

[COMMUNICATED.]

CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTMAS:

This is the time of universal laudation in the so-called Christian world, when the revolution of the earth each in its time gives vent to an exuberance of joy and festivity which ought assuredly to indicate an unmistakable and irreversible discipleship equal at least to the "high days and holidays" of those deemed outside the Christian pale.

All travelers, writers and historians agree, however, that associated with all other great religions there is a more earnest, devoted, literal fidelity to their acknowledged leaders and sacred books and literature, than there is in the Christian world. This fidelity is the more remarkable when the claims of Christendom are considered individually, as congregations, and in the aggregate, for it would appear as if division was the predominating feature of the Christian, and unity the prevailing feature of heathendom so-called and the methods of idolatry.

The standpoint—the base rock of the Christian religion—is in the authority of its Founder. He claimed to be specially sent of the Father, to be endowed with every requisite needed for so high and far-reaching a mission. He surely understood the methods and intent of that calling, knew what man was, and is, knew the potency of the principles, institutions, and organizations He established, ordained and directed under the ministry He educated and left in charge of this divine work after His departure. Surely He who was familiar with the burthens, ceremonies and exactions of the religious leaders of His faith and birth, discarded in His revealings all unneeded and superfluous things, making His yoke easy, and His burden light. Every thing was final, beyond controversy with His disciples; all He did and said was of importance, was worthy of perpetuation; His example, so far as applicable to His disciples, was indispensable as a consequence of His leadership based upon His authority and supplemented by His positive knowledge.

Jesus declared that He did nothing only that which He had seen His Father do; that He came not to do His own will but the will of Him that sent Him. For this reason "the Gospel" was in its unity, in its perfection even to detail, essential to the purposed end of its revelation. Human wisdom had no right to discriminate in regard to its parts, or as a whole. Human wisdom had no choice or voice as to what was essential or otherwise. Human wisdom could not supersede any of its features or add to its demand; and while there may be no evidence of documentary remains in the very handwriting of "the Man of Nazareth," the intimate relationship of His trained Apostles and their methods of propagation and life leaves no doubt (taken in connection with the assured promise of the revealing Spirit whose special mission was "to bring all things to their remembrance") that there was a definite and assured safeguard against the engrafting of error or discipline in the organization of the Church, as assuredly might have been the case had it been of simple, human origin and without the safeguard of authoritative control or Priesthood, which was a part of the inviolable and essential whole.

It is this Gospel or the methodized system of salvation, which as "Good News" became the burthen of all the Apostles whose writings have come down to our time. They understood its origin; it was called "the Gospel of God" (see 1 Thess. 2: 2-9, Rom. 1: 1, also Rom. 15:

16, 1 Tim. 1: 11); further in honor of its Revealer it was designated "the Gospel of Christ" (see Rom. 1: 16, 15: 29; 1 Cor. 9: 12; 2 Cor. 4: 4; Rom. 15: 19, and many other places). It was also called "the Gospel of salvation" (Eph 1: 13), and the Saints were warned against those who "would pervert the Gospel," and "against those who were given to change." Still further, "vengeance" was predicted against all those who failed to obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Upon one at least of those who were called upon to preach this Gospel was "a woe" pronounced, as if the mission and the responsibility thereof was not only an immeasurable privilege but had associated with it supreme self-abnegation and opinion on that which had been given.

From this standpoint what would have been in the early days the conclusion in regard to present sectarianism, or modern Christianity with its tagaries, controversies and divisions? "Mark those which cause divisions and offenses among you, contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them" (Rom. 16: 17, and in 1 Cor. 12: 25, also 1: 10), so that schism and division are adjudged unworthy of toleration.

Christendom stands convicted before the world as anti-Christian, as being without the pale of unity, claiming this, however, in essentials, and stating in great assemblies that the differences extant are of little or no moment; yet ever degrading by controversy and separate organizations and teachers to an unbelieving world that division is to multiply pulpits and to sustain a hireling clergy and to belittle in the eyes of thinking aliens and unbelievers the grandest feature of ancient, God-directed Christianity!

Paul in his day could and did anathematize all who preached any substitute or variation from that taught of authority. The Christian world of today anathematize the only perfect counterpart on earth of ancient Christianity, whether as to doctrine, ordinances, spirit, methods, manifestations or organization. It denies to this counterpart the name of "Christian;" it excludes from introduction, from association, from blessing, from recognition, that which for its fidelity, its adherence, its approximation at least, should be greeted as a co-worker in the redemption and reorganization of the world.

"But we object," says the Christian world, "to your claims of revelation, of exclusiveness, of Priesthood, of divine authority and acknowledgment!" Very well! Were these not features of the primitive Church? Is it an acknowledgment that sectarian division is due in great part to the lack of this very element that you disclaim and that the Church of Jesus Christ does absolutely claim? And can it be that this seasonable laudation on the so-called birthday of the authoritative Christ, is but from the lips, is but a pretense? Charitable believers in the Gospel hesitate at charging this to deliberate rejection of the Christ; they in this spirit rather charge it to tradition, to ignorance, or prejudice, or misrepresentation. They suggest inquiry, they refer for consistency to accepted standards, they testify to "Good news" at this auspicious time, to the truth of the everlasting Gospel, to God and Christ and the Holy Apostleship, as it was and is. They would prefer to see an undivided allegiance, a thorough acceptance of the simple rules, laws and institutions "once given to the Saints." They would like to see modern Christianity reformed, consolidated, united, one. They think churches could be reduced in number

with advantage to Christian interests. They would like to see hosts of those who "preach for hire and divine for money" engaged in other professions, or out in the world preaching the true Gospel, "without purse or scrip."

Nor is there need for ignoring the zeal, toil, sacrifices or success of all Christian religionists as they are. They have done good, made converts, sent out the Bible, redeemed many races, and in breaking down the barriers of ignorance and superstition and substituting a higher civilization, they have bettered humanity. Conditions have been corrected and changes made and in many instances "the churches" have been as John the Baptist, crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord;" for the Elders have followed in their wake and ere one superstition has been thoroughly engrafted in the soil of another, they have been enabled to accomplish great good in the name of Jesus Christ and in vindicating that order which He came to establish.

What a marvelous Christmas-tide this might have been had every so-called Christian teacher for the last century been endowed with "the fullness of the Gospel," had upon him "the whole armor of God," had preached not in word only, but "in power and in much assurance!" As it is, "the Gospel" is now being "preached as a witness" that the end may come and that He who was born in Bethlehem, crucified on Calvary, and then "preached to the spirits in prison," will speedily re-appear. Already the signs thereof are apparent, and ere a little time and the "Advent" now celebrated will be overshadowed by that more glorious second Advent, when He will appear without sin unto salvation unto all those who, looking for His appearing, have been obedient in the midst of superstition, opposition, persecution and have been unacknowledged of the world and decried by religionists who have professed allegiance to "the King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

A REAL LOVE STORY.

There is always and forever some sort of fascination about love stories and sentimental people find delight in reading them. Young folks or old are much the same in love affairs so it seems, and like to hear of them and read about them, and of course in holiday time it is expected there will be lots of stories of love and adventure written for the newspapers and magazines of home production. Nowadays writers usually begin in the middle of the story instead of a preamble or explanation in detail. Old fashioned story telling was different when I was a little girl, then all stories began with "A long time ago," and similar phrases, but now that would be old style, and one must conform to the taste of the present day, as far as possible, even in telling stories.

In an obscure part of the state of New York (long ago by the way), when my story opens there was much hard work to be done by men and boys (and women had their share, too, only it was different) clearing away the woods to get room to live, men were compelled to cut down the magnificent old trees, "monarchs of the forest," that had stood for generations, not only to get material to build with but land to build on. And so the forefathers of many of the present generation lived in the woods (so to speak) and occupied their time in subduing the earth and making the land fertile; gathering up the stones and building walls around their broad acres, that they made productive with much toil and hard service. Where many of the large cities and towns now stand were once great forests of oak, hickory, pine, maple and other trees indigenous to