

# Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS - FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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## Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

### "Follow me!"

"Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever thou goest!"

Guilty, forsaken, poor, and vile,  
I met the man of Calvary:  
He viewed me with a sweet sad smile  
And gently murmured "Follow me."

I saw Him wander through the land  
Among the poor of Galilee,  
I thought each action a command  
That seemed to utter "Follow me."

I saw Him pray the whole night long  
Communing with the Deity,  
And still He beckoned me along,  
And still He murmured "Follow me!"

Meekly He bore the scorn and sneer  
Of haughty Scribe and Pharisee;  
Amid it all my soul could hear  
The loving order "Follow me!"

Trembling I saw the piteous sight  
Of suffering in Gethsemane!  
And 'mid the darkness of the night  
I heard the whisper "Follow me!"

I saw Him at the judgement seat:  
My gaze His eyes met lovingly,  
A glance all love divinely sweet,  
And what it said was "Follow me!"

They doomed my blessed Lord to death,  
They nailed Him to the accursed tree:  
He died, but in His latest breath  
I heard the murmur "Follow me!"

Oh Lamb of God! oh blessed Lord  
Oh Friend who died—and died for me,  
With joy I hear thy precious word,  
With joy I go to follow Thee!

Through toil, or woe, or sore distress,  
Where'er thy glorious path I see:  
Through all—oh may I boldly press  
If only I may follow Thee!

F. B.

## THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

THE INTRODUCTORY SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE CENTRAL ASSOCIATION AT BERWICK, JUNE 21ST., 1858.

BY PROFESSOR A. W. SAWYER, A. M.

[Published by special request.]

"And His rest shall be glorious."—Isaiah xi. 10.

THE prophet in the passage from which these words were taken was predicting the fate of the nation that should oppress Jehovah's people and refuse to honour Him. The enemies of God's people might oppress them for a time for their good, they might vex and afflict them till they should weary out these wayward servants, and force them to acknowledge again that Jehovah is God. But they meant not any such good effect by their oppression. Pride and cruelty and lust moved them. They might be for a time as rods in Jehovah's hand to correct His chosen people; but they themselves will be bruised and scattered by other rods. The wicked may prosper for a time to carry on some of God's plans; but they shall not escape unpunished for their wickedness. The prophet's eye runs along the line of coming events, and sees these boasters against God smitten till but few survive, like the scattered trees that are left after a mighty forest has been laid low, and these so few "that a little child can number them." Their beauty, their strength, their hope have all perished. The prophet sees also a cheering change in the condition of God's people. They are no longer in bondage to idolatrous kings, no longer do enemies taunt them, no longer do they mourn for the shame of their own land. A King has arisen on whom the spirit rests without measure, a king who shall rule in righteousness, who shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. In his reign peace shall abound. The fulness of the Gentiles shall be gathered unto him. The knowledge of God shall fill the earth. The prophet sees all this; his soul glows with joy in contemplating the character of such a king, and he exclaims: the place where such a king shall rest, shall abide and continue to reign—"shall be glorious." That king must be Christ. There might

have been something in the subsequent history of the Jews that might serve as a type of the more complete fulfilment of the prophecy; but it seems impossible to apply the words in their full meaning to any one except Christ. Other prophecies understood as applying to him, are so parallel to this that we must consider it as having the same application. This interpretation is the one commonly received. However important and interesting the questions may be, whether there is to be any particular centre of this kingdom of Christ, or what will be the outward relations and characteristics of this kingdom, we do not propose now to discuss these points. It will be enough for our purpose to consider its spiritual characteristics. The kingdom here spoken of we believe to be made up of true servants of God, true disciples of Christ. They who have the faith of Abraham are the children of Abraham; and these united constitute the kingdom of Christ. We look on all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity as members of this great kingdom now being established in the world. The hearts of these people, or of such as may follow them in these earthly relations, are the resting place of Christ. The Church at large will be the place of his abode. The same truth is taught by Paul in these words: *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.* You, my brethren, and such as you, are the Temple of God. *If any man love me, said Christ, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.* This is the rest spoken of in the text. This is the kingdom whose glory we are to consider.

Language is frequently indefinite, because one uses words with one sense, another with a different. One would call an act of superior valor glorious: another an act of extraordinary benevolence. One might call a great victory glorious, because of the skill and courage with which it had been obtained: another would so style it because of the great and beneficent consequences that might flow from it. By some a nation of heroes would be called a glorious nation: by others, a nation marked by intelligence enterprize and virtue. So various is the application of the term used to characterize the rest of Christ. But there are some objects to which all would say the word should be applied. What are the qualities of such an object? In the first place we mention *loveliness*. We apply the term glorious to objects which may not appear lovely; but in the highest splendor there is something pleasing, something attractive, something which we love. But *grandeur* or *majesty* must be united with this. Beauty may exist by itself; but the blending of loveliness and majesty make the highest glory. The presence of these qualities implies another, the *excellence* or *choiceness* of the object. This may be estimated by the intrinsic value or by the cost. And then if we find in the object a *special fitness* to its purpose, it becomes on this account still more glorious. Now all will admit there may be a glory in human character as well as in the Sun, and that the qualities we have mentioned contribute to that glory. We have already observed that the hearts of men are the dwelling place of Christ to which our thoughts have been turned. The church enlarged, purified, established in the possession of the world, is the place of rest for this King of Glory, who renders glorious the place of his abode. It is, then, our work to trace in the Church of Christ the characteristics which have just been mentioned.

In the first place we are to notice the loveliness of the Church, the residence of Christ. "What elements make any character lovely? First of all, I think, we look for purity, or freedom from hatred, envy, revenge, lust, pride, covetousness, and the whole brood of sins whose presence so de-

files the heart. A mind possessing right sympathies and a correct judgement cannot be pleased with the exhibition of any of these affections. Sin is hateful. There cannot be any fellowship between the sons of Belial and the sons of God. But purity is lovely. We know it belongs to the inhabitants of Heaven. Christ delighted most in such as were free from guile and hatred. He pronounced a peculiar blessing on the pure in heart. God loves them. Man blinded by sin does not always see the beauty of this character. But in some cases even the depraved heart yields homage to the pure; and so far as grace sanctifies the heart and purifies the judgment, men come to see that there is a strange beauty in a character devoid of sin. The proper effect of Christian truth is to make a character of this kind. We may not often see it perfected. But in the imperfect state in which we view it, a beauty is seen and we acknowledge its power. How much more when this beauty shall mark the whole church, and the church fill the world. A world of people no more cherishing revenge, or hate, or deceit, or jealousy,—all "Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile?" We can see the beauty of the world in light, and air, and field, and forest, and cloud, and dew; but how much more beautiful and lovely such pure inhabitants of the world. In them Heaven's glories are reflected, and Zion we call "the perfection of beauty."

You will all admit that benevolence is essential to the loveliness of any character. This even softens the obdurate. It has a magic power to awaken the better affections. Self-denying labor for the good of others is rewarded not only by admiration, but by love. It is this attribute of good in God that makes Him the object of such love from man. It was this benevolence that so bound the common people to Christ. If few are ready to imitate an example of superior benevolence, all will unite in praising it, the hearts of all will be moved by it. Perhaps no other trait in the character of the departed is more affectionately remembered than active benevolence. No character can be truly lovely without this element. But all the material kindness we see among men is a poor substitute for that charity, that christian benevolence which is awakened through Gospel truth. The rare instances of this now seem rather to belong to Heaven than earth. We almost yield them the homage due to superior beings. We follow them: we obey them: we love their peaceful, useful lives. We know there are many of this character scattered over the world. We feel that God looks with special approbation on these servants and that the holy messengers between earth and Heaven must cluster about such bright spots in this dark world. But we are taught to believe that these instances will be multiplied until the light will cover the earth and we are called to contemplate the loveliness of the church at that time. The effects of sin may not then be seen as they are now, and consequently the demands for some forms of benevolence may cease. But the general character of the people of Christ must remain: the ruling disposition must continue the same. Selfishness with its hard features and dry eyes will have ceased to rule the world. All things will be brought under the dominion of love. Man shall no more oppress man. Nation shall no more vex nation. The green carpet of the earth shall not be stained by the slaughter of armies. The East shall send greetings of sincere kindness to the West. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, there shall be seen in business, in pleasure, in worship and in rest, in society and in solitude, "peace on earth and good-will among men." By the light of prophecy we see the coming glory and exclaim: *How admirable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts.*

I think you will agree with me that humility adds to the loveliness of the human character. By humility is not meant a voluntary degradation and a fawning to man. This spirit is distinct from true humility and despicable wherever seen. Pride may lead to this voluntary degradation; but pride cannot be loved. Pride regards

self; and selfishness separates between man and man. The Christian, on account of sin, must think of himself with sorrow. He is ready to acknowledge the smallest blessing undeserved. He ascribes all comfort and all hope to the grace of God. He confesses the lowest place in the kingdom of God too high for him. But he does not take the lowest place simply that he may be exalted. If he did this we should cease to love him. He takes that place because he is submissive to God, because he can forget himself in exalting the glory of God. The christian may bow himself in the presence of the Perfect One and fear to lift his head on account of his sinfulness. But when he is told that his sins can be pardoned through faith in Christ, he believes and loves and hopes. He looks away from himself and lives in God. He seeks nothing for himself. Christ lives in him and he lives in exalting Christ. He does not seek to become a victim to the pride of man. He does not acknowledge the claim of every pretender to authority and precedence. It may be best at times for the cause of Christ, that he should forbear and endure. But if there is need, he can put himself at the head of a nation or go forth alone to meet the proud champions of sin. He can sit on the throne or the footstool and feel that he is as near Heaven in one place as the other, that all these distinctions among men fade away when viewed from the height of Jehovah's throne. It is this self forgetfulness and this readiness to act wherever God puts one, that gives a charm to the character of every one who possesses it. Christ sets before us a little child to illustrate this character. We feel the beauty of the illustration. How lovely the sight of a nation, a race, a world of strong men converted and become like little children.

One other trait contributing to loveliness of character is worthy of notice,—gentleness. The simple, austere and formal do not call forth love. The hard and unyielding may be admired, but they do not awaken any tender affections towards them. Weakness may lean upon them, but the sympathies of the heart do not go out to them. If the rash are loved, it must be for something besides their rashness. But true gentleness always attracts and wins. What gentleness was in Christ. With all his sternness in denouncing woes on the unbeliever, how tenderly he called sinners to himself, how gently he rebuked Peter for his rashness, how like the gentlest of men he wept with the mourner, caressed and blessed the child, consoled the afflicted, rebuked his doubting friends. And how much we love him for this exhibition of his nature. But the purpose of Divine Grace is to transform all true believers into the image of the Son of God. The exhibitions of this gentleness which we may now see more than please us; but the character of the Church will become more perfect. Whatever is pleasing and attractive in the Christian now, we are taught to believe will become more pleasing and attractive; and the few instances of excellence will be multiplied till they fill the earth. The rough and cruel will become mild and kind. The taunting word, the overbearing manner, the denunciatory spirit, the contemptuous look, the malicious sneer, the wanton trifling with reputation or feeling will cease. The presence of these causes the world to be regarded with pity and horror by the perfectly pure and good; but the ceasing of these and in their place the presence of true gentleness of feeling and speech and manner, will give a loveliness to this disordered world and make it the delight of the holy. The change from natural ferocity and wildness into the gentleness of christian love, and the high degree of that grace which will be exhibited, are painted for us by the prophet in this beautiful picture: *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fawning together; and a little child shall lead them.* The beauty of the picture pleases us exceedingly; but the state of society here painted to us delights us much more. With earnest desire we can pray, "Thy Kingdom come."—(Conclusion next week.)