

Original Contributions.

POSITIVE INSTITUTIONS.

There is a tendency in the religious world to day to belittle the positive institutions of God. In fact we frequently hear it proclaimed from the pulpit that God does not look at ordinances in His worship, that He does not now require such in acceptable worship, but only demands a broken spirit and a contrite heart. This is certainly the requirement of God in acceptable worship; but can one have a broken spirit and a contrite heart, can one worship God in spirit and in truth whilst at the same time living in disobedience to positive commands or institutions? We will let the reader judge. Such teaching as we have spoken of tends not only to belittle the institutions of the kingdom of heaven, but also to ignore its King and Lawgiver; for if there be a kingdom of heaven (which no Christian will deny) it must have a King or Supreme dispenser of laws, and consequently a constitution,—as no king can rule where there is no constitution. Jehovah, in the days of Augustus Cæsar, set up a kingdom, over which he made that Jesus whom he raised from the dead both Lord and Christ. Acts ii. 36. This Jesus, while on earth, saw fit to promulge certain laws, by the compliance to which permission would be granted to citizenship in this kingdom. John iii. 5. He also, after His ascension to the throne of His kingdom, by His spirit through the Apostle Peter, to whom, while on earth, he had given the keys, Matt. xvi. 19, announced the same terms of admission. Acts ii. 38. This same Jesus, before His coronation as King of the universe and after that auspicious event, by His spirit, through His ambassadors, gave other institutions for the observance of His subjects. (See Matt. v. 32; Mark x. 11; Luke xxii. 19; I. Cor. xi) Certainly He gave many other commandments of a purely moral character, to which all His followers must conform, and without which conformity there can be no love for Christ. He that hath My commandments and doeth them, he it is that loveth Me. John xiv. 21.

Now the question arises, May we reject or ignore the positive moral commands, retaining only the purely moral? The answer of a large class of professors is in the affirmative. They tell us that the moral institutions are essential to salvation, whilst the positive are not. Let us look for a moment at their chief reason for coming to this conclusion. They object that by making justification or remission of sins that are past depend in any sense upon an external act, we make void the grace of God. This objection can only be raised by persons who are ignorant of God's manner of working, either in nature or religion. Whether the omnipotent Jehovah can work without means, I presume not to say, but I affirm that we can produce nothing, either in nature or in grace, done by God without means. The Apostle Paul affirms that "by faith we understand the worlds were framed by the Word of God." Will those declaimers on the non-essentiality of positive institutions in justification tell us that Paul limited the wisdom, power and goodness in reporting him to use means in framing the world?

By grace are we saved, either temporally or eternally? Man forfeited life when he sinned, but by the grace of a merciful God he is permitted to live out a certain number of days on this stage of action. This permission the Divine mind considered expedient to His designs to grant; but there can be no grace manifested where there is no gift. Had this remained as an idea only in the Divine mind, and had no gifts proceeded from the Creator, by the use of which Adam could live out his allotted time, there could have been no grace; for without food and wherewithal to supply his natural

wants, he would have died. Hence, the grace of God could only be appropriated by Adam by the giving of those essentials to natural life. When God granted Adam a lease of life, He granted Him means to insure that life. God grants each of us temporal life in the same way. "In Him we live and move and have our being," says the Apostle Paul, and it is as true in the physical as the spiritual sphere. (I have an idea that this declaration of the Apostle Paul, coupled with the great commission of our Lord and Saviour, brings within our just comprehension all the requirements, celestial or terrestrial, of an immortal soul) I can prolong my life only by using those God-given means adapted to that end. If we were to state that we lived by eating, some one might object that we are detracting from the power of God, for the Apostle to the Gentiles says, "In Him (God) we live and move and have our being." Yet the food is only the means by which God or His grace prolongs our life.

Other illustrations of equal apparenancy might be adduced to show that the grace of God is manifested in nature only by the gift of certain means consentaneous to that grace.

So it is in religion. There never was a time when positive institutions formed no part of religion. The patriarchs offered their holocausts. The bonded Hebrew, by Divine appointment, sprinkled the blood of the slain lamb upon the door-posts. The Mosaic priest could only enter the tabernacle through the altar and laver. Did the holy patriarch, the enslaved Hebrew, or the priestly Jew make void the grace of God when He approached him only in these ways? We think not. Whether the omnipotent and omniscient God could have permitted these persons to approach Him in any other than the appointed way, I presume not to say. But the disciple of Gamaliel declares, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." Whether it ever might have been, I am not at liberty to determine.

You will notice, then, that at the very foundation of the Christian religion is a positive institution. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission. Christ literally shed His blood on Calvary's cross. It is by this literal shedding of blood that we now receive remission. Will any one now affirm that positive institutions make void the grace of God?

This sacrifice was offered once for all in the ends of the ages, but sacrifice alone did not qualify the priestly Jew to enter the holy place. He must bathe himself at the laver, which, with the altar, stood in the court under the full glare of heaven. Neither does sacrifice alone qualify us to enter the kingdom of heaven, of which the holy place was a type, but we must submit ourselves to the ordinance of baptism. To this the Apostle Paul, in writing to the Hebrews, evidently refers when he says, Heb. x. 22: Let us draw near with a pure heart in fullness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water. If God sees fit to appoint means by which to approach and worship Him acceptably, dare any man approach Him other than through His divine appointment. We see, then, that as the grace of God is manifested to us in nature by gifts, or by means for the enjoyment of that grace, so in religion the grace of God is manifested by gifts, or means consentaneous to its enjoyment, viz: the gift of His only begotten Son, or the literal, not figurative, shedding of the blood of Christ, baptism, faith and hope, etc.

Christ, by shedding His blood, procures salvation for us; and as Adam, in order to enjoy the grace of God in prolonging his temporal life was given means consentaneous with that, and so the Author of our salvation, Christ Jesus, has given us divine appointments and teaching in order to enjoy a Christian experience here and eternal life here-

after. May the God of all grace give us that spirit of true wisdom which cometh from above, and the constant dwelling of His holy spirit which will enable us, like Martha of old, to sit at the feet of Jesus and drink in those words of eternal peace, for they alone can give life. "To whom shall we go," says the Apostle Peter, when asked by the Lord if they (the apostles) would also desert Him. "To whom shall we go, for thou only hast the words of eternal life!" JACK.

ALPHABET FOR YOUNG READERS.

A—Is for *Alpha*, the first and the good,
B—The *Beloved*, who redeems by His blood.
C—Is the *Crucified*, who saves us from sin,
D—The *Damnation* the wicked are in.
E—Is the *Eden*—the delightful—the blest,
F—Is the *Father* who leads us to rest.
G—Is the *Gospel*, which sinners invites,
H—Is for *Heaven*—the land of delights.
I—Is the *Immortal*—the home of the soul,
J—Is for *Jesus*, who makes the sick whole.
K—Is for *Knowledge*, which is the saints' light,
L—*Loving-kindness*, in which they unite.
M—Means the *Many* who will enter the fold,
N—The *Never-ending* delights they behold.
O—The *Omnipotent* Master we serve,
P—The *Passions*, now held in reserve.
Q—*Quickening* power of the gospel of love,
R—*Royal-honors* in the house up above.
S—Means *Salvation*, provided for all,
T—Is the *Time*, now, to give them the call.
U—*Universal*, the love of the Lord,
V—Is the *Victory* gained through His word.
W—Is the *Way* for the weary and worn,
X—Is the *Cross* and not easily borne.
Y—Is for *Youth*, when all Christ should receive,
Z—Is for *Zeal* to move all who believe.

O. B. E.

Charlottetown, March 25th, 1893.

N. S., N. B. AND P. E. I. BUILDING FUND

I think my proposition in the January number will be accepted by all right thinking brethren. One good sister said it was a grand idea, and that she would give me a start. So you see, brethren, if ever anything great is going to be done, now is the time. Let us start now and by January 1894, we will see how it has worked. Those who give their money now will be more than blessed in their giving for there will likely be calls for help before January next. We hope and pray that there may be many calls made. Every one loves to hear of the cause growing in our provinces, and when any one church calls for help, we should respond to the best of our ability. Now if all who are members of the Church of Christ in the three provinces, with those who are readers of THE CHRISTIAN, will give one dollar per year, we will have all the funds we need to carry on the work of preaching the gospel to all in these three provinces. It has been brought to your minds, dear brethren, and it will rest with you to make it a success or a failure. But I have too much confidence in our good brethren and spurn the idea of failure. Let us be up and doing and show ourselves worthy of our high calling in Christ Jesus.

I am going to open the list by giving one dollar to Bro. James Wallace, whom I have made treasurer. I think we could get no better for the position—one who has been found faithful in all his ways, and one who loves the Christ and His cause. Money placed in his hands will be sure and safe. The list of all moneys received will be given credit for in THE CHRISTIAN. We will have advisers appointed by one church in each province—Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and P. E. I.—for the distribution of the funds, so that the church most in need shall be first considered.

W. J. MESSERVEY.

Halifax, N. S.

RECEIPTS.

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