

## Communications.

## Our Troubles.

NUMBER VII.

I hope you and the readers of P. C. MESSENGER will indulge me while I talk more about our

## PREACHERS

As the prosperity of our cause depends more upon them than any other class of men in the kingdom of God. There being now no supernatural preachers and no promise from the head of the church that there ever will be, and the church, at least, to some degree, is responsible for the proclamation of the Gospel. It becomes her duty to qualify her gifted members for that work, so whenever she ascertains that she possesses a member whose feet are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, his loins girt about with truth, has on the breast-plate of righteousness, the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation, she should commit to him the sword of the Spirit and send him forth to preach, with ample recommendations and support. Thus the Gospel will be sounded out by her. If this brother should prove unworthy or preach any other Gospel than that taught by Christ or his inspired preachers, the church should withdraw her recommendations and support; also dismiss him from the body of Christ, and thus avoid any further difficulty with him or trouble on his account.

One of the greatest troubles we have had to encounter in California, has arisen from an unwise and injudicious distribution of our preachers. I opine a Methodist bishop could teach us much in this direction. But as we are not likely to call to our assistance a Methodist bishop, I will make some suggestions myself, though I can exercise no authority, either in the church or among the preachers; and here we will meet with some trouble from the churches, for most of them are selfish and only seem to care for the interest and prosperity of their own town or city. Now our advice is that every preacher be put to work in that part of the field where his labors would yield the greatest income. We have young men, hale and hearty, able to take the field and plant and build up churches; they should be assigned to that work. We have other good men, whose whole soul, body, and spirit are mellowed down by labors of love mingled with age; these we would assign to the pastoral work; but while the decrees of God would thus indicate and angels ready to approve the voice of the church, saying to this brother, come, feed my lambs and lead them by thy winning voice, to streams of living water, that they may drink and thirst no more. A voice is heard in the church, No, No; though we love this brother for his work's sake, he cannot amuse the children, nor use with dexterity the tuning fork. The result is, the athletic brother must leave the Gospel plow, with which he was operating successfully, and content himself to labor with a hoe, a rake, and a tuning fork, and the other brother, not being able to handle the plow, takes his seat in the shade and one laborer is lost to the work. A tuning fork is a very small instrument to be introduced here, while we talk upon a subject so solemn, but I have been frequently troubled over a tuning fork, and if it has troubled but one member of the church, it may be numbered among our troubles. Let me relate an incident that, often occurs after an interesting sermon and a warm exhortation; the congregation very solemn, sinners weeping, and all anxious and expecting to hear some dear soul confess our Lord; a song is demanded, some brother arises, announces the page in some three different books, then, after finding his tuning fork, draws it two or three times between his teeth, before he gets the right jingle. Now we sing. I have

seen by this time the solemnity turned into mirth, and the weeping into smiles.

But enough about these things. I will have no controversy with any brother upon the introduction of the tuning fork into the church. We have now on hand a controversy about the organ, and I think a controversy upon one musical instrument is enough at the present time.

The great object I have in view now is, it is possible, to stimulate every preacher in California, to buckle on his armor and take the sword of the spirit; and though he may have to make some sacrifice, preach the Gospel, the power of God unto salvation, and if you do not get your hire here which is your due, God will give it to you by and by. But I must talk to preachers again.

HENRY THOMAS.

San Jose, Cal., Dec. 10, 1877.

## Infant Church Membership, alias Infant Baptism.

A good Methodist brother a few days ago handed me a copy of the *Pacific Methodist*, the organ of the M. E. church South for this coast. On reading the paper over my eyes fell on an article entitled "Infant Church Membership." Upon examination of the article, I found that the heading was only another name for infant baptism, as the article was devoted almost exclusively to the defense of that institution. I have often wondered why it is that persons who argue so stoutly that baptism is a "non-essential," spend so much time in trying to prove that infants should be baptized. The article referred to fills almost two columns, the whole of which is an attempt to prove that infants should receive this non-essential rite.

The writer lays down the following proposition: "That the command to baptize infants is as definite and positive as to baptize adults." He then tells us that "a command may be enforced in three ways. 1st, by legitimate inference; 2d, by example; 3d, by positive precept." He then proceeds to argue the question under the first head, "Legitimate inference." The writer fails to state the true issue in the proposition which he discusses. No one contends for adult baptism alone, nor has anyone ever claimed that the Bible commands only the baptism of adults. What the opponents of infant baptism contend for is that the Bible commands only the baptism of believers; and they respectfully claim that it cannot be shown by "legitimate inference, by example," nor "by positive precept" that the Lord ever commanded the baptism of any others. But the proposition of the writer is not true even as stated, and he can not prove it true, by either of the "three ways" which he says, a proposition may be proven; let us look at it for a moment. "The command to baptize infants is as definite and as positive as to baptize adults." The Savior has commanded only the baptism of believers, infants cannot believe, the "legitimate inference" is that infants are not to be baptized; adults can believe, and the "legitimate inference" is that they may be baptized.

But let us try this proposition by the second way in which a proposition may be enforced. "By example." There is not an example of infant baptism in all the Bible; there are a number of examples of adult baptism; the Savior is one, Saul of Tarsus, Simon Magus, Lydia, Cornelius, and the Philipian jailer are others. This is sufficient to prove the proposition referred to untrue.

We notice now his argument in favor of infant baptism founded on inference. He says that "our inference in favor of this practice is taken from the fact that Christian baptism occupies the same position in the church of God under the present dispensation

that circumcision did before our Savior's incarnation," and again, "I shall proceed to show that baptism did take the place of circumcision."

If the writer of the article referred to could succeed in proving this he would gain an imperishable crown for his brow, and thousands of his Pedo-Baptist friends would rise to call him blessed; but in this he fails, as thousands of others who have tried before him. The Rev. Jacob Ditzler found out to his sorrow that that position could not be maintained, hence in his most recent debates he did not attempt it. That baptism did not take the place of circumcision may be shown, for the following reasons: 1st, males only were circumcised; "both men and women" were baptized; 2d, circumcision was to be performed on the eighth day, baptism is not limited to that day, and Pedo-

Baptists themselves do not do so; 3d, parents circumcised their own children, do parents baptize their children? 4th, the circumcision of a child never depended upon the faith nor piety of the parents, they might be as wicked as sin, as many of them were, yet their children were to be circumcised. Would our Methodist brethren baptize children of wicked disobedient parents? 5th, infants, idiots and slaves were circumcised alike without any moral qualification, simply because they belonged to the nation. Does baptism take the place of circumcision in these particulars? But the writer says that "it occupies the same place in the church of God that circumcision did before the incarnation." Now let us see: The Methodist Discipline commands baptism to be administered as an initiatory rite. Circumcision did not occupy this place, no one was circumcised under the law to make them Jews or to initiate them into the Jewish church, but because they were Jews and entitled to the ordinance by the command of God. That the Methodists make baptism the door into the church I presume will not be denied.

The writer of the article before us says that "it (baptism) is initiatory in its character." The Methodist Discipline requires their ministers to pray at the baptism of an infant, "that it may be baptized with water and the Holy Ghost, and received into Christ's holy church." We see then that according to Methodist theology, baptism occupies quite a different "position" from that of circumcision among the Jews.

But the writer tells us a little further along that "as an outward sign of an inward work of grace they are exactly alike." Now what puzzles me is, 1st, how circumcision was an "outward sign of an inward work of grace" to an infant eight days old. Then again, was circumcision an "outward sign of an inward grace to the wicked Saul son of Kish, first king of Israel, or to the wicked Jehu, and all those rebellious Jews who espoused the cause of Baal? Was it an outward sign of an inward grace to the wicked Jews who persecuted the Christians, stoned Stephen to death, and crucified the Savior? But we are told by the writer that in this particular "they are exactly alike." Now I would like for the writer to tell us how that baptism is an "outward sign of an inward grace in the heart" to an infant, and if there be an inward work of grace in the heart of a baptized infant, what is the medium of its accomplishment? Certainly it can not be accomplished by faith, for the infant can't believe; it can not be accomplished by repentance, for the same reason. Does it not follow that baptism is the only medium through which this "inward work of grace" is brought about? This is nearer "baptismal regeneration" than anything I have seen for a long time. If this be the teaching of the Methodist church, I confess that it makes plain some things in their discipline that have been hard for me to understand heretofore. For in-

stance, where the preacher is required to pray at the baptism of an infant "that this child being delivered from the wrath may be received into the ark of Christ's church," and "that the old Adam in this child may be buried in him;" and again, "sanctify this water for this holy sacrament, and grant that this child now to be baptized may receive the fullness of thy grace and ever remain in the number of thy faithful and elect children." Now all this is in exact harmony with the doctrine of "water regeneration," as is clearly set forth in the article under review.

But the writer tells us that "it took the place of circumcision as a seal." It is evident that baptism now formally seals all who receive it to God. Circumcision is spoken of in the Bible as a seal to no one except Abraham, and to him it was "a seal of the righteousness of his faith which he had being yet uncircumcised." Do the advocates of infant baptism administer that ordinance to infants as a seal of the righteousness of the faith they have before baptism? But we are told that "it is evident that baptism formally seals all who receive it to God." Now we all know the significance of a seal: It is to make secure to attest; in law it is to authenticate or to legalize that to which it is attached. To be sealed to God is to receive the stamp of God's acceptance, to have the assurance that we are a child of God; yet we are told that baptism is the seal. Isn't this placing too much stress on a "non-essential" ordinance? We are taught by the Apostle to the Gentiles, that God's children "are sealed unto the day of redemption." The writer says, "it is evident that baptism seals us." If this be true, does it not follow that all who have not been baptized have not the seal of their "redemption in Christ Jesus?" This is certainly placing a great stress upon baptism, and giving it a greater importance than is given to it in the word of God. The disciples have been denounced by their Methodist brethren as "water regenerationists," for saying that baptism to a penitent believer, is a condition of remission of past sins, but no one ever heard one of them contend that it seals us to God, or that it is a seal of our redemption. Baptism seals nothing nor any one. It is true that God's children are all sealed, but baptism is not the seal. Paul tells what it is by which we are sealed to God, "in whom," says the apostle, "after you believed, you were sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise," and again the same apostle says, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption." Thus we see that the Holy Spirit is that by which we are "sealed to God," and not baptism. It gives me pain to see our good brethren of the M. E. church South thus de-throne the Holy Spirit of God and exalta "mere external ordinance" in its place.

But the writer could have saved all this long argument founded on "inference," if he had resorted to either of the other two ways in which he tells us "a command may be enforced," that is, "by example or by positive precept." Now if those who contend for infant baptism would give us an "example" of it in the Bible, or a "positive precept" concerning it, that would settle the question, and there would be no necessity for an argument founded on "inference." I hope the writer will give an example from the Bible in his next.

BENTON.

Dean Swift said that the reason a certain university was a learned place was that most persons took some learning there, and but few brought any away with them, and so it accumulated.

To keep your secret is wisdom; but to expect others to keep it is folly.

## Lazarus and the Rich Man.

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores; and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table."

I suppose that the preceding parable has been read time and again by all of the readers of the MESSENGER, perhaps with a feeling of pity for poor lost Dives; but did the thought ever occur to you, gentle reader, that there is a possibility of you occupying the same position that the rich man did? Are there not souls starving for the bread of life, while we are living "sumptuously?" And will we refuse to give them the crumbs that fall from our tables? We all know that there are a few who are not able to give much, though the most of us are more able than we think. We have nothing but what we have received. And what are we for but that we should spend and be spent for him who has done so much for us. "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich." Are we better than he? Is the servant greater than his Lord? Jesus as a servant receives universal approval, Jesus as a master is not so popular. All are willing to be served by Jesus; but few are willing to serve him.

Reader, if you profess to be a servant of the Lord, take the case home to yourself. Suppose that you was master of a number of servants, and duty should call you away from home, and you should entrust your business matters with your servants, commanding them to do all that they could, assuring them that you would return soon, and reward them liberally for all their labor. If on your return your servants should confess to you that they had spent the means that you had given them, for their own pleasure, would you approve or condemn them? You had left fields of grain to be harvested; but some were not able to do much work, neither were they willing to spend their substance in hiring those who could. And those who were able, would not, because the others would not remunerate them for so doing. You pray for the conversion of sinners, but are you doing anything to convert them? Would you think that man sane, who on seeing his neighbor fall into a ditch would go into his closet and pray the Lord to help that man out? while he himself would not assist him, though it were in his power to do so. Christ thought sinners worth his blood, and shall we not think them worth even all our earthly goods?

We seem to think it better to lay up treasure on earth where moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal, than to obey the Savior's command, and "lay up treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt nor thieves break through and steal." He who has an eye single unto the glory of God will not spend his means for worldly pleasures. He will be willing to be poor in worldly goods that he may add some glory to the Lord. Jesus died for all; but somehow we seem to think it was just for us. At any rate, we are content if we think our own "calling and election sure." If we have the love that Jesus commanded, when he said, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you," we can not feel content as long as there is a soul wandering from God, that is in our power to reclaim.

Reader, if you knew not Christ would you think that person a Christian who would not deprive him or herself of at least some of earth's pleasures in order to teach you the way of life? "Not every one that sayeth unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of God." "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." "Be