

# Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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## Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

### PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE.

I cannot tell to others,  
Nor could they speak to me  
Of cares and fears distressing,  
Or the trials sore oppressing;  
But all are known to Thee.

O dear and precious Jesus  
Before Thy throne we bow,  
We see Thy patient tender care,  
Thy grace enabling us to bear  
The burden heavy now.

A present help we need  
As thirsty plants the rain;  
For this soul-hunger we would crave the  
bread,  
With which Thy children through all time  
were fed;  
And balm to ease our pain.

Our wants, our woes we bring,  
Our feeble uttered prayer,  
Take us and our's within Thine arms  
So safely keep—for death's alarms  
Lose all their terror there.

Till in our home on high  
The angels' song we sing;  
A heaven tuned-harp within our hand  
At last we've reached our Father-land,  
At last behold our King.  
Eldersley, June 1864.

## Religious.

### WORK FOR THE SKEPTICS.

If God is anywhere, we say to the rationalist, he may be everywhere. Once admit the principle, the possibility of divine interposition, and you settle the question for the whole Bible. Concede that God called Abraham—concede that God parted the Red Sea, that he fed the host of Israel with manna, that he lengthened the day for Joshua, that he rescued Daniel from the jaws of the lion, or the three youths from the fiery furnace; concede any single miracle of the Old or the New Testament, the miraculous birth or the resurrection of our Lord, and you admit a principle that sweeps triumphantly through the whole Sacred Record, and will guarantee the reality of every miracle of which that record makes mention. Who shall make a distinction? Where can you draw the discriminating line? Who shall say that *this* miracle may have been wrought, and then that any other miracle of which the Scripture informs us, is the product of credulity or of knavery? If one of these miracles is worthy of a God, so are all of them. If there was good reason why God should manifest himself in one extraordinary and anomalous transaction, the same reason will hold for them all. By logical necessity, then, we give up all the miracles, or we retain them all; and the history of the Hebrew nation, of the people of God, alike under the old and the new covenant, renders itself into a mere commonplace history, utterly disemboweled of its special significance, and its sublime purpose; or it stretches across the ages, a Mount of God, on which heavenly footsteps are seen, over which here hangs the dark cloud and there beams the ineffable glory in which alike is partly hidden, the majesty of the Eternal God.

And the principle applies not merely to miracles in the narrower sense of the term. It applies to every form of special divine interposition which is claimed to characterize the sacred writings. It applies to inspiration, to prophecy, to the divine mission of our Lord. Inspiration is a miracle. Prophecy is a miracle. An incarnate Messiah is a miracle. If there is no miracle, there is no inspiration.—If there is no miracle, there is no prophecy—no foretelling of the future, beyond the shrewd guess which even Stanley concedes to the Hebrew seers. On the other hand, if there is inspiration, or if there is prophecy; if holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; if, in the light of a higher illumination, they looked down the opening vista of the future—then all the rest follows of course. Miracle, in every one of its forms, is immediately authen-

ticated; because the same power which could and for any reason would, interpose in such a way, would also be likely to find reasons for other modes and forms of extraordinary and miraculous agency. And obviously, the Old and New Testaments, in all their parts, hang together; they form a coherent and mutually dependent whole.

To admit the first chapter of Genesis is to admit the last chapter of Revelation. To admit the divine call of Abraham, or the divine mission of Moses, is to admit the divine mission of Jesus Christ. To concede the divine origin of the symbolical sacrifices of the Old Testament, is to concede the divinity of that great Sacrifice of the New Testament which gives them their entire significance. To grant the reality of the New Testament Sacrifice is to grant implicitly the heavenly origin of that vast system of Old Testament offerings, which points so wonderfully and so variously to their antitypal sacrifice in the Now. Shadow and substance mutually support each other. From the tree you may reason to the shadow; from the shadow you may reason to the tree. The shell is less valuable than the kernel, but it is essential to the kernel. So, all the parts of the Bible are interwoven into one mysterious, sublime, indissoluble whole. They form a unity which, the more thoroughly it is examined, will be found all the more complete and more wonderful; like the system of nature, displaying to the superficial eye innumerable difficulties, and even contradictions, but constantly revealing to the penetrating gaze a profound unity.

We remind, then, the reader, of the problem which the rationalist has got to solve. It is all or nothing. He has got to get rid of all the miracles of the Bible, or his work is substantially unaccomplished. If any one is genuine, than any other may be, and probably all are. The same evidence, the same moral reasons which exist for one, exist for all. He may well put on his heaviest armor, and address himself to the conflict in the spirit of a hero. His enemy, to be conquered, must be annihilated.

### THE TWO GARDENS.

Eden and Gethsemane! How intimately the condition of the world is related to these two gardens! In the first man was placed in his state of innocence. There he was placed on trial for himself and all his descendants: there he fell. In that garden started the bitter fountain, formed by tears of regret over a ruin which man had caused, but which he had no power to restrain. That fountain has coursed its way down through the ages, augmented continually by tears of suffering and sorrow. The world can never forget Eden, both for what it was, and for what it became by reason of man's sin.

After four thousand years had elapsed, and the world had experienced the consequences of sin the second Adam enters another garden—the garden of Gethsemane. He entered it by night. It was the night of man's sin and guilt. He entered it to place himself on trial also for the world. When God called to the first Adam. Where art thou? He hid himself from his presence. He was ashamed because he was guilty. When God called to the second Adam, he answered. Here am I, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God. If much depended upon the trial of the first, we may say that even more depended upon the trial of the second Adam. There was a possibility of repairing the ruin of the fall, the world was not irrecoverably lost. But if Christ had refused to drink the cup of suffering put to his lips in the garden of Gethsemane, there could have been no salvation for man.

From the garden of Gethsemane started another fountain that courses its way through the world. That fountain has its source in the drops of bloody sweat that fell from the Saviour's brow. It was augmented by the stream that flowed from his hands, his feet, and his side, on Calvary. Whoever plunges in this stream, is cleansed from the stain of sin and guilt.

Down to the latest generation these gardens will continue to be remembered, and perhaps throughout eternity the scenes that transpired in them, will be studied with ever-increasing interest.—*Ger. Ref. Messenger.*

### ON SOME CONCEPTIONS OF HEAVEN.

No figure of rhetoric, employed to create in the mind a conception of heaven, is more frequently chosen than the similitude of a city with walls and gates. In the time of our Saviour, when men began to be taught of the New Jerusalem, and the narrow way that led to it, this was the most natural figure that could be used to embody its splendour in words; for the greatest work of that early day was the building of a city that should be surrounded with firm and solid walls of defence to defy a captor, and of imposing appearance to impress with grandeur the mind of the traveller who approached.

Accordingly, the inspired writers of the New Testament called heaven the Holy City; and the fathers of the church, in discouraging upon it employed the same striking metaphor. Thus it has come down even to this modern age, not only in the pages of the Word of God, where it remains ever glowing with peerless sublimity, but as the striking conception of the venerable past, whose poetry, as much as whose art, we cherish and admire. While the imagination, that spirit of restless wings, has seldom been content to tarry and look upon the same scene twice, however beautiful or entrancing, it seems to have returned again and again to behold the Celestial City, unable to attain, in the realm of its highest flight, a view of Heaven more unspeakably lovely to the eye and satisfying to the soul.

The complete figure appears to have included also a river, flowing at the end of the pilgrim's journey heavenward, forming a boundary between the earth and the dominions of the city beyond. This is the river into whose cold waves all travellers must descend; and it is deep or shallow to each according to his faith in Him whose throne and palace is on the other side, is wavering or firm. On this account, it has sometimes happened that many who have seen the city and yearned to enter in, have feared to cross the stream, though they should be welcome at the gates.

Bunyan, in the story of the Christian Pilgrim, relates, of the hero and his companion, that before they reached the gates of heaven, they came to this river which they must pass through. "So I saw in my dream, that they went on together till they came in sight of the gate. Now I further saw, that betwixt them and the gate was a river; but there was no bridge to go over. The river was very deep. At the sight, therefore, of this river, the pilgrims were much stunned; but the men that went with them said, 'You must go through, or you cannot come at the gate.' After they crossed they met two angels, clothed in white apparel, that shone as silver, who were waiting for them; and, guided by these attendants, they walked onward to the gate." The allegory continues: "Now, when they were come up to the gate, there was written over it, in letters of gold, 'Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.'"

After they reached the gate, a messenger was sent to tell the king that they had come; and he commanded that they should be admitted. "Now, I saw in my dream, that these two men went in at the gate; and, lo! as they entered they were transfigured; and they had raiment put on that shone like gold. There were also that met them with harps and crowns, and gave them to them; the harps to praise withal, and the crowns, in token of honour. Then I heard in my dream, that all the bells in the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them, 'Enter ye into the joy of our Lord.' I also heard the men themselves, that they sang with a loud voice, saying, 'Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.'"

"Now, just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and behold! the city shone like the sun; the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps. There were also of them that had wings, and they answered one another with holy intermission, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the

Lord.' And after that, they shut up the gates; which, when I had seen, I wished myself among them."

Let us now turn to Milton's conception: though it may not be more comforting than the description of the dreamer in prison, it is more gorgeous and complete. He portrays the gate, with its jewellery and gold, so clearly, that his words seem almost to flash forth shining rays.

"A kingly palace-gate,  
With frontispiece of diamond and gold  
Embellished; thick with sparkling orient gems  
The portal shone, inimitable on earth,  
By model, or by shading pencil drawn."

Nor does the poet leave out of his description the idea of the river:—

"Underneath a bright sea flowed  
Of jasper, or of liquid pearl, whereon  
Who after came from earth, sailing arriv'd,  
Wafted by angels, or flow o'er the lake,  
Wrapped in a chariot drawn by fiery steeds."

But Milton's varying fancy did not, in every instance, picture golden battlements and towers; in one place he has the verse:—

"The bounds  
And crystal wall of Heaven."

The refulgent light shines upon the city, and makes its glories greater by reflection, is brighter than the sun that dazzles from mid-heaven the eyes of men. And yet the poet, with a boldness as successful as it was hazardous, has ventured to declare that there is interchange of light and darkness in the heavenly realm. The angel Raphael, in the garden of Paradise, relates to Adam:—

"There is a cave  
Within the mount of God, fast by his throne,  
Where light and darkness, in perpetual round,  
Lodge and dislodge by turns, which makes  
through heaven  
Grateful vicissitude, like day and night;  
Light issues forth, and at the other door  
Obsequious darkness enters, till her hour  
To veil the heaven: though darkness there  
might well  
Seem twilight here."

But sublime as is the ideal of the venerated bard, we have a greater still; for he, with straining eye, gazed up at heaven; but there was another to whom the New Jerusalem came down. "I, John, saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." The City which St John beheld was radiant with the glory of God; "her light was like unto a stone most precious,—even like the jasper stone, clear as crystal." It had a towering wall and twelve gates. The City was of pure gold, and was reflected in the light like transparent glass. Its fashion was square; and it was measured before his eyes with a golden reed. The foundations of the wall were garnished with precious stones; each massive gate was a single pearl! In this city there shall nothing enter that defileth, or maketh a lie. A pure River of the Water of Life is there,—clear as crystal, and proceeding out of the throne of God. Greater than all, Christ is there!

Such a conception of heaven ravishes the soul. The Christian yearns to be within the sacred walls. He is almost impatient to hold a harp and wear a crown. While he looks upward, the vision is so enchanting that when he casts his eyes again upon the earth, his dwelling-place seems dismal, and his life dreary. The sun, in its meridian, shines with the fulness of splendour over his head; but the brightness is not bright enough; and he wishes that the sky might open before his gaze, and disclose the Golden City itself beyond. He would then have but a single other wish,—to be there,—afterward and for ever, he would be unspeakably satisfied. But while he waits here, and renews his courage daily, from the promise,—"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they might have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

A life is troublesome, and sets a man's invention on the rack. One trick needs a great many more to make it good; while truth is always consistent with itself, and needs nothing to help it out. It can live in all regions flourish in all soils, and becomes naturalized in all climes.

To LIVE and not to learn is to loiter, and not to live.