

# Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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## Poetry.

### Coming.

"What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.  
At even, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing."

It may be in the evening,  
When the work of day is done,  
And you have time to sit in the twilight,  
And to watch the sinking sun;  
While the long bright day dies slowly  
Over the sea,  
And the hour grows quiet and holy  
With thoughts of Me;  
While you hear the village children  
Passing along the street,  
Among these thronging footsteps  
May come the sound of My feet:  
Therefore I tell you, watch!  
By the light of the evening star,  
When the room is growing dusky  
As the clouds afar;  
Let the door be on the latch  
In your home,  
For it may be through the gloaming,  
I will come.

It may be in the midnight  
When 'tis heavy upon the land,  
And the black waves lying dimly,  
Along the sand;  
When the moonless night draws close  
And the lights are out in the house,  
When the fires burn low and red,  
And the watch is ticking loudly beside the bed,  
Though you sleep, tired on your couch,  
Still your heart must wake and watch,  
In the dark room;  
For it may be that at midnight  
I will come.

It may be at the cock-crow,  
When the night is dying slowly  
In the sky,  
And the sea looks calm and holy,  
Waiting for the dawn of the golden sun  
Which draweth nigh;  
When the mists are on the valleys, shading  
The rivers chill,  
And my morning star is fading, fading  
Over the hill;  
Behold, I say unto you, Watch!  
Let the door be on the latch  
In your home,  
In the chill before the dawning,  
Between the night and morning,  
I may come.

It may be in the morning  
When the sun is bright and strong,  
And the dew is glittering sharply  
Over the little lawn.  
When the waves are laughing loudly  
Along the shore,  
And the little birds are singing sweetly  
About the door;  
With the long day's work before you  
You are up with the sun,  
And the neighbors come to talk a little  
Of all that must be done:  
But remember that I may be the next  
To come in at the door.  
To call you from your busy work,  
For evermore.  
As you work, your heart must watch,  
For the door is on the latch  
In your room,  
And it may be in the morning  
I will come.

So I am watching quietly  
Every day,  
Whenever the sun shines brightly,  
I rise and say,  
Surely it is the shining of His face.  
And look unto the gate of His high place,  
Beyond the sea,  
For I know He is coming shortly  
To summon me;  
And when a shadow falls across the window  
Of my room,  
Where I am working my appointed task,  
I lift my head to watch the door and ask,  
If he has come,  
And the Spirit answers softly  
In my home,  
"Only a few more shadows,  
And He will come."

It is from the remembrance of joys we  
have lost that the arrows of affliction are  
pointed.

He who, by his principles or practice, cor-  
rupts the manners and morals of the rising  
generation, will reap a terrible harvest of  
woe! Better for such a man he had never  
been born!

## Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

### Thoughts on Theology.

No. VI.

THE PATRIARCHAL DISPENSATION.

Principles, (Concluded.)

My Dear Sir,—

The mode of enjoying the divine favour, by faith, was taught in the dispensations of God, during the times now under notice; and thus the principle was established, that faith is the origin of piety—the connecting link, so to speak, between God and man—the divinely appointed condition of blessing. The soul of the ancient believer submitted itself to God to be taught, guided, governed, at his will, "without gainsaying." Faith, in every dispensation can only have respect to the revelation of God, as far as at the time communicated. The principle was the same in Abraham as it was in Paul; but the truths developed, and to which faith had respect, were of course much more clearly known, and much more extensive in their range, in the latter case than in the former. The one had to do with the commencement of the manifestation; the other, with the completion.—See Genesis xv. 6: xxii. 16–18. Rom. iv. 1–5, 9–25. Heb. xi. 7.

I come now to the consideration of the manner in which the holy men of the patriarchal period regarded death and a future state.

"If a man die, shall he live again?"—That was a question which the patriarchs were unable to answer, fully and satisfactorily. There is not a passage in the book of Genesis which throws any light on the subject. The record simply states that "they died," and "were gathered to their people."

We turn to the book of Job, and find that death was contemplated with great seriousness and awe. True, it was cessation of toil and grief—deliverance from oppression—quietness—repose—sleep. "There," in the grave, "the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest. But all that was negative. The outlook into the future was terribly obscure. What gloom and uncertainty are expressed by the suffering patriarch! "Are not my days few? Cease then and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; yet through the scent of water it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" Job x. 20–22: xiv. 7–10.

That there were some feeble glimmerings of faith and hope may be admitted. But they were very, very feeble. The passages that are seemingly expressive of joyful confidence are rather to be interpreted of deliverance in this world. Clear views of separate existence after death—of the immortality of the soul—and of a judgment to come, could not be attained in those days. The thinking might speculate, and reason and guess, but they could do no more. Even in Egypt, if we accept the antiquity of certain documents, the people were taught to expect a righteous award after death, according to the character of their lives, the doctrine in which they were instructed was far from bearing a resemblance to bible truths as it was afterwards revealed. The were to look for a series of transmigrations, in and by which they were to be placed on probation for thousands of years, at the termination of which period they would be exalted to bliss or plunged in torment. But all was material—sensuous—disfigured by monstrous fables, and fitted only to influence the multitude. The thoughtful and philosophic, there is reason to believe had no sympathy with the popular faith, if

faith it might be called. The time was not yet come. Our Lord and Saviour has "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light." Whatever hopes of a future state were cherished before his incarnation were necessarily founded on partial and imperfect knowledge. "It was the haze of a misty morning—not the light of day."

But it has been confidently maintained that Job xix. 25–27 goes far beyond these statements. "I know," said Job "that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me." It has been customary to represent the patriarch as anticipating his resurrection from the dead, and consequently a full and glorious triumph over all evil. I must confess myself unable to accept this view. It appears to me to be an enormous antedating of the truth. Were the common interpretation correct, the dispute between Job and his friends would have been quickly settled, for he could have pointed to the glorious future, and argued conclusively that the brief calamities of this world might be patiently borne, seeing that after a few years of pain and sorrow, a state of endless happiness would be realized. But Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite continued the discussion after the supposed declaration of Job's faith and hope, which they evidently did not understand to convey the meaning that has been assigned to it. I may add, that if Job's words had been understood by the Jews in the sense which many moderns have attached to them, numerous passages in the Psalms and the Prophets, expressing sentiments and feelings respecting death, of a very different character, could not have been written.

The whole question has been elaborately discussed by Dr. Barnes, in his notes on Job xix. 25–27. He observes, "The following I believe to express fairly the meaning of the Hebrew:—I know that my deliverer or avenger, lives, and that he will yet appear in some public manner on the earth; and though after the destruction of my skin, the process of corruption shall go on till all my flesh is entirely wasted away, I shall see God; I shall have the happiness of seeing him for myself, and beholding him with my own eyes even though my very vitals shall be consumed. He will come and vindicate me and my cause. I have such confidence in his justice, that I do not doubt that he will yet show himself to be the friend of him who puts his trust in him."

In support of his views, Dr. Barnes remarks that "it is inconsistent with the arguments, and whole scope and connection of the book, to suppose that this refers to the Messiah and to the resurrection of the body after death";—that it is "inconsistent with numerous passages where Job expresses a contrary belief";—that "it is not referred to as a topic of consolation by either of the friends of Job, by Elihu, or by God himself";—that "it is inconsistent with the views which prevailed in the age when Job is supposed to have lived, and is wholly in advance of that age";—and that "all which the words and phrases fairly convey, and all which the argument demands, is fully met by the supposition that it refers to some such event as recorded in the close of the book. God appeared in a manner corresponding to the meaning of the words, here upon earth. He came as the Vindicator, the Redeemer, the Goel, of Job. He vindicated his cause, rebuked his friends, expressed his approbation of the sentiments of Job, and blessed him again with returning prosperity and plenty. The disease of the patriarch may have advanced, as he supposed it would. His flesh may have wasted away, but his confidence in God was not misplaced, and he came forth as his vindicator and friend. It has a noble expression of faith on the part of Job; it showed that he had confidence in God, and that in the midst of his trials he truly relied on him; and it was a sentiment worthy to be engraved in the eternal rock; and to be transmitted to future times. It was an invaluable lesson to sufferers, showing them that confidence could, and should be placed in God in the severest trials."

In the Epistle to the Hebrews it is said of the saints who died before Moses that they "all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city." These words express, however, rather the desires of those holy men than the amount of knowledge they had attained. Their wandering life—the fact that they were not permitted to make permanent settlements in the country—and the frequent annoyances and vexations to which they were exposed, led them to the conclusion, or at least to the hope, that there is another state of being—a true home—a final resting-place—where the weary soul will repose in everlasting bliss and safety. They "looked for" it—they "desired" it. But it cannot be proved that there was any explicit revelation on the subject. Had there been, it is not to be imagined that there would have occurred so long an interval of darkness and uncertainty, or that writers in subsequent ages would have evinced such ignorance and written so doubtfully.

The Apostle Paul could say, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." No such assertion could have been made by the good men who lived in the times now under review. It was the infancy of the church. The extent of the revelation was conformable to that state. Many centuries were to pass away before the language of apostolic assurance could be used. The patriarchs believed—and trusted—and ardently longed—but they did not "know." The descriptions of their religious feelings and habits, conveyed in terms characteristic of the present dispensation (as in our authorised version) are liable to be misapprehended. We must beware lest our theological predilections or traditional views influence our methods of interpretation.

I have refrained from adverting to Enoch's prophecy, quoted in the Epistle of Jude, partly because it is taken from an apocryphal book, and partly because it does not deal with the entire question of a future state, but only with the judgments that are to befall the "ungodly." Possibly the reference was to the wicked antediluvians, and their destruction by the deluge.

Yours truly,

J. M. CRAMP.

Acadia College, March 23rd, 1868.

### Saving the Pew-rent.

Mr. R. called to get the pew rent from one of the pew holders in the church, and it was drawn forth from the well-filled pocket-book very reluctantly.

"There, that is the last five dollars I shall pay you; you may let my pew to somebody else. I shan't waste any more money in that way, while times are so hard."

In vain the gentleman sought to change his resolution, by referring to his two sons in the Sabbath school. What would be the effect of such an example upon them? But the old man's mind was made up. He was determined to "save his money."

Well he did save his five dollars; soon his boys dropped off from the Sunday-school.—Their father's example was easy to follow. And as they gave up going to church and Sunday-school, you can readily guess where they did go. They rambled off into the woods and fields with evil companions, and soon got into the habit of dropping into liquor saloons.

The old man saved his pew rent, but his worthless boys squandered all his property, which they managed to get into their hands and in his old age he was turned out into the world houseless and penniless. His five dollars cost him over eight thousand dollars, and who can estimate all the other losses?

If you wish to see your families grow up shiftless, worthless, and intemperate, there is no better way to insure it than to forsake the