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Pulpit Criticism:

WITH

ANSWERS TO OBJECTIONS TO THE BIBLE.

A WEEKLY SHEET.

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ST. BASIL'S CHURCH.

CLOVER HILL.

The critics of "Pulpit Criticism" will be few who will not acknowledge that to pass from "Holy Trinity" to St. Basil's would be as natural, on the part of any of them, as it was for the apostle Paul, on leaving Puteoli, to say, "and so we went toward Rome." Well would it be for many an occupant of a pulpit if they would learn a lesson of practical wisdom from the Rev. Father who occupied the pulpit of St. Basil's on the 6th inst.; and many a grateful congregation would—if not "raise their Ebenezers"—at least "go on their way rejoicing." The Father announced that on account of the heat of the weather, he should only read the epistle and gospel; we therefore listened to eleven verses from the twelfth chapter of 1 Cor., and to six verses of the twelfth chapter of the Gospel according to Luke. It was not to be expected that anything would be said of an explanatory nature, relating to the portions read, and so far as any practical result of the reading is concerned, they might probably as well have been read back-

wards; the Douay version of the passage from 1 Cor. is anything but luminous. So soon as the Father descended from the pulpit, the celebration of the mass commenced, and the celebrant proceeded round the church, attended by an acolyte who carried a vessel of water, presumably "holy;" with this all were sprinkled who were within reach of it, including the editor of "Pulpit Criticism." As the latter individual was indisposed to hear mass, he repaired to—

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, CHARLES STREET.

It was a novelty to hear, (so far as the creaking steps of late arrivals permitted) some attempt at exposition of the twenty-first Psalm, which was being read as the writer arrived; an attempt which connected itself with the passage "Thou preventest (anticipatest) him with the blessings of goodness;" a stranger could not be expected to perceive that this was especially intended for the children of the congregation. The endeavour to assign some portion

of the service as a part which the children should understand, is an endeavour so commendable that it is to be hoped it will be widely followed, for ordinary services cannot fail to be largely unintelligible, and consequently irksome to them. Mr. Hogg illustrated the Almighty's anticipative providence by a narrative of a certain father having told his children that God had been many thousand years preparing the breakfast of which they were partaking; the gist of the story being that the coal employed in boiling the porridge involved in its development, the providential forethought of the Almighty; the dispensational aspect of the psalm as "touching *the king*," who in the first verse is predictively described as "rejoicing in *thy strength*, O Jehovah," and in the concluding verse is exhorted to "be exalted in *his own strength*," this aspect of the psalm was of course unnoticed, and it only remains, in passing, to indicate that *the king* (of kings) is himself addressed from the eight verse onwards.

The service at this Church was conducted by the Rev. John Hogg, and inasmuch as lengthy prayer preceded what is regarded by most non-Romish churches as the principal object of their assembling—the sermon—one cannot but comment on what is so generally observable in the supplications of such persons—their lack of apprehension of their relation to their Maker,—in this case, as in the last Presbyterian Church visited, the supplicant, regardless of the Apostle Paul's teaching on the subject (Col. ii. 13.) prayed that "our sins might be taken away," and that "our feet might be taken out of the horrible pit, and from the miry clay;" such petitions indicate unmistakably how little anyone who presents them can understand his own relation to God (as a believer), and consequently how little he is able to instruct others on that important subject. The Holy Spirit was addressed in prayer by this gentleman; without any Biblical sanction for such a proceeding,

and was said to "reprove" instead of to "convince" of sin. The sermon, which happily was of an order far above the average, was based on Esther vi. 1-3. Mr. H. commenced by stating that "Ashasuerus," the title of the king whose acts are recorded in the book of Esther, was a dynastic, and not a personal designation; that owing to the ruthlessness of character displayed in the narrative of the king's acts, in the book of Esther, it is generally considered that the king who sent Ezra and Nehemiah from Babylon is identical with Xerxes; how they who entertain such an opinion, in view of the opening verse of the seventh and eighth chapter of the book of Ezra, and the first verse of the second chapter of Nehemiah, it is hard to say. The argument however depends on the character of Xerxes, who shortened the shadow of his engineers, because the current destroyed the bridge they had constructed across the Hellespont, and scourged the sea because it was refractory, etc.; it remains for students to decide if a name can be swept from off the roll of Scripture by an argument of such a character. Our attention was next directed to Haman, the Amalekite, as the personage second in importance to the king, in the Persian court. Mr. H., observed that the circumstance of Haman being an Amalekite accounted for the sullen hatred which Mordecai would be likely to entertain toward him, and which at least would show itself in the lack of that obsequiousness which a man of Haman's character and position would be likely to expect, and this in its turn accounts for the remorseless hatred on Haman's part, which led him not merely to devise the murder of Mordecai, but the extermination of the race to which he belonged; the narrative presents the most amazing view of the unbridled power of a despot which history affords; the word alone of the king, attested by his signet necessary, to consign hundreds of thousands of his fellow-mortals to unresisting slaughter! Ha-

man's hatred was of a character, content to move at a tardy pace, provided success should ultimately attend his efforts, hence he spent one twelve-month (ch. iii. 7.) in casting lots, with a view to secure a propitious day; at the expiration of that period, like Satan at the ear of Eve, he broached his counsels to the king; with such apparent success did he cajole the monarch that the ten thousand talents with which he was willing to reward the executioners, were returned to him, and "*the people (given) also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee* (v. 11.); these Israelitish sheep (apparently without a shepherd) were scattered over provinces so numerous and vast, that another twelve months must elapse before the purposed slaughter could be executed; "the king's scribes were called *on the thirteenth day of the first month*" at the bidding of Haman, and the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, *on the thirteenth of the twelfth month*, etc." The narrative-comment on the transaction is-- "The king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan bewailed it," (v. 15). What more, from Haman's point of view, could be desired? for he knew not that "He who keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps," he could not have imagined that the labor he bestowed in selecting the most favorable day on which to perpetrate his contemplated massacre, was itself a means in the hands of an invisible ruler, of frustrating the project. Mr. Hogg briefly commented on the hackneyed objection to the book of Esther, that the name of God does not occur in it, and observed that the book is replete with evidence of the providential action of the Almighty; in illustration of this, he inquired, what or rather who it was that brought about the circumstances recorded in the words, "On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of

records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. And the king said, what honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants who ministered to him, 'There is nothing done for him.' The preacher proceeded to enlarge on that prerogative of the Almighty which all history illustrates, of causing "the wrath of man to praise Him," and commented on the vast issues which were involved in the preservation of the chosen people, the progenitors of the Messiah. The second division of this discourse related to the fact that God habitually overthrows transgressors in the ruin of their own schemes; of this, from the building of Babel onwards, sacred and secular history are alike redundant. Supreme among the illustrations of this verity stands that transcendent act by which death, and he who had the power of it, were vanquished by Him who voluntarily tasted it, (Heb. ii. 14). A third consideration in connection with this subject is the interesting fact that the Almighty characteristically accomplishes his purposes by trivial means; the sleeplessness of the king, and the reading of the chronicles of the Persian kingdom in the present instance; the flies, frogs, lice, and locusts of Egypt, the stone of David's sling, the dream of Joseph, and the finding of Moses, all serve as illustrations of this principle; in modern days the accidental firing of a musket acted as the match to the powder of the French revolution, and of the first shot fired by Great Britain at the forts of Alexandria, it will be difficult at the present moment to fortel the result. From these and similar illustrations of the Almighty's mode of accomplishing great ends, the reverend gentleman argued that He can, in his own time, reverse the moral order of the world; he

referred to the predicted taunt, "Where is the promise of his coming?" and answered it from Scripture—"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, etc." He encouraged his "little flock" in the exercise of faith and patience, by maintaining that a result will ultimately be achieved which will more than justify their expectation, and by declaring that the welfare of each member of the flock is in the hands of a Pilot, who unerringly guides to a haven, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

Rev. iii. 10. "Because thou keptest the word of my endurance, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial which is about to come on the whole habitable earth, to try those who dwell on the earth."

Ver. 12. "A pillar."—It is a singular coincidence that there is a solitary ancient pillar still remaining in the city of Philadelphia.

The state of Sardis now, is a token that the warning was given in vain, and shows that the threatenings of the Lord, when disregarded, became certain judgments. Sardis, the capital of Lydia, was a great and renowned city, where the wealth of Croesus, its king, was accumulated, and became proverbial. But now a few wretched huts, scattered amongst the ruins, are the only dwellings in Sardis, and constitute the lowly home of Turkish herdsmen, who are its only inhabitants. As the seat of a Christian Church, it has lost—all it had to lose—the name; no Christians reside on the spot.

Of Philadelphia, Mr. Hartley observes, that it is an interesting circumstance to find Christianity more flourishing here than in many other parts of the Turkish empire; there is still a numerous Christian population, they occupy 300 houses. Divine service is performed every Lord's day in five churches. The circumstance that Philadelphia is now styled Allah Shehr (the city of

God) when viewed in connection with the promises made to that church, and especially with that of writing *the name of the city of God* upon its faithful members is one of no slight interest.

Of Laodicea, Dr. Smith remarks, that it is utterly desolate, and without inhabitants, except wolves, jackals, and foxes.

CONNECT THE SUBJOINED "CORRESPONDENCES" WITH THOSE GIVEN
IN No. 15

Dan. viii. 11.—He shall take away the daily sacrifice.

Dan. ix. 27.—He shall cause sacrifice and oblation to cease.

The above quotations identify "the King of fierce countenance" (ch. viii. 23.) with the "Prince who shall come" (ch. ix. 26.)

Dan. viii. 19.—He shall prosper in the last end of the indignation.

Dan. ix. 27.—Till that determined is poured on the desolator.

Thus "the King of Assyria (Is. x. 5. and xiv. 25.) "the Prince who shall come" (Dan. ix. 26.) and "the King of fierce countenance" (Dan. viii. 23.) are identified. See also "the Lion" of Jeremiah iv. 7.

Dan. viii. 9.—He waxes great towards the pleasant land.

Dan. xi. 16, 41. 45.—He enters into the glorious land.

Dan. viii. 17.—At the time of the end shall be the vision.

Dan. xi. 40, 41.—At the time of the end shall he enter.

Dan. viii. 19, 24.—He prospers in the last end of the indignation.

Dan. xi. 36.—He shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished.

"The Prince who shall come" (Dan. ix. 26).

"The King of fierce countenance" (Dan. viii. 23).

"The King who shall do according to His will"

(Dan. xi. 36), are, by the foregoing passages, shown to be identical with "The King of Assyria." (Is. x. 5, and xiv. 25).