

# 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.

### THE SNOW-FLAKE.

Whither art thou tending,  
What thy mission here,  
Like a white-robed angel,  
From some heavenly sphere?  
Falling so softly, smoothly and low,  
Emblem of innocence—beautiful snow!

Hast thou come to cover  
Sorrow, pain and sin?  
To hide the many traces  
Where grief and woe have been?  
Fall feathery flakes the live-long night,  
The morn, perchance, will bring them light.

Or, comest as the destroyer,  
Silently, to slay?  
To wrap them in thy winding-sheet,  
And steal their life away?  
But one deep sigh, one long-drawn breath,  
Their sleep is sweet—the sleep of death.

Pity God the homeless,  
On whom this sleep doth fall.  
The prayers, the hopes of long ago,  
They cannot now recall.  
Happier those who patient lie,  
Tho' suffering long, 'mong friends to die.

Fall on thou gentle snow-flake,  
O'er sea and town and glen,  
But from their sleep eternal  
I'd rouse the souls of men.  
Would God that by my life, like thee,  
I, too, might shew His purity.  
Jan. 31st, 1864. B.

## Religious.

### THE BIBLE AND THE CHURCH.

AN ADDRESS BY THE DUKE OF ARGYLE.

The Duke of Argle presiding at the annual meeting of the National Bible Society of Scotland, in his opening address, said:—  
"The principle upon which all our operations are founded is this—that it is a wise and safe thing to circulate the Scriptures independent of all ecclesiastical organisation. We say that the Scriptures are above all churches, and that they are above all creeds and catechisms—(applause)—that by the Scriptures the Church is to be judged, and not *vice versa*, as many say, that we are to judge the Scriptures by the Church. (Applause.) Now, this I hold to be a principle of immense importance at all times, but I conceive it to be of still greater importance at the present time than it has been in many former periods in the history of the Church, because at the present time we have many speculations among us; it is a time of very bold and very free opinion. We have many speculations which are avowedly hostile to Christianity; we have other speculations which are, not perhaps, hostile, but are indifferent to the interests of Christianity; whilst we have others which I sincerely believe, are intended to be friendly, but are conceived by many of its friends to be equally hostile to the interests of Christianity; and I say it is an important question at this time what is to be our line of defence. Are we to stand upon the authority of the Scriptures? or are we to confess that we are unable to do so, that we are unable to fight in the open fields, as it were, that we must retire behind the earthworks and entrenchments of what men call the Church? That is the question which we have now to decide, and a more important question cannot be committed to the Christian community to be decided upon. (Applause.) Perhaps I cannot better illustrate what I mean than by quoting to you a passage which has just appeared in the charge of one of the most learned, and one of the most distinguished prelates of the Church of England, a prelate for whom I myself have the highest personal regard, respect, and admiration—a man who has added new lustre to an already illustrious name—I mean Bishop Wilberforce, the Bishop of Oxford; and I regret that I am on this occasion obliged to quote one passage from his charge in order to express the strongest possible dissent from his opinions. He says in a charge published only the other day, 'Thus we shall, in the long run, be unable really to

maintain the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, if we give up the Divine authority, in its proper place, of the Holy Catholic Church.' Now, when I read such a passage as this, as president of this Bible Society, I feel it to be my duty to ask publicly these two questions:—First, what is the Holy Catholic Church? and, in the second place, what is its proper place? We know what is the meaning assigned to these words by the Roman Catholic Church; we know that by 'one Catholic and Apostolic Church' they at least know what they mean—they mean a great organised system of priesthood, existing, as they suppose, from the time of the Apostles, and carried down to the present day, along with an organisation, with its existing head—a body at all times available to every member of the Church for the interpretation of his creed and his Bible. That is the meaning of the Roman Catholics; but what is the meaning, I ask again, which Protestants attach to the expression—'I believe in one Catholic and Apostolic Church?' I sincerely believe that there are many members of the Church of England who have no other meaning than this, that they believe in the Church of England. (A laugh.) There are many others, I believe, who simply mean that they believe in any church which has bishops, and I am afraid that we should stand a very bad chance in their estimation. But, fortunately, I know that none of these is the authorised meaning of the Church of England. There is another occasion on which another document of the Church of England is read, which throws great light on the meaning in which Protestants ought to accept such an expression as this,—and strange to say, this prayer, which I am about to refer to, is read not generally in the congregations, but specially in the seat of Episcopal power, especially in the cathedrals of England, and generally in Chapels Royal, before the royal presence. It casts great light upon the meaning of this 'Catholic Church.' It is what they call the bidding prayer in the Church of England, and the terms of it are these—'Ye shall pray for Christ's Holy Catholic Church, that is—two invaluable little words—for the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world.' (Applause.) Well then, having asked what is the Church, and having found some tolerably intelligent answer to that question, I put the second question—What is its proper place? because the Bishop of Oxford says: 'We shall be unable to maintain the Scriptures unless we maintain the Holy Catholic Church in its proper place.' Now the argument of the bishop goes on to this—We should never have had the Scriptures if it had not been for the Church; the Church has been guided by a supernatural power to tell us what the Bible is therefore the Bible hangs upon the Church. Now, I say—in what sense is it true that the Bible has depended upon the 'Christian people dispersed throughout the world'? Now, the course of argument is this—the Church was the witness of the Bible, the Church has been the keeper of the Bible, and so, by a very natural step which is not always distinctly expressed, by means of which we find ourselves landed in a conclusion which rebels against our judgment and our conscience without our ever, perhaps, having discovered how we are brought into it, we are brought to this—that the Church, being the witness and the keeper of the Bible, becomes also its interpreter. Now, I wish to say one word in regard to the sense in which the early church was the witness of the Bible, and in what sense we owe the Bible to it. I conceive it to be wholly unjustified to claim, on behalf of the early church, a supernatural or inspired power in respect to the collection of these writings which constitute Holy writ. I do not for a moment mean to deny or doubt that God's Spirit has been present with His Church, guiding it in all those matters in which it was useful that it should be guided for the future of the religious world—that I do not doubt, or deny, or dispute for a moment; but I say it was not necessary for the early Christians that they should possess any sort of inspiration, any sort of supernatural power, in order that they might be witnesses of the genuineness and authenticity of the writings which were committed to them. They were witnesses of the authenticity of the Scriptures exactly

in the same sense in which the pagans were witnesses of the authenticity of Virgil, or Livy, or Horace; and I believe that they had no other power committed to them than that of exercising their own human faculties in witnessing that such and such writings came from such and such men, and were committed to their holy keeping. (Applause.) I believe that all the difficulties which have arisen in past times in respect to the advance of science has been due to authoritative and to traditional interpretations, and that we shall never get rid of those difficulties except by estimating these interpretations at their proper value. Let me take an instance. It is very difficult for us now even to conceive the difficulty which existed in many minds, a few hundred years ago, in respect to the science of astronomy. None of us now can conceive how it was that a great part of the Christian world was excessively alarmed when they found that the earth went round the sun, and the sun did not go round the earth. No human being now even sees the difficulty; it requires us to go back and read the literature of that time to understand what people meant by having any difficulty on the subject; and yet we know, as a matter of fact, that it did constitute a very serious difficulty, that the Church in general were very much alarmed, and that they believed that this discovery of a purely physical truth was contradicted by many passages of Scripture, and was calculated to upset belief in the Bible. Well, now, take another instance of a science which is a much younger one than astronomy, and the truths of which are not yet so familiar to the public mind as the truths of astronomy—I mean the science of geology. A very great deal of alarm was expressed, and I am not sure that it has wholly vanished even at the present day, when it was discovered that the fact of physical death had existed among the lower animals upon the world for ages before the existence, and therefore before the fall of man. I really believe there are many persons in the present day who think that there is a difficulty in the discovery of this physical fact. I believe that the difficulty is rapidly passing away; but I say that both these difficulties have been entirely due to the acceptance of traditional and authoritative interpretations which have turned out not to be true interpretations. And how do we get over the difficulty now? I believe we get over the difficulty simply by adopting a doctrine which is not authoritative, which is not traditional, which is entirely new, which is objected to by the Holy Catholic Church—as the Bishop of Oxford calls it—for many generations. I mean this, which I find very ably expressed by Dr. Candlish in a work recently published, called 'Reason and Revelation,' as follows:—'All that is in Scripture is not necessarily revelation; to a large extent the Bible is a record of human affairs—the sayings and doings of men, not a record of Divine doctrine, or of communications from God.' And, especially in reference to physical facts, Dr. Candlish asserts, as I believe he well may, the independence of our faculties in this important passage, 'The Inspired word is abreast of the science and literature of its own age, but not in advance of it.' That is how we got out of the difficulties—not by holding to traditional and authoritative interpretations belonging to the Holy Catholic Church, but by maintaining the independence of our own judgments on all questions on which our own judgments are competent investigators of truth, and submitting to the conclusion which is manifest, that physical truth is only brought into connection with the Bible as a means of illustration."

### GEORGE WHITFIELD.

There was a bright, rosy boy, with a blue apron, in an inn, struggling with the confusion of great thoughts within him, which he could not either exclude or comprehend. There was a poor seitor of Pembroke College, choosing the meanest drudgery, wearing the coarsest cloth, eating the worst food and but little of it; standing in the biting frost until he had no feeling in his feet or fingers, and trying hard to fast the whole forty days of Lent. These were the glimpses they had of the childhood and youth of George Whitfield, who afterwards became an evangelist such as the world had never known since Peter the

fisher preached at Pentecost. Roused from self-righteousness, and opening his heart to the love of the Saviour, he went on his first work of preaching. Church after church was closed against him, but he went into the open air and proclaimed to listening thousands the unsearchable riches of Christ. The effects which followed were extraordinary. As he stood forth, his young manly countenance seemed to bespeak a hearing; and when once his voice was heard, so exquisitely was it turned, and so successfully was it wielded, high and low were subject to its spell. Add to his eloquence the earnestness which the heart of holy passion kindled, and they would not wonder at his influence.

His powers of description must have been marvellous. Men saw the scenes he painted. David Hume was held enchained by his eloquence until he forgot to sneer. The philosophic Franklin was moved like a common man; and the artificial Chesterfield was startled for once into an impulse of real feeling, and sprang forward to arrest the fall of the blind beggar whom the speaker pictured on the cliff. Alone he went to Bartholomew Fair, and commenced to preach. The showmen gave up their pursuits. A deaf old woman, who had first obstructed him, was found clambering up the pulpit stairs, that she might not lose a syllable of his sermon. The persons who heard him wept and trembled. The tears made little rills of cleanness down the cheeks of the Kingswood colliers. Children hung upon his lips with loving, earnest eyes; but perhaps the most touching illustration of his influence was the case of a little boy who sickened after he heard him preach, and whose soul cried out in the pauses of pain, "Let me go to Mr. Whitfield's God." This was not the power of what was called the pocket-handkerchief, nor dissembled tears. Whitfield could not help being an orator, but he aimed to be an evangelist, and so great was his success that he was said in one week to have a thousand letters from persons who had been blessed by his ministry. His work was preaching, and he knew it. The physicians once prescribed for him a perpetual blister. He said he had tried perpetual preaching, and found it answered as well. When winter came to stop his journeys, he mourned over it like a smitten child; and when spring returned, he bounded on to his beloved labor. He said he hoped to die in the pulpit, or at least soon after he came out of it.

After thirty-four years of successful labor, the evangelist gathered himself up for his final discourse. The people listened long, as if they new that for another Elijah there waited a chariot of fire. He then requested another minister to speak to them, and with the candle in his hand was ascending the stairs, but suddenly turned as if with a sense of mortality rapidly finishing, and of moments more precious than gold, and addressed them from the stairs until the candle burned down into the socket as he held it in his hand. The next morning he was not. In the night the messenger came, and like his Master, he ascended from a mountain of prayer. Such was George Whitfield, and ages yet unborn, as they read the moral of his life, will bless God for that prince of preachers, that noble, grand emblem of the revelation angel flying in the midst of heaven with the everlasting Gospel of peace.

### ILLUSTRATION OF SCRIPTURE.

CAUSING CHILDREN TO PASS THROUGH THE FIRE TO MOLECH.

Molech (variously written Moloch, and sometimes Milcom) was one of the deities worshipped by the Canaanites, Phoenicians and Carthaginians. He was propitiated by human sacrifices, especially by the sacrifice of children. He was represented, according to the Jewish Rabbins, in the form of a brazen statue, seated on a throne of the same material, with the head of a calf, on which he wore a crown, and with arms extended and inclining towards the earth. The children offered to him in sacrifice were placed upon these extended arms; but in consequence of the downward inclination above mentioned, they readily slipped off into a glowing furnace immediately beneath, where the fire soon consumed them. Others say that there was a