

Communications.

Our Troubles.

NUMBER IX.

We said in our last number, that the preparation of the material, the building of the church and the edification of the body of Christ, was the work of the

PREACHER;

we do not mean by this, that the preacher, is to do all the work, and the elders, deacons and members, to stand all the day idle, by no means; there is much work for all, and every member of the church, whether they be male or female, has a work to be performed, each may to some extent be a preacher and be instrumental under God, in making converts and edifying the body of Christ. When we speak of a preacher, we do not mean a genteel man, made such by a fashionable tailor, dressed in black, with a plug hat, fancy kid gloves, gold headed cane, gold watch, chain and seal, with a tuning fork in his vest pocket, ready to sound, that he may know that the introductory speech, he is about to make to a lady to whom he is presented, may be upon a fashionable key. I thank God that when we think or speak of a preacher, not even the shadow of such a being passes before our mind. But when we speak of a preacher, we mean a gentleman, through who yemas the rich milk of human kindness flows freely, who's mind has been fully illuminated by the brilliant rays of light, descending from the son of righteousness, who's judgment, from testimony, has finally decided the truth of the Bible and all it contains, who's heart is filled to overflowing, with the love of God, the tendrils of which, are reaching out and centering around the objects of his mission, who's winning voice is heard by day and night, in the family circle and in the high ways as well as in church houses, inviting sinners to come to God and into the bosom of the church, who's fervent prayers ascend to the giver of all good, in behalf of a fallen race, and after counting all the cost, leaves all earthly questions, and volunteers as a soldier, to fight, under Jesus the great captain of his warfare. This is the preacher, we want such. If all our preachers were thus heavenly minded, we would again say, as did the man of God, "how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things—But it is human to err, as well as mortal to die; and this good man before he leaveth the flesh may become a castaway, or in the goodness of his heart, he may introduce some custom, which may give us much trouble. During the last twenty years, customs have been introduced by preachers, and grown into usage and unless abandoned will cause us much trouble. A usage is more to be feared and fraught with greater evil than a written creed; a creed may be altered, amended or destroyed; but whatever becomes the usage of a church remains the usage of that church, for all time, whenever reference is had to that date; and has a powerful influence upon subsequent generations.

Some churches are governed more by the usage of their fathers, than their creed or even their Bible, they look upon them as a kind of higher law. The Presbyterians have established the anxious seat, as a usage in their protracted meetings; if objections were now made, to the anxious seat, it would be enough for a Presbyterian to know that it had been their usage for fifty years. The Baptist, Methodist and others, have introduced the mourning bench into their protracted meetings and continued it until it has become a usage, in those churches; its being a usage is regarded by many, sufficient to quash every objection men or angels could raise against the authority or utility of the custom.

The mourner's bench has been for many years and is now a powerful lever, in the hands of modern revivalists, it has enabled them to gather into

their different societies, hundreds, where without it, they could not have received tens, and if it be true, as they affirm, that while under this excitement at the mourner's bench, God sends his spirit into the heart of the unbeliever, who has never obeyed one of his commandments, produces faith in his heart, pardons his sins and gives him religion; then in heaven, through-out eternity, may be heard the shouts of many millions, praising God for the inestimable gift of the mourner's bench. But I have no faith in any human custom or usage, I believe they have done much in diverting the sinner, from the obedience of faith and introducing them to rely in imaginary and superstitious notions. If I ask a Baptist brother for his authority, for introducing the mourner's bench, he answers me by asking me, for my authority for introducing the *band of approbation*; well I feel *dumb*; for though I do not give the hand of approbation myself, I know my brethren do. But it was not a custom for a long time after the commencement of the present reformation and should never have been. And now brethren if we must have a human practice, let us exchange the hand of approbation for the mourner's bench. The former has no power to enlist the feelings of the sinner, but the influence of the latter no man on earth can estimate.

HENRY THOMAS.

San Jose, Cal. Dec. 25th, 1877.

Two More Propositions.

Bro. Stanley:

By your permission, I wish to make two more propositions to the Brotherhood of Oregon, the second one is, for us not to hinder any brother or sister from sending to our annual county meetings, twenty five cents for every one hundred dollars worth of property that we are assessed at, by the county assessor, to be appropriated for missionary purposes, the delegates from each congregation to select a President and vice-President, a Secretary and Treasurer, and employ all of our preachers, to hold protracted meetings, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and keep a strict account of their success, and the amount of contributions they receive, and report to the P. C. MESSENGER, and every three months report to the Secretary, and if they have not received a sufficient remuneration, for their labor, then give an order on the Treasurer for a sufficient amount to liquidate the debt. "Remember they that preach the gospel, shall live of the gospel." My third proposition is, that every brother or sister that is blessed with property, should make a will, and make the missionary cause one of the heirs, remembering at all times, that they that have not the (missionary) spirit of Christ, are none of his.

Z. DAVIS.

Buena Vista, Or. Jan. 11th, 1878.

Church Finance.

REPLY TO BRO. A. W. S.

I have read carefully more than once brother "A. W. S." articles on the subject of "Church Finance," and I confess I am not pleased with his suggestions altogether.

The grand objections suggested to my mind are these:

His plan is first, unlawful, second, impracticable, and third unjust. It is unlawful, because his plans would compel every one to give something whether the Lord had prospered him to that something or not. And if he had been prospered to something, it would make his brother or a "judicious committee," and not himself the judge as to what amount he had been prospered and should pay. It is unlawful also, because it is not sanctioned by the word, either in the letter, spirit or by just construction, or implication. It is impracticable, because, not being justified by the law, there is no means to compel a delinquent brother to pay

what is assessed against him. Ex-communication from the congregation would be the only way to punish a delinquent for non-payment of his assessment that I can think of, and the brother certainly would not contend that such a course is allowable under the law.

It is unjust, because it would take from the poorest widow, the most needy orphan, the sick brother something, it might be to the dividing of the last pound of flour, or meat she had; or to dismantling the orphan of its last garment, or taking away from the sick brother the last portion of medicine needed to restore him to health, I know the brother didn't mean this, but the system proposed by him would do it.

He objects the *ad valorem* system because the spirit of the Gospel is, that we should not have something for nothing, and taking the minors, sisters, and indebtedness of many out of the assessment a very few pay all expenses of the church, etc. I say, let all from the least to the greatest pay something, etc."

The words quoted above are the brothers, and would lead to just what I have stated, an in discriminate collection of taxes from the old and young, rich and poor, widows, infirm, and all alike, without regard to age, sex, or condition, and putting them (the taxes) into the pockets of the preacher, or perhaps to building, it may be a very costly church house, and furnishing it with the latest style of furniture, instrument of music, and all.

I can see no better plan than that taught by the apostle. In that is safety, out of it, danger, disaster, destruction. If we may depart from the teaching of the word with respect to raising church funds, and enter the field of speculation and construction on that subject, so may we depart from the word on any and all other subjects.

But the brother seems willing to depart from the favorite war cry of the founders of the Reformation, "I speak where the Bible speaks, and am silent where it is silent," in order to justify his position, and says that we "speak in many things where the Bible is silent as death."

But now I ask the brother if the Bible is silent on the subject of raising money? No, it speaks. Then let us speak like it speaks on that subject, even if there is never a church house built.

In order to raise church finances, my plan is not to ignore to "lay by in store" plan as the brother would irreverently do, but is to manage some way to infuse into the church more of the Spirit of Christ more devotion, more heartfelt religion, more fortitude, more knowledge, more temperance, more patience, more Godliness, more brotherly kindness, and more love. For if these things be in us and abound, they will make us that we shall neither be idle nor unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All Scripture is given by inspiration and is able to make us wise unto salvation through faith, which is Christ Jesus, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good work.

Then, "the lay by in store plan," is the Scripture plan for raising funds, an inspired plan, and is the plan, being thorough and perfect, and needing no amendments like that suggested by Brother A. W. S.

J. F. A.

Spencer Creek, Or. Jan. 15th, 1878.

The most polite, because the most effectual, way of governing in a family is for the husband occasionally to lay aside his supremacy; so in public as well as in private life, that king will be most popular who does not at all times exercise his full prerogative.

Send us a new subscriber.

Feed the Lambs.

Jesus said "Feed my lambs," and may a pitiful God remember the lambs which are straying, unled and unwatched, through the blind ways and stormy paths of this century.

The evangelizing spirit is warm in the hearts of our people, and we thank God for that. True Christian hearts are burning with zeal for the cause of the Master. Men with their eyes fixed heavenward, and strength devoted to the sternest of sternest of struggles, are pressing out from the warmer circles of Christian fellowship to "plant the line" beyond the walls of our acknowledged strongholds. But the saddest fact that appeals to the of him who studies our pioneer-work in all its features, is, that when a Paul has planted, too frequently, no Apollos has appeared to water.

Scattered through many counties of our state, are little bands of Disciples who have come together at the call of God's shepherds, as they have passed through the land, lighting the watch-fires of hope on the new-made alters.

Many of these little flocks have been forsaken by their shepherds, who are forced away by the press of other duties. "I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." They are scattered, and sometimes scattered for eternity. A few may cling about the altar and watch the dying flame, till, one by one, the sparks go upward like souls to God, leaving death and desolation to watch by life's deserted shrine.

The Spirit may cease to strive and go back to God; the soul may cease to pray and go back to the world; and angels will read the sequel beyond the day of doom and destiny. A bloomless plant in time; a dead and withered stalk in eternity.

There are instances in which such congregations have maintained life, rarely progressive life, owing to the presence in their midst of a few well developed Christian lives and hearts, already grown strong in the grace of God and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They are often materially assisted and encouraged by frequent evangelical visits by preaching brethren and thus kept alive in Christ.

No congregation of Disciples should be left without such assistance; either from active and progressive elements within, or from evangelical aid without.

The disastrous results of such desertions, are too unmistakably recorded in church history, by the impress of melancholy failures and prayerless hearts grown hopelessly cold, to be misread or misunderstood by the church in the discharge of its present duties and labors.

When Paul preached Christ with such power through the cities of old, he appreciated the necessity of watching over and nourishing "the babes in Christ." To-day we study with pleasure and profit his letters to them, and enjoy the holy enthusiasm with which he refers to his contemplated visits. Actuated by the same undying love for their prosperity, accompanied by Barnabas, he travelled through the cities of Asia, ordaining Elders in every church, confirming the souls and establishing them firmly in Christ. Again for this cause he left Titus in Crete, that he might ordain Elders in the churches.

Thus the apostles watched over their converts and endeavored to engage them in active Christian service, for activity is one of the first essentials to growth.

This apparent inability to provide for her scattered children, is one of the strongest appeals which is now being made to the church of the living God. It is a call which to this time, has received but a feeble response, but which demands immediate and prayerful consideration.

H. R. WILEY.

Santa Ana, Cal.

Evils of Gossip.

We have known a county society which withered away to nothing under the dry rot of gossip only. Friendships, once as firm as granite, dissolved to jelly, and then ran away to water only, because of this; love that promised a future as enduring and as stable as truth, evaporated into a morning mist that turned to a day's long tears, only because of this, a father and a son were set foot to foot with the fiery breath of an anger that would never cool again between them; and a husband and a young wife, each straining at the hated lash which is the beginning had been the promise of a God-blessed love, sat mournfully by the side of the grave where all their joy lay buried, and all because of this. We have seen faith transformed to mean doubt, joy give place to grim despair, and charity take on itself the features of black malevolence, all because of the fell words of scandal, and the magic mutterings of gossip. Great crimes work great wrongs, and the deeper tragedies of human life spring from larger passions; but woeful and most mournful are the uncatalogued tragedies that issue from gossip and detraction; most mournful the shipwreck often made of noble natures and lovely lives by the bitter winds and dead salt waters of slander. So easy to say, yet so hard to disprove—throwing on the innocent, all the burden and the strain of demonstrating their innocence, and punishing them as guilty if unable to pluck out the stings they never see, and to silence words they never heard—gossip and slander are the deadliest and cruellest weapons man has ever forged for his brother's heart.—All the Year Round.

Growth of Berlin.

A London paper, of a recent date, says: "It would be difficult to find a parallel in history of a rate of increase which could be compared with that of Berlin, the capital of Prussia, and now of the German Empire. Originally a Wend fishing village, on the sluggish River Spree, it did not attain any degree of importance until, in the days of the great Elector, it became the centre of a powerful State, of which he may be said to have laid the foundation. It is situated about one hundred feet above sea level, in the midst of a dreary plain of sand, destitute of either beauty or fertility—an oasis of stone and brick in a Sahara of sand." At the end of the seventeenth century it numbered, however but 50,000 inhabitants. It made more progress during the reign of the first Prussian King, Frederick I., and his successors, until, at the death of Frederick the Great, its population numbered 145,000. But the city increased at an enormous rate during the present century. In 1833 it had 250,000 inhabitants; in 1858, the population, including a garrison of 15,000 men, had increased to 455,000, while now it ranks fourth among the capitals of Europe, numbering nearly a million inhabitants, of which 22,600 are soldiers of the garrison, 20,000 Roman Catholics, and 16,000 Jews. Among its population should be mentioned 6,000 French Protestants, the descendants of those exiles who were driven from their native soil by the intolerance of Louis XIV., whose attribute, "le grand monarque," reads like a satire by the side of the shortsightedness which would deprive France of some of her best children by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Berlin received the refugees with open arms, and has reaped ever since, along with the whole of Prussia, the benefits of such a wise course."

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.