

the sacrament without confession—come to Christ with out a priest? Where are the priests? And next morning Molinos was imprisoned, and so were his friends, and the movement was stamped out. And the people of Rome could not imagine why such a step was taken; they said, We see no injury in it. But the priests were right, and they were right to put on this verse at the end of the fifty-first psalm too.

Now

WHEN OUR LORD CAME,

there the battle was, and he joined the side of the prophets; and down into the Christian church has come the battle, priest against prophet, prophet against priest, and it stands today the same way, with two gospels, two ways of life, two methods of authority; one of them mechanical, the other spiritual; one of them formal, the other real. The difference lies here, to conclude, and one must make his choice. According to the prophetic idea, a man comes forth from the divine presence to declare the Gospel of God and to exemplify that Gospel by a godly life and by tender care for the souls of the people. Of course he must administer sacraments, he may have administered sacraments too. That is good work. And now we must decide that. Is the great work administration of sacraments or the preaching of the gospel? That is

THE POINT TO DECIDE.

By what was the Christian church advanced from the beginning? By sacrament, however beautiful, however spiritual; or by the preaching of the Word? There is nothing on the face of the earth and nothing in human history so strong as preaching. By preaching, wickedness is beaten down; by preaching, men are brought to faith; by preaching, we obtained our civil and religious liberty. Therefore, I say, there stands the prophet—preach the Word, and also administer sacraments. And there stands the priest, with the sacraments in the foreground and the Word in the background, and if he gets full power, no Word at all. And then you take the priest; well, well he is, strictly speaking, an official; he may be more, but inasmuch as he is more he is a prophet; but, strictly speaking, an official, ordained after a particular fashion, and by that act of ordination, date and hour to be given, qualified to do—what? To preach? This is of no importance. To administer the two sacraments, so that in the sacrament of baptism he can regenerate a human soul, and in the other sacrament he can turn bread and wine into the body and blood of our Lord. It is

A TREMENDOUS CLAIM!

And now what does it depend on? Well, it depends on a long historical succession, so long, so minute, so confessed, that there is every probability that links are wanting, and if a link is wanting he is not ordained, and there is no sacrament, and there is no salvation brought near to these people. So much turns upon mechanism. And I ask you: Do you understand the Gospel of Christ? and was it such a church he intended to create?—that none of us is a valid minister of Jesus Christ unless he can trace his genealogy—ecclesiastical genealogy—back through all those centuries, and even through such extremely muddy and disgraceful channels?

But that is not all. I am aghast at this claim. I want to ask questions. I feel that I cannot have understood it—that the mere act of ordination, this formal act, on that day and that hour, has given him this power, and that that is all.

I WANT TO ASK QUESTIONS.

Of course, I say, he must be educated, trained, so that he understand the Bible, and understand theology, and understand the history of the Christian church. What! will it make no difference if he has not been? None, none to a priest, if he has been properly ordained; none. But suppose—and I have heard of such cases, of South American and Greek priests—suppose that he is so illiterate that he never read the Bible at all, and never in all his days read the four gospels of Jesus Christ? Truly qualified to preach, fully qualified; that would not enter into the matter! Suppose he be an utter fool? An excellent priest!

That is not all; that is the least, literally. Ah, there be men of very simple understanding and limited knowledge, although not of course so low down as that, who might set an example of godliness, and also lead some into the way everlasting. It is a serious business if you do not claim intelligence as a necessity for the priesthood, but it is not final. I have other questions to ask.

ONE THING I TAKE FOR GRANTED—

that he be a holy man, and that if he be an evil-liver he is no longer a priest. What! the sacrament valid, and the bread and wine turned into the body and blood of the Son of God, though his hands be unclean and his life black? Quite so; it will make no difference to priests; the sacrament will be equally valid, though he be the worst of the South American and Italian priests. This is fearful! Where am I now? This is mechanism certainly, with a vengeance!

But I have another question to ask. Of course he must at least be a believer in Jesus Christ; however ignorant or however gross, he must surely hold yet to an atom of faith? Suppose—it is impossible, but just suppose—that a man who did not believe in Jesus Christ at all, and who made a mock at the mysteries of the Christian religion, an infidel of the Renaissance, should be a priest: is the sacrament valid? Perfectly. What! perfectly valid? Perfectly valid. Then if a man be ordained, though he know nothing, though he be an evil-liver, though he be not himself a believer, if he be perfectly ordained, he is a duly qualified minister of Jesus Christ, with power to administer the very body and blood of the Son of God! I stand aghast.

A CONTRAST.

Yes, and that is not all. I take this subject—for it goes to prove my case, and a case where theory is car-

ried so far—I take this subject, this poor wretch of a Brazilian priest, one of the lowest types under a ministry of any kind that can be discovered—I take him, ignorant, dirty, evil-living, not intelligent enough either to believe or not believe, I take that creature, and I say: Then that is a valid minister of Jesus Christ? Yes; then I bring John Bunyan, I bring in John Bunyan. What of him? Was he a minister of Jesus Christ? No; never properly ordained! Ordained of the Lord, but not of man. Had he any right to administer a sacrament? None! Was the sacrament ineffective from his hand? Yes! Was he an intruder? Yes! Was he an imposter? Yes! Is there any hope for him? "Uncovenanted mercies!" I remember the sermons he preached, wherein he took sinners in his arms, as in Jerusalem's city, and literally carried them up to the mercy seat, that they could not escape from the salvation of God. And I remember his life in Bedford Goal, and all that he suffered for the Lord. And I remember the book wherein he has opened up the deeps below and the heights above, and hath made the way luminous for millions that they may enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And when I hear that creature is a minister of Christ, and this great prophet is an imposter, then I go down on my knees and implore God that from this debasing error and superstition he would be pleased to save us, and our children after us.—The British Weekly.

The Bible a Record of Life.

It has seemed to us that the interest which professional biblical scholars have been feeling in the historical, as distinct from the purely literary, point of view should be shared by those who are teaching in the Sunday school. It has been said that Christianity is the religion of a book; it would be quite as true to say that it is the religion of a history. Not the least significance of the Bible lies in the fact that it is not a collection of abstract thought, but is rather the record of actual life. Even those portions of the prophets the origin of which seems the farthest possible from human experience are in reality the most specific sort of application of truth to human needs. It is very largely the fact that the Bible is so intensely biographical and historical, and so far away from mere philosophy, that has given it its tremendous hold upon the world. We all feel a spirit of kinship with its men and women, and in their interpretation of God's leadings we discover comfort and inspiration for our own lives. Indeed, perhaps unconsciously, we never take the Bible as a book of mere teaching, but trust it also as the record of religious faith and discipline.

Now, it is this point of view that the man who calls himself the scientific theologian is taking. He refuses to believe, just like all Christians, that the Bible contains nothing but doctrines. He believes that the teaching of the prophets and apostles, and above all of Jesus Christ, was occasioned by and had especial reference to certain definite historical conditions. He sees that Jeremiah found in the political disturbances of Judah his texts of his prophetic teaching; that Paul found in the conditions of the churches of Galatia and Corinth, for instance, occasion for two of his most important letters, and that Jesus uttered some of his most searching and immortal truths because of the enmity and the legalism of the Pharisees and other religious teachers of his day.

Why cannot any Sunday school teacher work in somewhat the same way? It certainly leads to a clearer appreciation of the Scriptures. It certainly leads to an extraordinarily greater interest in the various books of the Bible. But perhaps more important than that, it gives the Christian teacher a certain assurance in his personal Christian life and in his attempts to influence the personal lives of his pupils. Perhaps one could say this comes about in two ways: In the first place, he feels that the Bible is a much truer book because it is thus to be corroborated in so many points by the severest historical study. Does it not often happen that you are at a loss to understand the exact meaning of some psalm, or some bit of prophecy, or some of the sayings of Jesus or Paul? You attempt to interpret them from the nineteenth-century point of view, without any regard to the times in which the writers lived, and you immediately find yourself in difficulty: that which is taught, perhaps even enjoined, seems so utterly at variance with the customs of today that one cannot understand how to get real help from it. But if this teaching be considered in its relations to its actual historical occasion—as, for instance, the matter of the feet-washing at the Last Supper, or the authority "to bind and to loose"—instantly one understands not only what it meant to the people to whom it was spoken, but at the same time one is able to translate that meaning into thought which is applicable to its own time. And then, in the second place, does not a man feel more confidence and more encouragement to undertake to live according to the teachings of the inspired men of the olden time when he remembers that their teachings are not the lucubrations of philosophers in their studies, but are the formulation of genuine inner life with God? So they are not guess-work, but have been tested. One immediately feels that, if it were true in their case, it may also be true in one's own.

Now, these are only a few illustrations of the helpfulness that lies in a person's trying to look at the teaching of the Bible from the historical rather than the immedi-

ately devotional or the purely theological point of view. Each of these two are invaluable, but each, if it is to be most helpful, must be conditioned by the historical. As our Sunday schools approach the study of the life of Christ, there is probably no better introductory work that could be done with the older classes than to introduce them into the times in which Jesus lived, and let them feel the current of Jewish life into which he came, and whose faults and excellencies so largely affected the language he employed. There is an increasing literature upon this subject, and one that is already past the experimental stage. There are books for all sizes and classes of readers; and the teacher, if no one else, should endeavor to become acquainted, in a general way, with the two hundred years that preceded Jesus' life, and especially with the customs and parties and religious hopes of the time in which he lived.

We should be glad if our readers who are so inclined would write us for suggestions as to such study. We should like to give references to literature, or even to suggest an outline course of reading on this subject to those who wish it.—The Biblical World.

From Manitoba.

It is Sunday night. I have had a good day in the service of the dear Lord. I have proof that many of the readers of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR are interested in my mission. Please give me a little space to speak to them, brother editor.

My work last week and to day has been in the town of Gretna, Southern Manitoba, just on the border line of Dakota. It has a population of less than one thousand, but almost all the nations of Europe are represented—the Germans prevailing and the German Mejonites being the prevailing religion. As I stood upon the street corner this afternoon, under the eave of one saloon and in front of another to sing and preach the blessed gospel I had to hear me the English, the Scotch, the Irish, the German, the Indian, the Jew, the Russian, the Prussian, the Sued and the Norwegian. Oh! how I wished that I could speak to them all in their own tongue the wonder-word of God! Many of them understood some of what I had to say to them and some of them all of it. May the Holy Spirit make the word the power of God in their hearts and lives. What fields for missionary work open up to us in this wonderful country! In this conglomerate mass there are eight Baptists. They have no pastor. There is a German brother who does good work as a colporteur. This is foundation work. I have been here a week. Our first meeting was 24, our last meeting about 70 and we had from 40 to 60 each night during the week. Oh how much these towns need the pure gospel! Here is the Lutheran church whose pastor told me that every member of his large flock, by virtue of his infant baptism, whether he be drunken or sober, honest or shabby, pure or profane, is an heir of God, a member of Christ and an inheritor to the kingdom of heaven. Here is the Menonite who lives more under the renewing influences of the gospel of salvation from sin, but whose motives for membership in the church are not always love for Jesus and loyalty to His word, but rather that they may enjoy the temporal privileges that membership in the church procures for them—the privilege of marriage for instance. They not only refuse marriage to those who are not church members but they exclude those who are if they marry out of their own particular church. Among professing Christians bearing other names there appears to be much of the form of godliness without its power, so much so in this town that I am charged or credited with being the first man that ever spoke to the people on the street corner and the first that ever asked any one indoors or out to stand up for Jesus or raise his hand as a witness for Him. Dear brethren of the East we need missionaries here—missionaries on fire with a passion for souls.

Two years ago to-night, reckoning by Sundays, I bade farewell to the dear people of North Sydney to join myself to the noble band of Baptists that are seeking to meet the constantly flowing and ever increasing river of immigration into this country with the "Truth as it is in Jesus." It was indeed tearing myself away from the love of an affectionate people, but I have not yet regretted my coming. The fields here are so immense. The needs are so great that I am not only glad to have some humble part in meeting the needs, but I frequently sing and pray:

"Far and near the fields are teeming
With the waves of ripened grain,
Far and near their gold is gleaming
O'er the sunny slopes and plain.

"Send them forth with morn's first beaming,
Send them in the noontide's glare,
When the sun's last rays are gleaming
Bid them gather everywhere.

"Oh thou whom thy Lord is sending,
Gather now the sheaves of gold,
Heavenward then at evening wending,
Thou shalt come with joy untold.

CHORUS.—"Lord of harvest send forth reapers!
Hear us Lord to thee we cry,
Send them now, the sheaves to gather,
E'er the harvest time pass by."

Gretna, Nov. 26th. D. G. McDONALD.
Permanent address, Austin, Man.

P. S. We are having a very remarkable fall. The "oldest inhabitant" has never seen anything approaching it. I can preach in the open air any day without overcoat or glove. D. G. M.