

before the gospel and the Christian religion were corrupted by the great apostasy, those who came to the communion table were persons who had publicly declared their faith in Jesus, had been immersed, and were at the time living godly lives. The apostasy came. Christianity was corrupted. Metaphorically, pious men, as Luther, Calvin, and Wesley started from Babylon to Jerusalem. The present Protestant denomination represent so many efforts to return to the simple faith and practice of the uncorrupted church. The success has been great; but not complete. There are now men and women whose loyalty to Christ cannot be doubted; they believe in Him; they love Him; the general current of their lives is in the way of obedience to him; of this there is no doubt in the minds of any reasonable person; now, what shall I do; shall I say to them when the Lord's table is spread in the public assembly: *You shall not join us in this sweetly solemn service? I CAN NOT DO SO. I WILL NOT.* I will read from the Divine Testimonies, and say: "Examine yourselves." We observe the Lord's Supper on every first day of the week; for thus the primitive Christians did. "We do not invest this ordinance with the awfulness of a sacrament; but regard it as a sweet and precious feast of Holy memories, designed to quicken our love of Christ, and cement the ties of our common brotherhood. We, therefore, observe it as a part of our regular worship every Lord's day, and hold it a solemn, but joyful and refreshing feast of love, in which all the disciples of our Lord should feel it a great privilege to unite. 'Sacred to the memory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' is written on this simple and solemn family feast in the Lord's house."

Thus I have as compactly as possible, speaking extemporaneously, given you an account of the numerical strength, the literature, the educational enterprises, and the missionary work of the Disciples of Christ. I have spoken to you of their origin, their aim, their method, and have mentioned some of their peculiarities in faith and in practice. I have called attention, especially to four peculiarities: 1. Their Creed. 2. The Confession before Baptism. 3. Baptism. 4. The Lord's Supper. I have spoken to you too long, but how could I occupy less time and treat these topics as they ought to be treated?

The Disciples do not profess to be the Church of Christ to the exclusion of others who believe and obey the gospel of the Son of God. We have not learned all of God's truth. We only claim to be disciples, *i. e.*, learners in the School of Christ. God has more light to shine forth from His own most precious word. We are far from assuming that we have restored the Christianity of Jesus to the world as it was in the beginning; but this we strive to do, believing that in this way alone can the children of God be once more perfectly joined together, and so move on to the conquest of the world for Christ. Is our aim worthy? I leave you to ponder this question. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you evermore. Amen.

THE ROCK OF AGES.

The southern coast of England has been the birth-place of the grandest hymns in our language. Within that belt of land—sacred to devout poetry—Charles Wesley caught the inspiration of many of his hymns, and there (we believe) he composed that delicious love-lay of the heart, "Jesus, lover of my soul!" On the shores of Hampshire mused and sang good Isaac Watts; and in the same country modest Annie Steele breathed forth her tender songs of consolation. In old Kent lived Edward Perrouett, who struck that thrilling note,

"All hail the power of Jesus' name!" In beautiful Devonshire, the Rev. Henry F. Lyte chanted his last sweet melody, "Abide with me; fast falls the even-tide." A few miles from him dwelt Charlotte Elliott, the sister of a clergyman; she went about doing good; but the grandest work God ever put into her hands was to write "Just as I am, without one plea." Devonshire is certainly honored above all other shires, for on that soil Augustus Toplady gave birth to the most glorious hymn of modern times, the "Rock of Ages." The "Dies Ira" is the king of mediæval hymns; but of modern songs of Zion the "Rock of Ages" wears the crown.

It is a curious fact that the spiritual birth-place of the heart which fashioned the hymn was a barn! Augustus Toplady was the son of a British officer. After Major Toplady's death his widow took the lad Augustus on a visit to Ireland. While at Codymain the boy of sixteen found his way into a barn, where an earnest, but uneducated layman was preaching on the text, "Ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." The homespun preacher "built better than he knew," for his sermon converted the soul which gave to the Church of God the "Rock of Ages." Let no man think he is doing a small thing when he is proclaiming Jesus and the great salvation even to peasants in a cow-house, or to sailors on the docks. Probably that obscure Irish preacher has overheard ten thousand echoes of his sermon in the heavenly world.

Toplady was ordained to the ministry in 1762, and began to preach on the banks of the Otter. His career was a short one, for he died at the age of thirty-eight. He lived fast, and worked fiercely. James Hamilton says of him, that "like a race horse, all nerve and fire, his life was on tip-toe, and his delight was to get over the ground." He composed in hot haste. Certainly some of his sharp controversial papers against Arminianism were thrown off as from a furnace for they scorched terribly.

Even when he wrote his magnificent masterpiece, the "Rock of Ages," he could not resist the temptation to give a sly thrust at those who he insisted were believers in "Perfectionism." So he entitled his hymn when he printed it—"A living and dying prayer of the holiest believer in the world." This was as much as if he had said: "The most sanctified soul in the world must come down on his knees, and confess that 'nothing in my hands I bring,' and that *rite* I to this fountain fly.

Glorious child of song! He has gone where the strife of tongues has ceased, and controversies are forever hushed. Perhaps he and Wesley have sung each other's hymns in glory and been puzzled to find out which of the two was the "Calvinist." As we Presbyterians sing with tears of joy, "Jesus! lover of my soul," so our Methodist brethren have cheered many a love-feast by pouring forth the inspiring strain:

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

Toplady's hymn is as universally popular as the sunshine or the vernal flowers. It has been translated into almost every tongue. Dr. Pomeroy went into a church in Constantinople, where a company of Armenians were singing a hymn which so moved them that tears were trickling down their cheeks. He inquired what they were singing. A man present translated the words, and lo! they were the dear old lines of "Rock of Ages!" When Prince Albert of England was dying his lips feebly murmured the sweet words of Toplady's hymn! And so it came about that the dying prince laid hold of those precious thoughts which had their original root in the rude discourse of an obscure layman in an Irish barn! Truly the religion of Jesus abaseth the proud, and exalteth the lowly. Kings and beggars must go down into

the dust alike, where the blood of the atoning Lamb is streaming.

We do not dare to attempt the critical analysis of Toplady's wonderful hymn. Just as soon would we pull a tube rose to pieces to find out where the delicious odor was lurking. The hymn itself is absolute perfection. Of all its lines the two finest are those which are carved on a monument in Greenwood, beneath a figure of Faith kneeling before a cross:

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling!"

No device in all Greenwood is more impressive; and no words can express more beautifully the entire empty-handedness with which a poor, weak, sinful soul comes up to grasp the divine Redeemer as its last and only home. The essence of the Gospel is in this matchless couplet. It has wrought itself into ten thousand prayers for pardon; it has been the condensed "confession of faith" for ten thousand penitents.

Two slight changes have been made in Toplady's hymn. The word "tracts" has been superseded by "worlds" in the last verse. In the same verse the author also wrote:

"When my eye-strings break in death."

Perhaps he had learned the medical fact, that at the moment of dissolution a delicate tendon near the eye sometimes breaks, and causes a flow of tears. But the allusion was more anatomical than poetic, and the word "heart-strings" is substituted in our common version.

This glorious hymn yet waits a *tune* worthy of it. The one in ordinary use is by no means of the highest order. Some master of music ought to compose an "air" which shall describe the majestic onward and upward movement of the thought to its sublime climax. The whole hymn is a fervent outcry of a broken heart to Jesus. It begins in a plaintive confession,

"Not the labor of my hands
Can fulfill thy law's demands!"

Then the supplicant owns that he is naked, empty-handed and helpless, and foul, and calls out imploringly—

"Wash me, Saviour, or I die!"

Then his bursting heart begins to yearn, and stretch onward. It reaches on to the dread hour when the heart-strings are snapped at the touch of death. It sweeps out into eternity. It soars to the Judgment-seat. It beholds the great white throne! And casting itself down before that throne, it pours forth its last piercing but triumphant cry,

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!"

—Rev. T. L. Cuyler, in *Evangelist*.

SIN'S FATAL FASCINATION.

When once a man has done a wrong thing it has an awful power of attracting him and making him hunger to do it again. Every evil that I do may, indeed, for a moment create in me a revulsion of conscience, but stronger than that revulsion of conscience it exercises a fascination over me which it is hard to resist. It is a great deal easier to find a man that has never done a wrong thing than to find a man that has only done it once. If the wall of the dyke is sound it will keep the water out, but if there is the tiniest hole in it, it will all come in. So the evil that you do asserts its power over you; it has a fierce, longing desire after you; and it gets you into its clutches.

Beware of the first evils, for as sure as you are living, the first step taken will make the second seem to become necessary. The first drop will be followed by a bigger second, and the second, at a shorter interval, by a more copious third, until the drops become a shower, and the shower becomes a deluge. The course of evil is ever wider and