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SERMON NO. XXXVII.

ON THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH.

Acts ii. 42.

“And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

We have here a beautiful picture of the primitive Church, drawn by the pencil of inspired truth, and remarkable for that hallowed simplicity which characterized the first disciples of our blessed Lord. It is a picture which we cannot too attentively contemplate. The more we are conformed in our faith and practice to the Church, in the Apostles’ days, the nearer we shall approach to perfection. They had been but a little while deprived of the personal instructions of Christ, the Holy Spirit had been recently and abundantly poured out upon them; there had been no time for the growth of human corruptions. Under these circumstances it is reasonable to suppose, that the primitive Church was correspondent to the will and precepts of the Lord, and worthy to be imitated, so far as the situation of things would permit, in all succeeding generations.

In discoursing, therefore, from the words which I have selected for the guide of our meditations, it will be my endeavour to ascertain in the first place, who they are of whom the narrative speaks; and then, enlarge upon the particular things which the text relates concerning them.

When that power from on high, for which the Apostles’ were commanded to wait in Jerusalem, had been visibly poured out upon them on the day of Pentecost, we find them assembled with the disciples, in number about an hundred and twenty. In the midst of these, Peter, standing up with the eleven, delivered the first apostolic sermon, of which we have any record. It was a sermon worthy of him upon whom Christ had said he would build his Church. Its effects fulfilled this extraordinary promise. His audience were affected to the heart, and anxiously inquired of him, and the rest of the Apostles, what they should do. Upon being instructed by Peter in the nature and necessity of baptism, and of that faith and repentance which would qualify them to receive it,

infidelity, which assumes the garb of religion, only to make war on every thing in it worth preserving."—*Episcopal Watchman*.

The corner stone of another Episcopal Church, to be called Trinity Church, was laid in the city of Washington, May 31st. with Masonic ceremonies. An address was delivered by the Grand Master, followed by a very impressive address and prayer, by the Rev. Henry Van Dyke Johns, Rector of the Church.

The corner stone of a new Church, to be called Christ Church, was laid in the village of Oswego, New-York, on Friday, the 9th of May, by the Rev. John McCarty, the Rector of the Parish.

American Bible Society.—The Anniversary of this Institution was held on Tuesday the 8th of May, at the City Hotel, New-York. The Annual Report states, that the receipts of the past year amount to \$75,879, and the expenditures during the same period, was \$83,255. The number of Books issued, has been upwards of 130,000. Of these, more than 70,000 were English Bibles, and about 60,000 English Testaments.

The Theatre.—I have often seen it stated, says the New-York Observer, by the enemies of religion, that much art was practised by Christians, to obtain money for the support of missionaries. But let us look and see the amount of money which is spent for the support of the Theatre. The managers of the Park pays annually, for the lease of the building occupied for the Theatre, *eighteen thousand dollars*; and it is probable that the other expenses attendant upon it, for the salaries of actors, &c. must be at least *thirty thousand* more. Then, according to his statement, the profits in a single year, have amounted to *fifty-two thousand*; which, added to the above, would make the amount paid at one Theatre in a year, *One hundred thousand dollars*. There are now four Theatres in New-York, and supposing the amount paid to each to be seventy-five thousand, it would give a total of *three hundred thousand dollars* per annum, for the support of Theatres in the city of New-York, to say nothing of the money consequently spent at their saloons, &c.

Ecclesiastical Statistics.—In England there are two Archbishops, 24 Bishops; 11,053 Churches and Chapels belonging to the Episcopal Church; of which number, 125 have been erected since 1800. The whole number of dissenting congregations, are estimated at; Unitarian, 204, Independent, 1,203, Baptist, 805. Total, 2,212. The Church of Ireland has 4 Archbishops, and 18 Bishops; the number of Churches not mentioned. The Scottish Episcopal Church has 6 Bishops, 74 Priests and Deacons, 100 congregations, and about 60,000 members.—*Church Register*.

Italy.—Under the auspices of the Prussian ambassador, new facilities have lately been afforded in Florence to the exercises of Protestant worship; and a Protestant burial ground, it is hoped, will be permitted, with the perfect good-will of the townsmen;

the Protestants having been obliged hitherto, to carry their dead to a considerable distance for interment.

Peru.—All monasteries and convents in Peru, containing less than eight monks or nuns, are to be immediately dissolved, and no city is to have more than one establishment for the religious orders.

Poland.—The Emperor of Russia and King of Poland, has given permission to the English Protestant residents in Warsaw, not only to perform worship in any place they may think fit, but also to build a Church at their own expense. They are unable, however, to do this, and are soliciting aid in England.

Infidelity.—In the city of New-York, it would seem, that a systematic effort is to be made to brave public opinion, and hurl defiance at the laws of God and man. A club called by a misnomer, “The Free Press Association,” has been formed, which, among other “laboured deeds of hard earned infamy,” meet every Sunday morning and afternoon, for the avowed purpose of profaning the Sabbath of the Lord, by profane songs, which they call “odes to nature;” by retailing Voltaire and Paine’s vulgar ribaldry, in the form of lectures delivered from a mock pulpit; over which is suspended a portrait of Tom Paine, their prophet and deity, together with a painting of Indians, women and children, in a state of “nature.”—*Nat. Phil.*

Anti-Duelling Association.—At a meeting of the citizens of Adams County, (Miss.) on the 8th of March, an association was formed of gentlemen, who resolved to exert their united influence, and use every honorable and lawful means to suppress the murderous practice of duelling.

Church Music.—We have had, says the *Philadelphia Recorder*, a very limited opportunity of examining the proofs of this new collection; and as far as it goes, we think very highly of it. The tunes are well selected, and the harmonies arranged under the review of the best masters. We trust that it will be received with universal favour.

Turkish Barbarism.—Accounts from Constantinople, as late as the 19th of March, state, that a decree of the Sultan had been announced, declaring “that henceforward no religious sects will be tolerated in the empire, except those which recognize the authority of the Greek and Armenian Patriarchs, or of the High Rabbi: and that those who remain must attach themselves to one of these sects, or emigrate.” In the latter case, their property is to be confiscated. To cap the climax of folly, it is also decreed, that all the young Catholic girls must marry men of one of the tolerated sects, or be transported to Asia.