

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH.

The institution called the Church occupies a prominent and important place in the New Testament Scriptures. Its first appearance is as a prospective institution, when Christ utters that memorable prediction, "On this rock I will build My church."—Matt. xvi. 18. It first appears as an existing institution in the account of the proceedings of the first Pentecost after Christ's resurrection; and from that to the end the New Testament is very largely a record of the growth, constitution, and fortunes of the church. It is to the consideration of the mission of this institution that this article is devoted.

It is but natural to suppose that such an institution has a mission. God creates nothing without a purpose. When He made the sun it was that it might rule the day; and the moon he made to rule the night. The rain and snow which come down from heaven return not thither again, but water the earth, that it may bring forth seed to the sower and bread to the eater. Man was commanded "to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it." The Son of Man came "to seek and to save the lost;" and it is only in harmony with what we know of God to suppose that, when He called the church into being and sent her down the ages, that He gave her a mission to perform. Furthermore, it is but natural to suppose that the mission of the church is in keeping with the dignity of the institution itself. It is no ordinary institution which we are studying. It is the institution which Christ has purchased with his own precious blood; which he has founded on the enduring rock of God's truth; the institution over which God has triumphantly set Him as its living head; the institution which shall survive "the wreck of matter and crash of worlds," and be united to Christ and God forever in the eternal world. Its mission then can be no ordinary one. It must be grand and glorious and enduring as the institution itself. What is it? 1st. *To support the Truth.* Ever since God gave truth to the world He has had a chosen guardian and exponent of the same,—some man or people to stand beneath it and hold it up, as the pillars support the roof,—some medium, to flash this truth on a degenerate and lost world, as the revolving light-house signal flashes the light on the storm-beaten craft at sea.

Abel was the exponent of perhaps the first revelation God ever made to man concerning sacrifice for sin; and by his support of that truth, in his righteous obedience, he has given the whole race a proof of the statement that "obedience is better than sacrifice." Noah was a pillar under the truth of God concerning the destruction of a guilty world, and he supported it for one hundred and twenty years. And when God gave a written revelation of His will, a nation was chosen as a repository of that truth; to Israel were the oracles of God committed. The central fact in that revelation was the unity of God, expressed in this one sentence, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord."—Deut. vi. 4. Israel's mission was to preserve the knowledge of the one true God. And to Israel's honor be it said, that amidst all the corrupt and corrupting forms of Polytheism in the nations around her, she did preserve intact the idea of the one God.

To the church of Christ, composed of men out of every nation under heaven, has God transferred the sacred trust formerly committed to individuals and this nation. Paul says, (1 Tim. iii. 15.) the church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth. And the truth entrusted to it is the culmination and embodiment of all truth bearing on man's redemption. This truth, as did that en-

trusted to Israel, finds its centre and embodiment in one grand proposition; that proposition, the creed of the church, is that "Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ the Son of the living God." It devolves on the church to sustain that truth at all hazards. In the face of a determined disposition on the part of man to legislate for Christ and supplant his authority, it belongs to the church to demonstrate that as the Christ, *the anointed One*, He alone has the right to rule. And in the face of the bold infidelity that would strip Him of His glory and deny His Sonship with God, it belongs to the church to keep flashing across the intellectual heavens, the startling and overwhelming proofs that He was more than man. And in the face of the mighty tide of iniquity that rolls its billows of death all over the earth, it belongs to the church, like Noah of old, to hold aloft the pregnant truth that God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He has ordained," and that "He will render to every man according to the deeds done in the body." Here is room for God-like courage and heroic deeds. The ocean billows of sin, and infidelity, and error, roll onward with tremendous force. May the church flash across the angry waters the beacon light of heaven's truth.

2nd. *To propagate the truth.* Error, like weeds, spreads itself. Truth, like the good grain, needs to be propagated. The truth committed to the church is adapted to all men and makes provision for all. "The world," "every creature," "who-soever," are common gospel terms. Christ says, "Go teach all nations;" "Go preach the gospel to every creature." The knowledge of Christ is to be extended by those who know Him; His authority, by those who serve Him. His conquests are to be made through the *body* of which He is the head. And in this work there are no limitations but the limitations of humanity. Geographical boundaries, national peculiarities, race distinctions, are all swept away in this universal scheme. "The field is the world." Wherever the sun shines and the wind blows, they warm the fair territory that Christ has a right to, and people whom He died to save. Hence those sweeping commands of universal import whether a man be red, black, white or brown, while there is a soul within him that suffers from the tyranny of sin and must meet its God hereafter, he is a fit subject for the gospel's power. And the Saviour rings that charge in the ears of the church, "Go preach to him, make a disciple of him, baptize him into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The church cannot consistently fold her arms until that command is obeyed. America's millions must be entreated to worship God instead of Mammon; India's to give up Brahma for Christ; China's to forsake Buddha for the living God; Africa, the dark continent, must be penetrated by the heralds of gospel truth. The church must never rest until her voice has been heard echoing across the continents of earth and the islands of the sea, nor until the inhabitants from the river to the ends of the earth have had an opportunity to know the true God and His Son Jesus Christ. *With such a mission, can the church sit in indifference and idleness?*

M. B. RYAN.

Williamsport, Pa., May 7th, 1884.

"THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS."

We are too prone to look only on the grand results produced by any given cause, and to overlook the small and perhaps insignificant cause itself. We have a tendency to "despise the day of small things." We should, however, remember that in religion, as in nature, great results often flow from small and insignificant causes. The farmer takes a grain of corn—he buries it out of sight in the earth. It decays and dies. It is now "the day of

small things" with the corn. But, moistened by the rains and the dews of heaven, and warmed by the rays of the summer sun, that apparently dead and useless grain of corn sends upward a tiny shoot to greet the eye of the husbandman, and soon he beholds the tasseled ear and the ripe grain ready for the sickle. The skilled artizan places the iron in the fiery cauldron, where, subjected to intense heat, the carbon, which alone renders it valuable, is rapidly removed from it, and it is to all appearance now only a mass of useless metal. It is "the day of small things" with the iron. But soon, by some rapid and dexterous movements, other ingredients are made to take the place of those removed from it, and we have the useful article known to commerce as Bessemer steel. And so on all the way through nature and art, disintegration and decay are but the precursors of greater usefulness and more glorious results. "But what has all this to do with the Christian?" I think I hear you ask. Much every way. He feels, perhaps, that he is a very small and unimportant unit in the great army of the redeemed, but he has an honest desire to do his Master's will. It is now with him "the day of small things." But that honest desire put into practice and perseveringly lived up to, will in the end accomplish great things, not only for the individual himself, but also for his fellow Christians. Perhaps the Christian sees those who were near and dear to him laid away in the silent grave, and he feels that with them it is indeed "the day of small things." But in reality it is but the beginning of a brighter and better day. As I write, the sun is just sinking out of sight behind Mount Royal, the pride of this great city. But I know that again that same sun will again make his appearance in the East, coming forth as a bridegroom from his chamber, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race. So with the dead in the Lord; they will enter upon a new and better state of existence than that in which they moved here below. With them it will no longer be "the day of small things," but the day of great and glorious triumph. Perhaps the Church of Jesus Christ, the pillar and ground of the truth, feels that she is at a low ebb; her members are cold and indifferent; her meetings are slimly attended; her ordinances are neglected; the notes of warning from the lips of her faithful pastor fall unheeded upon the ears of her membership. It is indeed with her "the day of small things." But let her take courage. The darkest part of the night is just before the dawn. Let her gird up her loins and run with patience the race that is set before her, and all will be well. The day of small things will give place to the day of rejoicing; the sigh of despair will give way to the song of praise; and the lamentations of her Jeremiahs will be succeeded by the hosannas of her redeemed and purified children. W. H. E.
Montreal, May, 1884.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

In the February number of THE CHRISTIAN there is an article by Bro. O. B. Emery on church discipline, which deserves more than a hasty reading. The subject is an important one, and should be carefully and prayerfully studied. It is true that a "judicious discipline must be attended to in order to the health and well-being of the church." But just here is where my trouble lies. What constitutes "judicious discipline?" Is it "removing the tares?" I think not. In the parable of the "tares," (Matt. xiii.) our Lord settles this question; at least this side of it. By this similitude we are taught that then, as now, the zealous servants, when they saw the "tares," wanted to go and "gather them out." But the Saviour says, "No!" let them alone "until the harvest;" and in His explanation He says: "The harvest is the end of the world," and the "reapers are the angels;" and at time of the harvest He will "send forth His angels," and "they