

## Pastor and People.

### GOOD AND ILL.

The wild bee sucks from bitter thyme  
A savory, luscious honey,  
And gathers sweets from noisome marsh  
As well as bowers sunny.  
The oyster in her silent home  
Conceals a grievance cruel,  
Till from her painful cross and wound  
Is wrought a precious jewel!

The leaves assailed by blighting blast  
With hectic flush are tainted,  
Yet gorgeously in aftermath  
The forest kings are painted;  
And Winter gives a biting kiss  
From chilling lips and hoary,  
Yet clothes the palace and the wood  
With wondrous, matchless glory!

The gathering clouds confront the sun  
With threatening storm and thunder  
That spoil our day—but rainbow comes,  
A beauty and a wonder!  
And base-born smoke, soaring to heaven,  
Obscures the blue so tender,  
Yet lies at feet of dying day  
A wreathed, crimson splendor!

The opal's luster is a flaw  
Of fissure and refraction,  
The ruby's glow a cosmic throe  
In sudden, fierce contraction;  
And what is good and what is ill  
Lies far beyond our knowing,  
And what is fair and what is foul  
Seems only in the showing!

And we in life's perplexities  
May spare our pain and guessing,  
Since bees and bivalves teach us how  
From evil to gain blessing;  
Lo! in the very train of ill,  
Hope's visions are attending,  
And days that spring in leaden gloom  
Have oft a golden ending!

—Congregationalist.

Written for THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

### A SACRED TRUST.

BY JOHN BURTON, B.D.

"Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests, and the Levites, and the princes of the Fathers' houses of Israel at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the House of the Lord." These are the words with which Ezra (viii. 29) committed to the chief of the priests the silver and the gold and the vessels designed for the service of the Lord in the temple at Jerusalem. The journey was long and perilous; at least four months would be spent skirting the Syrian desert and descending to Jerusalem. Nor was the way safe, save as "the hand of our God is upon all them that seek Him." So to these twelve was entrusted the treasure, to be kept truly until, the journey accomplished, the trust should end in the chambers of the House of the Lord.

The ascended Christ "gave gifts unto men" as he led captivity captive; and those gifts with which he enriched his church are given "for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ; till we all attain unto the unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God; until, in short, the Saviour's prayer be realized, that his disciples manifest the unity which he himself has manifested as between the Father and the Son. Plainly we have not yet reached that consummation, nor arrived with our trust to "the chambers of the house of the Lord." As Ezra and his companions, we are on the journey; and the charge he gave to his pilgrim priests may be legitimately applied to our Presbyterian congregations, entrusted as they are with certain treasures to be watchfully retained and conveyed till "the unity of the faith" is reached at Jerusalem the heavenly, in the chambers of the House of the Lord. It is my purpose to indicate some of these trusts, for if what is known as Presbyterianism has no special trust, its manifest duty would be to stand aside and yield its place. Trusts, however, we believe firmly it has.

The Confession of Faith is an historic document which to be thoroughly understood requires a knowledge of struggles and controversies that in the forms then assumed have passed away. For the general reader such enquiries are neither profitable

nor possible; nor is it desirable that the endless controversies that gather around Calvinism be considered; in the days of the Westminster divines evangelical theology was Calvinistic; Arminius would have been more than satisfied with the "moderate Calvinism" of our pulpits to-day. The church that retains the Westminster symbols claims to be but one of the evangelical churches of the land. Nevertheless there are certain trusts that may be emphasized as specially held by our Church to-day, among its companion pilgrims to the chambers of the House of the Lord; some broad principles which its subordinate standards enshrine, to which assent was given when adherence was declared to the doctrine contained in the Confession, and which we may earnestly and confidently hold.

First.—Catholicity. Calvin deplored division as one of the greatest evils that could afflict the Church of God. The Confession was a determined endeavor for unity in the faith. Its spirit is eminently Catholic. Mark its definition of the visible church: "The visible church consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true (i.e., the Christian) religion together with their children" (xxv. 1, 2-4; xxvi. 1). No intimation that succession in an Episcopate is needed to make its organization regular or valid; no setting up of a special form of ordinance as a barrier to its full communion; no insertion of rules enjoining, e.g., "buying of one another," thus emphasizing the dividing line; but a full recognition as brethren of all throughout the world that "are united to Jesus Christ their head by His spirit, and by faith have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection and glory." I am not contending that there is no narrowness, bigotry and many other ugly things among us. I am simply presenting some marked principles to which we ministers gave our assent as we recognized the teaching of Scripture voiced in the subordinate standard.

Secondly.—The Scriptures are emphasized as the foundation covenant of the Church, "unto which nothing is at any time to be added" (i. 5-7, xxxi. 4; xxv. 5). Over all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits is "the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture." As a Church we may have erred in interpretation. "All synods or councils since the apostle's times may err, and many have erred." Our testimony at all times may not have been free from the baser admixture, the purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error, but ever before us we have set as our arbiter and guide "the Word of God." And as all Scripture testifies of Christ, the exaltation of Scripture is the exaltation of Christ. We hear frequently in what are known as progressive circles, "Back to the historic Christ." That has ever been the position of the Presbyterian symbols. Back to those Scriptures which testify of Him. No doubt our vision has often been obscured, imperfect, even double; but the principle remains, and thitherward we ever struggle.

Thirdly.—Stress has ever been laid on individual, personal relation to God in Christ, as alone fitting for a place among the congregation. I know it has sometimes been said: "You Presbyterians admit anybody to your fellowship." We may forebear judging more than some, in that I for one believe we are following our Master; but our testimony is plain. I shall not touch here upon the vexed question of election, but the believer and the elect are one, and of such we are told that they have "taken away from them their heart of stone, and have given unto them hearts of flesh; are renewed in their wills and by His almighty power determined to that which is good" (x. 1). A renewed and sanctified life is demanded, that emphatically, nothing more or less. Lastly, with this emphatic individuality is secured the organic unity of the whole.

Our entire system centering in the General Assembly is a constant reminder that

"We are not divided, all one body we,"

that as "all saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head by His spirit and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His graces, sufferings, death, resurrection and glory," so also they "are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification, as also in relieving each other in outward things according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus" (xxvi. 1-2).

Here are four golden principles enshrined in the Confession that have been weighed out to us for offerings in the house of our God. Catholicity; Supremacy of Christ as in the Scriptures set forth; Individual responsibility; Corporate Unity. Are we earning as we journey, the final "Well done?" With what joy the faithful custodian of Ezra's company would empty out his rich treasure upon the temple floor and rejoice as the scales gave evidence of a trust faithfully kept. What shame and confusion if amid the general rejoicing "Tekel—found wanting," should be recorded. Ah, the banishment and outer darkness.

In thus emphasizing certain principles woven into the very texture of our Presbyterian polity I am not seeking to draw invidious comparisons, I am prepared to substantiate the statement that they are so thoroughly inseparable from our constitution that we may safely claim them as special deposits and to present them as incentives to a more decided conviction that we have as a distinct branch of the Christian Church distinct witnessing to bear. May our congregations all more thoroughly appreciate their trust, and realize, amid the distractions of this closing century, that they have a great work to do.

### THE PREACHER AND THE TIMES.

But you ask me, Must not a preacher keep abreast of the times? Yes, just as the angel did. He tells them nothing new in science, gives them no lecture on contemporaneous history, nor does he go back into the past and tell them of sins their fathers committed. He is fully up to the times as regards the sins of the people to whom he speaks. And thus, while you beware of usurping the places of editor and professor, claiming to be a preacher, beware also of wasting breath on heresies which are dead and sins which are passed away. Do not spend your time denouncing the worship of Jupiter, nor learnedly refute the errors of the Manichæans, but talk to the people of the sins they are committing and the temptation which assail them. If you will deal honestly and faithfully with all the forms of sin found among your people, holding up ever the atoning blood as the great remedy for sin, and Jesus as the great exemplar in righteousness, you will find you will have more than enough whereon to speak without retailing the news of the day. Besides never forget that it is of little consequence to your hearers if they are told of a false theory of molecular attraction; and if they do not know when distinguished men die, or famous cities burn, or ships sink; but is of vital, eternal moment that their theory of the way of salvation should be true and that they should know that Jesus Christ died to save sinners.—T. T. Eaton, D. D., in the *Homiletic Review*.

Arbitration has had a more prominent place in international politics than most of us are aware of. We see the statement that, since 1816, there have been one hundred and twelve arbitrations between the European nations, the United States, and the states of Central and South America. Thirty times the United States has so settled its difficulties.

### A GREAT COMMANDMENT: DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE MORROW.

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow."—Matt. vi. 34.

This is one of the passages that Mr. Robert Ingersoll reads and pronounces it folly. But is it not rather one of the wisest sentences ever uttered? The original means, "Take no anxious thought," or, in the language of every-day life, "Don't worry." Christ applies it to the future, to food and drink and shelter and raiment. He saw clearly that the anxiety about the evils of to-morrow, that never come upon us, causes a million-fold more suffering and death than the evils that come. He saw that multitudes perish of worry about the hunger and thirst and exposure that never come, for every one that actually dies of real hunger, thirst and exposure. Christ showed His infinite wisdom in avoiding the supreme folly of Mr. Ingersoll, and saying, "Don't worry," instead of saying, "Don't perish of hunger, or thirst, or cold, or exposure." He at the same time showed His infinite beneficence is revealing that universal and loving providence in which every one who will "seek first the kingdom of heaven" can find sure refuge from the dread and the worry. Is there any lesson that a hurrying, worrying world so needs to learn as this one of safety and peace from the lips of Jesus? Is not this a great commandment with promise?—Extract from "Hints at the Meaning of Texts," in *The Homiletic Review*.

### THE BROKEN BUCKLE.

You have read in history of that hero who, when an overwhelming force was in full pursuit, and all his followers were urging him to more rapid flight, coolly dismounted, in order to repair a flaw in the horse's harness. Whilst busied with the broken buckle the distant cloud swept down in nearer thunder; but just as the prancing hoofs and eager spears were ready to dash down upon him the flaw was mended, the clasp was fastened, the steed was mounted, and like a swooping falcon he had vanished from their view. The broken buckle would have left him on the field a dismounted and inglorious prisoner; the timely delay sent him in safety back to his bustling comrades. There is in daily life the same luckless precipitancy and the same profitable delay. The man who, from his prayerless awakening, bounces into the business of the day, however good his talents and great his diligence, is only galloping on a steed harnessed with a broken buckle, and must not marvel if, in his hottest haste or more hazardous leap, he be left inglorious in the dust; and though it may occasion some little delay before hand, his neighbour is wiser who sets all in order before the march begins.—Rev. James Hamilton.

The *Christian Register* says:—"If there are religious tramps who go from church to church, there are also the well-rooted steady goers who may be found in the same church and in the same pew from Sunday to Sunday. The minister expects to find them there just as any other part of the church furniture. He thinks of them when he writes his sermon, and when he delivers it. Their attendance at church does not depend upon barometer, thermometer, or any other weather instrument. The question whether they shall go to church does not come up to them at all. They go to church as regularly on Sunday as they go to their business on Monday. Nothing but positive physical inability can keep them at home. They have not sampled all the churches in the city, they go not merely to 'hear' this man or that; they are an integral part of the church itself, as much as the foundation on which it stands or the pillars that hold it up."

Bishop Sessums, of Louisiana, says: "An education which leaves out the divine is not complete; it is an injustice to our human nature. It is a very poor religion, on the other hand, which undertakes to leave our education."