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THE CHURCH'S STANDING MIRACLE.

"All the variations of fortune in her wildest caprices, lifting peasants to a throne, and depressing kings to a dungeon, are idle as the changeful shadows of an evening cloud, when compared with that solitary hour when He who stands at the door and knocks is first consciously admitted by the loving heart of a repentant believer."

There is taking place in the Church, every day and every hour, a miracle of a character so open and unquestioned, so beneficent in its effects and often so impressive, that it is convincing proof of a supernatural presence and power. It is not in the form of supremacy over the outward world, over diseased bodies, or defective bodily senses, over the fruits of the earth or the storms of the sea. He who wrought these mighty works, forewarned us that His followers should see greater things than these. Nor has it anything to do with that daring device of priestly ambition, so akin to heathen jugglery, by which morsels of bread and drops of wine are lyingly declared to be changed into the veritable body and blood of the Lord. One must already believe blindly in the divinity of those calling themselves the Church, before one can believe in a miracle, which bears in itself no evidence whatever of being such.

Nor do we refer to the continued existence of the Church in the midst of a sinful world, full of opposition, often raging against the Church, often seeming to bring the gates of hell into the battle, yet always finding it founded on a rock and unable to prevail against it, leaving it stronger and fresher, and leaving its Scriptures more authoritative and better understood, as the result of every attack. These things, indeed, returning from age to age, constitute the Church itself a standing and sublime miracle. To this we do not now refer, but to those daily occurrences of a supernatural character which mark and glorify the inner history of the Church itself.

We mean the marvel of conversion. We mean the miracle wrought in the moral nature of man; the healing of the palsy, the leprosy, the lameness, the blindness, dumbness and deafness, the fever and the lunacy of sin. We mean the stilling of the inward tempest of remorse, of the struggles of selfishness and duty, of prostration with conscience, of the love of the world with the pleadings of the Holy Ghost, of the terrors of the law with the dawning hope of pardon through a Saviour's blood. We mean the summoning of souls from the tomb of carnality, of self-righteousness, of unconcern, from darkness in trespasses, and in sins to a resurrection more marvellous and more needful than the resurrection of the body.

Although man's part in this work of conversion is definite, simple, and of the highest importance and necessity, it is none the less a miracle. The owner of the withered hand was ordered to stretch it forth, but a miracle was wrought as, with the whole force of his inward will, he obeyed the command. And the converted sinner, best of all, knows that the change in which all the active powers of his soul were engaged, is a miracle of grace.

To be born again; to be born of the Spirit, after being born of the flesh; to be raised from that total catastrophe of our moral nature, the fall; to the beginnings of a life of perfect purity and holiness; to have the power of selfishness broken up, and that of love put in its place; to have the tyranny of the world and the idolatry of covetousness replaced by spiritual-mindedness and breathings after heaven; to see the churl become bountiful, the miser become liberal, the drunkard become temperate, the profane become a man of prayer; to see whole licentious, cruel, cannibal, savage communities become orderly, civilized, gentle, Christian people; to see the raging blood-thirsty chief of such a people changed into a lamb, and filled with zeal to make amends for the ruin he had wrought; to see whole districts of the vilest and most sunken neighborhoods of our great modern cities raised to cleanliness, order, thrift, virtue, and hopefulness for this life and the next, by the power of the simplest Christian appliances—these are the miracles which the Church has brought with her down from apostolic times, and they are the everywhere visible proofs of her divine origin and authority.

To remove your doubts of the truth of Christianity, and of the claims of its institutions, you need not study dry volumes of evidences. You need but attend to living facts in the history of the Church and its missions at home and abroad; you need but look around you and behold the living epistles of the Church known and read of all men; you need but experience in your own heart that blessed change, which carries with it

a power of conviction more irresistible than the most faultless logic of the schools. It is these miracles, which never cease, that give the world such a settled conviction, after all, of the truth of Christianity, and that render the persistent efforts of infidelity to undermine its foundations so nugatory.

Christian worker! take courage. The laws of God's world of grace are so arranged that the result of faithful praying laborers shall ever be MIRACLES. Continue to plant and to water, and God will give the increase. Thank God! He is doing it to-day.

THE FREEDMEN:—OUR NEW GENERAL AGENT.

The appointment of an excellent and experienced Christian gentleman, a member of the Society of Friends, as General Agent of our Committee's work among the Freedmen, is worthy of notice. It certainly shows the purpose of the Committee to employ whatever agency, in their judgment, is most likely to promote the great end in view, irrespective of the quarter from which it is obtained. In a denomination as large, intelligent and zealous in the cause as our own has been, it does seem a little singular that a suitable and efficient Secretary could not be found. But that we now have such a Secretary, and one possessing qualifications in the line of a wide and happy experience in the work, perhaps not to be found in any denomination in the country, is certain, and a matter for congratulation.

Mr. Mitchell addressed the Pastors' Association on Monday of last week, in a manner that quite won their hearts. He alluded to the saying of George Fox: "We are nothing; Christ is all," as illustrating the spirit in which the position had been offered to him by our Committee. He referred to the honorable record of our denomination on the subject of slavery, and emphasized especially, the call of our Committee, in their November circular, for colored teachers. So far as he knew, ours was the first church organization which had shown this generous confidence in the colored race. He spoke of the extraordinary interest felt in the elevation of the Freedmen by the philanthropists and people of Great Britain. He had been asked, when visiting them in behalf of this cause: Do the Christian people of America know that they have the grandest opportunity for doing good of modern times, in elevating these four millions of freedmen? He said there were persons in England riding in third class cars that they might have the means of giving to this cause.

Mr. Mitchell's plans of labor among the freedmen seem to be the result of great deliberation and sagacity. What they want, he says, is guidance. They need to be instructed in all departments of thought and life. He considered their eagerness and aptitude for learning as worthy a place among the remarkable phenomena of our day. Their religious character needs to be moulded rather than overturned. Hence the work to be done among them, is emphatically such as the right sort of school teachers were peculiarly qualified to perform. Some fifty teachers are already at work in the employ of our Committee and the call is for more.

Already Mr. Mitchell has commenced visiting the churches and has made a favorable impression. We believe he will find our people everywhere ready with a warm and practical welcome for his cause. The time is highly favorable for a recommencement of the work. Under the incoming administration, the immense difficulties in the way of every kind of effort for the freedmen resulting from a half-suppressed rebellion, and a lurking remnant of slavery, will nearly if not quite disappear. The protection of our government will be a reality in Texas and in Georgia, as it long has been in Austria, and in most parts of the Union itself. And while the opportunity which we hoped for four years ago has now first fully come, the withdrawal of the Freedmen's Bureau gives to the opportunity the form of necessity. Every voluntary and religious organization must be worked to its full capacity to supply the great deficiency caused by the cessation of that great National Bounty. The time has come for action, as never before. And at length our denomination is harnessed for the work. Providence has really seemed to wait for us. Let us reverently accept the hand he holds out for us and go heartily and zealously to the work.

—That Christian people, and especially youth, should mingle to a certain extent with the social festivities of the season, and share personally in their amusements, is, of course, to be expected. We would no more attempt to hinder it than to prevent their laughing. It is the dangerous and unreasonable excess in these amusements, that alarms us. It is the devotion of Christian peo-

ple to worldly gaiety that we cannot see with indifference. It is the rage for party-going and party-giving; it is the plunging into a scarcely interrupted round of entertainments, costly, prolonged far into the hours for healthful slumber, made dizzy with the whirl of immoral dances, if not also with intoxicating drinks, and sometimes varied with a motley masquerade; it is such extravagant indulgences, allowed to interfere with times of serious thought, of spiritual refreshing, and of special efforts, and successes in the Church, that rouse our anxieties for Christians and the Church itself. A masquerade, forsooth! Christian people, hoping that they are clothed in the white robes of a Saviour's righteousness, to lower themselves to the follies, and to expose themselves to the perils of a masquerade ball!

It is often said, the line must be drawn somewhere, in distinguishing Christian people from the world. If there are just doubts on some amusements, masquerading certainly cannot have the benefit of any such doubts, but belongs clearly to the other side. Our judgment was long ago anticipated by the great poet, who, in his "Paradise Lost," classed together "Mixed dance, and wanton mask, and midnight ball."

THE SPIRITUAL SHOWER.

Again our news columns begin to be crowded with statements numerous and therefore brief, of the special workings of the Spirit in the churches. Deferred to a later period, perhaps than last year, the gracious visitation, which has not been wanting a single year since the close of the war, seems not about to be denied to the year just begun. Whether it will prove as lasting and as fruitful as those that have preceded, none can now say; but its proportions, with some suddenness have become, or have suddenly become known as wide-spread, embracing churches in all parts of the North and West, and including all the evangelical denominations in the reach of its blessings. Our readers will find illustrations of these remarks in our own denominational news, our city column, and in the religious intelligence on the seventh page of the paper.

Two things in the way of admonition suggest themselves at such a time. (1.) How small a proportion of the membership, even of a revived Church, are revived with the Church! Often the praying and the working are done by a mere handful, and they not at all the most influential in the church. God chooses the weak things of the world, children, women, to confound the things that are mighty. And yet how deplorable, how amazing the sight of a large body of the members of a church failing to put a right estimate upon such an occasion; showing outwardly but a languid interest; allowing trivial and worldly engagements to hinder their participation in the work, in a word, refusing to take up their cross and follow their Master, and identify themselves with Him and his people in laboring for the salvation of souls! How whole neighborhoods would be reached and shaken, and what immeasurable results would follow, if every revived Church were revived in every one of its members; if it were throbbing with soul and energy, and faith, and wrestling prayer in every part! A whole godless city was once made to tremble at the earnest preaching of a single prophet; what city in Christendom would not be shaken to its centre, and turned upside down, if every one of its churches were once vitalized in every member? Can this be done? It surely must be, if the gospel is to triumph by the instrumentality of God's people.

2. Alas! how many churches; how great a majority, we fear, of the churches at any given Revival season, know not anything of the glad experience of a Revival! The revived churches are often isolated. The breath of the Spirit bears them joyously on, while dead calm rests on all the region around. The outwardly unrevived Church may, indeed, by no means always be, in a dead, cold or unfruitful state. But it seems to us, no church maintaining as a rule a really healthful condition, can be without its seasons of special interest. Indeed, such a church, with its well prepared soil and adjusted instrumentalities, is the very one most likely to make good use of a time of special refreshing, and will spring with the greatest promptness to respond to the favorable indications of the Spirit. It is not to this class that the unrevived churches belong. They are the cold, the worldly, the formal, the divided and disorganized; those vacant churches who are looking out for an eloquent Apollon, rather than a faithful and pungent Paul; those who are giving out of their abundance only a suffering price for their minister, or who are suffering God's house, by neglect, to become an offense and a scandal, instead of an attraction to the community; who are estranging or neglecting

the young and hopeful material, and suffering them to stray away into other folds; churches where needful discipline has been sadly neglected, and the garden of the Lord is overgrown with vile weeds; where Sabbath-breaking trades and occupations have been tolerated, and where drinking customs have dribbled in like a subtle poison, from the wine presses of native vineyards; churches whose gay members run through all the dizzy round of the world's pleasures unchecked and unwarned from the half-sympathizing pulpit; churches shrivelled up into a conservative dread of such a thing as a revival, and who are dying, pulpit and pews, of the proprieties!

In these and in almost all unrevived churches, there is yet some salt; there are, it is to be hoped, a praying, mourning few, who take pleasure in the fallen stones of Zion. Let them not be disheartened. Let pastor and people, who have long been praying and waiting, think whether they are indeed ready, humbly and self-denyingly, to go to work for Jesus and for souls. Let them be sure that faith, prayer and labor are never in vain, in the kingdom of grace, and now, especially, let them expect to see them crowned with rich reward.

THE UNCHRISTIAN ABOMINATION OF EXCLUSIVISM.

Extraordinary demonstrations of narrow-minded tenacity about the minutiae of forms, the jobs and titles of the law, continue to be made by Christian people, calling themselves, and on many other accounts properly, Evangelical.

A Boston correspondent writes: "The close communion question is hardly pushed by the more liberal Baptists, and the 'loyal to principle and tradition' only try to carry their point with more vigor. Cases of discipline are even talked of for commencing unlawfully with the unbaptized."

The *Examiner and Chronicle* (New York) says: "We are informed that the Fifth Avenue Baptist church, of this city, on Friday evening last, unanimously resolved to withdraw its fellowship from Crammond Kennedy, for holding and promulgating doctrines not held by that church, or the church at Jerusalem, as described in the Acts of the Apostles. This is prompt and definite."

Mr. Kennedy was known some years ago, as the "Boy preacher," among our Baptist brethren. Recently he has declared for communion with Evangelical Christians, and for this grave offence against the sect-spirit of his denomination, one after another of the churches are casting him out. An act which brings him nearer to Jesus, makes him a heretic in the eyes of our modern Pharisees: Where, according to such a judgment would be John Bunyan, Roger Williams, Robert Hall, and Mr. Spurgeon?

A writer in the same paper urges that baptized (i. e. dipped) persons, who are members of other than Immersionist churches cannot be admitted to communion:

"They have not the Church-membership—they do not belong to a loyal constituency. No one who believes, as every Baptist does, that a Church is a congregation of baptized believers, can consider a Pedobaptist organization a Church."

Talk of Pusey or Pope Pius after this!

MINOR TOPICS.

—What the Roman Catholics would like to do in the way of proselytizing the freedmen of the South, we learned long ago. What they actually are doing, is certainly much below their wishes and plans,—in fact, if we are to believe the testimony of their own priests, amounts very nearly to nothing at all. Two of these priests belonging to New York city, are now making a tour of the South, and one of them, Father Malone, is writing the results of his observations among the Freedmen's schools. He speaks in most hopeful and generous terms of the schools under Presbyterian and National control in Charleston, but gently reproves the National Protestant Association for the spirit in which, in his judgment, it carries on a school in Savannah. His language, just at this point, bears directly upon the question with which we started. We quote from the letter as given by the *N. Y. Tribune*:

"Yet, we Catholics have no reason to be censorious, as we have scarcely made an effort anywhere in this great work of justice and mercy. I must mention, in this connection, that the Bishop of Savannah has brought from France, Sisters of the Order of St. Joseph, to teach the Blacks, but they are foreigners; they speak our language very imperfectly, and must, therefore, fail to accomplish much for them. In fact, the Blacks are like other people; they prefer sending their children to be educated by those who speak English well, and where the school accommodation is complete."

—The *Morning Post* declares that it would be "downright religious persecution" of the Mormons to pass Senator Craig's bill forbidding Polygamy and making it unlawful for the officers of the

Church of the Latter Day Saints to grant divorces and solemnize marriages.

Suppose we had, in one of our remote territories, a so-called religious community, one of whose articles of belief justified horse-stealing, and made the religious leaders of the community judges of the right of property in horses; would a National Enactment against horse-stealing be regarded by the *Post* as "downright religious persecution"?

The churches of the South had agreed, several years before the war, more or less distinctly, to recognize the rightfulness of slavery as an article of their creeds; does the *Post* regard the proclamations, and the national legislation, which did away with the dreadful wrong of American slavery as "downright religious persecution"? And must we be involved in open war with polygamists before we can see it to be right to assail their "peculiar institution"? We trust the matter will receive manly and decisive treatment at the hands of our legislators, in spite of the prurient sympathy of the American Burtons and Dixons *et id omne genus* with the gross iniquity, which skulls behind the perverted name of religion and cries "persecution" when the plain principles of justice are brought to bear against it.

—The charm of the whisky ring seems about to be broken. In New York city, two weeks ago, two convictions were procured and sentences of imprisonment pronounced for illicit distilling, after a year of delay, during which the defendants had put in operation all the usual methods of unscrupulous men to escape with their dishonest gains. They had procured false witnesses against the faithful revenue officer, who interrupted their business, in order to disgrace and remove him from office. Two of these witnesses have been convicted of perjury. They had black-mailed another revenue officer and sent him out of the country. While their case was pending, they renewed the business of illicit whisky-distilling, and they were regarded by the Secretary of the Treasury, among the worst defrauders of the revenue in New York city. They were each sentenced to three years' imprisonment, on the first count of the indictment. If only President Johnson does not pardon them!

—Vineland, N. J., now a settlement of 10,000 inhabitants, has a prohibitory Liquor Law. During six months, the Overseer of the Poor says, no citizen or settler has required relief. During the year, there has been but a solitary indictment, and that for a trifling case of assault and battery. Only one house has been burned down, and two other slight fires have occurred in the year. The Police expenses are but \$75 a year. The Overseer, after making his report and declaring his opinion that this state of things is largely due to the absence of alcohol, adds an instructive comparison with the town from which he came in New England.

"The population of the town was 9,500—a little less than that of Vineland. It maintained forty liquor shops. These kept busy a police judge, city marshal, assistant marshal, four night watchmen, six policemen. Fires were almost continual. That small place maintained a paid fire department of four companies, of forty men each, at an expense of \$3,000 per annum. I belonged to this department for six years, and the fires averaged about one every two weeks, and mostly incendiary. The support of the poor cost \$2,500 per annum. The debt of the township was \$120,000. The condition of things in this New England town is as favorable in that country as that of many other places where liquor is sold."

—At a recent meeting of the Fruit Growers Club in New York, the introduction of several bottles of American wine, for examination, aroused a brief, but spirited discussion, all apparently on one side. The Chairman was of opinion that our fruits could be put to a better use than by distilling them into wine or brandy. A Mrs. Dr. Fallock spoke up, and moved, for the sake of the women who were admitted to the Club on equal terms, (and not for a few hours only, as at the Burns' celebration) and who were opposed to whisky, tobacco, and other abominations, that all alcoholic liquors, in whatever shape, be tabooed henceforth and forever from the Club. The motion was carried with applause.

—The assaults of a paper as able and powerful as the *Independent*, are far from agreeable, but it is beginning to be felt that its praise is far more to be dreaded than its blame. What is to be thought of the defence of a Christian minister's orthodoxy, the climax of which is that he is "as good a Christian as John Stuart Mill"? If that is the very best proof the *Independent* can give of friendship to an assailed minister, belonging to an Evangelical denomination, well, may he exclaim: "Save me from my friends!"

—Following the example of their brethren in New York, the Methodists of Newark, N. J., have commenced raising a church building fund for that city. \$100,000 is the sum proposed by one of the speakers.