

Divine Author of the Bible knew both its character and the capabilities of human nature, that if He had desired He could easily have inspired some prophet or apostle to formulate a more exclusive standard, and that since He has given one which separates men rather by their spirit than by their intellectual opinions it is possible that this is the separation which He desires should be recognized by His Church. But one may easily go farther, and see why this very ambiguity of the Bible makes it a better standard than the creeds which are proposed either to supplant or to supplement it. The Bible may be briefly described as the History of the Life of God in the Soul—of the individual and of the race. It has often been pointed out that it contains no formulated creed; and the omission is significant. What it does contain is the record of spiritual life, of which the creed is only an intellectual analysis.

For example, the Bible contains little or no discussion respecting the origin of sin in the world; but it abounds with portrayals, in every possible form, of the experience of personal humility, contrition and repentance because of personal sin. It contains no discussion respecting the philosophy of the atonement; but every page is luminous with the experience of a joyful trust in a pardoning God, and a peace in Him which passes all understanding. It nowhere states the doctrine of the Trinity—three Persons in one God; but it exhausts language in its utterance of homage, reverence and affection to the Divine Son. It nowhere emulates the pages of the modern theological review in an attempted accurate definition of the nature or limits of future punishment; but it portrays in unequalled eloquence of feeling the awe with which the devout soul looks to a possible meeting with a just and holy God of a soul with sins unforgiven and a heart unchanged. It contains no wise philosophical disquisitions concerning the nature of moral obligation; but there is no book and no literature which compares with it in power to inspire a devout, unselfish, heroic life. In short, it contains very few definitions; very little purely intellectual philosophy; but it portrays, as no other book has ever done, that spiritual experience whose three essential elements are repentance, faith and love; sorrow for and abandonment of sin; trust in a pardoning and healing Saviour, and consecration and allegiance to a holy and loving God.

Account for it as we may, of the fact there can be no question, that the spiritual life which the Bible portrays is to be found equally eminent in men of very different logical qualities and theological opinions. No devout Protestant can question the spiritual life of Fenelon; no devout Catholic will deny the evidences of spiritual life in Robinson. A man may have humility, faith and love in either the Romish or the Protestant communion. Whoever actually possesses this divine life, of which the Bible is the one divine interpreter, is a child of God. Whoever consecrates himself to the direct work of promoting this divine life in other men is a Christian teacher. The essentials of Christianity are in the life, not in the philosophy about the life. They are not the doctrines of original sin, the proper deity of our Lord, the simplicity of moral action; they are personal humility, repentance, faith, trust, love. The foundations of true religion are in experience. And the reason why the Bible is a standard of truth, such as no creed ever was or ever can be, is because it is a divinely inspired disclosure of this divinely inspired life. The intellectual analysis of it is always partial and imperfect. The life itself is alone divine.

Any attempt to supplement the Bible by an authoritative creed, to require either of the church member or of the minister adherence to a human philosophy of this divine life, whether it be afforded by a written or an unwritten tradition, impairs the liberty of the mind by practically saying to it: "Thus far and no farther shalt thou go;" and impairs the spirituality of the Church by diverting its attention from the life to the philosophy, from the essentials of humility, faith and charity, to the non-essentials of intellectual opinion. He who has no sense of sin and therefore no experience of repentance, no consciousness of the presence

of a Divine Saviour and therefore no living trust in Him, no sympathetic realization of the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God, and therefore no catholic love for the one and no supreme consecration to the other, is not worthy to be inducted into the Christian ministry. He may serve his fellow-men in other spheres; but he does not conform to the Bible standard of truth, which is always a standard of life as well. But he who possesses these elements of an inward and a divine life, and is "apt to teach," will receive at the last a "Well done, good and faithful servant," and the Church of God may safely anticipate on earth the approbation which God will give in heaven.

The foundations of Christian truth are in a living experience; the interpretation of that living experience is the Word of God. We recognize no other standard of truth. We stand where Jesus Christ, and Paul, and Luther, and Robinson stood. We would stand here though we stood alone.

The true safeguard against heresy in pulpit or pew is not in venerable traditions, but in spiritual life. "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."—*The Christian Union*.

Correspondence.

To the Editor of the CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

DEAR SIR,—I am glad that in a recent issue the attention of your readers was directed to the subject of Church Music. It is a patent fact that in many of our churches congregational singing requires much more attention than at present it receives. Whether the congregation does its own singing, or leaves it wholly to the choir—which too often is the case—there is need of more study and training.

Could there not be a column opened in the CANADIAN INDEPENDENT for contributions to this branch of musical art? When there are so many different opinions respecting the style of music best adapted as a vehicle of praise to God, and also, as to the best methods of training our congregations to sing, might not our denominational organ draw attention, from time to time, to much needed improvements in our public service of song? A. F. MCGREGOR.

Listowel, March 25th, 1879.

To the Editor of the CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

SIR,—In looking over the INDEPENDENT of 6th March, I notice the "Christian Guardian" has given inspiration to your pen on the question of ministerial "tramps," and am glad to see your defence of the permanent pastorate from the charge of "scheming."

It is difficult to see what motive a permanent pastor who is in harmony with his people could have for scheming. There are few localities in which there is not plenty of work to do for the Master, to fill up the time profitably of a faithful pastor. His ministrations are well received by his people; the fruit of his labour is manifest in the steady growth of his church; he is at one with his people and they with him; his support, which is forthcoming at the stipulated time, is ample to meet all his wants, and perhaps something besides. The way is thus clear for him to employ his time, and energies in winning souls for Christ: which is the great work of the ministry. Now, if this be true, in regard to the permanent pastorate, whence comes the necessity for scheming?

The truth is, these lessons in scheming "nestle under," and are the fruits of the itineracy system, and are never shown more clearly, perhaps, than when they are put in practice by the student thereof, when he drifts into the fold of denominations holding opposite views.

You shall not be wanting in evidence to open the eyes of the "Guardian" to the fact that these pernicious lessons, which, when put in practice, are so de-

structive to the work of the Church, are the fruits, in some cases at least, of the itineracy, and are not always applied with due regard to truthfulness, as illustrated in a case which recently occurred in this city, to the destruction of a young, but well-organized, and prosperous church. Perhaps, in this case, the pastor thought "his sublime talents entitled him to a higher position," hence, his scheming for new fields of labour, as he is no sooner settled in his work, than he begins to look about him for another charge, without any special preference for any one denomination.

That there are occasional instances, under the permanent pastorate system, where a change is desirable and is sought in an open, frank, and Christian spirit, without doing violence to the Church and the cause of Christ, is not to be denied, but to argue that the system is calculated to foster, or encourage an unsettled condition of mind and heart, to the extent that scheming for a change is resorted to and made a constant study, to the neglect of the all-important work of looking after the spiritual wants of the flock over which he is chosen as pastor and shepherd, is at variance with all observation and experience.

Happily, for the good of the Church, this scheming for position, is seldom so unmistakably developed as in the case above referred to, and this minister received his training under the itineracy system, and had had no experience in "our ways which be in Christ,"—hence, in slumber be careful that we do not underestimate the amount of local disruption produced by the sudden and frequent change of pastors."

W. E. WELDING.

Brantford, 11th March, 1879.

Religious News.

THE Union church, Providence, R. I., Dr. A. J. F. Behrens, pastor, has a membership of 663.

THERE are now 350 churches in Burma, and most of the work—nearly all, indeed—is done by native teachers.

IN Boston it is estimated there are eight miles frontage of grog-shops; in New York city thirty miles.

DR. CUYLER'S church, Lafayette Avenue, Presbyterian, Brooklyn, N.Y., has 1,681 members.

PARK STREET CHURCH, Boston, under the pastorate of Dr. J. L. Withrow, raised for all purposes last year \$32,000.

THE English language will be the medium of instruction at the Syrian Protestant College at Beirut after next September.

THE Russian Synod of the Greek church is preparing for missionary work in Japan, and the work is to be carried on on a large scale.

TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD CHURCH, London, is again pastorless. Rev. T. Nicholson has just resigned after a short ministry.

THE Year Book for 1868 says that American Baptists average an annual contribution of not quite twenty-five cents each to all religious work.

BOSTON is about to lose one of its most prominent preachers, Dr. George C. Lorimer, of Tremont Temple Baptist church. He is going to Chicago.

A tablet to the memory of the late Rev. George Gilfillan has been placed in the School Wynd church, Dundee, of which he was pastor.

MR. RASSAM has discovered a cylinder of Sennacherib dated B. C. 700. It will probably help to decide the exact year of Sennacherib's expedition against Hezekiah.

THE International Sunday School lessons for 1880 comprise lessons in Matthew for the first six months, and in Genesis for the remainder of the year.

THE London "Christian" states the deplorable fact that 1,885 of the 5,241 shares of a recently registered brewing company at Carlisle, are held by clergymen.

DR. HOWARD CROSBY of New York has been appointed Lyman Beecher lecturer in Yale Theological Seminary for next year, and it is understood that he accepts the appointment.

UP to February 1, the total sales in the United States of Moody and Sankey's Gospel Hymns, Nos. 1, 2, and 3, were 6,392,460 copies, of which 4,713,873 were of No. 1. Nearly 7,000,000 of No. 1 have been sold in England.

THE American Presbyterian Board of Home Missions was in debt to the amount of \$90,000 on the 1st of February, and it needs \$45,000 more before the end of its fiscal year. The secretaries make a special appeal for contributions.

"A SMOKER" suggests in the "Central Presbyterian" that 20,000 of the 30,000 members of the Southern Presbyterian Church who use at least twenty dollars worth of tobacco annually, resolve to spend only half as much, and dedicate the other half, which would amount to \$200,000, to the benevolent work of their Church. Will they?