

great depths of our iniquity, it would be a flood so wondrous, that it would cover the highest tops of our hopes, and the whole world within us would be drowned in dead despair. Not a living thing could be found in this sea of evil. It would cover all, and swallow up the whole of our manhood. Ah! says an old proverb, "If man could wear his sins on his forehead, he would pull his hat over his eyes." That old Roman who said he would like to have a window into his heart, that every man could see within it, did not know himself, for if he had had such a window he would have kept it shut up, I am sure; for could he ever have seen his own heart, he would have been driven raving mad. God therefore, spares all eyes but his own that desperate sight—a naked human heart. Great God, here would we pause and cry, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow."—*Spurgeon*.

For the Christian Messenger.

MR. EDITOR,—

There are some passages of Scripture that are variously interpreted even by men belonging to the same denomination. One of these is that in 1 Peter iii. 19, 20. I wish you, or some one else would give us a plain exposition of the above passage, in the *Christian Messenger*. Perhaps Dr. Cramp or Dr. Tupper will do so, and oblige

IGNORAMUS.

We received the above a short time since, and forwarded it to the first name mentioned therein. Our thanks are due to Dr. Cramp for the following article, on the subject. We doubt not it will be very acceptable to other friends besides the above writer.

The Interpretation of 1 Pet. iii. 18--20.

DEAR BROTHER,—

*Ignoramus* has asked a hard question. Opinions are so numerous and conflicting that, as Dean Alford remarks, "the literature of the passage is almost a library in itself." There are three principal modes of explanation:—

1. It is supposed that by the Saviour's preaching to the "spirits in prison" is meant the ministration of Noah, "a preacher of righteousness," who, as the Lord's messenger and servant, proclaimed to those who "sometime were disobedient" the long-suffering of God, and exhorted them to repentance. They refused to listen to him, died in their sins, and are now "in prison," awaiting the final judgment.

2. Others maintain that the spirit of the Lord Jesus went literally down to the nether-world while his body was in the sepulchre; that he announced the glad tidings of the redemption which he had accomplished; that he found there the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament, who were neither in hell nor in purgatory, but in a kind of waiting-place; and that he took them with him up to heaven. This is the Roman Catholic notion. The curious may find it, in full detail, in the "Gospel of Nicodemus," one of Apocryphal Gospels. Hence the article in the so-called Apostles' Creed—"He descended into hell"—which was placed in the Creed about the fourth century.

3. A third party, impelled, as they affirm, by grammatical and philological necessity, regard the text as a statement of a fact which is not further explained. The Redeemer, they say, according to Peter's declaration, fairly interpreted, entered into a new condition of being at his death, and before the assumption of his resurrection-body. His spirit, in its separate state, visited the invisible world and there made known his glorious work of redemption. But for what purpose this was done is not stated by the Apostle, and need not be curiously inquired into, since the means of satisfying the inquirer are wanting.

No. 1, is the view embraced by a large number of Protestant commentators. There are formidable difficulties, however, in the way of its adoption. An impartial reader of the original cannot but admit that it appears to be a narrative of something that took place at that time; that is, that when the Saviour was "put to death in the flesh," and "quickened by the spirit," he "went and preached to the spirits in prison." Were there no theological purpose to serve, this interpretation would in all probability be generally received. The passage is historical throughout. The word which is translated "he went," in verse 19, is repeated in verse 22, and is there translated "is gone." When the Lord died, his spirit "went" and preach-

ed; after his resurrection he "went" to heaven.

It is observable that the words "flesh" and "spirit" are both without the article (according to the best authorities), and ought to be construed accordingly, in the same manner. There is no reason for supposing that the word "spirit" means the Holy Spirit; the reference is to the Lord's own spirit, as distinct from his body.

No. 2 requires no further remark. It is one of the dreams of antiquity.

No. 3 is the position taken by Dean Alford. These are his words:—"With the great majority of Commentators, ancient and modern, I understand these words to say, that our Lord, in his disembodied state, did go to the place of detention of departed spirits, and did there announce his work of redemption, preach salvation in fact, to the disembodied spirits of those who refused to obey the voice of God when the judgment of the flood was hanging over them. Why these rather than others are mentioned—whether merely as a sample of the like gracious work on others, or for some special reason unimagined by us, we cannot say. It is ours to deal with the plain words of Scripture, and to accept its revelations as far as vouchsafed to us."

Possibly some may think that the words of our Lord to the penitent thief are capable of an explanation in harmony with these views:—"This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Now, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus represents the abodes of the righteous and the wicked as so situated with regard to each other that each may know the other's condition. If, therefore, the Lord appeared in the spirit world and published the great fact of his atoning sacrifice, the announcement must come to the knowledge of all, both the spirits that were waiting for redemption, and those who were hopelessly "in prison," and whose anguish would be increased by the melancholy consideration that the blessings of the redemption might have been theirs, if they had not been "disobedient."

But all this is conjecture. The apostle has not explained himself. The passage under discussion is a singular and unaccountable digression. As to the explanations offered, cautious theologians will probably prefer No. 1, while critics will adopt No. 3, variously modified. Some few, perhaps wiser than the others, will think that the best course is to leave it as it is, and to be content to wait for the solution till "in God's light we see light." Happily, our spiritual position is not affected, however we may decide in the matter. Whatever may be the particular fact alluded to in the text, it is of small consequence to us in our present state whether we apprehend it or not. In the next world, when we shall see Jesus "as he is," every event, nearly or remotely connected with the great salvation, and tending, in any degree, to illustrate the principles on which it is founded, will be fully made known. Then we shall "see face to face," and "know even as also we are known."

Yours truly,

Acadia College, J. M. CRAMP.  
Dec. 25, 1862.

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, DECEMBER 31, 1862.

The Last Day of the year.

The day has now arrived in the present year that shall close the book whose leaves have been one after another filling with a record of the past. The last page only remains, and after a few more hours it will be declared that as regards the year of our Lord 1862, "Time shall be no longer!" Many may perhaps see in this nothing more than the natural course of events, and because no great convulsion of nature takes place, they vainly suppose that "all things continue as they were." The observer of the signs of the times and of the progress of events, however, will not fail to discover that God reigns. What has transpired in the world in the course of but one year, is sufficient to awaken the attention of the thoughtful to this fact, perhaps more than in any previous twelve months that they have lived.

In reviewing the past, we have much which calls for gratitude to the Giver of all Good. Our fears have been from time to time driven away. Instead of judgments, we have had mercies. The assurance that the direction of the affairs of men and of nations is in the hands of the All-wise, is a source of consolation to him who places his confidence in God. He can look back and recount the interpositions of his Heavenly Father, and can exclaim, whilst he erects his Ebenezer, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped me!" But to him who has no regard for the laws and government of the Most High, it only in-

creases the necessity for his serious consideration of the fearful position he occupies in the universe—man in antagonism to his Maker. The issue of this is not doubtful.

The close of the year is well suited for reflection on the past,—a comparison of the present with previous periods, and the formation of plans for the future.

Respected Reader, Let there be no unfaithfulness with yourself here, but let there be a full realization of your past failures, present obligations, and future hopes, and of the source whence all your strength is to be derived. It is only by a full dependence on Divine Grace that you will be able to succeed better next year than you have in the past.

In a national point of view, we may look at the year now drawing to its close as one of great mercy. Our last issue of 1861 was in mourning for Prince Albert, and the sudden stroke, it was feared, would exercise an injurious influence on the mind of our beloved Queen. Now we are informed that, in the anticipation of the Prince of Wales' marriage and from a visit of his intended bride, Her Majesty appears to have taken "a new lease of life." The future prospects of the Royal family are such that we can find no parallel for it in the family of any previous sovereign. The extended empire of Britain enjoying peace in all her borders for a year, is what could hardly be expected, and yet, with the exception of the slight misunderstanding with China, our horizon has been clear. In our first number of the present year, we gave the intelligence that the Trent difficulty had been overcome, and the war spirit which we feared would bear rule, had been laid. Now we have the pleasure to record that instead of any attempt to invade our rights, a free-will offering of thousands of dollars has been sent from our American neighbours to assist in sustaining those who, in consequence of the dreadful war, are suffering for bread. How much more grateful the present task! Would that at the commencement of the new year we might hope to report to our readers an end of the hateful war, and a renewal of commercial operations; so that gaunt Famine might accompany the spirit of War back again into the regions of oblivion—the shedding of blood be stayed, and peace, plenty and happiness resume their accustomed march over the nations.

We might give a review of other events which the year has brought forth on the European continent—in France, Italy, Austria, Turkey and Greece, but these are familiar to all our readers,—having been brought before them from week to week.

Although there have been thousands slain by the sword, yet we believe that these wars and fightings are but precursors of the reign of "Peace on earth." God has designs of "Good-will towards men," and it will be seen that out of all the confusion caused by wickedness in high places, there will come "Glory to God in the highest." By the dissemination of the good seed of the kingdom this is to be brought about. When this is done, and His people are waiting, then He will appear and bring about his own designs.

A word to all.

Since the first of January 1862, we have forwarded to our Subscribers fifty-three numbers of the *Christian Messenger*, under certain circumstances the information contained in one of these may have been worth the whole year's subscription. Some paid in advance for their paper, other have paid during the year, but we are sorry to add that some have not yet paid and that even for two or more years. In justice to our paying friends and to save ourselves from ruin, we must strike the names of some of the latter from our list, as preliminary to collecting the arrears due by them. Should any of our friends who thus find themselves without the first number of the *Messenger* for the coming year, send on the amount of their arrears at an early date, we shall be happy to add their names again and supply them with the missing numbers,—as we shall print a few extra copies for this purpose.

We would take this opportunity of saying to those persons who neglect to pay up and renew their subscription, that they need not suppose that the money in their hands belonging to us will be a source of happiness to them, and we advise them to lose no time in paying up. In some cases where persons think they are too poor to take a newspaper and pay for it, it is probable that the want of promptness in their business, or industry in their calling, has made them negligent in this matter, and it requires but a little consideration and effort, to enable them to provide this with the other necessaries for their families. They will be likely to become even poorer by giving up, as they would by ceasing to provide themselves with food, or to sow

their fields in the Spring ready for the coming Autumn. We doubt if there are many families in this province who could not, if they wished, in some way, provide what would enable them to pay for food for their minds, as well as procure sustenance and clothing for their bodies.

To our AGENTS generally we are greatly indebted for their efforts to aid us in their several localities during the year. In some cases we know the help given by them is not properly appreciated by the Subscribers for whom they act. We hope that our patrons who have not already done so, will without delay, call on the nearest Agent with their subscription—and so facilitate his labor and render it the more pleasant. If they can get any good New Subscribers and will give their names to the Agent he will be pleased to forward them, and we shall be glad to receive them.

SPURGEON AGAIN.—The *N. Y. Examiner*, in referring to the compliment lately paid to Presbyterianism by Mr. Spurgeon, at Clapham, pithily remarks:

"Mr. Spurgeon lately made a speech at a festival given by the Clapham Presbyterian church, in which he is reported to have said that he rejoiced that this was a Presbyterian church; he was a Presbyterian himself. Seriously and solemnly, he believed Presbyterianism to be the government Scripture had ordained. He was not an Independent, and he objected altogether to be classed with the Independents. He was Episcopalian-Presbyterian-Independent, but rather more Presbyterian than Independent." Pretty good for a man who professes to be a Baptist. But it was a pity for him to make so long a compound in defining his position. If he had said he was SPURGEON, and that he believed in that form of church government, he would probably have hit the mark as well, and saved time in doing it."

A man's actions are the best exposition of his opinions and the above remarks are well put. But we have yet to find the version of the above speech from Mr. Spurgeon's own pen, or from any authentic source. There have been many things said of Spurgeon so wide of what afterwards appeared to be the truth, that we are willing to wait for something more reliable before taking this speech as reported, and giving it full credence.

The *Witness* had better keep cool about "this justly celebrated preacher."

THE INTERCOLONIAL RAILWAY.—The Hon. Mr. Tilly, the New Brunswick Delegate, arrived on Friday last by the steamer from England. We learn from the *Morning Chronicle* that the negotiations with the Imperial authorities, although they "had not received a formal ratification," "yet," the editor remarks, "we understand that the mission may be fairly reported as successful."

It gives the following as the terms on which the loan was to be raised for constructing the Railroad:

"First, the arrangements entered into at Quebec in September last are formally approved by the British Government.

Second, the Colonial Governments are to be left free to construct the road either by Commissioners to be appointed by them, or they may grant a subsidy to any Company, equal to the undertaking, that may be found willing to construct and manage the road.

Third, the Secretary of State for the Colonies is to name one of three engineers to be appointed to make preliminary surveys, preparatory to the locating of the site of the road.

Fourth, the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury will raise the loan—£3,000,000 stg.—by the issue of Imperial Debenture Bonds, and the Colonies are to have the benefit of the Imperial credit, pledged direct to lenders. No commission will be charged by the British Government for managing the fund, unless any portion of it should be negotiated through the Bank of England, in which case the Bank's charge of one-eighth per cent. will be made.

The arrangement for re-payment of the proposed loan, is as follows:—

- £250,000 in ten years.
- £500,000 in twenty years.
- £1,000,000 in thirty years.
- £1,250,000 in forty years.

After ten years from the date of the loan, a sinking fund is to be provided, with the object of re-paying the principal at the dates respectively named."

THE IMPERIAL FISHERY COMMISSIONERSHIP.—By the last English mail we are informed that letters were received stating that the office of Fishery Commissioner, vacant by the death of the late Moses H. Perley, Esq., had been offered to the Hon. Joseph Howe, who would in all probability accept it.

The *Chronicle* states that "this choice, being Imperial, and not Provincial, if accepted, will not involve the retirement of Mr. Howe from the Legislature, or even the vacation of the post of Provincial Secretary during the coming session."

The salary is stated to be £1000 sterling a year, with an additional allowance of £250 a year for a private secretary.