

# Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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## Poetry.

### Silent Teachings.

Sunlight! tell the hidden meaning  
Of the rays thou lettest fall;  
Are they lessons writ in burning,  
Like God's warning on the wall?  
"Strive, O man, to let a loving  
Spirit cheer the sad and poor;  
So shall many a fair hope blossom,  
Where none grew before!"

Stars! what is it ye would whisper,  
With your pure and holy light?  
Looking down so calm and tender  
From the watch-power of the night.  
"When thy soul would quail from scorning,  
Keep a brave heart and a bold:  
As we always shine the brightest  
When the nights are cold."

River! river! singing gayly  
From the hillside all day long,  
Teach my heart the merry music  
Of thy merry rippling song.  
"Many winding ways I follow;  
Yet at length I reach the sea.  
Man, remember that thy ocean  
Is eternity."

Chambers' Journal.

## Religious Literature.

[Many of our readers we believe do not see the *Christian Review* (Quarterly). We have therefore made some extracts from an excellent article by one of its able contributors in the October number. We would transfer the whole were it not that it would fill too large a portion of our space. Others besides Ministers will derive pleasure and profit by giving it a careful perusal.—Ed.]

### Christian Experience in its Relation to Ministerial Success.

Nothing on earth is so powerful as goodness, nothing like it to control the heart. But goodness, powerful as it is, unaided by a mightier influence, will not work that transformation of character which it is the object of the preacher to effect. Even the spotless life of the Son of God did not mould into its own likeness those who enjoyed the advantages of his personal ministry. The day of Pentecost, that day of the Spirit's special influence, added to the Church more disciples than many days of labor by Christ and his apostles, before those ministers were endowed with the Spirit from on high. The Spirit's influence in the ministry, and, by the ministry, in the hearts of others, works into the soul that love of the truth, that intensity of Christian feeling, that persistence in Christian effort, which are indispensable to the progress of the cause of Christ.

As a denomination, we Baptists have always insisted upon piety as essential to ministerial character and usefulness. Human learning, and the discipline of the schools, we have sometimes, in theory, undervalued; but a renovated heart, enlarged Christian experience, profound views of the law of God and of the gospel of Christ, never. The rule, that "no man has a moral right to preach beyond his own experience," we may not have rigidly ordered to, but we have not knowingly ordained to the work of the ministry a man who has not given credible evidence that he is in Christ Jesus, and therefore a new creature. More than this. We have looked to our preachers, whether evangelists, missionaries, or pastors, for higher attainments in piety, for stronger faith, intenser zeal, livelier hope, profounder humility, more glowing love; in a word, for larger experience in all the graces of a perfect Christian character and life, than has been required for simple membership in a church. Love for what has been called experimental preaching prevails so largely with the mass of our people, that the deep murmur of unsatisfied desire, will always manifest itself, if our pastors' sermons do not show the communings of his own heart with the inner life of the truths which he utters. Our tastes and our characters, at least in this country, were formed by a class of ministers, whose experience of the working of gospel truth upon the heart and life was

especially rich and instructive. Truth, as it lay in their minds, was not a cold intellection. It was emotional; it stirred their souls to their lowest depths; it aroused their activities, nerved their energies, and made their intellects, their consciences, their wills, work, and work for God and humanity. A woe they felt was upon them, if they did not preach, and preach the gospel; that, and nothing but that, met the cravings of their own souls, met the wants of their own case as sinners. Christ crucified, risen, interceding, was the basis on which rested their hopes; and to them it seemed that nothing but the same atoning sacrifice and finished righteousness, and prevailing intercession, could save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.

Having these views of our denominational sentiment, believing that these views are entirely Scriptural, and that the presentation of them will not be untimely, we shall offer to our readers some thoughts upon *Christian experience in its relation to ministerial success*.

No man, whose heart has not been renewed, can understand the truths which constitute the gospel, and upon the preaching of which all ministerial success must depend.

Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. The natural man knoweth not the things of the Spirit. The late William Wilberforce, a man of distinguished piety, on one occasion prevailed on William Pitt to accompany him to hear the eminently spiritual Richard Cecil. The preacher delivered a discourse on one of the leading points of Christian faith and duty,—a discourse which struck Mr. Wilberforce as being unusually imbued with the spirit of fervent piety and evangelical truth. On returning from the place of worship Mr. Wilberforce asked Mr. Pitt what he thought of the sermon. The answer of the illustrious statesman was:

I did not understand one word of all that I have heard. Indeed, I could not have been more ignorant of the preacher's meaning, if, instead of addressing his audience in English, he had spoken all the time in an unknown tongue.

The difficulty thus complained of by the Prime Minister of England, has been felt and acknowledged by not a few erudite men, who have listened to the gospel without spiritual profiting. The eyes of their understanding were closed, that they could not see; and their ears heavy, that they could not hear.

Germany, perhaps more than any other country, has had these lights, which were no lights; but England, also, and the United States, have had not a few men of great learning, of giant intellects, of noble natural impulses, who have brought their vast stores of knowledge to the elucidation of Divine truth; and still, after all their efforts to force their way into the regions of spiritual illumination, they have known less of the doctrine of Jesus Christ than the man of the humblest capacity, who has been taught by the Spirit of the living God, who has "hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes."

Divine things are not objects merely for the speculative understanding. They have to do with the emotions, the sentiments. Reason cannot evolve them. Association cannot suggest them. Imagination cannot compass them. The faculties to which they are addressed are not perceptive, suggestive, reasoning, imaginative, tasteful only. They are emotive, feeling. The man who should say, I comprehend an intellection which I have not known, would talk as intelligently as the one who should say, I comprehend a feeling which I have not felt. A practical trial of Christianity is indispensable to all satisfying insight into its nature. It must be experienced to be understood. It must be tried to be comprehended.

We cannot become acquainted with anything, except by the impressions which it makes upon us, and these impressions are made upon our different senses, external and internal. As we know the taste of a substance by the palate, and its color by the eye, so we know the joyfulness of an event by the happiness which it produces, and the amiableness of an object by the love which

we feel for it. Or, to express the same idea in another form:

God has created everything double; a world without us and a world within us. He has made light without, and the eye within; beauty without, and taste within; moral qualities in actions, and a conscience to judge of them. The internal powers are called into exercise by their corresponding external objects.

The organ of vision excited by the presence of light, the sense of smell by odors, the faculty of taste by beauty or deformity. No man in his senses would say, that without the eye one could be made acquainted with the beautiful colours of the rainbow; that without the ear, he could enjoy the delightful harmony of an exquisite musical performance, or, without taste, the delicate flavor of the peach or orange.

The love of offspring is a natural affection. The delicacy and strength of a mother's fondness, in a moment, starts into full maturity and power. In the bosom of the lowliest peasant, a new fountain of sensibility is opened when he feels that he is a father. Every one whose heart has throbbed with the parental emotion, knows full well, that all this tenderness, all this depth of feeling, was utterly incomprehensible by him up to the very time that the appropriate external object called it into existence. Now it lives in all the distinctness of a well-known, accurately-defined, and most delightful emotion. It has been felt, experienced, tried. It is therefore known. It is not brotherly or sisterly affection. These had been known before; *this* unknown.

Let the Bible be opened, let its teachings be subjected to the test of experiment, and we shall find the affirmation, that the natural man knoweth not the things of the Spirit, sustained most fully by the amplest historical testimony, given in by men who have conducted the experiments.

To a mind not spiritually enlightened, with what unmeaning words and sentences does the Bible abound! God. What is that? The Universe, says the Pantheist. The Son of God. Who is he? An inspired man, born in Bethlehem of Judea, says Socinus. The Holy Ghost. What is that? A divine attribute personified, says the modern Unitarian. To be born again. What does that mean? To enter a second time into a mother's womb and be born? inquires Nicodemus. To become a new creature. What is that? To renounce Judaism and embrace Christianity, says Dr. Paley. Regeneration. What is that? To be baptized by a bishop in the apostolic succession, says the high churchman. Atonement; the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who takes up his habitation in the soul of the believer; salvation by grace; the spirit of adoption, poured forth upon the heart, and filling it with all the peace and joy of a confident reconciliation; fellowship with the Father and the Son; having the life hid with Christ in God; growing in him; receiving out of his fulness; beholding with open face his glory, so as to be changed into his image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. What do all these things mean? Surely "spiritual things are spiritually discerned." "The natural man knoweth not the things of the Spirit." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but he hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

The success of the ministry, under God, is greatly dependent upon what a minister preaches. All truth is not equally fitted to lead men to forsake sin and cleave to Christ. Because a thing is true, it is not therefore to be spoken in the pulpit and called the gospel. In science, art, literature, government, there is a vast amount of truth which makes up no part of the gospel, and which, introduced into a sermon, would be as unsightly as a dissertation upon agriculture in a treatise upon medicine. To give appropriateness to the introduction of a particular truth into a gospel sermon, it must be a gospel truth, or if not itself a gospel truth, it must at least be one the proclamation of which is directly calculated to illustrate and

enforce that which is a part of it. Some truths are addressed to the imagination, some to the taste, some to the passions, some to the intellect, and some to the conscience and the heart. Subjects may be selected and treated with a view to their action upon either of these susceptibilities, without leading in the least towards the accomplishment of the true purpose of the Christian ministry. An audience may be made to retire in tears from the house of God as well as from a theatre. Their imaginations may be seized upon by a glowing imagery, their passions may be so aroused, that their whole frames may be convulsed by a religious truth as well as by any other, and still the end of the gospel may not be reached. It has been said, that among the thousands who have visited the famous painting of the crucifixion, by West, perhaps there has not been an individual who has gone away unmoved. Could the scenes of the last judgment be reduced to canvas; the Saviour coming in the clouds, with great power and great glory; the angels flying through the Heavens, to gather in the redeemed; the congregating armies of the risen dead, the immense, the interminable field of men, whose anxious faces await the dreadful separation; its sight must awaken the deepest, most solemn, most awful emotions. The same scene, clothed in language, set to music, or spoken from the pulpit, should produce the same effect. But, as those who have wept at the painting of the crucifixion, or perhaps at a description of that touching close of the Saviour's life, have not always had their consciences moved by reflection upon the cause of that event, their sins, nor the end of it, their salvation, in any such way as to lead them to Christ, as their wisdom and righteousness, so the scenes of the judgment might be contemplated without one thought of that personal sinfulness which will assign to the left hand of the Judge the finally impenitent. Men love excitement, and the excitement of the sensibilities and the imagination, better than that of the conscience. As a consequence, where such excitement is, especially if the conscience is not touched, people will hang in breathless silence or in tearful anxiety upon the lips of a speaker, who can move them without making them condemn themselves. Still all this may pass away without adding anything to the power of any motive to hate sin and love holiness.

We do not question the right of the preacher to make use of all the avenues which God has opened to the heart. He may roll the thunder and paint the rainbow, but he must also part the cloud and show the sinner that God whom he has offended, and that Saviour who has died for him. With the mere excitement of the imagination and the sensibilities he must not stop, no, not till he has driven the man back into the chamber of his own dark soul, and let the spirit-hand write, "Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting"; not till he has carried him away from himself and laid him at the foot of the cross, where the Saviour's blood, falling upon him, has cleansed him from sin and uncleanness. If the arrows of the Almighty are not driven into the hearts of the King's enemies, they might as well have remained in their quiver. If the wound which they make be not healed by the blood of atonement, it is made only to rankle and to burn.

The very best remedy to heal the divisions which are disturbing the peace of the churches, would be for the ministry and the membership to get their souls imbued with the spirit of a deeper and broader piety, of a piety which would control not only the matter of thought and discourse, but the spirit and manner of them also.

In a time of great spiritual declension, we have sat under the preaching of one whose very words were so cold that it seemed to us as though we were at the foot of some mountain height, where the cold water of the melting snow was descending upon us, and sending its chills to the extremities of our almost frozen body. But soon the rays of the Sun of Righteousness have fallen upon that preacher. We have taken our place again in the house of God, and have been astonished to find that there