians of old "hearing, believed and were baptized" and then returned to establish missions and spread the gospel in that Empire. Who can tell how many for the first time heard the gospel of Christ in Chicago, or how many have been drawn to Jesus by the attractive power of the cross? In meditating over God's dealings with men we can truly exclaim "we have heard strange things this year."

The principles advocated by THE CHRISTIAN seem to be gaining ground in every Christian country. How many see and deplore the evils of sectarianism and plead for the union of Christians. Man-made creeds which divide, are losing their charms and the perfect adaptability of the Bible for all religious instruction is being

understood and acknowledged. These facts are cheering. The growth and prosperity of the Disciples where the gospel is faithfully and continuously preached, is further proof that it "pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." In these provinces the cause is greatly retarded for want of preachers. From among the few we have, faithful and efficient men pass from service to their rewards, but others are coming on to take their places and to increase the number of laborers, and we trust that the Lord of the harvest is answering the prayers of many, to send forth laborers into the harvest. The number of our young brethren now studying for the work of the ministry is quite encouraging.

The churches in different places seem to be taking on new life, the older members stimulating the younger to Christian activities, and the young, feeling the church of God to be their home, requiring their best energies and amply providing for their noblest enjoyments. More is being done than ever before for spreading the gospel at home and among the heathen, and the spirit of Christian liberality is evidently on the ascendant.

These favorable signs of the times are the more remarkable when we remember our lack of love and zeal and faithfulness to Him who has redeemed us with his blood. God bestows these favors for the great love wherewith he loved us in Christ.

Let all who love the Lord praise and magnify His holy name and never forget that He wants to be gracious, wants to give more grace to the humble and to make in future years the triumphs of the cross far more abundant than in the past.

Original Contributions.

THE ACCIDENT OF BIRTH.

Diagonally across the street from where I live, there lies the remains of a neighbour who died this morning about one o'clock; beside her four wax candles are burning although the sun is shining on clear snow and nature supplies abundant light. She died under the rules and having received the rites of the Roman Catholic Church. In the full assurance of the faith of that church she lived and also died. As far as we can judge she was no hypocrite, no imposter. She neither tried to deceive herself nor others. Her faith was without guile. If she was deceived, she, herself, was honest, and so did the best she could according to the conditions. Had she been born in the Protestant Episcopal Church, and had she received the training of that church in childhood, learned her catechisms, repeated her prayers, and when considered ready for the rite, receiving confirmation from the holy hands of the authorized bishop of that church, she doubtless would have continued to live in that communion, and in the full assurance of faith she would have come down to the end of life, finally going down into the cold embrace of death, in the firm hope of a glorious immortality. Had she been born of parents belonging to any other sect of Christendom she doubtless would have lived and died, under and to some extent, obedient to the teaching of the particular sect, believing that sect to be right above all others. Why? Because the teaching of that sect was the religious teaching of her childhood.

But to go farther out still. Suppose she had been born in a Mormon family, she would no doubt have lived and died in the firm belief that Mormonism was the true faith, and that all who lived and died out of Mormonism were exposed to the wrath of God and in danger of endless woe.

How different again would be her faith had she been born in a Mohammedan family in Arabia? To her then all Christian teaching of whatever sect would not only be ignored, but despised. To her

in life, "God is God and Mahomet is His prophet." In the faith of Islam she would live and in the faith of Islam she would die. In that faith she would hope for a glorious immortality.

If we go out further still—go out into the heathen world we will find men and women who as firmly believe in supreme powers (of whatever kind) as we believe in the Omnipotent hand and infinite mind which rules and keeps in harmony all worlds in infinite space and supplies the want of every living thing. They believe in the punishment of the wicked and the happiness of the brave or virtuous or good beyond this life.

Suppose again that a child is born in a London slum, where the first air which it breathes is an atmosphere of crime, and as its mind develops, and it learns from its surroundings, the impressions made on its mind are, that deception, lying and stealing are virtues, but to be detected in any of these is a crime. The child thus raised will have no conscience in the matter. Crime to the person thus taught will not be criminal as it would be to the person trained in the pure atmosphere of a community enlightened by the teachings of a spotless Son of God and the Apostles whom He sent to make known His will.

Now in all these conditions and many more which might be added, *what makes the difference?*

To this question, there is to my mind but one answer, *viz:—the ACCIDENT of birth.*

Why are you a Roman Catholic? Because I was born a Roman Catholic.

Ask the question to all the members of all the churches down all the graded line of protestantism and with the exception of only a few members among them all, you will receive substantially a corresponding answer: I am a Baptist because I was born a Baptist, a Presbyterian because born a Presbyterian, and so of the Methodist, Protestant Episcopal and all others.

It is true they may give you in many instances another answer and think also it is true; that is, that they have investigated and found that the church to which they belong is the true church. This, however, is not true of more than one in an hundred. They have not investigated. Men do not investigate in those matters. The door against investigation is closed by their early training—their catechisms and sectarian colouring of God's Holy Word. By these also they are so built up in righteousness (!) that, were the door open to investigation they would not enter in. O no, men do not investigate, they do not "try the spirits," they do not "prove all things and hold fast that which is good," they drift on the current of influences in which they were born, time waiting them on until they disappear in the unseen, beyond the limits of earth.

With many there is no opportunity of proving the ground on which they stand. For instance: the Mohammedan on the sands of the desert, as he turns his face toward the sacred shrine and prays to the God whom he adores, saying, "God is God and Mahomet is his prophet." He believes he has the true religion, he has no means of trying, he lives and dies in the hope of a Mohammedan paradise.

The heathens have no means of investigating, they are shut in from even the possibility of it.

The man raised in the London slum is virtually shut in from investigation.

The Roman Catholic is also shut in by authoritative priestly gates and bars, so he cannot investigate.

Many others to a greater or lesser extent are shut in from attempting to try the ground on which they stand religiously, sometimes by priestly authority, sometimes by family pride, and sometimes from lack of opportunity.

Now then some questions: Where does responsibility end? Are all equally responsible? If all are equally responsible and if men are to be saved only