

Messenger and Visitor

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CHRISTMAS.

We cannot be reminded too often as the Christmas season draws near that the great lesson which it teaches is God's great gift to the race. That was the burden of the angels' song on the first Christmas morning, and it has been the very heart of the glad evangel ever since that morning. Then it was "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good-will to men." It is the same glad song today. As the days glide so swiftly by, and the seasons come and go with such rapidity, it would be the mark of wisdom to make the Christmas of 1904 mean more than any Christmas that has gone before. God gave—a great gift, for a great object, and for a great purpose. Its unspeakable value consists not only in what it is in itself, but in what it does for its recipient. "Unto you is born a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." The shepherds who were watching their flocks at night, heard it, believed it, and were made glad. Millions have heard it since that morning, have believed it and have been made glad. The fact, the great, glad, eternal fact is with us today. And there are more people on this earth of ours to whom this message comes with cheer and hope than at any other period in its eventful history. For it is the word that away above and beyond all others reaches to the very heart of humanity's need. "Most of all, deepest of all, highest of all, inclusive of all, it is the message we need, and it is the message which the world needs." The beauty, the significance of it all is, that it is not for one race or tribe or people or country. It is for each and all. Wherever there is a man, be he high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, to him the Prince of Peace comes with his word of cheer and hope. The great purpose of his coming was to reconcile us to God, to take away our sin, so making peace. He comes to us to free us from the guilt of sin and from its power, so that the peace that passeth all understanding may rule in our hearts. He came to subdue the hostile and selfish passions which in the social, the industrial and the political worlds divide men into hostile camps, and to bring in the era of brotherhood when the whole world shall be bound by ties of love in one great family.

The annual remembrance of Christ's birthday helps to fasten upon the hearts of men, all too prone to forget, the unspeakable love of God and the unspeakable gift which found expression in the person and work of Jesus the Christ. How goodly well when friends are distributing their gifts, to remember that he whose name they bear gave Himself to die for us, and said to his followers, "Inasmuch as ye have done unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done unto me."

"Come in the morn'g, for see and hark!
A world was waiting in the dark,
With throbbing heart and straining gaze,
To catch the first up-springing rays,
O happy, happy morn'g!

CONCERNING MERIT.

It is said that in a cemetery in the city of Cork, Ireland, may be seen the following epitaph. Anything more blasphemous can scarcely be imagined. 'Edward Mallory, the friend of humanity, the father of the poor. He employed the wealth of this world only to procure the riches of the next; and leaving a balance of credit on the book of life, he made heaven a debtor to merry.' Is it possible for any such plea to avail at heavens portals? Heaven will never be defiled by any who enter therein. The song that will be sung forever there will be "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins, in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever amen." Cleaving to the merit of the crucified, alone, can prepare for joining in that song.

There must be a letting go of every other dependence, and a taking hold of Christ as all and in all. His merit and his alone, can avail as a passport to that blissful state which the Psalmist contemplated when he said 'Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory.'

Nothing in human merit can give assurance of that reception. Again and again has this been realized in the dying hour of those who have had no other trust than that

which they reposed in Christ. Mr. McLaren of Edinburgh, in his last moments was visited by his colleague, Mr. Gustar, who said to him, "What are you doing brother?" His answer was, "I'll tell you what I am doing, brother; I am gathering together all my prayers, all my sermons, all my good deeds, all my ill-deeds, and I am going to throw them all over board, and swim to glory on the plank of free grace." That was the only way in which he could get to glory. In like manner the late Dr. Francis Wayland near the close of his useful life, said, 'I have indeed tried to do my duty, I cannot accuse myself of having neglected any known obligation. Yet all this avails nothing. I place no dependence upon anything but the righteousness and death of Jesus Christ.' Dr. South said truly, as we think "a man at best is incapable of meriting anything from God." The true state of the case is that all possible excellence is required and all possible service is demanded, so that meeting these obligations, is only responding to the claims of duty, and therefore nothing meritorious can be recognized in any attainments or achievements. None can be or do that which will entitle them to be rewarded with the greatest of all rewards, even "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away." No one has ever lived well enough to be thereby assured of an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." Resting upon the transcendent merit of Christ is imperatively required of all who would finish their earthly course with joy. It was what Paul had done when he could say at the close of life, "I have kept the faith." A failure in this respect is full of peril; and yet it is an evil to which there is great exposure, in that it is natural for all to make more or less account of their own merits, and the tendency to practically, if not theoretically, undervalue and reject the merit of Christ, is so strong as to need constant attention in checking it. Whatever else is abandoned, let it not be reliance on the merit of him whose "name is above every name." That is a vital matter. Here is solid work. "All other ground is shifting sand."

THE WEEK OF PRAYER.

The Evangelical Alliance has issued its annual call for the world-wide week of Prayer, for 1905. It will begin with Sunday January 1st and close on Saturday the 7th inclusive. It is expected that sermons will be preached on Sunday the 1st. Texts have been suggested from Ps. 67, 97:11, Isa. 40, 5: 62, 4, John 17, 20:21, Eph. 2:19-22, etc.

The following are the principal topics Monday, 2nd:— 'Praise and Prayer for the body of which Christ is the Head' Tuesday 3rd—'For Nations and their Rulers,' Wednesday 4th—'For our Land and Possessions, Thursday 5th—'For Families, Educational Establishments and the Young, Friday 6th,—'For God's ancient people Israel, Saturday 7th, Foreign Missions.

The object of these meetings is to weld the hearts of all God's people in loving Christian fellowship, no matter what their denominational differences may be. It is hoped that all Christendom agreeing in such a week of supplication may be a blessed exhibition of the unity before God, of all true believers. Now that so much is being said as to 'Union' between different denominations this fraternal spirit should form a marked characteristic of the Week of Prayer and throughout the ensuing year, as a consequence.

MORAL REFORM.

At the social union in Chicago, the principal address was given by the Rev. Dr. Meeser of Detroit. His theme was, 'The need of a Moral Revival in Private and Public Life.' The subject was most timely. It would not be amiss to have such a subject treated in the most trenchant style in our own Dominion if one half of what we read in the newspapers be true.

Dr. Meeser showed first why such a revival is needed. He referred to a number of instances as evidences of moral laxity, Divorce and the present conception of the marriage relation was one of these. Men, and women too, seem to think that in marriage individual preferences are the chief consideration. As a result the number of divorces is almost beyond belief, 100,000 last year. He referred also to the demoralization in public taste in various forms of literature, more especially, as seen in the Sunday newspapers.

Then too the low ideals and moral turpitude that obtain among public officials. This is seen when men have anything to do with those engaged in the liquor business. If an address in moral reform were given in some parts of these provinces some very trenchant remarks might be made as to the conduct of the officials in their attitude towards the liquor traffic, and their utter disregard of the provision of the law in respect to that traffic.

How men can violate their oaths in such matters passes knowledge. There is also the wholesale purchase of votes at elections, and the means used to corrupt the electorate, which are a scandal and a disgrace to all parties involved, directly or indirectly.

SOUL-SAVING.

This is the ultimate aim in this world of all Christian work. It is well enough to talk of building character and of developing Christian graces and of reforming society,

These are the finishing touches to be put on the structure after its foundations and walls are in place, but there is only folly in hanging up painted scenery for a world's admiration while there is nothing but gauze to support this artistic display. Nor do we believe there is any better way of improving character or of reforming society than by keeping forever closely at the task of saving souls. The temple is built by fitting each individual stone and board for its place and this fitting is to be done in forest and quarry not after the material is placed in the wall. Let there be no mistake here. Conversion is of prime importance Jesus said to a very moral, upright, clean, straight man, "Ye must be born again," that first, the rest will follow.

Editorial Notes.

—The *Truro News* says concerning Dr. Creed's note which appeared in our last week's issue in reference to the non appearance of the Year Book. "We have a printing office right here where we are writing, from which this publication, if the printer was not kept waiting, would have been out sharp on time to a day." This ought to be true in any up-to-date printing office. There is no good reason why the Year Book of the Baptist Convention should not be printed and delivered by October 31 at the very latest. Its value as a work of reference is diminished by every passing month of delay in its publication.

—A note from Rev. H. Morrow under date, Nov. 8th says "We have just got through the most rainy rains we have ever known, and we had heavy rain the 6th. We have never known rains to last longer than Oct. 19 and have had our last shower Oct. 8th; but this year they have been heavy and long continued, from June, 1st to date. We have had 275 inches or nearly 23ft of solid rain, how would you like that? (St. John or Halifax might answer.) The rice crop is fine, fine these late showers have kept it fresh and the grain will be filled, We are fairly well, if we could ease up a bit would be very well."

—It takes more than natural resource and material advantages to make a strong and prosperous and influential nation. God is in the history of nations as well as in that of individuals and the people who forget or disobey God will as certainly suffer for their sin as the individual who does the same. Nothing exalts and strengthens a nation like righteousness and nothing as certainly presages its doom like wickedness. The evidence of this can be seen in the collapse of those nations which feared not God. When the strain came, France honeycombed with infidelity went down like a house of shells before the German legions. What is true of nations is also true of communities and individuals. Wicked men do not prosper in the long run, though they may seem to do so for a time. It always pays to do right and to live right, in and for, this world, and for any other world.

—Missionary work is not an incidental feature of church life, it is its very essence and substance. A church without a missionary spirit is a fire without heat, a tree without fruit, clouds without rain, a light under a bushel, an organization having only the form of godliness but in which the Spirit of God has not breathed the breath of life. A church has simply no reason and no justification for being except it is employed in executing the divine plan for the redemption of the world. If these things are so then the right to be of some churches ought to be seriously questioned. Merely to go through the round of the ordinary routine of church services is no warrant for an existence. Unless the body is impressing itself upon the community as a moral force, as a power for good, a factor in the uplift of the people and a vigorous, active agency in the extension of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is in no real sense a church.—It may be so called—but that is of little worth.

—The President of the So. African Baptist Union for the coming year in his inaugural address which was entitled 'The greatness of the Individual Church' said in reference to Baptist polity, "It is the glory of our ecclesiastical polity that, like the ancient and primeval churches of the Pentecostal period and the New Testament era, each church is complete in itself. It is our wisdom, it is our strength, and it is our security, not to have moved, through nineteen centuries of blundering ecclesiasticism, from that noble, simple and inspiring pattern.

After nearly a quarter of a century of experience, I, for one can say, I know of no other polity so near to the divine pattern, with so exquisite a charm, or so ample a place for the play of consecrated character as that of the baptized churches represented here."

—We hear a great deal said in these days about the weakness of the church, the inefficiency of the pulpit, and the failure to win thoughtful and intelligent men to the worship and service of the true and living God. The smallness of the average congregation, the lack of interest, and the absence from public worship, on the part of so many is accounted for by the above statement. But there is one reason that is frequently overlooked, that men love darkness. This is true of the natural man and accounts for much of the indifference to the church and its services. This is the real source,—the spring of all the ungodliness that is seen in the world, and if you will, in the church. Purify the fountain and the stream will be pure.