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## Poetry.

### A Sermon in Rhyme.

BY D. W. HOYT.

If you have a friend worth loving,  
Love him. Yes, and let him know  
That you love him, ere life's evening  
Tinge his brow with sunset glow,  
Why should good words ne'er be said  
Of a friend—till he is dead?

If you hear a song that thrills you,  
Sung by any child of song,  
Praise it. Do not let the singer  
Wait deserved praises long,  
Why should one who thrills your heart  
Lack the joy you may impart?

If you hear a prayer that moves you,  
By its humble, pleading tone,  
Join it. Do not let the seeker  
Bow before his God alone,  
Why should not your brother share  
The strength of "two or three" in prayer?

If you see the hot tears falling  
From a loving brother's eyes,  
Share them. And, by sharing,  
Own your kinship with the skies,  
Why should any one be glad,  
When a brother's heart is sad?

If a silvery laugh goes rippling,  
Through the sunshine on his face,  
Share it. 'Tis the wise man's saying,  
For both grief and joy a place,  
There's health and goodness in the mirth  
In which an honest laugh has birth.

If your work is made more easy,  
By a friendly helping hand,  
Say so. Speak out brave and truly,  
Ere the darkness veil the land,  
Should a brother workman dear  
Falter for a word of cheer?

Scatter thus your seeds of kindness,  
All enriching as you go,  
Leave them. Trust the Harvest-giver,  
He will make each seed to grow,  
So, until its happy end,  
Your life shall never lack a friend.

Amherst Record.

## Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

### Church Polity.

No. VII.

#### THINGS INDIFFERENT.

Protestants hold that Holy Scripture is the sole source of Christian theology, and the sole directory of Christian obedience. But they do not hold that everything comprised in theology is contained in Scripture.

Under the law of Moses there was prescription for everything, nothing was left unprovided for. Not only was a certain thing to be done but the manner in which it was to be done was prescribed. There is no such strictness under the new dispensation. Certain things are indifferent, that is, they may be done, or they may be left undone, there is no obedience in doing them, or disobedience in the neglect. "Let every man be fully persuaded," Rom. xiv. 6. This extends to a variety of things.

It includes *opinions*. It is of no consequence what views we take of a variety of matters respecting which intelligent persons differ among themselves. Some receive one system some another. The theory which this man respects, his neighbor regards as almost absurd. Whether either of them is in the right may remain to be proved—although it may involve many questions of morals, and a man may be the better for believing, or the reverse for rejecting. Second Adventists for instance differ among themselves. Some may think that the Lord will come in their life-time, others postpone the event till the next century. Here and there a fanatic ventures to fix the date, as Miller did in the year 1843.

*Religious Services.* The Lord requires of us, one day in seven, but how many services may be held on that day, and how they may be observed, and to what length they may reach, has not been dictated, and the greatest diversity exists. There is no divine rule, all that is divine is, that the day is God's. Some observe other days, such as Easter, Whitsuntide and Lent, and the Wednesday and Friday fasts. The Lord Jesus says, "Who hath required this at your hands?"

Then the authority of the CHURCH is pleaded. That plea however will not avail, the Church has no authority

to institute observances and bind them on the members, which is, to bind a yoke on the neck of the disciples, for which the Master has given no permission.

*Food.* Here, indeed we have a prescription, and it is wide enough. "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving," 1 Tim. iv. 1.

Mohammedans vex themselves for forty days in the fast of the Ramadan and many who are called Christians followed their example though not to the same extent of punishment. But the New Testament says, "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. xiv. 17. John the Baptist ate locusts and wild honey, Paul said, "Whatever is sold in the shambles that eat asking no questions."

*Dress.* General principles are given in the Bible, it would be well if they were better observed. Christians are bound to observe them, in the avoidance of whatever is luxurious. There is no religion in the shape of a garment and pride may lurk under a coarse dress as well as under a fine one.

In these times it is especially incumbent on Christians to practice economy and retrenchment, that they may "Owe no man anything," and incur no suspicion of moral integrity.

It is not unusual in some cases to clothe customs with power, and consider them binding, as though omission of observances were sinful. This is superstition, and it may do harm. Diversity of practice is a reasonable cure. Uniformity is proper enough in many things, but if it be rigidly enforced it may prove burdensome and mischievous.

*Laws* must be reserved for the lawgiver. The pastor may observe many things which require correction, and for which he may find it not difficult to provide a remedy by private admonition or such friendly interference as Christian feeling may suggest, without going so far as to mention the matter at a meeting of the church. The pastor and deacons may properly constitute a standing committee which may take into consideration any case as it occurs and effect satisfactory arrangements; or bring before the church if necessary such matters as may be best so treated.

J. M. CRAMP.

For the Christian Messenger.

### Elucidation of Scripture.

"He hath made every thing beautiful in his time; also he hath set the world in their heart; so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end." Eccles. iii. 11.

A part of this text, as it stands in the common version, seems quite obscure. That the world is in the heart of the unregenerate is unquestionable; but it appears inconsistent with the tenor of Scripture to represent it as set there by the Most High. (See Eccles. vii. 29. 1 John ii. 15, 16. James i. 13-17.) It is, therefore, natural to enquire, if some of the Hebrew words will not fairly admit of another rendering: The word translated "also" sometimes signifies *but* or *yet* (Ps. cxxix. 2.) and that rendered "heart" in some instances denotes *midst*. (Ex. xv. 8; John ii. 3. The word rendered "world" as a verb, sometimes means to *conceal* or *hide*, and as a noun, a *secret*. (Lev. xx. 4; Ps. cxi. 8.)

Though Parkhurst's definitions of Hebrew words are not, in my opinion, as accurate and reliable as are those of the Greek, yet he appears to me to have given the true import of this text, as follows:—"He (God) hath made every thing beautiful in its season; (but) He hath even put (such) obscurity in the midst of them that no man can find out the work that God doth from beginning to end." (Heb. Lex. in Olo.)

This translation, sustained by the *usus loquendi*—use the mere words elsewhere—removes the difficulty. It ac-

cords with the well known fact that, while all God's works are certainly made or done in wisdom," (Ps. civ. 24) and the utility of many of them is apparent, in some instances the design or purpose of them is so hidden, or obscure that, in our present limited state of knowledge, no one can comprehend the whole. Rom. xi. 33. It is, then, obviously the part of prudence to search out the works of the LORD as far as we can, (Ps. cii. 2) and then quietly to acknowledge our inability to understand those things which are to us incomprehensible; and to rejoice that JEHOVAH is infinite in wisdom and power, and does all things well.

C. TUPPER.

Aylesford June 13.

For the Christian Messenger.

### Theology at Wolfville.

No. 3.

It could hardly have been expected that great results would follow the Theological teaching done at Wolfville the last fifty years, considering the smallness of its amount. At no one time during this period has the Department been represented by more than one man, while some of the time it has not been represented at all.

Yet some good has been accomplished. It were easy to cite the names of brethren, now gone to their reward, who nobly and successfully labored for Christ in these provinces and in heathen lands, whose sole Theological training was received at Wolfville. And the same might be said of some of our most useful and influential living ministers. And yet these visible results are far from expressing the full measure of the good that has been done. Others of perhaps greater importance are somewhat spiritual in their kind, and therefore not easily distinguishable by the eye of man. They exist in the form of thought, principle, culture, and are now operating as spiritual forces in society. Indeed, there is some reason to believe that the religious complexion which the College proper has ever borne, though never in a sectarian form, has largely sprung from the Theological or religious idea in which it had its inception, and which has lived within it and pervaded its life.

Had no Theological instruction been given at Wolfville during the last fifty years,—had the school been begun and maintained as a purely secular one, for the sole purpose of diffusing secular or general knowledge, the denomination would not probably have reached its present position, nor the College itself been so generally useful. On the other hand, if more Theological instruction had been given during this period,—if, say, two men had been exclusively devoted to the work, probably the denomination would now be numerically stronger, and occupy a higher religious status.

But however different the results might have been had the instruction given been more or less, the fifty years are gone, never to be recalled. The question which now presses for an answer as we enter upon another half century is: What course had we now better pursue? What course will lead to the best results fifty years hence? Shall we abandon the idea of a Theological Department altogether, and advise our young men to seek a Theological training abroad? Or shall we make such provision for them, at home that the necessity of going abroad may not exist? In my humble opinion the latter will be the better course to adopt, and for the following reasons:—

1. In this way we shall have a larger supply of ministers and thus be better able to meet the wants of the Churches.

For thus, first, a larger supply of ministers will be produced among us; and second, a greater number of them will be retained.

The truth of the first part of this statement may not be at once apparent to some persons; they may not readily perceive how the existence of a flourishing Theological school in our midst could be the means of leading a larger

number of young men to enter the ministry than if no such school existed, and the young men were consequently obliged to seek their Theological training in other lands; but I think a moment's reflection will make the matter plain. The very presence of a live, progressive Theological school in any country creates around it an atmosphere favorable to the production of the material that is to feed it.

Certain conditions are always necessary to certain results; certain means must be used for the accomplishment of certain ends. But I question if a Theological school outside a given country will be the means of furnishing as large a supply of ministers for that country as a school equally good within it. I hold that the production of ministers for these Maritime Provinces through the agency of a Theological Institution that is not within their circle, but in a country of another type and nationality, the social, intellectual, and religious tastes of whose people differ materially from those of our own—this I hold to be a direct violation of the law of fitness and adaptation.

But whatever doubt may exist touching the first part of our statement, none can be entertained concerning the second, namely, that hereby a greater number of ministers will be retained among us. The great majority of our brethren who have settled in the United States would be now laboring in these provinces if they had received their Theological training here. For it is chiefly through studying abroad that inducements are presented to remain abroad. And of course those most likely not to return to us will ever be the ones we can least afford to lose.

Our young brethren who go to Newton or elsewhere to study doubtless feel attached to their own country and their own institutions; but their loyalty to these is hardly proved by their willingness to return when no other course seems open to them. But to be invited to a more influential position with a larger salary than could be obtained at home, and still to return—this would be a proof of genuine loyalty. It is however a proof very seldom furnished. I have never known but one instance of it, and that was the case of a young man who returned because of a previous engagement to do so, from which he could not get released. On the other hand several instances might be cited of persons who have been strongly urged to come back and settle in the provinces, but in their estimation the louder call was to remain in New England.

It may be said, indeed, that the "field is the world," and that Christ may be faithfully served in one country as well as in another. Very true. But the remark is not pertinent to the point in question. The matter now under consideration is: how shall the largest supply of ministers be obtained for these Provinces, and I maintain that it cannot be done by sending them to receive their Theological education in the United States.

That more ministers are wanted to meet the present needs of the churches is painfully apparent. The number of ministerial graduates the present year is not equal to that of the ministers who have been removed the last year by death.

The question of how the needed supply shall be provided is one demanding most serious and prayerful consideration.

D. M. WELTON.

For the Christian Messenger.

### The Christian's Food.

"As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby," 1 Pet. ii. 2.

The Word of God—our Bible, is God's great and precious gift to man. What a mercy it is that He should condescend to thus speak to his rebellious creatures. Small would be our knowledge of Him if he had not so spoken. How would we ever come to Christ, if we had not the written law to act as a school-master to bring us to a know-

ledge of ourselves and then to the exercise of justifying faith? But great and precious as are the written words of God to us, small would be their value had we not the greater and more precious gift which they reveal.

The words of God by his servant John are:—"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and Word was God." John further says:—"This Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." This then, is God's chief and best, his crowning gift, to man, without which, all other gift would sink into insignificance. It is the milk of the Word that babes in Christ must partake of, to cause them to grow up into Christ their living Head.

The persons so spoken of have been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God. Having had a spiritual birth, they must have spiritual food. Though the letter killeth, it may lead to the Spirit that giveth life, cannot of itself give itself give life or spiritual food. For that food which nourishes to eternal life, we must go to Christ, who has declared himself to be the bread of life. To grow and have spiritual life and strength, we must feed on Him. Without His Spirit we are none of His, and to have His Spirit we must receive it from Himself. To bear fruit we must not only be in the vine, but we must draw nourishment from it. Christ has ever in the past been as he ever will be, the meat and drink of all who live by him.

The Israelites when passing through the wilderness, all ate the same spiritual meat and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual Rock which followed them, and that Rock was Christ. All who have had this spiritual birth, to grow and have spiritual life must have spiritual food, which is fully provided and freely offered, as we read,—"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." See also Isa. lv. 1; Rev. xxii. 17.

When Samaria was invaded by the Syrians, and the inhabitants of the city were expecting death by famine, the Lord frightened away the Syrians, and by the words of four lepers the starving people were led to find plenty of food on the camping ground of the Syrians. They were not fed by the words of the lepers, but by their words led to an abundant supply. Even so, the written Word for which we should give thanks and praise, lead to the Spirit that giveth life.

Death has passed upon all men, for all have sinned. But our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel—the good news. Yes by the written words of God, life and immortality are brought to light or revealed to man; yet it is Christ the Word and He only who is the life and light; and as he is the Bread of Life, we must feed on Him, or we cannot have eternal life. This should be our daily bread, and as he is so freely offering himself let us not go starving, but eat and grow for in Him all fullness dwells. In Him there is enough for each, enough for all, enough for evermore.

THE LAW OF LIBEL.—The supreme Court of Vermont has just made a decision that will be of interest to the readers as well as to the publishers of religious journals. A minister was excluded from a Congregational Association, and an official notice of the action published in a newspaper. The excluded man brought suit for libel, but the court decides that such publications are privileged, and that damages cannot be recovered unless a manifestly malicious publication be proved. Official decisions of ecclesiastical bodies may be published by newspapers without infringement of anyone's rights. This is good sense, and we are glad to know that it is good law also.—*Examiner & Chronicle.*