

It. "A moral, sensible and well-bred man will not affront me, and no other can."

We are heterodox, Mr. McDonagh says, on the subject of conversion and in our teaching upon the privileges of the unbaptized to pray. Let us see. We believe man is dead in trespasses and in sin, that he is alienated from God in heart and life. We believe it requires divine power to convert him. That power is exercised by the agency of the Holy Spirit through the gospel.

Conversion consists in turning the man—the whole man—with all the energies of his being out of the service of sin into the service of the living God.

It is against false theories of conversion that we have lifted up our voice. Against that theory, for instance, with which Mr. McDonagh is doubtless acquainted, of teaching the sinner to listen for strange sounds and to look for dreams, and visions, and trances, and convulsions, or some other variety of physical or psychological phenomena.

It is for opposing such theories of conversion, which make void the Word of God, that we have been accused by such as Mr. McDonagh of denying conversion altogether. We deny the false and oppose it because of the great importance of the genuine.

Prayer we believe is the blessed privilege of every person. We believe in a God who hears and who answers prayer. We believe that it has its place, and is not a substitute for something else. Everything in its place is our doctrine.

It is against the doctrine of teaching the sinner to pray instead of yielding himself in obedience to the Saviour that we object. When a sinner knows his duty and will not do it, his prayers are not acceptable. Let the sinner do his duty and pray at every step is our teaching.

I suppose Mr. McDonagh will say, however, that we don't mean what we say—that we are keeping something back, that we are deceiving the people, etc. That is most convenient when he has nothing else to say. The Jews said the same to Christ. "Some said, he is a good man; others said, Nay, but he deceiveth the people."

The following, on conversion, is from "Our Position," by the late Isaac Errett. Bro. Errett was a representative man among the Disciples. He was editor for years of one of our most influential papers. He was an intimate friend of James A. Garfield, and preached his funeral sermon. He says:

"While heartily recognizing the perpetual agency of the Holy Spirit in the word of conversion—or, to use a broader term, regeneration—we repudiate all theories of spiritual operations and all theories of the Divine and human natures which logically rule out the Word of God as the instrument of regeneration and conversion; or which make the sinner passive and helpless, regarding regeneration as a miracle, and leading men to seek the evidence of acceptance with God in supernatural tokens or special revelations, rather than in the definite and unchangeable testimonies and promises of the gospel. We require assent to no theory of regeneration, or of spiritual influences; but insist that men shall hear, believe, repent and obey the gospel—assured that if we are faithful to God's requirements on the human side of things, he will ever be true to himself and to us in accomplishing what is needful on the divine side. Our business is to preach the gospel, and plead with sinners to be reconciled to God; asking God, while we plant and water, to give the increase. We care little for the logic of any theory of regeneration, if we may but persuade sinners to believe, repent, and obey."

The following is from Alexander Campbell on the question, "Has a sinner a right to pray?"

"If no sinner has the right to pray, of course no man has the right, for all men are sinners. No sinner, however, in his own right, or without a mediator, can acceptably approach God, and have a favorable audience in prayer. 'He that comes to God,' in prayer, 'must first believe that God exists, and is approachable, and also 'a rewarder of all them who diligently seek Him' in the appointed way."

The Lord taught his disciples to ask, to seek, and even to knock at the Door of Mercy, with the assurance that it shall be opened to them. Every man, therefore, who has heard the overture of divine philanthropy, and accredited, is commanded to ask, to seek, even to knock at the Door of

Divine Mercy, with the assurance that it shall be opened to him. Is not this an all-sufficient license?

Paul prayed before he was baptized, and was not only heard, but accepted and answered. True, he had in his heart the purpose of consecrating himself to the Lord, which he did at the earliest opportunity. Those who know not what they should do, and yet believe in the person and mission of the Lord Jesus the Christ, may as lawfully, and with full allegiance in their hearts, ask the Lord what they should do, as Saul of Tarsus did; and doing this in faith of the person and mission of Jesus of Nazareth will, no doubt, be answered, and directed in the way which they should choose. T. L. FOWLER.

April 7.
[NOTE.—This correspondence must close here in the Free Press.—Ed.]
—London Free Press.

The Commission vs Denominationalism.—I.

T. B. KNOWLES.

To many, both in the religious and non-religious world, denominationalism is an enigma; a source of perplexity. Its human systems, creeds, names, and practices, that contrast so widely with the simplicity and unity of the church founded on the day of Pentecost, upon the one sublime truth and article of faith, in the divine creed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," must be apparent to every honest student of the New Testament. Yet, to many, doubtless, who have sought to find the simple truth, and the exemplification of the religion of Christ, in denominationalism; its marked contrast, and endless jargon of party claims, and moving opinions, have been fruitful of much confusion.

Some, yea many, have given up the search in despair and become indifferent; or, doubtfully asked, "What is truth," and settled down into infidelity. A lady, whom the writer had the pleasure of seeing obey the Lord, said: "I was anxious to be saved once, but could not get religion as others said they did, and gave up trying after a while, and believed that they were all deceived. I have been a skeptic for three years." But, to a keenly-observed, and unbelieving world, denominationalism presents a rather unlovely and uninviting picture. It is received as a mass of discordant sects, ambitious for self-aggrandizement and party creeds, rather than for the salvation of the world, and the maintenance of "the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace." It is made, therefore, by many, and not without reason, the excuse for avowed skepticism, and open contempt, for the divine claims of Christianity. Nor is it possible for sectarianism to clear itself of the responsibility of much of this antagonism to the gospel of Jesus Christ, while it gives such abundant occasions for the world to ask, as it does, again, and again, "Whence came all this division and discord, this marked selfishness, in the church, if Christianity is a divine religion?" "Or, why are human creeds made to usurp the authority of the Bible, if it is true, as claimed by the church, that the Bible is the Word of God?" "And why does modern denominationalism assume the right to sit in the place of the church of the New Testament, and apostolic, according to its claim, if the church was established by him who claimed to be the Christ, with all power in heaven and on earth?" No answer will satisfy an honest mind, of course, save that of divine authority. And, here it is: "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same things, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be

perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment." For whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal and walk after the manner of men? For whom one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollis; are ye not men?

Thus was denominationalism condemned, when at the first, it began to take root in the church of Corinth; and the divine judgment against it has never been reversed.

The trend of denominationalism has ever been in opposition to the unity of the church for which our Lord prayed: "That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us." For while this is the earnest prayer of the loving Christ, the persistent practice of sectarianism is division, and glory in party. Clear it is, that it is not a tree of the Lord's planting. And although its growth has been vigorous, and it has multiplied its denominational branches that have borne bitter fruits, as if to fill the whole earth; the axe of divine judgment is low at its root, for "every plant," says Christ, "which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up."

"Enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings," are some of its precious fruits, with which it would attract the world, to "join the church!"

Do we wonder at the wide-spread and increasing feelings in the churches that says: "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting," and that earnestly prays for the closer unity of God's people?

The conscientious acceptance of the open Bible by the people, in the reformation, under Martin Luther, broke the arrogant power of Popedom. So must the proud power of Creeddom be supplanted by an honest return and submission to the Word of God as sole arbiter and authority in all matters of faith and practice, in the kingdom of Christ.

And, surely, it is high time the professed church should clear herself from the humiliating charge of inconsistency, with regard to her professed reverence for the Bible. What boots it, that, while she claims to hold the grand truth uttered by Ohillingworth, "The Bible, I say, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants," she continues to ape the Church of Rome, in bowing to the sceptre of fallible, human dogmas, instead of obeying the infallible Word of God? And thus she has kept up a prodigious strife, along denominational lines, in her zeal to defend mere human opinions and to support denominationalism, instead of being "the pillar and ground of the truth!"

Surely, this has given cause for reproach to the enemy and made the church a stumbling-block, to a large degree, instead of being a "light," to the world. But, that there is no more New Testament warrant for a sect-divided Protestant church, than for the Church of Rome; and that both are alike contrary to the Spirit and genius of the Gospel of Christ, is becoming more and more apparent to the religious world. What ever may have been the apologies in the past for this prolific creed-crystallizing process of certain human opinions and doctrines, there is neither demand nor excuse for this kind of denominational work-shop any longer. We are nearing the end of the nineteenth century, and there is an evident and growing dislike for its musty wares. "What a spectacle," says T. DeWitt Talmage, "we have in our denominations to day: committees trying to patch up an old creed made two or three hundred years ago, so that it

will fit on the nineteenth century." This is a healthy sign that the minds of men are casting off the yoke of the creed-ruler. And, when the church at large shall abandon this, and in faith and practice accept the sacred scriptures, which are inspired of God, and are "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work," it will have taken a long step towards answering our Lord's touching prayer for the world's salvation, "that the world may believe that thou didst send me."

Until thou, denominationalism can give no adequate proof of sincere efforts for the world's salvation, an honest submission to the expressed will of Christ, in that prayer.

Nay, it must bear the fearful responsibility of abetting the world's unbelief, and ruin! Against it may be pronounced the awful words, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth un to me from the ground."

Easter Thoughts.

Easter morning was so bright and beautiful! I was revelling in the golden sunshine and wondering if ever there had been a stormy or gloomy Easter. I could not remember one, and it seemed so fitting that the day on which we commemorate the rising of our dear Saviour from the grave should be gloriously, radiantly bright. I was thinking of all these things, and of the joy there was eighteen hundred and ninety-two years ago, and of the peace that filled Mary's heart on beholding the smile of her risen Lord—that smile that is still beaming into every corner of the Christian world to-day, warming and cheering the hearts of the weakest disciple. Easter is always such a glad thankful day. I felt like speaking to someone of the goodness of the Lord. It isn't by any means a forbidden subject at our house, still I notice that conversation usually lags when it is introduced. We are full believers, some of us even professing Christians, but alas! as the little boy said of his father, we are Christians, but we "don't work much at it." We have an excellent theoretical religion, but little in it for practical, every-day use. And to my mind, we, who are chilly Christians, without a spark of heavenly fire in our hearts, following Christ so far off that people do not know which side we are on or else dishonoring our Saviour by professing on Sunday what we are not prepared to carry out on Monday, do more harm to the cause of Christ than those who openly avow themselves on the opposite side.

So I was not much in the habit of talking of these things, though often I had serious thoughts, and I did long for more earnestness of purpose, more abiding in Christ. And this morning I felt so much like sharing with somebody the gladness in my heart, and God never sends the desire without the opportunity.

With these thoughts in my mind I went to the kitchen on an errand and there encountered the little boy-of-all-work who is such a pleasant little fellow that I usually stop to sow a few seeds in his uncultivated mind and give him something to think about. He had just come in, and knowing my aversion to high winds remarked, "This is a lovely morning, so much warmer," with special emphasis on the first and last words, and in a tone that gave me plainly to understand that an appreciative smile was expected for the information. I felt like giving him more than a smile. It just fitted in with my thoughts about the beauty of the Easter morn, and I wished so

much for courage to tell this poor ignorant boy the beautiful story of his Saviour and mine which reached such a glorious consummation on that Easter long ago.

But the hall door stood open and Dora stood in it, and Dora has not much faith in anybody's goodness generally, and mine in particular (though it came to me that morning that surely this was more my fault than Dora's), so I hesitated and felt that the desire and opportunity were fast slipping away. Then the childish voice broke the silence again; "perhaps it is because Jesus rose from the dead on Easter morning that it's such a beautiful day," he said inquiringly.

I tell you, friends, I felt ashamed. Here was this poor child who attended Sunday school and tried so hard to master the Roman numerals and pronounce the long Bible names that he might find and read the verses himself, actually saying to me what I, twice his age and a professing Christian, could not get courage to say to him. I felt rebuked and humbled. Here was a heart, not only willing to receive, but longing for the truth, inquiring for that sweet, old, ever new story of Jesus and his love, and I had been dumb. 'Twas not that I was ashamed of my Saviour, but it seemed such a cross to confess him, even before a child, and then I knew I did not let his love shine out in my life as I should.

I looked back over my life and thought of the many times I had longed for a word of help and encouragement from some fellow-pilgrim, and the hunger of my heart had not been satisfied. I thought of the many who had talked to me of this and that and the other, and the few who had even spoken to me of that all-important theme—my soul's salvation. I have often longed for sympathy and help in my Christian life from those from whom I had a right to expect it, but in vain. And the cry goes forth to-day from a heart that has needed help. "Oh! why do not Christians speak freely one to another?" not only in church and prayer-meeting but daily, hourly in the kitchen and in the drawing-room. Why do not we, who are all journeying toward the same city, compare notes by the way, and refresh ourselves and others with words of praise and thanksgiving, lending a hand to a weaker brother and catching the out-stretched hand of a stronger one? And oh! why are there not more outstretched hands? more lips that are daily witnesses for Christ? Why don't the redeemed of the Lord say so?

The opportunities of life are fast passing by. May you, and I, more earnestly endeavor to improve them. Not only tell poor starving hearts of the fulness of Christ's love, but help and cheer those already started on the way, those who walk side by side with us yearning for our sympathy. Let us resolve to withhold it no longer. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another" (Malachi iii. 10).
Rrra.

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