

THE WESLEYAN.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1880.

THE WORK OF TO-DAY.

One of the favourable seasons, of the current Methodist year, for gathering in sheaves into our ecclesiastical garner, is rapidly passing away. What are we doing in the vineyard? How are our talents being used? Do we each recognize our individual responsibility? Are we desirous, each for himself, to know what the Lord would have us do? How great the danger that we shall mark what others are doing, or are not doing. How apt many people are to notice the success of others, or the failure of others. How easy it is for multitudes to see what others ought to do, and to approve or condemn. How difficult it is for us to do all things as they ought to be done. How difficult it is for us to recognize practically our own personal duty. How apt we are to excuse our own shortcomings by pointing out faults in others. How many souls have we brought to Jesus within the last year. Have we fed any of God's hungry children with the bread of life? Have we given a cup of the water of salvation to any thirsty souls. Are we trying to rescue brands from the burning? Do we succeed? If not—why not?

THE OFFERING OF ISAAC.

HALIFAX, Feb. 9, 1880. MR. EDITOR.—The last issue of the WESLEYAN states that Freeman, who, some months ago, killed his child, supposing he was called of God to imitate the deed of Abraham in offering Isaac, has been sent to a lunatic asylum. Would it not be timely and profitable for you to give us, through your paper, some light on the subject of the offering of Isaac? Yours truly,

NORTH END.

A satisfactory exegetical interpretation of the narrative, concerning the offering of Isaac (Genesis 22: 1-14), involves some difficulties. It has often been incautiously affirmed that God commanded Abraham to kill his son Isaac. Are we to understand this command as having a sensuous or materialistic meaning? Should we not, in our efforts to comprehend this theme, distinguish between the slaughter of a human being, and the spiritual consecration of a person as a sacrifice to God?

The commands and the promises of God have often been erroneously interpreted as relating to the outward, and the visible, when they really referred to things inward, and spiritual. The Jewish people for ages expected, through the coming of the Messiah, the establishment of an outward and visible kingdom, even though the revealed word of God which had been given to them had spoken of a kingdom that is spiritual, and that cometh not with observation.

We should interpret the record concerning the offering of Isaac in the light of other portions of the Scriptures, and thus let the Holy Spirit be his own interpreter. In the Psalms (51: 16, 17) it is said: "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Paul says (Roman 12: 1): "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." The apostle here appears to ask the Romans to sacrifice their bodies; but he, obviously, does not mean that there should be in this sacrifice the taking of life. The spirit of Judaism, and the genius of Christianity, as indicated in the Scriptures, and the timely rescue of Isaac from the slaughter, show that the shedding of human blood in sacrifice is not a duty devolving upon any man. Hence we might infer, in the beginning of this investigation, that the command to Abraham did not mean that he should slaughter Isaac as one may slaughter a sheep. When Samuel was a child his mother took him (1 Sam 1: 24, 28) to Eli, the priest, and offered him to the Lord. Accompanying the offering of Samuel there was the wood, and the altar, and the knife, and the shedding of blood; but it was the blood of a bullock that was shed, and not human blood. God required in the olden times that the offering of animals should accompany the offerings of the heart. There came in Abraham's history a period, when it was made clear to him that he must give up all—himself, and that which was dearest to him on the earth—to God, as a sacrifice. It was to him an occasion of supreme trial. He was equal to the emergency. He made the required surrender, according to the light he had. Mark the phraseology of the record. "God did tempt (prove) Abraham."—How? Was it by some dream-vision of

an entirely extraordinary character? Or, did God prove him in a way in which he proves others? The Scriptures speak of God as the leader of his people. He leads them by the hand. The Lord alone did lead his people through the wilderness. The sacred penman speaks of the hardening of Pharaoh as having been done by the Lord. Thus it is suggested to us that we must find God everywhere, and in everything. God was with Abraham in his experience connected with an immediately preceding the offering of Isaac. Abraham had been trying to do well, but he had sinned. He had been looking for the light, and yet in his darkness he had stumbled. He was conscious of it. He had some mysterious communications. Knowing that he was a sinner, he repeatedly offered sacrifices. Abraham had been just previously rebuked by Abimelech for sin (Gen 20: 9): "Thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done." He must have keenly felt the sharp rebuke. Then, again, Abraham had sent Hagar and Ishmael away into the wilderness, under remarkable and painful circumstances.

When he afterwards heard of the perils of Ishmael in the wilderness, and how Hagar lifted her voice and wept, when she feared her boy would die (Gen 20: 16) he felt contrite. Abraham, under the stings of an accusing conscience, desired to find relief. He might then well ask: What must I do to be saved? Who shall deliver me from my guilt? Then God heard the cry of Abraham, and sent the answer: "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, and offer him as a sacrifice." May it not have been that through such an experience it was that the command of God came to his sinning, but awakened, and penitent, and praying servant. God thus spake to wandering men, as he now does, that he might lead them, as still he leads us, in wondrous ways that we know not.

Abraham wanted peace, comfort, life. All that a man hath will he give for these; and hence he takes his beloved Isaac—his dearest earthly treasure; and in his perplexity, and spiritual darkness, he would have taken the life of his son, if God had not, in mercy and in love, shown to him a more excellent way.

On the part of Abraham there was a misconception of God's purpose and way. The patriarch did not fully understand what God required. Multitudes of good men have misunderstood the call of duty. There is no doubt that God meant to try Abraham severely. While God appeared to demand the sacrifice of Isaac, it was really the sacrifice of Abraham, himself, that was required.

As this crisis in Abraham's experience had come, God makes it the occasion of giving to him a two-fold revelation: First, he was to give his son Isaac up to God in and under the completion of an animal sacrifice, and thus cut off all worldly attachment to him; and, secondly, in the conflict which this trust involved, God would reveal to him that he did not so much require a sensuous as a pure and spiritual sacrifice. It was not merely the outward form that God required, but the sacrifice that involved the broken spirit and the contrite heart.

It was only natural that Abraham should misunderstand the command. There prevailed around him, at that time, the Asiatic custom of human sacrifices. Among the early Hebrew nations of Palestine, the offerings of human sacrifices, to the gods of those nations, was of frequent occurrence. Abraham probably felt that God was moving in some mysterious way, to bring about some wondrous event. It was to the obedient patriarch a crucial experience. He was greatly perplexed. He could not see through the darkness. He could only believe and obey. The evasive answer of the trembling father, when the beloved Isaac asks: "Where is the lamb?" appears to indicate that Abraham believed some new revelation was about to be given to him and to Isaac. Such a revelation, just when it was needed, was, in the fulness of the time, given to them, and through them to the world.

God said to Abraham: "Sacrifice to me thy son." Abraham had been a heathen Chaldean, who would assume, until he became better informed, that to sacrifice meant to kill. As Abraham was to be the father of the chosen people, God would show, through him, that he requires, of his spiritual Israel, the sacrifice of the human heart, not the bodily killing of a human victim, but the completed spiritual sacrifice. In the offering of Isaac, the distinction, and the connection, between the ideas of to sacrifice, and to kill, are indicated.

The second verse of the record under consideration is to some extent misleading, because of the stress which may be laid upon one of its prepositions: "And offer him there for a burnt offering." may, as the original admits, according to Lange, and others, read: "with a burnt offering." It never has been the burnt offering that was most acceptable

in the sight of God. The obedience of the faith of Abraham, as seen in his readiness, on the one hand, to offer his beloved Isaac; and, on the other hand, to receive the revelation not to kill Isaac, when the knife had been uplifted; but, rather, to slay the victim that had been caught in the thicket, was acceptable to God. Abraham trusted God when he could not trace him, and by his faith he triumphed.

DELUSIVE THEORIES.

Freeman, the Pocasset slayer of his child, who has been assigned to a place in a Lunatic Asylum affirms that he was led to the commission of his horrible deed by a call from heaven, by the reading of the scriptural account of the offering of Isaac by Abraham (Gen. xxii: 1-14), and by the reading of Charles Wesley's hymn beginning "Abraham, when severely tried." Freeman's testimony is being discussed by a portion of the press. Many persons profess to think that there is some logical force and consistency in what Freeman says. How does the hymn in question read? What does the hymn teach?

Abraham, when severely tried,
His faith by his obedience showed;
He with the Lord's command complied,
And gave his Isaac back to God.
His son the father offered up,
Son of his age, his only son,
Object of all his joy and hope,
And less beloved than God alone.
O for a faith like his, that we
The bright example may pursue;
May gladly give up all to thee,
To whom our more than all is due!
Now, Lord, to thee our all we leave;
Our willing soul thy call obeys;
Pleasure, and wealth, and fame we give,
Freedom and life,—to win thy grace.
Is there a thing that life more dear?
A thing from which we cannot part?
We can; we now rejoice to tear
The idol from our bleeding heart.
Jesus, accept our sacrifice:
All things for thee we count but loss;
Lo! at thy word our Isaac dies,
Dies on the altar of thy cross.
For what to thee, O Lord, we give,
A hundred-fold we here obtain;
And soon with thee shall all receive,
And loss shall be eternal gain.

Our estimate of what this hymn teaches will depend upon whether we give to it a sensuous or a spiritual interpretation. If we look at it with a sensuous eye, Isaac appears to be "offered up" and "dies," and Abraham's "bleeding heart" is seen. To this extent there is suggested a sacrifice, involving the destruction, by a father, of the life of his child. Thus Freeman, with his diseased mind, looked upon this hymn. So, possibly, many others have done.

But there is a more excellent way of reading these lines of Wesley. If the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life. We should read the first, fifth, and sixth verses in the light of the other verses, and take the hymn as a whole. We should also read this composition in the light of what its author has elsewhere written, and in the light of his well known character. Then the evidence becomes clear and irrefragable that "the bright example" Abraham has left us, does not involve the shedding of the blood of our children, but rather a spiritual service involving the complete consecration of ourselves, our children, our all, to God.

In the same way we should read the Scriptural account of the offering of Isaac by his venerable father. There is a sensuous way of looking at the record, which gives to the transaction a ghastly and bloody aspect. God was pleased to require a sacrifice from Abraham. Does the reading of this record, as an isolated portion of the sacred oracles, leave us in doubt as to whether this sacrifice was to be of a material, or of a spiritual, character? Then let us seek for light by comparing Scripture with Scripture. When we read this record in the light of God's teachings elsewhere, and in the light of his revealed character, we learn that he delighteth not in the shedding of human blood, that he doth not demand of any parent that he should take the knife to slay his child; and we learn, moreover, that, in all ages, and everywhere, the sacrifices God has required have been spiritual, rather than sensuous, and have involved a broken spirit and a contrite heart.

The demands of God upon us are imperative; they may sometimes appear to be harsh; they may involve a perplexing struggle; but they are righteous, and they are not unreasonable. Hence we may say with Wesley:

O for a faith like his, that we
The bright example may pursue;
May gladly give up all to thee,
To whom our more than all is due.
Now, Lord, to thee our all we leave;
Our willing soul thy call obeys;
Pleasure, and wealth, and fame we give,
Freedom and life,—o win thy grace.

Rev. J. E. Hopper, Editor of the Visitor, of St. John, was in Halifax recently. He preached in the Universalist Church on Sunday last, morning and evening.

DEATH OF A BAPTIST LEROYMAN.—Rev. John M. Curry, a Baptist clergyman, resident at Hillsboro, N.B. died on Sunday Feb'y 8th of consumption. The deceased gentleman was for some time stationed at Salisbury, but the last three years has not been stationed as a minister, though preaching occasionally. He was about 50 years of age and leaves a widow.

HYMNS AND TUNES.

ST. JOHN, Feb. 9, 1880.

To the Editor of the Wesleyan. DEAR SIR—(Can you tell me if the Hymn Book Committee of the General Conference recently places an edition of the new Hymn Book, with words and tunes printed on every page? To do this would be to promote the heartiness and spirituality of our public worship; not to do this would be to behind the age. I have often been delighted, in visiting churches in the United States, to find such magnificent hymnals in the hands of every worshipper, and to hear such general and correct singing from the printed score. Yours, &c.,

A VOICE FROM CENTENARY CHURCH.

REPLY—The Hymn Book Committee of the General Conference has selected the hymns for the new book, and arranged the order in which they are to appear. The Committee is now, through a Sub-Committee, bringing out the book in three editions. Other editions will soon follow. Nearly one half of the contents of the new book has been electrotyped. The book will probably be ready for the market about August or September next.

The work assigned, by the General Conference, to the Hymn Book Committee does not include the publication of a hymn and tune book. The necessity of such a book for the use of our congregations is widely recognized. Some preliminary steps in the direction of its preparation and publication have been taken. It is probably that the two sections of the Book Committee will, ere long, take such action, on this important subject, as will result in the publication, within the next twelve or eighteen months, of a thoroughly suitable Hymn and Tune Book, for general use in all our Congregations.

A new Methodist Church, capable of seating 100 persons, imposing in appearance, and with the usual modern facilities for church work, has recently been dedicated, in Strathroy, Ontario. A new parsonage has been purchased for the pastor of the Church. Both church and parsonage are on the same lot of land. The cost of land and buildings is nearly \$17,000. At the completion of the Church \$2,397 remained unpaid. An effort was made in connection with the opening services to provide for the unpaid balance. Rev. Alfred Andrews, pastor of the Church, took charge of this effort, and succeeded in securing the whole deficiency. The Trustees, and congregation, of this new church property, may be congratulated on their success.

REV. J. A. GORDON.

DEAR SIR—In a recent issue of your paper, an inquiry from P. E. I. makes me authority for an unqualified statement, viz: That the Baptist population of the Dominion of Canada is eleven thousand more than the Presbyterian population of the same place. Now Sir, I never made such a statement, either publicly or privately. What I have said in way of conversation will appear in the "Christian Messenger" of Halifax in the course of a few days. Yours, &c., J. A. GORDON. East Point, P.E.I., Jan. 20, 1880.

REPLY—We willingly give brother Rev. J. A. Gordon the opportunity to correct in our columns the mis-statement to which he refers. Some one, probably, has blundered. It is very easy for a public speaker to be misunderstood. Sometimes one is not clear in his statements. Ones auditors on that account may, occasionally, get unwittingly "mixed." Hence misrepresentation may follow.

An article on Statistics appeared in a recent number of the Christian Messenger, written for our especial benefit, in which the editor so puts things that a careless reader might assume that Brother Seldon said something that he never intended to say. In the article to which we refer (Messenger, January 14) the editor intimates that, in reporting the Census of the Baptists of the Dominion, there should be included the Africans, the Free-willers, the Christians, the Unions, and the Tankers; especially as the different Methodist bodies are included under the general heading of Methodists. The editor then says: "If we were disposed to treat our Methodist brethren so, or even to give them the one column marked 'Methodists' and compare it with the one column marked 'Baptist' we might say—there are but 17,592 'Methodists' in the whole Dominion, whilst it says there are 165,238 Baptists. How does that look, good Brother? Well, there it is more truly than what you affirm. But you know it is not the truth, nor are your figures the truth with regard to either body. It is sometimes said 'Figures cannot lie,' but it is very evident here that they can and do lie, most shockingly on this matter."

Brother Seldon, of course, does not mean to say that he can lie; or that he does lie, "most shockingly," by giving the figures as he has in the foregoing extract. And, yet, it is easy to see how an incautious reader of the Messenger might be misled by Brother Seldon's figures and might accuse him of lying. Some one might quote him as saying: "The Census does actually say there are but 17,592 Methodists in the whole Dominion, whilst it says there are 165,238 Baptists."

While Brother Seldon says just that, he, really, does not mean precisely what he says. It is a peculiar way he has of putting things—sometimes. He was only writing for a purpose. We give these quotations to show one of the ways by which persons may be misquoted. Possibly in some such way brother Gordon may have been understood as having said something he did not intend to say. We hope that hereafter our Prince Edward Island correspondents, will, when send-

ing statistics to us for publication, be as wise as serpents, and as harmless as doves. P. S. Since the foregoing was in type Mr. Gordon's letter, to which he refers above, appears in this week's Messenger. He says he has been reading a Circular "To the Presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church in the Canadian Maritime Provinces," and also the Baptist Year Book for 1878, by Rev. J. M. Cramp, D.D. In his letter in the Messenger, he virtually admits having said something very much like what our correspondent reported. He puts his explanation in the following words: "What I said was that according to that Circular the Baptists have 12,000 more communicants in these provinces than the Presbyterians."

We learn from St. John that Rev. Joseph Hart, Pastor of the Centenary Church, experienced some days of considerable prostration and suffering last week. He has since rallied, and, though still very weak, is much better than he was.

The work at Granville Ferry is widening and deepening in interest. Large numbers of persons are participating in the services. The probabilities are that many sheaves will there be gathered.

The tidings from Charlottetown are encouraging. The services now being held there, under the direction of the able superintendent of that circuit, Rev. H. P. Cowperthwaite, are being crowned with success.

The Services in several of the city churches in Halifax are being continued, and conversions are reported.

Rev. Henry Pope, D.D., of St. John, was in this city in the early part of the week. He appears to be enjoying excellent health.

James B. Morrow, Esq., who had recently visited Bermuda, and the West Indies, returned home by steamer Beta in the early part of this week, in good health.

POSTAL CARDS.

CHARLOTTETOWN, P.E.I., Feb. 5th, 1880.

We are holding Special Services here with very good results. About 25 have been forward for prayers, the most of whom have found peace. H P C

TANTRAMAR, Feb. 8, 1880.

We are now in our third week of Special Services at Fairfield. Our congregations are good—that of Sunday last the largest since the opening of the church—three persons have reported themselves decided for Christ and happy in his forgiving love. The people are remarkably attentive and very serious. Our prospects for a great work there are good. "Brethren pray for us." W R PEPPER

ADVOCATE HARBOUR.

The members and others attending the Methodist church here had a donation party at the Parsonage, on Thursday evening, January 22nd, for their pastor, Rev. W. S. Swallow. It was largely attended. Speeches were made by Rev. W. S. Swallow and James Nicholas, and in every respect it was a success. The cash proceeds amounted to \$63.43. N.B.M.

We are rejoicing because the Lord has heard our prayers and his work is reviving. The Spirit to quicken and convince has been poured out in rich abundance. During the week of prayer union services were held and the congregations were large. A feeling of Christian sympathy and love prevailed among the adherents of the two churches in this place—Presbyterian and Methodist. This was encouraging and we immediately commenced special services beseeching and expecting the down shedding of the Holy Ghost. The work was hard and unpromising at first—because the spirituality was not as high as it should have been—the average attendance at class being no more than six. The prayers of faith of the few faithful ones, however, brought the blessing and the dry bones were shaken. We are happy to say that since the work commenced many cold professors have been quickened, a few back-sliding Christians have been reclaimed and five have joyfully passed from death unto life. The honor is to be given to the Great Head. The work is not yet accomplished. There are more to follow. Brethren pray for us. J. W. WADMAN. Stanley Bridge, P.E.I., Jan. 30, 1880.

MR. EDITOR.—Although I have not suffered from hemorrhage lately, yet I am still very unwell. I have attempted to preach a few times this winter, but have suffered so much in my throat, and left lung, that I have had to desist. In the meantime, the spiritual and financial interests of the circuit suffer. Being so isolated here, none of the brethren can help me except Bro. Coffin, who does all in his power to supply my lack of service. But the duties of his own circuit are quite enough for one man, without supplying Gableus. He made us a visit a few weeks ago, and held a meeting for the Relief and Extension Fund. The results were encouraging, considering the failure of the fishing last summer. Upwards of \$60 were promised, all of which has been paid except \$2. Your brother in affliction, R. O. JOHNSON.

WOOSTOCK, Feb. 10, 1880.

Our special services are producing blessed results several have given their hearts to God and others are seeking the happy confidence of sins forgiven. The church is much revived and the classes are better attended. The meetings will be continued next week when a still more abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit is anticipated. W. W. C.

CORRESPONDENTS.

FROM THE THE RELIEF A. Numerous items received from time to time from the following correspondents, and presented from the pro-Fund. The following explanation: Conferences, No. Toronto, 20; Mission Districts, 25; London, 25; Montreal, 18; Nova Scotia, 8; N. B. & P. E. I., 7; Newfoundland, 4. Totals, 87.

In the above statement are given, including diaries, Japanese, &c., fore, that the following have, as yet, lists: Toronto Conference, 20; Mission Districts, 25; London Conference, 25; Montreal Conference, 18; Nova Scotia, 8; N. B. & P. E. I., 7; Newfoundland, 4. Totals, 87.

MINISTERS. In addition to the by the circuits, we been given by the next, as the following: Conferences, No. Toronto, 20; Mission Districts, 25; London, 25; Montreal, 18; Nova Scotia, 8; N. B. & P. E. I., 7; Newfoundland, 4. Totals, 87.

The foregoing names appear in our Annual Conference. Adding the received from the following amount (1880): 453 Credits have 928 Ministers. Total, Cash received at Mt. It will be seen 389 circuits have that from 246 ministers have yet been received, however, that from these, reports will time of the appropriations. It is very should be reported delay, so that could June. Particular the fact that if the yet to report keep ready attained, the 000 will be received.

MINISTER'S SUBS. Rev. John Wier, Rev. Geo. Johnson, (to Rev. W. H. Langille, Mrs. James Scott, Yr. Rev. Joseph Hale, Cu.

LISTS. NOVA SCOTIA. Lawrencetown, Sydney, Sydney North, Windsor, Port Hawkesbury, Port Hood, Country Harbor, Arcadia, Wallace. NEW BRUNSWICK. Jacksonville, Murray Harbor, Fredericton, Marysville, Bonaventure, Gagetown, Sackville, Florenceville, Arthurton.

RETURNS FROM Toronto Conference, London, Montreal, Nova Scotia, N. B. & P. E. I., Newfoundland.

Total amount Cash received. CASH RECEIPTS. Per Rev. Sydney North, \$200; Port Hood, 142; Country Harbor, 100; Rev. J. Hoar, 50; Rev. J. A. Mosher, Rev. D. Hickey, Per Rev. Rev. J. J. Teasdale, Rev. James Scott, Rev. R. McArthur, Rev. James K. Hart, Arcadia, \$90; Barrington, 90.

Per Rev. Rev. C. Jost, A.M., R. A. Daniel, William Ryan, T. Watson Smith, S. B. Dunn, G. O. Huettig, Hillsburgh, 137; Kentville, 37; Burlington, 29; Rev. J. C. Berrie, per Murray Harbor, Rev. B. W. Sprague, P.

SIR.—The Editor in commenting Methodist clergy into the Episcopal fact—that the thodist Church aim branch of Protec