

October 21st, 1882.

No. 41. 147

Pulpit Criticism.

THANKSGIVING SERVICE.

HOLY TRINITY SUNDAY SCHOOL.

This is a service which, for the past thirty years, has been held annually, in connexion with the harvest; "the altar," (as the communion table is styled at Holy Trinity) was slightly decorated; the most appropriate portion of the decoration of the table, consisted of a bunch of grapes, in conjunction with ears of corn, which occupied a conspicuous position above it; it may be presumed that most persons who are in any way interested in revelation, are aware that the "corns of wheat" symbolize the truth enunciated by the Lord, in John xii, 24, but they may not have observed that the career of the grain from the time it is garnered, has several parallels in the life of the Lord; the flail is the first instrument, to the action of which it is submitted,—Christ "gave his back to the smiters," Is 1, 6: the wheat is then *separated* from the chaff—one of the characteristics of the Redeemer was, that he was "*separate* from sinners," Heb. vii, 26; The wheat is crushed in the mill—The Messiah "was bruised for our iniquities," Is. liii, 5. Water, the symbol of the Holy Spirit, (Is. xlv, 3; Ez. xxxvi, 25, 27.) is mingled with the flour; Jesus was "full of the Holy Spirit," Luke iv, 1. The dough is placed in the oven—The Lord passed through such a *furnace* of affliction as man had never previously undergone. The loaf is the final

result of the processes above described, and of *that* the Apostle says, "For we being many are one loaf, one body; for we are all partakers of that one loaf," 1 Cor. x, 17. We have already adverted to the fundamental truth of Christianity, as symbolized by the ears of corn; it only remains therefore to add that in contrast with the slaughter of *animals* from year to year, which only foreshadowed the *death* of the true "Passover," the Lord, in instituting the festival of his supper, selected his symbols from the *vegetable kingdom*, and in the case of the "fruit of the vine" no less than in the ears of corn, we have the great truth of resurrection set forth, as well as that of death; resurrection with the additional thought of joy, for wine is said to "make glad the heart of man." But to return to the subject of the decorations at this festival; heaps of ripe fruits served as bases at the corners of the table, the communion rails were prettily adorned with blended flowers, fruit, and grain; sheaves of corn lay on either side the entrance-gate to the chancel; the finials of that part of the church were "dressed" with corn-ears and colored leaves, and crosses of the same were attached to the various cloths which form part of the furniture of that portion of the Church; the canopy of the adjoining font was also thickly studded

with flowers; this may be said to have been decorated with defective taste; the effect of the whole, however, was exceedingly pretty, and the circumstance of both fruit and flowers having been contributed by the children alone, and the ultimate destination of both being the hospital for sick children on Elizabeth street, enhanced considerably the interest of the festival. When however, our thoughts are directed to the instruction conveyed, in connexion with all this, it will be necessary to make considerable abatement in the terms of praise; ecclesiastical cripples, one might suppose to have come into the world with a crutch under each arm, so absolutely dependent are they on those supplications which they are wont to carry in their pockets; hence, whether they are called to visit the sick, or induced to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise, they advance on the crutches of their ritual to the altar of the Most High; every kind of anachronism and confusion is the inevitable result; the service in question furnished ample illustration of this fact; Ps. cxlviii was the "proper" psalm for the occasion; it is pre-eminently an Israelitish psalm, and awaits its fulfilment, according to a prediction in the body of it, (v. 13) when the name of Jehovah-Jesus alone shall be exalted. In order to apprehend this, it will be well to refer to Psalms viii, 1, and xxxiv, 3, to Is. xii, 4, and lii, 13: it will be necessary also for the writer to repeat (what has been stated in a previous paper) that the word "name" is a Jewish name for the Messiah, and that the word rendered "saints" (v. 14) is always applied to Jewish saints.

The fifth verse of this psalm, read in the light of Heb. i, 10, confirms the statement as to its Messianic application; the psalm is looped up at either end, in common with those other strings of pearls adjoining it, with "Hallelujahs," and they await their fulfilment, not at the harvest festivals of this sin-blighted dispensation, but when the "harvest of the earth" has ripened, (Rev. xiv, 15), and when men will have realized that "God hath highly exalted* him, and given him a name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of those in heaven, and of those in earth, and of those under the earth, and every tongue will have confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. ii, 9-11. Are they doing so now? Let the teachers of "Holy Trinity" enquire at Albert Hall, and they may hear sentiments of the following cast—"He who assumes the existence of a God, assumes too much."

* This word "exalted" will be found in the latter three of the passages cited from the Psalms and from the prophet Isaiah. The space at our disposal will admit of but a brief notice of the address to the children, which was delivered by the Rev. — Paterson. The rev. gentleman spoke from 1 John iii, 13, "My dear children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." The address was unfortunately too gushing to be true, and that in more respects than one; the poor children were plied with the delusion that they had been "baptised into Christ;" they were therefore the spiritual children of the clergyman of the parish; their parents were said to pray for them, etc., etc. The ecclesiastical tradition that the Apostle John, when old age had overtaken him, used to go about, leaning on a staff, and addressing all comers with, "Little children, love one another," was the best of several stories which served to make up the address: the distinct tendency of the service as a whole, was to induce a devout recognition of the Almighty's goodness and love in vouchsafing a bountiful harvest, and so far was unexceptionable.

THE DISCIPLES' MEETING,
CORNER OF JAMES AND LOUISA STS.

A family compact, in the name of religion, would appear to be the key to the situation, in this place; but when persons voluntarily stand aloof from the genteel shams around them, and sustain considerable pecuniary burdens, in so doing, they are at least entitled to the credit of sincerity in regard to their proceedings. It was somewhat amusing to hear the oracle of this assembly "improve the occasion" by lugging into his address, (which was supposed to relate to Rev. v.) a passage from the epistle to the Ephesians (ch. iii. 21), and that with the obvious intention of criticizing a critic who was present; the passage is "To him be glory in the church, &c." "The church" was, for the occasion, assumed to be a building, which, if the assumption be granted, the observations based on it might be dignified with the designation of an argument, as the critic was supposed to "forsake the assembling &c.;" it is remarkable that this latter passage was not employed for the purpose; had it been employed, one could but have replied that there is no rule without an exception, and each individual must exercise his judgment in the matter, under a sense of his responsibility. To comment on the service, however, we commenced by apostrophising the day on which we were assembled, and that in the form of a hymn; two other hymns were not only good, but so good that the truths they conveyed were contradicted by the petitions of those who offered prayer; in the hymns, the assembly gratefully recognized the fact that they occupied the position of accepted worshippers, but they who presented

supplication in the name of others *prayed for the pardon of sin*. They who have been in a position to compare the ecclesiastical systems wherein the ministry devolves on one man, with those, which, locust-like "have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands" (Pr. xxx. 27), will have concluded that neither of the systems affords a guarantee of any approach to an adequate acquaintance with scripture; in the several one-man systems, as they are termed, the usual style of teaching (if we may apply such a term to the average pulpit essay) is but an echo of the commentaries of the past century, and the ministrations of the locust-like assemblies, though in some respects superior to the others, are lacking in intelligence, cold, and sadly suggestive of lifelessness; exceptions there are in each case happily, where one or more individuals have studied, untrammelled by sectarianism more or less, and in such cases—and just in proportion as they are unshackled—will something like lucidity be obtained, and will shine forth. One is not disposed to blame a man because, in reading such a chapter as 2 Peter. 1, he reads it as he finds it in the authorized or even in the revised version, but it certainly is to be regretted that in these days of boasted culture, the simplicity of successive portions of such a chapter should, on the one hand be obscured, and on the other, that no one apparently should ever remove the obscurities; it fell to the lot of the writer, when commenting on a published sermon of the arch-deceiver, who has been imported to this city from Brooklyn, to call attention to two gross blunders which occur in the verse he selected as his text

for the first of a series of *selected sermons* (v. 19 of 2 Peter 1); the former of these related to the word "established," which should be substituted for "sure," and the latter to the pointing of the last line—"until the day star ("the bright and Morning star") arise"; it is worth while, when a man is aware of the desirability of so doing, to read part of the fifth verse as follows, and *that* for two reasons—"supply to your faith, courage, and to courage-knowledge"; the reason for the first alteration in the passage is that the apostle catches up the thread of the first thought, in the eleventh verse, when he says, "for so an entrance shall be *supplied* to you abundantly"; the reason for the second is, that "courage" to confess is the manifest need of all who have ever realized what it is to believe. "Ye shall never stumble." would be preferable to "fall," in the 10th verse, and "magnificence"—the magnificence of the future kingdom, which the three favored disciples were privileged to witness, Matt. xvii, 1-3—should be substituted for "majesty" in v. 16; the sense in which "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" is that it is not an explanation put forth on the authority of unaccredited individuals, see 1 Cor. ii. 13, and v. 21 of this chapter.

As it is the writer's practice to attach more importance to the portions of Scripture which are read in most of the churches, than he does to the other features of the service, he has only space to observe that the various acts of wor-

ship in this assembly, devolve on several of the members of the community; the church in James-st. has recently discovered (or may be supposed to have discovered) that its worship may be conducted more "decently" and in better order, by the intervention of "elders," hence that rush for the platform which once characterized it, has been abated, and an elder nominates the persons who shall conduct the several portions of the service; two or three consequently pray, one of them quite inaudibly to any one three yards away from him; another is supposed to be qualified to read, and others to address the assembly; that the several portions of the service are apt to require an interpreter, may be gathered from the subjoined lines from the first hymn which was sung on the 15th inst.:

"The first-fruits of a blessing prove
To all the sheaves behind"—
"This day I must to God appear," &c.

That the readers are not necessarily profoundly versed in Scripture, may also be gathered from the circumstance of one of them having announced that he was about to read *the first chapter* of Obadiah. The weekly "breaking of bread," and contributing, as the supposed result of "laying by them in store," 1 Cor. xvi. 2, is in one sense Scriptural, but we should like to see the celebration of the supper characterized by more reverence, the perpetual repetition of the words of institution omitted, and the self-complacent glorying in the rectitude of the proceedings likewise.

(To be continued in our next.)