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THE CHRISTIAN.

Vol. III. }

SAINT JOHN, N. B., JUNE 1847.

} No. 6.

CONDUCTED BY W. W. EATON.

Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.—*Petr.* On this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.—*The Lord Messiah.*

DECLINE OF CONGREGATIONS. THE CAUSE AND REMEDY.

A question of great importance bears heavily on the minds of the faithful in Zion. Why is it that many Congregations of the Lord—in the order of the Gospel—regularly holding forth the word of life, do so little for the conversion of the world? Indeed a graver question yet, perhaps, should be propounded: why are the deaths, removals, and apostasies of some congregations more numerous than conversions to the Lord? There are causes. They should be sought out, and if a remedy can be found it should speedily be applied.

An inquiry into the cause of a disease does not remove it; but it sometimes suggests the best means for its removal. If apathy, indifference, or the violation of the laws of the King exist either in Churches or in individuals, the cause unquestionably is a want of conformity to the divine record. "The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save: neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Isaiah lix. 1, 2. The causes therefore of the decline of individuals and congregations are transgression and disobedience. What! and these churches in the order of the Gospel? Yes: it is now possible to have the form of godliness without the power; indeed Paul has informed us that in the "last days" these times would come. It is possible for men to attend to all the positive institutions of the Gospel and all its public observances, with their hearts as cold as an iceberg, and their affections as completely engrossed in the world as were those of Judas or Ananias and Sapphira.

Various motives may have called together many who now have their names registered on our Church books. It would be surprising were not this the case. If in the days of the Apostles, when Jews and Gentiles were combined against the Lord and his Anointed, when the disciples were a hissing and a by-word among the nations—unworthy men and false teachers, yea false apostles, made the christian confession, what are we now to expect when in many places it is unpopular not to belong to some religious society; when, indeed, some religious teachers urge as a motive to become members of the Church, that it will add to their

popularity and respectability ! So desirous are men naturally for enjoyment, respectability, and some faint reason for the expectation of heaven, the wonder is that a greater number do not profess to believe in Christ while their hearts are immersed in the world !

In two particulars we confess ourselves greatly disappointed in the fruits of the revival of the Apostolic Gospel and the return to the order of ancient worship. For the good of the cause, and for the information of our junior fellow-laborers these disappointments shall now be disclosed.

When first we embraced with all our heart the Apostolic Gospel, and began to announce the glad tidings to others, we imagined that nothing more was necessary after a full exposition of the *facts, commands and promises* of the Gospel, than to persuade those who gave attention to these exhibitions of the truth, to be immersed. The thought was never once entertained that any one, believing in the existence of the Supreme Being and a future state of rewards and punishments, could possibly, before God, angels and men, be persuaded to declare his faith in the Lord Messiah unless he had in deed, in truth and in heart consecrated his affections, his whole being, to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. We deliberately came to the conclusion that every one who heard the Gospel, and manifested a desire to be immersed into the name of the Lord, would certainly be a genuine disciple of Jesus. The unpopularity of the doctrine, the opposition of the sects, and the absence of every worldly motive, were enough to deter any and every one from being immersed for remission of sins, who was not a genuine penitent and a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. But we have been disappointed. Many have declared their faith and repentance, and love for the Lord, and have been immersed into the sacred name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who by their Christless and prayerless lives shew that they have been "washed to fouler stains." The devil first opposes the truth directly : when he finds it too strong for him he tempts men to counterfeit it. Satan himself puts on the garb of an angel of light. It is no then surprising that his children should do so. When the chariot of truth cannot be stopped in its onward progress, he mounts the box and turns charioteer, and thus by furious driving he seeks to accomplish, under the guise of friendship and zeal for the cause of truth, what he had previously sought to effect by open opposition.

Many grossly dishonest, even in the estimation of the world, have professed to believe and repent, and have found a seat among the disciples. Men who neither render to God nor man their just due have been enrolled among the saints, and are "spots in their feasts of charity—feasting themselves without fear ;" and yet the really faithful are surprised that no more can be induced to obey the Gospel : "purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump," and then your influence will be felt.

The second disappointment to which we have alluded is, that men would from Lord's day to Lord's day meet the disciples of Jesus at the the Lord's table, and there participate with them in the reception of the loaf and cup—which is designed to remind the believer that Christ "bore his sins in his own body on the tree, that he should be dead to sin," and that "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,"—and at the same time roll sin as a sweet morsel under his tongue.

It is to be feared that violators of their vows to God and man, those who are impure in heart and profane in conversation, have been tolerated among the disciples:

We supposed that no one but an atheist could be induced to receive the symbols of the broken body and shed blood of the Lamb of God, without sincerely examining himself, and resolving by the grace of God to fill up the full measure of the christian character. Although we have been disappointed in these expectations, a better acquaintance with the word of the Lord teaches us that we ought not to have been. Vile characters insinuated themselves into the Churches in the Apostles' days. Five out of the seven Churches addressed by the Saviour, through John on the Isle of Patmos, were found in many things deficient. The Church in Corinth, notwithstanding its spiritual gifts and the zealous and indefatigable labors of the great Apostle for some time, had in its communion immoral members. The family of Adam had its Cain—of Noah, its Ham; the family of Jacob those who would murder a brother; Israel always had either a Nadab, an Abihu, a Korah, a Dathan, an Abiram, an Achan, a Saul, an Ahab, a Manasses; and even the little family that clustered around the Saviour had a Judas. What then can we expect! We have now no severe persecution to sift out these hypocrites. Means must be sought to rid the congregations of the Lord of all those whose influence is not for the promotion of the cause: branches that bear no fruit should be pruned, and the dry and withered should be lopped off. By Heaven's aid Gideon accomplished more with the three hundred men with whom he attacked the hosts of Midian, than he would have accomplished with the more than thirty thousand, who, after having joined his standard, he dismissed to their homes. Our motto should be first *pure*, then *peaceable*. One of the redeeming qualities of the Church at Ephesus was that she could not bear those who were evil.

From the above desultory remarks our conclusion is apparent, that one of the causes of declension in many of the congregations is *recognizing those as disciples of Christ who neither in heart or in life endeavor to honor him*.

Many proclaimers of the Gospel give their entire attention to first principles; they labor to make disciples. When they have the joy of hailing them as members of the congregation of the Lord, their anxiety is at an end. When all appear to be gathered in of those who have heard the word, they go to other parts; and often leave the little flock without any one to care for them. No man can have more influence over newly organized congregations than he who has been the means of bringing them to the Saviour. It is wicked then for any one to leave a company of young disciples until they have been well instructed in the things of the kingdom, and have been set in order with their overseers and ministers. This neglect is another cause of declension.

Want of Scriptural knowledge is another fruitful cause of declension. Too many are satisfied with a superficial knowledge of first principles; and little if any attention to a scriptural knowledge of those duties which are the light and glory of Christianity. The detail of the relative duties of the disciples is to them dry and uninteresting compared with the discussion of polemic theology. Nothing is more surprising than the fact

that many of the proclaimers of the Apostolic Gospel preach *three* discourses of pure speculation to one of Gospel facts, commands, and promises. We have been sick in our very soul listening to speculations on the nature of man; the effects of the fall, whether total or partial; whether the death threatened to Adam was "temporal, spiritual, or eternal;" whether the death of Christ was designed to remedy the evils of the first, second, third, or all; the theory of regeneration, election, &c.; whether the first resurrection took place when "many of the bodies of the saints that slept arose, and came out of their graves after his (Christ's) resurrection," or whether that is yet future; whether it was the infant John or his father Zacharias whose "mouth was opened, and whose tongue was loosed, and who spake and praised God," after the former had received the name given by the angel when he appeared to his father on the right side of the altar of incense; and a dozen other themes, that have no more to do with a disciple's growth in grace and in knowledge, than the debates of the old school-men had with the return of professors to the primitive faith and practice of Christianity.

Who, in his senses, would imagine that dwelling on these speculations—be his opinions as true as holy writ—he would by them bring sinners to Christ or build up the saints in the faith and practice of christianity! If speculation be the order of the day, speculative, moonlight disciples, will be the fruit. If the gospel be preached from envy and strife, envious and striving will be the converts made by such labourers. If a war on sects, creeds, and finding fault with others, and paying but little attention to our own, be the course pursued to convert men, we must expect that our converts will be of that envious, fault-finding, censorious class, whose sour, bitter spirits, will make the truth appear odious rather than attractive. Nothing is more certain than that the indulgence of any of these dispositions will beget children which will show their paternity and will finally become infidels.

Whatsoever we sow we shall reap. This is a fixed rule of heaven. Those who have encouraged preachers, whose whole labors have been that of detraction rather than an exhibition of the faith and practice of christianity in letter and spirit, are beginning to learn that "*murmurers and complainers*" are not the most lovely characters with whom to associate as fellow labourers in the kingdom of Jesus.

Many congregations have declined in consequence of having such spirits among their leaders. Instead of teaching the sects the truth, and then endeavouring to persuade them to embrace it, the presence of one of their number has been the signal for a general attack until all but the more punctual among the brethren have left the meeting. Having their combativeness so long excited they must oppose some one, and then their weapons have been turned against themselves, and the end has been division, contention, and the declension of the cause. It is dangerous to dwell long on the subject of error. It will not do to gaze too intently on that which is odious, for

"Vice is a monster of so frightful mien
As to be hated, needs but to be seen,
But seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity—then embrace."

Much more than was at first intended has been written on the causes

of the present state of things in the community generally. We have much more to say, but we fear longer to gaze on evils. We now turn to that which is much more pleasing—the *remedy*. 'Tis true in our complaints we have alluded to some of the remedies. We will now notice them in detail.

1. And first, we only ask of the brotherhood what they can easily perform. What they have done is a proof of what they can do. More scriptural knowledge in reference to relative duties, the discharge of which, will fill us with stronger love to God and man, and will cause us to speak as if in possession of a holy unction from on high, and will make our words and actions tell upon the hearts and consciences as well as upon the intellect of our hearers and associates.

In the study of first principles, what have we not done! To convince the world that "baptism (to use the words of Wesley) to real penitents is both the means and the seal of pardon," we have ransacked creation. We have proved and illustrated it a thousand times from Old and New Testament authority. Every type, symbol, and ordinance in the oracles of God have been used to show its design and meaning. We have proved it from all the written and printed creeds in Christendom. We have illustrated it by all the moral, political, and family relations, known to the world. We have proved it from history, sacred and profane. Poets and philosophers, ancient and modern, have been searched, and have been called to our aid, and even Shakspeare himself has been upon the stand, and has testified that men were cleansed from their sins in baptism. We have proved from the laws of the kingdom of nature, of grace and glory, that the positive law of immersion in order to the plenary remission of past transgressions was for God's glory and the best interests of the human family!!

All, therefore, that is asked—perhaps we should say demanded at the present crisis—is that all who love the cause of truth and righteousness, who would see the congregations growing in grace and in knowledge, and sinners converted to the Lord, would set themselves to work as zealously and as perseveringly to study *the best means of promoting the cause of the Lord*. Collect from every source the best proof, the plainest facts, the most convincing illustrations, to impress your own mind and that of others with the necessity of *holiness* in thought, in intention, in word and deed. When the same labour has been performed by the teachers, elders, exhorters, &c., in the congregations to further themselves and others in the work of faith and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, that has been performed to induce them to become disciples of Christ, then may we expect to see the cause of the Lord marching forward with rapid strides. The same zeal, study and perseverance, which have characterized many prominent brethren in their efforts to bring sinners to Christ, and to make them members of his congregation, manifested in teaching them the observance of all things commanded by the Saviour, would, with Heaven's blessing, not only keep the brethren growing in grace, and in knowledge, but would continually be attracting sinners to the cross of Calvary. O, what a revenue of glory would be brought to our King were all the disciples to do all in their power to show forth the praises of the Lord! -

2. But how can the disciples be brought into that state of mind, in which to create the necessary interest in the accomplishment of this work? Duties have been neglected—churches and individuals, in many instances have settled down in a state of apathy, looking and waiting for some distinguished preacher, or for something to transpire, they know not what. Some members are removing to other parts. Some are going home to heaven, and others are going back to the world. What can be done to break the lethargy—to stop the retreating army?

One says, if we had a better place for the congregation to meet in, more would come and listen to the truth; another, if we were only able to employ a preacher of distinguished abilities the cause would advance; and a third, has strong hopes that the next protracted meeting will give the cause a new impetus! Now all these hopes are vain. It is true, one or more of these causes may give you a momentary start, and you may appear to be improving; but no permanent success will attend you until the church begins at home—gets every thing right within. When this is the case—when every member of a congregation discharges the duties devolving upon him, in his closet—in his family—in the church, and in the world, then the church will grow whether they have an evangelist or not—whether they worship in a chapel, meeting house, school house, common dwelling, or a field. They will need no extra protracted meetings or foreign human aid to build them up. How weak the faith of that congregation which is continually deploring its want of a fine meeting house, an eloquent preacher, &c. Its faith is in men and the works of men, and not in God and his truth! Were each disciples to discharge all their own duties, eloquent preachers and convenient places of worship would follow as their legitimate fruits.

But we recur again to the inquiry. What can be done to create the proper kind of interest? In giving a direct answer to this question we are presuming on one fact, namely, that in all the congregations meeting regularly, there are some few at least that take a deep interest in the cause, and are willing to do any thing for Zion's sake. This being presumed, we answer, that a full, honest confession of transgression (doing what we ought not to do) and disobedience (neglect of duty) will always create an interest in the confessor. Nothing relieves the burdened heart or wakens up the lethargic soul like a full and unreserved confession.

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whose confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” Prov. xxviii. 13. “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord: and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin,” &c. Psalm xxxii. 5. With the teaching of David and Solomon agrees the beloved apostle John: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John i. 9. The duty and necessity of confession is taught in all the ordinances of Heaven. Every sacrifice brought to God's altar was a confession of sinfulness. Though not a word were uttered, the man who stood at the altar with his lamb, &c., with his hand upon its head took its life, he declared that he was guilty, that he deserved death: through that sacrifice he expected deliverance from guilt. In our immersion we confess the Lord, and as often

as we break the loaf we confess our faith in Jesus as the great sin offering, and through him look for pardon.

All who have become the disciples of Christ have the promise of pardon through confession and prayer. But the greatest difficulty apprehended in bringing this examination to a favourable issue is the absence of conviction on the part of professors that they need this confession! How few appear to feel any compunction of conscience unless they have actually violated some of the common principles of morality! Every desire and thought not in conformity with the will of heaven is sinful and needs the pardoning love of God. The fact should ever be present with the disciples that "to know to do good and not to do it, is sin." James iv. 17. We should endeavour, therefore, to ascertain in what we have been deficient, and make an honest confession, and be determined in future to do our whole duty.

To give a more definite turn to these remarks, we would specify a few sins :

1. *Want of love to God.* Who that has ever thought on God's love to him, but must be sensible that his affections are comparatively cold! Brother, can you reflect on the love of Jesus, consummated in his death, and not almost involuntarily exclaim, "Lord pardon my want of love to thee?"

2. *Neglect of secret prayer.* This duty is enjoined by the Saviour. Those who neglect it, refuse to obey him. The Lord was very particular about this duty: "Enter" says he, "into your closet, and when you have shut the door, pray to your father in secret," &c. Matt. vi. 6. If disciples neglect this duty, they must expect to be "barren and unfruitful."

3. *Want of love for our fellow men.* No man has the spirit of Christ who does not love all men. And yet many professors can associate with their dear friends and relations, and never make an effort to win them to Christ. They can converse freely with them on every theme but that of a Saviour's dying love; and point them to every object of attraction but the law of God. If we see them expose their health we are alarmed, and do all in our power to dissuade them from such exposures; but we can see them stand on "slippery places while firey billows roll below," and never lift up the voice of warning! And yet we say we love them! We often are surprised that so few obey the gospel when all those who have so little love for their fellow men continually testify against its truth and importance!

It is not possible with our limited space to take up subjects of this kind in detail. Every one, however, who will reflect for a short time must see that he needs pardon on account of his disobedience—his want of conformity to the divine will. When he thinks, in connexion with the above duties, of his want of gratitude—thankfulness; his neglect of the word of God—self denial; watchfulness over ourselves and our brethren; want of love to the poor, needy and destitute; neglect of the assemblies of the saints and the ordinances of the gospel; he must feel the necessity of humbling himself in his closet before his God. He will then add to the above catalogue, his transgressions, his violation of God's will, the many things he has said, and thought, and done, contrary to the

letter and spirit of christianity. And, as he goes on with his examination, he will be surprised in how many things he indulges contrary to the convictions of a conscience enlightened by the word of God. Before he leaves his closet he will begin to estimate the importance of a thorough reformation. If in his closet he has made a full confession, and has determined that God's will shall be done in and by him, like Moses, his face will shine, and others will feel his influence.

But he will not pause here. If he has neglected the proper training of his family: if the voice of prayer has not been there heard, he will confess to his family his neglect of duty and will teach them the right way, and pray with and for them. He will then confess to the congregation of the Lord, if he has sinned against them by neglecting his duties, or by doing any thing which has been a reproach to the cause. To the world, against whom he has sinned by his unchristian walk, he will confess, and endeavour to walk in wisdom toward them that are without. In all this he will be zealous and sincere. He will be so ingenuous that no one will doubt his sincerity: wherever he has wronged any one in reputation or property, he will make the most ample satisfaction: he will not gauge his honesty by the laws of the land, but by the Saviour's rule—"As ye would that others should do to you, do you even so to them." In a word, he will dispose of every thing connected with himself as a religious being, just as though he expected to stand before the Judge the next hour. Nothing short of this will do! Who now loves the cause of God? Who will be honest to God, themselves, and the world! This is the remedy which we would propose. No one can make such a confession as this without creating within himself deep feeling. No one need fear fanaticism, because confession of our sins and forsaking them is most reasonable. Will the brotherhood individually take these desultory thoughts into serious consideration? So confident are we of the power of truth, that we have not the most remote doubt that if this course were pursued by the faithful, that all those whose hearts have ever been touched with the love of God would soon rally to the standard; and hypocrites, and those unworthy of a place in the Congregation of the Saints, would either be converted or driven to their own place.

Brethren, reflect seriously on these suggestions: not because your humble servant has submitted them, but because the world demands it, your spiritual interests demand it—all in heaven and earth who love God demand it; and God says "if you cover your sins you shall not prosper"—if you refuse to confess them, "Be sure your sins will find you out."

W. W. E.

STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

No. 5.

EPISTOLARY WRITINGS.

BY A. CAMPEELL.

In a preface to one of the Epistles we can illustrate and apply the principles referred to in a previous number to much better advantage than in such general remarks; and for this purpose we shall present the

reader with a short preface to the epistle to the Romans, which has generally (both by the ancients and moderns) been considered the most obscure and difficult of all the epistles :

PREFACE TO THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

As this epistle, when understood, is a sort of key to the greater number of Paul's letters, much depends on forming clear and comprehensive views of its import. As far as our limited means of furnishing such preparatory information as may assist the reader in examining it for himself will permit, we shall contribute our mite. In the first place we request the reader's attention to a few facts of great importance in the investigation of this epistle ; and indeed, of all Paul's epistles.

I. The main question discussed in the narratives of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John ; or the grand topic of debate from the time John the Immerser appeared in the wilderness of Judea, till the resurrection of Jesus, was—*Whether Jesus the Nazarene was the Messich ?* The Jews on the one part, and the Saviour and his Apostles on the other, were the only persons engaged in the controversy—the principal parties in this discussion. Hence it was altogether confined to the Jews. Indeed, they only had the means of determining this, as they were in possession of the oracles which foretold his coming, identified his person, and attested his pretensions.

II. The grand topic of debate from the resurrection of Jesus till the calling of the Gentiles, (an interval of several years,) was—*Whether Jesus who was crucified had actually arisen from the grave and ascended into heaven ?* This, though different in form, was, in effect, the same as the preceding. It was differently proposed and argued, though tending to establish the same grand point. The Jews in Judea, the Samaritans, and the Jews in all the synagogues among the Gentiles whither the Apostles went, were the only persons who took an active part in this controversy.

III. After the calling of the Gentiles, and the number of disciples among the Jews had greatly augmented, a new question arose, which among the converts generally, and especially among those of the Jews, occupied as conspicuous a place as the first question did among the Jews in Judea. This question is as prominent in many of Paul's epistles as the former is in the historic books of this volume. It is this—*Whether the Gentile converts had a right to be considered the people of God equally as the Jewish believers ; or whether they should be received in the christian congregations of believing Jews, without submitting to any of the Jewish peculiarities, on the same footing with the circumcised and literal descendants of Abraham.*

IV. Many questions grew out of this one, which for a long time occupied the attention of the christian communities throughout the world, and called for the attention of the Apostles. But as Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles, he was obliged to take a more active part in these discussions, and thus we always find him the bold and able advocate of their rights, however, or by whomsoever assailed. To this question we are doubtless indebted for much of the information which this Apostle has given us, as it was the occasion of so much being written on many topics connected with it, such as—

1st. The genius and design of circumcision. 2d. The promises made to Abraham. 3d. The nature and design of the Law of Moses, or Old Covenant. 4th. The righteousness of the Law, and the righteousness of Faith; or justification by works and justification by grace. 5th. The Jewish priesthood and sacrifices. 6th. The sacrifice of Christ. 7th. The grace of God, or the divine philanthropy. 8th. The election and calling of the Jews. 9th. The nature, design, and glory of the christian constitution and assembly; and many other topics subordinate to, and illustrative of, the one grand question concerning the reception of the Gentiles.

To simplify still farther, and to comprehend under a few heads the whole apostolic writings, it may be said that there are *three* gospels, with their circumstances, which engross the whole volume.

The first is "*the glad tidings*," emphatically and supereminently so called, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, exhibited and proved to be the only begotten Son of God, sent to bless the people among whom he appeared, who credited his pretensions. The second is *the glad tidings of salvation to the Gentiles*, called "the Gospel of their Salvation." This exhibits Jesus as the Saviour of the world, and his death as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. The third gospel is that developed in the Revelation of John, in the common version, called "*the everlasting gospel*," or good news, that the long apostacy, that the long dark night of antichristian superstition, tyranny, and usurpation, is passed; and the kingdoms of the whole world have become the kingdoms and empire of Jesus, the King of kings.

The circumstances that gave rise to these three gospels constitute the shade in the picture of God's philanthropy. The developement of the character and condition of the human family, relative to these *three gospels*, in connexion with them, engross the whole apostolic writings. On this a hint or two must suffice.

As to that which is by way of eminence called "*the Gospel*"—the degenerate and apostate state of the most enlightened and favored nation among men, the descendants of the Father of the Faithful, form the contrast; and, as a foil, set off and brighten this most splendid of all exhibitions of the mercy of God, from which spring all other good news to men.

As to the second gospel or good news—the deplorable condition, their ignorance of God, and the nameless vices of the Gentile world, their long alienation from God, and scandalous idolatry, constitute a theatre on which to exhibit to advantage the glad tidings of God's gracious purposes towards them from the beginning, evinced in sending his Son to make a propitiatory sacrifice for their sins, and in calling himself the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews.

And as to the third gospel—the awful apostacy of the professed christian communities, and gross departure from the letter and spirit of the christian institution; their schism, strifes, and persecutions, which this apostacy has given rise to; the long rejection and continued infidelity of the Jews, with awful grandeur prepare the way for the proclamation of the everlasting good news—the joyful era when it shall be sung, "*Babylon the Great is fallen, NEVER more to arise!*" The kingdoms of

the world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and his saints shall triumph with him for a thousand prophetic years! These engross the whole apostolic writings.

The first of these three has been fully discussed and established in the testimonies of the four Evangelists. The second is recorded in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, and developed in the epistles. The third, in some passages of the epistles, but particularly and fully in the last revelation made to the Apostle John.

The epistle to the Romans is altogether devoted to the second—and was written with a design to prove that the believing Gentiles are, equally with the Jews, entitled to all rights and immunities of citizenship in the kingdom of God's own Son.

This brings us to the epistle to the Romans; in reference to which let it be remembered, that although the term *Roman*, in its most restricted sense, denoted a Pagan citizen of Rome, yet both Jews and proselytes who lived there were called *Romans* as well as the Pagan citizens of Rome. Hence Luke informs us that Roman sojourners, both Jews and proselytes, heard Peter announce the glad tidings on Pentecost in Jerusalem. Hence we may conclude that a congregation in Rome was formed soon after the return of the Roman Jews from Jerusalem.— Though the congregation in Rome was at first composed exclusively of Jewish disciples; after the calling of the Gentiles, and especially at the time when Paul wrote this letter, it was composed of Jews and Gentiles.

Without going into a long detail of particular proofs to come at the *design* of the Apostle in writing this letter, we may readily gather from the epistle itself that the Jewish and Gentile disciples in this congregation were not perfectly reconciled on account of certain questions and debates involving the Jewish peculiarity; that the great question between the Jews and Gentiles was not decided in this congregation, though so eminent in the Christian faith; that Paul wrote with a reference to the actual condition and circumstances of this people, according to the best information he had respecting them, not having been himself at Rome. As this congregation was placed in so conspicuous place, and was known to the whole Christian communities throughout the Roman empire, the settling of this question in Rome was a great object; and as the Apostle, though anxious to visit the city, had been prevented for a long time, he conceived the noble design of settling the difficulties between the Jewish and Gentile brethren in this city, by a long and argumentative epistle, embracing all the points of chief difficulty between the Jews and Gentiles in Rome and elsewhere. Such was the *design* of writing this letter, as the circumstances and allusions found in it, and all evidences, internal and external, evince.

Having formed such a design, the Apostle was at no loss how to execute it. He was well skilled in all the questions and customs, and expert in all the arguments of the Jews in the support of their peculiarity. He knew all that a Judaizer or an infidel Jew could say in support of his favorite theme. Besides, as the Judaizer, who aimed at bringing the Gentiles under the law, argued from the same topics that the infidel Jew handled to show the superiority of the Jews' religion and to oppose the Christian, the Apostle so arranges his arguments as to silence both. He

was well aware that this letter would soon become public property, and that it would be read by all parties, as well as by the brethren to whom it was addressed; for all would be anxious to know what "the apostate Jew," as some called him, or the great "Apostle to the Gentiles," had to say with reference to these questions. He writes with all these things before his mind.

It is worthy of notice that the Apostle does not attempt to settle such questions merely, or, indeed, at all, by his apostolic authority. Though his decision, without assigning a single reason for it, would be final amongst all Christians who recognized him as an Apostle; yet he does not attempt to settle the point in this way. He appears as a logician, and meets opposition, not by a decree, but by argument. In this way he enlightens and confirms the christians in the faith, and qualifies them to convince and silence those who would not receive the decree of an Apostle, as that from which there is no appeal.

(To be Continued)

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN.]

"Therefore, shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest. But in the LAST DAYS it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come and say, come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths, for the Law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." MICAH iii, 12; iv. 1, 2.

BRO. EATON, in the above stated prophecy, there are at least six particulars specified and pointed out.

1. The ploughing of Zion.
2. That of Jerusalem becoming heaps.
3. The mountain of the house like the high places of the forest.

ITS RESTORATION.

4. The last days is to bring the establishment of this mountain of the house, and its exaltation above the tops of the mountains and hills.
5. The exhortation of the nations to each other to go up to this established mountain and exalted house.
6. The law is to go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Question—Must not the three first mentioned particulars take place prior to the three last? and if so; when and what time (i. e.) in the christian dispensation did the first three particulars spoken of have their fulfilment? Brother Eaton, your reply to these questions will enable me to ascertain when, if ever, the three last have yet taken place. I have both read and heard it preached that it took place at *Pentecost*. I am at present rather dissatisfied, by reason of the first three particulars. I want your kind assistance upon this very important portion of God's word. I remain your's, in christian fellowship,

CONDONO.

REMARKS.

In the interpretation of prophecy we should always keep in view time, place, and the peculiar circumstances of the people among whom

it was written. Had our brother C. noticed the time when Micah and Isaiah wrote, I think he would not have doubted the exposition of those who point to Jerusalem and the day of Pentecost for its fulfilment.

Isaiah prophesied seven hundred and sixty years before Christ, which was about one hundred and fifty-four years before the Babylonian captivity, and Micah about ten years after. Chronologists differ but little on these dates. The prophecy quoted by you was uttered then more than one hundred and forty years previous to the overthrow of Jerusalem, when the Jews were taken captive into Babylon. Notice particularly the preceding verses, (Micah iii. 9, 11,) in which the prophet charges them with their iniquities, and then adds: "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field," &c. This was fulfilled when their "holy and beautiful house in which their fathers praised the Lord was burned up—and all their pleasant things were laid waste." Isaiah lxiv. 11.

The conclusion of the Mosaic dispensation, is called the "last days." "He hath spoken unto us in these *last days* by his son." Heb. i. 2. "And it shall come to pass in the *last days*," said Peter, when on the day of Pentecost he quoted the prophecy of Joel ii. 8, to explain the design of the miraculous out-pouring of the Spirit on this memorable occasion. The "law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus," on that day went forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. For the first time a kingdom was established without the confused noise of warriors and garments rolled in blood. Primitive Christians did indeed "Beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks." This portion has had a glorious fulfilment. Would to heaven we could have a return of these glorious days. I ask no millenium more glorious than to see the human family living in the same peace and harmony that characterized the Jerusalem Church—the mother of all real Christian Churches.

W. W. L.

BROTHER EDITOR,—From the commencement of the present volume of your little pamphlet, I have been a constant reader. I am happy to learn that your attention is particularly directed to the unfolding of the first principles of the gospel of Christ. Unless your readers are made conversant with the manner in which a sinner can be just with God, and with the privileges, immunities and duties of all the citizens of the kingdom of heaven, your labours will be in vain, and their faith will remain under the mists and obscurity of the wisdom of men: their profession a mere sound, cold and inoperative. And their expectations for "the inheritance of the saints in light," uncertain and void of the joy of the Holy Spirit, which purifies the soul through believing and obeying the truth. As you profess to be an advocate of the faith, order, and discipline of the ancient church of the saints, I should esteem it a favour if you would give a scriptural answer to the following queries.

Query 1st. What is christian forbearance? On what commands, doctrines or institutions is it to be exercised, and what are its *true* boundaries?

Query 2d. Does the New Testament teach that it is the duty of the sisters as well as of the brethren, to impart public instruction to the

church when they meet for edification, exhortation and prayer? If so, what does the Apostle mean in 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35; 1 Tim. ii. 12.

Query 3d. Do the Scriptures teach that in a christian church it is the duty of all the brethren, indiscriminately and regardless of their ability to edify the church, to occupy the time of the church while the Pastor and other brethren are present— who are more competent to instruct the body? If it is their duty, what are we to understand by 1 Cor. xii. 2, 9, 30.

There was a time in the history of the church of Christ when a year or a nay would be a sufficient answer to each of these; but in this day of general departure from scripture usage both in faith and practice, and “what I feel,” and “what I think,” “and what has been the custom of our fathers,” (however at variance with the living oracles,) are unblushingly substituted for the order and practice of the churches that were in Judea in Christ Jesus. He who undertakes to rectify abuses and restore the new testament order of things, must not only show what is right, but what is not; exhibiting the subject in all its importance by arguments and illustrations, with all long suffering and doctrine.

Wishing you success in your arduous labours as a teacher of christianity.

Your's truly,

SENEC.

Note to Senec.—We have written a reply to your flattering letter and queries, but our printer could not find room for it. Look for it next month.

W. W. E.

The Christian Psalmist is the title of a new Music and Hymn book now being published by Bro. S. W. Leonard, of Louisville, Ky. It is to contain tunes written in the usual common style, in the patent note form, and the recently much improved system of numerical music. The fast system ought to be mastered by almost any in a few hours. Will brother Leonard inform us, through the Christian Journal and Union, who his agents are in either Boston, New York, or Philadelphia, that we may know how to procure a specimen copy; or perhaps he can send a copy in sheets to our address, Eastport, Maine.

W. W. E.

The friends on Deer Island should not blame Brother Barnaby for the notice taken of Elder Chadwick's exposition of Acts ii. 38! In a private letter to me, which I knew he did not design for publication, he gave Elder C's. exposition, and for the benefit of our readers, and more especially for those who had listened to such teaching, the comments were penned. If blame is to be attached to any one throw it all on your humble servant.

W. W. E.

We embrace the earliest opportunity to thank Brother Alexander Hall, for his promptness and kindness in so soon forwarding his book on “Universalism against itself.” So far as we have examined the work, he has proved the truth of its title; for the proof texts on which universalism leans for support, he grasps like a man confident of the strength of the cause he would defend, and in every instance pierces this latest system of scepticism to the core. We commend the work to our readers.

THE IRISH FAMINE.—BY MR. ALARIC A. WATTS.

A cloud hung o'er green Innisfail—gem of the silver main;
 Oh! who that saw that fearful sight, might dare to look again?
 The earth with fruitful verdure clad, man held his head on high,
 (But man even in his best estate is less than vanity,)
 Abroad he looked o'er east and west, as though defying fate;
 A curse went forth across the land, and it was desolate.
 "Hope against hope" awhile prevailed, we said, 'tis early dawn;
 The day will show bright promise yet, the cloud will be withdrawn.
 Men spoke in whispers, each one feared to meet the other's eye;
 As iron seemed the sterile earth, as brass the sullen sky,
 But Patience had her perfect work, abundant faith was given;
 Oh! who shall say the scourge of earth does not bear fruit for heaven!

Slowly arose the unwilling call, broke forth the smothered cry—
 "Lo! Famine cometh o'er the land; send succor, or we die!
 The hand that smites our fertile fields hath passed your island o'er;
 Of your abundance let us share, and Heaven will bless your store."
 The bond of brotherhood prevailed, forgotten was our strife,
 And freely was our gold poured forth to buy the staff of life.
 A little while! a little while! and louder did they say,
 "Gaunt Famine is within our gates, oh send us help to day!"
 Then children's eyes were dim with tears, and woman's cheek grew pale;
 Men who had braved the battle's brunt now trembled at the tale.
 We did not dare to turn aside, although in fear we read,
 And grain by grain was gold implored to buy the famished bread.

Yet still went forth the strong appeal, still louder waxed the cry,
 Brave Self-Denial started up, true fount of charity;
 First, Taste her idols sacrificed, the sinless joys of mind;
 Treasures that science priceless holds were willingly resigned;
 Lightly Privation's self was borne that we might have to spare;
 Rich boards with lavish plenty crowned sank down to hermit fare.
 Beauty her baubles cast aside, as if in holy strife;
 Childhood its playthings would forego, and youth the pride of life.
 All hearts were opened, and each hand responded to the call;
 Weak Penury her mite cast in, the richest gift of all;
 The standard-bearers of the church, amid severest wo,
 As Israel wrestled with their God, and said, Thou shalt not go;
 As ONE MAN bowed the nation down, while myriad voices prayed;
 "Stand thou between the quick and dead, and let the plague be stayed."

YE never heard that fearful wail, YE never saw the sight
 That almost might put out the sun, and turn the day to night
 No pleading glance to you was raised, YE heard no suppliant sigh;
 The voice that roused your heart of hearts was inborn sympathy,
 Or visitant, like his of old, that ever seemed to say,
 "Come over now to Macedon and give us help to day."
 Broad ocean rolls between our homes, yet spirits are akin;
 Wide waters cannot quench the love the christian heart within.
 Our prayer was to the Lord of hosts; to him our hearts were spread;
 The prayer was heard, and by your hands He sends the daily bread.

Prayer, that can pierce the highest heaven, can reach beyond the sea:
 Hearts that may never know your names send heartfelt thanks by me
 The blessing of the voiceless thought that dies upon the tongue;
 A blessing on your matrons fair, and on your maidens young;
 A blessing be above your path, a blessing round your bed;
 A blessing on the stripling brave, and on the hoary head;
 A blessing such as Christ be-towed, upon your children small;
 A blessing "ere the sun goes down," upon you, one and all;
 A blessing on your fruitful fields, and on your garnered store;
 Rich blessings rest upon you, friends, now and for evermore!

17 Berner's st., London, April 3, 1847;

THE TWO PICTURES.—At the late Sunday-school Union meeting in Exeter Hall, Rev. Dr. Reed said :—“ I remember hearing of a painter who had drawn a picture of innocence. He had taken for its type a beautiful smiling boy, kneeling on a stool in the act of praying near the lap of his mother,—health upon the cheek, freshness in the whole countenance, a fearless glance of the eye, love of his mother, and something beyond ; everything, in short, indicating that which the painter wished to describe, the simple freshness and joy of innocence. Now, it so happened that the artist wanted a fellow to this painting. He wanted a picture of guilt, and for a long time he sought in vain that which should convey its full purport and wretchedness. At length some friend told him that in a prison not far off he might find the object he desired. He went there : he entered a cold dungeon. A few rays of light streaming through a grated window revealed to him a wretched object on the floor broken down with crime and sensuality ; the cheeks hollowed by disease and misery ; the eye lustreless and averted from every spectator (it was the aversion of shame ;) and every thing indicating the deepest distress. There the artist had a picture of guilt. He painted it ; and when he had done this, he thought he would place the two pictures side by side in the dungeon, that he might see the effect of the contrast. He did so ; and no sooner had he placed the pictures there, than that poor wretched creature clasped his hands together and began to weep bitterly. “ It is my mother ! ” he exclaimed. It was the same individual. The picture of innocence, and the picture of wretchedness, depravity and guilt, was actually the same person in different stages of life. Oh ! should you ever meet one of your dear little charges in some miserable hovel or dungeon, exhibiting the very reverse of his present smiling joyousness and innocence, how will you look back, and regret that at the time he was under your care you did not strive more earnestly, and were not permitted more successfully to minister to him the blessed tidings of salvation.”

We can supply *one or two hundred* new subscribers with full sets of the current volume of *The Christian*. Grateful for past exertions we ask for their renewal. We hope to be able to give some of our agents some tangible proof of our gratitude.

We ask our correspondents again to remember our address ; many of them subject us to much extra expense by not attending to our directions. Other queries in our next.

Some of our correspondents have supposed that packages sent to them have failed because they have received less since the receipt of the first number. Not wishing to burthen them with postage, we concluded not to send the other numbers until we learned whether the first were disposed of.

What has become of the “ Witness of Truth ” and brother Oliphant ? Not a number for months.

* * * “ *THE CHRISTIAN*.”—A monthly of sixteen pages, at ONLY *Half a dollar a year*, in advance. All subscribers to begin with the volume Letters, papers, &c. from Canada and the United States, sent to Eastport, Me. From all other places, to Saint John, N. B.