

# Messenger and Visitor.

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Remember! the "Messenger and Visitor" for \$1.50 a year to all new subscribers who pay within thirty days of the time of subscribing; and to all old subscribers from January, 1886, who pay within thirty days of the time their subscription expires.

—CARRIAGES.—Will our ministers and others who are kindly attempting to enlarge the circulation of the Messenger and Visitor send in their lists of new subscribers for next year, by Jan. 1st, so that we may know how many papers to publish. If all they propose to do is not done by the beginning of the year, will they please send an estimate of the number of subscribers they will probably secure.

—NOTICE.—We propose to print the date to which each subscriber has paid for the Messenger and Visitor upon a label with the address, early in the new year. Will those who send us in their subscriptions enclose a sending receipt, in the meantime?

—THE PROBLEMS forced upon the attention of the people of the United States by the growth and religious condition of the great cities, led to the call for an Inter-Denominational Convention at Cincinnati. From the circular accompanying this call, we take the following:

In 1880, there was in the United States one million of the population in Boston, one to 1,600; in New York, one to 2,468; in St. Louis, one to 2,800. That is, the city, where the forces of evil are massed, is from one-third to one-fifth as well supplied with churches as the nation at large. Our church accommodations in the city are growing more inadequate every year. It is a matter of most serious concern that our cities are growing much more rapidly than the whole population. From 1790 to 1880 the latter increased twofold; the population of the former eight-fold. Our urban population in 1880 was 22.5 per cent. of the whole. The time is coming when the city will control the country.

—AN EXPERIENCED Free Baptist preacher who is a good observer writes us: "After carefully studying the field, and the cause of its declension, of F. B. churches in Northern Ohio and elsewhere, I am firmly of the opinion that a failure to instruct our people has been the prime cause. Our extreme liberality has led us to be too conciliatory toward error and unscriptural teaching. When the fathers of our denomination preached and defended the truth and exposed error, they strengthened and multiplied. As their sons relaxed and declined the favor of the people, our declension came."—Morning Star.

Yes, those who have truth on their side need no other power than the truth itself for God is pledged to ensure its triumph. If our denomination begin to take pride in its liberality rather than its loyalty to what God has enjoined, we may expect to repeat the history of our Free Will Baptist brethren in the United States. It is a matter which should lead to serious enquiry among those whether open communion has not been the chief expression of this extreme liberality which has been so disastrous.

—In an article on the Lord's Supper, the Free Baptist will say that the disciples who were with Jesus when he instituted his Supper were representatives of the coming church; that they stood for the church of the future as a whole, and not any ecclesiastical part of the body. The communion is a grand union ordinance for all believers, irrespective of those differences of opinion which make the "denominations." As their sons related and state of the church, when denominations shall cease to exist.—Morning Star.

Whether communion is a grand union ordinance, irrespective of those differences which make denominations, is just the question at issue, and the affirmative should not be assumed. Granted that it prefigures the ultimate state of the church when denominations shall cease to exist. That is a state when error has ceased to reign, and when it will raise no barriers to the enjoyment of all good privileges. Let this state of things prevail on earth, and there could be no doubt of the qualification of all believers for the Lord's Supper. Until the type is a little nearer the antitype, there is room for the gravest doubt.

—THE BENEVOLENCE of New York, have been holding what they term "missions." These are what other denominations would call evangelistic services. The evangelists, called "missionaries," go from church to church, speaking day after day. The object is, in a word, they desire to reach both rich and poor. The chief interest attaches to the services in Old Trinity, where Rev. W. H. Aikin, preaches every day, twice a week, from 11 to 12 o'clock. This is a most interesting and successful mission. Aikin is a most able and successful preacher, and seems to have carried with him into the Episcopal church, all the best and most logical beliefs. The fact that converts of the

class that frequent this church, hang on his lips, shows that the plain truth of the gospel has lost none of its attractive power. Probably few of his wealthy hearers before have heard such faithful words as the following:

"Do you never think you've got to die, you rich men? It's a healthy occupation to think of it. Do you ever think of the tiny line among the death notices about you? Think of yourself in that hour when you are sinking, sinking, sinking—good God! where?"

"O, poor rich man! blow like a leaf into the darkening void. Sinking into ghastly depths with the cry of terrible agony on thy lips—lost! lost! lost! The jaws of death gape to swallow you. And yet your soul might have been satisfied if you had wished."

"What are you worth? That's the question you hear and you ask everywhere. It is not what your banker has. You only seem to possess what you own; for you are worth only what you are, and there is a bankruptcy court on the other side of the dark valley."

—A CORRESPONDENT of the Richmond Herald states that extensive revivals are in progress in Kentucky. He believes that 15,000 will be added to the churches this year. Very many Disciples are uniting with Baptist churches. The old idea of the necessity of baptism for salvation is dying out among them. This is really the chief difference between Disciples and Baptists. If they come over to our ground on the doctrine of baptism, there is no reason why the two bodies should not become one.

—THE LUTHERAN CHURCH of the United States is pretty well divided, as the following from their Year Book will show:—

In regard to confession the Lutherans of the land are divided into four sections—viz., the Independent Synods, fourteen in number, and embracing 11,130 pastors, and 244,847 communicants, over against 1,124 pastors, and 261,724 communicants in 1884, the decrease in membership being, however, only seeming; secondly, the Synodical Conference, the most conservative doctrinally, embracing 107,000 pastors, and 270,801 communicants, over against 934 pastors, and 265,202 communicants in 1884; thirdly, the General Council, occupying a moderate conservative position, and embracing 107,000 pastors, 222,259 communicants, over against 721 pastors, and 265,806 communicants in 1884; fourthly, the General Synod Work, doctrinally the most liberal in the whole church, embracing twenty-three mostly small synods, with 124 pastors, and 132,332 communicants, over against 849 pastors, 126,164 communicants, in 1884; fifthly, the general Synod South, doctrinally probably nearest to the General Synod North, embracing 124 pastors, 124,000 communicants, over against 108 pastors, and 14,336 communicants in 1884. The grand total for the whole country is now 38 synods, 4,018 pastors, 1,232,000 teachers, 6,303 congregations, and 889,727 communicants, over against 56 synods, 3,736 pastors, 777 teachers, 6,302 congregations, and 873,232 communicants in 1884, or an increase of two synods, 282 pastors, 455 teachers, 562 congregations, and 18,495 communicants; the actual increase, however, being between thirty-five and forty thousand, as a number of independent synods last year had sent us no account, and were estimated much too high.

The large influx of German immigration is the great source of numerical increase to this body. Their discipline also allows about all to be communicants who wish.

—WE HAVE aimed to give the Messenger and Visitor of this week a Christmas flavor. There is no command to keep this day religiously; there is nothing more certain than that the day generally celebrated is not the anniversary of our Lord's birth; nevertheless it cannot be harmful; but helpful to have a day upon which we turn our thoughts to the great wonder of the incarnation.

—HOME MISSION REPORT. Let every one read the communication of the Secretary of our Home Mission Board this week. What reason we have for gratitude that over 300 precious souls have already been brought to the Saviour on our Home Mission fields since Convention time. The mission fields are also brightening on our Foreign Field, while Acadia College was never more prosperous than now. The only discouraging feature is the slowness with which money comes into our various funds. Let us give cheerfully and generously, when God is blessing so richly.

—THERE IS TOO MUCH TALK about the church and not enough about the individual, said a brother at the Baltimore ministers' meeting. Yes; we are too much inclined to deal in vague generalities. People do not like to be smitten by the Sword of the Spirit. We will shelter ourselves very comfortably behind general terms. We will admit that we are all great sinners, but it is not so easy to plead guilty to the specific charge. You are a great sinner. We may assent to this in a general way; but it would be very unpleasant to have any one speak of any particular sin or of our being sinners, and we might be disposed to make the loud speaker share in our discomfort. While there is greater need of this more direct preaching, because men seek to dodge the thrust of truth, it requires some moral nerve to preach in this way, and run the risks. We would, however, scarcely advise any to follow the example

of a southern Baptist minister of the olden time. He prepared a sermon at a time of scarcity for a wealthy cologne who was hoarding his grain to get fancy prices. He described the action of the old gentleman in a very plain way, and characterized it in no complimentary terms. During the time he was delivering it the cologne sat bolt upright in his pew and looked the preacher in the face without the tremor of an eyelid. Finally, getting out of all manner of patience, the minister roared out, "Col., why don't you put down your head? I mean you." While all unnecessary occasion for offense is to be guarded against, the true servant of God will follow Paul's example and "commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." This direct personal work, wherein the fear of God relieves from the fear of man, and makes bold and faithful, is the kind of work which tells.

—MR. E. W. SAWYER, B. A., (Acadia and Harvard) will be tutor in History next term in Acadia College.

## EXPLANATION.

A friend has called our attention to a remark in an editorial in the Telegraph, of Dec. 22nd, to the effect that the silence of the Messenger and Visitor respecting the recent appointment of Prof. Foster to the Portfolio of the Minister of Marine and Fisheries is "eloquent," suggesting the idea that this silence is due to disapproval of his course as a politician and a Baptist. We wish to explain that the Messenger and Visitor is not a political sheet, and never makes any notice of political appointments except as items of news. We shall not take it kindly, therefore, if any political significance is given to our silence, in any such case. Neither have we ever heard a hint to the effect that he was not re-elected to the presidency of the Union Baptist Education Society because of his course in politics. We do not believe in bringing politics into the business of a denominational society any more than into a denominational paper, and we are confident the members of the U. B. Society generally are of the same opinion. Let us warn all likewise that this explanation has no political significance.

## Christmas Oxygens.

Hundreds of quaint and poetic observations of Christmas may be found to reward the curious searcher in literature. Exceeding them all in simple beauty and nobility stands that first festival, kept by shepherds and sages under skies and among scenes which will always be held sacred, in remembrance of that time:—

Taking his way westward, the follower of ancient customs may be present in imagination at the bound fests with which kings and nobles counted the observance of the day.

The celebration of the Feast of Lights, as the Latin Church chose to designate its commemoration of the benefits brought by the "Light of the World," has always been accompanied with feasting, merry-making and joyous pomp. Why, then, should not we of the present century love to go back in spirit, and lay the Yule log, sing carols, and rejoice under holly and mistletoe, with our far away ancestors?

All their observances, however, end by suggesting one central fact: that the day is as universally beloved as the sunshine, and that, in spite of the pomp and majesty connected with its celebration, it is, and always has been, the property of the humblest. Like all the best things of life, it belongs to the beggar as well as the king. The beggar may not be able to make one gift from his poverty, and the only thing he receives may be a crust, to enable him to live until another day of hardship; and yet he may keep his heart warm by the glow of a Christmas spirit.

"Let's dance and sing and make good cheer, For Christmas comes but once a year," says the old carol.

Though we have no roof under which to make merry, though our songs at other times are complaints at fortune, on that one day let us give ourselves up to unstrained enjoyment of the good-will that should then flow like a river, refreshing all desolate homes.

"We never keep Christmas now," said a pair of sisters, who were alone in a house of sadness. "There is no one left to celebrate it with us."

"We are one great family in enjoyment of common blessings. Let the very breath of our lips rise as incense in praise of the goodness that has included us all in a great gift."

"Every one now is a king in conceit," declares an old Christmas song.

If his be true, let us treat one another at that time, at least, with a royal courtesy of spirit. It is the custom of the day to show our increased love for one another by an interchange of gifts, and since Christmas is the common blessing of all, every one should make his offering without feeling humiliation at the richer present beside which it may lie.

Does a poor woman spend her rare leisure in peering a handkerchief for a friend more fortunate than herself? Let her give it, without thought of its value, and let the receiver prize it according to the affection which accompanied it.

To do something for another! that is the true secret of noble living. We are not equal to it on most days in the year; we have a thousand thoughts of our own precious selves, to one of our neighbor. But so potent and penetrating is the Christmas atmosphere, that it revives our higher impulses. We long to draw nearer to others; we rejoice in our common brotherhood.

Let us yield to the power and charm of the day, and keep Christmas indeed!

## Bethlehem's Watchtower.

BY ARTHUR WESTWORTH LAYTON.

[There was an old stone watchtower, called Elder's Watchtower, on the plains of Bethlehem, near where the shepherds are supposed to have seen the angels on the night of Christ's birth.]

I love the soft in-coming tide,  
That breaks in showery of silver spray;  
I love the dews that open wide  
The flood-gates of the living day;  
I love the harvest field that speaks  
From each green blade of growing corn;  
I love the first beam that breaks  
Across the heart in sorrow's morn;  
But fainter than the silver tide,  
And brighter than the morning's flood,  
The light on Bethlehem's meadow wide,  
Where Elder's ancient watchtower stood.

O little town of Bethlehem,  
Where Christ, the perfect man, was born,  
Thy memories are dear to them  
Whose earth-ward feet are travel-worn;  
The angels' song thy shepherds heard?  
Is echoing along the years:  
Thou hast an ever-welcome word  
For human weal and human fears.

Oh, fairer than the silver tide,  
And brighter than the morning's flood,  
The light across thy meadow wide,  
Where Elder's ancient watchtower stood.  
The plains of life are cold and gray  
Like those beneath the Syrian star,  
Our lips are dumb when they would pray,  
Our hopes are all defaced with scars.

The promise of a perfect world  
So faintly gleams on distant hills,  
That faith from her strong tower is hurled,  
And wild despair her bosom fills;  
But thou, dear town of Bethlehem,  
Dost promise to our darkened race  
That heaven's greatest deed  
The forehead of mankind shall grace.

And we are glad this Christmas time  
That first upon thy starlit hills,  
Where Syrian pyramids climb  
And drink the freshness of the rills,  
There shone the sacred Christmas light,  
And echoed far the angels' song  
That rings forever through the night  
Of human misery and wrong.  
Oh, fairer than the silver tide,  
And brighter than the morning's flood,  
The light on Bethlehem's meadow wide,  
Where Elder's ancient watchtower stood.

—Truth's Companion.

## A Theist's Idea of God.

Without doubt the ablest of our evolutionists is John Fiske, and, as a thinker and writer, he takes his rank with the first of his school of thought in the old world. We have read his recent contributions to the Atlantic Monthly on "The Idea of God," and while far from agreeing with his theory of the divine being, involving his relations to man and the world, his recognition of the immediate connection of God with his works indicates a hopeful tendency of modern theistic thought toward essential harmony with the teachings of revelation. Here are his conclusions:

"It is no empty formula or metaphysical abstraction which we would seek to substitute for the living God." The infinite and eternal Power that is manifested in every pulsation of the universe is none other than the living God. We may exhaust the resources of metaphysics in debating how far his nature may fitly be expressed in terms applicable to the physical nature of things; such vain attempts will only serve to show how we are dealing with a theme that must ever transcend

our finite powers of conception. But some things we may feel sure. Humanity is not a mere local incident in an endless and aimless series of cosmical changes. The events of the universe are not the work of chance, neither are they the outcome of blind necessity. Practically there is a purpose in the world thereof it is our highest duty to learn the lesson, however well or ill we may fare in rendering a scientific account of it. When from the dawn of life we see all things working together toward the evolution of the highest spiritual attributes of man, we know, however the words may stumble in which we try to say it, that God is in the deepest sense a moral Being. The everlasting source of phenomena is none other than the infinite Power that makes for righteousness."

In exact agreement with this conclusion are the words of that eminent Christian Scientist, the late Joseph Henry, who, in one of his last letters, wrote:

"After all our speculations and attempts to grapple with the problem of the universe, the simplest conception which explains and connects the phenomena is that of the existence of one spiritual Being, infinite in wisdom, in power, and all divine perfections."

From this conclusion there is no escape, and the issue of all scientific thought on the subject will be found to be in this direction until, at last, reason and revelation will be seen to be in perfect agreement.—Baptist Weekly.

## Hold Fast.

Steadfastness is a prime virtue. "Be sure you are right, and then hold on though the heavens fall." "Prove all things, and adhere to the good," and surrender it only with life. "Hold fast" to your faith. It is the life of the devil that "it matters not what it is, but believe." As he believes, so he lives. Throw away or tangle with your faith in the inspiration and divine authority of the Scriptures, and you are sure to go astray and perish in your unbelief.

"Hold fast" to your integrity. To let go one particle of it—to compromise in the least with wrong—endangers your soul, and is sure to forfeit your peace of mind and your Christian standing and influence. "Hold fast" to your profession. Observe to the church which Christ purchased with his blood. Honor and magnify the mission. Sustain and advance its interests by all the means and influence which God has given you.

"Hold fast" to Christian effort in behalf of souls. "Be not weary in well-doing." Guard against an "evil heart of unbelief." Do not doubt the "promises," they are all "yes and amen in Christ Jesus." The night of fear and struggle and waiting may be long and dark, but the morning will come to gladden your heart, if, like Jacob, you hold on.

"Hold fast" to prayer. Be sure you get hold of the everlasting arm, and then let it go. Persevere in the face of a thousand obstacles. Let not God go till he bless. Be not denied. Turn rebuke and seeming denial into fresh praise, as did the Syro-Phœnician woman. The answer, the blessing is sure, when God gives the grace of perseverance.

"Hold fast" to heaven. Make it the pole-star of life. Never lose sight of it, not for an hour. Live daily as "seeing him who is invisible." Look straight on over death and the grave, and all the strife and interest of time up in heaven, and see the mansion and crown and harp awaiting you there. What is this world, what are the fleeting years, what are momentary sorrows and self-laments and labors, with heaven and Christ on his throne, and immortal life in immediate prospect?

"Wherefore, prove all things," hold fast that which is good.—The Rev. J. M. Sherwood in Homiletic Review.

## The Minimum Christian.

The minimum Christian! Who is he? He is the Christian who is trying to go to heaven at as cheap a rate as possible. He is the man who aims to have as little religion as he can without looking it altogether. He wants to get all the world he can, and yet escape the worldling's doom.

The minimum Christian goes to church in the morning, and in the evening also, unless it rains, or is too warm, or too cold, or he is sleepy, or has the headache from eating too much dinner. He listens most respectfully to the preacher, and joins in prayer and praise. He applies the truth very sensibly—to his neighbors. He goes rarely to the prayer-meeting, as it is very rarely to be uninteresting. He is always, however, at the communion and is frequently quite regular in his family prayers for a week or two after.

The minimum Christian is very friendly to a good work. He wishes them well, but it is not in his power to do much for them. The Sunday-school he looks upon as an admirable institution, especially for the neglected and ignorant. It is not con-

venient, however, for him to take a class. His business engagements are so pressing during the week that he needs Sunday as a day of rest—nor does he think himself qualified to act as a teacher. He is in favor of tract distribution, and of visiting the poor; but he has no time to take part in these labors of love. He thinks it is a good thing for laymen to assist in prayer-meetings, and in social religious circles; but he has no gift for public prayer, or for making addresses, and he must leave it to others. He is very friendly to home and foreign missions, and gives his "mite." He thinks there are "too many appeals," but he gives, if not more than to save his reputation, pretty near it—at all events he aims at it.

The minimum Christian is not clear on a number of points. The opera and dancing, perhaps the theatre and card-playing, and large fashionable parties, give him much trouble. He can't see the harm in this, or that, or the other popular amusement. There is nothing in the Bible against it. He does not see but that a man may be a Christian, and dance, or go to the opera. He knows several excellent people who do. Why should not he?

The minimum Christian does not believe much in sudden conversions, nor in zealous aggressive efforts; he has no fancy for revivals; his greatest concern is a dignified propriety and a faultless decorum, and that all things "should be done decently and in order," whether souls are saved or no. He has a fondness for the aesthetic, and prides himself on a refined literary taste, and he has no patience with the pastor's rousing appeals to faith and repentance. They are not elegant. The cause may be hurt thereby; and Mr. Dives may give up his pew. These are the "that hinder the gospel." The church of God is not in half as much danger today from exemption as she is from her minimum Christians. Be one thing or the other. Be hot or cold. Be a Christian of a worldling. But be no longer a tepid, vapid, indifferent, minimum Christian.—Pulpit Treasury.

## Sabbath in Germany.

(1) "In view of the fact that 624 per cent. of the population of any country on an average are able to attend church, New York is bad enough with only 25 per cent. of the people church-going; but in Berlin, Hamburg, and Bremen they are only 2 per cent."

(2) "In 1884, according to Dr. Stocker's statement in the German Parliament, 'the large towns of Germany have a smaller number of churches per proportion to the population than those of any country in Christendom.'"

(3) The following is given as an extract from the Kreuz Zeitung of Berlin:—"If we look at the moral condition of our country, must we not be horrified in our inmost soul? What frightful barbarism! What an increase of coarseness and bestiality! Truly, yet a few are taking their places at the head of their brothers the animals. Every newspaper tells us of murder, of suicide, of terrible derangement in homes and families, of unheard of atrocities, of a moral degeneracy that must fill us with horror. And, turning to our social state, we see ourselves going downward on the path of destruction."—Craft's Sabbath.

## This, That, and The Other.

—REV. O. P. Gifford was one of the speakers, Monday evening, before the Methodist Social Union. He told the story of a colored brother, from Richmond, who called upon him one day in Boston and said to him, "The difference between us in Richmond and you here in Boston is, with us the Bible is the end of argument, with you it is the beginning."

—There are 234,000 Indians in the United States, including 30,000 in Alaska, nearly all west of the Mississippi, living on poor lands. Of these, 140,000 wear citizens' dress and 70,000 speak English.

—Spurgeon, in a late speech, urged that every Baptist church establish a Lay Preachers' Association, and that all members be able to preach be encouraged to do so.

—A man in England lent an estate, the income of which was to buy fagots for burning heretics.

—When home is ruled according to God's word, angels might be asked to stay at night with us, and they would not find themselves out of their sphere.—Spurgeon.

—The work of evangelization in China presents encouraging, if not satisfactory indications. The Protestant Missions reported 13,156 members to the Shanghai Conference eight years ago. There are now 25,488, a gain of a little over one hundred per cent. Could we make a like gain in this country, we should be quite well satisfied with the results of our labor. Last year there were 47,000 in China 432 British Protestant missionaries, 368 American, 61 German, making a total of 501. But what are these among a population of 350,000,000?