

# Christian Messenger.

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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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WHOLE SERIES  
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## Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

### NEW TESTAMENT VERSION OF THE PSALM XLVI.

BY  
ANTHORNE MUSGRAVE.

(Published by the  
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Our refuge and our strength is God;  
"Therefore will not we fear":  
When earth is trembling at His nod,  
Immanuel is near.

Should shattered mountains cleft, and torn,  
And crumbled by the shock—  
As dust to ocean's depths, be borne;  
We rest on Christ the rock.

And though the troubled waters roar  
And foam in surging strife;  
We reach the far celestial shore,  
In Christ the ark of life.

A river glides with living streams,  
Jerusalem to lave;  
Forth from the fountain that redeems,  
Flows every rippling wave.

The crystal tide with gladness swells  
To cheer the holy place,  
Where the Most High in glory dwells  
And manifest His grace.

That city is Jehovah's own,  
With bulwarks from above;  
Her lustre is the Lord alone;  
Her rampart is His love.

The heathen rise in haughty rage;  
Their contest kingdoms shakes;  
Tumultuous war they madly wage,  
A voice their uproar breaks.

Earth melts—To flame the fabric yields  
Rocks, caverns, lakes, and coasts;  
Amidst the blaze of boundless fields,  
Behold the Lord of Hosts.

Despisers paled in alarm,  
Their doom of wrath expect.  
Oh horror! points that outstretched arm:  
See, gathered, His elect.

"Woe worth the day!" the voice of wail  
Shrill rises in that hour,  
When hearts of noblest flesh shall fail  
At Christ's appalling power.

Then refuge, and repose, and joy,  
Shall Jacob's God accord;  
And praise triumphant shall employ  
The ransomed of the Lord.

Come see what havoc o'er the earth,  
The Lord's right hand hath made;  
"The Word," that gave creation birth,  
Creation's crimes has weighed.

Forever, all-throughout the world,  
Battles and wars shall cease.—  
Look! Jesus' banner wide unfurled  
Proclaims the Prince of Peace.

He snaps the bow; the shivered lance,  
No warrior fierce shall wield;  
The Saviour frowns, His kindling glance  
Burns chariots on the field.

"Be still and know that I am God."  
Homage and love I claim.  
The heathen, awe-struck, kiss the rod,  
And, bending, shout His name.

Then perish, impotent, the boasts  
Of pride—unmasked—abhorred;  
Abides with us the God of Hosts;  
Our refuge is the Lord.

## Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

### NOTES ON CHURCH HISTORY.

No. I.

DEAR BROTHER,—

I propose, with your permission, to furnish a series of occasional papers on some prominent points in Church History. They will not be in the form of a continuous narrative. The object will be to select for observation such facts as may appear to be significant of progress, or life, or change, or corruption, and, thus to enable your readers to arrive at an accurate judg-

ment of the state of the Church in the several stages of its history. Some biographical notices will also be included.

Church History begins with the Gospels and the Acts. It will be proper to commence this series with an observation or two on the origin of those books.

It is reasonable to suppose that a variety of reports would get into circulation respecting the life and teaching of the Saviour. Every eye and ear-witness would have his own account to give. The same transactions would be diversely represented. Each would give the colouring which his cast of mind affected, and would convey the impressions made upon himself. This, too, would lead to sundry omissions and varieties of representation, arising from intellectual and moral peculiarities. All this actually took place, as we gather from Luke's preface to his Gospel.

Hence the desirableness of an authentic history, to which all parties may appeal. We have it in the form of a fourfold digest each narrator viewing the wondrous events of the Saviour's life from his own standpoint. These records of the Evangelists are authoritative. They are confessedly an abridgment of the real history—a collection of anecdotes rather than a chronological account:—but they comprise all that it has pleased God to preserve. Such of the genuine tradition, as it was judged proper to retain are here embodied. In the Christian Scriptures the old traditions are fixed. They are committed to writing and placed in a permanent form. They contain all that is to be known of the Lord. Other narratives, the products of the inventive gossip of the times, and as silly as they were unauthentic, were justly rejected by the Church. They constitute the "Apocrypha" of the New Testament.

It was equally desirable that we should be furnished with a clear statement of the origin of the Christian Church, and of the laws by which it was to be governed. We learn it in the Acts and the Epistles. Those documents inform us how the Lord's injunctions were understood, and how his servants were subsequently instructed to legislate for the Church. Sayings and doings of Paul and Peter might be afloat in many places, and anecdotes of their proceedings might become topics of conversation; but these soon died away, and the writings only remained. They, and they only, are authoritative. If difficulties arose the appeal would be to them. Individuals might assert that they had heard Paul say so and so, or remembered his course of procedure under similar circumstances; but it will be at once perceived that to give heed to such things would introduce an element of great uncertainty and hazard. One "hearsay" would be set against another, and a general state of unsettlement would result.

### TRADITION.

It was graciously and wisely ordered that the narratives and letters now comprised in the New Testament were in circulation among the Churches before the failure of traditional memorials. Paul's first letter (to the Thessalonians) was written A. D. 52: his last, the second to Timothy, just before his death, A. D. 68:—Peter's, about A. D. 63;—John's probably thirty years afterwards. The Gospels and Acts (John's Gospel excepted) appear to have been published during Paul's life. Thus the Churches were secured against mistakes and lapse. The divine writings were an unerring guide.

But man is so fond of his own work that he ventures to tamper—even with heavenly arrangements. Apostolic methods were too simple; they had not enough of "pomp and circumstance" in them. Improvements were suggested and additions made. When those additions had been a few years in existence they came to be regarded as integral parts of church order; and as the Churches were at first constituted by an apostle or his deputy, it presumed that the mode of government found in operation, say a hundred years afterwards, had been originally instituted. They were all ascribed to apostolic tradition. It is obvious

that the same plea would continue to be adopted in succeeding ages, and so it might come to pass that what professed to be a Christian Church, a thousand years after the commencement of our era, might bear scarcely any resemblance to the divine pattern. These suppositions are confirmed by history.

The only safeguard is found in steadfast adherence to the New Testament. There we have the true tradition. The writers were doubtless under divine influence when they wrote; and it seems evident that the Holy Spirit restrained their pens, so that they have handed down to us, instead of long details; a compendious account of Christian affairs—brief summaries of doctrines—and detached rules and advices. Christianity is not presented in the form of a cut-and-dried system, though there is a system. What it is, must be ascertained by diligent examination and comparison.

### DEVELOPMENT.

It is a favorite notion with some that the doctrines and practices of Christianity are not completely given in the New Testament but were to be developed in succession ages. If so, the apostolic times were not the best times, as we have been accustomed to think, and the Bible is rather to be compared to the child's "Primer" than to the "Advanced Reader" which is placed in his hands during his last school-days. Such a theory does not comport with the reverence due to God's word, nor is it sustained by facts. The boasted development has proved to be declension and departure from the faith, the distance increasing as the development went on. The religious system of the Church of Rome is not a development of the Church as at first established, but mainly a mass of corruptions, foisted in from time to time, under the pretext of apostolic traditions or ecclesiastical authority. And it is especially deserving consideration that this development-theory leaves those who embrace it in a state of utter uncertainty. How can they be sure that they have yet received all truth? For anything they can tell, additions of the most important character may be made to the existing scheme, and centuries may elapse before the will of the Lord can be fully known. No thoughtful Christian will be satisfied to remain in such a state.

### ADAPTATION.

There is another aspect of the human system of the Church. It is adaptation. Its upholders maintain that the New Testament prescribes no form of church government or modes of worship. All this is left, as they think, purposely undetermined in order that Christians might adapt their measures to the views and habits prevalent in different countries and at different times. According to these persons, Episcopacy may be established in one land—Presbyterianism in another—Congregationalism in a third; a liturgy may be in use here, and free prayer there; and all be equally acceptable to the Great Head of the Church, and equally conducive to the advancement of the spiritual interests of the body. This, too, is a cunning contrivance to weaken the hold of the Bible on the Christian conscience, and to exalt human authority. It is readily admitted, indeed, that the apostles have not given minute directions for every service, and that within certain limits Christian freedom may be allowed. But there are limits. And it may be satisfactorily shown that principles are laid down for the management of church affairs—precepts applicable to specific cases—and precedents of action, covering the whole ground. These are suited to every state of society, and may be carried out in practice under all forms of civil government. In regard to them we are "under law to Christ." No form of church polity can be lawfully adopted which does not provide for the Christian character of the members of the churches, or which tends to deprive them of their rights, or lay on their necks the yoke of priestcraft. In short, there is no safety but in strict adherence to the written record.

All religious denominations have need

to be very careful in this matter. We hear of "usages," which are held to be authoritative and binding. Let true-hearted Baptists beware lest human usages usurp the place of divine law. We have no right to legislate. Where the mode of obedience or service is not enjoined, we have no power to select from differing modes that which pleases us best, or appears to be the more expedient or suitable, and then enforce its observance under penalty. Being a "thing indifferent," we must leave it there, and not change its position by any legislation of ours. The assumption of right to enact new regulations, and give them the force of law, involves a charge of incompleteness against the Divine Lawgiver. Whatever "cases of conscience" may occur, or be dreamed of, affecting individuals or churches, we have no reason to doubt that we shall find them all provided for, directly or indirectly, in the inspired Book. "To the law and to the testimony." How different would the state of the Church have been, if "the law and the testimony" had been reverently regarded!

A writer of the last century penned this sentence—"Ecclesiastical history in one long lie." That is, as he may be fairly understood to mean, it is not the history of the true church—of the progress of religion,—but of disputes, and abuses, and corruption, and sects, and to what may all these be traced but to traditions, which have thrust out truth? If the whole church had resisted the temptation to invent, and add, and polish, how different would the ecclesiastical state of things appear at the present time! There would be no diocesan bishops,—nor archbishops,—nor deans and chapters,—nor priests,—nor patriarchs,—nor cardinals,—nor popes. There would be no liturgy,—no mass,—no crucifix,—no invocations of saints,—no purgatory,—no indulgences,—no confession and absolution—no monasticism,—no paintings or images in churches—no kneeling before them. All these are foreign to the New Testament. We owe them to the pretended traditions, the so-called development. But they are opposed, not only to the principles and spirit of the new dispensation, but to the very letter of the christian law. We cannot imagine such monstrous antagonism to Christianity as existing in the churches to which the Apostolic epistles were written. We look upon modern Christendom, and exclaim. "How is the gold become dim! How is the most fine gold changed!"

Yours truly,

MENNO.

Dec. 28, 1869.

### SHALL WE KNOW THEM?

The inquiry often arises in the mind of many persons, and especially when loved ones have been removed by death: Shall I know them in Heaven? Such persons will find comfort in the following paragraph:—

Who has not asked the question—Shall we know our kin and friends in heaven? Why should we not? On crossing the line which divides the present from the spirit land, will we instantly become oblivious of this life? Will all memory of it then perish forever? Suppose it should. With it will perish the knowledge of sin and of obedience to Christ. We shall then be, to ourselves at least, as though we had always been perfect.—To us, consequently, Christ can never seem a Saviour. For, should we wholly forget that we had ever been lost, we could not possibly realize that we had ever been saved. These two things imply each other. We would know that we were happy, but we could not know that we had ever been otherwise. To know this would imply memory of this life; and memory of part, would most likely imply memory of all. We shall not forget some and remember the rest. That Christ should ever become to the saved as not a Saviour, is not conceivable. It would be a vital falsehood. This is inadmissible. I hence conclude, that we shall remember; and if so, we shall know. Should I remain myself and know it, and still retain the