

TRUTH SPREADING.

At a meeting of the local Evangelical Association held in the First Presbyterian Church of this city, March 6th, Dr. Bittinger, of Sewickly, read an able essay on the "Eschatology of St. Paul," or the Apostle's teachings relative to death and judgment. The paper required more than an hour for its delivery. The last paragraph, which we quote below, gives the gist of the argument, and in our opinion shows a marked step toward truth, by an able and seemingly fearless man.

We would be glad to see more men of nerve, and of intelligent, untrammelled interest in the teachings of Paul and all the Scriptures. But so surely as they step upon the Word of God as a basis of faith, they will find, as did this essayist, that the traditions of men are sadly out of joint under the present rule of anti-christ. Mark and ponder well the force of the argument of this brother just awakening to a realization of the shortness of the "bed" (creed) in which he has been resting. (Isa. 28:20.)

"In conclusion, accept a few remarks and reflections. I have been struck with the prominence which Paul gives to the coming of Christ, in his epistles, speeches, and sermons; the many direct statements of the dogma, and the still more numerous allusions and references to it. I am struck and startled by the practical value of this doctrine for exhortation, encouragement, comfort, warning, and vigilance. It is the farthest goal set for this life, and to appear blameless at Christ's coming is the highest aim of Christian living. It is evident that with Paul and the primitive Christians, Christ's coming took the place of our popular conception of heaven. We are refugees fleeing from a pursuing wrath; they were pursuers of hope, looking for a deliverer. We think, speak, and sing of going to heaven; the

Apostles wrote and spoke of Christ's coming from heaven, and to this expectant King all David's psalms were set. We think of the judgment, with fear, trembling, and horror; they thought of it with solemn joy. I might mention other things, but these are enough to show that the modern Church does not conceive of Christ's second coming as the Apostolic Church did. As a practical doctrine, it has no place in our theology, no influence in our lives. Has the virtue all gone out of it, or have we fallen away from the faith once delivered to the saints?"

Truly a wonderful awakening of the people, relative to what is taught in the Bible is in progress. Thousands of letters from all parts of this country and Great Britain, give abundant evidence that people will no longer "stop thinking," or "burn the book" at the behest of self-satisfied sectarians, interested only in the upbuilding of their party and its views, and not in the elucidation of Bible truth.

Oh, how sad it is, that the so-called pastors care only to have their flocks asleep and dreaming, and will not lead them to the beautiful, fresh fields of living truth, and streams of living water. On the contrary, they seek by every means to prevent the sheep from eating Food by raising the cry of POISON. Their flocks may drink deeply into pleasure of the world, or satiate themselves with worldly business, and it is all "very natural"; but let them seek to acquaint themselves with the teachings of their Father's Word, and they are the subjects of prayers, entreaties, expostulations, and threatenings. They are told that they are on the road to infidelity and hell, and that the only cure is to "stop thinking, and get at church work." If it is true that to be a christian to-day means that we must "stop thinking," and be mere MACHINES, controlled by the theological schools, then is that Scripture out of place in which God says: "Come, let us reason together" – and again, "Search the Scriptures" – and again, the Scriptures "are able to make thee wise."

Yes, it seems to be one of the snares which Satan sets for the saints' feet: He gets them to work at holding fairs, festivals, and church lotteries, in the belief that that is working for Jesus. Perhaps it is to cancel a church debt which Satan prompted them to incur, to minister to religious pride. And we might add, much of the other church work seems to us conducive to evil results, and hence attributable to evil. For instance, it has become fashionable for nearly all churches to have three meetings on Sunday, and four or five during the week. This absorbs all the spare time of many, and leaves them weary of religious things, and without any time for Bible study, or thought on the "deep things of God."

The meetings do not give spiritual nourishment and strength, but merely soothe the minds of some who think that thus, they please God, work for Jesus and bear the cross, while instead, much of it is the merest nonsense, conducive to self satisfaction.

True christians see through the hollowness, and endeavor to have their hearts fed by secret worship and communion, and conclude that because all christians and ministers do and sanction this system, it must be right. Thus, this which is called work for Jesus, is in reality an arrangement with Satan to make people "stop thinking" – He puts them to work; since he cannot get them to do evil, he does get them to work so hard and so much that they can get little good and no truth.

We were struck with the operation of this plan as practiced by a minister of Allegheny city, recently. An elder of the church came twice to our afternoon meetings to get some "Food." He was spotted as a sheep likely to jump from the fold, and being a sheep of some means and influence, he must be penned again. Accordingly the minister was informed, and he visited the elder, who candidly said that he had gone to our meetings to hear for himself, and so far he had heard nothing which he thought was unchristian or unscriptural. He excused himself by saying, that he had gone because they happened

to have no afternoon meetings in their church. Before the next Sunday a meeting was appointed for the afternoon hour and this poor sheep was made its leader.

If we are correct in judging, that much of the work, is arranged by and in the interest of Satan, and he has able helpers in many of the under-shepherds.

How does the chief shepherd regard such tenders of the flock, think you? As there are kinds of work owned and accepted of God, so there are exceptions among the ministers.

To any who doubt our conclusions we say, "Come, let us reason together," test your preacher and see whether he is able to show you how and where our Bible based teachings are wrong. But if he says "stop thinking," "burn the book," or any [R340 : page 4] other unchristlike or unreasonable thing, conclude that he cannot meet it fairly. If they offer theory, or if they speak disparagingly of those "of this way," remember that ours is only a repetition of the experience of Jesus, the Apostles, and of the reformers – Knox, Wesley, Luther and all who ever proclaimed advanced truth. Answer all opponents with a "Thus saith the Lord," or a "Thus it is written," and ask them for Scriptural proofs for their utterances. To this end, study to show yourselves workmen approved unto God, that you may be able to give to every man that asketh you, a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. (2 Tim. 2:15, and 1 Pet. 3:15.)

You will be sure to find that their titles and knowledge of their own line of theology, is the extent of their stock; and of Bible knowledge, they have very little – next to none. (Isa. 29:10-14.) Then, too, if ever so well posted in the Scriptures, there is very little which can be applied in harmony with their creeds.

Then, with charity for them, and love for all the sheep, go to the storehouse of the chief shepherd; there drink in the truth and give to

others, fearless of infringement upon any theological patent, and God will bless you with refreshing draughts.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, (right and truth) they shall be filled," if they know the voice of the shepherd and follow him.
