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THE

WITNESS OF TRUTH.

Vol. IV. OSHAWA, DECEMBER, 1849. No. 12.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AS CONSTITUTED BY CHRIST AND THE APOSTLES.

It is well known, that there are different views held in respect to the formation and design of Christian Churches by those professing to be the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. On this very important subject, the New Testament must be the guide of every Christian.—There is no need of wading through ecclesiastical history, in order to obtain a correct view of a scriptural church. Neither is it necessary to unite judaism with the gospel to constitute the Christian system. In the formation of Christian churches, at the present day, if the New Testament were taken as the guide, instead of creeds, confessions, and articles, of faith, there would not be found such corrupted societies as we now see professing to be Christian churches.

By the light of God's word let us examine what is a Christian church. The Greek word, translated "church," simply means an "assembly;" this is the meaning of it in the following passages of the scripture, Acts xix. 32, 39, 41.

After the Saviour of mankind rose from the tomb, he remained forty days with his apostles, "speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." Before he ascended to heaven he delivered fully to these his commission, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," Matt. xxviii 19, 20.

The proceedings of the inspired servants of Christ provide the clearest explanation of the commission, which can be furnished.

The apostles traveled every where preaching "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." This was the first subject of their preaching, commanding every person to repent, that is

to forsake evil habits, to love God, and to believe in Jesus as the Saviour.

Those who believed the apostles' testimony, were immersed into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This was the universal practice in the first age of christianity.

Then, they were formed into Christian societies. Each society, or church, met every Lord's day to worship God,—to call to memory the resurrection of the Redeemer,—to commemorate the sufferings and the death of Christ, by attending to the Lord's supper,—and to help one another on their way to heaven. Such were the "churches" of which we read in the New Testament, at Jerusalem, Rome, Antioch, Corinth, and many other places. There were neither councils at the formation of these churches, nor when their bishops were chosen. The New Testament knows nothing of councils; and teaches, that every scriptural church chooses its own officers, both bishops, and deacons.

The word of God clearly teaches that a Christian church, is a society of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ,—a congregation of godly men and women, who are united for the advancement of truth and holiness in themselves, and throughout the world. This cannot be denied, for it is evident from the nature of the exhortations contained in the epistles, which were written to the first churches. Those who composed the Christian church at Corinth, were addressed as "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints." Likewise the members of the churches at Ephesus, Philippi, and Colosse, were "saints and faithful in Christ Jesus"—"Saints in Christ Jesus"—"Saints and faithful brethren in Christ." The persons who composed the church at Thessalonica, were manifested to all around them, by their "works of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope." The individuals composing these and other churches to which the ambassadors of Jesus wrote, are uniformly addressed as brethren in Christ, joint partakers of grace, and fellow heirs of glory.

They are continually exhorted to perform spiritual acts, and to discharge their spiritual duties, by taking a part of the public worship in their assemblies. None except the godly in Christ Jesus can appreciate the motives by which these exhortations are enforced. It is a glorious truth that "the Lord added to the church daily the saved." A Christian or a believer in the Saviour in the days of the apostles, was understood to be a spiritual person, who had passed from death unto life. Such was his profession: his faith, led to this blessed result, for it "works by love and purifies the heart." That there were hypo-

crites, in the first churches, who deceived for a while even the apostles, and that "ungodly men" sometimes crept in unawares, cannot be denied. Granting this, does not in the least contradict the statements which have been made. When any such characters were detected, they were expelled from the Christian societies of which they were really unfit members. Such individuals would not be permitted to remain in fellowship with primitive churches. Sometimes they withdrew on their own accord, being wearied with engagements which were uncongenial to their carnal minds. Exceptions strengthen the general rule. A scriptural church is a godly association; its objects are altogether spiritual. None except those who have repented of their sins, believe in the Saviour, and make a public profession of Christ in baptism, can be admitted as members of a christian church: Or in other words, none but the new born can scripturally obtain membership in a Christian church.

It is evident that the first Christians endeavored to keep the churches pure from unholy mixtures; and that they acted in harmony with the spirit and design of the gospel.

They rendered due obedience to the commands of the Saviour. The Lord Jesus is the "head of the church." Practical godliness consists in doing the will of Jesus. The members of every Christian church are his servants, and they ought to obey him in all things. Christian churches were formed with a view to advance personal piety. The full completeness of Christian character must be in Christian union. The manifestation of the spirit is given to every man to profit withal, 1 Cor. xii. 7.

There should be free communication of thought. The interchange of friendly advice, and the stimulating influence of holy example, will prove eminently conducive to personal godliness. "As we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification."

The ordinances of the gospel are appointed for the very same purpose. They are not merely intended as acts of obedience to the Divine Head of the church, but sources of benefit to Christians. The Lord Jesus manifests himself to his disciples, when associated for those pure Christian purposes, "as he does not unto the world." Fellowship with the saints is very closely connected with real fellowship with God.

Christian churches were formed for the real purpose of spreading christianity in the world. The disciples of the Lord Jesus, were the "salt of the earth," and the "light of the world." Their own happiness is not the only object of their conversion, but that they may be the instruments of converting others; that the high purpose of the Almighty may be accomplished by letting the nations of the earth hear the blessed gospel. There is no limitation to the commission; "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," and it is binding upon the followers of Christ to make known the message of divine mercy. Every believer is bound to be a witness for the Lord; the gifts which the Saviour bestows on his servants are not merely for show, but for special use. All who understand christianity, are commanded to teach it. This obligation must be peculiarly felt by the churches of the Lord Jesus, since they consist of individuals, whose duty and privilege it is, as individuals, to propagate the truth. The idea is clearly taught throughout the epistles. The disciples of Christ being united in their Christian efforts will exert a mighty influence upon the ungodly portion of mankind. In order that these things be accomplished, strict obedience must be given to the commands of Christ. The servants of the Saviour must meet together for public worship.—The religious services of the first Christians were few and simple.

They met on the first day of the week, that day on which the Lord rose from the dead; they prayed and sang praises to God; the scriptures were read; discourses were delivered suited to the occasion; and the Lord's supper was celebrated on the first day of the week by the primitive christians. It is plainly taught in the New Testament, that while the elders, or bishops, had the presiding, and were bound to feed the church of God, all who were qualified were expected to use their gifts for the edification of one another, and the conversion of souls. This is almost lost sight of at the present day. True fellowship must be attended to in Christian societies. "Love to all the saints" is the constant manifestation of faith in the Saviour. The divine grace which unites the soul to God, unites believers together; and carries them to act harmoniously in the spread of divine truth. Sympathy, and forbearance are strictly enjoined in the word of God, Rom. xii. 15; xiv. 1—4, 5, 12, 13; xvi. A uniformity of opinion cannot be expected in this imperfect state of things. Even in the days of the apostles differences existed. If those differences did not infringe the great truths of the gospel, mutual allowance was always enjoined. Christianity clearly displays the forbearing spirit of its author. The Lord enjoins strict-

ly on his followers the spirit of forgiveness. The golden rule of the Saviour is well adapted to check the fury of the soul and restore friendship. Matt. xviii. 15—17. If this were attended to Christians would have no need to be ashamed of their conduct.

In order that the purposes be fulfilled for which Christian churches were formed, government must be observed.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the sole and supreme Head of the Christian church. The "government is on his shoulder."

He "holdeth the stars in his right hand, and walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks." When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended, first into the lowest parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens that he might fill all things) And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The first agents of the Lord were the apostles. Other special coadjutors were appointed as the state of the churches required.

Such were Timothy, and Titus, who were evidently intrusted with a great amount of delegated authority, for temporary purposes. Neither these, nor the apostles, had any successors. When the first churches were put in order, they were committed to the care of elders or bishops on whom devolved the direction of their affairs. They are the spiritual rulers of scriptural churches, according to the well known laws of Christ, which it is their duty to see put in force, and the duty of the churches to obey. The proper qualifications of bishops are clearly set forth in 1 Tim. iii. : 1—7; and Titus 1. 6—9: and the qualifications of deacons are to be found in 1 Tim. iii. 8—18. Neither bishops nor deacons acted in opposition to the church, or were "lords over God's heritage." In the New Testament, full power is given to the churches (including their bishops, though not always mentioned,) to execute the laws of the Saviour, and maintain true fellowship. Bishops are to be respected for their work's sake 1 Thess. v, 12, 13; Heb. xiii. 17. If they stand in need of temporal support, we think it is taught in 1 Cor. ix. 7, 13, 14. There may be difference of opinion with respect to this passage.

In Christian churches strict attention should be paid to the enforcement of discipline. Whatever tends to destroy the harmony of Christian friendship, or dishonour the gospel of the blessed God, must be dealt with promptly.

Christian churches are holy societies; their union and purity should be sustained without compromise. The disciples are directed to "withdraw themselves from every brother that walketh disorderly," and to "mark them that cause divisions and offences" and avoid them." Even a private offence if persisted in exposes the guilty one to censure and also to the penalty of exclusion. In respect to the laws of Christ being put in force, all scriptural churches are independent of each other. The Christian church in Corinth had no power over the church at Ephesus. The apostles and especially the apostle Paul exercised a general superintendence over the churches, and issued prompt authoritative decisions while they lived. *It was perfectly right for the churches to appeal to them, as the ambassadors of Christ. But with regard to each other, the churches had equal rights. Those rights are still remaining, nor can they be surrendered or violated without committing great guilt. For the accomplishment of the purposes of discipline, the word of God is sufficient. It contains the statutes of the Lord Jesus, who is king in Zion. Men who are fond of improving divine truth have sought out many inventions, but the servant of God should take heed to the holy rule as laid down by the great law-giver.*

If the simple, spiritual service of the New Testament has been burdened by complex rituals and wearisome ceremonies; if in addition to the bishops and deacons, the only offices known in the times of the apostles, other names, titles, and offices have been introduced, forming a complete hierarchy of ungodly men, and ceremonies imposed,—let scriptural churches ask, "What is the chaff to the wheat?" Let all betake themselves "to the law and to the testimony." There is a great difference betwixt the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations. The New Testament is a book of truths and facts; not a book of ceremonies. Had Jesus thought the Mosaic ceremonies needful, he would have given directions accordingly; but there is abundant direction and provision in the New Testament for spiritual government. The disciples of Christ have First Principles. These are, the supremacy of Christ, the Spiritual nature of his kingdom, the Sufficiency of the divine scriptures, the Rights of conscience, the Independence of churches. There must nothing be done or permitted in Christian societies, in controvention of these great principles. And the disciples have Second Principles: All the exhortations of the Lord and his apostles, are for the protection of the churches against sin. Again, general rules. "Let all things be done decently and in order." 1 Cor. xiv. 40 "Let all things be done to edifying." (26,) "Let all your

things be done with charity." xvi. 14. "Do all to the glory of God." (x. 31.) These divine and simple rules are better than all the ecclesiastical canons put together. Special directions of the enforcement of Christ's rules, are clearly set forth in the following passages; Matt. xviii. 15—17; Luke xvii. 3, 4. Rom. xiv. 1—21; 1 Cor. v. 1—5; 2 Thess. xi. 10—12; 1 Tim. v. 3—16. The whole of the proceedings of Christian churches, can be brought within the range of holy writ.

It would be a great blessing to christians, if they would study their bibles more, and *listen less to priestcraft*.

Societies cannot be regarded as christian churches, in which these principles are denied, or cannot be wrought out. A national church is entirely inconsistent with the New Testament.

It is to be lamented that so many learned and amiable men give so little attention to the formation and design of the Christian church.

I remain,

Yours,

A TRAVELLER.

Toronto, 11th Nov., 1849.

OBEDIENCE—DEVOTION.

[From the Christian Baptist.]

THERE IS NO trait in the character of the Saviour more clearly marked, more forcibly exhibited in the memoirs of his life, than his unreserved devotion to the will of his Father and his God. How often do we hear him say, "I came not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me." "It is my meat and my drink to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work." The motto of his life was sung by David in these words: "To do thy will, O God, I delight." An unfeigned and unreserved submission to, a perfect acquiescence in, and a fixed unalterable determination to do, the will of the Most High, is the standard of devotion, and the rule and measure of true happiness. Whence, let me ask, arose this devotion to the will of the Father in our Lord and Saviour? We answer, Because he knew the Father. He knew that God is, and was, and ever shall be love, and he received every expression of his will, whether pleasing or displeasing to flesh and blood, as an exhibition of God's love. He knew too, that there was no love like the love of God, either in nature or degree. The love of God is a love emanating from, incorporated with, and measured by, an infinite wisdom, and omniscience. Human affection is often misplaced and misdirected, because of human ignorance and human weakness. The love of some men is much greater than that of others, because of the strength of their natural endowments. But as the wisdom and knowledge of God are unsearchable, so his love never can be misplaced, misdirected, never can be measured, nor circumscribed. It is

perfect in nature, and in nature it is wisdom, power, and goodness combined. In degree, it cannot be conceived of by a finite mind, nor expressed in our imperfect vehicles of thought. It passes all created understanding. It has a height without top, and a depth without bottom. Every oracle of God, is a manifestation of it. As the electric fluid pervades the earth and all bodies upon it, but is invisible to the eye and imperceptible to the touch; but when drawn to a focus in a cloud by its law of attraction, and when it is discharged to another body which requires more of it than the point from which it emanated, it assumes a new form, and a new name, and becomes visible to the eye, and its voice is heard. Every expression of the will of God, every commandment of God, is only drawing to a certain point, and giving form and efficacy to his love. It then becomes visible—it is then audible—We see it—we hear it—we feel it.

The very term *devotion* has respect to the will of another. A devoted or devout man is a man who has respect to the will of God. When a person is given up to the will of any person, or to his own will, he is devoted to that person or to himself. But as the term devout is used in religion, we may say that every man is more or less devout, according to his regard to the will of God expressed in his holy oracles. The Saviour was perfectly so, and he is and ever shall be, the standard of perfect devotion. Not an item of the will of God found in the volume of the old book written concerning him, that he did not do, or submit to; not a single commandment did he receive in person from his Father which he did not perfectly acquiesce in, and obey. He was then perfectly devout.

Now, in proportion as men are regenerated, they are like him.—Faith always purifies the heart. A pure, is an unmingled heart, that is, a heart singly fixed upon the will of God. The regenerated are therefore devout, or devoted to the will of God, and the unregenerate care nothing about it. Now every one that is devout, or devoted to the will of God, will continually be inquiring into the will of God. Hence his oracles will always be their meditation. Every regenerated man will therefore be devout, devoted to the revealed will of God, will seek to know, and understand, and practiced it; therefore every regenerated man will be a friend and advocate of the ancient order of things, in the church of the Living God, because that order was according to the will of God, and every departure from it is according to the will of man. There is not a proposition in Euclid susceptible of a clearer or fuller demonstration than this: Every regenerated man must be devoted to the ancient order of things in the church of God—Provided it be granted as a postulatam, that the ancient order of things was consonant to the will of the Most High. A mind not devoted to the whole will of God, revealed in the New Book, is unregenerate. He that does not obey God in every thing, obeys him in nothing. Harken to this similitude.—

A householder who had one son and many servants, was about to depart on a long journey to a distant country; he called his son into

his presence, and said to him, My son, I am about to be absent for a long time; you know I have a vineyard, and an olive-yard, and an orchard of various kinds of fruit. These I have cultivated with great care, and have kept my servants employed in fencing, and in cultivating each of them with equal labor and care. I now give them and my servants into your care and management until my return, and I now command you to have each of them fenced, and pruned, and cultivated as you have seen me do, and at my return I will reward you for your fidelity. He departed. His son calls all the servants together, and having a predilection to the grape above every other fruit, he assembles them all in the vineyard. He improves the fences, he erects his wine vat, and bestows great labor and attention on the pruning and cultivating the vines. They bring forth abundantly; but his attention and the labor of the servants is so much engrossed in the vineyard, that the oliveyard and orchard are forgotten and neglected. In process of time his father returns. He finds his vineyard well enclosed, highly cultivated, and richly laden with the choicest grapes. But on visiting his orchard and oliveyard, he finds the enclosures broken down, the trees undressed, and browsed upon by all the beasts of the field.—He calls his son. He hangs his head in his presence. His father asks, Why is it, my son, that my oliveyard and orchard are so neglected, and destroyed, while my vineyard flourishes, and is laden with fruit? Father, said he, I have always thought the grape was the most delicious of all fruit, the most salutary, as it cheered the heart of God and man, and therefore the most worthy of constant care and cultivation—I therefore bestowed all my attention upon it. His father rejoined, Unfaithful child, it was not my pleasure, my mind, nor my will, then which guided you; but your own inclination. Had you preferred any thing else to the vineyard, for the same reason that you neglected my orchard and my oliveyard, you would have neglected it. I thank you not for the cultivation of the vine, because, in doing this, you consulted not my pleasure, but your own. Undutiful son, depart from my presence—I will disinherit you, and give my possessions to a stranger.

So it is with every one who is zealous for keeping up one institution of the King of kings, while he is regardless of the others.

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE ?

THE BAPTISTS AND DISCIPLES—THE POSITION WE OCCUPY.

LETTER SIXTH.

ELDER DAVIDSON: DEAR SIR:—For the purpose of paying all due respect to what is called a "Regular Baptist Association," I will, before submitting a single comment, quote a few items from the published account of the Haldimand Association, held at Pickering, June 1849. The following are the first four articles in the constitution of the said organization:—

ARTICLE 1.—This Association shall be called the "HALDIMAND REGULAR BAPTIST ASSOCIATION."

ART. 2.—This Association shall be composed of such Churches only as embrace in substance the following doctrines:—

The being and unity of God—the existence of three equal persons in the Godhead—Divine inspiration of the Old and New Testaments, as the complete and infallible rule of faith and practice—the depravity and just condemnation of all mankind, by the fall of our first parents; Election by grace according to the foreknowledge of God—the proper Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ—the all-sufficiency of his atonement, through which believers are justified freely by grace—perseverance of the Saints—the immersion of believers in the name of the Trinity, the only Christian baptism—the Lord's Supper, a privilege of baptized believers regularly admitted into fellowship in our Churches—the resurrection of the body, and general judgment—the final happiness of the saints, and misery of the wicked, alike interminable—the obligation of every intelligent creature to love God supremely—to believe what God says, and to practice what God commands—and the religious observance of the first day of the week.

ART. 3.—The object of this Association shall be, to promote by correspondence and personal intercourse, unity of faith and practice, fellowship, cordiality of feeling, and union of effort, in promoting the interests of the Churches, and the furtherance of the cause of Christ throughout the world.

ART. 4.—This Association shall recognize the power and independence of the Churches; and in no case exercise any authority or jurisdiction over them. Nevertheless, it shall have a right to drop from its connection, any Church which, in the opinion of the Association, may have essentially departed from the faith, either in principle or practice.

A word, in passing, upon the name of this union of congregations, may be sufficiently edifying to merit notice. The term "Association," of itself, has indeed a very innocent meaning, and may be applied to any union or co-operation, political or religious, domestic or scientific; and hence it is wisely provided that the term, in your ranks, shall be accompanied with the two epithets, "Regular" and "Baptist." Simply to say Baptist Association, would not, it appears, be adequately specific; for there are some Associations, composed of Baptists, that, in the opinion or faith of your brethren, are not so "regular" as they should be. Hence you delight in the full title, Regular Baptist Association.

But what or who is a Baptist? You and I must give the same answer—a person who baptizes. We read of John, not *a* Baptist, but *the* Baptist,—the only Baptist among the thousands who were baptized. John was the only Baptist among them, because he alone performed the work of baptizing. Whether he was John the Regular Baptist is not specially affirmed. But taking the terms as they mean, your Association, if consonant or in accordance with its title, is a body of persons

who baptize, and who are baptizers of a regular order, in contrast with other baptizers who are not so regular. Am I doing you injustice?

The doctrinal portion of the constitution embraced in article second, I pass over. Although it gives no prominence to faith; says nothing about repentance; and affirms nothing definite concerning the Messiah being the groundwork and bulwark, the Alpha and the Omega, of the Christian superstructure, still it may be accepted as a neat, modest, convenient creed of the popular order.

But the fourth article is the most objectionable. From this we learn the ecclesiastical and clerical authority of the Association. While in one breath the Association denies all interference with the freedom and independence of any church, in the next breath it assumes "a right to drop from its connexion, any church which, in the opinion of the Association, may have essentially departed from the faith;" and of course the members of the Association claim the privilege, every time they meet, of constituting themselves competent judges of "the faith" which should be found in "any church." This is very prettily expressed—"a right to drop from its connexion;" but what is the nature of this right, and what are the consequences of its exercise? The Roman Council has "a right" to decree; a Presbyterian Synod has "a right" to expel; and a Baptist Association has "a right to drop from its connexion." Are they not all alike clerical in principle, although different in degree?

When the leading members of a church among your people learn a little more than their brethren, and urge the wholesome precepts and the better claims of the good Book, rather than adhere to usages which custom alone has sanctioned, they immediately stand "in danger of the council;" for when the time arrives for the Association to meet, the church of which these New Testament scholars form a part, is said to have "departed essentially from the faith," and is therefore dropped from the Baptist connexion, and, by this very act, so far as the Association has power, said church is placed before the community as a corrupt, heretical, and ungodly body. And as to the effect within the pale of the Baptist denomination, a papal decree is not more authoritative among good and true catholics than this Association dropping among the orthodox churches and members of the Baptist ranks.

I am not drawing a picture for the mere purpose of showing its defects. My object is rather to exhibit, agreeably to my original design, the contrast between the Baptists and Disciples, and the true ground upon which we stand as a religious people. Ecclesiastical

interference with churches, or clerical inquisitorship, whether in Canada or Italy, whether in Pickering or in Rome, we utterly disclaim: not because we have any personal prejudice against it, but because not in consonance with inspired eustom. I am slow to think there is a Baptist in Canada who would attempt to find a passage in the writings of the apostles, or glean an allusion from the example of the first churches, in favour of an instrument, organization, or body ecclesiastic designed and instituted to judge, suspend, expel, or "drop" whole congregations. Elder Davidson—there never was such a "body of divines" until created by earth-born wisdom and legislation. Let me say with emphasis, *the Disciples have no use for organizations, associations, or conventions exercising clerical authority, as the Twelve Apostles have left us all the legislation and ecclesiastical power we require.*

Now think not, my dear sir, that I am disposed to be invidious, or that I cherish a censorious spirit, should my pen touch with some sharpness upon the subject of Baptist conversions and revivals. Personally or denominationally I have nothing either to lose or to gain by the consideration of these questions, or any question connected with this correspondence. I have no interest in anything affirmed or denied other than an interest connected with truth. The elucidation of truth, by a fair comparison of what *now is* with what *was* when the apostles were the preachers, is, with me, of the essence of importance; and could I be assured from evidence that the Baptists stand first in scriptural intelligence and practice, I would lose no time in applying for admission into their fellowship.

Concerning the meaning, power, and nature of conversion as understood by disciples, I have already, in a former letter, been sufficiently explicit. By conversion, I have intimated, we mean a change of view, heart, condition, and the beginning of a new character,—which new-creating change is produced by the gospel of our Lord, its truths, precepts, promises, hopes, joys, honors, and rewards being apprehended and appreciated. Now the simple yet potent objection I have to conversions among the Baptists is summed up in a sentence: Baptist conversions are not unfrequently effected independently of the gospel. Understand me. I am persuaded that no Baptist contemplates or intends this result, but, in all candor, I am assured it often happens. Permit me to speak more particularly. When a candidate applies for admission into the Baptist Church, a special meeting is appointed for his examination, at which the minister and the candidate, besides some others, attend. The candidate is called upon to state his feelings and

desires, and particularly the circumstances of his past change, how, where, and when it took place. To the past he himself, in revealing his heart, refers. Now if he can speak of a particular time and place when and where he *felt* a special change, and *saw* a divine messenger, or a light from heaven, and *heard* unusual sounds, impossible for man to utter, he is regarded as having experienced religion, and the committee of examination report accordingly. He may not be acquainted with a single fact, precept, promise, or condition of the gospel. He may not even know what is the meaning of gospel. But he is received as a convert—he has seen a vision, or has had a dream, and therefore God must have converted him!

Or take another case. A candidate stands up in the examination room, and declares his anxiety to become a member of the church.—The ground-work of his solicitude is called for. He speaks. What does he say? He tells his spiritual judges that he went to hear Elder So-and-so, at such a place, at such a time, and from the hearing of that sermon he had good reason to date his conversion. And what did he hear? Probably the thunders of the law repeated: perhaps a description of the earth opening to swallow the Israelite rebels who stood up against Moses and Aaron: it may be he heard a discent upon the flames of the everlasting fire, or the awful horrors of the day of judgment.—Nothing concerning the gospel was heard, and hence nothing concerning it is spoken. But he is an acceptable convert, hopefully changed and worthy of reception, because the Spirit it is supposed has operated upon his heart! This, with me, passes for nothing else than making converts without the gospel of Christ.

Revival meetings exhibit in the greatest perfection the religious work of converting men without the Saviour or his gospel. The meek and lowly Jesus, or his inspired and unassuming apostles, could never appear in places so full of noisy tumult and belialism. The mob at Ephesus, which came together it knew not why, and in its confusion some shouting one thing and some another, would seem to be the best *New Testament model* for such rare specimens of praying, crying, groaning, shrieking, jerking, tumbling, and swooning as we find at revivals. But I forbear further commentary upon this chapter of spiritual oddities, for there is little that is wholesome in the review, either to you or me. All that I am intent on demonstrating, is, that the Baptists can and do make converts apart from and independently of the bible or the gospel. Still I admit it is with most of them an error of negligence rather than of wilfulness, as it arises from the pop-

ular and easy practice of following old customs instead of searching and scrutinizing the sure word. *No such revivals and no such conversions are recorded in the living oracles, and hence the disciples, like the members of the primitive church, can do better without than with them.* Please to note this as a marked difference between the Baptists and Disciples.

Friend Davidson—I am about closing my letter, and in all probability will not lift my pen to address you direct until your promised response is received. Allow me, before concluding, to say, first, that I have given you only a rapid sketch of things pertaining to the people calling themselves disciples, and that many statements and comments of a general character require explanation in detail, which, if called for, will be forthcoming; and, secondly, that if I have in the course of my remarks, and the plain-spoken reflections I have made, said anything calculated to give you personal offence, I am conscious of no such language and certainly of no such intention, as it has been my purpose from the beginning to stand at a noble distance from all personalities, and attend strictly to our respective views and usages. I will therefore bid you a benevolent adieu for the present, requesting, that, in fulfilling the agreement to review or reply to these letters, you will furnish letter No. 1. for the January number.

All of which is submitted by a devout lover of the truth of God.

Dec. 10th, 1849.

D. OLIPHANT.

DYSPEPSIA!

I have read in a periodical, which perhaps many of your readers do not see, essay No. 1. on "the nature, cause, and cure of spiritual dyspepsia." Believing that this disease is very prevalent at the present time in Canada as well as elsewhere, I could wish that the entire essays as they appear were transferred to the pages of the "*Witness*" But as this cannot well be done on account of the smallness of our paper, would it not be well to present to the brethren the author's leading views on this most interesting and important subject? If this disease can indeed be cured, the cure ought most certainly to be widely published. Justice could not of course be done to the author's style, and method of illustration, but if his main leading views were correctly stated, he would no doubt pardon one for presenting a skeleton when nothing more could be given. I shall give the author's own words, and if a wrong impression is likely to be made by the omission or mis-

placing of a sentence, it will be your duty to point out the mistake.
Nov. 1849. O.

There is not perhaps, within the entire range of moral or spiritual ailments, a disease, more difficult of accurate description or more intractable in its remediate management than that which forms the subject of our present inquiry—Spiritual dyspepsia—a most interesting disease to the spiritual physician, and one having the strongest claims upon his attention and sympathy.

But before considering this form of spiritual disease, it would perhaps, be well in the first place to inquire a little into that condition of the system constituting spiritual health.

Health whether spiritual or physical, may be defined to consist in that state of the living body in which the parts are sound, well organised and disposed, and in which they all perform freely their proper functions.

There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. The outward man is of the earth, earthy, and must subsist upon that which is earthy or material. For doing this it is furnished with an admirable machinery for the reception, digestion, and assimilation of material nature by which the health, vigor and comfort of the physical man is promoted and sustained. So it is with the mind, as the inner, or spiritual man. It too has its own peculiar nature—an aliment exactly adapted to its constitution; and faculties too of receiving, digesting, and assimilating whatever is spiritual like itself. Each has its own peculiar aliment, and its own peculiar powers of appropriating and assimilating it to itself; and thus each in perfect harmony with its own peculiar organization is fed and sustained.

Having now in a very general manner considered the condition of health, we shall in the next place consider some of the symptoms or manifestations of good health.

It is evident that the inner man must, in order to enjoy spiritual health, be fed and sustained in perfect harmony with its own peculiar organization. The communications of the Holy Spirit constitute his proper aliment. They are apprehended by faith. Thus received into his spiritual system, they are assimilated—they become spirit and life. But as the outer man must daily receive, digest, and assimilate a suitable portion of material nature so must also the inner man; in order to his growth, health, vigor and comfort, he must daily drink in the pure milk of the word, and feed upon it as the bread of life. So long as he partakes of this spiritual food with exquisite zest, he has the evidence

within himself that he enjoys health and vigor. But he has outward faculties as well as inward. By these he manifests to others that the character of the inner man is holy and spiritual. They are members of righteousness because the functions they perform accord with the feelings of the inner man. Hence their proper exercise always indicates the symptoms of sound spiritual health. The eye when sound never looks with concupiscence; the ear never listens to evil suggestions; nor does the tongue utter corrupt speech, but on the contrary that which is good for edifying. Nor will the hand or foot consent to become an instrument of evil, but contrawise, of blessing one's neighbor. In a word, his mind is not more desirous of devising what is good, than are his outward members active in executing it. His rule of action will never permit him to do evil that good may come. In his transactions with men, his yea is ever yea and his nay is always nay. The delightful law of kindness is ever seen and felt in his intercourse with men. He loves and seeks the society of those who bear the moral image of him whom he delights to serve, and to commune with them in his sanctuary is the joy and rejoicing of his heart.

Such are some of the prominent symptoms of spiritual health.

It is a remarkable fact that there is hardly any disease less understood than that which is so often presented to us and known under the vague denominations of Lukewarmness, Worldly conformity, and Spiritual apathy. In the first place then we shall endeavor to present a review of the symptoms of spiritual indigestion, and its more immediate consequences; in the second place consider some of the proximate and remote causes of this disease, the manner in which they excite it, and the changes which take place in its progress; in the last place, detail the plan of treatment which has appeared to us most successful.

So gradual and insidious is the approach of this disease as scarcely to be perceived by the patient himself. He may continue as formerly to partake daily of spiritual food but with a relish somewhat diminished. This symptom does not however continue long before there is also felt a slightly impaired appetite accompanied by a slight impairment of spiritual discernment. The occasion of the above symptoms would seem not unfrequently to depend on protracted abstinence from spiritual food. The outer senses have thus acquired strength from exercise, while the inward have become weakened from disuse. Hence the bread of life when received cannot be properly assimilated because due time for reflection, discrimination, and adaption of the word of life to the particular wants of the inner man.

Should these symptoms not be relieved, then we shall have those of a more aggravated character. To impaired appetite well succeed spiritual debility. In his works of faith and labors of love he sooner becomes weary. There is in his gait a languor indicating a great want of nourishment, and of tone and vigor. When he takes his seat at the table, he eats with little relish and less discrimination. He often selects a portion of meat much too strong for his weakened powers of digestion, the effect of which is not to nourish but to excite the head and produce delirium, in which the dyspeptic talks incoherently of election, reprobation, the final perseverance of the saints, and fancies himself rich, increased in goods, and to have need of nothing.

There is also at times a want of that harmonious, healthy action between the heart and the remorse organs. The eye sees with cupidity. The ear hears evil suggestions with little dislike. In like manner also with the tongue. Its perverted function will be seen in lightness of speech, jesting, boasting, words with double meanings, and these symptoms are remedials—exaggeration, prevarication, and confirmed falsification. So also with the hand and foot—the hand will offend and the foot trespass, and thus become the instruments of unrighteousness.

The above symptoms, indicating the condition of outward senses, constitute the second stage of spiritual dyspepsia. The third and last stage indicates the condition of the heart—the great fountain from which are the issues of life and death. Love, joy, and hope are amongst the symptoms that denote health. These depend upon the healthy condition of the heart. The heart again depends upon the head. Through the medium of this organ the heart is to receive the pure milk of the word, from which it is to be circulated as the great centre of life, health, and vigor. From the great importance of its functions, we see at once the propriety of the advice given by a distinguished spiritual physician: "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." The spiritual pathologist has always found it difficult to discriminate properly the symptoms that denote functional from those that indicate organic disease of this organ. This however they have always found, that where the heart was really diseased, the head was never sound and healthy. They always act and react upon each other.

A. W. C.

P. S.—The author of the above is a Physician, and a co-editor of the *M. Harbinger*.

SPECIAL CALL FOR A SPECIAL PURPOSE.

UNION CONVENTION PROPOSED.

Reflecting on the awful and wide spread condemnation on account of disobedience, and that associations and societies, of late years have been resorted to, in order to promote the cause of the gospel, I have been astonished, that as yet not one has been set on foot, to promote union among Disciples of Jesus, so as to be led by the scriptures, to be of one heart and mind. As to obedience "in all things" the Lord enjoined it upon his Apostles, and which the first churches observed as we have it set forth in the Acts and epistles. From these reflections, I have endeavoured to draw up as measures for the consideration of all disposed to render implicit obedience to Christ, which I herein set forth in connection with what is already stated; and in which I do not presume to say I may not have erred, in several points, but submitting entire to the examination of those and those only, who fear the Lord, and alone appeal to the word to correct every error; what I have set forth will in my estimation at least prove useful for a scriptural examination of the subject. For I distinctly declare, no opinion or declaration unless in the scriptures, ever shall, I trust in God, be admitted in reference to the subject, to which I shall render any countenance, but stand openly opposed to every and any line of action not in all things in accordance with the scriptures as sanctioned and practised by the Lord and his apostles, and the churches which were in Judea in Christ.

I therefore submit for consideration, that all desirous of rendering obedience to all that Christ and his apostles taught and practised, should take into consideration the promotion of oneness of mind, heart, and obedience as referred to, so that in acts of worship, conduct and bearing, all may walk by the same rule, that a public meeting should be held by such on the 1st of June 1850, at Buffalo, to carry it into operation. These ideas are put forth to call for the views and opinions of all disposed to be governed as the Lord directs,—all so disposed are requested to, send their views on before 1st June next to Oliver Rowson, Buffalo, N. Y. On examining such sentiments notice will be given as to suggestions made, so that all may come prepared to enter upon the great object. No money collections shall have any place in this measure, except individuals paying the postage of communications. It may be stated by some, "perfect obedience is not to be looked for" in the present day. With reverence be it stated, if not practicable, why enjoined by the blessed Saviour and the Apostles; holding obedience impracticable is replying against God and denouncing the requirements of the merciful gospel as deceitful and vain. Why should the Apostle hold forth, that Christ was become the author of salvation to all that obey *If* obedience was impossible? With humility be it stated, why should the Lord enjoin on his sheep, to hear his vows and follow him, if such is impracticable? Such objections do not belong to those who are pressing to perfection, following on to know the Lord—all such devices are from satan, the spirit from whom all disobedience proceed,

Eph. ii 2. The Church order, composed of men's wisdom, mixed up with the word, prevails, and no hope can be entertained of oneness of heart and mind. The Evangelical Alliance failed, as such was not contended for; the effort was commendable as far as it went, but full and implicit obedience, working by the same rule, was not contended for. To the Head of the Church, to the King in Zion, alone should we look for success. I conclude as Paul did to the church at Ephesus, "Peace be to the Brethren, and love with faith from God, the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with them who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

To all who fear God and whose hope for pardon, is in the work of Christ on the cross.

That Associations or Churches be formed through the earth to promote obedience to Christ and Love among Brethren in strict conformity to the example of the "Churches of God which in Judea were in Christ Jesus"—the proposed Meeting at Buffalo, on the 1st of June 1850, to come together with fasting and prayer to carry out the measure and guidance of the word and leading of the Holy spirit.

A copy of the forgoing will be forwarded to such Evangelical publications as advocate obedience; their taking notice of it will be regarded as countenancing search after truth, and their sending a copy of their work, with their observations, shall be duly recorded in the account of the proceedings in behalf of the measure in view.

J. BUCHANAN.

Falls of Niagara, 15th October.

The above is a noble as well as a notable object. No honest professor can reasonably fear to appear at such a convention. We trust that very many will make full proof of their honesty and love of truth by attending. If it be practicable, we shall be there; and before the time arrives we hope to have it in our power to announce the intention of a number of distinguished Christian gentlemen to be present. ED.

OUR EVANGELISTS' LABOURS.

The brotherhood of Western Canada will perceive by the following letter where brethren Kilgour and Anderson have been requested to commence and prosecute their labours:—

Oshawa, 24th Nov., 1849.

DEAR BRETHREN ANDERSON AND KILGOUR:—It is among my duties and pleasures again to address you. The brethren chosen to direct your labours as the Evangelists of the congregations, having met together at Pickering on the 18th of November, desire through me to point out to you the field they consider best for you to occupy, at least during the first few months from the beginning of your travels. You will understand, it is presumed, that the directions submitted, in all cases, are general and not special, leaving you to fill up the

details agreeably to the wisdom and discretion with which you are endowed. There are circumstances, conditions, occurrences, ordinary and extraordinary, which cannot, by any human foresight, be either ascertained or anticipated, and for which therefore no provision can be made, except to give liberty and discretionary authority to those who are actually engaged. You will, then, please regard yourselves as constituting, not a mechanical machine, to be moved and directed by another machine, but as "able ministers" "in the kingdom and patience of Christ," in whose skill, judgment, and discretion we all confide.

On taking leave of Eramosa, you will please proceed south and south-west to Waterloo and Rainham, with the intention, after making a visit to these two places, of visiting the churches in the Niagara District, and subsequently all the churches from Hamilton and Dundas to Picton. The object of this visit to the churches is two-fold. First, to give the brethren generally an opportunity of becoming personally acquainted with those whom they engage to sustain in heralding the news of the gospel; and in the second place, to enliven, interest, and excite the brethren everywhere to a higher point of religious warmth and exemplary fervor in all that pertains both to their own advancement in truth, holiness, and love, and their greater influence and missionary activity in the conversion of wandering strangers and their return to the gospel habitation. It is contemplated that you will remain two, three, or four days, more or less, with the brethren at each locality, in this your first tour; and in passing along, you will please make particular enquiry at every point you visit where brethren are located respecting the state of the public mind at a distance from the place where the brethren meet, and the chances of success in the event of holding meetings at certain places and points away from the direct influence of the church. With this information, obtained in passing from church to church throughout the province, you will, at the close of said visit, be able to direct your labours to the best possible advantage in localities where brethren in their church capacity are not in the habit of labouring.

As the churches of Erin and Esquesing know you personally, you may omit paying them a visit immediately, (unless you learn their unwillingness to accede to this arrangement,) promising to give them a religious call hereafter. In journeying from Berlin to Rainham, if you find it not too great a circuit, or not too far out of a direct course, it may be well to administer comfort to the little number of "little ones" in North East Hope. If, also, you could make it in your way to see how the brethren in Norwich progress, all the better. Upon visiting Rainham, you will not meet with a church; but a few brethren and friends there will assist you in the necessary preparations to hold meetings where some labour has already been bestowed, a few miles east of the village of Walpole.

Concerning a visit to St. Vincent and other places in the north-west, these regions, it is hoped, will not be neglected; but for the present, a visit to these parts may be laid over or postponed. By this postponement, more assistance probably can be rendered in future.

Before concluding, it is necessary to add, that while visiting and labouring with those churches which have not united with their sister churches in the divine work of making known the message of the gospel, you are requested to make an appeal to them according to the tenor of God's love, and truth, and grace, as may rouse them to a sense of duty though far gone in a death-sleep, reviving them into the activity of life though almost congealed in the icebergs of north-pole worldliness. Endeavour to fill their souls with the benevolence and philanthropic nobility of the gospel. Warn them of the perils and fatalities of attending to what they call their own business supremely, exclusively, and adoringly. Speak to them of heaven's disinterestedness toward a guilty world. Tell them that God, angels, and men—heaven, earth, and the grave—time, eternity, and universal space, in the majesty of its extent—call upon them to arouse from their deathly slumbers, and take part in the God-honoring work of redeeming sin-corrupted man.

Now may favour attend you. Keeping your Master in view, and enlisting all your energies of mind and strength, of soul and spirit, in the service of the King of kings and Lord of lords, may you be personally, socially, and religiously prospered.

By authority of the brethren.

Your brother in the work of the gospel,

D. OLIPHANT.

SPECIAL NEWS.

St. Vincent, Dec. 10th, 1849.

DEAR BROTHER OLIPHANT:—The November Number of the "*Witness*" has been received, and we are all rejoiced at the prospect of receiving a visit from the brethren who have been nominated by the delegates of the co-operation as Evangelists. Until now we have felt ourselves almost forgotten; but the expectation of receiving help encourages us, and we feel strengthened by it. Though the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, yet we feel our inability to use the armour of God as effectually as we could wish, in the pulling down of the strong holds of satan, and in removing the prejudices of the people. Our progress though slow is still onward. One more has been added to our number by immersion since you last heard from us. All that sectarian bigotry and ignorance can do and say, is resorted to, in order to prevent the people from hearing the truth as it is in Jesus.

Their slandering and evil speaking, we do not regard, as far as it respects ourselves personally; but it grieves us to see men and women going on in open rebellion to the requirements of the gospel, and false teachers crying peace, peace, when there is no peace. We are often asked by opposers, what do you believe? What are your principles? They are referred to the doctrine taught by the Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles for the articles of our belief and the principles we advocate. But the fact is they do not want to know what we believe;

they are afraid to come to the light of divine truth lest their unscriptural practices should be reprov'd. When will the time come when men professing to teach christianity—will cease to teach for doctrine the commandments and ordinances of men.

I fear that among those professing to know the better way, there are many who make but little progress in divine things. Many might be helpers in carrying forward the good work, if they would exercise the talent they possess; but there is too great a disposition generally to allow others to write for us—speak for us—and even to think for us—while if they would exercise the talent they possess, however small, editors would be assisted and encouraged, those who teach would be strengthened, the churches enjoy a state of health and prosperity, and we would hear of many more yielding obedience to the glorious gospel of the son of God.

I have the pleasure of forwarding to you a list of new subscribers for volume five of the *Witness of Truth*. I hope the *Witness* may ever prove consistent with its title, and that you may receive *tangible* proof of your labours being appreciated by the brethren.

Yours in the good hope,

D. L. Layton.

✍ We shall make a strong effort to see the brethren in St. Vincent during the winter, since it will be a considerable period before brethren Anderson and Kilgour can reach that vicinity.

D. O.

Wainfleet Nov. 20, 1849.

DEAR BROTHER OLIPHAN—It always affords me pleasure to announce progress of the good cause. Opposition to the gospel of Christ has run very high here this summer. It seems as if spirits from the internal regions have arisen to aid the furious efforts of the enemies of the cross. They first assailed by an attack upon the *doctrine* of this reformation; but the sword of the spirit soon taught them that it was sore work, to “kick against the goads.” There was brought to bear the artillery of misrepresentation, slander, and defamation in the very worst form, directed by Mormons and other perfidious enemies. To add to the gloomy scene, one or two members meditate a return to Egypt. But amid the battling elements we are happy to announce the confession of two persons who were recently baptized by brother Hendershot. They were induced to obey simply by reflection and reading the scriptures. To complete our joy two more who were formerly connected with the Baptist church in Rainham, made application for union, and were accordingly united with us on last Lord’s day. May heavenly peace and love attend all the dear children who “seek for glory, honor, and immortality.”

Have you declared like one of old “that we shall see your face no more?” If so, we have sorrow on this account.

Yours,

A. CLENDENAN.

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