

# The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

NEW SERIES.  
Vol. XXV., No. 10.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, March 10, 1880.

WHOLE SERIES.  
Vol. XLIV., No. 10.

## Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.  
A Lay for the Bereaved.

Sadly we mourn when love's cincture is broken,  
Yearning we bend o'er the life-bereft clay;  
Wait we in vain for the accents familiar,  
As vainly for smiles which have vanished for aye.

Hushed is the voice that so long was our music;  
Glassy and dim the oncelove-lighted eye;  
Pulseless the heart ever warm with affection,  
Folded above it the quiet hands lie.

Cold is the grave where the loved ones must slumber,  
Dark was the portal that led to the tomb;  
Alone, all alone did they ford the chill river?  
Was there no ray to enliven the gloom?

Ah yes! when the death-angel folded his pinion  
Above the calm couch where the sufferer lay,  
A glory ineffable lighted the features,  
A beam from the realms of unending day.

The ear had grown dull to the music of mortals;  
And weary the eye to the beauties below;  
Filled was the heart with a longing to enter,  
The regions where pleasures unceasingly flow.

Softly they pass from our fondest embraces;  
Gently they breathe the last loving farewell;  
Hastes the freed spirit, blood-washed and perfect,  
With Jesus its Saviour forever to dwell.

Look up, weary mourner, beyond the horizon  
That boundeth thy view lies the City of Light,  
Through whose streets of pure gold the departed now wander,  
Their faith sweetly changed to the raptures of sight.

While they tune their soft harps to the music of angels,  
And sing the sweet song none but ransomed ones know,  
They bend from their seats 'mid the glories of Heaven,  
To watch o'er the loved ones who linger below.

Feb. 26th, 1880. N.

## Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.  
Review.

THE EARLY YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY: A COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY OF THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, BY E. D. PRESSENSE, D.D., IN FOUR VOLUMES, VOL. 1, PP. 512. VOL. 2, PP. 640. VOL. 3, PP. 478. VOL. 4, PP. 528. TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY ANNIE HARWOOD HOLEDEN. LONDON, HODDER AND STOUGHTON, 1879.

It is taken for granted that every Christian minister who has been liberally educated spends a portion of his time daily in the study of the Scriptures in their original languages—at least of the New Testament. The writer's experience in that respect dates as far back as the year 1814, and has been unintermitted.

Next to the study of the Greek Testament is the perusal of the writings of the early Christian Fathers. A familiar acquaintance with them is very desirable. We hear much of the Apostolic times. Some religious bodies are constantly boasting of their apostolicity, although it is certain that many would be apostolical are nothing better than traditionalists.

Dr. Pressense has laid Christendom under great obligation by the publication of "The Early Years of Christianity."

Their is no work on the subject, in our language, of equal value. Whoever wishes to obtain a correct and comprehensive knowledge of the Christianity of the first three centuries should study Dr. P.'s pages.

The first volume is devoted to "the Apostolic age," and gives us the author's views on sundry points respecting which the learned differ. We observe that

Dr. P. does not admit the second imprisonment of Paul, which is accepted, we think, by the majority of critics. He attributes the Epistle to the Hebrews to Apollon, in which, we cannot agree with him. He holds the universal priesthood of Christians, and believes that infant baptism was not introduced in Apostolic times. Whence then did it come? It is much to be desired that Dean Stanley, and those who think with him, would fairly discuss that question, and tell us, if they can, what authority can be adduced for a ceremony which, according to their own shewing, was not included in the "all things," which the Saviour commands His disciples to observe. But they are silent.

No first-rate authors, beside the Apostles appeared in "the beginning of the gospel." Joseph Millner, the Church historian, says that, "to believe, to suffer, and to love—not to write, was the primitive taste. That is true: but we must beware of undervaluing the plain writers of the first centuries. We say nothing of Ignatius, for his pages have been spoiled by interpolations; nor of Barnabas and Hermas, who are decidedly below par; yet we trust that no true scholar will allow himself to speak disparagingly of Clement of Rome, of Justin Martyr, or of the Epistle to Diognetus.

The second volume treats of "the Martyrs and Apologists." The horrors of pagan persecution and the heroism of Christian faith are set before us most graphically, and while we cannot read without shuddering the narrations of torture and outrage, and wonder at the endurance of agonies which it is scarcely possible to imagine, we cannot but sympathize with the sufferers, and almost think that if we had been there we should have shared with them, even though we had been wrapped in pitched clothes and set on fire to illuminate Nero's gardens.

More than 1800 years have passed since those scenes were witnessed. Who could have supposed that similar scenes of atrocity would be exhibited in the thirteenth and following centuries, including the seventeenth in Spain, in France and in Italy, under the sanction of Holy Mother Church, and applauded by divines and bishops, and popes? Who could have ventured to dream of such men as the second Charles, and Judge Jeffreys the infamous; and yet such men have been! and they have had their Apologists!

The third volume, "Heresy and Christian doctrine" is a melancholy volume. It treats of slips and slidings which it soon became fashionable to denounce as heresies and to anathematize. It was a dark day when professing Christians learned to curse. Some men are adepts at it. Those who wish to know all about Gnosticism, Montanism, the "Alexandrian school" the "Greco-Roman School" the "School of Carthage" together with the varieties of judaising notions which sprung up, will find full and impartial accounts in this volume, and will probably be disposed to weep over the follies and weaknesses which the human mind indulges in when it sports with religious opinions. The last volume is deeply interesting. It records the triumphs of Christian faith, and describes its effects on the individual, in the family and on society. First, Pagan life is depicted. Philosophy, poetry, and elegant literature had sought to enlighten and refine the world, and had miserably failed. Pagan society was a conglomeration of vice; it was perilous for a moral or Christian man to enter into ordinary association; the religion so-called, was terribly polluting. The theatre was a nursery of murder and adultery. What a change took place when the gospel achieved its victories! The face of things was entirely changed. Christian character succeeded to immorality, the beneficial influence was felt all through the family. Slavery gradually gave way, justice and benevolence produced their ameliorating effects, and society experienced a happy revolution. To be a Christian was to be a happy man, a Christian family was a happy family. Those cities in

which the gospel prevailed, producing the fruits of the Spirit, exhibited such results as caused astonishment and admiration. The Pagans were confounded. Such effects were produced as Dr. Watts adverts to in modern times, "While the wide world esteem it strange, Gaze and admire, and hate the change."

The testimony of the catacombs should be adduced:—

"Here we find the great and glorious poem of martyrdom graven on stone. The catacomb of St. Calixtus had the honour from the early part of the third century of being the resting-place of the great Roman bishops who suffered for the faith. A fresco long concealed in an upper gallery of this catacomb gives a vivid representation of the great fight of faith against force. This picture is unique of its kind, for the persecuted Christians were ever more ready to represent the triumph of faith than their sufferings and wrongs. The Roman magistrate is here depicted seated in the midst of the forum; he has all the arrogance of irresistible power; it is plain that through him is heard the voice of Caesar; before him is a Christian being examined. It is impossible to describe the calm serenity and gentle firmness conveyed by his look and gesture. We feel as we gaze that nothing can daunt him, that he represents a power higher than that of all the praetors and consuls. A man clothed in priestly robes is retreating hurriedly from the forum; his attire is that of a pagan priest; it is evident that this is the denouncer who has brought the Galilean before the judge. The condemnation of the accused is certain, but the flight of the accuser shows that in reality it is he who is vanquished. He knows well that though he may kill the man he cannot kill the faith, which in the end will overturn all his idols and lay them in the dust. This fresco sets before us that sublime scene so often described in the Acts of the martyrs, the brief decisive dialogue between the representative of the new faith and the armed defender of the ancient state. We seem to hear the simple confession, *Christianus sum*, repeated through three centuries by thousands of voices, and of which the *Polyeucte* of Corneille brings to our ears the triumphant echo. We could imagine ourselves present at the trial of Polycarp or Justin. The confessor seems, in the moment of condemnation, to behold with the eye of faith the chariot of fire waiting to carry him up to heaven, a symbol constantly repeated in the *Arcosolia* of the martyrs." P. 501. We quote the eloquent words of Dr. Pressense in the concluding portion of the work, "Let us recapitulate in a few broad outlines this history of the most marvellous of human revolutions. Born amid the ignoble and the base, hidden like a lost thing in a remote corner of the world, founded by one whose life began in a stable and ended on a cross. Christianity commences its great work, poor and proscribed, and having, as said one of its first apostles, neither "silver nor gold." In these its days of obscurity and persecution it reached its ideal: this was truly the reign of the Spirit upon earth, and it mattered little to its subjects whether they were found in the poor upper chamber at Jerusalem, in some humble quarter of Ephesus or Corinth, or in a gloomy prison cell in Rome. The religion for which all hearts athirst for God had been waiting had come, and it fulfilled all the best aspirations of mankind, which they had been able to conceive but never to realize, that which Christianity made possible. This religion came to bring at once comfort and freedom, to impart with the Divine forgiveness a new and pure life, to put an end to all the bondage of the past and to animate all the future with an inspiration of love and holiness. It not only so raised the lot of the individual but it founded also a new society, freed from the bonds of the pagan state as from those of the Jewish theocracy—a society of believing souls based upon a common faith, and upon this faith it established the grand equality of the universal priesthood,

while at the same time so organizing its powers as to unite order with liberty. Its whole life was Christ. Full of a pure and ardent devotion to the crucified One. Christians looked to no other name for the salvation of the world, and made it their task to gather up and to preserve His words. His memory is their chief treasure, and they are animated and fortified by His living Spirit. To suffer and to die for Him they count happiness and glory. Guided by His Apostles, who are pre-eminently the witnesses of the Master, they seek to reproduce His perfect image; in them He lives again upon earth, and they pour out their blood freely to carry on His work of enfranchisement and universal restoration, never doubting that the nations to whom they are sent have been given to them by Him."

It is a great mistake however to suppose that the theology of the Anti-Nicene Church was moulded like our own. The creeds were not born. Christian theology as a Science, did not exist. Men had not learned to express themselves on religious matters in the set phrases of these times. The writers of the first three centuries were substantially orthodox according to the usual meaning of that word, but they did not carry their soundness into details, nor think it necessary to be rigidly precise in the use of expressions. In fact there are very few of these writers whose style will pass muster if compared with modern "standards," and yet they held the truth as it is in Jesus, and were as sound as Dr. Owen, though they were unable to write in his prolix and involved style, or to adopt his phraseology.

We close by advising the members of the rising ministry to study the Apostolic Fathers Cyprian, Tertullian, Chrysostom, and we may add Clement of Alexandria and Origen.

J. M. C.

For the Christian Messenger.

Is the Law the Christian's rule of Life?

The mere suggestion of such a question will be looked upon by many as next to sacrilege. That it is, is assumed and taken for granted on every hand. It is put forward and emphasised even in the church standards. It is preached, and asserted, and written with all the positiveness and frequency of a religious axiom that nobody ever thought of doubting, yet this proposition I make bold to utterly deny. If I fail to give good and sufficient reasons for such denial, let me and my arguments be dealt with rigorously.

And first "to the law and to the testimony." Where in Scripture is it affirmed or intimated that the Christian is under the law as a rule of life one whit more than as a ground of justification? On the contrary, is it not repeatedly declared that "we are not under the law" but "under law to Christ?"

By "the law" as thus used, I think is generally understood the ten commandments, perhaps in the light of the supposed interpretation of them given by our Lord. Now, what are these commandments? It seems never to have occurred to many that they are almost exclusively prohibitions merely. "Thou shalt not," is the "flaming sword turning every way" to guard what they interdict. But is the life of a Christian to be ruled by mere interdict? Is that the representation of it given in the New Testament? What would be the character and life of a child governed solely on this principle? We sometimes see something that approaches to it, but is it to those families that we go to find our models of obedience and development? Or what would you think of a citizen whose loyalty and usefulness consisted in merely avoiding what is within the restrictions of the penal code? The truth is, no good or really moral man refrains from theft, for instance, because the law of either God or man says, "Thou shalt not steal." No more does a Christian

refrain from worshipping idols because the decalogue says, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," &c. Such "law is made for the lawless," and no others are in the slightest degree restrained thereby, much less under it as their rule of life, 1 Tim. i. 8-11. The Christian is governed by "laws" written upon his heart.

But, says one, the law as interpreted by Jesus, has reference to much more than mere external conduct. Well, I grant that, and yet I think the same conclusions hold when applied to its highest and deepest spiritual import. It is not true that I refrain from hating my brother because the law forbids murder and every disposition tending toward it.

But it is further replied, Jesus declares that nothing less than perfect love to God and man "is the fulfilling of the law." Now let us see whether he does or not. In the first place, is it the law written on "tables of stone" merely to which He refers? or is it the law of God in its wider significance embracing its general restrictions and requirements as understood by the Jews? In the next place, what is it that Jesus really dees say on this point? Now it seems to me that His declaration plainly is, not that to love God "with all the heart," &c., and your neighbour as yourself is what is implied in the decalogue but that to do this embraces it as well as everything included in "the whole duty of man." "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets, and therefore they must be more than the law and the prophets. "And if there be any other commandment it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And so the Apostle's teaching in Rom. 13th. "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." Of course he has. The law against murder is fulfilled in not hating, merely, But "love worketh no ill to his neighbour," on the contrary, as our Lord shewed in the parable of the good Samaritan, it worketh good, "therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" indeed. "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

But I remark further, that this comment upon, or, if you please, epitome of the law, is not the rule of life for the Christian. Let us see if it is, does loving the Lord with all the heart, soul, mind and strength of an imperfect, sinful creature come up to the measure of the Divine will? Is it therefore the standard in full of Christian character and conduct? Or, to present what will perhaps be more readily grasped and accepted; is loving our neighbor as ourselves all that is embraced in the "new commandment"—"that ye love one another, as I have loved you?"

In conclusion then, it will be asked, If the law is not the Christian's rule of life, what is? I answer, "the law of liberty"—that says not only "thou shalt not" but "thou shalt," the perfect law of love, or in other words, The life and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. But it is said, Did not Jesus obey the law? I answer, He did, and He did far more, He loved the Lord with all His heart and soul and mind and strength, and he loved his "neighbor" far better than himself. In a word, the rule of the Christian's life is nothing less than absolute perfection—"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." And nowhere in Scripture do I find an intimation that "the law," much less the decalogue, was ever intended for, or is at all adapted to any such purpose. "For by the law is the knowledge of sin."

THETA.

A translation of Pope's "Universal Prayer" into Latin elegiacs has been made by Rev. H. J. Dodwell, now confined in Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum. It is spoken of as of fair merit.

There is no good in preaching to the hungry.

Better to go supperless to bed than run in debt.