

CHRISTIAN ARCHAEOLOGY.

(Continued.)

III. PUBLIC WORSHIP.

The pentecostal firstfruits of New Testament Christianity were not gathered in the streets of Jerusalem by a band of Salvationists, but in a meeting of the disciples who *were all with one accord in one place,*¹⁾ sitting in a house,²⁾ probably one of the thirty halls connected with the temple. We know that the 120 who formed the nucleus of this first Christian congregation, men and women, had been accustomed to meet for prayer and supplication.³⁾ At this pentecostal meeting, the *wonderful works of God*⁴⁾ were proclaimed, and Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and preached the gospel of Christ crucified and glorified.⁵⁾ There were those who *gladly received his word,*⁶⁾ which could not have been known to the apostles but by a profession of faith, which the new converts made before they *were baptized.*⁷⁾

Here, then, we have the various acts performed in the first meeting of the first congregation of primitive Christianity: the preaching of the word, the administration of a sacrament, confession of faith and prayer. Nor was this

1) Acts 2, 1.

2) Acts 2, 2.

3) Acts 1, 14.

4) Acts 2, 11.

5) Acts 2, 14 ff.

6) Acts 2, 41.

7) Acts 2, 41.

But what will the *man* in the pew have to say about these things? Well, in the first place, the probability is that the man will not be in the pew very much where preaching like that of Dr. Briggs has become acceptable. And if he be there, the probability is that he will say what the woman says and do as the woman does. When the devil dispenses his theology and people go to hear him, things are likely to take the course they took when Higher Criticism was first taught and practiced in Eden, where the question, "*Yea, hath God said?*" was followed by the negation, "*Ye shall not surely die,*" and the woman did eat of the forbidden fruit, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. There will be exceptions. There will be those who will go to hear Dr. Briggs as one goes to a menagerie. Even some of these may come to grief, as boys in a menagerie who go too near the cages. There will be men, especially lawyers and business men, who want facts and evidence, and there will also be women who want something whereon to base their faith; and all these will decline to invest in this kind of wildcat stock. But there are many who will take to popularized Higher Criticism, as boys in kneepants take to swearing and cigarettes, because it makes them feel big, while they are only bad boys.

A. G.

WHAT READEST THOU?

A Question to the Pastor.

What readest thou? is a question to which peculiar importance attaches in these days when there is such a vast amount of literature and such a wide range of choice between good and bad, profitable and unprofitable reading. In reading the eyes are the avenues to the inner man, and the matter read is the food for the mind and soul. Naturally, the effect will be similar as in taking food for the body.

Every one knows that it is by no means something indifferent what kind of food and drink he takes. Healthy food nourishes and supports the physical life, poison destroys it. Bread strengthens, liquor weakens the body, and adulterated food will gradually vitiate the system. Whether the soul is edified and the mind ennobled, or the soul destroyed and the mind debased by reading depends in part on *how* you read, but mainly on *what* you read. Imbibing obscene literature will beget a filthy mind, romances will fill the brain with idle imaginings; poetry and prose of sterling worth will create nobility of sentiment.

The books, periodicals, and papers which you read are your companions. Now the adage has it: Tell me with whom you associate, and I will tell you what you are. The truth of this saying is confirmed by the Scripture declaration: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners," 1 Cor. 15, 33. There may be some strong minds that can repel all the influences of their companions and surroundings, but there are not many such strong characters under the sun. The average mortal will be like his fellows. "At Rome you will do as Rome does," that is the rule. Your companions whose company you keep day after day will modify your principles, mold your mind, govern your taste, direct the channel of your thoughts. In reading a book you are keeping the author's company, and even when reading to refute him it is not always easy entirely to withdraw yourself from his influence.

Because reading has such a powerful influence either to ennoble or to debase, either to build or to destroy, a peculiar duty devolves on the minister of the Gospel in this respect. He should not only watch over the literature read in his own family, he should also have an eye to the books and periodicals which come to the homes of his members, and he should moreover see that he himself does the right kind of reading, so as to be a safe guide to others. Do you frequently ask others: What do you read? and do you never put

that question to yourself? "The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits," writes Paul 2 Tim. 2, 6. The minister who, at least in a measure, is to direct the reading of others, will do well in sometimes putting the question to himself: What readest thou?

Dost thou every day spend hours together reading the newspapers? The minister of Christ should be so far acquainted with current events as to be able to judge of the signs of the times and so to comply with the word of the Lord Matt. 16, 3, but much newspaper reading is of evil, because by it much precious time is lost and because it has the tendency to distract the mind from those things with which the minister of Christ should be occupied continually. The pastor who daily devours a square yard of newspaper in the morning is very apt to talk politics in the evening or to discuss the happenings of the day, when he should rather speak of things that are profitable unto edifying. The pastor ought to set an example of moderation in newspaper reading.

What readest thou? Novels? To spend whole days reading novels, as is sometimes done, is a thing which deserves unmitigated condemnation. A pastor who does this is setting a bad example to his youthful parishioners, and though he does it privately, yet it is very apt to become known and to be imitated. The pastor is called to save souls, but in setting an example of novel reading he does that which tends to destroy souls.

What readest thou? Philosophy? astronomy? science? poetry? There is a kind of reading which is commendable. Some of these branches of knowledge are taught at colleges and seminaries for the education of the mind, and they should not be laid aside altogether when entering on the active work of the ministry, but they must ever be regarded only subordinate helps and aids in the work of the ministry. Though the reading of philosophy may be exceedingly delectable to the mind, yet with the minister of Christ theology must ever remain the mistress, philosophy the hand-

maid, and he must never forget that it is not right to court the maid more than the mistress. Among the "allotria" which a minister must not allow to infringe on his official work Dr. C. F. W. Walther names also "music, painting, scientific studies, literary activity." (*Pastorale*, § 11, Note 2.) *Spare* time may be profitably devoted to history, science, or poetry, but the pastor's first duty is to live up to the command: "Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry," 2 Tim. 4, 5. Devoting much of his time and attention to other than theological reading is also connected with a peculiar danger to the minister. If the reading of science and of belles-lettres leads the pastor to think the presenting of the simple truths of the Gospel on a plain platter too common a thing and he begins to aim at regaling his hearers with a garland of flowers picked from the garden of poetry and often borrowed from heathen singers, then his labors are lost to the kingdom. Flowers soon fade, and only those sermons can bring fruit unto life eternal which are patterned after those of the man who wrote: "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God," 1 Cor. 2, 4. 5. Certainly the preacher should use becoming language and a graceful style,—vulgar language and the arts of the mountebank disgrace the pulpit—, but sensational preaching and the delivering of attractive addresses which are often overloaded with all manner of artistic embellishments is one of the most baneful faults of our modern pulpit in which poets, orators, and tourists are more frequently quoted than the apostles and prophets. Watch thou in all things, also in reading belles-lettres, and do not allow them to crowd the Word of the Cross in your sermons, lest souls arise and accuse you of feeding them on pictures instead of bread. And be careful to heed the warning of Paul: "Beware lest any man spoil

you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ," Col. 2, 8. If your mind is philosophically inclined indulge it not too far and be on your guard lest in your heart the maid and the mistress exchange places. Be not carried away by the tendency of the age to subordinate the Bible to science. The Bible first, science second. The Bible is always right, science is often wrong.

What readest thou?

The Bible enjoins reading: "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine," 1 Tim. 4, 13, and if Timothy would have asked what books he should read Paul would have pointed to the sacred roll. Searching the Scriptures is enjoined upon all, but more especially on the clergy. The minister of the Gospel is to preach Christ. Now Christ says: "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me," Ps. 40, 7. This volume of the book, the scroll of the Scriptures, a minister must study if he is to preach Him who is its author.

Readest thou the Scriptures?

There are pastors who read theology much and the Scriptures little. They glean their sermons from the writings of some renowned men, and the Bible serves them only for a book from which to take a text, and even this they perhaps read only once. Readest thou theology, and readest thou not the Bible? Why forever drink from the rivulet? Why not ascend up higher and test the fountain? Are you commanded to preach the theology of the past and present? or are you not rather commanded to preach the Scriptures? Rest not content to read the Bible through others, read it yourself. To read theology and not to read the Bible is a precarious thing. The "helps" to the pastor which are now flowing from the press in a broad stream are but too frequently helps to help him away from the Bible.

Thou readest theology—what theology readest thou? Lutheran? sectarian? scientific? old? new? What are the

names of the authors whom you have invited to a place on your shelves? To what school do the books belong which you most frequently consult?

Years ago we had a neighbor, a Lutheran minister, who was in the habit of saying, "by his library no one could tell what he was, a Lutheran, Presbyterian, or Methodist." It was indeed uncertain what the man was. This only was certain, he was anything but a Lutheran. Seeing such a medley collection of books in which all shades of heresy and sectarianism, from Jung Stilling to Brigham Young, are represented, one receives the impression that the owner of that library must himself be a little of everything and a piece of nothing. A preacher can be judged pretty safely by his library. If you see whole shelves filled with novels you conclude that he is a novel reader; if you find the poets of all lands represented you take it that he is a lover of poetry; if you see that the writings of sectarians and heretics predominate you will infer that the owner is himself a sectarian, or that a whole menagerie of wild beasts are jumbled up in his brain which still retain the nature of the jungle although given orthodox names; but if you find a library the bulk of which is composed of Lutheran works of sterling worth from old time and new you understand that its owner means to be a Lutheran. It is a deplorable thing that so many who are called Lutheran ministers have sectarian libraries. As a matter of course a Lutheran pastor ought to have a Lutheran library.

Well, ought not a preacher to be able to judge and to distinguish truth from error? And may he then not safely use books of all kinds? We readily assent to that if it is applied to learned professors and old, experienced men, but it sounds very different from the mouth of a young man. Is it a crime to be young? No indeed! Neither is it a crime to be youthfully innocent. The young man but recently out of school who thinks he can use the works of sectarians with perfect discrimination, because he has learned to count

the articles in which they err at his fingers' ends, is an innocent who has not yet probed the depths of Satan, or there is a soft spot about him where self-conceit has its seat.

A healthy man may receive bruises from external causes when his system remains sound, but running sores are a proof of a diseased system. Quenstedt errs on the duties of civil government, but his system is sound and offers all the means to correct that error; but John Calvin was a fanatic who laid down false principles of theology and these corrupt the whole system, tinge every article of faith, and have led to an endless split-up of sects and sectlets, and resulted in a spirit of liberalism akin to infidelity. Now if a young man uses the books of Calvinists day by day and week after week and often reads very hastily in gathering material for a sermon, he can scarcely escape being tinged with the Calvinistic spirit. He will probably not imbibe Calvin's errors on predestination and the sacraments, but the Calvinistic atmosphere will by and by become congenial to him, and when this has come about, then the spirit of Luther has fled from him.

We would most earnestly advise every young man who enters the ministry of the Lutheran church against loading the shelves of his bookcase with sectarian works, however great their renown may be and however cheap they may be offered him. If his library is composed of sectarian works and he is not too busy or too indolent to use it, it will surely in a measure mold his faith and will have a deleterious effect on his preaching. Lutheran pastors should provide themselves with Lutheran books even if they cost more money. Better a small library of select Lutheran works than a jungle of books of every spirit that it almost seems dangerous to stand them side by side. A bishop is to be "a lover of good men," Tit. 1, 8. See that you have good men to associate with in your study. Better a half dozen lovers of the truth, though they present an uncouth exterior, than a dozen gilded bards of doubtful tune. Eat that which is wholesome: read that which is good.

F. K.