

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

DENOMINATIONAL ZEAL.

We lament the fact that many people, in their effort to avoid fanaticism and offensive dogmatism, allow their zeal for denominational work to degenerate. We would enter a plea in behalf of personal enthusiasm in labouring for the prosperity of that denomination which best expresses the religious sentiments of each individual. Zeal in supporting the branch of the kingdom of God with which one is identified does not necessitate bigotry; it does not preclude fraternizing with representatives of other denominations; it in no way engenders hostility. It is a grand mistake to suppose that neutrality on all points of religion is evidence of earnest support of all, or that a professed indifference as to what denomination is in the ascendant is evidence of whole-souled interest in the general cause of Christian progress. The person who is most interested in the cause of Christianity in general is the one who is most interested in his own Church in particular. He is not a fanatic who honestly strives to glorify God by making his own denomination as influential as possible—he is a man of zeal.

The people most to be dreaded in Christian work are what we would call spiritual gypsies—you may see them on the move at any time. Although holding their membership in some particular church they honour several congregations with their presence, as occasion of state of feeling may direct them here or there. They profess an unbounded love for all shades of religious opinion—from bold Pelagianism to stern Supralapsarianism. As a lady once remarked to the writer, "They have tried them all, and like one Church about as well as another." One of the great defects of these people, who have no enthusiasm for any one branch of Christian work, but are constantly emigrating, is that they have no abiding sense of personal responsibility. They flinch every time an emergency arises, or whenever special effort is demanded. They have, forsooth, too much love for the cause in general to do anything for it in particular. Striving to avoid narrowness and bigotry, but seeing no difference between bigotry and zeal, they deprecate them both, and profess to be religious on general principles. Facts justify us in asserting of ministers and laymen alike, whose zeal is not concentrated, that they are no more to be counted on for real effective work than the stranglers about an army are to be relied on when the trumpet sounds a charge on the enemy.

In order to cultivate fraternal feeling is it necessary that one compromise his belief and remain inactive? Does the fact that a church member gives up all decided opinion, and resolves not to say anything in behalf of his own denomination, indicate that he is willing to endorse the sentiments of all the rest of the religious world? We believe not. Intellectual suicide is not so easy as some people imagine, and it will be found just as difficult to hold adverse sentiments in religion as it is to simultaneously hold conflicting views on any other subject. So long as the human mind labours under its present disabilities men will reason in different ways, will start from varied premises, use different data, and arrive at diverse conclusions on all religious topics. So long as Christianity is prominent in the world it is folly to talk about sinking all personal zeal concerning the differentia of Christian belief, for it cannot be done either until all men see the truth in the same light and in the same relations, or until all men have been alike deluded. Questions of doctrine and Church polity will divide the world until the end of time, but that fact does not argue that zeal in support of these differences must always result in acrimony and hostility. We can easily conceive of differences without divisions; zeal without rancor; firm adherence to the truth, as it impresses itself on the individual heart, without bigotry; the greatest divergence of opinion co-existing with the greatest community of feeling. But we cannot conceive of a world compromise of all opinion as in any manner meaning the same thing as denominational fraternity. Would that all men were zealous in vindicating the truth as they understand it—a position at once safe and charitable.

Now is there any valid objection to denominational zeal? We fail to see the advantage that will accrue to any Church by having such an indifferent member-

ship that the most careful scrutiny will not reveal where they stand or what they believe. The progress of the various branches of the Church, and therefore of the Church at large, has been effected, not by compromise with anybody and everybody, and for the ostensible purpose of pleasing all parties, but by zealous efforts in particular directions. And as neither the external conditions of the Church, nor the internal workings of human nature have change, concentrated zeal must remain an essential factor in Church work.

If a person believes that from off the great ocean-beach of Revelation his denomination has picked the most pebbles of truth divine, he should be zealous in making the cause which is supposed to be nearest his heart as prominent and influential as possible. If from the mirror of his denomination he believes that divine light is most perfectly reflected let him be ambitious to cast its blessed rays all over society. For to pretend to have no zeal about that denomination which Christians by their vows and association declare to be the most transparent medium of sacred truth is desperately weak.—*Rev. Charles Lowell Cooder, in Philadelphia Presbyterian.*

ALL TRUTH IS CALM.

All truth is calm,
Refuge and rock and tower,
The more of truth the more of calm,
Its calmness is its power.

Calmness is truth,
And truth is calmness still:
Truth lifts its forehead to the storm,
Like some eternal hill.—*Bonar.*

THE VIRTUE OF A CHEERFUL FACE.

In one of the board schools situated in a densely populated district of Glasgow on the morning immediately succeeding the short vacation at the new-year time, the young lady and gentleman teachers at the head of the "infant" section were made the delighted recipients of a present from their young charges. The gifts, which were entirely unlooked for, consisted of two of those highly ornate short-cakes with appropriate sentiments in sugar which we were all as children familiar with, and which as "old fogies" we do not entirely taboo. The purchase doubtless had been made at one of the neighbouring confectioners, and the young donors laid their offerings blushing and in childish fashion without a word before their teachers. Both were alike astonished, but the gentleman managed to stammer out some thanks. The young lady's delight was more lingering and she blushing inquired what she had done to merit such kindness. For a time no response was made, until at last a chubby boy on a back bench chirruped out, "*Cause you're aye smilin', Miss.*" It was a day of smiles after that. Teachers! does this incident convey any lesson to you?

AM I A CHRISTIAN?

This vital question is anxiously asked by many, and various are the grounds on which it is suggested. On account of their afflictions, some have painful doubts and fears in regard to this cardinal matter. The inquiry arises in their minds, how can a gracious God love those whom He so greatly distresses? It seems to them that they would not afflict their children as God afflicts them, and hence they are led to fear that they are not the children of God.

In all such distressing apprehensions, however, there is a strange forgetfulness of what the Scriptures teach upon this very point. To all such victims of gloomy, if not agonizing, doubts and fears, the word of the Lord is uttered saying, "Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." Troubles are not always witnesses against us, to vitiate our hope of heaven. Often are they rather manifestations of Divine kindness and love. What was said to Job may be accepted by us, as though we were addressed in the words of Eliphaz, "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty."

Though being in adversity may not be a sure sign of being in a gracious state, yet it may be regarded as an evidence that those thus called to suffer are not

spiritually abandoned, or consigned to utter hopelessness. Such suffering may be no more a mark of condemnation than the pruning-knife is an indication that the tree must fall. The refiner does not heat his furnace for the metal which he knows to be worthless. It is not common for a person to watch over and correct, year after year, a stranger's child. Such attentions are ordinarily confined to the person's own child, or to an adopted child. They tell of parental love which can cause grief in order to bless or save.

We may hear an apostle saying, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" Some one has said, "Lawns which we would keep in the best condition are very frequently mown; the grass has scarcely any respite from the scythe. Out in the meadows there is no such repeated cutting; they are mown but once or twice a year. Even thus the nearer we are to God, and the more regard He has for us, the more frequent may be our adversities. To be very dear to God involves no small degree of chastisement."—*The Watchman.*

FAITHFUL MINISTERS.

The "Christian Advocate" puts in a good word for faithful ministers:

"To say of a minister 'He has trouble in his church,' is generally thought to be against him; but it may be in his favour. Some men have neither manhood, piety, nor regard for the Church sufficient to make trouble. They will let immorality break in, and fashionable vice creep in, and smile benignly all the while, taking the gifts and flatteries of the people with unctuous delight. Such men have 'no trouble,' but 'iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxeth cold' wherever they go. Whoever succeeds one of them, if honest, must have trouble. What kind of trouble does the minister have? Is he inconsistent, neglectful, capricious, passionate, immoral? If so, he is a curse to the Church. But does he preach the truth, honestly try to enforce the discipline, and raise the standard of right living, and does this make trouble among the backslidden and the ungodly? If so, the trouble is a testimony to his good works. There are churches that will go rapidly to ruin unless some one is sent there to make trouble. Some years ago, a presiding elder, one of the genuine kind, who support every good man, and never join with worldly-minded complainers against the faithful, said that there had been a great revival in a certain town. He was asked, 'How many conversions?' 'Not one yet,' said he, 'but the members have stopped dancing theatre-going, and raffling at church fairs, and have begun to attend class-meetings, and the incorrigible are feeling bitter toward the preacher.' The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable."

CANON FARRAR ON THRIFT.

At a crowded meeting of the Help Myself Society, in Exeter Hall lately, Canon Farrar took occasion to condemn the recent Westminster outrage, in which he said not a man in England, Scotland, or Ireland sympathized. While these things existed in England, they were not of England; all Englishmen loathed and abhorred from their inmost hearts the recklessness, the wickedness, the abominable wickedness, which vented itself in the act of fiendish spite at Westminster. Continuing to speak on temperance and thrift as the cardinal virtues of "help-myselfism," he said that the working men of the day were spending thirty-six millions annually on drink—a sum exactly equal to the rent they paid. The nation paid an amount equal to their drink bill in doing away with the mischief that drink was working in pauperism, vagrancy, lunacy, criminality, and disease. A sober working man was better off than if he belonged to the middle classes in these days, for manual labour was continually rising in value, and mental labour was being gradually depreciated. Speeches were also delivered by Mr. Arthur Pease and others.

THE man who truly loves, loves humbly, and fears not that another may be preferred, but that another may be worthier of preference than himself.—*Miss Mulock.*

THE ignorant man marvels at the exceptional; the wise man marvels at the common; the greatest wonder of all is the regularity of nature.—*George Dana Boardman.*