

It is a select company that gathers here. Those who kneel at Christians stand upon a lower plane than they. Of the two the Christian belongs to a nobler type of manhood—a type that has its source in God. The humblest member which it includes has a place in the kingdom of heaven.

We are brought near to the patient sufferer. We see more than the emblems on yonder table; we behold the cross, and the bruised body, and the blood dripping to the ground. We come into the presence of the mystery of redemption, and hear the pleading cry, "Father forgive them." What is the world to us after such a vision? Can its vain shows delight us more? Can we go from that sacred place to pursue our own selfish ends? Do we not rather say, "We also die; we are 'crucified with Christ, and to the world, and the world is crucified to us. Henceforth our joy shall be to live for him who died for us."

He who brings a clear vision, and a sincere and loving heart to this simple service will find it a means of spiritual refreshment. It is not to the most of us what it ought to be, nor what it might be, but the fault is with ourselves alone.

It is said that Prince Albert on one of his visits to the Highlands of Scotland drank from a spring by the wayside, and that its owner erected a monument to commemorate the incident, and also a cistern through which the water might flow for the refreshment of weary travellers. It keeps ever green the memory of "Albert the good," and is a constant benediction to all the country round. The Lord's Supper is a monument placed by his own direction. It has been his witness through all the ages; it has contributed to the preservation of the knowledge of the great gospel facts, it helped the faith of believers, and sent them on their way with a song in their hearts. If here we can discern the Lord's body in the true spiritual sense the place becomes one of privilege and blessings. We discern a "real presence" more real and blessed than what Romanists ever knew.

UNIVERSAL OBLIGATION.

The observance of the Lord's Supper is a matter of obligation as well as of privilege. It was given to the eleven disciples, but also to all believers to the end, and yet it is habitually neglected by many who profess to be the followers of Jesus.

The conduct of some hinders their approach to the table of the Lord. Conscious that their life is wrong, and having a sense of the fitness of things, they cannot persuade themselves to partake of the emblems of the Lord's body and blood. But why not make their lives right? The remedy is with themselves.

Some plead their unworthiness. It is well to have a tender conscience, but it is not well to cherish morbid sentiments respecting ourselves. No person's natural fitness qualifies him for gospel ordinances. When God justifies a sinner he does not take his worthiness into the account. It is wholly a matter of grace.

There is a passage however, already adverted to, that makes them afraid. "Whosoever shall eat the bread and drink the cup in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord." The apostle is reproving them on account of certain disorders in connection with their feasts. The more opulent brought their portion, leaving their poorer brethren unsupplied. Each was intent on his own eating and drinking to excess, while others were left to go hungry. Whether the Lord's Supper came before or after such a feast, they were in no condition to observe it with becoming solemnity and reverence. The passage certainly gives no ground for discouragement. The sincere believer need not worry on account of his own unworthiness. Let him claim gospel promises and enjoy its privileges.

The Mid-Week Discovery.

BY JOHN H. MASON.

I had been feeling for some time that something might be done for our midweek meeting. It was large, strong, devotional and in many ways satisfactory already. But I wanted to see the attention of my people more concentrated and more sustained on the word of God. Further, I believed that a new emphasis upon the divine word would draw in some who had fallen by the way.

The Epistle to the Ephesians was the Scripture chosen for the experiment. The time given to the book extended from September to January. In September a printed slip was distributed in the form of a bookmark, upon which the schedule was laid out. The passage for each week was designated and a topic for each Scripture was drawn from the passage.

Every student of the Bible knows that the Epistle to the Ephesians is not easy reading; and further that in this, as in other Pauline epistles, the harder and therefore more discouraging part is at the beginning. I knew that my people were just verage men and women. There were few college graduates among them and few who had learned to study or to think in the thorough-going method of to-day. Yet I was not moved to select an easier epistle or one that would lend itself to a more simple analysis. I was convinced that my people were fully equal intellectually to the humble epistle at Ephesus to whom Paul primarily wrote. At last I determined to try them. I suggested that every attendant should read

the entire epistle every day from September to January. That provoked a smile, but some of them thought it worth trying.

As first meeting was not altogether encouraging. Some who had taken my word for it that there were profound depths which were worth plumbing, but which were sure to be missed by the easy gliding average reader, put their minds on it. They worked hard. And they were staggered by that first overwhelming sentence following the salutation. Good Bro. A admitted that he was altogether in the fog. The Scripture had never troubled him like this before. Brother B. was greatly encouraged by the confession of Deacon A., for he had attempted the same deep waters and had lost his footing, too. Sister C. had got more, to be sure; but somehow her search had been unsatisfying. At the close of the meeting the brightest and most thorough Bible student in many counties told me that I had made a large mistake. One might venture the gospel story in that way, but not one of Paul's epistles; least of all the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Of course I went right on. The second meeting was better. The fogs began to clear a little. Some who had read the epistle seven times in the interval began to see streaks of dawn. We were on the second half of the first chapter. A few felt that the eyes of their understanding were beginning to be enlightened and the vision of the glory of their inheritance was beginning to take shape. The people went home with brighter faces.

By the third week the attendance was growing, and some whose faces had become unfamiliar were straggling back. There was a more cheerful and confident note in this meeting. A few had read the epistle fourteen times now. They were getting fairly excited. They would have agreed with Coleridge had they known that he said, "This Epistle to the Ephesians is the divinest composition of man." The thought of God's great love wherewith he loved us was getting a new hearing, and the warm streams of that love were quickening. The thought of a new power, yes, even of new life, out of the old dead sterility became real and pregnant. There were more voices in the meeting to-night. Somehow a new spirit seemed to be among us. The words that were spoken were more thoughtful and more meaningful. Those stereotyped phrases which were common last spring seem to be going out of fashion with us.

It is the last week. We have just closed our final meeting. What a meeting it was for the last night of the year. A meeting of experience, gratitude, contrition, confession, consecration. The face of Deacon A. was shining. He had read the book at least three score times. He referred to-night to that first meeting in September and to the darkness in which his spirit struggled. He has not solved all the mysteries, but his heart is flooded with sunshine. And the mysteries do not trouble him. Sister C. has read the book seven times every week between September and January. All God's word (not merely this little fragment) means so much more to her now. God means more. Christ means more. Life means more. The cumulative effect we had not thought of that.

Again to-night, as at the first meeting, the pastor referred to Paul's method, elsewhere as well as here; first a mighty foundation in Christian doctrine, as men call it, then upon this the noble structure of an earnest Christian life. The second part, which is practical, appeals more directly to this practical age of ours. But without the superb foundation of Christian truth reaching back to deepest eternity and into the very heart of God (and yet involving every humblest human soul) there would be no overmastering motive for the Christian life toward which Paul is urging us. Without that his appeal might be stirring, but it would not be convincing.

To-night we are looking backward. Naturally, for the year is dying. No, not that. We are looking backward along the way by which Paul has been leading us. We have concluded that he knew what God's world and Christ's church were going to need in the first years of the twentieth century. We rather like Paul's method now that we understand it better. We rejoice in the grace of God as we never did before. Christ has made his way deeper into our hearts. The cross is a mighty fact after all. We are going forward into the new year with one new resolution at least, viz.: to know God better through his word.

The boys and girls are home from college for the holidays; and some of them were with us to-night. At the close of the meeting a Vassar senior sought out the pastor and with eyes and voice filled with soul, said: "That it the kind of meeting I believe in."—The Standard.

Negro Baptists in the United States.

BY H. E. MORRHOUSE.

Phenomenal has been the growth of Negro Baptists in the United States since 1860. Then they numbered a scant 400,000; now about 1,800,000 are reported. Making allowance for laxness in revision of lists of church

members, we may set down the actual number at about 1,600,000. This is four-fold increase in forty years; while in that time the Negro population has increased from about 4,000,000 to 9,500,000, or less than two and a half times. In round numbers there are about 16,000 Negro Baptist churches and 10,500 ordained ministers. Commonly, in the rural regions, where quite three-fourths of the people live, a preacher ministers to three or four churches, which, like white churches, have "once-a-month" preaching.

Negro Baptists are most numerous in the following states: Alabama, 182,075; Texas, 137,639; North Carolina, 140,205; South Carolina, 140,107; Mississippi, 200,118; Georgia, 221,442; Virginia, 227,208. Baptisms reported and estimated last year, 75,000.

Their progress intellectually has been marked. Forty years ago the minister who could read the Bible was an exception; now the exception is the man who cannot read it. In the cities and large towns, generally, there are able, cultured ministers, who preach to intelligent congregations, meeting in excellent houses of worship, with pipe organs and trained choirs, while the Sunday schools are studying the international lessons. In the rural regions however, where the low grade common school is held only three or four months in the year, progress is slow and conditions are lamentable. But the general eagerness of Negro Baptists to provide for the education of their children is seen in the fact that nearly all the twenty-six schools aided by the American Baptist Home Mission Society are crowded to overflowing, several being obliged to put three and four students in a room intended for but two. The enrollment in these, and in some other schools not receiving aid from the society, is about 7,500. These return as lighted torches to illumine the darkness.

There is gradual, though slow, increase in the accumulation of wealth. Wages generally are low. Lessons of frugality and thrift have not been learned by the majority of the people. But the increase in taxable property of the Negroes of Georgia was over \$1,000,000 last year. There is a Baptist banker in Alabama who stands high in commercial circles. It is wonderful how, out of their meager resources, they have erected so many church edifices, school buildings, orphanages, etc.

They have well organized state conventions and local associations, through which a considerable missionary and educational work is done. The National Baptist Convention, organized about 1886, has a foreign mission board, which last year raised about \$6,000 for all purposes; a home mission board, with its own subordinate publication board, that has been at work about five years; and an educational board, in existence about the same time, but which has undertaken no distinctly school work. There is also the Lott Carey Convention in some of the Atlantic coast states, which last year raised nearly \$3,000 for missionary work in Africa.

Negro Baptist conventions in six states have been in co-operation with which state conventions and with the Home Mission Society and the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, primarily for the benefit of the host of ministers who have had but meager educational advantages. This work has proved a great blessing. Plans for broader co-operation are now under consideration. While on the part of some there is a tendency to work separately along race lines, the more thoughtful recognize the importance of maintaining fraternal and co-operative relations with their white brethren, who, particularly at the North, have contributed so largely of their resources and of their noble men and women for the elevation of their race. The outlook is encouraging.—New York.

A Purpose is a Power.

REV. C. R. CRUIKSHANKS.

Our purposes exercise a strong, controlling influence in the formation of our character. Abraham, in obedience to the God of his life, purposed in the heart to offer his only son, Isaac, upon God's altar; and this sublime purpose thrust him forward as the world's greatest champion of literal and implicit obedience to God, and immortalized him as the father of the faithful. Joseph purposed in his heart that he would not enter into an unholy alliance with the mistress of sin, and his unswerving purpose of fidelity to principles of purity, crowned him as the world's greatest hero and example of self-restraint. Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat, and his inflexible purpose of unfaltering fidelity to principles of truth and righteousness, focussed the light of God upon him, revealing him as a shining example of heaven's protecting care over God's faithful ones. David, even in the midst of evil and domestic strife and in a time of war and turmoil, purposed in his heart to build a house to the name of the Lord his God. Although God did not permit him to build it, yet this purpose so pervaded his reign and changed the minds of the people as to pave the way for his son, Solomon, to erect the finest temple edifice that was ever kissed by the smiling rays of the morning sun. And the Apostle Paul purposed in his heart that he would know nothing save Christ and him crucified, and borne aloft on the shining wings of this heaven-borne purpose, no man ever mounted faster or ascended higher in Christian influence and power or enjoyed richer blessings and experiences of grace. If we would develop strong Christian characters, filled with mighty potentialities for good, we must be captured, conquered and controlled by a sublime purpose to be something for God and do something for the world. And yet it is intensely and distressingly sad to see so many men and women all around us who have no purpose in life. They are wavering and vacillating, unstable and unsettled. They are swept about by every wind of doctrine. They are borne upon the bosom of the incoming tide or rolling current of public opinion. They are drifting, drifting, sadly drifting, down the stream of time toward the ocean of eternity. A life without a purpose, oh, how sad! No God to serve, no Saviour to love, no soul to save, no battle to fight, no victory to win, no heaven to gain! No purpose means no character. A sublime purpose, faithfully carried out, means a beautiful character. Brother, have a righteous purpose as the propelling power and guiding star of your life, and your character will inevitably partake of the nature of that purpose.—Baptist Argus.