

# Messenger and Visitor

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## Honor all Men.

The words which stand as the caption of this article embody an apostolic injunction which its author must have considered important. It stands in connection with other injunctions of the highest significance—"fear God," "love the brotherhood," "honor the king," and we cannot ignore its right to stand where it was placed by the apostle. Perhaps as Peter wrote these words he was thinking of a great lesson which he learned one day while, on a house-top in Caesarea, he waited for his dinner. That vision on the house-top and the incident which followed wrought a great enlargement of Peter's conceptions concerning the relation of mankind to God; and therefore their relation to himself, and this enlarged conception finds fitting embodiment in this brief injunction which the apostle addresses to his brethren, "Honor all Men."

The Christian world has found this injunction of Peter a hard saying. Even those who have most jealously held the apostle's teachings to be among the things which are to be believed and practised have too often shown for it a shameful disregard. How often nations and communities, calling themselves Christian, have utterly ignored the claim of other peoples and communities to equal rights and privileges with themselves! How often those who professed to acknowledge the lordship of Christ and the authority of the law of love have denied to their fellowmen the right of life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness and the exercise of conscience! And out of this failure to honor men as men, and so to respect their civil liberties and rights of conscience, what wars, what slaveries, oppressions and persecutions have resulted!

We may congratulate ourselves that, at least in respect to the recognition of the natural rights of men, it cannot be said that the former days were better than these. The sympathies, as well as the thoughts, of men have been widened with the process of the suns. The circle within which men are recognized as neighbors has been greatly enlarged. Many old jealousies, animosities, bigotries have died out. Race and class distinctions have less power to separate men than they once did, many middle walls of partition have been broken down, more regard is paid to the gold and less to the guinea's stamp, more to character and less to place and title; and the rights of man as man, whatever his race or his religion, to justice and sympathy at the hands of his fellowmen, is being more widely and fully recognized. There has broken upon us at least some glimmering of truth that a man is to be honored because he is a man and because, as a man, he reflects the image of his Creator. We are beginning to understand that the fact that a man's ideas, beliefs and conscientious actions are very different from our own constitutes no reason why we should refuse to honor his manhood and to recognize his right to neighborly consideration and respect.

But not even in the most enlightened Christian communities and the most exemplary churches has the spirit of Christ's gospel become so fully realized that there is no need to call attention to such admonitions of Scripture as are embodied in these words of the apostle. There is a certain honor, to be paid to men, even the most degraded and brutalized, because they are men, for even these bear something of the divine likeness, and by the grace of God and the gospel of Him who was not ashamed to be called a son of man, they may become partakers of the divine nature. We need to learn this

lesson so well that we can honor the manhood of man in spite of glaring faults and defects, so that we can be patient with men when they misunderstand, misrepresent and vilify us and the things which we hold dear. We need to learn it so well that we can be fair toward men who hold religious and political opinions radically different from our own. We need to learn the lesson well enough to be able to pass through the excitement of an election campaign without vilifying those who are opposed to us and ascribing to them motives inconsistent with the character of honorable men.

## Christ's Divine Authority.\*

Men love to listen to those who have "authority," especially to those whose authority comes from their own attainment, and which gives them a right to speak. Edison is an authority on electricity, and men defer to what he has to say. Nansen is an authority on the arctic, and men love to hear him talk about that region of ice and cold. Stanley is an authority on Central Africa, and none would deny what he says about the dark continent. Before yielding to what a man says, we want to know whether he really has a right to speak. If we grant that, we are only too glad to hear and obey. Majorities count simply for nothing when weighed against real authority.

While this holds true in secular matters, it also holds true in matters of religion. Here, too, majorities count for naught. We seek for "authority." Majorities, if yielded to, would lead us to idolatry, for the major part of the world still bows down to idols. This instinctive seeking for and yielding to authority is what leads men to think more of what Moses and the prophets said, and what the apostles declared, than of what mere philosophers have uttered. We feel that the holy men of old have more of the true right to command than have all others combined. In religious matters, Moses and Paul speak with authority; while Plato and Marcus Aurelius do not. But even Moses and Paul (the two greatest men who have ever lived) do not claim this authority in their own right. They acknowledge that it is delegated. Christ, on the other hand, claims true divine authority. In the same way in which the Father has authority, so he claims that he has. "I and my Father are one." Moses never would have said anything like that, and, if he had, we should feel that he was guilty of blasphemy. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." Paul never would have dared to say that. Isaiah was a marvelous prophet, but he never would have ventured to cry, "I am the light of the world." All this, and much more, Christ claimed; for he claimed that he was to be the final judge of all mankind, and that on his word the eternal fate of all would depend.

Now, in what did this authority consist? First and foremost, in what he was in himself. He was divine. This is what Gabriel said when he called him "the Son of God" (Luke 2: 32, 35). This is what the Father himself said when he called him "my beloved Son." This is what even evil spirits said when they cried out that he was the "Son of God." This is what the Apostle John said when he declared that "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1: 1). See, then, angels, demons, men, and God: the Father, all unite in this declaration. And to this we must add the repeated testimony of Jesus himself.

To all this his life, teaching, and works bear witness. They all point in the same direction. "Never man spake like this man." And never man lived and wrought like this man. It is simply impossible to deny the testimony of all these witnesses; for, if we deny them, then we are driven to the conclusion that he was an impostor, and utterly deceived and deceiving. Such a conclusion, under the circumstances, is preposterous.

But the consequences of the acceptance of his teaching leads us to the same conclusion. The world has attained all that is best only as it has accepted and lived up to his teaching. This could not be if he were an impostor, or, else we should have to acknowledge that the best life is only attainable by obeying the biggest impostor that the world ever saw. No man will calmly acknowledge this.

\*A. F. Schaeffer, D. D., in the 'Sunday School Times.'

But since all this is true, we owe to him the same deference in things spiritual that we give to men in things secular who are authorities in their respective departments. If we know that any man has absolute truth in any one department, we never think for one moment of controverting what he says. So should it be in all religious matters. To him who alone has divine authority we should yield instant and absolute obedience. Is not this so? If not, then to whom should we render it?

## Editorial Notes.

—It is rumored that Dr. Nathan E. Wood, of the First Church, Boston, will be appointed to the presidency of Brown University, vacant since the resignation of Dr. Andrews, about a year ago. A committee appointed to select a president is to report at the meeting of the corporation of the University, which takes place February 8th. Dr. Wood, a few months ago, declined an appointment to the presidency of Newton Theological Seminary.

—Many of our readers will enjoy the article which appears on page two of this issue, under the caption "A Reminiscent Gossip about Famous Preachers," by C. W. Townsend, pastor at Hillsboro, N. B. The reminiscences will extend over another article. Mr. Townsend appears among the contributors to the sermon section of the Homiletic Review for February. The title of the sermon is "Ingersoll versus Paul," and the text 2 Tim. 1: 12. The preacher contrasts the infidel's negations with Paul's affirmations, the destructiveness and despair of his doctrine with Paul's constructiveness, hopefulness and assurance of ultimate triumph.

—Rev. Charles Albert Berry, D. D., one of the most widely known ministers of the Congregational body in England, died on Tuesday of last week. His death was very sudden, occurring while he was conducting the funeral service of a brother minister. Dr. Berry was in his 47th year. Since 1883 he had been pastor at Wolverhampton. He had visited America more than once, and on the death of Henry Ward Beecher there was much talk of Dr. Berry as his successor. He was the first president of the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches, was chairman in 1897 of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, and in the same year visited the United States as representative of the Arbitration Society, and in this capacity addressed large meetings in several of the large cities of the Republic.

—Whatever may be thought of Mr. Balfour's scheme for university education in Ireland, of which some account is given in another column, one cannot but admire the manliness of the position taken by him when he told a deputation which waited upon him in reference to the matter that the views expressed by him represented his conscientious conviction, and that he was not disposed to abandon them because they might be unpopular. Whether or not he remained in public life was to him, he declared, a matter of indifference, but it was not a matter of indifference that he should have the liberty of expressing opinions which he honestly held. The man whose honest convictions of what is right public policy count for more with him than popularity and continuance in office, possesses at least one essential quality of true statesmanship.

—The fight over the growth of sacerdotalism in the Church of England continues, and with greater vigor. The upholders of the confessional and other ritualistic inventions become more defiant, and the attitude of the Protestant party, within and without the church, becomes more determined and aggressive in opposition to the Romeward tendency. There is abundant evidence that the use of the confessional in Anglican churches is becoming prevalent, and a clergyman of the church has boasted in the press of the ease with which the young people are led to conform to this innovation. "They accept it like ducks accept water." Alluding to this writer and his statements, Sir Vernon Harcourt said in a recent letter in the London 'Times': "Some measure or other, and that without delay, must be taken to rid the church of such men, or the Bishops will soon find that the people will get rid of the church. . . . The Protestant laity will not allow the children of their parish schools, or of their families and homes, to be brought up in children's masses and children's