

The Plague of Pessimism

It were a consummation devoutly to be wished if all the pessimists in our churches on civic life, our homes, could be transported to some barren island in mid-ocean where they could emphasize one another and indulge in their godless cater-waulings to their hearts' content. Your practiced chronic grumbler and pessimist in home, church or state makes life miserable for all about him. He is a nuisance in society, a plague to his friends, a burden to himself. What an inspiring picture will the children have to carry them through life if entomped on their memory is the recollection of a moping, jolly father and, what is worse, a sour faced, scowling mother. There are some places where the motto, "Home, sweet home; there's no place like home," would be the most grotesque and bitter irony imaginable.

HOPE'S TRIUMPH.

There can be no hope in a godless life. "Without God, without hope." Tearing away the mask of pleasure with which the godless life so often screens itself and you find the hideous marks of of hatefulness, discontent, selfishness, misery in the background. The life devoted wholly to self, to the indulgence of pleasure and accumulation of goods for selfish ends, that life of all lives is the most unsatisfactory. It spells damnation at the end. It is a base, blasted life, whether it ends amidst the cushioned luxury of a palace or the squalor of a hovel.

The true ground of hope is in God. The gospel of Christ is the evangel of hope. The Christian life is the life of hope. "My son, the world is dark with griefs and graves, so dark that men cry out against the heavens." True; yet Leibnitz is suggestive when he says that, though this is not a perfect world because of the presence of evils, still, for the purpose of man's training and discipline, it is the best of possible worlds. And the Christian apostle throws light on the same dark problem when he exclaims that "all things work together for good to them that love God." The world was dark indeed when Jesus tabernacled in the flesh, but there was no note of pessimism or despair in this ministry. He "illuminated the moral evil in the world most deeply and clearly." He knew what was in man. With unerring insight he knew perfectly the foulness of sin, the torturing nature of guilt; nevertheless he dared to say that he could save to the uttermost and that no one should be cast out who came to the Father by him. And not only did he say it, but, like all his matchless teaching, it has been proved absolutely true in ten thousand instances during the Christian centuries. The world's hope springs here and nowhere else. The light of hope streams across the ages from the height of the world. And he who is Christ smant know it. His whole soul is buoyed with it. It has become an integral part of his personal experience, a victorious power in his life. His vital identification with Christ has taught him that he has chosen the good part which can never be taken away. He has a consciousness, a conviction that he is on the right side. He believes with firmest confidence that his hope can never fail because it rests on the center of things, is in alliance with that divine spirit of truth, righteousness and goodness which, despite surface indications to the contrary, is and must ever be the moving, guiding, controlling Spirit of the universe. In this spirit he bravely faces the evils of his time. He heroically enters upon the new year before him. Evils dismay him not, for he knows out of evil good must come. He remembers that Rome was not built in a day and he knows that the kingdom of heaven will not be set up in a night. He knows that "the mills of God grind slowly"; that the obliteration of evils require time; that God will give all the time necessary, and that, although the work of the church may lag in one year, still in the aggregate of the years, progress and prosperity will be registered, and the cleansing, uplifting influence of Christ's Kingdom will gradually but surely permeate and leaven personal, social, civic and national life.

HOPE'S FRUITAGE.

Hence, like the stalwart apostle of the early days he rejoices in hope! Hope and rejoicing are inseparable. Doleful, lugubrious Christians bear not the family likeness. They can never be true members of the household of faith. The true healthy Christian is brimful of the joyousness of hope. He rejoices in hope just as naturally as the nightingale fills the moonlit woods with liquid melody and the summer sun fills earth and sky with golden sunshine. Of such Christians, true Christians, we need our churches full, our homes and towns full. "Under whose preaching were you converted?" inquired the church of a young man who presented himself for membership. "Under nobody's preaching," came the reply. "But under my mother's living. It was my mother's cheerful, hopeful Christian living and well doing that caused me to decide to live the same life." That is the best evidence for Christianity, for it is Christianity, and, like the sun, Christianity is its own best evidence.

"Cast thy bread upon the waters,"

Ye who have but scant supply—

Angel eyes will watch above it,

Ye shall find it by and by.

He who in his righteous balance

Both each human action weighs,

Will your sacrifice remember,

Will your loving deeds repay,

Cast thy bread upon the waters,

Ye who have abundant store—

It may float on many a billow,

It may strand on many a shore.

You may think it lost forever,

But as sure as God is true,

In this life or in the other

It will yet return to you.

It was something like flickering faith. No sooner did Andrew make this little suggestion than he felt ashamed and evidently would have withdrawn it. The improbability of his expedient being practical occurred to him, and he anticipated the objection suggested on rationalistic grounds. "But what are these among so many?" How often faith suffers eclipse by the shadow of our poor reason coming across its face! These dreadful "buts" are always arising in our hearts, to cloud our rising faith. Yet, truly, apart from Jesus' power, "What are these among so many?" What are all our resources in comparison with the vast needs of poor shepherdless humanity? What are our science, our philosophy, our philanthropy, our civilization, our organized schemes of help and deliverance? How little headway we make against the world's sore need! Truly all we have is but five barley loaves and two small fishes, which are nothing until placed in His Almighty hands, who can multiply them indefinitely; but if brought to Jesus, and then used with His blessing, will prove more than enough.

"There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes." Just a little lunch which he had brought with him that day. Of course, this laddie's small supply among so many but the very fact that it was mentioned to the Master is evidence that Andrew had some thought working in his mind, that if once it were suggested, the Master might do something with it. Perhaps Andrew was thinking of how the Lord had made the water wine at Cana, and possibly He might do something of the kind if only He had the means to work with. Here, at least, was something. Andrew was a resourceful man—a man of quicker thought and readier action than the others. It was he who first went and found his brother Simon Peter, and brought him to Jesus. Well, this was but a little faith. Yet he offered it to Jesus, and, as it turned out, it was accepted, and his suggestions became the basis of a glorious miracle. Let us not be afraid or ashamed of proposing what comes to our mind, no matter how small it is, or how ridiculous it may look! David

thought of his sling and stone, and God did not despise it, but used it.

Now for our little fishes and our few barley loaves. Let us not be ashamed of them; but above all, let us not begin to distribute them as they are, for surely they will fail. Give them, not first to the multitude, but bring them to the Lord, and put them in His hands. He will not despise them, but accept them from us. Jesus will feed the multitude with our bread, but it must first be placed in His hands. The widow's mite cast into the treasury with her whole heart, given to the Lord and not for ostentation, is more than the unconsecrated wealth of the rich. Bring your poverty, your weakness, your lack of training or worldly influence to the Lord; place it in His hands, and see what will come of it, for "It is not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." The "waters of Shiloah that go softly" are better than the armies of Egypt. If we could only learn this lesson, what multitudes of poor, hungry, starving souls we might feed! It is not that if we all bring what we have, and combine to make much, but each bringing our little, and giving it into the hands of the Lord, the supply is multiplied and blessed.

Ordination and the English Bible.

The following report of the Committee to suggest the scope of an examination on the English Bible for candidates for ordination appearing before the Permanent Council of Baptist churches of New York and vicinity was adopted by the Council at the meeting on Monday, December 21: To the Permanent Council of Baptist Churches of New York and Vicinity:—The committee has corresponded with teachers in all Baptist theological seminaries in the United States, and with other well-known Bible students, announcing the purpose of the Council concerning an examination of candidates for ordination on their knowledge of the English Bible, requesting an opinion thereon, and asking for suggestions as to the specific duty for which it was appointed. The limits of this report will not allow quotations from the letters received, which, without exception, heartily approve our course. It is a matter for congratulation that we have the enthusiastic endorsement of presidents of seminaries, members of their faculties, the denominational press, intelligent laymen of our own communion, and able representatives of other Christian bodies.

After two protracted sessions, and after careful study of suggestions by our correspondents, your committee recommends as wise, and possible under present conditions:—

I. That examinations of a candidate for ordination be upon

- (1) His Christian experience;
- (2) His call to the Christian ministry;
- (3) His knowledge of the English Bible;
- (4) His views of Christian truth.

II. That in the examination on the English Bible no difference as to scope be made between graduates of theological seminaries and those who have not such advantages, since some knowledge of the Bible is essential to qualify any person for entrance upon the Christian ministry. The Council can easily adjust the minuteness of its examination to the educational history of each candidate.

III. That, as a minimum, the scope of the examination on the English Bible embrace:

- (1) The names and classification of the books of the Bible;
- (2) The contents of any book in the Bible;
- (3) Biblical history, including principal biographies;
- (4) The life of Christ.

IV. That the resolution stating the purpose of the Council, and this report be sent to each church in the Southern New York Baptist Association, with the request for its endorsement of our action.

W. C. BITTING, J. L. CAMPBELL,
W. A. GRANGER, E. S. HOLLOWAY,
R. P. JOHNSTON, C. S. MORRIS