

Bro. Peterson to the Sentinel.

Editor of Catholic Sentinel, Portland, Oregon:

DEAR SIR,—Having been detained from completing my reply to your lengthy editorial of May 9, 1878, from causes too numerous to mention, I now proceed to give another extract from your bombast.

You say: "We will now explain to him how the church can have two heads and not be 'a monstrosity.' We suppose Bro. Peterson to be sufficiently read in the Scriptures to acknowledge that Jesus Christ was the founder of his church, and also that in order to maintain unity and perpetuity he appointed St. Peter to be his representative upon earth, and the visible head of his church. Christ is the invisible head of the church. Here, Bro. Peterson, we demolish your monstrosity, in the simplest manner. The church of God is a visible community or body, and a visible body must have a visible head, just the same as every nation is represented by a visible government, although all nations in the world are governed by the Almighty God in an invisible manner," &c.

Your explanation is not very clear. Why not give us some authority from God's word, showing that Peter is the head of the church on earth; simply for the best reason in the world. There is not an intimation of the kind in the Scripture, nor yet in history for several hundred years after the death of Peter.

Your supposition in regard to my knowledge of the Scripture, I have to say this: There is not a passage in the Bible that says that Jesus set up his church, body or kingdom, until after his ascension to heaven and coronation and crowning, at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us. Having received the promise of the Father, "the Holy Spirit," he inspired his ambassadors, who on the first Pentecost after his resurrection and ascension did set up the kingdom, which John the Baptist, in his day, said was at hand, and which Christ told the twelve apostles, in his first commission, to preach, saying: "Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matt. x.

This being a fact, we are willing to believe it. Kingdoms are of two characters, limited or unlimited. Christ's kingdom is unlimited. He is the Supreme Monarch. Therefore your assumption that Peter is the head of his church or kingdom on earth is without foundation in fact, and as you offer no proof on this assumption only that which you deduce from nationalities, we simply say your premises do not justify your conclusions. The apostles were told not to meditate what they should say, for a mouth and wisdom should be given them which their adversaries should not be able to gainsay. They had no choice nor will of their own in the setting up of the kingdom. They were only the instruments through whom Jesus spoke by the Holy Spirit, and gave to the human family the law of the spirit of life. See Matt. x. 20; John xvi. 13-15.

Again we take an extract of your article: "Bro. Peterson's 'sec. negative proof' is a curious compound of negation and nonsense. He tells us that the church 'has not the same order of ministers as the apostolic church,' yet he demolishes his own objection by admitting that after the establishment of the church these gifts were to cease. How then could any church possess gifts that were destined by Almighty God to cease? And then he calmly tells us that 'Christ did his work and went to his reward.' (?) Will Bro. P. kindly enlighten the world as to where he found this new fangled Christianity. He would certainly secure a patent for it as it is entirely novel, never having appeared in the whole range of theology before. Rewards are re-

ceived absolutely and entirely from God by man, and when a writer speaks of Christ going to 'his reward,' he evidently knows nothing whatever about the omnipotence or attributes of Almighty God. The same remark will hold good relative to Bro. Peterson's assertion that 'the apostles left no successors,' an assertion that is demolished by the strongest passage of 'Holy writ.' Before Christ ascended into heaven he said to his apostles, 'All power is given to me in heaven and in earth, go therefore, teach ye all nations,' &c. Matt. xxviii. 18-20. Catholic Bible.

In reference to sec. negative being nonsense, &c., I leave the readers of our articles to judge. You seem not able to see how a church could at one time possess gifts and then a later period not possess them. I know not how to make you see this. Any man that will carefully read the Acts of Apostle, will see that they possessed power that no other set of men have possessed since the Apostolic day, neither was it the design of our Savior that they should. See 1 Cor. xii. and xiii. Your wonder and amazement in reference to my statement in reference to Christ going to his reward would all vanish by a careful study of his words. See John xvii. 4, 5, 11, and 13; also Heb. v. 6-9, and xii. 2. By a careful study of these Scriptures you will discover I need no patent. You say the same remark will hold good about what I said about the apostles leaving no successors. I do not fully understand what you mean by this; but will say you might as well talk any other nonsense as to talk about successors to the apostles. Jesus declares them his witnesses to testify to the things they saw and heard, and the things which the Spirit should make known to them. These things they testified to, and sealed their testimony with their lives; and now if we believe on Jesus to the saving of our souls, we must believe through their words, as Jesus prayed. John xvii. 20. No successors in all this. But we must close for this time.

Yours, &c.,

MARTIN PETERSON.

Mound Ranch, Jackson Co., Or.,
Aug. 9, 1878.

The Law and Evidence of Pardon.

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY NIGHT, JUNE 16, 1878, BY DAVID WALK, AT THE LINDEN-STREET CHRISTIAN CHURCH, MEMPHIS.

"For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Rom. x. 3.

I have been carefully reviewing our teaching with reference to the law of pardon; and I have faithfully and conscientiously pondered this question: Is our teaching concerning the subject of remission so clearly scriptural, and at the same time so radically different from others, as to make our existence as a distinct religious organization both justifiable and necessary? For I all the time contend, that if we are not speaking a word of truth that would not else be made; and if we are not doing something specifically and unmistakably enjoined by the Word of God that would not else be done—then we have no right longer to maintain, or to struggle to maintain, a place among the various ecclesiasticisms of the world. Nor do I at all scruple to occupy ground so broad and high as this. Our position as a religious people is either right or wrong. If it is right, then we are bound by every sacred and worthy consideration to maintain and defend it; but if it be wrong, then it becomes our solemn and imperative duty to abandon it. And it is in the light of considerations so grave and momentous that I come to the discussion of the question: Has God a clearly revealed plan by which He saves sinners? If He has, do we conform to it? Is there anything for

the sinner to do? If so, what is it? We know that salvation is of God, but is it the duty of the sinner to co-operate with God? If yes, then how and to what extent, shall he co-operate with God? What must he do, if any thing, in order to obtain the pardon of his sins? What shall be the evidence to him that he stands justified before God?

Let us suppose for a moment that God has no rule by which he works—no plan—no clear or settled order—no invariable method—in the great matter of human salvation. If this were true, what would follow? Why, then each man would be a law unto himself; and in such case it would be the merest folly—the baldest nonsense—to talk of law, of method, of plans and purposes, of judgment, of rewards, and of retributions. Under such circumstances the moral world would present the same spectacle of confusion and lawlessness that characterized the physical universe before the creative and formative fiat of Jehovah broke the silence of eternity!

Men are sinners. All men are sinners. Their sins must be pardoned—remitted—cut off—or they have no promise of salvation. I speak with great deliberation. God has never promised to save one unpardoned member of the human family. He has never, any where, or in any place, even remotely hinted that heaven is at all accessible to an unpardoned and guilty man. This much is absolutely certain. What He may have reserved to himself we know not; what he has revealed we do know.

The sinner's relations to his God must be changed, or he is inevitably doomed, and that to all eternity! In one word, pardon is what every sinner must have, or there is no promise that he shall ever see the face of God.

There must then, of necessity, be a law of pardon—and this is true, for under every dispensation God has a standing ordinance for the remission of sins. Speaking of the Mosaic dispensation, Paul says: "Almost all things are, by the law purged with blood, and without the shedding of blood is no remission." A less ambiguous statement of a fact was never made; and this statement of a fundamental fact in the moral government and kingdom of God furnishes us the reason why one of the first two worshippers who ever appeared before him with sacrificial offerings, was rejected. God accepted Abel's offering, and blessed him; He rejected Cain's offering, and cursed him. Why was this? Was this a purely arbitrary act of the Sovereign? The reason is this: There was no blood in the offering which Cain brought. His fruit-offering would not bleed! There never was such a thing as the remission of sins without the shedding of blood. Under the law it was clearly and specifically pointed out what a sinner had to do in order to obtain the forgiveness of his sins. He had to procure a proper animal, and bring it to the priest, and the priest "shall take away all the fat thereof, as the fat is taken from off the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall burn it upon the altar for a sweet savor unto the Lord; and the priest shall make an atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him."

Again, "And he shall offer the second for a burnt-offering, according to the manner: [that is, according to the prescribed rule or manner,] and the priest shall make an atonement for his sin which he hath sinned, and it shall be forgiven him."

Once more. "If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord, and lie unto his neighbor in that which was given him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbor, or have found that which was lost, and lieth concerning it, and sweareth falsely in any of all these that a man doeth, sinning therein"—what shall such a sinner do? What

are the precise steps that such a man must take in order that he may obtain the forgiveness of sins, and know that his sins are forgiven? Listen. "Then shall it be, because he hath sinned and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found, or all that about which he hath sworn falsely; he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part thereto, and give it unto him to whom it belongeth, in the day of his trespass-offering. And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord, a ram without blemish out of the flock, with tly estimation, for a trespass-offering unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord: and it shall be forgiven him for any thing of all that he hath done in trespassing therein."

How simple—how plain—how easy all this! But two things were requisite: 1. To obey all that God commanded; and 2. To trust confidently in all that God promised. To obey the commandments, and believe the promises, of God, comprehend everything. The man who had faith enough in God to heartily believe that what He promised that he would fulfill, knew that he was pardoned. The evidence of his pardon rested upon (1) his knowledge that he had done precisely what God commanded, and (2) his faith that God would keep His promise.

Very well. Can we not enjoy the same blessed assurance of pardon under Christ? Is Moses better than Christ? Is the Law better than the Gospel? Did the Jew, who faithfully obeyed God, entertain any doubt of his pardon? Was there any guess work about it? Was there any mere indulging of a hope that he was pardoned? Would not this have been to dishonor God, and to blaspheme His holy name?

Now, what is the law of pardon under Christ? We have seen what it was under Moses; what is it under Christ? We must look for this law of pardon under the only commission that ever embraced the Gentile world! What is the evidence of pardon under Christ to all—both Jews and Gentiles?—for there is no difference between Jew and Greek. Is it faith? Is faith the evidence of pardon? Because a sinner believes in Christ, is this the evidence that he is pardoned? This cannot be, for faith necessarily precedes pardon; therefore faith cannot be the evidence of that which it precedes. Is it repentance? This can not be; for repentance likewise precedes pardon. Repentance, then, no more than faith can be the evidence of pardon. They are both essential to pardon; but neither, nor both together, is the evidence of pardon. To show that I am right in this, I will here quote from the celebrated Dr. Richard Watson, of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England, whose "Institutes" have to be studied four years by every regular Methodist minister, before he can be ordained to the office of Elder. I quote from the "Institutes," Vol. II, page 277: "Repentance and faith are exercised in order to pardon; that must, therefore, be subsequent to both, and they can not, for that reason, be the evidence of it, or the evidence of pardon might be enjoyed before pardon is actually received, which is absurd." All of which I heartily approve, except his always putting the word repentance before faith, which is also "absurd;" but at this point the learned Doctor meets a great difficulty, which neither his theology, nor the theology of the whole religious world enables him to overcome. He says: "But it has been said 'that we have the testimony of God in his word, that when repentance and faith exist, God has infallibly connected pardon with them, from the moment they are perceived to

exist, and so it may be surely inferred from them.'"

Now, this is actually the teaching of a great part of the so-called, and self-styled, orthodox, on this momentous subject; this is the best evidence they have that they are pardoned; that is, having faith and repentance, they infer from them their pardon. But this does not satisfy the cultivated and logical mind of Dr. Watson. How does he meet the difficulty? Hear him: "The answer is, that we have no such testimony." That is, "that we have the testimony of God in his word, that when repentance and faith exist, God has infallibly connected pardon with them from the moment they are perceived to exist, so it [pardon] may be surely inferred from them." Dr. Watson says that we have no such testimony. We must, however, hear the learned Doctor further. He continues: "We have, through the mercy of God, the promise of pardon to all who repent and believe; but repentance is not pardon, but they are its prerequisites; each is a *sine qua non* [an indispensable condition], but surely not the pardon itself, nor, as we have just seen, can either be considered the evidence of pardon, without an absurdity. They are the means to that end; but nothing more: and though God has 'infallibly connected' the blessing of pardon with repentance and faith, he has not connected it with any kind of faith; nor with every degree of repentance, nor with every degree of faith. How then shall we ever know, whether our repentance and faith are accepted unless, pardon actually follow them? And this pardon cannot be attested by them, for the reason above given, and must, therefore, have an attestation of higher authority, and of a distinct kind, the only attestation conceivable which remains, is the direct witness of the Holy Spirit. Either this must be acknowledged, or a painful uncertainty as to the genuineness or the required measure and degree of our repentance and faith, quite destructive of 'comfort,' must remain throughout life."

There is not one particle of controversy between the eminent and learned Doctor and those whom he and his would stigmatize, as "Campbellites," in all that he here says, except in these words: "The only attestation conceivable which remains, is the direct witness of the Holy Spirit." Is he right in this? It is a fair statement of the position of the orthodox religious world, but is it the truth? If it is, then I do not hesitate to say that the maintenance of a distinct existence on our part as an ecclesiasticism is a crime against humanity, and treason to the Lord Jesus Christ! These be grave words, but they are true ones. But I do not accept the teaching of Dr. Watson, nor of the orthodox, as herein set forth, and hence am what I am. I regard the difference between the advocates of primitive Christianity and the denominations touching this point as radical—vital—and forming the issue of real consequence. Set this right, and most of the minor difficulties will necessarily adjust themselves.

Now let us see if the only evidence of pardon conceivable, is the direct witness of the Holy Spirit. And in answering the Doctor—and all the religious world represented by him—on this point, we shall not only show him a more excellent way, but we shall also reach the law of pardon through Christ.

The only law of pardon that ever did apply—or that now applies—to the Gentile nations, is written in these words, the last words uttered by our Lord on earth: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" [that is, pardoned.] Now, as Dr. Watson has fully and correctly shown that faith is not the evidence of pardon, and repentance is not the evidence of par-