

Our State Meetings.

All the men of the Jewish nation were required to meet three times every year, and remain together seven days each time. The women were not required to attend these meetings, though they often did attend. See Deut. xvi. and Neh. viii. "The feast of unleavened bread, the feast of weeks, and the feast of the tabernacles," were sacred and important occasions—"at the place which the Lord should choose." We might all profit by studying them, the reasons for them, the proper manner of conducting them; their abuses, and their blessings.

And in this connection it is well to remember the typical nature of the Jewish worship. This was, as a whole, an example or type for us—Gentiles as well as Jews, and is handed down for our admonition. 1 Cor. x. 6, 11.

If the Jews needed and could profit by three annual meetings, should we not profit at least by one? But if they mismanaged, abused, and made these meetings a curse instead of a blessing—as they evidently did sometimes—is there not danger of our erring and suffering in the same way?

Hence we need to consider

1. HOW TO ORGANIZE THEM.

And here it may be well to premise, and clearly understand, that these are Christian meetings. Others are not counted in them, as Gentiles were not in the Jewish meetings. They are not made up of the world and the church, or of the sectarian and the church; but of Christians in good standing at home, and of delegates from congregations of Christians in good standing. Nor do they come by virtue of a price paid for membership, but by virtue of being Christians. When assembled they are not a body independent of the churches, but a body composed of individuals who are accountable to the churches where they hold membership, and who, on their return home, would be dealt with, if they should do anything unworthy of the Gospel, or the Christian name.

The rule laid down by Paul, and approved by all experience and observation, that, "all things should be done decently and in order," would seem to require 1, a chairman; 2, a secretary—if not more than one; 3, a corresponding secretary, if it is designed to continue and make the most of these meetings; 4, a treasurer; for means are necessary to the work. The meeting being called to order, and these officers appointed; then, if we would follow another one of Paul's rules, "Let all be done to edifying," the chair, with the approbation of the meeting, may appoint

1. A committee on credentials.
2. A committee on general programme.
3. A committee on finance.
4. A committee on preaching and the morning worship; the bishops of the church with which we meet being left to manage the Lord's day worship.
5. A committee on Lord's day schools.
6. A committee on missions, and missionary or evangelical work.

Perhaps other committees may be appointed; and the committees on finance and missions might be, like the corresponding secretary, made permanent; that is, remain and act from one meeting to another; make their reports to the annual meeting, next, after their appointment, and not be discharged till their reports are approved.

The duties of the committee on credentials would be to determine who should be members of the convention. This is on the principle, that every body of people has a right to determine its own members. There is, of course, and necessarily, a primary organization which is somewhat informal. But after permanent organization, all bodies of men, from the Senate and Congress of the United

States, down to the smallest temperance and benevolent society, determine who shall, and who shall not be members, just as every individual congregation does. In doing this it is not proposed to try any case, to discipline any one, or in any way to interfere with the independence of the congregations; but simply to learn enough about each individual or delegation proposing to take part in the meeting, to be able to say, "we want you," or "we don't want you." The necessity for this course is often absolute. Certainly such a meeting would not receive Methodists, Presbyterians, or Mormons, as such, or persons excluded or manifestly unworthy, or worldlings. To do so would be to abandon the idea of its being a Christian meeting.

2. WHAT SHOULD BE ATTEMPTED.

1. Here it may be well to note again and distinctly, that this is not a body outside, or independent of the church. Every member of it is presumed to be a Christian, and accountable to his home congregation.

2. That it is not a court of appeals, or a court at all; it is not to discipline members of congregations or decide personal difficulties. It disclaims every thing of the kind.

3. It is not a legislative body; its province is not to make laws.

4. It does not propose to do anything for the congregations which it would not be lawful and proper for them to do—nor anything that belongs especially to them—as the ordaining of evangelists, or other church officers. Occasionally, persons, without due consideration, look to these meetings to ordain evangelists, &c. Scripturally organized congregations do all this. But

1. We meet, and get acquainted, encourage, and are encouraged. "As iron sharpeneth iron so doth the countenance of a man his friend." "As face answereth to face in water, so doth the heart of man to man." Hence, in separating, each one is more determined, and better prepared for the great work before him. He knows his co-workers better, loves them more, and is better able to cooperate with them. This is a great good, and would well repay all its costs.

2. He knows the field of his labors better, and can better determine where and how to work. This, too, is a great advantage. Less labor may yield more happy results now.

3. He learns something of importance about the Bible, about preaching, duties of evangelists, &c., and these lessons are of great importance.

4. A general programme for the next year's work is laid out, and carried home by each one, and all energies are directed that way—all together. Thus, if a paper should be sustained, one more than another; if books, tracts, &c., are to be circulated; if a Sunday school work is to be done; if a school or college is to be sustained; if a mission is to be inaugurated or sustained—it is understood and agreed on, and all work the same way. If certain persons or things are not to be commended, or approved—it is understood. Of course this is not a legislative, or a judicial agreement; but it is a brotherly, a Christian agreement; and the love and respect we have for each other will, to say the least, go far to secure unity of action. If innovations come in or causes of discord, and the spirit of love and peace abounds, we will know how to manage them, and will manage them as we could not by separate and individual action. "In a multitude of counselors there is safety."

3. HOW TO MANAGE THESE CONVENTIONS.

Perhaps it is rather late to call attention to this head-line. Perhaps it is not the best. But I desire some how to intensify the rule given by Paul to this effect: "Let all your things be done with love." "Love works no ill to one's neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

"All things whatsoever ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even so unto them."

We used to have our constitutions and by-laws in pamphlet form, and our board of managers from one year to another. Some brethren stumbled, or were about to stumble at these, and we dropped them all, rather than afford, or put a stumbling block in our brother's way. And now, if these committees, secretaries, etc., are offensive, even to the weak, away with all of them. So of tuning forks, hymn books, and all the instruments in the world! Away with them all at once and forever rather than have discord or wound a brother's feelings. They are not absolutely necessary to the worship—as eating of meat is not—and however desirable or important, they cannot be worth so much as union. Only this is Christian love—the love that would enable us to understand, "In honor preferring one another"; "The strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves," etc. When this love abounds, we shall have no angry disputes, no unkind words, no perversions, or hand hits, no "bitterness, or wrath, or anger, or clamor, or evil speaking."

"When love in one delightful stream, Through every bosom flows; When union sweet and dear esteems, In every action glows!"

We all have our opinions, our tastes, and our preferences; but who of us values these more than he values his Christian brother, and the union and peace of the church?

That which cannot be done in love—that is, on the divine plan—cannot be done at all; cannot be done by man's plan. We must abandon it, however important and desirable. It is impossible, and we may as well admit it.

"How can two walk together unless they agree?" and it might be added: How can they agree unless they love each other?

I suppose therefore that any one who would say a fretting word, or do anything manifestly not necessary to the worship, or to obedience; any one who is unkind, unloving, unbrotherly; any one who would disturb the meeting, or wound the feelings of his brother by word or deed, unnecessarily, should be reproved, and if he persists, disowned, and put away, and I suppose that every member, from the chairman to the farthest off and the least, should see to this: I note this and dwell on it, and would make it more clear and forcible if I could, because I have seen so much evil result from lack of attention to it—in our state meetings and elsewhere. I have attended at least a dozen state meetings, and many others, where this unbrotherly spirit and manner so prevailed as to destroy almost entirely the good that might have been done. And many have gone home discouraged, feeling they might never attend another state meeting; that they certainly would not if they could be assured they would find again the same unpleasantness. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be."

It is very discouraging to find members discussing, like politicians, for the accomplishment of personal ends; in the interests of our sanctified selfishness; for the promotion of favorites or the crushing of opponents; or introducing matters that belong not to a convention of this kind, and which would inevitably disturb and discourage its best friends. To prevent these evils, brethren have been compelled to stand constantly on the watch-tower, and by prudent suggestions prevent such evils. And after all that the most thoughtful and wise could do, our state meetings have been more or less injured, till now, and for some years past, many have not attended, and are not inclined to attend, unless they can have some assurance that more of wisdom and the divine spirit will prevail.

Besides the matters here spoken of, I would have no objection, if individuals at these meetings or elsewhere, would form companies for publishing papers, books, tracts, keeping book and tract depositories, running schools and colleges, etc. Or if the meetings, or individuals will raise funds, select and send out Sunday school evangelists, or general missionaries, at home or abroad; I will be glad, even if they should have a regular constitution and by-laws, and a standing board of managers, provided good people are not offended. If they are or if the harmony of the meetings is to be disturbed, I would rather wait or waive any preference, and perhaps my rights in the interests of good order and brotherly love. Bear with the weak ones, and they will learn. At least, do not "sow discord among brethren," and so destroy our state meetings, and hinder many good works.

I would venture some other suggestions, as that the committee on general programme be permanent, and make out, and publish before each meeting, what is to be done—who is to lecture, the themes, time, etc.—so that all will know what to expect. This, if wisely done, will go far toward encouraging attendance, and promoting business. But, if you have patiently heard my motion, I will wait for a second.

Very affectionately,

C. KENDRICK.

Are we a Sect.

That is, we churches of Christ, in California, in contradistinction from churches of Christ elsewhere. Are our practices different, and is our faith the same?

If so, and if not so, should we not have a written creed, not because it is absolutely necessary, but because it might be a pleasant thing to have as a sort of written statement for a memorial. Something to look back to, as a sort of history, to tell what we once were, and to enable us by contrast to tell, or know what we now are, and are to be. The signs of the times indicate that a great secret power is at work to effect a grand union and cooperation of all Protestant churches upon the common points of their faith.

The great religious cyclone is expected to move on silently, but surely, with the steady gait of destiny, exhibiting great powers of elasticity at first, and then equal powers of contraction afterwards, each denomination will be permitted to retain this creed, providing that all of its distinctive features are forever neutral, inert, and inoperative. Hence, our Presbyterian friends can retain that clause of their creed that says, "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others preordained to everlasting death."

But the above scrap of creed, will be dead, historic creed-lumber, so far as the new Catholic church is concerned, her elasticity would permit them to retain it as an heir-loom but not as common faith material. And this will be true of all other denominational peculiarities.

Now the grand question with us churches of Christ is, if we are irresistibly drawn into this great religious malstrom, what of our faith and practice can we be permitted to retain and what must we surrender.

Perhaps a written statement of our present religious status would enable us to determine:

Art. 1. Faith, repentance, confession and baptism are essential to salvation.

Art. 2. Two protracted meetings a year are essential, at which time the Lord's supper may be celebrated and popular preachers remunerated, provided they come from a distance, are well dressed, are of commanding presence, and don't stay too long.

Art. 3. The use of the International

Series of lesson papers is imperatively demanded by all of our Sunday schools.

Art. 4. It is essential that as many as can conveniently attend our State meetings.

Art. 5. Where God speaks we speak and where he is silent we are silent. We are opposed to written creeds of human origin. The New Testament contains our only creed.

Art. 6. None but the greatest preachers on the coast should be encouraged at our meetings, and even they should not receive such remuneration as would financially embarrass the churches. All our preachers should learn to minister to their own necessities and not burden the churches.

Art. 7. A church government or polity, ranging anywhere from prelacy to a democracy, will meet the wants of all classes of our people.

Now then in reviewing the above articles, we are surprised to find so much that will be received as common ground and so little that will be expurgated and annulled.

Faith and repentance we can retain as both are orthodox. Confession and baptism will be so modified as to not be in the way of a union.

There will be no objections to Article second, unless some of our old fanatic brethren insist on our meeting and breaking bread every Lord's day. Article third is a creature, into two of the "grand unions" and will be retained. There would be no trouble with article five, providing that a judicious interpretation be rendered by liberal minded ecclesiastics. And in regard to article six, as the material interests of the churches seem to require it; hence, it would probably remain in tact until this "contractive age," when a universal council may establish a universal creed, at which time, we shall start to live the life of Rome over again with a plurality of Popes instead of one.

The fact is, the exigency and emergency of these times demand a change, and it appears to be coming pretty fast. The standard of piety is alarmingly low. A vital union with Christ is not now urged as essential. A tide of worldliness is sweeping over the churches; the perilous time of the last days is come; men profess the Christian name, and refuse to obey any of Christ's commands; a spirit of lawlessness prevails, and everybody seems to love gains and pleasure more than anything else. A universal lapse of spirituality seems to call for a "universal church," every way compatible with the present condition of things. Process Verbal Pro Memoria.

Loud talkers, and those who think that it is the thunder that kills and not the lightning, will do well to read the following:

The less your fluent ministers have to say, the bigger they scream and the louder they shout. Lyman Beecher, on returning home from church one Sunday, said that he felt that he had done very poorly. Said one of the boys: "Why, father, I thought you were never in better trim; you just shouted it out to 'em.'" "Aye, aye," replied Mr. Beecher, "that's it exactly; when I am not prepared I always holler at the top of my voice."

Among recent additions to the Central Park Museum of Natural History are some enormous bones found in the ancient seas of Colorado and Kansas. The sterile lands of Colorado and the chalky deserts of Kansas are the beds of those ancient seas, and the discovery of innumerable bones and skeletons in them was originally made by Professor Marsh and by the late Professor Mudge. Crocodile-like reptiles, from one hundred and fifty to two hundred feet long, must have swarmed in those great inland seas, for monster bones which have been found reveal their size.