

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND MAN'S ACCOUNTABILITY.

AN ESSAY PREPARED BY REQUEST AND READ BY THE REV. WILLIAM MCPHER, AT BADECK, FEB: 25TH, 1871, BEFORE THE CAPE BRETON MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE.

(Published by special request.)

That God in Sovereign love and power according to his eternal design, saves the sinner from a helpless and ruined condition; and yet, that he should hold the sinner, as such, accountable, for not repenting, and believing the gospel is to some, calling themselves christians, both irreconcilable, and unreasonable: yet, if we consult the word of God, and experience, both are equally true.

That our redemption originated in the eternal purpose—in the free, sovereign, and electing love of our Father in heaven, is clearly taught in the word, and is the joy of the christian heart.

Indeed, a correct apprehension of the character of God, as revealed in his word, renders him incapable of a new thought, or of anything having a beginning in his mind. His designs of mercy are eternal—co-eval with himself: so that here well applies the saying of the wise man; "There is nothing new under the sun." All things revealed, always existed in his eternal counsels. "Known to God, are all his works, from the beginning of the world."

Every thing that has, or does, or shall transpire, co-operates with the bias of his eternal and unchanging mind. The outrage of Satan—the persecution of the enemies of the truth—the conflicting elements of warlike nations, down to the minutest details of human affairs, must subserve his glorious purpose of salvation. "Is there an evil in the city, and I have not done it?"

He is not capable of change, neither does he desire, or need to change; for He himself, is the glorious perfection of goodness. To say, that any thing that was to transpire, in the course of revelation, or the development of the saving plan, was needed, in order to reconcile him to the sinner, would be breaking the most precious link in the golden chain of the scheme, and placing him in an unfavourable light.

The idea of reconcilableness, is inseparable from changeableness: whereas, whatever is revealed is the free outflowing of the eternal love of God to us; yet, that love sought not, neither could flow to us, but in a way harmonizing with the eternal rectitude of Him, against whom we sinned. Yet, He saw us in our lost state—the element of our ruin within ourselves. He loved us—He pitied us—and proposed to save us.

The manner in which His purpose of redemption was made manifest, is not less marvellous, than the love that gave it birth.

Let us, in the first place, look at it from the sinner's side. He was created by God, in God's own likeness. He was capable of holy, happy and perfect communion with God, and God deigned to hold a Royal communion with him, as with a royal but subordinate prince, and governor of this Province of his own unlimited Dominion. His residence was fixed in a garden, planted by the hand of God, with a rich variety of trees, producing fruit in abundance, for supplying his wants. He was restricted from nothing, but the fruit of one tree. Surely that was not much; it was essentially necessary to keep him sensible of his happy subordination. How awful is the guilt of rebellion under such happy circumstances? Yet man rebelled. He ate of fruit of the forbidden tree; the very desire of which constituted him a bitter enemy to God. Poor man! he is under arms against the Lord. His primary innocence and glory renders the guilt of his rebellion more aggravating in the sight of God, and more terrible in consequence to himself. He is guilty of high treason against the best, the kindest and most righteous of all Sovereigns. His crime is capital. He must die. He died immediately as to good, is subject to bodily death and to eternal misery. He deserves it the more, because he was forewarned of his danger. He is, therefore, justly sentenced to die. "The day thou shalt eat thereof, thou shalt surely die."

Man is also under the curse of God's holy Law, which is the law of his own primary happy being. This fearfully perpetuates his misery; for this law rules in heaven, on earth and in hell—extending over time and eternity, and is felt in its blessing or curse, according to the conformity or nonconformity of the mind of every

moral creature to that of God. "Cursed is every one that continueth not, &c." How miserably fallen, and helpless are we by nature!

To love the sinner in such a state is Sovereign love indeed. To save him from such a state is Sovereign salvation indeed. So great a salvation, that no created intelligences could, or would interfere. To offer the whole host of heaven in sacrifice for the sinner, would be an insult to the holiness of God, and could not atone for one sin. Sin is committed against Divinity; hence the sacrifice must be of divine worth.

Secondly. We see the wonderful greatness of the Father's love, in the greatness of the one offered in sacrifice. As none short of God's own eternal Son could suffice, he withheld not his own dear Son. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, &c." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Now, some may say, that in virtue of the sufferings, and death of Christ, the sinner can, of his own accord, believe the Gospel. No such thing. None can believe the Gospel, but the truly born again. If the sinner can, of his own accord, believe the Gospel, then is he able to bring himself alive; for faith is the act of the living soul, and consequently able to perpetuate that life which involves a denial, both of the total depravity of our nature, and of the office of the Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God, the price of our redemption is paid. The banners of salvation indeed are unfurled. Jesus Christ, and him crucified, is proclaimed as the only hope of the sinner—God the Father is just, in releasing the sinner from the demands of justice and law, because Jesus has paid the ransom. The way is opened for the Holy Spirit, in harmony with the divine honour, to operate upon the heart of the dead sinner, convincing him of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, giving him or her no rest of soul till it is found in Jesus.

He was called Jesus, because he was to save his people, not in their sins, but from their sins. Hence Paul to the Ephesians, and to us too, "But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he has loved us even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, &c." Here is the origin "rich mercy," the disposition that moved him towards us, "great love," the blessed end in view, "hath quickened us together with Christ."

It is to be feared that too many content themselves with a mere natural assent of the mind to the truth, and talk loudly of imputed righteousness, while they are ignorant, both of themselves as sinners, and of Jesus as a Saviour. It is vain to talk of righteousness being imputed to us, separate from that righteousness being infused into our souls by the Holy Spirit, producing in us holiness of heart, and life, and devotedness to the cause of our glorious Redeemer.

This was God's eternal counsel. "According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved."

Our blessed Saviour before leaving his disciples, comforted them by the assurance, that he would send the Holy Spirit who would be a more effective teacher than even his own bodily presence. He was to convince the world of sin, as well as to comfort his people, by leading them into all truth. Blessed Teacher! Faithful to the sinner, for he spares him not, till he loathes both himself and the sin that he loves; faithful to Jesus, for he reveals to the truly penitent sinner of the things of Jesus, and in the sinner gives glory to him.

Indeed, it requires the same power to quicken the dead sinner, as was required originally in the creation of man. The sinner is spiritually dead. Hence Jesus said; "verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." The Holy Spirit—speaking of the conversion of the sinner, makes use of the following terms; "created, quickened, regenerated." Surely in view of such strong terms, used by him who knows what is in man, we cannot resist the conviction, not only, that our salvation originated in the sovereign love of God, in providing us redemption in and through Christ; but also in sending the Holy Spirit to quicken, and enable us to see our state, and to apprehend the redemption that is in Christ Jesus with

eternal glory. The sinner, though in the misery of despair, would have never thought of such a glorious remedy. The whole heavens, apart from the throne of glory could not have imagined it. It is their wonder to this day. Oh, what has the wisdom and love of God effected, and is effecting in behalf of poor sinners—in behalf of his own people every moment. Having begun the good work, He carries it on unto the day of Jesus. Their final perseverance is all of sovereign grace. Though they lost the image of God by the transgression of Adam; yet, when by the operation of the Holy Spirit through Christ, their soul is re-formed into that image, it is impossible that the "gates of hell" should prevail any more. Well may God's people then sing,

"Oh to grace how great a debtor,
Daily I'm constrained to be."

Let no one say that the doctrine of Sovereign grace, or God's Sovereignty in the salvation of the sinner, is encouraging to the sinner, or to the christian to slothfully fold his hands. Surely they do not understand. It is only the caviling of the proud heart. So they accused Paul of encouraging sin: but he outvied them all in holy zeal and devotedness to the cause of Christ.

The christian wants but a correct apprehension of this glorious doctrine to be both holy, happy and active. He knows that his foundation cannot fail, therefore he works with the assurance of success. "Wherein, God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath. That by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us, &c."

(Conclusion in our next.)

For the Christian Messenger.

ONTARIO CORRESPONDENCE.

THE HOT SEASON AND SUMMER VACATIONS. ACCIDENTS, CARELESSNESS AND CRIME. MYSTERIOUS MURDER. WONDERFUL ENGINEERING FEAT. THE INSTITUTE ENLARGEMENTS, &c.

I suppose letters must be written, and newspapers printed, whatever point in the thermometer is touched by the mercury. What a pity that every body, printers and readers included, could not take a siesta of four or six weeks in the hot season. That would equalize matters and make things comfortable all round. As it is, arrangements seem hardly fair. The ministers and other professionals, the merchants and monied men generally—in short all the more important members of the community run away from town, leaving a few unlucky wights to do their work in addition to their own. The result is that pulpits have to be filled without preachers, Sunday Schools carried on minus teachers, and things generally get out of joint. I wonder if, after all that is said about the desirableness of a few weeks recreation, or dissipation, for brain-workers, it may not be just a little selfish for all the bigger and more important bricks to make their escape periodically from the social edifice, leaving the additional weight to crush the smaller, and not less hard pressed ones. (I must confess, in parenthesis, Mr. Editor, that that last metaphor seems susceptible of improvement, or would be so were it not hot and holiday weather. I trust that affects critics no less than others.)

Apropos of the hot weather though, the excessive heat has been for the most part a myth, in Ontario, this Summer. The really hot days of the season—forgetting some broiling ones so long ago as May, might be counted on one's fingers. Rarely has there been an evening when one did not find himself involuntarily buttoning up, and closing doors and windows as nine or ten o'clock in the evening approached. In fact, some of my more sensitive neighbours assure me that they have often had fires kindled for comfort's sake. This, I will venture to say, has not been the case since August came in, a week ago. It (August) has brought back some milder specimens of those days of sweltering, and those nights of tossing and broiling, to which settlers from the Atlantic coasts find it so hard to become seasoned in Ontario.

Accidents and crime seem to advance with about equal pace in this part of the Dominion. Did I think it in my line to chronicle horrors, and did I suppose the appetite of the readers of the Messenger craved such food, my task would be a comparatively easy one. Allowance of course must be made, in computing the averages of such occurrences, for the great increase in population and travel. Yet it would

seen as if carelessness and recklessness in regard to human life must be increasing out of proportion to the increase of either. For instance, upwards of fifty cases I believe, of death by drowning, have been reported in the *Globe* within a few months, and many of them the result of sheer, culpable, carelessness. A respectable man attempts to jump on board a steamboat after it is some feet distant from the wharf, and loses his life. Several boats approach too near the Falls, and their occupants take the fearful plunge over the great cataract of Niagara, and the fragments of their disjointed bodies are picked up in different places along the shore below. The loss of life or limb, by attempting to get off, or on moving trains is fearful, get the oft repeated fate of former braves, has little or no effect in restraining other silly ones from attempting to distinguish themselves, before the multitude in the same senseless fashion. The wheels of the railway Juggernaut crush in this way hundreds of infatuated devotees.

And as to crime, one's eyes and ears are pained with the daily reports from various quarters. Either suicide is fearfully on the increase, or the press is much more faithful than ever before in recording facts and particulars of this kind. One can scarcely escape the conviction that the new views of certain philosophers of the day are fastening themselves on the minds of the people in advance of their promulgation, and the owners of useless, or worse than useless lives, are saving their friends, or the public, the trouble of confiscating them for the public good. Can it be that certain mysterious influences travel in cycles and re-appear periodically, finding their way to human brains through atmosphere, or food, and that it is only the same re-action producing varying results whose effects we see in theorists and madmen? Those columns of suicides, how familiar they become even to the slight variations of mode. Here A. hangs himself in his threshing-floor. There B. retires to his chamber, coolly requesting not to be disturbed, and cuts his throat from ear to ear. Yonder C. tears her petticoat into strips and forms a rope to suspend herself from the bars of her prison cell. In another place Neptune's wrath is provoked, and D. takes the fatal plunge from some pier, or steamboat deck.

Well I am afraid I have been exhibiting the dark side of the picture. I don't, after all, agree with those who think the world is getting worse and worse. Only these foul blots, marring the page of current history, seem somehow to get a fearful prominence now-a-days. People in this Western section are just now having one of these periodical excitements, over a mysterious murder which has lately taken place. A poor man with his wife and two or three small children occupy a log hut in a country district. In the depth of night the voice of the wife and mother is heard crying aloud for help. Neighbours rush in to find the husband and father a fearfully mutilated corpse upon the bedroom floor, and the disconsolate widow recites a fearful tale of his being chopped to death with an axe by two ruffians with blackened faces who came to the bedside demanding his money or his life, and who after taking the latter, carried off the whole of the former in the shape of a sorry ten cent piece. The want of a sufficient motive shrouds the horrid crime in mystery, but public sympathy for the bereaved woman is deep and loud. A reward is offered. Detectives are on the track. Several men are arrested and a coroner's inquest is held, when lo! to the astonishment and horror of everybody, the twenty-four picked men record their solemn belief that the wife herself and an accomplice are the murderers. If this verdict is re-affirmed as it seems likely to be, by a court of justice, another striking illustration of the old adage "murder will out," will have been given, as every circumstance seems to have been favourable for diverting every current of suspicion from the guilty parties.

Let me turn for a moment to a more agreeable theme, and record a wonderful feat of engineering and mechanical skill performed on one of the branches of the Great Western the other day. The branch was sixty miles in length and it was desired to change the gauge from five feet six to four feet eight inches with the least possible interruption to traffic. The result was, that trains stopped running at 6.30, P. M., and resumed at 7.45, P. M. Sixty miles of track removed and re-laid in one hour and fifteen minutes. The feat is said to be without a parallel. At any rate it proves that this excellent railway has a liberal

supply of both brain and muscle at command.

Dr. Fyfe has completed the task of which I spoke in a previous letter, having secured in cash and pledges the \$10,000 necessary to enable the Institute to claim the liberal offer of Messrs. McMaster and Claxton. Preparations are already being made for the contemplated improvements.

It is proposed to spend at least \$14,000 to \$16,000, during the next two or three years in enlarging the present edifice and in the erection of new ones. So the work of education goes on, slowly it is true, but yet considering the limited numbers and means of the denomination, in a manner satisfactory and encouraging.

J. E. W.

DR. STRANE AND PRINCE GORTSCHAKOFF.

The Rev. Canon Battersby, who was one of the deputation to the Emperor, on behalf of the Protestants of the Baltic provinces, publishes in a letter the following interesting details:—

You are aware that the object of the expedition was to plead with the Emperor of Russia, on behalf of those of his subjects in the Baltic provinces who having been, by fraud and various worldly inducements, induced to join the Russian or Greek Orthodox Church, have since, to the number of some hundred thousand, repented of that act, and desired to return to the Lutheran Church. By the law of the Russian Empire they are unable to do this. Once in the Russian Church, they must always remain in it. No matter how urgent their convictions of the erroneous character of the belief or practice of that confession, leave it they cannot, without rendering themselves liable to the most cruel sufferings. No wonder that, under these trying circumstances, those poor people should have lifted up their voice to God, and that their cry should have reached his ear. The late mission of the Evangelical Alliance Deputation was the fruit, we believe, of their prayers, which had first ascended to God, before the hearts of Christians in other lands, were sufficiently moved to take up their cause.

The Deputation consisted of thirty-six members, of whom nine were from the United States of America, four from Sweden, one from Denmark, two from Holland, one from Belgium, four from Germany, one from Hungary, five from Switzerland and ten from Great Britain.

On the 14th, at 10 a. m., we waited on the Prince, at the villa where Prince Gortschakoff was residing, near the Palace, and had an interview with him, which lasted for an hour and a half.

The subject was opened on our side by Dr. Schaff, the eminent American divine and scholar, whose knowledge of the German and French, as well as English languages, peculiarly fitted him in our opinion for the task. The English language, through the kindness of the Prince, was the principal medium of communication. Dr. Schaff gave an admirable summary of the grievances complained of from our point of view, yet in such a way as could not fail to produce a favourable impression on the mind of the great statesman.

In his reply, the Prince gave us his views, first, on the general principle of religious liberty, and then on the special cases of alleged intolerance of which we complained. He asserted that religious tolerance had always been the peculiar attribute of the Russian empire, and appealed in proof of it to the churches and chapels of different creeds which were to be found side by side in the streets of St. Petersburg. He admitted, however, that in the cases of those who were already or might become members of the "Orthodox Church," it was an essential law of the empire that they should continue so. He seemed to think, however, that this was no infringement in any way of religious liberty, and asserted again and again that no charge of intolerance could be maintained against the Russian Government. If, however, any alteration was necessary in the law, this, he pointed out with much emphasis, must be left to the judgment and discretion of the Emperor, who would choose his own time and method of doing it.

Dr. Coulin, the eminent Geneva preacher, followed in French, and in a most impressive manner, with much feeling, continued in the track so ably opened by the first speaker.

Prince Gortschakoff replied in French, and in the same strain.

Mr. Dodge, of New York, then addressed a few words to the Prince, after which there was a general call on the part of the