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Pulpit Criticism:

WITH

ANSWERS TO OBJECTIONS TO THE BIBLE.

A WEEKLY SHEET.

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THE PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHURCH.

BERKELEY STREET.

Primitive Methodism too nearly resembles the Methodism of Wesley, to have accommodated itself to the high-flying members of society, to any great extent, but to judge from the circumstance of an anthem having been sung by three persons in Berkeley Street, of whom the organist himself was one, the disposition to be accommodating in such matters is not very remote. The service was conducted by the Reverend T. Sims, on the 27th ultimo, and in more respects than one was commendable, for no one would be likely to doubt the sincerity of conviction on the part of the minister; as little could any doubt that he was quite at his ease in the discharge of his onerous duties; if they were just, they could not fail to perceive that he has little enough, in a worldly sense, to attach him to his present course; it appears to the writer that nothing short of a high sense of duty towards God and man, could induce such an one to persevere in his career; but if, to quote the gentleman's own words, one is to "exercise one's

reason on what the Lord says"—a process which most persons are content to do by deputy—one is apt to arrive at conclusions widely apart from those of the reverend gentleman. He selected the sixth chapter of Matthew's gospel, as the portion to read, in the first place, and subsequently to dilate on. As the ministers are few who do not imbibe their views traditionally, it is not remarkable that this gentleman should have failed to apprehend that what the translators have been pleased to style "the sermon on the mount," is nothing less than a code of laws given by the Messiah to his disciples in his capacity as king, and those laws, in certain cases, in expressed contrast with the laws of Moses. They were given to the disciples moreover, as distinct from "Gentiles," see ch. vi. 32. Persons who maintain that the whole of this portion is applicable to believers of the present dispensation, will have so far to "exercise their reason on what the Lord says," as to reconcile the petition "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," with the

advanced teaching of an inspired apostle, "having forgiven you all trespasses," Col. ii. 13. "Scripture rightly interpreted does not contradict itself," said the preacher, and in so saying, gave expression to a truth which most persons will do well to ponder. One's charity ought certainly to be of the most elastic description, in order to assume that persons are in earnest, when they read, as if applying to each other, such words as "when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance," "thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head," etc. ; is anything more remote from the mind of the primitives and others, than fasting, whenever they may happen to "anoint their heads?" when ladies, on whose bonnets the stuffed remains of hapless humming-birds have taken up a temporary lodgement, serenely listen to "take no thought for your body, what ye shall put on," one is apt to wonder if it is a burlesque one is witnessing, or what it is. The reasoning of these latter arguments, which in principle apply to Christians, is entirely thwarted by the ludicrous rendering of the 27th verse—"which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature?" To add a foot and a half to a man's stature, would be a considerable result of "taking thought," but the Lord's argument is, that He who has bestowed the greater gift, will grant the lesser ; He who has bestowed life, will give the food and raiment needed to sustain and to protect it. He proceeds with an illustration of the futility of man's misplaced care, and says : "which of you by anxiety can prolong his life one span?" Even the revisers of the New Testament have corrected this, so that our "primitive" friend, who enlarged on the impossibility of a man adding a foot and a half to his stature, was like most of his ministerial brethren, caught knapping ; he however told us that the word "thought," in connection with "take no thought," had lost its meaning of anxiety since the days of King James, and illustrated the statement by reference to Lord Bacon, who records the

fact that Queen Catharine Parr and another "died of thought." The reverend gentleman necessarily deprecated "the members of his church being anxious as to what they should put on, as Peter and Paul, and every one else who has ever spoken in the name of God, have always done, and so far as one could judge from appearances, with as little effect as his predecessors ; it is well the time occupied by nominal Christians, in "taking thought" for their attire is not registered below, or we might read—"these frizzes occupied me an hour and three quarters to bring to perfection," "that feather prevented me paying my baker's bill," "those rings, which straight-laced apostles would have designated 'costly array,' didn't exceed the cost of three suits of clothes." When Oscar Wild announces that the cauliflower is his favorite flower, the ladies will doubtless "take (much) thought" on that important disclosure, and don the flower accordingly, for whether they frequent Primitive Methodist conventicles, or any other, they appear (to quote the minister's words) to be largely occupied with that which is "useless, injurious, heathenish, and sinful." Misquotations of scripture are among the commonest of literary curiosities, and our friend, the pastor, who cannot himself be accused, of being "slothful in business," when intending to quote the passage, "*not slothful*," etc., talked of being "diligent in business." He divided his address, which was restricted to vs. 25-34 of Matt. vi., the chapter read at the commencement of the service, into three sections—what the Lord prohibited—why he did so—and the practical consequences of the prohibition ; the persons assembled were assumed to be "sons of God" and Rebekah's misplaced anxiety, David's and Elijah's, were severally portrayed as warnings to them ; the minister dilated on the incompatibility of having the heart at the same filled with the love of God, and of the world ; in commenting on the exhortation to "consider the lilies," it was manifest that he had not

bestowed much time on their consideration, as he described them as "of but little use"; their medicinal properties would probably be the last idea to be "considered" in relation to them. "The Kingdom of God" (v. 33) which the disciples were exhorted to seek, was of course represented to be "spiritual," but as that is a subject on which the gentleman enlarged, to whom we listened in the evening, it is needless to comment on it, on the present occasion.

COOK'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
QUEEN STREET EAST.

The service at this church was conducted by the Revd. John Kirkpatrick, on the evening of the 27th ulto. The attention of the congregation was invited to the subject of Egypt, from the stern old paraphrase of the psalm, the metre of which necessitated "thou preparedst a room for the vine," etc., to the end of the service. The first portion of scripture read, extended from Ex. xii. 31-42. It was satisfactory to hear some attempt at exposition in the course of the reading, but one or two points were omitted in this first portion, which should not have been; the former of these was the incidental acknowledgement on the part of the Egyptian monarch of his inferiority to the leader of the monarch's enslaved people; this transpired in the request, (v. 32) "and bless me also;" "without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better," Heb. vii. 7. The second oversight was the more culpable, inasmuch as anyone who aspires to the work of the ministry ought to know that the foolish rendering of the thirty-fifth verse, "the children of Israel borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver," etc., is a subject of perpetual carping on the part of ignorant objectors to the Bible; "a workman who needeth not to be ashamed" should therefore anticipate such an objection by reading the word "borrowed" "asked" or "demanded," or otherwise

should explain that it ought to be so rendered. Mr. Kirkpatrick commented on the fact that the British troops are at the present time devastating the territory formerly allotted by Pharaoh to the children of Israel, and on the comparative insignificance of the number of the warriors of today. Among the statements which *might have been made* on the latter part of the portion read, is the fact that Josephus gives the period of the Israelites' sojourn in Egypt, both as two hundred and fifteen years, and as four hundred and thirty; the solution of the two statements being afforded by the Septuagint, and by the Samaritan Pentateuch, each of which insert the words "and in Canaan," after the word "Egypt," in the 40th verse. It was to have been expected that in reading Ex. xiv., a minister possessing the requisite amount of cultivated intelligence would not have passed the "hardening of Pharaoh's heart," (vs. 4, 8, 17), without informing us that the word "hardened" should rather be "strengthened," "encouraged." The indication that Moses had been supplicating (presumably) in silence, afforded by the enquiry on the part of the Almighty, "Wherefore criest thou to me? speak to the children of Israel that they go forward," etc., one might have supposed to be worthy of a passing notice; that the "angel of God who went before the camp of Israel, even the pillar of the cloud," etc., v. 19, was none other than the Messiah, is sufficiently manifest from Acts vii. 30-34, and Mal. iii. 1. The circumstance of this national triumph being celebrated in the Psalms (lxxxvii. 4, and lxxxix. 10), and in Is. li. 9, is itself a sufficient answer to those who endeavour to derogate from the miraculous character of the passage through the sea (v. 26). The retributive character of the destruction of the Egyptians, in relation to the monarch who had said (Ex. i. 22), "Every son who is born, ye shall cast into *the river*," is another of the many lessons deducible from the portion read on that occasion; that the whole transaction was moreover

a foreshadowing of what is yet future (Rev. xii. 6, 14), would not be likely to be dreamt of in the philosophy of the minister of Cook's. If we pass to the eightieth Psalm, from which the text of the sermon was taken, we find that what is termed "the spiritual application" thereof, is so egregiously spiritual, that we are not told that "the sea" of the eleventh verse is the Mediterranean, and "the river" the Euphrates, to which the kingdom extended in the days of Solomon, and to which it will again extend by and by. It is an invidious task to be obliged to comment adversely on a minister's prayers, but when such a gentleman has not learned that we have but one intercessor, and that the office of the Holy Spirit is (as it is expressed) to make intercession *within* us, and not *for* us, it becomes necessary to invite his attention to the fact; and although it is perfectly true that we are "creatures"—as is a cow—if believers in Christ, in his various relations, we are entitled and encouraged to approach our "Creator" in the spirit and in the attitude of children, and the Scripture itself puts the words in our mouths,—"*Abba*" (the child's cry) "*Father*," but the same Scripture does not (as was observed in relation to another minister of the Kirk) authorize us to ask the Almighty to "*wait on us*," but on the contrary, encourages us *to wait on Him*.

The Rev. Mr. Kirkpatrick has furnished us with so much matter for comment, apart from his harangue, which, from a Presbyterian point of view, is the grand performance, that it becomes necessary to postpone the notice of that production until the 9th inst.

"EXAMINE YOURSELVES."

No two words in our language more strikingly exemplify the untaught condition of our teachers than those above written. The Corinthians (2 Cor. xiii. 3) had been repudiating Paul's apostleship, and he answers them thus:—"since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, . . . examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith."

The passage represented above by asterisks is parenthetical, and should be marked accordingly; it would then be manifest that Paul's reply to the Corinthians had no connection with self-examination, but might be thus transposed:—"Ask yourselves through whose preaching you obtained your Christianity." Men prefer groping in their own darkness, (*examining themselves*), to "feeling after him who brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel."