

The Canadian Independent

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TORONTO, FEB. 3rd 1881.

TO CORRESPONDENTS: Country Parson in our next Will you send us your name?

We regret to find that a new plan of distribution to our City subscribers through a company formed for the purpose, has resulted in disappointment, many of our friends having failed to receive copies of the INDEPENDENT for the 13th and 20th January. We have a few left of those dates, and if any who are short of those numbers will drop us a card we will mail copies to them.

HAS CONGREGATIONALISM A WORK IN CANADA? HAS IT THE MEN TO DO IT?

Dr. Stevenson, in his address as chairman of our Union last year, virtually asked, and in some measure answered, or suggested answers to these questions. The subject is too momentous to be allowed quietly to slumber in the pages of the "Year Book," or among the carefully stored-up pamphlets, dust-covered, on our lower shelves. That we have a definite place we ought not only to believe, but with power should we make others feel that we do believe it, and constrain them to listen to our words. We should, as our chairman expressed it, "cover our stations in the great conflict." If we are to struggle for existence we ought to know whether that existence is really worth the struggle, and whether our stations are worth the covering. We offer a few thoughts thereon, bound by the limits of an editorial, which must be our apology for the very cursory treatment of the subject.

First, a few words upon the times in which we live, viewed from an ecclesiastical stand-point. Those of us who have arrived at middle life were surrounded in childhood by circumstances very different in character and influence from those in which we now walk. Theological lines were definitely marked out: if you heard a text announced on "Sanctification" from an Arminian pulpit, you could forecast its general outline as certainly as with a guide book in hand you can note the stations on the Grand Trunk R.R., between Toronto and Montreal. True, all stations might not be stopped at, hence a stranger might miscalculate, but the experienced traveller could tell every stage and winding. Precisely the same would be true, *mutatis mutandis*, regarding a Calvinistic pulpit. The same is true now when from his Rip Van Winkle sleep some high and dry churchman rises, or lawn-sleeved prelate speaks regarding the true church and the rabble dissenters. Twenty years ago you would stray into an unknown church, and the sermon would to a practised ear declare the *ism*. This is fast changing. One might go the round of our city churches for a year and hear no certain sound upon the differentia of the denominations, unless, indeed, he should stumble upon a Baptist defence of close communion.

Yet the Shibboleths remain, though sorry are the pronouncements thereof. Do we require to make plain our meaning? Some time ago in directing attention to the hindrances to Christian unity we pointed out certain rules of entrance into various Christian denominations, which, beyond New Testament limits, were exclusive. e.g. The Anglican Church permits latitude enough to satisfy any as to doctrine, from Bishop Colenso, still living, to Canon Liddon or Dr. Pusey; but "except ye be Episcopally ordained ye cannot enter the ranks of the clergy, nor be allowed, except on a street acquaintance, the recognition of a lawful bishop." The line must be drawn somewhere, and here it shall be, whoever dares to transgress, *anathema sit*. Arminian and Calvinist may exchange pulpits, recognize each other, and worship together, loving as brethren. Thank God that such not only can be, but is, the *odium theologum* is less black than formerly; but the most worthy Methodist minister could not be "called" by the most free Presbyterian congregation without an avowed change of faith, nor the most revered from among the Presbyterian ranks occupy as pastor a Methodist pulpit: whilst our Baptist brother stands firm with his pool of water through which one must go a seat at the table which should commemorate a world-wide sacrifice is eached. The spirit of the age, however, is growingly against these exclusions. Churchmen will recognize other denominations and allow the courtesies of recognition to other ministers. Presbyterian minorities swelled even to majorities will justify a professor in dealing very freely with the Old Testament writings, and quietly ignore Arminian tendencies though the Confession of Faith groan audibly under the strain: there are indications, too, that Methodism, scarcely a century old, must relax, is relaxing some of its bonds, though the form may be retained. The churches are drifting, everywhere there is indecision. Thus far we in this colony have scarcely felt the mighty unsettling of old forms and faith, but it is fast coming, is at hand. Where stand we? Holding the true Catholicity of the Church by individual liberty in living unto Christ, we close neither our pulpits nor our pews from men whose record assures us that they have learned to walk in Christ and seek the blessing of His children. We have, without any strain upon our polity, given more than one of our pulpits in perpetual charge to tried men of other name without demanding a recantation or a disavowal of tenets formerly held; and in that very simple fact have declared a Catholicity you will seek elsewhere in vain. Thereby we have manifested at least a liberty which enables us unshackled to meet the wants of the day. And then, as our late chairman expressed it, "the future is more and more ours, not that other denominations will cease to live and work, but that the whole Church of Christ will become increasingly penetrated by our views and inspired by our Spirit."

Creed, catechism, confession have over the masses and among thinking men little authority to-day, here the extremes of society meet, and the cry of both is, lead us to the fountain

head. There is to be no authority to come between individual men and churches, and the Christ they would make their own. "Tis a broad land of wealth unknown" to which we are coming, and through which our children will be compelled to pass, yet a broad land of wealth may prove a trackless wilderness, and souls wearied with their wanderings lie down therein to die. We are not encumbered, and therefore the more fitted for the journey than though we were heavy laden and tightly harnessed; have we the wisdom therein "to dig up wells," and keep our path straight, guided as the wise men from the east by Bethlehem's Star?

Therein lies the answer to our query, "Have we a work in Canada?" By answering the second question we solve the first. Let us lay it seriously to heart. Other denominations are gradually learning our liberty, and therein we rejoice; but are we who have that liberty to find ourselves gradually dropping out because we have not wisdom to use that liberty aright? Sad use has sometimes been made of liberty, ours has not always been wisely held, nevertheless liberty abused should teach those who possess the priceless blessing to abuse it no more, but to use it for the great work before us.

To the Churches we must look for a true noting of the signs of the times, let them call men "tried and true," or encourage only those who can cover their stations. Let churches demand something more than success in drawing a crowd and "making it pay," remembering that by sacrifice and the suffering of reproach all moral victories are won. Only let us not suffer for evil-doing. In those sacrifices often demanded, let the members of churches remember too, that all sacrifice should not be on the part of one class, that is, the minister. There is no reason in the nature of things why he should—because the enterprise does not pay—live in a barn whilst he visits his people in ceiled houses; but there is reason why all should be up and doing, seizing the opportunities the present affords for the vindication of the principle, that the Church is Christ's, not the State's, nor the Creed's, but that direct to Him we bring our work, our word, our all. He only—yet He is Lord over us. At its noblest times the Church has ever sat at Christ's feet and learnt direct from Him. Be that our mission, free, untrammelled, only let us remember Christ is not a mere shadow, a dream, but veritably Immanuel, God with us. Thus shall we most surely prove that Congregationalism has a mission and that we have men to fulfil it.

THE APOCRYPHAL BOYHOOD OF JESUS.

The subject of the Sunday School lesson for next Sunday, "The boyhood of Jesus," brings up the fact as to the silence of the evangelists on this part of the life of the Saviour. After the return from Egypt, the one only glimpse we get of Jesus until the beginning of His public ministry is in the portion covered by the coming lesson. It is evident, we think, that in the account inspired by the Spirit of God when the attestation to Christ had been given, that He was indeed the promised one, the

Messiah, the salvation of God, then the record ceases until the time of specific ministration and labor began.

In striking contrast with the reticence of the Gospels are the Apocryphal Gospels, which are full of stories just such as we might suppose man would have invented, miracles of nonsense, of revenge, and at the very best without a purpose or spiritual lesson. No one, we think, can read those old legends without feeling more than ever by contrast, the striking simplicity of the four evangelists, and a conviction that their narratives carry with them the stamp of truthfulness and divinity. We do not propose to do more than give our readers a few specimens of these stories, that when they sit down to the study of the gospel narrative in their classes on Sabbath, they may learn more than ever to value the revelation of the truth of God.

Our quotations are from the gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, a compilation, apparently, from older documents and floating legends respecting the infancy of the Saviour, it is probably about the 5th century. We omit the wonderful story of what occurred during the flight into Egypt, to give more particularly one or two incidents later on. In the following the four-year old Saviour is represented as working a miracle of revenge:—

"One Sabbath day he played with the children by the bed of the Jordan. When, therefore, he had sat down, Jesus made himself seven pools with mud to each of which he made little channels, through which at his command, he brought water from a stream into a pool and sent it back again. Then one of those children, a son of the devil, with envious mind shut up the channels which supplied water to the pool, and overthrew what Jesus had made. Then said Jesus unto him, woe unto thee, son of death, son of Satan. Dost thou destroy the works which I have wrought? And straightway he who had done this died."

The parents of the dead child cried out—as well they might—to Joseph and Mary, whereupon Jesus,

"Not willing that his mother should be grieved, spurned the body of the dead with his right foot, and said to him, 'Arise, O son of iniquity; for thou art not worthy to enter into the rest of my Father, because thou hast destroyed the works which I have wrought.' Then he who was dead arose and departed."

Then further miracles with the mud.

"And it came to pass after these things that in the sight of all, Jesus took mud from the pools which he had made, and made twelve sparrows out of it. Now, it was the Sabbath when Jesus did this, and there were many children with him. When, therefore, one of the Jews had seen him do this, he said to Joseph, Joseph, seest thou not that the child Jesus worketh on the Sabbath, which it is not lawful for him to do, for he hath made twelve sparrows or mud. When he heard this Joseph reproved him, saying, Why dost thou on the Sabbath such things as it is not lawful for us to do? And Jesus, hearing Joseph, and clapping his hands together, said to the sparrows, Fly! And at the voice of his command they began to fly. And as all who stood there saw and heard, he said to the birds, Go and fly through the globe and all the world and live."

In the next chapter (for this, like the genuine Gospels, is in chapters), another boy—a son of Annas, the priest of the temple—breaks open the pools of water again. He dies in like manner, but as his parents were not present probably to cry out he is not revived. Yet again, in the next chapter, another boy runs against Jesus; he is denounced by