

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

OUR CHRISTIAN SOCIALITIES.

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Man is a compound being, having in himself ever active elements engendering inclinations, more or less strong, alike to solitude and society. These two states of existence though distinct are not opposed, though different are not destructive. Each is to him of needful importance, while both are mutually advantageous, if not essentially necessary. In each there is a vast field of opportunities and obligations for the cultivation of personal character as well as the discharge of relative responsibilities, and he who seeks to live exclusively in either fails at once to mature, as he ought, his own manhood, benefit his own species, and fulfil his high destiny. While comparative solitude may favour the pursuit of profounder thought and the better concentration of cultured capabilities, and while it may exclude much that might be injurious, yet it may none the less exclude much that might be beneficial, seeing that it would most assuredly leave dormant and dead much, if not most, of our more emotional and sympathetic nature. Man was made and meant alike for God and good, for society as well as solitude, and while, much more in society than in comparative solitude, he may meet with much that is neither congenial nor commendable, he should ever bear in mind that fallen though he be, he has still the capability not only of withstanding evil, but to be even from real as well as "from seeming evil still educating good"—ever remember that his being can neither be satisfied nor developed as it ought to be without society. While, then, men may be drawn together whether by the power of animal magnetism, or by ideas that press for utterance, or by interests that claim kindred, or by affections that long for exercise, by any or all together, the fact exists, and while misery may seek solitude, and sorrow seclusion, yet happiness ever longs for society, and joy ever seeks to ring out its raptures far and wide to the world.

That friend with friend and family with family should occasionally meet together in social and convivial gatherings, while favoured by men, is far from being forbidden by God, and that religion which alike in its essence and operations is ever "good will to men," so far from censuring and condemning such meetings, countenances and encourages, heightens and hallows them. As it is natural, so it is desirable that those who are oft called on to meet together amid the toils and trials of life should sometimes meet at more leisure times and in more cheerful circumstances in the mutual interchange alike of social sentiment and cordial hospitality. By so doing unseemly asperities may be softened, mutual misunderstandings removed, petty jealousies obliterated, waning affections revived, kindly sympathies fostered and the social elements of our nature called forth and cultured. There, too, the old are rejuvenated by the buoyant vivacity of the young, and experience for the while a renewal of the heart-stirring emotions of their earlier years, while the young in turn are profited by the sagacity, benefited by the experience, and animated by the achievements, of those who are yet beyond them alike in years and attainments. Even genial mirth and amusement, when kindly and considerately interposed, like elastic layers between uncongenial privations or pursuits, may do much to mitigate their rougher jars and joltings, and thus be not only seemly but useful in the variegated journey of life.

Human joys, we know, are ever in accord alike with nature and with Scripture. It is somewhat noteworthy that the first recorded manifestation of God the Father to our first parents was in connection with their marriage joys, to celebrate their nuptial union and consummate their wedded bliss, and while these were the joys of those who were perfect, they were no less the joys of those who were human. Further, the first miraculous manifestation of God the Son to mankind was at a marriage feast, which He not only graced with His presence, but shared in its socialities and ministered to its enjoyments, for there "the conscious water saw its God and blushed." While many windy discussions and wordy disquisitions have been employed to settle the kind and character of that wine, it seems to me that the whole mystery may be solved, settled and summed up in the simple statement, that Jesus made just the same kind of wine

then that He makes now, and that all the difference is that then it was produced immediately and in stone pots, but now it is produced gradually and in grape-skins, and as to its character, it was doubtless similar to that which God Himself at first pronounced "very good." Thus, amid the manifestation of matrimonial joys, Jesus bestowed His benediction upon a loving pair, who, as one, were about to enter the journey of life, to share its joys, to battle with its ills. At the call, too, of Matthew, we are told, "he made Him a feast in his own house," at which Jesus, with His disciples, was a welcome as a worthy guest. But by so doing, those who professed to be more pure than He not only murmured at but censured Him. Jesus, however, triumphantly defined and defended alike His position and His purpose by shewing that He was thereby seeking the extension of His kingdom and the increase of its subjects. Wherever Jesus went as a guest, whether into the house of Simon or Zaccheus, or into His more frequent and favourite haunt in Bethany, He ever left a blessing behind Him, and He does so still. Instead of seeking seclusion and court-ing isolation, He ever went about doing good, and whether in the house or on the highway, He met and mingled with society in all its diversified phases, and ever, as the issue shewed, He did so in order to brighten, to beautify and bless.

While in making the most and the best of anything, a man thereby at once shews his wisdom and secures his weal, it should ever be the aim and endeavour of all to make the most and the best, alike of their social powers, their privileges and pleasures, and that too, without either destroying their distinctive character or depriving them of their joyous nature. Although the cravings of human nature are as manifold as they are multiform, yet so varied and so vast are the resources of God's Word to guide and of God's world to supply, that our natural, if not necessary socialities need not be either time spent foolishly, or energy and opportunity wasted wantonly, like water spilt upon a rock which can neither do good nor again be gathered up, but rather like the surplus power unneeded to drive a mill, which may be advantageously turned aside to turn another piece of machinery, it may be, very different but not less needful; so in such a way a certain proportion of a man's time and energy may be wisely drawn off from the main purpose of a plodding life and profitably employed in solitary or social recreation, equally useful and not less needful.

If then we look to God's Word for the sanction of our socialities, we should look there none the less to learn how best to make the most of them, to learn how by them, both to get and to give the most good alike for present enjoyment and future reflection. While such guidance is both needed and provided, yet how seldom is it employed. On the contrary, there is a widespread and a growing tendency, even in Christian communities, in their socialities, to set aside, if not to scorn, that "wisdom which profiteth to direct," to sneer if not scoff at that "godliness which is profitable unto all things," and to disown and dishonour Him whose they say they are and whose name they bear. There is a strong tendency to look upon religion as not only foreign to the highest human enjoyments, but as frowning upon and forbidding them, ever clouding the soul's serenest sunshine, repressing and rebuking every buoyant feeling, and cooling, chilling and checking every rising emotion warmly welling up from leal and loving hearts. Such ideas are as erroneous as they are injurious, as if Christianity implied the surrender of every good, and as unfitting for social life and unfriendly to human enjoyment. When Jesus trod the earth He was one who was "anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows," ever delighting to diffuse it, and wherever He was a welcomed guest no one had ever any reason either to regret His presence or dread His return. Our Christian socialities, then, ought ever to acknowledge Him alike in the parties assembled and in the pleasures enjoyed, for He came not to destroy aught of human happiness worthy the name, but to increase it, in heightening its tone and hallowing its tendency. To desire His company, to recognize His presence, and to submit to His guidance, would prove the most effective safeguard in enjoyment and the best preventive against turning His kindness into a curse. If, then, in our seasons of social enjoyment, Jesus be sought and assigned His supremacy, there is no reason why such times of joy and gladness may not be a furthering of spiritual progress and fruitful of spiritual good, no reason why in this way our periodical socialities may not be made

markedly instrumental in meeting us to be "ever with the Lord, in whose presence there is fulness of joy and at whose right hand are pleasures evermore."

ROMISH ORDINATION.

MR. EDITOR,—I have been hoping to see this question discussed in your columns, but so far I have observed only one brief letter, and as the matter is now before the Presbyteries, I am sure all are prepared to hear with all due attention whatever any one may have to say either in support of the one view or the other. That the question is one of very grave importance, and of no small degree of perplexity, may be readily admitted. To some it appears that for the Protestant Churches to deny the validity of Romish ordination, is virtually to deny the validity of the Protestant ministry, because at the Reformation the great leaders in that movement had no ordination except what they received in the Church of Rome and carried with them when they left her. Those who hold this view assume the necessity of something like a tactual succession, and also that the Church of Rome is not more corrupt and antichristian now than she was at the time of the Reformation. If she is more thoroughly antichristian now than she was then, her ordination might be regarded as valid then, but not entitled to be regarded by Protestant Churches as valid now. And that she is more thoroughly antichristian now may be proved by appealing to the action of the Council of Trent in formally sanctioning and adopting the very errors and abuses in regard to the way of salvation and the worship of God, which had for centuries been developing within her, and against which the reformers protested. And since then she has been going on from bad to worse, as is evidenced by the articles of faith which since that time she has decreed, of which the "Infallibility of the Pope" may be cited as an illustration. Witness also how she brands with her official curse and consigns to perdition every one who shall deny any of these articles of faith which she has decreed! Look at her in the light of the descriptions given in Scripture of the great apostacy, "the man of sin," "that Wicked," and is not the correspondence complete? If, then, she is apostate and antichristian as an organization, though many of the people of God may be within her, and therefore are addressed in the words, "Come out of her, my people," she is not a branch of the visible Church of Christ, and her priests are not entitled to be recognized as ministers of Christ.

But another ground on which it seems to me the validity of Romish ordination may be denied is, that there is no such office in the Christian Church as that with which Rome professes to invest the spiritual guides of the people. There is no such office in the Christian Church as that of priest. All God's people are priests, it is true, through their union and communion with Him who is the great High Priest of our profession. But there is no such ecclesiastical office or function appointed by Christ in the Christian Church as that of priest; and if there is not why should a man's being set apart to an office which does not exist, be regarded and treated by Protestant Churches, when the man has found out his mistake, as after all only another name for the same thing, or substantially equivalent to ordination into the office of a minister of Christ? I see the Presbytery of Montreal has decided "that the admission of a reformed priest to the status of an ordained presbyter without the imposition of hands is re-ordination sufficient." But what is the *form* of admission? The Confession of Faith teaches that "every minister of the Word is to be ordained by imposition of hands." This is clearly what Scripture teaches, and to depart from Scripture, and commence paring away all the "mere externals" and so-called "non-essentials" in ordination is irreverent to Christ and dangerous to the interests of the truth. And what about the call of the Church as a prerequisite of ordination?

PROTESTANT.

AMUSEMENTS.

MR. EDITOR,—A recent number of this paper contained a letter from "A Church Member" who is perplexed to know why the amusements of dancing and card-playing should be discouraged by many Christians,—and who invites the expression of other opinions, as being sincerely desirous to see more light on this matter.

As one who has given a good deal of thought to