

# The Christian Messenger.

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## Poetry.

### The Infidel and his Daughter.

"The damps of death are coming fast,  
My father, o'er my brow;  
The past with all its scenes has fled,  
And I must turn me now  
To that dim future which in vain  
My eyes seek to descry;  
Tell me, my father, in this hour,  
In whose belief to die.

"In thine? I've watched the scornful  
Smile,  
And heard thy withering tone,  
When'er the Christian's humble hope  
Was placed above thine own?  
I've heard thee speak of coming death,  
Without a shade of gloom,  
And laugh at all the childish fears,  
That cluster round the tomb.

"Or is it in my mother's faith?  
How fondly do I trace,  
Through many a weary long year past  
That calm and saintly face?  
How often do I call to mind,  
Now she's beneath the sod,  
The place, the hour, in which she drew  
My early thoughts to God.

"T'was then she took this sacred book,  
And from its burning page  
Read how its truths support the soul  
In youth and falling age;  
And bade me in its precepts live,  
And by its precepts die,  
That I might share a home above  
In worlds beyond the sky.

"My father, shall I look above,  
Amid this gathering gloom,  
To Him whose promises of love  
Extend beyond the tomb?  
Or curse the Being who hath blessed  
This checkered path of mine?  
Must I embrace my mother's faith,  
Or die, my sire, in thine?"

The frown upon that warrior brow  
Passed like a cloud away,  
And tears coursed down the rugged  
Cheek  
That flowed not till that day.  
"No, not in mine?" with choking voice,  
The skeptic made reply—  
"But in thy mother's holy faith,  
My daughter, may'st thou die!"

## ASSOCIATIONAL SERMON.

### "Meat" vs. Christian Work.

THE SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE  
N. S. CENTRAL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,  
ON MONDAY, JUNE 28, 1880.

BY REV. JOSEPH MURRAY.  
Published by Request.

"For meat destroy not the work of  
God." Rom. iv. 20.

At the date of this epistle, there was evidently a very uncharitable spirit among the Christians in Rome. The converted Jews accused the converted Gentiles of undue license, and the Gentiles in turn, laughed to scorn the precision of the Jews. On the one side, Jewish ceremonies were sacredly regarded, and on the other, the liberty of the gospel was abused, so that between the two, the charity which suffereth long and is kind, suffered severely at this juncture. The Apostle steps in and bids the disturbance cease: "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth, for God hath received him." "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." And then as if to silence all objections, he adds: "For meat, destroy not the work of God." Now, it may appear to some, that the knowledge and spirit of Christianity have so far advanced, that the followers of Christ so closely imitate their Master, that the necessity for enforcing this truth is past. But brethren, I appeal to you, coming as you have, from the daily battle with self; and your knowledge of those professing the religion of Jesus, do you not believe, even yet, that there is a necessity for the apostolic injunction, "For meat destroy not the work of God."

I. OBSERVE THAT WHICH IS TO BE GUARDED—"THE WORK OF GOD."

There are but two kinds of work: good and evil. To God's servant, there is but one Master, one service, one reward. "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." With the Christian there can be no distinction between works for self and for Christ, a portion of time or talents devoted to self,

and a portion to religious purposes. For this would indicate an incomplete surrender. But "ye are bought with a price" and, as servants, are to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, which is your reasonable service. The only safe position is where the Bible places the man, "Steward of the manifold grace of God."

We will briefly consider this part of our subject under two leading thoughts. 1st. The regeneration of man, and 2nd., his development and perfection in Christ Jesus.

1: These two thoughts are clearly expressed in our Lord's commission. "Go make disciples of all the nations, immersing them into the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Evangelism is the primary work of the church. For "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." It is a grand achievement for the artist, to chisel out in perfect form, the ideal angel concealed within the block of marble, but it is far grander to conceive the ideal. It is a great work to develop the Christian, but it is sublime to change an enemy to a friend; a demon to a saint.

This is God's prerogative, still he permits us to assist. In the olden times, soldiers of renown had their armor bearers. We are but armor-bearers for Christ. He places in our hands the sword of the Spirit—the Word of God. We are permitted to hold it aloft—to proclaim its wonderful powers—its divine efficacy. But it is the hand of the Holy Spirit alone, which wields it with effect.

In what a deplorable state is man found! He is described as asleep, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall give thee light." As one dead: "you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sin." A strong figure, and the Apostle loved to deal in such. But our Lord gave us the key to these expressions in his remarkable words, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." The Will, the controlling power in man is opposed to God. No fetters can bind and keep him from salvation, but his own will; it is enmity to God and to His laws. It says daily, "I will not have this man to reign over me." What can the Church of Christ do to subdue this will? Preach the Gospel of Christ. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save men. The simple fact that Christ Jesus came into world to save sinners is the grand antidote for sin. It is not civilization first, then the gospel, not secular knowledge, then religion, but the simple fact that "God so loved the world." There is a Divine vitality in the Gospel of Jesus which is the "power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." But is this all that man can do in the salvation of the sinner? It is all he can do directly.

Yet there are a great variety of ways in which to preach the Gospel. There is a door to every man's heart, and an avenue leading thereto. It may have many windings, may be obstructed with rubbish, and many flights of stairs, but there is a way to every heart. The Christian who visited the man dying in one of Scotland's hospitals, and being again and again repulsed when he would speak to him of Jesus, sat down and softly sung,

"Jerusalem my glorious home,  
Name ever dear to me," etc.

placed a key square into the lock of the man's soul. That hymn was the one his sainted mother used to sing. There is much Gospel preached which is ineffectual, because not done in the right way.

Oh! winners of souls, cease not your efforts to gain admittance. For when you gain the heart then you can sow the seed with success.

But there is the indirect way of reaching souls, i. e., through their friends, and especially through the Mercy Seat. I often think that efforts to save men which goes up to Jesus and then down to the heart is the most effectual. For when we

move the Omnipotent arm of God, we move the whole world. But the grandest part of all this work of regeneration is unseen by mortal vision. Our Lord did not attempt to explain, but simply declared, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and ye hear the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit." But of this we are assured the Holy Spirit is convincing men of sin, righteousness, and of judgment to come. The angels of God are wooing to the paths of peace. The destinies of men are trembling in the balance. A thoughtless word or act may turn the scale. It is to prevent such a calamity that the followers of Christ are exhorted to lay aside mere selfish gratification: "For meat destroy not the work of God." "Oh that we could see as the Apostle did when he wrote, knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men, "Be ye reconciled to God."

Could we but measure the holy influence of which a soul redeemed is capable? Could we but gaze upon the miseries of the lost, and understand somewhat of the anguish of the eternal sorrow, could we but see the family meetings around the throne of God, and the handshakings of holy fellowship, we would forget all earthly pleasure in our desire to win souls.

And now amid so many deeply mysterious workings of God's Spirit upon the hearts of the unregenerate. What manner of persons ought we to be, lest we mar some of them? Rather let it be our life study to know the mind of Jesus and so help in spreading His kingdom.

2. Following the regeneration of the soul is its development and perfection in Christ. This also is a great work entrusted to the Church, *nourishing children* for God. Christ is saying to His people as Pharaoh's daughter said to the mother of Moses, "Take this child and nurse it for me and I will give thee thy wages." It is something more than immersing them and placing their names upon the Church record, it is training them for Christian work and Christian fellowship, and for a Christian's heaven. Many of them, though born again, are dwarfed and distorted by evil companions and evil habits. These as far as possible are to be developed into pure, firm, tender and benevolent Christians. As in the physical, so in the spiritual, all are not equal in strength or proficiency. It is the sublime aim of the Church of God to act in harmony with the Apostle, and "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

There are babes which can take little else than milk, and that they must have or suffer. There are those who in the severe battle of life have been maimed, and must be supplied with crutches. Some lived so long in the hot miasma of sin, that they were dwarfed and must be carried. Oh! the Church ought to be a spiritual hospital, and keep well supplied with lint and bandages, crutches and ambulances, above all, having an efficient staff of nurses, such as the great Apostle declared himself, and Sylvanus and Timotheus to be among the Thessalonians, "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. How cheering is the fact that the Bible is an ample treasure house. Food for the hungry, armor for the soldier, crutches for the lame, medicine for the sick, composed as Bunyan says, "Ex carne et sanguine christi." All we need is there, so that the "man of God may be perfect and thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

II. We come now to notice the admonition concerning his work, *destroy it not*.

There is no tendency in this teaching to compromise the truth. It is the giving up of meat, not the Word of God. It is simply denying self that the enjoyment of which would be an injury to others however innocent to us.

When our own pleasure merely is affected by indulgence, we should refrain rather than offend another's feelings, or cause him to do wrong. The Apostle adds his own decision in the matter, "If

meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world stands." What a sublime example! We will now apply the admonition of our text, and pray that God will grant us all Divine enlightenment:

1. For luxuries no Christian should destroy the work of God. When the Holy Spirit enters the soul the carnal desires are subdued, its affections turned towards new objects. Israel feasting upon the old corn and magnificent fruits of Canaan ceased to long for the flesh-pots of Egypt. The new-born soul has few temporal wants, for the table of heavenly food is sweeter. But alas! these carnal desires are only conquered, not removed, and sooner or later they will endeavour to regain their dominion. Sooner or later some of those who cheer the hearts of God's people by their renunciation of sinful courses return to their worldly pleasures.

Like Christian, as boys, they cannot forbear plucking the tempting fruit which hangs over the wall from Belzebub's garden. The body which so soon is to become an occupant of the tomb is pampered with dainties and adorned with expensive clothing. Their style of living is discribed by Divine lips, "Clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day." Costly jewelry absorbs the benevolent resources. \$100 for a shawl, and 50 cents for Foreign Missions, \$25 for a trinket, and 25 cts. for the salvation of souls. A table groaning with dainties and a *pious prayer* for the poor. Christ afoot, and His humble disciple rolling by in his splendid turnout. There come to our ears the tender pleadings of our Mission Boards, but their words are drowned by the chink of gold dropping into the till of some popular play. Oh! that these words of inspiration would ring in such hearts, "For meat destroy not the work of God."

Churches sometimes make a well-nigh fatal mistake in building too costly edifices for the worship of God, a debt is incurred which like a horrible incubus largely destroys its future usefulness, instead of the strength of the Church being given to the salvation of souls. The principal question of anxious committees is, "How shall we lift this mortgage?" Brethren, am I on the wing of imagination? or are these stern facts? That they are stubborn obstacles to the advancement of the Gospel is very apparent.

2. For evil or unnecessary habits destroy not the work of God.

Every man's life ought to be pure. He frustrates the designs of his creator if it is not. A noble character is its own reward. But in addition God fills the earth with symbols of purity and goodness, thereby wooing all to a holy life. But surely the Christian ought to require no urging to put away evil habits. Shall those cleansed in the life currents of God's Son wallow in the mire of sin? Will those who have tasted the cup of salvation, eagerly quaff the old cup of foul habits and base pleasures? I fear that I may not be approved by all in speaking thus plainly, but to be approved by Christ is sufficient.

Oh how painful to the hearts of God's people to behold those bearing the sacred livery of the religious professor mingling in the gay throng of worldly pleasure seekers. By their side are some who with trembling heart heard their expressions of sorrow for sin. As they listened they too were convinced and almost persuaded to be Christians. They also stood by when they came up out of the waters of consecration to God, and receive the right hand of fellowship to a spiritual communion. But now as they behold them whirling in the dance, the gayest of the gay, they become infidels at heart and despise both religion and its Author.

If those who indulge in what they are pleased to call innocent amusement, could realize the helplessness and darkness they cast over many a heart, they would pause and say in the spirit of the Apostle, if my amusement is going to turn the feet of some of my

friends down to hell, I will not indulge in such pleasures while I live.

There are many who could not be induced to sully their lips with an obscene word, but who indulge in the common use of tobacco. Approach them upon the subject, and they readily reply, "It does not injure me, it rather does me good." Neither would meat injure the hard working apostle, but do him good. But the grand question with him was, not "How will it affect my health, but how will it affect my brother? Will my liberty cause the least of God's children to stumble? or be weakened, or led to do wrong? But I ought to beg the Apostle's pardon for bringing him into comparison with such men. Oh! look at his self-denial, then at theirs. To say nothing about the physical and moral purity that would ensue, what would be the financial result, if this evil habit were put away from among Christians? and the amount now expended upon it, judiciously spent on God's work? I venture to say that in one year our missions would be free from debt and flourishing. Our Institutions of learning lifted out of embarrassment, with a rapidly increasing endowment fund; or, take another direction, nearly every church in the Dominion could nobly sustain a pastor.

Is it not a problem? How can a man kneel before God and pray, "Thy kingdom come, while he is daily sacrificing to Moloch the very means that God has given him for the purpose of extending that Kingdom.

Another habit which we fear is too frequently practiced among God's people to the great hindrance of His work, is use of alcoholic beverages. For this the same excuse is urged, "It does not injure me." The sequel of which proves it false. No man can imbibe without great harm to himself and others. We have not time to speak of its terribly blighting effects upon the system, mind and affections, as well as the previous habit, the use of tobacco. It mars and defaces God's glorious work within himself. But further, the imbibing Christian is a tottering pillar in God's house. He is a cause of anxiety and weakness to his brethren, a reproach to Christ, and a false light to the world. Oh! for such "meat," such carnal pleasure, how can men for a moment jeopardize God's work?

Must we be constantly met with the cry of Hard Times, while a host of great evils are fattening, and God's cause suffering? Abraham put forth his hand to slay his son at the command of God, and shall the man of God now sacrifice his grandest interests at the cravings of an evil appetite. May God Almighty grant that the day may soon arrive when men cannot point to the occupants of our pulpits as their example in these pernicious habits. But those bearing the vessels of the Lord being clean, the people shall take up the refrain of "Holiness to the Lord."

3. An overweening desire for worldly gain destroys much of God's work. Let it not be understood that we oppose honest trade or stirring business industry! "Diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord" is our motto. All honor to the men who like the late lamented Cobb of Boston, who consecrates his business talents to God's service. But there is a spirit of worldliness, setting down upon the christian church which is terribly blinding in its effects. It indulges no evil or expensive habits; but is so absorbed in hoarding that the cry of the widows and orphans for bread is unheard. The groans of the perishing millions disturb not his reveries. The man is so blinded by the desire for gain, that he cannot read Jehovah's Due Bill, "How much owest thou my Lord?"

He is color blind and cannot discern what portions of the decalogue he is violating. The wrong is perpetuated. Like parent, like child; even death does not break the spell. If men who have spent a whole life in getting would give wisely when they can no longer control their wealth there would be one redeeming feature in worldliness. But alas! the death bed is no place to learn benevolence.