

# Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.  
VOL. X, No. 42.

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1865.

WHOLE SERIES.  
VOL. XXIX, No. 42.

## Religious.

### Divine Sovereignty and Man's Freedom.

Human philosophy has puzzled and confounded itself, time out of mind, in attempting to resolve the problem how God can influence the will of man, and yet man be voluntary and free. So high has been the dispute, that the schools of philosophy have ranged themselves in mutual hostility on this platform alone. The single line of demarcation has been the question, whether the human will is free or constrained, whether man is a voluntary agent, or an agent divinely necessitated. The one school has decried, with a sort of horror, the freedom of man, as if it were an invasion of the sovereignty of God. The other has refused the doctrine of divine constraint, as if it overthrew the responsibility of man, and sapped the foundation of a moral government.

Standing on the two extremes of opinion, those hostile armies have faced each other in open contradiction, shooting forth each its own arguments, which, however they rattled against the iron proof of their antagonists, fell hurtless to the ground. Or, if ever a champion were pierced by a convincing shaft and fell a victim to the controversy, the rival hosts still held their positions without a surrender and without the admission of a truth. On no middle ground have they ever met, nor suffered their flags to float side by side, to tell the world that truth is composed of more ideas than one. It is an almost touching commentary on our mental shortsightedness. It should make us fearfully distrust all extreme forms of opinion.

Unlike the schools of men, God teaches us that the truth, which to him is a unity, is to us as a complexity, that the world is a mixture, that man himself is a compound of opposite elements, and man's life a constant conflict of forces. Without stopping to explain to an imbecile curiosity, the intricacies of the mighty problem, the inspiration of God seizing on both parts of the question, joins them together in one statement of truth, and presses that statement in a practical form, home upon the bosom and the brain of every human creature. It will not allow us to be amused with the question, "How can I be responsible to God if I am dependent on divine grace?" nor on the other hand, "How can I be dependent on him for salvation when the responsibility is all my own?"

The Bible does not scruple to declare, with that positiveness which belongs to certainty, and that assurance which is not afraid of paradox, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." It lodges that solemn injunction on our hearts, and it leaves us to speculate on it at our peril, to reject it to our perdition, or to act piously upon it to our joy and salvation.

We feel it to be true, even where our understanding cannot grasp the truth, that there must be an inworking God to overrule our depravity, or else we can never be willing to be his. No matter where we find our witnesses, only let them be experts in human nature, competent witnesses, men who have thought enough of life and of themselves to have an intelligent opinion, men who have tried the experiment of holiness in their own strength, and they will testify alike. The Christian who has mastered his unregeneracy, and the sinner whose unregeneracy has mastered him, will both confess that without God we can do nothing. Both look up to a sovereign power above them; the one looks tearfully, thankfully; the other doggedly, discontentedly. The former thrills, while he adores, and says, "By the grace of God I am what I am;" the latter writhes as if he were inwardly stung, while he complains, "I cannot repent, I cannot give my heart to God." This divine truth has its human attestation, and man is witness for God that his omnipotence is supreme, even over the spiritual dignity of us immortals.—*Dr. A. H. Vinton.*

He that does good for God's sake seeks neither praise nor reward, though sure of both at last.

### A Universalist in a Difficulty.

An old man who was called the apostle of Universalism in the village where he resided, was on his death-bed. One of my deacons suggested that he would be gratified to see me. I called and found him reduced very low, on the confines of the eternal world. He gave me a hearty welcome, and entered at once upon the great subject of preparation for death and heaven. He said, if he was not right, he desired to be corrected, but he was sure that he loved God, and that all men would be saved. I replied, that if he really loved God, he would surely go to heaven. God would never exclude from heaven any one who loved Him. I then inquired, "How long have you loved God?" "Always"—was the instant reply. The old man confessed that he had not always lived as he ought—had some times been guilty of excess in drinking, and abused his family; yet he was confident he had always loved God.

I inquired whether he had ever publicly professed his love to God, and his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He said No, he did not believe in making a profession of religion, and then committing all manner of iniquity. He proceeded to berate churches, and all professed christians and hypocrites, as the very off-scouring of all things. He charged them with falsehood, and almost every species of immorality and crime. He waxed warm and was very earnest indeed for one so near his end. And when he closed his terrible Philippic against all the professed children of God, he sunk down exhausted, and turned his eyes upon me—as much as to say, "What will you answer to that?"

"Mr. M.," I replied, "you have drawn a dark picture, but I admit it is applicable to some who profess godliness. There was a Judas among the twelve apostles; and there are some in almost all churches that do not bring forth the fruits of righteousness, and are, as we have reason to fear, enemies of the cross of Christ. Now Mr. M., if these men live and die as they are, what will become of them?" The old man hesitated, and was evidently very much embarrassed, but at length said—"That's a tough question." He did seem to feel the necessity of future punishment, for those christians he so bitterly maligned, and so cordially hated.

### SIN.

SIN—that word ought to be written in a paragraph, a page, a book by itself, and written in blood. What sin is I know not; I only know that when God would mark the heinousness of sin, no adjective can be found sufficiently energetic but one borrowed from sin itself; and he describes it as "exceeding sinful." I only know that over the whole earth, and in all the depths of hell, sin is the only thing which God abhors; the only object which the absolute, essential, quintessential love hates with absolute, essential, quintessential hatred; exclaiming in tones of imploring deprecation, "Oh, do not this abominable thing which I hate." I only know that if God has a government, sin is treason against that government; if God is holy, just and true, sin defies and outrages these perfections. As the tenderest of fathers, God yearns over his children in ineffable compassion, but sin arms those children and arrays them in horrible revolt against this adorable being, causing him to use the language of a parent, who, finding all entreaties vain, turns from his unnatural offspring, and seeking some lonely spot, pours out his griefs there, making rocks and vales vocal with his complaints, as in anguish he cries, "Hear, O heaven, and be astonished, O earth, for I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." Above all, fix your eyes on the cross, and tell me now, if you can, what sin is. O cross, cross, dripping, smothered with the blood of incarnate Deity, as we gaze there, what is our estimate of sin? What a hideous phenomenon is this without a name, which it will require eternity to comprehend and to deplore.

Nor does sin only attack and insult God, and seek to be a deicide; it is a homicide and in the most dreadful sense; it is the author of all the woes, burdened with which the whole creation groans together. Wherever

human forms pine with disease, or writhes with pain, the sickness and the agony are inflicted by sin. Wherever human hearts bleed and are torn with affliction and anguish, the blow has been struck by sin. Sin snatches from our arms those objects which are dearer than life, hurrying them to the grave; and sin is digging graves for us. Sin sends forth the pestilence that walketh in darkness and the destruction that wasteth at noon-day.—Sin riots in lust, and blood, and murder.—Sin revels in scenes where brothers, born of a common Father in heaven, rush upon each other like demons, and are mingled in promiscuous carnage, till the trampled and gore-sodden earth cries out to heaven. Every burning fear, every harrowing fear, festering grief, every corroding care, every shooting pang, every piercing remorse; the sighs and moans of lazar-houses reeking with putrefaction and death; the shrieks, and wails, and clanking of chains in hospitals swarming with maniacs; and the curses and blasphemies of dungeons where guilt rots and raves,—these, all these, are but feeble reverberations of these dismal truths. "Sin reigns unto death," "Death has passed upon all men, for all that have sinned."

This is not the worst. Pestilence, suffering, death, are only outward symptoms of the interior plague; they are really merciful, for they warn us of the blight within. Sin murders the soul. Its withering, blasting course is not exhausted in this life, but goes with us into eternity, to be perfected and perpetuated there. "The wages of sin is death"—death to all spiritual life now, and an immortality of pain, and tears, and despair. "The sting of death is sin," the weeping and wailing of the judgment will be the ever-gnawing worm and the ever-quenchless fire.

Enter, now, into these truths; unite them; think what sin is, what sin has done, what sin is doing, what sin will do in eternity; are you surprised that God pronounces them fools who "make a mock at sin," and that we are exhorted to "resist unto blood, striving against sin?" What shall we then say of him who not only sins, but finds his highest pleasure in a life of sin?—*Fuller.*

### Ministerial Support.

Few ministers have had a competent support during the last two years. Many of them have incurred debts which press them like mill-stones, and unfit them for the most effective service. Others have been compelled to starve both mind and body to escape debt, and their people have suffered more than they. The paper issued by the Congregational Council, on the subject of ministerial support, is worth careful reading. We give an abstract, insisting on a competent salary.

It enables him to give himself wholly to his work. That taxes all his powers and absorbs all his time, and no man can go outside of it without detriment. Paul did, but he is the grand exception and anomaly of the ages.

It keeps him in the best condition for his work. That is, it removes temptation to over-work in other matters, and affords reasonable means of recuperation by diversion, travel, rest.

It provides indispensable helps, such as books, etc., to feed and replenish his own mind.

It secures a respectable appearance in house, dress, culture, etc. If his bearing be mean, his words will be despised.

It enables him to be honest. He can enforce by word and deed all the claims of integrity.

It furnishes the means of liberality. And he cannot train his people in the grace of giving, unless he leads the way by example.

It opens the way for forecast in providing for those he must leave behind him.

It conciliates the favor of the Master. He treats the churches as they treat His servants. With the merciful He will show Himself merciful, with the froward He will show Himself froward; and the writer adds, with the stingy He will show Himself stingy.

It keeps up the ministry. For failure to render an equitable support threatens to run the class out. God's servants will cheerfully bear the hardships He sends, but the stingy stint of men is another matter.

Finally, the laborer is worthy of his hire, and surely he should be paid whose services are literally invaluable, far beyond the power of money to measure.—*W. & R.*

### A good creature of God.

Dr. Guthrie has little sympathy with the love for whiskey so prevalent in Scotland. He expresses his opinion in the following energetic language: "I have heard a man with a bottle of whiskey before him have the impudence to say, 'every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; and he would persuade me that what was made in the still-pot was a creature of God. In one sense it is so, but in the same sense so is arsenic, so is oil of vitriol, so is prussic acid. Think of a fellow tossing off a glass of vitriol, and excusing himself by saying that it is a creature of God. He would not use many such creatures, that's all I'll say. Whiskey is good in its own place. There is nothing like whiskey in this world for preserving a man when he is dead. But it is one of the worst things in the world for preserving a man when he is living. If you want to keep a dead man, put him in whiskey; if you want to kill a man, put the whiskey into him. It was a capital thing for preserving the dead admiral when they put him in a rum punchoon, but it was a bad thing for the sailors when they tapped the cask and drank the liquor, till they left the admiral as he had never left his ship, high and dry."

**THE SHORT GIFT.**—The *Christian Mirror* says: A clergyman on leaving one of the meetings of our late conference, remarked to a friend that he regarded as the next best gift to that of the Spirit, "the short gift."

We have had occasion frequently to urge this idea upon the attention of those who write for the public. Not a few communications are wholly laid aside by editors simply because of their "longness." Nowhere, however, is the "gift of continuance" to be deprecated more than in the prayer-meeting. Where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, but not necessarily length. We lately attended a meeting in which twenty or more exercises, praise, prayer and exhortation, full of life and feeling, were brought within the hour, and every heart was ready at the close to say, "Surely the Lord has been in this place." Brethren, let us pray for and cultivate the short gift.

**FAITH AND WORKS.**—A bishop of the American Episcopal church says:

When I was about entering the ministry, I was one day in conversation with an old Christian friend, who said, "You are to be ordained; when you are ordained, preach to sinners as you find them; tell them to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and they shall be as safe as if they were in heaven; and then tell them to work like horses. That is an admirable tract in itself. It possesses every quality of a good tract. We have Divine truth presented to the mind. Preach to sinners as you find them, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." No work before, all the work after salvation; no work that we may obtain the blessing, but all the work because we have obtained it.

**THE "HUB."**—The following, in homely words, presents a true and happy metaphor:

A negro preacher while holding forth to the colored soldiers then stationed at Fort Hudson, said: "De whole ob God's relation to us am like de wheel. De Lord Jesus Christ am de hub, de Christians am de spokes, and de tire am de grace ob God's bidden em all together; and de nearer we get to de hub, de nearer we get to each other."

**DO YOU KEEP THE SABBATH?**—If you do not keep God's Sabbath on earth as he directs, can you expect him to give you a Sabbath in heaven as you desire? See Isa. 58: 13. The Sabbath is a test of our loyalty to God. Refusal to "keep it holy," is rebellion against him; and he that neglects it, shows that he is not under his government. He belongs to another.—*Am. Messenger.*

**SIR ROBERT PEAR.** once remarked:—"I never knew a man to escape failure, in either body or mind, who worked seven days in the