

Communications.

Our Troubles.

NUMBER VIII.

If all the preachers, elders, deacons and members of the church were measured by the heavenly rule, came up to an elevated standard of morality, were living up to their full duty as Christians and enjoying all the favors promised to the faithful by the Head of the church, we would have no troubles; and would not again trouble the readers of the P. C. MESSENGER, with a talk about our

PREACHERS.

They being the workmen under God to prepare the material for his house and place it on his foundation, only according to law, should be very careful about their work, and see that it was good work, true work and square work, such work as Paul describes when he says, "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Now, if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire, (or he shall suffer loss by fire, but he himself shall be saved). I Cor. iii. 10, 15.

The decrees and ordinances of God require that there should be elders and deacons in every church, and their utility is beyond dispute. Yet it is the work of the preacher to plant, build up, and edify the body of Christ. And from the day our Lord was crowned and seated at the right hand of his Father, the Holy Spirit was given to his disciples, whom he left upon earth, and the first church was planted in Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all; until this day, history leaves us no account; nor does the memory of man call to mind a single instance where the material was prepared, a church built and grew to manhood without the aid of the preacher.

Yea more. The memory of man cannot call to mind a church, which after it had been planted and grew up to manhood, dispensed with the preacher and resolved to live, without preaching, but sickened, and unless that church repented and did her first works, she died, and the last state of that community was worse than the first.

We have had occasionally, to speak of the members of the church, the church, the deacons and elders. But they are not our subjects at present, the Lord willing we will talk about the troubles they give us by and by. But the preachers, our heart's desire and prayer to God is that they would not stand in the way of sinners, but take them by the hand and lead them into the service of the Lord. We want them to work; we believe it to be the duty of the church to pay them; but if the church refuse to do her duty, this is not a good excuse for them. We have confidence in God, and believe he will pay them full price for all they do according to his will. But it is not his will that a preacher should spend his time with a church which has lost her first love. A church, some of whose members have an annual income from \$5,000 to \$10,000, and yet too poor to pay a good preacher \$1,000 or \$1,200 for a year's labor, has lost her first love, love of God, and has taken up with her second love, love of money. God will not pay the preacher anything

to preach for her, unless she repent and do her first works, remembering from whence she has fallen; but it is the will of God, as expressed to the church at Ephesus, that the candlestick be removed from her; the result of which would be death; for if she was now sick, amidst the light being constantly attended by an angel, withdraw these and the church must die, and God knows it would be better for humanity to have no church than to have a dead one.

HENRY THOMAS.

San Jose, Cal., Dec. 20, 1877.

Unlearned Questions.

But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strife." 1 Tim. ii. 23; also 14 verse.

This is, in effect, a command; and one as imperative, and probably as important as any other. It may be that, to be baptized is not mere emphatic or more necessary.

There is scarcely any evil that, in the whole history of the church, has not resulted more or less, and generally more than less, from a disregard of this teaching. The strife comes from this disregard, and the divisions chiefly from the same source. There is little trouble or division about what is taught; but there is much about what is not taught. Unless you have reflected much on this subject, you will be astonished to see how much evil this teaching, when obeyed, prevents. It proposes directly to prevent divisions and strife; and without these what profound stillness would reign? It would be like "the great calm" of the waters, at the Savior's command.

What religious sect is not founded on an opinion, rather than faith; on an untaught question, rather than a thus sayeth the Lord? The dispute is not as to what is taught; about that there can be but little difference; it is as to what is not taught, as to a passage not in the Book, rather than as to one which is in the Book. We seem more anxious to find the passage not there, than the one that is there. And hence I have known long contests as to what would have been the consequence if Adam had not transgressed.

This teaching disposes effectually of infant baptism, the mourner's bench, the faith alone system, the organ question, and many, indeed all kindred subjects; in proof of which we have only to ask ourselves the question: Where is the passage that authorizes any one of the theories or practices mentioned? The absence of the passage should be conclusive proof that they are untaught questions; and for this reason, as well as because they gender strife, they should be avoided. In the very nature of things, being untaught, they do and will gender strife; and for this reason, if for no other, the apostle says: Avoid them.

That reformer who said: "Let us speak where the Bible speaks," laid in part, the foundation of a great reformation; but that other reformer who said: "Let us be silent where it is silent," completed that foundation. These expressions taken together cover the whole ground; and when rightly construed and fairly lived up to, should bring all Christians to the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace.

E. SWINFORD.

Is the Bible an Impure Book?

SYNOPSIS OF A SERMON DELIVERED BY H. D. CONNELL, IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, WATSONVILLE, CAL., Dec. 9, 1877.

Will the Belief and Practice of its Precepts Defile or Pollute Man?

Will it make any one the Worse for Believing and Practising its Teachings?

Is any one the Better for Disbelieving and Refusing to Obey its Commands?

There are certain great principles at the center of every system, which

are the embodiment of all there is in that system.

The science of mathematics is built on certain axioms.

The Americans claim that governments are founded for the benefit of man, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

The Bible has a few precepts from which spring all its teachings. These principles being analyzed, we can, with unerring certainty, decide its influence on the life of an individual, a community, a nation. Then to an examination of these principles we address ourselves:

In Exodus xix. 5-9, we have the proposition submitted to the Jews—

"I will be your God, if you will be my people."

Here is the first principle of free government in all the annals of history; here is the father of our precious Declaration of Independence. God asks them if they will obey him. If so, he will be their God. Says the immortal Jefferson: "All governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed." Behold how accurately the sage copied the principles of the Bible. See how this sentiment finds an echo in every true heart, because it was put there by the God who made us. Is this impure? It may be to tyrants. For this our fathers suffered in Valley Forge; for this they crossed the Delaware at dead of night, in mid-winter; for this they rotted in British hulks; for this the brave Green and his men went into battle naked; for this they trod with bare and bleeding feet the frozen snows; for this our mothers went cold and hungry in toil and tears; for this brave men died and pure women prayed. He that loves it not, let his father disown his name; let his mother hide her face in shame; let his death be without tears; let his burial be in the darkness and gloom of the night; let the thistle and thorn grow on his grave; let no tear fall on its soil; let storms beat there; let foul birds make it their abode; let the sad notes of their mournful tones be heard there. This principle, swelling in the bosom, gave us Pulaski, Lafayette, Henry, Jefferson, Green, Washington. Yes, our homes and happiness.

Therefore this first principle of the Bible is pure.

Idolatry is forbidden. "Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself nor serve them." This forbids man to worship anything that will degrade him. Man is above the material universe, therefore to worship anything in it, from the reptile up to the shining worlds, would degrade him. Though man is above all these, yet he is weak and imperfect. Though an honest man is the noblest work of God, he is unfit for an object of worship. No people can rise above the gods they worship, hence man could never rise above the frailties of poor weak man. He is commanded to worship a being called God; of whom it is said, "He cannot look on sin with the least degree of allowance."

The heavens are unclean in his sight. He charges his angels with folly. All the washings of the ceremonial law and perfections of fire and water, were to convey to the uncultivated mind, the purity of God. To us these ceremonies were not given, because we need them not; for we are the product of all these factors multiplied into 2,000 years of civilization. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul and mind. It is a law of our being that we become like the object of our worship. Man is here taught to be pure, holy, wise, merciful, just, good, because the object of his worship is.

"Thou shalt honor thy father and mother." Here obedience to parents, and reverence for them, and care for them in old age is taught. Is it impure in a child to give a ready ear to

the voice of advice from a father or mother? What is more noble in man than to honor the mother that entered the valley of the shadow of death to give him life? Who sang the first lullaby over his cradle, and gave his infant lips the snowy breast? Who cooled his feverish brow in sickness and kept her constant vigils over his midnight slumbers? Yes, he should give her the best room, the softest bed, build her fire first in autumn and last in spring. He that teaches differently is an enemy to woman and no friend to man.

"Thou shalt not kill." Is it impure to teach the sacredness of human life? To stay the murderer's hand?

This has become the law of every enlightened people, written in books and on stones, and engraven with the iron pen of education in the heart of man—stamped by his Maker in the coin of his nature. If murder is impure, then is the sacred care of human life pure. This the Bible teaches; he that teaches differently is a murderer at heart and should be bound by chains or held in prison walls.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery."

This teaches that each man should love and cherish his own wife only. That every woman should love and honor her husband alone. Is this impure teaching? Home is the guardian angel of every virtue. He who breaks this command inflicts a wound on his fellow man too deep and sore to ever heal. What can be worse than for "husband to husband meet, returning from each other's bed defiled." The teaching of the Bible is for the wife to leave father and mother and cleave unto her husband. The husband to leave parents and cleave unto his wife. The teaching of some now is, leave husband and cleave unto every other man—leave wife and cleave unto some other man's wife or daughters. The family is a sacred temple, dedicated to love and pater-nity. Any other teaching is that of the libertine, and is deprecated by all honorable men and chaste women. "I had rather be a toad and feed on the damp vapors of a dungeon, than hold a corner in the things I love for another man's use." What is the wealth of a State, if it is not her virtuous men and chaste women? Who feels like going to war or ceaseless toil for a home defiled by the adulterer's touch? This commandment hangs like a glittering sword over every home dedicated to virtue. Who is it that says this teaching is impure? The that seduces the simple and weak, the spoiler of home and honor, the companion of the lewd, and the child of the devil.

"Thou shalt not steal." Here the sacred rights of property are taught. Is this impure? If it is, it is impure to the thief only, for the honest man holds it dear. This, too, has gone from Moses into all law, and become as fixed as the polar star. Take this from our laws, and "Robber would robber meet and knock robber down." Thief would steal from thief. The earth would be full of violence. To this commandment the heart of every honest man bows in obedience.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." This can be impure to him only who says, "Evil be Thou, my good." The traducer of character, the ruiner of reputation, (some editors attend) who is more to be shunned than that Janus faced man that smiles on you, while his flattering tongue drops with honeyed lies, his cankered heart is filled with hissing serpents, whose forked, fiery tongues spit forth venom, to damn your reputation and malign your name. "He who steals my purse steals trash, but he that robs me of my good name takes that which enriches him not and makes me poor, indeed." Diogenes, when asked which was the most dangerous beast, answered: "If you mean a tame one, the flatterer; if a wild one, the slanderer." Therefore, this like all that

has gone before, is pure.

Speak the truth.

"Truth divine forever stands secure. Its head is guarded and its base is sure. Fixed in the rolling flood of endless years The pillar of the eternal plan appears; The raging storms, the dashing waves, defies."

Built by that Architect that built the skies."

If this commandment was obeyed, it would bring peace and sweet dreams, love among men, save the name of woman, and cause the earth to smile with joy. Let us remember Goldsmith's beautiful description of a truthful man:

"Like some tall cliff that lifts its awful form, Swells from the vale and midway leaves the storm; Though rolling clouds around its breast may spread, Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

Thou shalt not covet, unlawfully desire anything that is thy neighbor's.

This steps back of action and quenches desire, takes away the cause of theft, and guards the soul in purity.

He that fights against the Bible, fights against these teachings. For these are the principles God gave to govern man. He that confines himself within the bounds of these commands cannot go far wrong. He that refuses to listen to these cannot go right.

Present Position of Science.

It has been asked whether we are in the dotage, or in the infancy of science. A question that involves its own answer; not in the infancy, because we have learnt much; not in the dotage, because we have much to learn. The fact is, we are in a highly progressive state of improvement; and it is astonishing, in how geometrical a ratio the march of knowledge proceeds. Each new discovery affords fresh light to guide us to the exploration of another, until all the dark corners of our ignorance are visited by the rays. Things apparently obscure, have ultimately illustrated even those that are obvious; thus the alchemist, in his very failures, has enlightened the chemist; and the visionary astrologer, though constantly false in his prophecies, as to those little events going on upon the earth, has enabled the astronomer truly to predict those great events that are taking place in the heavens. Thus it is that one experiment diffuses its sparks for the examination of a second, each assisting each, and all the whole. Discussion and investigation are gradually accomplishing that for the intellectual light, which refraction and reflection have ever done for the solar; and it is now neither hopeless nor extravagant to anticipate that glorious era, when truth herself shall have climed the zenith of her meridian, and shall refresh the nations with her "day-spring from on high."—Ex.

Liars and Hypocrites.

The falsehood that the tongue commits, said Landor, "is slight in comparison with what is conceived by the heart, and executed by the whole man, throughout life. If, professing love and charity to the human race at large I quarrel day after day with my next neighbor; if, professing that the rich can never see God, I spend in the luxuries of my household a talent monthly; if, professing to place so much confidence in His word that in regard to worldly wealth I need take no care for the morrow, I accumulate stores even beyond what would be necessary though I quite distrusted both His providence and His veracity; if, professing that 'he who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord,' I question the Lord's security, and haggle with Him about the amount of the loan; if, professing that I am their steward, I keep ninety-nine parts in the hundred as the emolument of my stewardship; how, when God hates liars and punishes defrauders, shall I, and other such thieves and hypocrites, fare hereafter?"—Ex.