

# THE BIBLICAL RECORDER.

DEVOTED TO RELIGION, MORALITY, LITERATURE, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.—T. MEREDITH, EDITOR.

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## TERMS.

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## From the Boston Recorder.

The following excellent article in the pamphlet form was recently distributed among the members of a Church in Boston. Believing it would be useful in other Churches, we are induced to publish it.

## THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY.

There is hardly anything in this world which can be efficiently carried on without system.—In every branch of business order and punctuality are essential to success. Suppose a man were to establish a factory, upon the principle that those employed, might enter and leave at their pleasure; that they might work when convenient, and leave their looms for a morning walk, or for an afternoon recreation whenever they felt inclined. Suppose even he should lay down a perfect system of rules for industry and punctuality, and yet adopt no measures to see those rules scrupulously obeyed. How long would such a factory run? How long would such a man be kept from the list of bankrupts?—There must be a system and punctuality to give efficiency and success. It is necessary in literary institutions to have duties in regular routine vigorously enforced. Not even a literary or political club can long exist, without having measures adopted, to ensure regular attendance.—And an army, without system and undisciplined, is too contemptible to be feared. It needs but a handful of well organized, and highly disciplined troops, to scatter such an army to the winds. In every institution, system and regularity are indispensable to success. Why, then, should the Christian feel that the church can be prospered, if its meetings be not attended with punctuality, and its affairs be conducted with energy. The church is not to acquire efficient organization and energy, by a system of fines and punishments, but by moral power,—by the conscientious feelings of its members. If there be not enough of principle in the bosoms of church members, to sustain this discipline, the church must go down.

The Christian should feel, that next to the duties he owes his family, are the duties he owes to the church. And he should feel as deeply bound to attend the stated meetings of the church for business and for worship, as he does to attend to any duties which he is called to perform in life. If there be any duties in the world, which the Christian has pledged himself faithfully to perform, they are those duties which arise from his relation to the church. You have stood before a large congregation of your fellow men, and solemnly called God to witness, that you would consecrate the affections of your heart, and the energies of your life to his service. And now with what possible propriety can you allow the ordinary claims of business, to absent you from the evening lecture, where your brethren are assembled for worship, or from the church meeting, convened to consult upon the interests of our blessed redeemer's kingdom. You have vowed fidelity, and your vow is recorded in Heaven, and will you now in total disregard of those your obligations, leave the church unaided by your prayers or counsels?—After having entered into engagements with your Maker, can you, with any conscience, engage in other pursuits to such a degree as to prevent your fulfilling these your prior and most solemn engagements?

If a man had engaged to perform certain services for you, and afterwards should enter into new obligations to some other individual, which rendered it impossible to discharge his duty to you, and should offer this an excuse, for violating his promise and proving unfaithful to his trust, would you not say to him "you have no right to form new engagements, which will prevent you from discharging the obligations into which you have already entered?" Would you not consider such a man as false in word, and unfaithful in action? How then can you after having promised fidelity and activity in God's service, and taken upon yourself the obligations of the church;—how can you enter into new obligations with the world, which make you unfaithful to God, and an apostate from the responsibilities and labors of the church? And yet how frequently do we hear it said, "my worldly cares are so numerous, that I have not time to attend the meetings of the church, and to take an active interest in efforts to convert the world." What impiety and what insanity is such an excuse!

Here is a man who has recently become interested in religion, and he most sincerely resolves that he will give his life to his Maker. He is humble and prayerful and active. Look into his family you see him the engaged Christian.—Go to the evening lecture and you see him there one of the most devout and happy of the worshippers.

"He loves to steal awhile away  
From every cumbering care,  
And pass the hours of setting day  
In humble, grateful prayer."

Follow him to his business, and he is ever ready to speak a word for his Saviour. He unites with the church, and takes a deep and active interest in all its decisions. And thus he continues for some months, apparently a happy and growing Christian. But he is prospered in business, and by and by begins to think of enlarging his establishment. Perhaps some new branch of business opens before him, which promises profit.—He hesitates however, for his time is now fully

occupied, and if he enlists in this new enterprise he must neglect some of his Christian duties. At last, however, he concludes to take upon himself these additional cares. As a consequence he becomes a less frequent attendant upon the exercises of the conference room, and the social evening prayer meeting. Before many months have elapsed, he neglects these meetings entirely.—Soon you look in vain for his presence at the monthly concert. His prayer is not heard there; his pecuniary aid is not felt there. Next he abandons his brethren at the business meetings of the church. He leaveth them to bear alone the responsibilities and toils of the church, to form and execute their own decisions, unaided by his co-operation or encouragement. The lecturer preparatory to the communion is next forsaken. Hurried and heartless family prayers, and the total neglect of active Christian effort, follow in the train of this sad declension. Christians are disappointed and grieved. Those who are not Christians, but feel friendly to religion, are by his example repelled from duty, and begin to fear that all professions are delusions. And the enemies of religion point contemptuously to him and say, "what do ye more than others?" The influence of such a professor, is decidedly disastrous to the prosperity of the church. And yet if a Christian brother endeavor to reclaim him to a sense of duty, he will say, "I have so much business upon my hands, that I cannot find time to attend religious meetings." Now what right have you to have so much business upon your hands, that you cannot attend to those duties you owe to God? When has your Saviour absolved you from your convenient obligations, and permitted you to neglect his service, that you might more energetically engage in laying up treasures upon earth?—The duties you owe God, can never with impunity be laid aside, for new and unnecessary obligations. And yet in every church there are some who are thus neglecting duty, and are endeavoring to quiet conscience by an excuse so fallacious, and so wicked. You would never dream that they were professed disciples of Jesus, did you not occasionally see them at the communion table. Such professors are but a mockery. And if such a man be not in truth a hypocrite, he makes others believe that he is so, and the religion which he professes, is a delusion.

We do not mean by these remarks that a person cannot be thrown into circumstances, which shall render it necessary for him to be absent from the devotional and business meetings which are appointed. But we do mean, that the obligations which the Christian owes the church, are among the most sacred into which he can enter. We do mean that all his plans of business should be formed in reference to this subject, and that he cannot guiltlessly enter into new and unnecessary obligations, which shall prevent him from attending to his duties to his God. The mother has occasionally been detained by the numerous cares of a large family. But if she be a faithful Christian, she will make every effort in her power, so as to arrange her domestic cares, as to enjoy the privileges as frequently as possible, of meeting her friends in the social circles of prayer. The man of business, may occasionally be surrounded by unforeseen circumstances, which will make it his duty to be absent from the meeting at which he desired to be present. The pious physician will not unfrequently be called from the assembly of prayer, to the bedside of the sick and the dying. But every Christian is bound to make these interruptions as few as possible. Every one must arrange his business, in reference to these his religious duties. The principle upon which we must act is, that those duties we owe the church are sacred, and that nothing but imperious necessity, should induce one lay them aside at any time. Each one must judge for himself. But he must decide with an awakened and enlightened conscience and in view of judgment and eternity.

It is necessary for the prosperity of a church, that the members should be acquainted with one another, and that there should be that bond of union which in former times attracted the attention and admiration even of heathen adversaries.—But this acquaintance can only be obtained by frequently meeting together as Christian brethren. It is generally the case when difficulties arise in a church, that it is in consequence of that want of sympathy and confidence which a more intimate acquaintance would ensure. The church is surrounded with many dangers, and there is great need of that strength which can only be found in united hearts. It is this alone which can prevent occasional collisions and strife. And he who stands in the way of this union of affection by not cultivating the acquaintance of his brethren, and by giving them no opportunity to sympathize and commune with him, is weakening the energies of the whole church. He not only withdraws his own influence, but throws an obstacle in the way of others.

Plans must be formed to awaken deeper interest,—and to extend the power of religion through the community. Here is a call for all the energy of mind of which the church is possessed—for all the ingenuity of skill, for all the strength of combined action. Such questions as the following are constantly arising:

What shall be done to infuse more efficiency into the monthly tract distribution?

How shall we enlarge a Sabbath school?

What measures shall be adopted to promote more system, in collecting money for charitable purposes?

Is it expedient to appoint a day for church fasting and prayer?

Is it expedient to choose a Committee to visit all the members of the church?

Is it expedient to adopt any unusual measures to arouse the attention of a sleeping community?

Now how are these questions to be decided? Who are to sustain the responsibility? Does it belong to the Pastor? Surely not! Does it rest upon the Deacons? by no means. Here is a call for the wisdom of the whole church, to be called forth in discussion and decision.

There are acts of discipline to be enforced.—

From the time of Judas to the present moment, there have always been apostates in the church. In almost every church there are unworthy members, and the church by salutary discipline, must purify itself from their sins. Jesus Christ chose twelve, and one of them was a devil. And of course, it is to be feared, that in every church there are not a few who are either deceivers or deceived.

Upon this subject, questions of most painful and difficult decision, are continually arising.

Here is one who has been guilty of conduct inconsistent with Christian character? But there are evidences of penitence. What shall be done?

Another has renounced the faith of the gospel, and has fallen into open sin. There are all the various degrees and shades and combinations of offence.

Upon whom does it devolve to settle these questions of difficulty and perplexity? I would ask the church member who is accustomed to take no part in these deliberations, where is your warrant for withdrawing from them and throwing the whole responsibility upon your brethren?

A few months ago, we knew a church, which was near being thrown into dissension by the settlement of such a question. The question was whether in a given case, there should be immediate excommunication or suspension? And yet not one third of the church were present to aid in deliberation—to decide by vote—to bear the responsibility. Is it right, my brethren? Can Jesus Christ look without a frown upon those who are neglecting his business because they wish to attend to their own.

And what is the influence of the example of such a professor. He is continually enticing other Christians to do as he does. He is thus paralyzing the efforts of the more faithful members of the church. He is speaking to the community around, telling them that religion is but a name. And the more respectable the man is in character, the more unimpeachable in conduct, and the more extensive his influence—the more disastrous to the welfare of the church is his example.

It is the silent influence of a holy life; the constant exhibition of deep interest in the welfare of the church, which more than all things else impresses the community with the belief of the reality of religion. And he who practically says "I will take care of my own concerns, and they who please, may plan and execute for the interests of the church," practically says, "I have no confidence whatever in the demands of the Bible."

## From the Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot. THE SALARY OF CLERGYMEN.

Suppose the American people should abolish the name of Sunday by giving it back into decades, as the philosophers of France once did,—what would become of domestic relations, of the sense of justice, of the duties of neighborhood, of civil freedom,—of every thing precious in human life?

Ought not a class of men who devote their lives to the promotion of social and national welfare, and whose duty it is, to warn these who are involved in the busy scenes of a worldly existence, that death is certain, the hour uncertain; and that all which is done on earth will be subjected to a Judge, who can neither err nor be deceived,—ought not such men to be sustained in their ministry? In what manner? They can perform no labor but those which pertain to their vocation. These occupy all their working hours. They are expected to learn as the world learns, and to know, in an age of severe and learned criticism, by what means they can best defend the fortunes which misdirected talents, and malicious ingenuity, are ever disposed to attack.—They are husbands and fathers. Ought they not to be so placed as to enjoy the benefits which these relations were intended to bestow? If they cannot so educate their children as to feel assured that they will be able to sustain themselves, and perhaps a widowed mother, those who are naturally the dearest objects to them, may be the subjects of most painful solicitude, since they see that they have to look to the world's cold charity for daily bread.

If a clergyman can accumulate nothing for an inheritance, surely he ought not, (though with all possible economy,) to be so straitened in his circumstances as to have his mind distracted from his professional duties so that the year may not close upon him in the worst condition of slavery, that of an insolvent debtor.

Those who assume the relation of parishioners are bound by every tie of interest and conscience, that their minister shall be adequately supported. Their wants are not those of luxury, though such may be the wants of some of their parishioners. But they do want, and must have, if their minds are left free to perform their duties, comfortable homes, means of conveyance, means of social intercourse, and of educating their children & of teaching, by reading & reflection. It is exacted of ministers that they shall be learned & eloquent; that they shall devote no small portion of their time to parochial visits: that they shall be at all times ready and prepared to perform their solemn duties, whether periodical or occasional, and in whatever condition they may be themselves, through the changes and chances of this variable world. And yet they must keep pace with the intellectual world, if they would usefully fill their sphere to which, under Providence, they have been assigned.

Parishioners well known from experience that society is continually progressive, and that many things are held to be necessary in 1836, which were considered as luxuries by themselves, or their fathers, but a few years ago. This progression applies equally to clergymen. They must live according to the character of the age, with whatsoever degree of simplicity and humility, they may temper it for themselves. Neither clergymen nor their families, more than others, are exempted from the costly calamities of sickness. One serious visitation of this nature makes a deep inroad on a stipend which is hardly suffi-

cient to sustain a state of uninterrupted health.

The money which one gives to the support of Christian teaching, and consequently of sound morals, is better bestowed than any which he can give. No one ever missed or lamented the money given in this precious cause, however much he may have had occasion to regret misapplied charity and vexatious ingratitude.

The time has gone by in which the sanctity and dignity of clerical office gave a claim to respect and reverence, whatsoever the individual might be who filled the office. Consideration for the man depends now on his own effectiveness in his calling. Is it wise and just, is it for the public interest, to exclude from the ministry those men who could make themselves independent, and perhaps eminent, in almost any other calling? If there be no encouragement to the best natural gifts, and to the best cultivation of them, in the clerical profession, this expanding country offers more inducements than any other to employ such gifts in other pursuits. The end of this matter will be, that no talents will be found in the ministry, but those which could not find bread for their possessors in any other employment.

Suppose one should compare the wealth, population, and the aggregate of salaries, with the services of the clergy in the state of Massachusetts, it would be found, that there is no class of men, who do so much for the public, and for whom the public does so little. They would do yet a great deal more, than they now do, to improve, honor, and adorn the intellectual and moral condition of their country, if they were not so often harassed for means to supply inevitable wants.

## INFIDELITY.

We do not deprecate infidelity merely because it is the hot-bed of immorality; nor because it proclaims extermination war against the best institutions of the civilized world; nor because it is scattering the blight of misery and death in some of the fairest portions of our own dear country; nor even yet because it opens eventually the broad gate to everlasting ruin; but we deprecate infidelity chiefly as the bane of rational enjoyment, the spoiler of all the holiest endearments of present and individual existence. Its votary must believe himself a *kind of thing of chance*—a germ of animated being, dropped by accident on the shores of time—obliged by a blind necessity to bloom in its present state for a few days, and then to wither away, and all beyond is blank! He can have no just conceptions of his relationship to mankind, he recognizes no common parent of our race, he sees no overruling providence in any thing. When the spring comes forth in its beauty, and invests all about him with the loveliness of a paradise, it whispers not to him of a land where spring and autumn are perpetual. When all the luxuries of the maturing year are spread out before him in rich profusion, he says not in the gratitude of his soul, "These are the gifts of him who careth for me." When prosperity smiles, or adversity frowns, amid all the vicissitudes of mortal life, he feels not, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good—he will not fail me nor forsake me—the very hairs of my head are numbered."

O, lives there a human being so perverse in intellect as to look upon this beautiful world of ours and all the worlds that swim sublime in space, and see no design, no benevolence, and exclaim not, "My Father made all these!" O, lives there a human being so miserable on earth as to believe himself a lone and isolated thing—a mushroom-like emanation from nothingness; unpurposed, undetermined, unnoticed and unguarded by Heaven, and owing allegiance to no superior Power!—Ah, we envy not the man who has no God, who holds no high and holy communion with the deity, and feels no blessed assurance of a faith that relies implicitly on the promises of a Revelation, and rejoices not in a hope of immortality!

Life is not all sunshine. And when the clouds of heaven gather blackness, and the red thunderbolts are hurled fearfully from the skies; when the dread earthquake convulses all nature; when the pestilence that walketh in darkness presses close upon us; when, in short, danger and death in a thousand Protean form stalk spectre-like around us, it is then that we naturally feel the need of some Almighty arm on which to lean for succour? But infidelity denies us this resource. It leaves us single and unarmed when every earthly dependence fails. It leaves not even hope behind. Alas, no supernatural ray beams on the unbeliever's soul in his last, sad, lonely hour,—all around is dark. O, how unenviable is the last exit of the proudest skeptic! No holy consolations soothe the bitter pangs of death, no heaven-born promises dawn upon the cipherian terrors of the grave! He is about entering

"The undiscover'd country, from whose bourne No traveller returns."

to be or not to be; possibly to lie down in eternal sleep; possibly to rove a restless and intelligent spirit over the boundless fields of space, and possibly—O the dreadful possibility! what infidel feels and fears it not?—possibly to meet the frowns of an incensed God whose revelation he has despised, and whose laws he has trodden under foot—to feel the lashes of conscience, the gnawings of the undying worm, the torments of endless death, and the penal fires of an eternal hell forever! Such are the tender mercies of infidelity to the dying man, such the reward of a life spent in her service.

Who that has read the closing scene of an infidel's career,—who that has marked the fearfulness with which the champions of Atheism and Deism have met their fate,—the pains which Hume took to divert himself from his own thoughts,—the settled melancholy of Rousseau,—The recantation of Voltaire, and the awful ravings of Paine,—who, in view of all this, can exclaim, "Let me die the death of an infidel, and let my last end be like his?" And yet these men

were the pillars in the sandy founded temple of daring doubts; they spent their lives in hardened defiance of Omnipotence. And if they could not die with at least a forced composure, or a brutal stupidity, it certainly speaks very little in recommendation of their creed. If such giants quail in the trying hour, what shall support feeble men and women? Who will dare venture unflinchingly where such leaders have been foiled?

And are these the fruits of infidelity? these the only consolations she can give us in exchange for the unflinching consolations of Christianity? Alas, she would take away all the bliss we possess or hope for, and leave us the "dead sea fruits" of her false philosophy! O, then let the storms of adverse fortune howl—let friends all forsake us, and foes all unite—let men say all manner of evil against us falsely for Christ's sake—let pains, torments and sickness prey—let death put on his tripple terrors—let the worst come to the worst;—but take not away from us the faith of the Gospel.

C. A. & J. J.

## From the Southern Churchman ROUSSEAU'S OPINION OF THE BIBLE AND ITS AUTHOR.

This divine book, the only one which is indispensable to the Christian, need only be read with reflection to inspire love for its author, and the most ardent desire to obey its precepts. Never did virtue speak so sweet a language; never was the most profound wisdom expressed with so much energy and simplicity. The majesty of the scriptures strikes me with astonishment, and the sanctity of the gospel addresses itself to my heart. Look at the volumes of the philosophers, with all their pomp: how contemptible do they appear in comparison to this? Is it possible that a book, at once so simple and sublime, can be the work of man? Can he who is the subject of its history, be himself a mere man? Was his the tone of an enthusiast, or of an ambitious sectary?—What sweetness! What purity in his manners! What an affecting gratefulness in his instructions! What sublimity in his maxims!—What profound wisdom in his discourses! What presence of mind, what sagacity and propriety in his answers! How great the command over his passions!—Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live, suffer and die, without weakness and without ostentation?—When Plato described his imaginary good man, covered with all the disgrace of crimes, yet worthy of all the rewards of virtue, he described exactly the character of Jesus Christ. The resemblance was so striking, it could not be mistaken, and all the Fathers of the Church perceived it. What prepossession, what blindness must it be, to compare the son of Sophroniscus to the son of Mary!—What an immeasurable distance between them!—Socrates dying without pain, and without ignominy, easily supported his character to the last; and if his death, however, had not crowned his life, it might have been doubted whether Socrates, with all his wisdom, was any thing more than a mere sophist.—He invented it is said, the theory of moral science. Others, however, before him had put it in practice; and he had nothing to do but to tell what they had done, and to reduce their examples to precept. Aristides had been just, before Socrates had defined what justice was: Leonidas had died for his country, before Socrates had made it a duty to love one's country. Sparta had been temperate, before Socrates had eulogised sobriety; and before he had celebrated the praises of virtue, Greece had abounded with virtuous men. But from whom of all his countrymen could Jesus have derived that sublime and pure morality, of which he only has given us both the precept and example? In the midst of the most licentious fanaticism, the voice of the sublimest wisdom was heard, and the simplicity of the most heroic virtue crowned one of the humblest of all the multitude. The death of Socrates peacefully philosophizing with his friends, is the most pleasant that could be desired. That of Jesus expiring in torments, outraged, reviled, and execrated, by a whole nation is the most horrible that can be feared. Socrates in receiving the cup of poison blessed the weeping executioner who presented it; but Jesus, in the midst of excruciating torture, prayed for his merciless tormentors. Yes! if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God. Shall we say that the evangelical history is a mere fiction? It does not bear the stamp of fiction, but the contrary. The history of Socrates, which nobody doubts, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ. Such an assertion in fact only shifts the difficulty, without removing it.—It is more inconceivable that a number of persons should have agreed to fabricate the book, than that one only should have furnished the subject of it.

The Jewish authors are incapable of the diction, and strangers to the morality contained in the gospel, the marks of whose truth are so striking, so perfectly inimitable, that the inventor, would be a more astonishing man, than the hero.

## From the Cumberland Presbyterian. RELIGIOUS OPERATIONS IN TEXAS.

Rev. Sumner Bacon, who has been engaged for about three years in the distribution of the Bible in Texas and Mexico, gives the following report of his labours during the last summer:

On the 12th of April last, I attended the first anniversary of the St. Augustine Bible Society. At that time, the Society had received no books from the parent Society, but have since received a supply, though none of the books have as yet been distributed, owing to the fact that no competent person could be procured to act as distributing agent. I preached eight or ten times in the vicinity of St. Augustine and Nacogdoches—the state of religion was then lower in that section than I have ever known it, though the congregations were large for this country. I left that region about the first of May, for the Brassos, in which section I remained till the last of September; during which time I supplied more than one hundred and twenty-five destitute per-