

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

WHY ARE YOU A PRESBYTERIAN?—IX.

BY REV. JOHN LIND, M.A., TORONTO.

The Reformed Churches have always rejected prayers to the saints, to angels, or to any creature, as unscriptural, inconsistent with the worship of God, absurd in the extreme (for creatures are not omnipresent nor omniscient), and derogatory to the alone mediatorship of the Lord Jesus Christ. In like manner all true Protestants reject with abhorrence the use of pictures, images, crucifixes, etc., in worship. Such use is idolatrous in character, forbidden by God, and calculated to fix the attention of the worshipper upon the object seen, and so to prevent the real worship of God. Prayer for the dead are also rejected. This practice is founded on the Popish doctrine of purgatory—a doctrine which has no support in Scripture, but is contrary to its express teaching. Prayer for souls in purgatory can have no meaning, and are only countenanced by the priesthood for the purpose of extorting money from their superstitious devotees and keeping them in bondage through fear.

A wholesome dread lest, by having funeral services and prayer at the grave, men might be led to suppose that these services in some way injured to the benefit of the dead, led the Westminster divines to put the following clause in their Directory for worship: "Because the custom of kneeling down and praying by or towards the dead corpse, and other such usages, in the place where it lies, before it be carried to burial, are superstitious; and for that praying, reading and singing, both in going to and at the grave, have been grossly abused, are in no way beneficial to the dead, and have proved many ways hurtful to the living; therefore let all such things be laid aside." It is there also further directed that the interment be "without any ceremony."

Notwithstanding the above, prayer at funerals and at the grave is now generally practised by Presbyterians, as it is believed that men are too enlightened to think that a funeral sermon or prayer can in any way affect the condition of those who have departed this life.

4 Religious oaths and vows are parts of worship, and should be made to God alone. Swearing by God is the only proper form of oath. Scripture expressly forbids the use of oaths except when they are required by the authorities in Church or State. It also forbids swearing by any creature, as by the Book, the Evangelists, or according to any other of the many human devices by which it is attempted to bind the conscience. To refuse to swear when judicially called upon is a sinful neglect of the worship due to God, and to take an oath with reservation, or to disregard an oath in the alleged interests of the Church, is a jesuitical evasion of the authority and obligation of God.

The propriety and obligation of vows are clearly taught in Scripture. Vows are made to God alone. "No man may vow to do anything forbidden in the Word of God, or what would hinder an, duty therein commanded, or which is not in his own power, and for the performance of which he hath no promise of ability from God." On this ground the Reformed Churches declare monastical vows of celibacy, professed poverty and regular obedience, to be unwarranted, superstitious, sinful, and calculated to ensnare the conscience, pervert the intellect, confound morality, and overthrow society. God is not thus worshipped.

5. The sacraments are parts of worship. The Reformed Churches acknowledge only two sacraments—Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the Church of Rome adds to these the so called *minor* sacraments—confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction. These latter are rejected by true Protestants, because they were not instituted by Christ or enjoined by His authority, and are not divinely appointed signs of an inward grace signified and applied to believers.

One marked distinction between the Reformed Churches and the Papacy is found in the view taken by them of the sacraments. According to the Reformers, salvation is applied to all who by faith receive Jesus Christ as He is offered to us in the Gospel. Hence it is all important that there be a preacher of the Word in order to the production of faith at the same time. The sacraments also are of importance

as presenting Jesus Christ in all His covenant fullness sensibly to the faith of the recipient and sealing to him the benefits of salvation. According to the Church of Rome again, salvation is applied in the sacraments, and in them alone; so that a man, although a believer, that does not receive the sacraments, is not within the covenant of grace, and cannot be saved. To the Romanist, therefore, the sacraments are all-important, for Jesus Christ and His benefits can be received in no other way, and the Church in the sacraments becomes the alone dispenser of grace. From this cardinal difference in theory has arisen the marked difference in practice which obtains:

(1) Baptism. The Reformed Churches baptise with water in the name of the tri-une God. They reject all Popish additions, such as the sign of the cross, the salt, the oil and the spittle, which have been superstitiously added. As these farcical rites symbolize, so they are calculated to perpetuate and enforce doctrinal error, as if by the mere rite, apart from faith, grace were communicated and salvation secured.

The scriptural sponsors for children, when recognized by baptism as members of the visible Church, are parents. On them God has laid directly the responsibility of bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Hence Presbyterians reject godfathers and godmothers in baptism. There is no mention of such parties in the New Testament. About the beginning of the fifth century the question began to be agitated as to whether, in extraordinary cases, when parents could not or would not be sponsors for their children, others might not act *in loco parentis*. But it was not till four centuries after that godfathers and godmothers were required. As now practised, this sponsorship has been the merest form, alike without meaning or Scripture warrant, and tends to lessen the sense of responsibility resting on Christian parents.

The general practice is that baptism should take place in the public assembly. There is warrant in Scripture for private and household baptism, but it is found in ordinary cases for edification that the solemn rite be performed publicly, both because thus the congregation is instructed, and because the superstitious idea that baptism in some way is necessary for the salvation of the child and benefits it, while the parents may be unbelievers or are unwilling to connect themselves with the Church, is not encouraged, as when baptism is privately administered.

Baptism by sprinkling or affusion has been practised by the Presbyterian churches solely because they believe it to be more in accordance with Scripture practice than immersion. Not to dwell on Old Testament baptisms, which certainly were by sprinkling and affusion, it may be affirmed (1) That there is not a single instance in the New Testament where the recorded baptism *must have been* by immersion; (2) That there are many passages (such as Matt. iii. 11: xx. 22; Luke xii. 50; 1 Cor. x. 2; Luke xi. 36; John ii. 6; 2 Kings iii. 11) in which baptize cannot mean immerse; (3) That in the majority of instances recorded, immersion was highly improbable; (4) That the baptism of the Holy Ghost is always spoken of as a "pouring on." While, therefore, it may be admitted that the washing with water by plunging the whole body under water is baptism, this is evidently not what the Scriptures teach us as to the mode of baptism; far less can it be essential to Christian baptism.

THE BIBLE IN EDUCATION.

"If the Gospel is to be established in China, it must be through its own sons. In such a plan of education the Bible must be placed first and before all things.

"From this he animatedly warmly upon the teaching done in some of the theological schools of the present day. The subject had long been upon his mind. There was too much cramming. He believed many of the old Highlanders of this country who had had no opportunities whatever of education knew more about their Bibles than some of the graduates of even such a good college as Princeton. The Bible should be taught first, last, and all the time. For himself, he considered that the time he spent when a student at Princeton, after midnight, in earnest study of the Bible and the objections to it of the great infidel, Tom Paine, was of more value to him than any other work he ever did as a student. Without such a training, he would not have been fitted to contend single handed against the Confucians, Buddhists, and others of China."

The above extract is from the noble farewell address of our honoured missionary in Formosa. It gives us the secret of his wonderful success. He is successful

because he uses the Gospel, which is the power of God and the wisdom of God. From this also we may learn the reason why, in Christian lands, there is not in our day success, but declension; why, amid professed Christianity, the Sabbath is disappearing; why murders, crimes of violence, impurity, seduction, disregard of marriage obligation, are rife; why dishonesty and unscrupulous sharp practice prevail; why lying, perjury, and corruption abound. The reason is, in a sentence, the Gospel is not known or believed by the masses; the Bible is not taught. Some may preach the gospel of humanity and the ethics of Agnosticism; they cannot save souls or furnish the salt of the earth; they will not arrest corruption or moral decay. Our children may be skilled arithmeticians and grammarians, and know all the ologies but theology, and yet remain heathen, immoral, debased, amid the highest culture and æsthetic excellence. The whole thing among us is wrong. Agnostics are banishing Gospel truth from our schools and colleges, and the Bible is not relished in our churches. Men would rather read George Eliot and secular newspapers on the Sabbath, than study the Apostle Paul and wait on Gospel preaching. And why? Simply because they do not know the Bible. They are utterly ignorant of the message which God has sent to man from heaven. We must get back to the times of the Reformation, when God's word was "The Book."

SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHERS' COURSE OF STUDY.

MR. EDITOR,—The lack of interest mentioned by a correspondent is capable of explanation. One reason may be that many of our elders, deacons, and managers have had very little experience in this work, and are not engaged in it now. It might be well if Paul's qualification of "apt to teach" were a little more considered in the selection of officials: and had this been the case, this lack of interest on the part of sessions would not have required remark.

But lukewarmness, at least, does exist, and on the part of more than the elders. This can be overcome if some suggestions made in the Toronto Convention were practised. One was, that ministers be trained to *oversee efficiently* their Sabbath school workers; another was, that the school and its work be kept more constantly before the people in the *public services and home visitations* of the pastors.

The training, and even self-training, of Sabbath school teachers deserves every encouragement, being of vital importance. An efficient school means a growing Church. A TEACHER.

OXFORD COLLEGE IN FORMOSA.

MR. EDITOR,—A little more than a year ago Dr. McKay intimated his desire to have a College in Formosa for the training of native converts for the Christian ministry. The building, it was thought, would cost about \$4,000. It was at once suggested that, as a mark of personal esteem for the Doctor and interest in his great work, his more immediate friends and acquaintances in Oxford, his native county, would raise the whole sum. Many, of course, were unbelieving, and spoke of the county being committed to an impossibility. However, the matter was laid before the Lord, it was evidently one which had the Divine approval. An appeal was made to the people, and the result is that to-day Dr. McKay is in possession, not of \$4,000, but of considerably more than \$6,000. It ought, of course, to be mentioned that after the work was begun in Oxford, some congregations and individuals outside the county generously volunteered to assist, which kind offer was thankfully accepted.

I hope soon to send you a complete list of all sums which I have received from parties in the county and outside of it for this purpose. This week I have the following acknowledgments to make: Clifford, per Rev. S. Young, \$60; Innerkip, per Mrs. Begg, \$10.20; Princeton, per Rev. J. Little, \$28; E. Oxford, per Rev. D. M. Beattie, \$4.75; Boston Church, Esquesing, \$36; Milton, \$18.27; Knox Church, St. Catharines, \$150; First Presbyterian Church, St. Catharines, \$100; Haynes' avenue, St. Catharines, \$50; A Friend, per Rev. J. Leiper, Barrie, \$5; Chalmers Church, Woodstock (additional), \$16.30; Mr. J. Walker, per Rev. W. T. McMullen, \$10; Two Ladies in Scarboro', per Rev. R. P. McKay, \$9.50; Princeton (additional), per Rev. J. Little, \$2.05; Knox Church, Woodstock, per Rev. W. T. McMullen,