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WHOLE SERIES.
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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

CHRISTMAS,

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-THREE.

In memory of some custom old
They deck the rooms with garlands gay,
Almost it looks like early May;
But winter 'tis, so dull and cold.

Without, the winds do fiercely blow;
Within, this holy Christmas time
Reaches down the far off chime;
Without, the cold and storm and snow.

O Day of Christ's nativity—
(They vainly talk who say that man
Alone could grasp the heavenly plan)
What were our world if 'twere of thee?

May God watch over those we love,
And doth He not love every one?
For all did die His blessed Son
That they with Him may reign above.

For old and young my lay I write,
From "favour'd Isle" my sonnet springs;
But the heart sigheth as she sings
To greet ye all this Christmas night.

Hail Christmas night of seventy-three!
Be warm our hearths our hearts as bright,
As warm upon this holy night,
As when beside our mother's knee—

She told us o'er again the story
How Jesus came, that holy child;
And of His mother Mary mild,
Till love encircled both with glory.

She told us of His blessed life,
Until we felt that we could die,
But mother bade us rise and try
To follow Him in earnest strife;

In lowly zeal our way pursuing,
That unto us his birth may seem
A real life—no idle dream,
A solid peace our souls enduring.

Then we, as they in custom old,
Bedeck our room with garlands gay
Until it looks like early May,
Nor hearth, nor heart may feel the cold.
England, Christmas '73. B. M. L. P.

The above stanzas are from the pen of a subscriber in England—a Nova Scotia lady—who still feels an interest in all that affects those whom she has left behind. At this season in particular her pleasant memories of home are revived. We have, occasionally at other seasons, had poetic contributions from the same source, and hope to be again similarly favored.

THE STAR IN THE EAST.

That so Thy blessed birth, O Christ,
Might through the world be spread about,
Thy Star appeared in the east,
Whereby the Gentiles found Thee out;
And offering Thee myrrh, incense, gold,
Thy threefold office did unfold.

Sweet Jesus, let that star of Thine—
Thy grace, which guides to find out Thee,
Within our hearts forever shine,
That thou of us found out mayest be;
And Thou shalt be our king therefore,
Our priest and prophet evermore.

Tears that from true repentance drop,
Instead of myrrh, present will we;
For incense we will offer up
Our prayers and praises unto Thee;
And bring for gold each pious deed
Which doth from saving grace proceed.

And as those wise men never went
To visit Herod any more;
So, finding Thee, we will repent
Our courses followed heretofore;
And that we homeward may retire,
The way by Thee we will inquire.

—George Wither.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

THOUGHTS FOR THE TIMES.

No. VII.

THE FALL OF ADAM.

In the course of an Address delivered by him during the session of the Conference of the Evangelical Alliance in New York, the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher is reported to have spoken as follows:—"That which man wants is sappy food, refreshing food.

Men are willing to be dealt with—to have their sins flashed in their faces—to have their consciences roused. Men want a preacher that takes hold of them in some way, and helps them bear their burdens. But how is it? Men that are sore in life—men that are in sorrow—women who don't know how to bring up their children, and are continually having more and more added to their flock—people who want to know where the next hod of coal is coming from—people who are afraid of the sheriff—men who are pricked with the thousand nettles of human life—they come to church, and hear a long discussion on the fall of Adam!"

This is a fair specimen of Beecherism. How far Mr. Beecher agrees with Christians generally in regard to the fundamental truths of the gospel, is not the present inquiry; but it is well known that he is in the habit of speaking of doctrinal preaching with seeming disrespect. It is as if he should say, "Tell me not what Christianity is, but what it does. Don't take your texts from Paul's Epistles, but from Christ's discourses, or the narratives of his life."

It has become fashionable in certain quarters to raise

A HUE-AND-CRY AGAINST DOGMA, as they choose to call it. It may be because men are getting tired of New Testament truths, and style, and manner, and are willing to be "made a spoil of through philosophy and vain deceit." Like the ancient Athenians they want "to hear some new thing." But whatever may be the explanation, the fact is patent. The Ritualist will amuse his audience by explaining the mysteries of copes and stoles, and red and green colours, and all the proprieties of kneeling, and bowing, and standing, as though posture and position and dress were the all in all of worship; and the broad churchman will wing his way among the transcendentalists, and soar so high that you lose sight of him. By many persons belonging to these classes discourses on the Pauline model are nauseated. The complainers are to be found in all communities, and they are distinguished by flippancy, conceit, and arrogant bearing.

Now, it is not to be denied that in times of controversy, when conflicting opinions were debated with no small degree of asperity, and a man was often "made an offender for a word," there was a danger of sermons becoming repulsive, except to disputants. And when the storm was over, the preachers on both sides deemed it proper to dwell almost exclusively, for a time on the doctrines which had been discussed, and to take care not to deviate from soundness of expression. There was an orthodoxy of phraseology as well as of truth. But it was pronounced by many to be unpalatable: they found it dry, cold, and hard of digestion. And so it is still. There has grown up in these times a distaste for doctrinal discourses. It may be the fault of the preachers. It may be the fault of the hearers. Perhaps there are faults on both sides.

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY ought not to be distasteful to intelligent Christians. It is very different, however, from Systematic Theology, as it is commonly taught. That belongs to the class-room not to the pulpit, where its presence is never desirable. But if a pastor wishes to instruct his people in Biblical Theology (and that should be the aim of every pastor), he will find that the best way to attain this object will be the adoption of an expository course. Let his Lord's-day morning services be arranged on this plan. He will perhaps prefer to have a double series, taking the Life of our Lord, in the use of a Harmony of the Gospels, one Lord's day, and the Epistles on the next, and so on, alternately. By this means, he will be sure to declare "all the counsel of God." Doctrine and duty—principles, and practices—exhortation—warning—comfort, will all have their appropriate places, and will be furnished in due proportion.

The pastor will be a "scribe instructed into the kingdom of heaven," and he will "bring forth out of his treasures things new and old;" and the people will learn to "speak the truth in love," and will "grow up into Christ, in all things." If this plan be judiciously carried out there will be no complaints about "dry doctrine."

But after all, what are the doctrines, as they are called? They are God's plans—the records of God's acts—and therefore, the facts of Bible theology; or, they are great truths, founded on or developed from facts. Election is God's plan of mercy, his "purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Justification is at once God's method of restoring the lost, through the atonement of his only-begotten Son, and the act of restoration, consequent on the acceptance of the atonement, through faith. Sanctification is a glorious fact, the result of the truth believed, to the saving of the soul." And so of the rest. The fall of Adam is a fact; and total depravity, as it is technically called, is a fact; for it is unquestionably true that as "by one man sin entered into the world," so, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"—"there is none righteous, no not one."

An irreligious man looks abroad on the state of the world with dismay. He sees wretchedness everywhere; crime, everywhere; ruined character, broken hearts, frightful calamities, everywhere; and the pall of death spread over all society. He begins to think hardly of God: he is tempted to revile his government and to blaspheme, and the more violently, because history tells him that such has been the course of human society in all nations and in all ages. "What!" he exclaims "has it been so always! Has the race been a dying race all the time?" "Yes," the philosopher answers: "such is the natural course of things. Animals live their time, and then die. Man is a nobler animal, but still he is an animal, and he, too dies: It is the law of animal being."

But man is MORE THAN AN ANIMAL.

He has a mind, a soul. He can think, reason, generalise, and arrange thoughts. He can look back, and reflect; he can look forward to the future, and rejoice and hope. He has a consciousness of a higher destiny. He infers from the sufferings of the present state the existence of another, where all seeming inequalities will be rectified. Nevertheless, he must die—and the thought of death is painful to him. It wears the aspect of punishment. It appears to be the work of an angry God. Darkness and mystery brood over the whole representation. He is ready to adopt the words of one of the writers of the Psalms—"Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?" (Psalm lxxxix. 47.)

Now, the Bible is the only source of light on this subject. Its account is brief, but clear. We are told that man was the last-formed of the creatures, and the most glorious of all. They, in their successive generations, had been dying for ages, and the earth was sown with their bones and their dust. Destruction waited on creation; it was inexorable law. But when Adam stood in all the freshness and beauty of the new nature in the garden of Eden, prepared "to dress it and to keep it," there was no sign of death in him. There was at that time no reason why he should die; and he would not have died if he had not sinned. It was sin that let loose death on the earth. Milton speaks

"Of Man's first disobedience and the fruit Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste Brought death into the world"

Paul says, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin"—death, that is, to man. Animals had not sinned—could not sin—yet they died. Man did not die till he had sinned; he was mortal from the moment in which the sentence was passed and execution took effect at the appointed time. That sentence included the race: "in Adam all die."

Many questions might be asked here particularly with respect to the transmission of evil, and the universal corruption of mankind—but they are questions which cannot be answered. We must be content to walk in comparative darkness. But we must take heed lest we complain of God, or assail his government with the puny weapons of our malice or our hate. All his ways are holy, and his judgments are just, although the world is clothed in mourning, and bewails the wide-spread ruin that has fallen upon creation.

There is a consideration which must not be overlooked. It is, that no one perishes unless he has made Adam's sin his own by personal transgression. We shall be judged at the last day according to "the things done in the body." But infants have not done anything; they are not susceptible of impressions, and know no guilt.

INFANTS, THEREFORE, DO NOT PERISH.

At what age, or under what circumstances, personal responsibility begins—how that responsibility is graduated—or by what process infants are prepared for the "kingdom of heaven" above, we have no knowledge, all that we can affirm is, that the Bible nowhere tells us that infants will be among lost souls in another world. God punishes sin:—sin is "the transgression of the law;—and transgression is a personal act—the act of a person who sins. Every inhabitant of the place of woe will be compelled to adopt the confession of the penitent thief, "We indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds."

But a brighter prospect opens before us. The melancholy history of "the fall of Adam" does not end in gloom and despair. In the promise given in the garden, obscure, doubtless, at the first, and for many ages afterwards, we have the germ of the future gospel. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Satan, "the old serpent," is fore-doomed to defeat and destruction. Century after century he revelled in the ruin which he had himself occasioned, and took his fill of tears and blood, with little check or restraint. The pregnant sentence of the apostle John, "The world lieth in wickedness" [more properly, "in the wicked one"] described the state of mankind in all those times. Yet, towards the end of the period now under review there was a glimmering of light. The "eternal purpose" prophesied in the spiritual horizon.

WORDS OF CHEER,

God's salvation was presignified. A new order of things was foretold, a great deliverance promised. The coming of "God's elect" was announced—the "Prince of Peace"—the "Priest after the order of Melchizedek"—"the Lord our Righteousness." Singular changes and overthrowings took place among the nations, all tending to constitute the civilized world one field of labour, in which one language became the medium of intercourse between the mercantile and literary branches of society, and the peoples were at rest. The Jews "looked for redemption." Among the Gentiles there was a vague expectation, an indefinite longing for light and moral power.

That was "the fullness of time." Then "the seed of the woman" appeared, in the human person of the Incarnate Son of God. He walked the earth in the majesty of holiness, scattering bounties and blessings wherever he went. He was "delivered up" by the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" and crucified by the "wicked hands" of men. His death was more than martyrdom. It was the offering-up of the Lamb of God. Then it pleased the Father to bruise his "beloved Son," and thus to manifest "his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

As Christ is "the Lord our right-

eousness," every one who believes in him becomes righteous before God. One disobedience occasions universal death. One obedience ensures everlasting life. The death, in its full result, falls only on those who have become accessory to the disobedience by personal sin. The life is secured to those who become partakers of the obedience by making it the ground of their hope towards God. Adam's sin slays his posterity. Christ's righteousness saves the church—the company of the believers—the army of the regenerate.

When the dying Saviour exclaimed, "It is finished," the sentence on Satan was confirmed, and its final execution rendered certain. It was the death-knell of the devil. The members of the church at Rome were taught to expect that God would "bruise Satan under their feet shortly." Jesus himself said, "Behold, I come quickly." Eighteen hundred years have passed away, and he has not come. But the work is still going on. At length "the day of the Lord" will dawn on this sin-smitten world. Jesus will come "in power and great glory." His saints will be with him. They will "bear the image of the heavenly!" They will share the victory of their Lord. They will be "like him," for they will "see him as he is." And as they look back on the ages that will have rolled away since Adam fell, they will be reminded of the successive dispensations of divine grace by which God gradually revealed himself, and prepared the way for the redemption, with wonder at the wisdom and the love, the forbearance and the justice of the Most High.

They will see that the fall of Adam was the occasion of the bestowment of

UNSPEAKABLE BLESSINGS

on the sons of men, inasmuch as the restoration which divine love devised and carried into effect, through the atonement of the Son and the sanctifying grace of the Spirit, involved, not only pardon, but peace, and joy, and strength, and comfort, and liberty—even "all spiritual blessings" here—to be followed by the unimaginable bliss and holiness of the never ending state—all which will be enjoyed by those whose powers will be expanding, ever improving, and rising higher and higher into the life of God.

What would have been the results if Adam had not fallen, we cannot tell; but we know some of the benedictions with which man has been blessed, notwithstanding that fall. We need not speculate on the former. We will open our hearts to the influences of the latter, and pray continually that God would give us "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ."

How much less we should have known of the government of God, if Adam had not fallen! For the manifestation that has taken place in and through the redemption, could not, as far as we can see, have been granted to mankind under any other dispensation than that in which we are living.

The fall of Adam was the most frightful, horrible fact in the history of our race. Its developments have filled our records with "mourning, lamentation, and woe." Ought we not to be deeply humbled before God, in that we have taken part in the rebellion—and to stand amazed at the proclamation of pardon—pardon "bought with blood—with blood divine?" Must we not ascribe all misery to sin—all mercy to grace?

This is a glimpse of the theology of the fall of Adam. Is it "Dogma"? Or is it fact?

Dec. 10, 1873.

SENEX.

Disestablishment is evidently the order of the day in Japan. Henceforth the Shinto priests will receive no salary. They will depend for their support on the offerings of the people.