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# Pulpit Criticism:

WITH

ANSWERS TO OBJECTIONS TO THE BIBLE.▷

A WEEKLY SHEET.

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## CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER.

BLOOR STREET.

The service at this church was conducted by the Reverend Septimus Jones, on the evening of the 24th ult. The structure of the Church is, in the writer's judgment, charming, and gives evidence of great pains having been taken to render it faultless; the taste and refinement which characterized the musical part of the service struck the writer as eminently exceptional, and one of the hymns (No. 521) was simply superb; he must, however, confess disappointment at hearing another exquisite hymn, "Son of my Soul," &c., sung to another tune than that which he had always regarded as inalienably associated with it, and *that tune*, as he thinks, vastly less suitable. There seems however, no reason why a critic should be supposed even by implication, to concur with the teaching of a public institution, which informs us that it will not "require of any man" the belief of what cannot be proved by Holy Scripture; we should therefore, at the outset

of its printed form of worship, observe that when the Apostle Paul was interrogated on a subject of the utmost moment to the enquirer (Acts xvi. 30) he did not say "when the wicked jailor turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive," but he enunciated on the contrary, an entirely opposite principle; the passage from Ezekiel no doubt commended itself as in harmony with the views which prevailed at the period of "His Majesty's happy Restoration,"\* and might afford some evanescent solace to "His Majesty," to Nel Gwyn, and the rest of \*the spotted "ladies" of "His Sacred Majesty's," Court, but that is no reason why we, in the nineteenth century, should avail ourselves of Nel's spectacles.

\* See preface to Prayer Book.

\* The "ladies" of the Court of Charles II. invented artificial blemishes in the form of small black patches, wherewith to hide imaginary pimples on their faces, necks, &c.

And if we overleap the intervening portions, and glance at the Psalm appointed for the day (Psalm cxix. 1-32) we can scarcely fail to perceive their unintelligibility, and their unsuitability for Christian worship; will pastor or people for instance inform us what meaning they attach to the seventh verse—"I will thank thee with an unfeigned heart, when I shall have learned the judgments of thy righteousness;" it may be well to inform them, in passing, that "judgments" should rather be "laws." Again, in regard to the next verse, (prayer-book version) what "ceremonies" do they contemplate "keeping," that they may not be "utterly forsaken." How many persons have a lie put in their mouth when ostensibly addressing the Almighty, they are taught to say, "with my whole heart have I sought thee," and "with my lips have I been telling of all the judgments of thy mouth"; How many of those whose "riches" have been obtained by the open violation of God's laws are taught to say, "I have had as great delight in the way of thy testimonies as in all manner of riches. Can any sane person suppose that when an average Episcopal congregation takes the concluding words of this section of the psalm on their lips, it is anything less than a solemn mockery on their part? The words are, "I will talk of thy commandments; and have respect to thy ways, my delight shall be in thy statutes, and I will not forget thy word." It is needless to continue the quotations, and it is also needless to express surprise at the increase of infidelity, in view of such and kindred performances, in the name of Christianity. It is time however to glance at other portions of Scripture which were read on this occasion, the eighth of Nehemiah being one of them. It is observable that the Scriptures themselves habitually appeal to the "understanding," hence we read that "Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both of men and women, and all who could hear with understand-

ing;" the corrupt Church, on the contrary, has always done its best to hoodwink all intelligence; it is sometimes accomplished by theatrical appeals to the senses through the medium of an imposing ritual, and not less frequently, by more subtle appeals through the agency of catch-penny compositions styled sermons, which either consist of stale platitudes, which any schoolboy could indite, or else they descend to religious jugglery, spiced with smut, and advertized with all the effrontery of "Jeremiah's visit to Ireland." To return to the Biblical narrative, it is interesting to observe that this revival of religious zeal took place *on the first day of the seventh month*, and we read again vs. 7 & 8, that "the Levites caused the people to understand the Law," and again, that "they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading." These Levites therefore, acted far more intelligently and faithfully both toward God and man than do they who aspire to occupy a position corresponding to that of the Levites in the present day; but there is one marked distinction between these two orders of men; the Levites themselves understood the Scriptures, whereas the would-be priests of the present day are, to a large extent, grievously ignorant of them. It may be well to observe that we learn that the Persian word "Tirshatha" (v. 9) means "austere," so that Nehemiah was possibly a rigid governor. The last of the four feasts of the seventh month, recorded in the concluding portion of the chapter, as kept by the Israelites on their return from Babylon, is of great interest to those who apprehend the relation of the seventh month to the seventh thousand years, and to such persons only. The reading of the appointed portion of the New Testament illustrated the contrast between the period when the Levites "gave the sense," and the present time, when the ostensible teachers for the most part, give *nonsense*.

The first chapter of Luke, from the 57th verse, was read on this occasion; it would have enhanced the interest of the portion, had we been informed that when "*they were calling the infant John, Zacharias*, after the name of his father;" the meaning of the name "Zacharias" is, "whom Jehovah remembers;" the proof of Jehovah "remembering" was afforded by Zacharias' mouth being opened immediately that he named the child "John," the equivalent of "Johanan," which means "Jehovah is merciful;" Zacharias had been one of the many who have prayed, (v. 13), and yet have not believed (v. 18), he had therefore to suffer until he did believe (v. 20), and when he had realized that the angel Gabriel's words "were fulfilled in their season," then he discovered the prophetic pregnancy of the name he bore; he learned that his Jehovah indeed *remembered*, and stereotyped his conviction, when "he asked for a writing-table, and wrote, saying, His name is John"—"Jehovah is merciful." The ministers of the Episcopal Church, even if they were competent to expound Scripture,—which for the most part, they are not, would, if they were to attempt it, be held accountable for the ecclesiastical misdemeanor styled "brawling;" the practical wisdom which seals their lips is however quite intelligible, for attempted exposition, might lead to reflection, and that might result in enquiry, and enquiry might prove highly inconvenient. Mr. Jones selected his text from Matt. viii, 34, "And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their "coasts"—neighbourhood. The sermon could not be said to teach anything save one gross blunder; the Lord was said to have "preached about the streets," whereas unfortunately for his well-to-do representative, it was expressly predicted of him, that "his voice should not be heard in the street." Is. xlii, 2. Matt. xii. 19.

## THE KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

QUEEN STREET WEST.

The service in this Church was conducted by the Revd. H. M. Parsons on the 1st. inst. The Knox Church, be it said to the Berean honor of the ministrations therein, is the first Church in Toronto, in which the writer has observed that rustling of the Bible leaves, (when a reference was made to portions of the sacred volume which invited reference) which affords an unmistakeable evidence of the practice on the part of the minister, to exalt the Bible as supremely worthy of all the attention that can be bestowed on it; the unaffected solemnity of the whole service, regarded as an act of worship, and not from a critical point of view, contrasted most favorably with some of the debasing burlesques which, in these latter days, court popularity at the expense of truth and even decency. As the writer takes the liberty to exercise that right of private judgment for which the covenanters fought, he will not be expected to endorse all that reached his ears on this occasion; he may therefore be permitted to observe,—what he thinks the minister would, if like David, he were disencumbered of his (Presbyterian) panoply—that such a psalm as the ninety-ninth, with the singing of the paraphrase of which, the service commenced, though suitable for Israel, when Jehovah-Jesus sat "between the Cherubim," and specially suitable when "the people" will have reason to "tremble," as sung by Christians in the present day, is simply illustrative of the period when their Puritan forefathers thought themselves at liberty to apply the judicial butcheries of the Old Testament to the times in which they lived; this confounding of dispensations which differ, inherited as it is from the Puritans, characterizes all the Churches which profess supreme allegiance to the Bible, except those assemblies in which

the ministry is not restricted to a single individual. There are of course exceptions to this rule, and it is one of the privileges of the Knox Church to be ministered to by a gentleman who apprehends these truths. One might have expected some comments to have been made on Ps. xxxix, and on other portions of Scripture which were read during the service; and as the word "Selah" constitutes a part of the several psalms in which it occurs, and is introduced in order to emphasize the portion which precedes it, we can scarcely be at liberty to omit it; it is remarkable that on the two occurrences of the word in this psalm, it supplements the statement that man is altogether (as vapour); the type in which the word "Lord" is printed in the seventh verse, indicates that it was "The Root of David" who was addressed when the Psalmist exclaimed, "And now, Lord, what wait I for? *my hope is in Thee.*" The third portion of Scripture read during this service and intended presumably to constitute a link with Ex. xx, and the psalm above named, was Heb. i. to ii. 4, and of this, one cannot but observe that the successive quotations from the Old Testament, in that portion, being as they are, the quotations of inspired men, are necessarily invaluable as throwing light on the several portions quoted, we venture to consider that attention should be invited to facts of this nature, in passing, and that

an aspect of the Lord so sublime as that which (in the Greek) describes him as "the offshining of the Father's glory," and consequently conveys the idea of eternal and inseparable relationship, should never be publicly passed in silence.

Certain infants were said to have been "baptized" on this occasion, but happily for the little mulers, were not "buried in baptism;" that phrase would appear to many minds, to preclude the possibility of the ordinance having ever been intended to apply to infants; the most plausible of the arguments in favor of such an application, was employed on this occasion, that of the supposed parallel with the initiatory rite of the Israelites; but as the characteristic feature of Christianity consists of a "*telling of words*, whereby thou and *all thy house* shall be saved," we think it obvious that the "words," (and consequently the deliverance) applied only to those who could understand them. To assume that the first two centuries of this era could roll by, without a single reference to "the baptism" of a baby, if such a practice obtained, appears to the writer to be assuming too much; that man's natural love of ordinances should lead him, in the third century, when the church had greatly advanced in corruption, to "baptize" *one baby*, is on the contrary, entirely intelligible. Lack of space necessitates the postponement of any comment on Mr. P.'s sermon.

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