

## The Christian.

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## EDITORIAL.

## REASONABLE SERVICE.

I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Rom. xii. 1.

Men are liable to hold extreme views on all points of general interest on religious as well as on other matters. Some consider religious discussion sinful, and refuse to compare their feelings and actions with the word of God. Under the impression that they are led by the Holy Spirit, and feeling happy by times, at least, they even laud their refusal to search the Scriptures to ascertain whether their conduct and feelings accord with the law or spirit of life in Christ Jesus. "We are happy," they say, "and don't believe in argument."

Others, again, are continually ready for argument, and read the Bible mostly for this purpose. They never seem happy but when discussing points of religious difference. Speak to them of Christian duty, on the morality and the enjoyment of the religion of Christ, and the spiritual temperature is down at once. Their enjoyment is in the discussion of disputed points and in the thought of being victorious.

The proper course between these extremes is marked out by the Apostle in this inimitable letter to the Roman brotherhood. After a short preface, he enters into an argument, which is continued with great animation until he reaches the twelfth chapter. Qualified in a pre-eminent degree by nature, culture and inspiration to handle and master great subjects, he meets his opponents and carries every point with convincing power. His opponents were Jewish teachers who mixed Judaism with Christianity, and contended that Christ saved the Jews only, and that too, because they were circumcised and had the flesh and blood of Abraham. Paul affirmed that all Jews and Gentiles were sinners. That even Abraham being a sinner, was not justified by works of merit, and could not impart to his fleshly offspring what he did not possess himself. He proved all men to be guilty before God. He also proved that Christ died for our sins, for the sins of all men, and offered salvation to all men on His own terms, and so freely as to cut off all grounds of boasting; that men were justified by faith and not by works of merit. In comparing man's selfish views of a Saviour, who would justify one nation and leave all other nations to perish without mercy with the grace of God by which Jesus tasted death for every man, and His last command, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, the Apostle is borne along in every step with the surpassing wisdom and power of God, and closes the argument in the eleventh chapter with the following peroration, "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all. O, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways, past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath seen His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him and it shall be redeemed to Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things to whom be glory forever."

But although the great argument is concluded, the letter is not finished. Paul proceeds to show the effect God had designed to produce on the hearts and lives of those who beheld His "unsearchable judgments," and urges his brethren to carry out the divine purpose, in presenting their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, etc., etc. So that the letter which begins with important

argument, ends with counsels, warnings and admonitions, not less important to the Christian. For want of space we will but glance at some points in the command here given by Paul whom Jesus had made a general.

First—This command is a *persuasive* command, "I beseech you." David was also a commander of Israel, the Lord's people. But the difference between Israel and Jesus Christ's people is this: Israel were not a willing people, but Jesus's people are a willing people, as David predicted in the 110th psalm, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Paul lived in the day of God's power, or gospel day. When all the people of Christ knew the Lord and loved Him, and when describing the rich mercies of God by which these people expected to praise Him forever, this was his manner of address, I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, etc., etc.

Second—This command is *intelligible*, "that ye present your bodies. When He says your bodies, all can understand Him. When the spirit or soul is spoken of, it may not always be clearly understood, but when our hands, or feet, or tongue, or eyes, or any or all members of the body are mentioned, it is plain what is meant, so that the command is plain for all to understand.

Third—His command is *important*. Our bodies in their different members are engaged in some service. Our feet are apt to carry us along the "broad road" which many travel, or they can carry us to the abode of the poor and needy—to the Lord's house and the Lord's service. Our hands can be engaged for self or sin, or they can be employed in the cheerful service of God. So with our eyes and ears, they can help us to draw near to God, or they can have a controlling influence in drawing us into sin. And what an immense power for good or evil is in the *tongue*, a fire, a world of iniquity set on fire of hell, and in turn setting on fire the whole course of nature or the whole world. (James iii. 6). And yet this "unruly evil" can be made when presented to God a means of grace to others who are unsaved. Thus commands the Apostle, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." (Ep. iv. 29).

How important, then, the command to present our bodies a living sacrifice to God, as they are under the control of our will, and they are so powerful to accomplish good or evil.

Fourth—This command involves *sacrifice*. A service without sacrifice is ignored by Old Testament and New. The sacrifices for sin which were offered under the law might be called dead sacrifices. The animals offered passed into death and there remained. They never came back to tell of their efficacy or to make the corners thereof perfect. But when Jesus offered Himself without spot to God He passed through death. He lives again and lives forevermore, making His sacrifice in every respect both a living and an acceptable sacrifice. When the Christian presents His body according to the claims and commands of Jesus, he gives himself and his time and talents and money and all he has to God, so that God is pleased to call it a sacrifice. Jesus enters the open door, sups with Him and He sups with Jesus. Jesus accepts the believer, with what little the believer has, and gives Himself with all His wealth and glory to him in return. The true believer will show all through life that he is sacrificing for his Master, and hence his service will be a living sacrifice. So that this command involves both sacrifice and the cheering encouragement that it is accepted of God.

Fifth and last—This command is just and the service requested *reasonable*. When we remember on the one hand the malignity and deceit of him

who is planning our ruin what reason can be given for serving him. On the other hand when we remember the love of our Creator; what He has done to make us happy forever; how much He has borne from us; how freely He gave us His beloved Son that He might through Him freely give us all things; surely it is reasonable to serve Him. But we must for the present stop the pen.

## Original Contributions.

## OUR HOME MISSION WORK.

That the interest in our mission work is not what we think it should be, we frankly acknowledge; and for this very reason this article is written. Not that I propose to give what appears to me to be the reasons for this lack of interest, but rather to try and stir up the pure minds of my brethren by way of remembrance. I have confidence in my brethren, and believe all they need to enlist their warm interest in our work is to get them to see and feel the need there is for this work. In order to do this it has been decided that we should devote a department in THE CHRISTIAN expressly to the interest of our home mission work.

What we mean when we speak of this work is the efforts that are now being made to build up the cause of primitive Christianity in these provinces. That our brethren generally do not understand the nature of this work, nor what has been accomplished in the last seven or eight years, is to me very evident. I feel assured that did they understand the nature of this work, and the good that has been done with the few hundred dollars at our disposal, that they would gladly contribute of their means to promote so good a work. I could fill this article with the reports of successful work done by the Mission Board, or under its direction, and the hundreds that have been added to the saved through this instrumentality. At another time this may be done, but for the present the mere statement of the fact must suffice.

That we may have made some mistakes, and that there are some apparent failures, will also be freely admitted; but the general success attending our efforts has been so great, compared with the small amount of labor done, that we are encouraged to work right along on this line, believing God will continue to bless our efforts. The greatest hindrance to our work during the last ten years was the want of preachers. We had quite a number of churches all over these provinces but only a few preachers. On account of this several of those churches were dying as fast as they could. To save them and put them again in working order was the aim of our mission work. To do this, for the want of a regular evangelist we have employed a few of our preaching brethren for such time as they could spare from their work in their own localities, and set them where we thought the most good could be done.

In doing this we were not doing just as some good brethren thought we should do. There are those who have said in the past, and say now, "this is not mission work," "the missionary should go out into new fields," etc. But is it wise to allow our churches of long standing to die for the want of labor while we are trying to build up in new places? We think not. Is it not just as important to bring those back to Christ who have wandered from Him as it is to bring in those of the world? And with what confidence can we go out into new fields and invite men and women to unite with us on the one foundation, while they can point to those dying or dead churches as our failures? Let us first go to work with our weaker churches, and "set in order the things that are wanting," then we can confidently reach out into new fields as opportunity may offer.

Again, some have objected to employing our