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All communications for the Editorial, News of Churches, and Correspondence Columns should be addressed to the Managing Editor, Box 2648, P.O. Toronto.

Pastors and church officers are particularly requested to forward items for "News of the Churches" column.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF DENOMINATIONALISM.

IN a recent issue we pointed out the difference between a sectarian spirit and a denominational Christian standpoint, while the former is worthy of disapprobation. Now, have those who attach themselves to any denomination of Christians any responsibilities to work in its sphere, and for its progress, or are they morally free to work in any sphere they choose, and for the advancement of other circles than the one to which they are allied? As there is considerable divergence among Christians on this point, we propose to examine it.

What is a denomination? It is a larger or smaller circle of Christians believers who have rallied around some distinctive principles which they deem it important to emphasize. The Presbyterian denomination has crystallized about certain great principles, the Methodists about another set, and the Congregational around a set differing from either of the others. Difference of opinion as to principles then gives rise to various circles of Christian hearts, called denominations. Now it is to be presumed that when a man enters any one of these communions, he does so from some preference. He knows why he has selected certain principles instead of others. In other words, if he becomes a Methodist, he ought to know why he selected that communion; or a Congregationalist, why he has entered that fellowship. This looks plain and simple.

Now having found certain distinctive principles, determining his own choice, and allying him to a circle of people bound together by these principles, ought not a man to work co-operatively with his brethren, and in behalf of what he believes to be most in accordance with truth? That this is not always the course adopted, is a well-known fact. In all circles there are people with such wonderfully large sympathies that they would just as soon help other bodies as their own. An incident will illustrate this. In one of our cities, a Methodist church was holding revival services in its own peculiar way. A member of a Congregational church, priding himself on expansive sympathy, went to help the revival, and for six long weeks he never put in an appearance at his own place of worship, neither at the preaching, nor the prayer meeting, nor at the communion service; and all the while, he was pitying others for their narrowness, because they were not so broad-hearted as he was. This case does not stand alone. Every church circle could furnish an incident closely akin to it. But was this person's sympathy of such an ennobled type that he could be complimented upon its possession? We think not. There was a wrong done to the circle of which he was a member, and to whom he had pledged himself in fellowship of spirit and of work. He was neglecting his promised duties at home to take up voluntary work abroad, as a woman who had her hands full with the work of her own home, would give all this the go-by that she might spend several days at her neighbour's quilting.

We contend that it is what Joseph Cook would call "axiomatic truth," that in the general work which as Christians we are attempting to do, it is proper and right that we should work in the company of, and in sympathy with, those whom we esteem yoke-fellows. Of course, there may be occasions which may justify the laying aside by all denominations of their distinctive plans for a time, to co-operate in some general good. But such occasions are rare indeed. For practical purposes the work can be pushed forward more successfully by each Christian company toiling

according to its own light, and in sympathy with the plans it deems the best. And, if this be so, then every man who is a member of a Church should work primarily and heartily with the Church of his choice, and not deem it an unimportant matter as to whom he helps. In this peculiar love for his own communion, he is as justifiable as a man is for loving and working for his own home in preference to the home of some friend around the corner.

SYMPATHY.

ONE of the strongest bonds that the individual soul feels to its Lord and Master is undoubtedly the fact that He is a sympathizing Saviour. It is not only that He was tried the same as we are, but that He mirrored our sorrows, and put a song of thanksgiving on the lips, but that constantly, in every circumstance of trial and difficulty, of doubt, darkness or suffering, the same Divine Jesus can enter into, and understand our feelings, can sympathize with us to the utmost, for "in all points He was tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

"In every pang that rends the heart,
The Man of Sorrows had a part;
He sympathizes with our grief,
And to the sufferer sends relief."

Whatever may be the mystery of the temptation of Christ, and it is surrounded with mysteries, we know that He was tempted; it was no sham trial, which could not by possibility have a different result to that recorded; and so, being tempted, and that just in the line of our temptations—to wrong dealing, to pride, to worldly success and honour, apart from God—He is able to succour them that are tempted; and our hearts are thereby knit to Him in the bonds of indissoluble affection.

If these be truths, and that they are no one will, we think, doubt, then do not Christians see opened to them the secret of their power and success in every branch of Christian work? If, as from the Lord to His servants, this is such a mighty influence, should not we seek to use it ourselves to the same blessed end. We are aware that a large, loving, sympathetic nature does not dwell in everyone, the circumstances which would draw from one a flood of sympathy fail to move others; it is foreign to them, they cannot understand it. Making all allowance for constitutional differences, we must yet say that we fail to see how hearts touched by the love of Christ can have no flowing out of that love to their brethren, and we are sure that it exhibits at the best, a very low state of piety, very little spiritual life. Let us take the case of a pastor filled with this sympathy; what a force that will give to his teachings; how the truths which fall from his lips will be clothed with unction; how he will find his way to the hearts of his people; the troubled will feel that they can confide in him and seek his counsel; the young will feel the magnetism of his presence; and all will be drawn to him as to a man filled with the spirit of his Master, a true and faithful under-shepherd. In the same way it is found that the Sunday school teachers who gather round them the largest and most interested classes, whose scholars are the most regular and attentive, with a larger average giving themselves to Christ through His Church, and becoming in their turn Christian workers, are those who throw around them the golden cord of sympathetic love, with eye, and voice, and actions, ever testifying to a deep interest in their scholars' welfare, and who shew it not only when in the class on Sunday, but in their homes, and wherever opportunity may offer.

What is true of the more active members and workers in a church is true of the whole body. How often do we hear of churches that they are cold, formal, dignified and unapproachable. We have been told of those who have gone to certain churches for a whole year, and no one has spoken a word to them, or given them the warm grasp of welcome. This seems almost incredible, but we are compelled to believe it. How many are lost to the churches and to the cause of God by this? A word, an expression of sympathetic interest would bind and keep thousands.

Yet again, in church life, in the varied difficulties, anxieties and sorrows that come to brethren, how great the field for sympathy. One is tried by business, all things appear against him, a cloud is hanging over his head threatening to burst in ruin; another whose family depend upon the labour of his hands, cannot find work to do, seek it honestly as he will; a third has met with ingratitude or something worse from one whom he has benefited and trusted; or a mother is tried and harassed with family cares, possibly with that most terrible curse—a drunken husband; or a long sickness has fallen upon some active worker; or death has entered into a family. We need not multiply instances, they are found in every church, and are a constant call for active sympathy and comfort. If one church has a true idea of its duty, all the members will be ready to respond to the call, proving the oneness of "the body of Christ." It is in the lack of this that we are paralyzed and dead, and not until Christians realize that they are "members one of another," suffering and rejoicing together, will the Church be like its Master, and draw all men unto it.

HINDRANCES TO CHRISTIAN UNITY.

THIRD FAIR.

CHRISTIANITY is designed to meet "the facts of the case;" the world's need called it forth, the world's need is to be supplied thereby. That our denominations are supplying that need in great measure, we know. We have no argument with the man who would deny such to be the case. We are simply pointing out facts they do not meet, and in not meeting them perpetuate divisions. "I am a Presbyterian by birth and by conviction," said a friend to the writer. "Precisely so," was replied. Subtract from the conviction all that came with the accident of birth and its consequent surroundings, and how much will be left to an unbiassed conviction? Now that fact—the fact of birth with its attendant powers, the Churches of "authority" fail to meet, save as they perpetuate the "Church of our fathers," irrespective of the claim to be the true Gospel Church, and thus preserve sects rather than the unity so much, professedly, desired.

There can be no doubt that the present is a time of inquiry, and the tendency is to demand the ground upon which authority rests, the "Thus it is written" of the scribes is not deemed sufficient for the satisfying of the inquiring mind; and thereby is manifested a spirit which the Master met—yes, encouraged, for though he confounded Scribe and Pharisee by their own "it is written," His teaching was, "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thus and so, but I say unto you, this." He spake with authority, but the authority in which His great apostle gloried, "by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Rome meets this spirit by Vatican decrees and the *bruta fulmine* of Councils, of which Councils, from Nice to the Vatican, it may be said that like the Ephesian mob that drowned Paul's Gospel, the majority were bear gardens. True to her motto, *semper eadem*, unity by her can only be attained over the grave of individual liberty, unless by some fresh development of Jesuit casuistry, Papal infallibility, in the hands of some progressive Pope, should undo all the authority of the past, and by one bold stroke, unromanize Rome.

How stand our Anglican friends in relation to Christian re-union? The reply is not reassuring; with divided voice they but faintly echo Rome therein. We say divided voice, for individual clergymen of that denomination do indeed fraternize occasionally with "Nonconformists" (the anachronism is theirs, not ours), yet they can allow of no reciprocation, so that their fraternization assumes the form of patronage, which simple self respect forbids being accepted on the part of men every way their New Testament equals. Indeed, the truth may as well be plainly stated: our Anglican friends too often make it a matter of condescension when they do appear upon another platform than their own, and while discarding the doctrine are but too willing to shelter themselves behind the sup-