

# The Christian Messenger.

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## Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

"For other Foundation can no  
Man Lay."

There is a sure foundation,  
A well-tryed Corner stone;  
And every age and nation  
May safely build thereon.  
The bulwark wall, salvation,  
Shall evermore remain;  
Against that sure foundation  
The heathen rage in vain.

Philosophers and sages  
In darkness groped their way;  
Adown the weary ages,  
They led the world astray:  
Strive not, with ceaseless trouble,  
To build, with wood or hay,  
Or like consuming stubble,  
It shall perish in a day.

O thou profoundest Mystery!  
Beyond the whole world's ken;  
Unknown to human history,  
Untold by human pen.  
We turn to Thee, believing  
The word that Thou hast given;  
And in our hearts receiving  
A sweet foretaste of heaven.

Halifax, November, 15th, 1879.

## Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Convention and the Churches.

Dear Editor,—

Baptists have never been forward to bind men's consciences. But Baptist Churches have found it necessary as well as scriptural to withdraw fellowship from those who walk according to sound doctrine. And it is for the church, not the individual, to decide what sound doctrine is. We believe in the authority and independence of the churches, yet it has been found not contrary to Scripture and very advantageous to the cause of religion, for churches to unite in forming Associations and Conventions. While these bodies have no ecclesiastical authority they ought to possess much influence, within their bounds at least. Composed as they are either of churches or of Pastors and delegates from the churches, their doings should command the respect of all the churches that are in any way connected with them. If this is not to be the case it is useless to spend time and money to attend their sessions. And as in all our democratic institutions the majority must rule, the action of the majority is to be considered the action of the Society. At the meeting of the Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, held at Truro, in August last, a financial scheme was carefully prepared by a committee and adopted by a large majority of the Convention. The scheme seemed to commend itself to all that spoke on the subject. The only questions that were raised, were,— "Are we prepared for it?" "Can it be made a success?" Probably no one will deny that the various enterprises of the denomination need the amount contemplated by this scheme. All will be ready to admit, we presume, that the amount can be raised, and will be raised, if the Pastors and leading brethren of the churches will take hold of the matter with earnestness and with a determination to make it a success. Inasmuch as the Convention adopted this scheme, and the cause of God both in our midst and on the Foreign field needs the amount it aims to raise, we do hope that the pastors of the churches will have collections made quarterly or monthly, and see to it that an amount is raised equal to one dollar per head of the entire membership of the churches under their care. The Granville Street Church, Halifax, have sent in their pledge to raise such an amount. The Committee are confident that even more will be secured. Let other churches send in their pledges as soon as possible. The Finance Committee want to know whether an Agent will be necessary or not; and, if one is needed, where his labours will be required. The churches must give us the information on which we are to base our action in this matter.

Our Home Missions require funds at once. Arrangements are completed for placing an additional French Missionary in the field. The obstacles in the way of our conducting Home Mission work in New Brunswick have all been removed. Now the whole field is under the supervision of one Board. We wish to thank God that the desire of our heart, fondly cherished for eight or nine years, is at last fulfilled. But organization however perfect is not enough. The churches must furnish the Board with means, and God must give his blessing, or the work will not be a success.

G. E. DAY.

Yarmouth, Nov. 27, 1879.

For the Christian Messenger.

Karen Traditions.

No heathen people has been discovered possessing traditions that correspond as nearly with biblical facts as the Karens of Burma. Some, on this account have been led to suppose them descended from the Jews, which does not seem at all improbable. In reference to their origin they themselves say that their forefathers came from the North, crossing in their journey "the river of running sands," by which they mean a trackless region where the sands rolled before the winds like the waves of the sea. This is supposed to describe very well the desert region between Tibet and China which these nomads may have crossed on their way to their present abode.

Their traditions are now almost unknown in Christian villages, but are still repeated, or chanted among the heathen, and handed down from generation to generation. Their tradition of the Fall is expressed in the following stanzas:—

"Anciently God commanded, but Satan appeared bringing destruction. Formerly God commanded, but Satan appeared deceiving unto death, The woman E-n, and the man Thai-nai pleased not the eye of the dragon, The persons of E-n and Thai-nai pleased not the mind of the dragon, The dragon looked on them,—the dragon beguiled the woman and Thai-nai, How is this said to have happened? The great dragon succeeded in deceiving—deceiving unto death.

How do they say it was done? A yellow fruit took the great dragon, and gave to the children of God; A white fruit took the great dragon, and gave to the daughter and son of God. They transgressed the commands of God and God turned his face from them, They transgressed the commands of God and God turned away from them, They kept not all the words of God—were deceived, deceived unto sickness, They kept not all the law of God,—were deceived, deceived unto death."

In regard to the great Evil Being, the Tempter, they say:—

"Satan at first was just; But afterwards transgressed the Word of God, Satan at first was divine, But afterwards broke the Word of God; God drove him out and lashed him from his place; He tempted the holy daughter of God, God lashed him with whips from his presence."

Their tradition respecting the lost books which the "white foreigner" was to restore to them, and which seemed to have prepared them to receive the gospel, still exists among the heathen. In one large village in the Mergui district there is a "God teacher," as they say, who repeats to them from time to time what the elders have taught from generation to generation, "children and grand-children, the Karens had books, perfect like other people. But they did not take care of their books and therefore lost them. When they lost their books, they lost their knowledge of God, and when they lost their knowledge of God they could no longer live in peace with each other. The younger brother became an enemy, the older brother a foe. The more they lived in hostility, the more degraded they became, the more they did evil, the more they did evil, the more severe were the judgments of God, afflicting them with sickness and death."

After repeating at some length their hopes of receiving the traditions of the elders, say, "Look towards the ocean. The great bird will ascend and spread forth its white wings. That is the white foreigner bringing you the words of your eternal God. If you observe the words of your great God which the white foreigners bring to you, you shall become acquainted with the righteousness of your God, and be able to discriminate between right and wrong."

Christian teachers have visited the village referred to and have told them that the "white foreigners" have come as expected, but they hesitate to believe. This is owing in part to their knowledge of the immorality of some white people, and they do not think God would commit their expected treasure into such hands. Again they knew many Karens who have professed Christianity, but who afterwards became worse than before. Thus their traditions have lost, to some extent, at least, the power they once possessed in preparing them to become Christians.

A poetical fragment respecting the lost book is as follows:—

"The palm leaf book that is written in circles,  
The book of palm leaf that in circles is written,  
The elders drew out the lines in long coils,  
They became great winding paths!  
The letters of the palm leaf books  
Teach ancient wonders!  
The letters of the palm leaf books  
Show wonders of antiquity.  
God sent us the book of skins;  
It is at the feet of the king of Hades  
God sent us the book that has neither father nor mother.  
Enabling every one to instruct himself,  
The book of one sided letters, the letters ten,  
Is at the feet of the king of Hades,  
The book of one-sided letters, of letters many,  
All men could not read."

They praise the "book of skins" as teaching more important matters than the book of palm leaf, the latter only treating of things that make men wonder. Parchment is unknown among all these Indian tribes, and it would appear from the above that they must at one time have had some knowledge of the materials used by more western nations. What more natural than that they were possessed of the Old Testament Scriptures?

H. M.  
Tavoy, Burma.

For the Christian Messenger.

How Wesley came to give up Reading Sermons.

A visitor to Allhallows Church writes the following:—

"But an object of some special interest was discovered in the Vestry. In a neat gilt frame, hanging opposite the door, was a little scrap of the personal history of Mr. Wesley, and it read as follows:—

ALLHALLOWS CHURCH, LOMBARD STREET, LONDON.

On Sunday, Dec. 28th, 1788, two sermons were preached in this parish Church for the benefit of forty-eight poor children belonging to the St. Ethelberga Society—that in the morning by the Rev. George Patrick, L. L. B., and that in the afternoon by Rev. Jno. Wesley, M. A., from the words in the service, "His commandments are not grievous." The congregation was very large.

While Mr. Wesley, then in his eighty-sixth year, was putting on his gown in the Vestry, he said to Mr. Thomas Lettis, a steward of the charity, "Its about fifty years, sir, since I preached in this church, I remember it from a particular circumstance, I came without a sermon, and going up the pulpit stairs I hesitated, and returned into the Vestry under much mental confusion and agitation. A woman who stood by, noticed my concern and said, "Pray sir, what is the matter?" I replied, "I have not brought a sermon with me." Putting her hand on my shoulder, she said, "Is that all? cannot you trust God for a sermon?" The question had such an effect upon me that I ascended the pulpit, preached extempore with great freedom to myself, and acceptance to the people, and have never since taken a written sermon with me into the pulpit."

My friend afterward acknowledged that he had caused the version of Mr. Wesley's dilemma to be hung conspicuously in the Vestry of Allhallows, perhaps with the hope that that phase of his character might become helpful to any clergyman about to pass from the vestry-room to the pulpit.—*Christian Advocate.*

Dr. Philetus Dobbs.

ON THE USEFULNESS OF MINISTERS' WIVES.

The taciturn Dr. Dobbs gives the readers of the *National Baptist* a communication from "A. Pastress" in which she says:—

"Your article on 'The Usefulness of Wives' was truly sublime; it was majestic. But was there not a want of completeness? Was the usefulness of a wife to the pastor adequately recognized? True, sir, there was one allusion, only one, to her; but does she not merit far more? No sir; suffer her to say to you that I have been a great blessing to my husband. How often have I heard him say: 'My love; what should I do without you—or, (he has added with a tear) without some one in your place.' How feelingly he prayed at the funeral of a minister's wife that 'our dear brother might be sustained, and that Providence might soon repair the loss, or enable the brother to repair the loss for himself.' I have been, I say, a great help to him. For example, sometime ago he preached a sermon on 'The Recognition of Our Mothers-in-law in Heaven.' The congregation was not very large; during the following week he was rasher driven, and could not write more than one preparation. Toward the close of the week, he said to me: 'My love wouldn't you like to hear that sermon again?' 'Oh certainly,' said I. 'I understand then that you request me to repeat it?' 'O certainly.' 'I thank you, my love. What a help-meet you are.' So, on Sunday morning, he said, 'I have been specially requested to repeat the sermon preached last Sunday morning; accordingly, this evening I will,' etc., etc. Indeed I couldn't tell you how many times he 'has been requested' in the same way.

Then, at one time, things did not go very well in the church. It was pretty evident that there was trouble ahead. Just at that time I had the mumps; my husband promptly resigned, stating that his wife's health, etc.; and then some resolutions were passed, beginning: "Whereas our beloved pastor, in consequence of his wife's impaired state of health has tendered his resignation," etc. These resolutions were prepared by him, but I copied them. And indeed I could not tell you how many resolutions and commendatory paragraphs I have written or copied, so as to enable him to say with truth that he did not write them.

On another occasion, my husband while laboring with a struggling church, was so fortunate as to be called to a "larger field" in a city. To all who inquired what he was going to do in the matter, to all who urged him not to leave the feeble band, and not be influenced by the salary question, he had one reply: "My wife has never been happy here; you know she is a person of a great deal of culture; she does so enjoy refined society; and besides, her health!" Yes, sir; I proudly and fondly believe that I have been a great blessing to my husband. I really feel that he would miss me sorely—at least until the vacancy should be filled."

ON CHANGING A PASTORATE AND PASTOR. TWO LETTERS, AND ONE REPLY.

On another occasion Dr. Dobbs receives two letters. One of them from the Rev. A. Humblemind, wishing for a change in his pastorate, and wishing Dr. D. to mention his name to a church he describes, as follows:—

I find, sir, that the church in Bumbleborough does not present a sphere suited to my temperament and to what

my too partial friends regard as my culture and my ability. Many of my best efforts are not appreciated. And yet, if at any time the people see, or think they see, any falling off, it is wonderful how much complaint there is.

Then again;—but, after all, perhaps, I need not go through the long catalogue of objections to my present field. The practical point is this, I want another field; and you are no doubt the man who can direct me to the very field. But it is proper that I should describe to you the kind of field I want.

As to the location, I want one in or near a large city, where I can have all the literary and social privileges that are dear to me and my family, and where my children can go to the very best schools. Yet the location must be one where expenses are very light, for reasons which I will not detain you by enumerating.

As to salary, I may as well say at once that it must be abundant, so as to place me above care, and to give me a chance to lay up something. I say nothing about providing for the expenses of an occasional European tour, for that would be a matter of course, and would be outside. Liberal donations now and then would also be requisite.

As to culture, the people must be highly educated; yet they must be free from conceit and must at all times be ready to look up to their pastor. Nor must they by reason of their culture make extravagant demands on him.

Piety there must be, and of a very elevated type. The rich men, for such of course there will be, must not be worldly, or selfish or ostentatious. They must be ready always to bear their full share, yet without ever claiming pre-eminence. The deacons must be men of excellent judgement, yet modest, always suitably deferring to their pastor. The women must be free from all love of display; they must never indulge in idle conversation; they must be exemplars of all the graces of the gospel alike at home and abroad.

Socially I wish that the church should occupy a high position; yet without being lifted up. I should wish the people always to welcome me to their homes, yet never to complain, if I am so buried in my studies as not to be able to visit.

The other letter is from the deacons of the church of which he, Rev. A. Humble-Mind is at present pastor, but as they expect he will soon be leaving, they wish Dr. D. to aid them in getting a new minister and mention some of the characteristics of one who would suit them. They say:—

We want a man who will not be concerned about salary, a man who preaches for souls, a man who can say with the Apostle Paul, (would that he were still on earth!): "I seek not yours, but you." We really cannot bear to have a man looking as though his salary was not large enough, and feeling badly if it is not paid when it is due.

The town is quite high-toned; and we should wish the minister to live in proper style, so that we should not be ashamed of him or his house or his family. We wish the minister and his wife always to have the house in order for visitors who may need entertainment. And we want his wife to arrange her matters so that she can visit a good deal, and always conduct the female prayer-meeting, the missionary meeting and the benevolent sewing society, as well as represent the church on all the boards and union associations of the town.

The minister must be a learned man, yet not in the least vain of his learning; we want him to be very profound in his thoughts, yet so simple that the children will not fail to understand him.

He must always do justice to the pulpit on Sunday, to the Wednesday evening lecture, and the preparatory lecture, and the explanation of the lesson to the teachers, and to the Pastor's Bible-class; at the same time we are