

The Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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Poetry.

OUR ONE LIFE.

'Tis not for man to trifle! Life is brief,
And sin is here.
Our age is but the falling of a leaf—
A drooping tear.
We have no time to sport away the hours;
All must be earnest in a world like ours.
Not many lives, but only one have we—
Frail, fleeting man!
How sacred should that one life ever be—
That narrow span!
Day after day fill'd up with blessed toil,
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil.
Our being is no shadow of thin air,
No vacant dream;
No fable of the things that never were,
But only seem.
'Tis full of meaning as of mystery,
Though strange and solemn may that meaning be.
Our sorrows are no phantom of the night—
No idle tale
No cloud that floats along a sky of light,
On summer gale.
They are the true realities of earth—
Friends and companions even from our birth,
O life below—how brief, and poor, and sad!
One heavy sigh.
O life above—how long, how fair, and glad!
An endless joy.
Oh, to have done for aye with dying here;
Oh, to begin the living in yon sphere;
O day of time, how dark! O sky and earth,
How dull your hue!
O day of Christ, how bright! O sky and earth,
Made fair and new!
Come, better Eden, with thy fresher green;
Come, brighter Salem, gladden all the scene!

Literary.

For the Christian Messenger.

BIBLE REVISION.

It is a significant fact that an article in favour of the revision of our authorised version of the Scriptures has recently appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*. It was occasioned by the publication of the "Annotated Paragraph Bible," by the Religious Tract Society. That work is an edition of the Scriptures, printed in paragraphs, like other books, the numbers of the chapters and verses being given in the margin. There are also brief annotations, amending the version, or expounding it. The old Testament only is as yet published. There is reason to believe that a minister of our own Denomination, formerly labouring in one of our sister colonies, is the principal editor. He is eminently qualified for the undertaking.

The *Edinburgh Reviewer* thinks it highly inexpedient that a society, not assuming a literary character, should engage in such an enterprise. At the same time, he fully acknowledges the necessity of revision. The pith of his remarks is contained in the following extracts:—

"Surely it is high time for another revision of the English Bible. It is now almost 250 years ago since the last was made. During that long period, neither the researches of the clergy nor the intelligence of the laity have remained stationary. We have become desirous of knowing more; and they have acquired more to teach us. Vast stores of Biblical information have been accumulating since the days of James I., by which, not merely the rendering of the Common Version, but the purity of the Sacred Text itself, might be improved. And it is essential to the best interests of religion, that that information should be fully, freely, and in an authoritative form, disseminated abroad by a careful correction of our received version of the Sacred Scriptures."

"Language, like all other things of this world, is given to change. Its fashion passeth away. Though the language of the Bible has remained stationary, the language of society has kept moving on. Words and expressions which bore one sense in the days of Swift, have now become obsolete in that sense, and acquired another. Scriptural phrases, which were sufficiently clear to our great-grandfathers, have gradually but imperceptibly changed their meaning, and become altogether unintelligible to their descendants. For instance, *CARRIAGE*, in the Bible, signifies the things carried, such as baggage; with us it means the vehicle. *PREVENT*, in the Bible, signifies to help by anticipation; with us it means to hinder. *TO LET*, in the Bible, often signifies to obstruct; with us it means to permit. *PRIVILEGE*, in the Bible, signifies full of pity; with us it means contemptible."

"We admire as cordially as Swift did, or as any man can, the *strength*, the *beauty*, and the *simplicity*, of our authorized translation of the Sacred Scriptures. We are the last who would wish to part with or to injure it. We do not desire to have it superseded, but revised. And we cannot perceive any reason whatever why, because its faults are corrected, its deficiencies supplied, and its obscurities rendered clear, either its *strength*, its *beauty*, or its *simplicity* should suffer sear or diminution. On the contrary, we conceive that, if the required alterations were made in accordance with the spirit of the old translation, those qualities would become more prominent as the book was rendered more easily intelligible."

"They who would resist the elimination of the palpable mistakes, and the acknowledged imperfections of our English Bible, from an apprehension of offending the religious prejudices of the people, are guilty of a pious fraud, which, though of a lighter shade of guilt, ranks in the same vicious category with the practice of the Romanist, who lends his support to the perpetuation of a belief in fictitious relics, or endeavours to sustain the faith of his flock by the contrivance of a fraudulent miracle. In dealing with a book, of which Divine truth is the argument, nothing ought to be regarded but the means of rendering it the most distinct and perfect reflection of that truth; and if our present translation do not afford such a distinct and perfect reflection, it ought to be subjected to a course of continuous and careful revision, till it shall. But, even supposing that this confidence of the people in the immaculate excellence of the English Bible, were as deeply impressed and generally diffused as some of us imagine, and that, hitherto, we have evinced a salutary caution in respecting it, the time for such forbearance has now ceased. The popular belief in its perfection must gradually fade away before the cheap dissemination of such works as that of which the title stands at the head of the present article, and in every page of which some error of the translation is exposed and an amendment suggested."

The remedy is thus propounded:—

"What we should desire would be to see such a company of erudite persons appointed by the Royal Head of the Anglican Church for the execution of the task required, as were selected by James the First for the last revision of the Sacred Volume—but with this addition, that they should constitute a permanent commission; that when any vacancy occurred in their body, a successor should be chosen in his place, from among the most eminent Hebrew and Greek and English scholars of the kingdom; and, that the important office of guarding, superintending, and perfecting the text of the Inspired Writings, both in the original languages and in the translation, should be committed to their charge. In the performance of these sacred duties, they would be expected to avail themselves of every discovery for the purification of the original; to suggest such improvements in the translation, as might best serve to disseminate among the ignorant the benefit of their researches; and, above all, to publish, from time to time, and at no long intervals, under the sanction of their joint authority, improved editions of the Hebrew, Greek and English Scriptures. By the help of Divine Providence to the labours of so competent a body, we might reasonably hope to find ourselves eventually

in possession of such a version of the Bible as should correctly represent the sense of its inspired authors; and we do most seriously believe, that the piety of the people would increase, and their unchristian differences diminish, as the sense of the authorities to which they all appeal was set more fully and distinctly and accurately before them."

I should not have much faith in a "Commission" of this kind, unless the members were impartially appointed. This might be done by selecting them from lists furnished by the various Colleges, of all denominations. If, by such an appointment, a competent revising body were constituted, and if, after the termination of their labours, the present authorised version and the revised one were both printed by authority, so that persons might have their choice, all claims would be provided for.

It will probably be long before such a movement takes place. But the publication of the article referred to, shows that the attention of the British public is directed to the subject. Meanwhile, the American Bible Union is prosecuting its important labours. Learning cannot be better employed than in elucidating the meaning of God's Word.

MENNO.

Jan. 7, 1856.

We are much obliged to Professor Dawson, Principal of McGill College, Montreal, for sending us a copy of the *Witness*, with a report of his lecture before the Montreal Young Men's Christian Association. We may perhaps look upon it as a production of Nova Scotia, and from one so highly and generally respected it will on that account be read with interest, and as it has made its appearance in what may be considered the capital of British America, our readers will receive the following brief sketch of it with still more pleasure and satisfaction.

The Scriptural Narrative of the Creation.

LECTURE OF PROFESSOR DAWSON, PRINCIPAL OF MCGILL COLLEGE, BEFORE THE MONTREAL YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION.

The exercises of the evening were opened with prayer by the Rev. Dr. Wilkes, after which the President gave a few prefatory remarks previous to introducing the speaker of the evening. He said that some perhaps would exclaim that the taste for lectures had passed away, but when he looked around upon the large audience then assembled, he felt it unnecessary to say anything in refutation of so false an idea. Having briefly spoken of the objects of the Association, the President introduced to the audience Professor Dawson, who was greeted with hearty applause.

He commenced by remarking that he could not hope in a single lecture to do justice to a subject of such great extent. He proposed, therefore, merely to bring before them general considerations in order to lead them to inquire into the subject. Speculations respecting the earth, its origin and formation, have been a popular theme of the philosopher in every age of the world. The works of writers in the middle ages are filled with theories and philosophical speculations on the subject, whose conclusions were vague and unsatisfactory. Modern philosophy has built its theories upon facts, and in its conclusions, has arrived at great and important truths. The simple narrative of the Bible still stands erect, and has even a firmer hold upon the convictions of the mind than geology. We have, in truth, in the story

recorded in the Scriptural account of the creation a parallel testimony with that of geology to the order of the creative work. Moses, lifted by inspiration above the pantheistic doctrines of his time, wrote words which shine like dazzling light amid the darkness of ancient heathenism. God had sculptured long before, that history of the Creation which was to be decyphered by modern research, and compared with the Mosaic narrative. It must be admitted that this view of the relation of geology to scripture does not universally prevail. Geology has often been set up in opposition to the Bible. It is a pleasure for us to know, as we do, that there is a perfect harmony existing between the revelations of the Scriptures and the facts discovered by geology.

Modern science has studied nature independently, and endeavoured to explain past states of the earth by the light of existing causes. We have thus two distinct lines of inquiry, that based on the geological monuments of the earth's history and that of the inspired record. The tendency of Christian enlightenment is to untrammel inquiry. The truths of nature are always in perfect accord with the truths of God's word. He remarked that his views coincided with that class of writers who viewed the geological periods as equivalent to the Mosaic days of creation.

I. In the first place, as to the general nature of the Scriptural doctrine of the Creation.

If the account given in the first chapter of Genesis be entitled to any credit, it must be accepted as a revelation to man from God. There is no middle ground. All attempts to find such have failed. The Mosaic narrative represents the creation of man as the last in a series of events. Consequently the facts cannot have been derived from human testimony. This truth is not affected by any possibility that Moses consulted more ancient authors in the writing of his account of the Creation. The events of the Creation were not witnessed by man; therefore, Moses could not have written from the authority of other men, and, consequently, the student must accept the account as from God, otherwise it cannot be regarded as true. The narrative is a statement of the creative work, without any reference to secondary causes. It states only a few leading facts.

II. The facts revealed by Geology as to the creation of the world. There are some who think that geology is ever shifting its position, and is but a mass of controversy. But it is far otherwise. While the fundamental principles of geology are recognized by all men of science, there is still much debatable ground, and many disputed points in the science. Our most common rocks, as sandstone, slate, &c., are the results of gradual formation. Older rocks have been, by the action of water and other causes, ground down to sand and clay, and afterwards consolidated. Animal growth and deposition from calcareous waters have produced the limestones. Coal is the product of vegetable matter, which, in a form similar to peat, has, by great pressure, and the action of water, attained its present rank as a mineral. Granite, trap, and rocks of that class, are proved to be the result of volcanic action. So general have been these changes, that geology can find no rock that can be affirmed to be coeval with the world's creation. Accepting the conclusion that they have been formed by secondary causes, the distinct order of their deposit has been ascertained. The upper strata of formations must be the latest. The aqueous deposits have flowed over one stratum, thus forming a second, which in its turn has been made the bed for the deposit of still another forma-