

# Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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## Poetry.

### The Comforter.

BY REV. RAY PALMER, D. D.

"I will send him unto you."—John 16: 7.

O Holy Comforter,  
I hear  
Thy blessed name with throbbing heart,  
Pressed oft with sorrow, sin and fear,  
And pierced with many a venom'd dart;  
Come, Messenger divine,  
Come, cheer this heart of mine.

O Holy Comforter,  
I know  
Thou art not to dull sense revealed,  
Thou com'st unseen as the sweet flow  
Of the soft wind that woos the field;  
Breathe, Messenger divine,  
Breathe on this soul of mine.

O Holy Comforter,  
Thy light  
Is light eternal and serene;  
Shine thou and on my ravished sight  
Visions shall break of things unseen;  
Come, Messenger divine,  
Make these bright glimpses mine.

O Holy Comforter,  
Thy love  
O'erflows as the flooding sea;  
Give me its tenderness to prove,  
Then shall my heart o'erflow to thee;  
Come, Messenger divine,  
Fill thou this heart of mine.

O Holy Comforter,  
Thy grace  
Is life and health and hope and power;  
By this I lean each cross embrace,  
Can triumph in the darkest hour;  
Come, Messenger divine,  
The strength of our grace be mine.

O Holy Comforter,  
Thy peace  
The peace of God, impart and keep  
Unruffled till life's tumults cease,  
And all its angry tempests sleep;  
Come, Messenger divine,  
Thy perfect peace be mine.

## Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

### Thoughts on Theology.

No. III.

#### THE PATRIARCHAL DISPENSATION.

##### Historical Notes.

My Dear Sir,—

By "the Patriarchal Dispensation" is meant the manifestation of God, and the state of religion consequent thereon, during the time preceding the establishment of the Mosaic Institute.

The chronology of this period has been much disputed. Archbishop Ussher's system which is adopted in the Reference Bibles of our Authorised Version, is not now generally received. It does not appear to give time enough for the events which are known to have taken place between the Creation, as recorded by Moses, and the birth of that illustrious lawgiver. There is a difference of 606 years, between the date of the Deluge, as assigned by the Hebrew Bible, and that given in the Greek Version of the Septuagint, executed in the third century before the Christian era. Dr. Hales, whose "Analysis of Chronology" was published about forty years ago, constructed a system, partly founded on the Septuagint and partly on independent calculation, which finds much favor among the learned, and is at any rate regarded as a nearer approximation to the truth than that of Archbishop Ussher. The dates below are given according to both authors.

	Ussher.	Hales.
The Creation.....	B. C. 4004	5411
The Deluge.....	" 2348	3155
The Confusion of Tongues.....	" 2247	2554
Birth of Abram.....	" 1996	2153
Call of Abram.....	" 1921	1878
Birth of Isaac.....	" 1896	2053
Birth of Jacob.....	" 1836	1993
Death of Abraham.....	" 1822	1978
Death of Isaac.....	" 1716	1873
The Journey into Egypt.....	" 1706	1863
Death of Jacob.....	" 1659	1846
Death of Joseph.....	" 1635	1792

The early history of our race is given with so much brevity that we are of necessity ignorant of many facts, and are often unable to trace or even to discern the connections of events. It is easy to conjecture and some men are fond of treating conjectures as certainties; but the cautious inquirer will not allow himself to be drawn away from the clear path of historic authority. He reverences the silence of Scripture.

Take the account of the Creation and fall of man for an illustration. We cannot tell where Eden was. We do not know what kind of fruit grew on the forbidden tree: the popular notion that it was an apple has no foundation in the Scripture narrative. The mode of intercourse between God and our first parents is not explained. We have only imperfect information respecting the physical effects of the introduction of sin on the human constitution. The origin of sacrifices is completely hidden in obscurity. Other points might be referred to. All we really know is, that Adam and Eve were created, in full maturity of powers, bodily and mental;—that the arrangement under which they were placed (sometimes called, but inappropriately, "a covenant") was wise and good, involving a very simple test of obedience;—that they failed and fell, and thereby incurred the penalty of sorrow and death, embracing not only themselves but also all their posterity;—that they were banished from the happy garden and went forth "to till the ground from whence they were taken";—and that human history, ever since, has presented an unbroken series of pains, diseases and crimes, interspersed with numberless forms of death—all being the horrible "wages of sin." This, I say, is the substance of our knowledge. Innumerable questions may be asked, to which, at present, no answer can be given. "Now we know in part."

It would appear that the divisions of mankind into two classes took place at an early date. I do not mean by this that the distinction between "righteous" and "wicked" were hereditary. Some of Cain's posterity might have turned to the Lord, and some of Enoch's offspring for aught I know, were ranked among the "ungodly," whose doom he foretold. But from the time that men "began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen. 4: 26), the family was divided into the godly and the godless. The former were in the minority. Two persons only are mentioned by name as eminently pious, in the times before the deluge—Abel and Enoch.—One of them was the leader of "the noble army of martyrs"; of the other, "the world was not worthy," and he was snatched from the evil to come by what was then considered as an early and premature death.

But though "the wickedness of man was great upon the earth," the existence of idolatry among the antediluvians cannot be proved. There were tyrants among them, and evil of every kind prevailed. It may be supposed that when some of them beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness, their hearts were secretly enticed, and "the mouth kissed the hand" (Job 31: 26, 27.); but the fact cannot be established. That Tubal-cain fashioned idols "of brass and iron"—and that idolatrous festivals were enlivened by the skill of those who "handled the harp and the organ," may be imagined; the age was bad enough for it all; yet, in the absence of proof, it is not fair to make the affirmation.

Still it is certain that religion had almost died out. "The earth was filled with violence." Noah, the "preacher of righteousness," strove to stop the tide of wickedness by teaching and example, for he "was a just man and perfect in his generation, and he walked with God"—but his efforts were fruitless. The deluge was a tremendous vindication of God's justice. It swept the rebels away, and the "history of the world began anew."

The promises made to Noah comprised the universal charter, under the provisions of which mankind have lived from that time to this, and will continue to live the "mystery of God is finished." There is no danger now, of any general devastation by water, "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." The next destruction will be by fire.

The flood did not drown sin. Human depravity re-appeared, in impious manifestations and diversified forms of unholy daring. Now, also, idolatry showed itself. "Your fathers"—said Joshua to the assembled Israelites (Chap. 24: 2).—"served other gods." The names of the first divinities have not been handed down to us in the sacred record. It is not unlikely that they are still to be found among the ruins of Nineveh, and in the tombs and temples of Egypt. It is not worth while to unearth these genealogies.—"The name of the wicked shall rot."

There is a blank in the religious history after the Covenant of God with Noah. We read of no communication from heaven for several centuries. The Lord had not forgotten the promise given in Eden, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent; but "the time appointed was long." Twenty-three hundred years passed away ere the first step towards its fulfilment was taken. Then "the God of glory appeared" to a man dwelling in Ur of the Chaldees, and directed him to leave his country and go to a land which would be pointed out to him. His father and other members of the family accompanied him, and they settled for a time in Haran. A second call summoned Abram to the completion of his obedience, and he left his father in Haran, to become "a stranger and a pilgrim" in Palestine. That call was an important era in the world's history. It was the greatest event of the age. Abram was selected to be the channel through which divine mercy would flow. Thus ran the engagement:—"I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Faith laid hold of the promise: Abram "believed in the Lord, and it was counted to him for righteousness." He walked in obedience to divine commands, and had the honour of being called "the Friend of God." The covenant made with him was repeatedly confirmed (Gen. 15: 14-17; 15: 16-21; 17: 1-8; 22: 15-18). It was afterwards limited to the time of Isaac, and then to that of Jacob.

Nevertheless, there were some instances of piety in other directions. Melchizedek was "priest of the Most High God." The obscurity resting on that portion of the narrative has not been dispelled, and we are unable to come to a satisfactory conclusion respecting the "king of Salem"; but he is evidently spoken of as a good and great man. Abram, too, became "a blessing" to his own family. We read of "the God of Nabor." Abram's brother—an expression which implies an abandonment of idolatry. Laban's language, at his last interview with Jacob (Gen. 30: 27: 31: 49), indicates knowledge and fear of Jehovah, although his was an imperfect religion, since heathen superstitions were mingled with it; and there were "strange gods" (probably *teraphim*, and amulets or charms) even in Jacob's household.

The will of God was communicated during all this time by visions, dreams, angels, and voices from heaven. There was as yet no permanent record.

At the close of the period the chosen family were in Egypt, reduced to slavery, and there seemed to be no hope of release. Of their religious state we have no information. We only know that "they sighed by reason of the bondage."

In my next I shall commence a review of the religion and morals of the patriarchal age.

Yours,

J. M. CRAMP

Acadia College, Jan. 21st, 1868.

### The Power of Prayer.

#### ANECDOTE OF THE REV. JOHN RYLAND.

The Rev. John Ryland, of Northampton, a man who was in advance of the age in which he lived, was accustomed to print and circulate tracts long previously to the existence of the Religious Tract Society. To help in defraying the expenses of this work, he would sometimes appeal to the liberality of others. On one occasion, he called on his friend Mr.

Dupont, at the Castle and Falcon, in London, and finding that a clergyman was there asked to be introduced to him.

"Sir," said Mr. Ryland, "I print and distribute tracts on religious subjects, at an expense above my own means, and understanding you are a clergyman, and of course that you take an interest in the improvement of the ignorant and poor, I have waited upon you to solicit a contribution."

"I know," replied the clergyman, "nothing about tracts; I take no interest in such improvements."

"Pray, sir, have you a parish?"

"To be sure I have. I am rector of a parish containing two thousand souls."

Mr. Ryland, with great promptness and devoutness, fell on his knees, in the presence of the clergyman, and poured forth a fervent prayer, that God would have mercy on the two thousand souls, whose shepherd declared that he cared not for their improvement and salvation; and especially that he would open the eyes of their shepherd. Rising he left the room—the clergyman standing in utter consternation.

"Dupont," inquired the clergyman, when a little recovered, "what madman was that you sent up to my room?"

"Sir," was Mr. Dupont's answer, "he is no madman; but one of the most respectable ministers of Christ in the kingdom; and if you will but go to Jewin Street Chapel this evening, and hear him preach, you will no more think him insane."

"Well," said the clergyman, "I will go, for I never heard anything like his conversation and prayer in my life; but I am sure he is mad."

He went to the chapel, and was much struck with Mr. Ryland's preaching; and on the following Sabbath heard him again at Spa Fields. God blessed the word; the clergyman wept like a child, conversed with Mr. Dupont, heard Mr. Ryland as often as he could, and left a sum of money for tracts; returned to his parish a different man, and became extremely useful to many of the two thousand souls, for whom before he had cherished no concern.

This anecdote was related by Mr. Bound, of Cheshunt, who knew any loved both Mr. Ryland and Mr. Dupont, to a friend by whom it was lately told to a grandson of Mr. Ryland.

Another grandson, with sentiments of deep and affectionate veneration for his ancestor, communicated this anecdote to a periodical, in the hope that such an example of christian fidelity and zeal may "provoke to emulation" many others, and thus produce fresh illustrations of the saying of the sacred volume, "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" (Prov. 15: 23.)

### Live for something.

Thousands of men breathe, move, and live—pass off the stage of life, and are heard of no more. Why? None were blessed by them; none could point to them as the means of their redemption; not a line they wrote, not a word they spoke, could be recalled, and so they perished; their light went out in darkness, and they were not remembered more than the insects of yesterday. Will you thus live and die? O man! immortal live for something. Do good and leave behind you a monument of virtue that the storms of time can never destroy. Write your name by kindness, love, and mercy, on the hearts of the thousands you come in contact with year by year, and you will never be forgotten. No; your name, your deeds, will be as legible on the hearts you leave behind, as the stars on the brow of the evening. Good deeds will shine as brightly on the earth as the stars of heaven.—Dr. Chalmers.

"A lighted lamp," writes McCheyne, "is a very small thing; it burns calmly and without noise; yet it giveth light to all who are in the house." And so there is a quiet influence, which, like the flame of a scented lamp, fills many a home with light and fragrance.

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."