

PACIFIC CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

"GO YE, THEREFORE, TEACH ALL NATIONS."

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Pacific CHRISTIAN MESSENGER,

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Biblical Interpretation.

Editor P. C. Messenger:

A correct understanding of the word of God gives light and knowledge to the intelligent and appreciative mind. So that "The entrance of the word giveth light, making wise the simple." That all such promises, are upon the condition that His word is understood, requires no argument.

"He that heareth the word and understandeth it," is the man that is made wiser and better.

Philip said to the Ethiopian, "understandest thou what thou readest?" He did not, but he was sensible and honest enough to confess his ignorance and to ask for knowledge upon the figurative language of the prophet. A certain interpreter of the Scripture, conceived the idea that the "austere man" of Luke xix. 21, was an "oyster man," and he found no difficulty in showing the wonderful similarity between our Lord and an "oyster man." Another interpreter of the same sort could see clearly that the "untow-ered generation" of Acts ii. 40, were perfectly defenceless, as they had no tower of refuge in the hour of danger. Another class "who know not the Scriptures, not the power of God" make themselves ridiculous, and do much harm by claiming that every Hebrew and Greek word has a corresponding English word, and that in our Bible, we have such corresponding word in every case; and that every such word means just what it says, and says just what it means." No allowance whatever, can be made, either for the figurative or secondary meaning, and use of words.

As a result of such false understanding of the Scriptures, or of its words, it was actually believed a few years ago, that unconverted man had a heart of stone. Literal, real stones. It was this false principle of interpretation, founded in ignorance, that brought about the silly imposture of transubstantiation. The priest knows well enough, that the "loaf" is nothing but bread; because Christ said, "this is my body," they find it necessary to transform the "bread" into the actual "body" and "presence" of Christ by the magic of the priest.

To what other conclusion could such a false interpretation of the Scriptures lead?

In the simplicity of unconscious and dogmatic ignorance they would say, "Christ said to the assembled disciples at Jerusalem, in the language that they understood, 'this is my body,' and 'this is my blood.' Now the phrase 'body' and 'blood' had a definite meaning to the disciples, and if Christ used them in a different sense from that which they understood, then he deceived them, unless

he made an explanation; and we have no evidence that he did this!"

Now I would ask any person of ordinary intelligence, if such interpretations of Scripture are not even worse than azoic nonsense. But says the credulous interpreter, "Christ says in Matt. xxvi, 26, 28, 'this is my body,' and 'this is my blood.' Now who under the sun would have ever thought of making that statement of Christ mean bread and wine, had it not been that Protestant skepticism and science is said to teach differently." Now just think of it; they say Christ says "this is my body," and Christ's real body it is, and must be. Hence, the necessity of the "real presence," or transubstantiation.

Again, God said to Adam "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,"—and yet "Adam lived 930 years and begat sons and daughters." From this statement of Scripture, some "self-willed" skeptics, who "speak evil of the things that they understand not," reject the statement as false, because in this case "the day" is lengthened out to 930 years. And according to the infallible formula above quoted, they say, "Now the word day had a definite meaning both to Adam and to the Israelites, and if God (or Moses) used it in a different sense from that which they understood, then he deceived them, unless he made an explanation, and we have no evidence that he did."

The ignorant man begins to turn and twist the old book inside out, but he only involves himself in wild and fanciful theories, and in hopeless darkness; for he is tied hand and foot by his own senseless formula, and he can not explain it.

Again, the man of understanding (or science) knows that the terms "morning" and "evening," mean nothing more or less, than "the beginning" and "the ending," or, the first part and the last part. This is not only true of the Hebrew and Greek, but also of its English meaning. The morning of life refers to the time of youth, or the early past life; and the evening, to the end of life. In its appropriated meaning now it is used with reference to the beginning and the ending of the solar day; ranging as it does, in different latitudes, from six hours to three months in length.

Now if the critic who "is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason;" and who infers that the "evening and the morning of the first day," and so on, necessarily means the rising and the setting of the sun, (because the words morning and evening had a definite meaning to the Israelites, and if Moses used it in a different sense from that which they understood then he deceived them, unless he made an explanation, and we have no evidence that he did.) I say if the terms mean sunrise and sunset can he tell the exact length of those primordial days, seeing that the sun and moon were not made until during the "fourth day?"

To say that the "morning" and "evening" of the first four days, (at least) meant the time of sunrise and sunset, because "it had a definite meaning to the Israelites, and if Moses used it in a different sense—he deceived them; when there was no sun to either rise or set until the fourth day, is simply worse than azoic and silurian nonsense, and the "six days of Genesis combined.

Science is knowledge, and knowledge is truth, and well would it be

both for the Bible and for humanity, that we were all "searchers after truth" both in Nature and Revelation, and between them there is no conflict. As we obtain more knowledge our ignorance and our foolish interpretations of Scripture vanish away. But in all our search after truth, let us not ignore either science or

COMMON SENSE.

From Bro. Aaron Payne.

NORTH YAMHILL, OR.,

Feb. 9, 1880.

Editor Christian Messenger:

I have seen some communications in the MESSENGER of late that I think I ought to reply to.

The first communication I wish to reply to is from S. C. Adams, my junior brother in the ministry, and the high respect that I have for him causes me to make the reply. He speaks in his piece that was published of members of the church who will not hire the clergy, as dead limbs that ought to be sawed off that the tree might take a more vigorous growth. If they were cut off perhaps they would be more in the way than they are now; for I am satisfied that my junior brother would not desire the inquisition fires again kindled to burn them up; and more than that he would have to use his own law chisel and pruning knife, for the Scripture of the New Testament furnishes no pruning tools for that purpose. And now I will furnish my brother with a much better plan than he proposes, viz.: to dig about it and fertilize it, and if it bears silver leaves and gold berries to suit, all right; and if it does not, leave it to his Master and mine to cut it down; dead limbs on a tree always indicate a decayed root or hollow trunk. Remember that.

The second piece that I wish to reply to is where a writer says that the reformation at one time nearly all opposed a hired ministry; he ought to have said that it universally opposed it. What I term the reformation is the rejection of all creeds and confessions of faith made by man, and take the Scripture for our rule and practice. This reformation took place in eighteen hundred; this threw them off of the broad gauge that leads to and from Rome, and they ran upon this narrow track until eighteen hundred and twenty-seven; up to this time the reformation opposed the educating and hiring the clergy to preach, and this opposition to hiring the clergy was universal; but unfortunately, as I think, they were again switched off into the broad track; and those that are in favor of hiring men to preach claim this the start of the reformation. This took place in north western Virginia; and although we have no written creed or confession of faith yet made, and profess to take the Scripture for our rule and practice (or at least so represent it), there are many things taught and practiced contrary to the Scripture; and I here call for a return to the first principles, to teach what the Scripture teaches, nothing more, nothing less, and those that contend for these first principles are termed old fogies. I believe that word has become patent in the mouths of some people; but the writer is very thankful that those that oppose the hiring of the clergy, for the good of the church and the world, are nearly all dead, and gone to heaven. In reply I will say that if the demand of the clergy was complied with by protestant, Europe and America would

be as effectually drained of its cash as the Roman Catholic country now is, but thank God there is not quite all the opposing power yet dead.

Hope this will be published at an early day, and if there is any one that thinks proper to reply, I respectfully request it.

Respectfully your brother in Christ,

AARON PAYNE.

From Bro. James W. Webb.

LOMPOC TEMPERANCE COLONY,

SOUTHERN CAL., Feb. 4, 1880.

Dear Bro. Campbell:

I read with deep interest the items of church news on the Pacific Coast, through the columns of the MESSENGER, and as often blame myself that I have never reported the results of our protracted meeting, last fall.

Bro. B. W. Skene and myself have been laboring for some time to build up a congregation in town, here, and have succeeded, we believe, well, under all the adverse circumstances of a new place, want of a meeting house of our own, &c.

We had the pleasure of having Bro. H. D. Connell's efficient aid in a protracted meeting, lasting over two Sundays. He drew out large and very attentive audiences of all classes, from first to last, increasing; indeed all the while. He not only instructed, comforted and strengthened the brethren, but added some twenty-five, mostly by confession. I did the immersing in the river, with great satisfaction, as my eldest daughter, Lizzie, aged 15, was among the number. Bro. Frank Aldridge, of Watsonville, and wife, assisted greatly in singing. Bro. A. preached and exhorted at times, too. It is the wish of all the church and all of those who attended Bro. Connell's preaching, that he should return, if possible, and follow up the good work, this spring.

The Methodists are just completing a church house, and very many non-church members volunteer substantial help whenever we make a move to build. But times are too hard, at least till after harvest.

Our Sunday school is doing excellently. Bro. Skene is a fine worker in that department, and has large experience. He divides the time with me in preaching and presiding at the Lord's table. Bro. Connell and myself ordained him an elder. He is a very earnest, practical and instructive preacher, holding close to the "Word," yet calling many useful and apt outside illustrations. He has an abundance of the fortiter in re, and is successfully cultivating an equilibrium of the suaviter in modo. It grieves and hampers me that I can't give my whole time to the Gospel work. I gave up school teaching to invest some money and time in a small store, thinking simply to make my own living, and so to be able to give gratuitous preaching and temperance work. But alas for my calculations, the small store has grown into a large one, and the two branches of work spoken of keep growing on my hands. The store is like the bear the man had; I can't let go unless somebody will help me, by buying me out, a thing I am asking the Lord, should he see fit to aid me to. The other work the people in and out of the church, and my conscience wouldn't let me quit if I wished to.

Indeed it must be something of a compliment to preach, with but very slight preparation, regularly in one

place for nearly five years, and one's hearers protest if I suggest that it must be getting monotonous and must be largely a repetition, and that we should have a change. Well, just as Providence leads. If he opens the way elsewhere, and seem to say "walk you in it," I will; but if he indicates that I should stay in this part of the field, here, contentedly, I will stay. It is a good community and climate, and enjoys many advantages. Should I, at any time, be called elsewhere, Bro. Skene is abundantly able to feed the brethren with the bread of life.

My good wife and I often laugh because we left Australia to escape the great heat, and intended, if California were not cold enough, to go to Oregon! California brethren this winter can appreciate the joke, for snow lay even in Los Angeles, the city of orange groves, in the door yard for several hours. Nevertheless, I hope, some day, to pay Oregon a visit, renew my pleasant acquaintance with Bros. P. R. Burnett, E. W. Barnes, S. C. Adams, J. P. McCorkle, and others, and get acquainted with Bro. Campbell and many of whose names and labors I have learned through the MESSENGER. But I must close. I have hurriedly scribbled (as your compositor will readily allow) this while eating my dinner. The meal is ended, time up, and paper filled.

Truly your brother,

JAMES W. WEBB.

Two Kinds of Discontent.

There are few men who look at life with such sturdy common sense, and who have so keen a sympathy for all that life implies and includes, as Rev. Robert Collyer. In his lecture on "Clear Grit," he thus speaks:

It is the curse and blessing of our American life that we are never quite content. We all expect to go somewhere before we die, and have a better time when we get there than we can have at home. The bane of our life is discontent. We say we will work so long and then enjoy ourselves. But we find it just as Thackeray has expressed it. "When I was a boy," he said, "I wanted some taffy—it was a shilling—I hadn't one.—When I was a man I had the shilling, but I didn't want any taffy."

But I say not a word against that splendid discontent that all the time makes a man strike for something better. I like this idea that every boy born in America dreams of being President. No man has any right to be his best and not to do better tomorrow than he is doing to-day. But all that will come by keeping close to a manly and dutiful life. While we are going steadily along to whatever future awaits us, the grandest thing we can do is to feel sure that what we are doing for a day's work, with all that we can do besides, is just the most blessed thing, so far as we can do, and that we are very likely having the best time that can ever come to our life; that this work and wife, and home and children, all they are and all they mean, beats the world.

The saddest thing in our life, is our discontent when we ought to be the most contented. It is our birthright to get the good of life as we go along, in these simple and pure things that to all true man and womanhood are like sunshine and rain to an apple tree. But when we will not believe this, and dream that the best of our life is to come when we have made our fortune, then we sell our birthright for a mess of pottage; but worse than Esau, the pottage gives us the dyspepsia, and then we lose the good of birthright and pottage together.