

# Christian Observer

Baptist Seminary  
Reading Room  
500 W. Broadway

Vol. 86.

LOUISVILLE, KY., APRIL 6, 1898.

No 14.

## CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.

AND

### ST. LOUIS PRESBYTERIAN.

A Presbyterian Family Newspaper.

Founded September 4, 1813.

Published Weekly by

CONVERSE & CO., (INCORPORATED)

512-514 Third Street, Louisville, Ky.

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All communications and letters on business should be addressed simply to Converse & Co., Louisville, Ky.

For Terms, see foot of page 24.

### CONTENTS OF THIS NUMBER.

#### EDITORIAL.

Editorial Notes.....	1
Death of Rev. J. V. Barks.....	1
Courtesy.....	1
Newspaper Quarrels.....	2
Must We Expect Miracles Now?.....	2
Next Meeting of the General Assembly.....	2
Dr. Vance's Sermon on Predestination.....	3
The Passover Lamb.....	3
Our Book Table—Literary Notes.....	19

#### CONTRIBUTED ARTICLES.

Articles.....	Author.....	Page.....
"In My Name".....	"JOTHINGS BY JONES".....	1
Some Letters on Christian Perfection, No. V.....		4
Training—Classes for Personal Work.....		4
A Memory.....	Mrs. ANNIE H. PATTERSON, China	4
"He Burst the Bars of Death".....	Mrs. BESSIE W. CHURCH, Ohio	5
The Sunrise Prayer Meeting.....	Mrs. ANNIE L. PRICE, W. Va.	9
The Successful Pastor.....	H. M. SYDENSTRICKER, Ph. D., Mo.	10
Country Churches.....	REV. JUNIUS M. BATTE, Ark.	10
A Home Mission Suggestion.....	REV. R. H. REID, S. C.	10
Moody in Tampa.....	REV. J. G. ANDERSON, Fla.	10
First Church, Houston, Texas.....	C. W. SEDGWICK, Tex.	11
Good Friday and Easter.....	REV. J. W. PHIPPO, D. D., Miss.	11
The Famine in China.....	REV. B. C. PATTERSON, China	14
The Fredericksburg Home and School.....		14
The Institutional Church.....	Mrs. A. M. PAYNTER, Ill.	15
Mississippi Synod's Evangelistic Work.....	J. R. DOBYNS, Miss.	15
The Colored Evangelistic Work.....	REV. S. F. TENNEY, Tex.	15
Academical and Industrial Institute at North Wilkesboro, N. C.,	S. G. WALKER, N. C.	15
"Followed Me in the Regeneration".....	DR. S. C. ALEXANDER, Ark.	16
Sing Unto the Lord.....		16

#### MISSIONS.

A Thousand Converts in Korea..... Mrs. EUGENE BELL, Korea 6

#### THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

The Transfiguration..... Rev. F. R. BEATTIE, D. D. 6

#### YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETIES.

The Holy Spirit..... Rev. W. M. ANDERSON, Tex. 7  
Lessons from Great Missionaries " " " 7

#### POETRY.

Why Weep at Death?.....	Mrs. R. G. TYLER	5
Thou, God, Art Love.....	REV. H. M. SYDENSTRICKER, Ph. D.	6
Easter's Meaning.....	MINNIE LEONA UPTON	8
A Spring Concert.....	Mrs. L. H. SIGOURNEY	17
The Reason Why.....		19
The Violet.....	MARGARET E. SANGSTER	20

#### RELIGIOUS NEWS.

Ecclesiastical Notices.....	11
Presbyterian Church.....	12-13

#### THE HOME CIRCLE.

Welcomed by the Lord—Our Honor Roll—The Shorter Catechism in Chinese—She Repeated the Invitation to Church—The Sunrise Prayer Meeting.....	8-9
OUR YOUNG FOLKS.—Letters.....	9
OUR LITTLE ONES.—What Is a Fly Good For?.....	9
CHILDREN'S HOUR.—Hunting Easter Eggs—The Lily of the Valley—Fun and Facts.....	17

#### HOUSE AND HEALTH.

House-Cleaning Helps—The Secret of Longevity—The Soothing Power of Work—Recipes..... 18

#### STORY AND INCIDENT.

Mrs. Grant's Easter Eve—Concerned for Another's Sin—Reading Character—Molding Marble—Catnip at the Zoo—Paper Making..... 20-21

#### SELECTED.

Current Comment.....	3
Man's Sinfulness.....	4
Gems from Recent Sermons.....	5

#### SECULAR NEWS.

The Destruction of the Maine.....	22
Marriages and Deaths.....	14
Domestic News.....	23
Foreign News.....	24

Our hearty thanks are due to friends who have responded to our request for issues of the *Observer* of February 23. They have come in sufficient numbers to supply our needs.

### EDITORIAL NOTES.

April is the month of the collections for the cause of Education for the Ministry. Let the offering be made in every church. In vacant churches let the session see that the collection is taken and sent promptly to the treasurer, at Memphis, Tenn.

The death of Rev. Alex. McLean, one of the General Secretaries of the American Bible Society, is noted with sorrow. He has frequently visited our General Assembly in the interest of that work. On his last two visits we could but note that he was less vigorous than usual. His private conversations with us were marked by a broad and prudent conception of the general relations of the different branches of the Church one to the other.

It may not be amiss to suggest that amid all the present strife and disturbance incident to the war, which seems imminent between our own country and Spain, care be taken to maintain a sincere interest in all the work of the Church. Our church year is now about to close, Presbyteries are holding their meetings, and the reports of another season's work are being made up for the Assembly. Let our people be truly patriotic, and take a deep interest in the affairs of state, but let us not abate one iota of our fidelity to the affairs of the Church; but be faithful to all religious duties and privileges, and liberal in the support of all her schemes of work at home and abroad.

An earnest Methodist says, "The doctrine called the 'final perseverance of the saints' is an exploded theory. Everybody now believes that anyone may fall away from the religious life and be lost." Yes, if the man is saved not by Christ but by his own efforts—if his salvation is the work of man and not of God, if it depends on his holding on to Christ, there is a strong probability that some day he will relax his hold and fall away. But this is not the teaching of God's word as Presbyterians understand it. It is the electing love of God that chooses him; it is the strong arm of Christ that lays hold on him and saves him. His weakness counts for nothing in the work of his salvation; God's strength does everything. The feebleness of the infant in his father's loving arms does not endanger his safety. The imperfections of the saint in the loving arms of Christ do not imperil his salvation. The saints possess no perseverance that will avail. Their salvation is all the work of God—not their own. The "perseverance of God," or the "preservation of the saints," is a more fitting name for this precious doctrine.

The following reminder, which is sent to us by an esteemed brother, will be of assistance to church sessions in making up their reports, and to Presbyteries in collating them for the use of the General Assembly:

It would be well for the Presbyteries at their spring meetings to bear in mind the following injunction of the last General Assembly, found in the report on Systematic Beneficence, on page 55 of the Minutes:

"(3) The Assembly hereby solemnly enjoins the Presbyteries to require of church sessions, in case of failure to take up any one of the collections ordered, to report in writing the reason thereof, upon the validity of which the Presbytery shall pass judgment, approving or disapproving, as the case may be. And the Presbyteries shall state upon the face of their annual reports on Systematic Beneficence in regard to their compliance with this injunction.

"(4) It is made the duty of the Standing Committee on Systematic Beneficence of each General Assembly to ascertain from the presbyterial reports on this subject how far the above injunctions have been complied with, and to report to the Assembly what Presbyteries (if any) have failed to comply with them. It is also hereby made the duty of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to enter upon the docket the duties herein imposed upon the said

Committee, as an item of business, so that the attention of the Committee may be expressly called thereto."

### DEATH OF REV. J. V. BARKS.

A postal card received on Saturday last tells of the death of Rev. J. V. Barks at his home at Odessa, Mo., on Tuesday, March 29. He was an old man—his age was eighty years, six months and fourteen days. Of his three sons, one, the Rev. H. B. Barks, is in the ministry of our Church, and is in charge of the Elizabeth Aull Seminary, at Lexington, Mo. One daughter also survives him.

His early life was in Ohio, and while there he married (in 1818) Miss Lydia Bancroft. The same year he removed to Warsaw, Mo. Subsequently he took charge of the churches of Lick Creek and Mount Prairie, at Perry, Mo. He was stated supply at Waverly, Mo., from 1886 to 1890. About that time he removed to Odessa.

In his later years his bodily strength was feeble, but his ripeness for heaven increased day by day.

### COURTESY.

This is a most desirable quality, not so frequently found as it should be. The absence of it leads to rudeness, and inflicts many a painful wound on gentle and sensitive natures. It causes disregard of the respect and consideration which are due from one to another in the varied relationships of life.

The word courtesy primarily means courtliness, or elegance of manners. It also means politeness. But in the deeper and richer sense in which it is now to be properly understood it means good manners based on gentle consideration for others, politeness growing out of a kindly feeling for those about us. At root, this quality of heart and conduct is closely akin to real unselfishness, and may perhaps be really an active phase of this grace.

This desirable quality of courtesy is one which finds a place in all the relations of life, and which all ages and classes of people should seek diligently to cultivate. It is a beautiful plant, with fragrant bloom and valuable fruit, so that it should be planted in the garden of the life of every one.

In the home it has its useful place. Here, sometimes, there is special need to cultivate courtesy. The near relationships and familiar contact of the home life call for special care lest true politeness based on kindly feeling be neglected. The fact that in some cases people are said to have one set of manners for the home and another for the social circle illustrates this danger. Fathers and mothers should be careful to set a good example of courtesy, and they should always require their children to exhibit it toward them and amongst each other. Rude, selfish, ill-mannered children make any home miserable, and such boys and girls become young men and women who are unfit to take their place in the social circle. The home is the very best school in which good manners and courteous politeness can be cultivated.

At school and college there is need for this same grace. The relations of teachers and scholars, of professors and students, should always rest on that kindly consideration on both sides which will produce genuine courtesy. This will make the routine of the class-room a pleasure, and the experience of school days of very great value. The complaint is sometimes made that our public schools fail to train the pupils in good manners and gentle politeness. There may be some truth in the charge, although it would be unfair to blame the school for what, in most cases, is the fault of the home. In any case, the school should train in good manners well as in other things.

In the social relations of neighbors there is a

wide and varied field for the play of courtesy. If this quality ruled in the social circle, there would be more sincerity and less superficiality, more faithful friendships and fewer fatal estrangements than is the case sometimes among good people. The young men and women, as well as the older people of the social circle, should be most careful to have that gentle, courteous manner which adorns the social circle.

Even in business and professional life there is ample room and constant need for courtesy. There is no reason why men should buy and sell like bores, or that the duties of the lawyer and physician should be discharged in a rough, ill-mannered way. True courtesy makes the true gentleman, and no one in all the activities of business life should fail to be a gentleman. In speech, in bearing, and in conduct, a man will gain much and lose nothing in even a worldly sense if he adds to clear, strong business sense and energetic, active professional service a kindness and considerateness of manner which expresses itself in true politeness and genuine courtesy. It may be added that this good quality may often have a commercial value, and lead to promotion. In connection with church life and work this quality has its highest sphere of exercise. Among the members of any congregation, between different congregations of the same order, and in the relations of the various denominations, there is ample room for the grace of Christian courtesy and that kindly consideration which is the very essence of the Gospel of Christ. This grace may be found lacking in all the relations just indicated in religious circles, and its absence is a serious blot on Christian life and conduct. Here, above all other places, there should be that gentle kindness and considerate unselfishness that would adorn the religion of Christ with its chief glory. If Christians are all members of Christ and partakers of his life and spirit, they are members of each other; so that they should have thought for each other.

Even ministers of the Gospel need to heed the exhortation to be courteous towards their people and towards their brethren in the ministry. Few things will mar a minister's usefulness more than a rude manner of behavior. Scarcely any measure of intellectual power will fully compensate for this, and nothing can excuse lack of courtesy in the minister of Christ. Young men at college and seminary, who have the ministry in view, should have a constant care to cultivate true courtesy, in view of their future work.

The true secret of courtesy, as it ought to be understood, is the piety of heart which the Gospel produces. Without this, the true kindness and unselfishness which is the source of real courtesy is wanting. A mere surface polish of manner in which there may be no real courtesy is possible without piety, but true courtesy is the product of real piety.

#### NEWSPAPER QUARRELS.

Something ought to be done in the Presbyterian Church to the North of us to compel its editors to live in peace with each other. Nothing is more distasteful to us and to the great body of readers we are sure than to be compelled to read the personal bickerings, the unkind reflections, the continual scoldings of one editor to another. If Chicago and Cincinnati must quarrel let them have it out to themselves, and not before a great multitude of peace-loving, Christian-mannered people. When we fall out with Dr. Mallard or Dr. Converse, the readers of the CENTRAL shall never hear of it. We will take the train and go to see them in person and spend a week. As for the Trans-Mississippi brother, we hold everything in Texas too much in fear to think of a quarrel; and the young brethren at Charlotte and at Clinton are under the special protection of the "CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN."—*Central Presbyterian*.

The *Interior*, Chicago, replies:

Will not our Southern brother tell us why we are excluded? Dr. Mallard or Dr. Converse may be more entertaining, but we defy them to be more hospitable. If he had taken the train at Richmond he would have found us with a carriage at the Chicago end. Does our friend limit his Christian charity by a tortuous line drawn by the Ohio river?

The young brother at Clinton replies: "The *Central Presbyterian* makes us feel very cosy and safe under its protection," but thinks he will have to fight sometimes. He (the *Southern Presbyterian*) says:

We approve the self-restraint necessary to such a policy of peace, but we fear that it erects too high a standard for most of the Southern Presbyterian papers. For ourselves, we seek no fight, but if the quarrel is thrust upon us we believe it better to have it out and be

done with it, than to silently harbor malice. The dog loses spirit that though ever tantalized by the game, is never unleashed. When we were young, younger even than at present, we found that a sharp little setto was generally conducive to a better understanding. Peace is always desirable, provided it is consistent with honor, truth and justice. The provision, however, is all important.

The *North Carolina Presbyterian* says:

It is almost a temptation to quarrel with him, if our reward, too, is to be a week's visit from him.

For our own part, we look forward to the week's visit from Dr. Smith with pleasure. We will give him a royal welcome and extend him every courtesy. But we do not like the condition of the visit. He is so genial and lovable a man that if the visit is to be had only by a falling out with him, it may be delayed until we both go to receive our reward in a better land, where we will not know how to fall out.

#### MUST WE EXPECT MIRACLES NOW?

In Old Testament days, there were few miracles. None were wrought in the days of Seth or Enos or Methuselah, none for Abraham (unless we so count the birth of Isaac) nor Isaac nor Jacob nor Joseph. And there were trying circumstances in their lives which to human view might have called for miraculous relief. No miracles were granted to David or Solomon. The Old Testament miracles can be summed up in those of the days of Moses, Joshua, Gideon, (the fleece), Elijah, Elisha and Isaiah. Even John the Baptist did not miracles.

Why should miracle power have been granted to these rather than to others? Not because their trials were greater than others, for they were not. But rather because to them were committed special public responsibilities of giving shape to the Church's work. Moses was to lead its members out of Egypt, and give them the ordinances of worship: it was proper that the giving of these ordinances should be attested by a divine seal. Joshua was to settle them in Canaan and make a partition of the land for them which should be accepted as final and prevent any quarrelling over boundaries among the tribes of Israel. To Elijah and Elisha was entrusted God's special remonstrance against the soul-destroying and nation-destroying wickedness of the Ten Tribes, and to Isaiah a similar duty for the Two Tribes. There was therefore in each case a call for a divine authentication of the messenger and the message.

This call for miracle working does not exist at the present day. There is to be no new message. The last chapter of Revelation settles that point. In the place of human prophets, the New Testament economy is marked by the special and abundant presence of the Holy Spirit to warn and lead the people of God to their duty. Christ is the one prophet of the new dispensation.

As there is no divine warrant for a new messenger or a new message, there is no call for miracles to attest it. We have therefore no reason to expect them.

But may not God do wonders for his people at this day? Yes. He has done wonders in converting hardened souls, in healing those who seemed to be sick beyond hope of recovery, in removing obstacles to the work of his people which seemed insuperable, and in a hundred other ways. We expect him to perform wonders of grace all through this dispensation. Let us pray for his richest blessings in all our time of need, and let us expect answers to our prayers that are marvellous in richness. But let us not mislead the people of God by teaching them that there is scriptural warrant for expecting a return of the days of miracles.

#### THE NEXT GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

At the weekly meeting of the ministers of New Orleans, making arrangements for the entertainment of our General Assembly, held in the editorial rooms of the *Southwestern Presbyterian*, on Wednesday, March 30, attention was called to the following editorial note in the *Christian Observer*:

At a meeting of Presbyterians in Louisville last week the question was considered whether there is danger that yellow fever, or the prospect of yellow fever, may interfere with the attendance at the approaching General Assembly at New Orleans; the latter part of May next, and a committee was appointed to request the Moderator of the Assembly to change the place of meeting to some safe point. The session of the First church, Louisville, invites the Assembly to meet at this church.

Whereupon it was unanimously resolved—

1. That we regret that among the many conventions of a national character secular and religious to meet in our

city during the months of April and May, the only suggestion for a change of place should have come from Presbyterians.

2. That our city is at present remarkably healthy, as shown by its weekly reports, and that the house to house inspection, careful attention to sanitation, and watchful quarantine arrangements instituted and being energetically carried out by our new Board of Health, affords reasonable guarantee of exemption in the future from unusual sickness.

3. That our brethren can rest assured that should the emergency, we do not anticipate, arise, timely notice will be given to the Moderator that he may make such change of place and time as his judgment may dictate.

4. That we are persuaded that our brethren of the Church at large will not suffer themselves to be influenced by an expression of fear so utterly groundless and uncalled for.

The brethren who may gather at the spring meetings of Presbytery, this week and next, will be glad of the information contained in the first three of these resolutions.

The criticism, in the fourth resolution, upon the caution suggested as being "an expression of fear, so utterly groundless and uncalled for" will be tested by time. The yellow fever epidemic last fall caused extensive quarantines. During the mild winter we have not had severe freezes in the Mississippi valley to kill the germs of the disease. Reports have come from various sources that there have been cases of fellow fever at several points in the Southwest during the winter. If the brethren in New Orleans are in position to state that there are no cases of yellow fever at any place in Mississippi and Louisiana, an assurance to that effect would be welcomed by many presbyters. The entire Church desires that New Orleans shall have a full and delightful meeting of the Assembly at the earliest practicable season. The meeting in Louisville simply raised the question of safety, this particular year; and extended a cordial invitation to the Assembly to meet here, if a change be advisable.

#### DR. VANCE'S SERMON ON PREDESTINATION.

A very beautiful sermon on Predestination by Rev. James I. Vance, D. D., of Nashville, has been issued in tract form by the Presbyterian Committee of Publication at Richmond, Va. It is an exceedingly pleasant presentation of the love of God, who is planning such redemption for the world as is beyond our capacity of conceiving. We are sure that as it was heard with delight it will be read by many with profit.

The sermon has given occasion for an exhibition of the misunderstandings that flow from the habit of looking too much at one side of any subject. Our brethren of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church have been divided from our Church, because of their unwillingness to adopt, in their Confession of Faith, doctrinal statements which, though clearly deducible from the Scripture, they cannot fully understand, or whose relation to other truths they cannot comprehend. Accordingly they have adopted a Confession of Faith which varies materially from ours in the paragraphs referring to preterition and predestination. And they have magnified these differences greatly.

By reason of zeal in magnifying these differences, the organ of that church, the *Cumberland Presbyterian* (which is published at Nashville) is tempted to lay hold of some expressions in this sermon and hold them up as in contrast with certain expressions in our Confession of Faith. It tries to produce the impression that Presbyterians (and this sermon especially), are abandoning the rich, grand truths of Calvinism, and coming over to the semi-Arminianism of the Cumberland Church.

Its zeal has here led that paper into error. On one side of a column rule, it quotes what our Confession of Faith teaches concerning the decrees of God, on the other side it quotes (somewhat inaccurately) what Dr. Vance says about predestination. It overlooks the fact that Dr. Vance was not attempting to discuss all the decrees, but only one of them—predestination. The chapter of the Confession which it quotes deals both with decrees that are "efficient" and decrees that are "permissive." Dr. Vance describes the former, and does not touch upon the latter at all. The vaunted "contradiction" exists therefore only in the imagination of that editor.

Probably the same failure to note the distinction between God's "efficient" decrees and his "permissive" decrees, may have appeared in the preaching