

# RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCER.

And Bible Society, Missionary, and Sabbath School Advocate.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY, FOR THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

OF FREE C. BAPTISTS OF N. BRUNSWICK, AT ONE DOLLAR

A YEAR, IN ADVANCE.

McLEOD, Editor. Office, No. 6, King Street.

That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ—PETER.

B. J. UNDERHILL, D. W. CLARK, WILLIAM PETERA, Pub. Committee.

NEW SERIES.

SAINT JOHN, NEW BRUNSWICK, FRIDAY, JULY 7, 1854.

VOL. I.—NO. 27

## Religious.

### THE NESTORIANS.

Nestorius was a Syrian, and bishop of Constantinople, who strongly objected to the title of "Mother of God," as applied to the Virgin Mary. It was not until he was accused of doing so, that he was accused of doing so. The Bishop of Rome combined with others against him; and, by a council held at Ephesus, A. D. 431, he was pronounced accursed, and banished. "Condemned," it is said, "without a hearing, and in one of the cases of the Egyptian desert; and all who held his views were expelled from the church." But the Nestorian Christians increased in spite of the imperial laws; and among them may be traced some of the brightest servants of God; for their separation from Rome preserved them from many errors. From the time of Nestorius, images and pictures of the "Virgin and Child" became common.

In the sixth and seventh centuries, these Nestorians were remarkable as missionaries of the truth; they continued entirely independent of the systems of Rome or of Constantinople, and had a patriarch of their own at Seleucia. They abounded in Chaldea, Persia, and Assyria, and carried the Gospel into the remotest and most barbarous parts of Asia, and even into China. Their manners were pure; they never interfered in political revolutions, and remained as witnesses for God, even when Mahometanism overcame Romanism. In the eighth century they sent missionaries through the immense and savage tracts of ancient Scythia, or modern Russia, and even to Siberia and Nova Zembla.—*The Book and its Story.*

From Communication of a Missionary among the Nestorians.)

In the North of Persia, at the base of lofty mountains, whose snows glitter in the sun, is a plain of great extent and uncommon beauty. This is the province of Oromiah, the home of the Nestorian Christians. Let the reader stand with me on the flat-topped roof of our mission-house on Mount Seir. We are 1000 feet above the plain, which lies stretched before us in all its beauty, many miles in length, girt about with rugged mountains, dotted with hundreds of villages, veiled with foliage, and rejoicing in its thousand hills of golden grain. Beyond the plain is the sea of Oromiah, studded with islands. Mounds of ashes, with a scanty soil on them, conspicuous in different parts of the plain, have been supposed to be the places where the sacred fire was ever kept burning, and where the Parsee priests bowed adoration to the rising sun.

The Nestorians are a people interesting from their language,—the Syriac,—closely akin to the Hebrew, and spoken many centuries before the birth of Christ,—a language nearly identical with that which was commonly used in Palestine in the days of our Saviour, and the medium through which he conversed with his disciples and instructed the people; and it was in this same language that, in a dying agony, he cried with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi! Eloi! lama sabachthani?" "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

The Power of Mahomet hunted down the Nestorians, like defenceless sheep, in the midst of their missionary enterprises. Presented with the peaceful alternative of "the Koran or the sword," they melted away at last like the snows of spring; and for centuries they have been sunk in ignorance and superstition. The modern remnant of an ancient and venerable church consists of about 50,000 souls, nearly half of them residing in the mountains of Oromiah, and the rest scattered over the rugged ranges of the Kurdish Mountains, the districts of Tekhoma and Tyari.

They are a good-looking people, not having the peculiar physiognomy of the Jews, from whom, however, some consider them descended, primitive, and unwearied in acquired knowledge. We thank you, "We thank you," is uttered by many voices, after any religious teaching. In the midst of the deep corruption of their church, they have been kept far nearer the Bible standard than the Roman Catholic, Greek, or American Church.

I never met with a Nestorian who denied the supreme authority of God's Word. Image and idol-worship they hold in abhorrence, also ritual confession and priestly absolution. They have no mass or worship of the host. They do not refuse the cup to any communicant. They reject the doctrines of baptismal regeneration, of penance, and of purgatory, as unscriptural and wrong; and they are extremely liberal in their feelings towards all those with whom they are in Christ Jesus. They have always welcomed the American brethren, and granted their churches to us for the preaching of the Gospel. One of our number, was ordained by us in an old Nestorian church. Their own organization episcopal; yet bishops, priests, and deacons, all ordained, and witnessed this ceremony with evident gratification. It must be added, that, during long residence here, we have laboured with the sole object of speaking Bible truth, and bringing the people back to a humble, holy life, and we studiously avoided any mere sectarian efforts.

Dr. Perkins, the pioneer of our mission, and this ancient church prostrate in the dust, the people were grossly ignorant. They had no Bibles, and not half-a-dozen readers in a whole village. All their books were in manuscript, and were scarce, and sold at a high price. Stealing was prevalent,—lying in wrought into all their words. They used to say, "We all lie here. Do not think our business would prosper, and we not

lie?" Wine circulated like water; and, with many features of orthodox religion, was a thing of form and outside show. Now there are seventy village schools, and two seminaries for training up young men and women to go forth and repair the wastes of many generations. The sacred fire is kindled once more upon their venerable altars. The holy Scriptures are now happily completed in both the ancient and modern language of the Nestorians. The contents of their own rare ancient Syriac manuscripts have been returned to them in a printed form. Their own clergy have aided us in the translation of separate portions; and I shall never forget their emotion when we had first translated the Lord's Prayer. The Nestorian ecclesiastics who were with me were interested and delighted above measure at the first sight of their language in a written form. They would read a line, and then laugh audibly with satisfaction. We copied many portions, on cards, of the British and Foreign Bible Society's editions of the Scriptures in the ancient language, till the arrival of our press in 1840.

This was an event of great interest and joy. As I carried the proof-sheet of our first small book, composed of portions of the Scriptures, into my study for correction, and laid it upon the table before my translators, they were struck with mute astonishment and rapture to see their language in print; and as soon as their recovery from surprise allowed them utterance, "It is time to give glory to God!" was their mutual exclamation. "Now that we behold the commencement of printing books for our people!"

The entire Old Testament was published in 1842, in ancient and modern Syriac, in parallel columns, by the American Bible Society. It forms a large quarto volume of more than 1000 pages.

Dr. Perkins continues: "The influence of the holy Scriptures on the pupils in our schools and training colleges, and on the scores and hundreds of adult Nestorians who are learning to read in our Sabbath-schools, and at their humble homes, and through all these readers on the mass of the people, is incalculable.

Here, also, efforts have been made by Papal emissaries to pervert the people; and they offer the most serious obstacles we have to encounter in our missionary labours. They denounce the holy Scriptures as 'corrupt English books,' and forbid their converts to read them."

French Papists at Mosul, and at Elkoosh (the venerable home of the prophet Nahum), have made many converts among the simple people, who but too readily yield to their influence.

In Mr. Layard's account of his recent tour, we have a vivid sketch of the Nestorian tribes, who are entrenched among the mountains of Assyria. Soon after they had been put in possession of 2000 copies of the four Gospels, by the British and Foreign Bible Society, in 1830, the divine seed sprang up, and bore fruit to the glory of God. The American missionaries say of these tribes: "Many of the people appear like persons awakened from a deep sleep, and are inquiring, 'How is it that we have been kept so long in ignorance and self-delusion?' To which inquiry their priests reply, 'We, ourselves have till now been dead in trespasses and sins, and our sin is greater than yours for having hidden the light from you so long.'"

We owe to Mr. Layard many details of this early church, interesting as connected with what is said of them in the Reports of the Bible Society. He has made two visits to their villages in the Tyari mountains, while taking refuge from the heats of the summer during his labours at Nimrud. He often found the people gone up to their zomas or summer pastures. These are little rocky nooks, high on the mountains, where they build temporary huts of loose stones, with black goat-hair canvas stretched over them, pitched at the foot of snowy precipices,—yet, strange to say, on a carpet of Alpine flowers. He followed them to their zomas. Though poor and needy, they are hospitable, and brought their best to the traveller. He says there is an earnest religious feeling peculiar to them as a people.

There are now very few learned priests left among them; yet at the time of the Arab invasion, they were the chief depositaries of the learning of the East. They translated the works of Greek philosophers into their own language, and retranslated them into Arabic. There exist among them the remains of very old churches, which have all small entrances, in order that their tyrants the Turks may not lodge horses and beasts of burden within their doors. Mr. Layard sometimes found a book of prayer, or the Scriptures in manuscript, lying on the rude altar; but frequently the greatest part of the leaves were wanting, and those which remained were torn into shreds, or disfigured by damp and mould; for they were compelled to hide in the mountains the manuscripts of the churches, or to bury them in some obscure place, at the time of the massacre—the dreadful massacre of these poor people—which took place in 1843, when Beder Kan Bey, with his cruel Kurds, invaded the Tyari districts, and murdered in cold blood nearly 10,000 of their inhabitants, carrying away their women and children as slaves. These captives were afterwards released through the influence of the British embassy in Turkey. Mr. Layard actually came in contact, near Lizan, with ocular evidences of this terrible slaughter. Skulls, heaps of blanched bones, and even skeletons of all ages, still hung to the dwarf shrubs growing on the precipitous steep slopes down which they had been hurled. Some of these Nestorians were employed as diggers in the mounds of Nineveh; and Mr. L. relates that several of the priests or deacons were among the workmen, who, on the Sabbath, repeated prayers, or led a hymn or chant.

He adds: "I often watched these poor creatures, as they reverently knelt, their hands uncovered, under the great bells, celebrating the praises of Him whose temples the worshippers of those frowning idols had destroyed, and whose power they had mocked. It was the triumph of truth over paganism. Never had that triumph been more forcibly illustrated than by those who now bowed down in the crumbling halls of the Assyrian kings."

Mr. Layard visited, in the district of Jelu, the church which is said to be the oldest in the Nestorian mountains, "the only one that had escaped the ravages of the Kurds, and still contains the ancient furniture and ornaments. The church was so thickly hung with relics of the most singular and motley description, that the ceiling was completely concealed by them. Amongst the objects which first attracted my attention were numerous China bowls and jars, of elegant form and richly-coloured, but black with the dust of ages. They were suspended, like the other relics, from the roof. I was assured that they had been there from time out of mind, and had been brought from the distant empire of Cathay, by those early missionaries of the Gospel to the shores of the Yellow Sea. If such were really the case, some of them might date so far back as the sixth or seventh centuries, when the Nestorian Church flourished in China, and its missions were spread over the whole of Central Asia."

How exceedingly interesting is this independent testimony of Mr. Layard, as viewed in connection with the news recently received from China! He appears to have given excellent counsel to Mar Shamoun, the unfortunate and troubled patriarch of the church: "I could not disguise from him, that, in education and the free circulation of the Scriptures, there could alone be found any hope for his people." And thus among the Tyari mountains exists the remnant of the Syro-Chaldaic or Nestorian Church, which once had the "living water," in its ancient translation of the Scriptures, and dispensed it widely to the heathen. But in course of time these copies became exceedingly rare. Mr. Wolff, the missionary, in his travels in Persia, purchased some of them, which safely reached England, though they were twice in peril by shipwreck. They came into the possession of the Bible Society, who discovered this translation to be the same as the Syriac (but written in Chaldaic character), and, by means of its learned editor, T. P. Platt, Esq., supplied from the Syriac its missing portions. The sacred books were sent back in a printed form, and the Society might have said with Mr. Layard, "The conduits were choked up, but we cleared them, and restored the fountain pure as it had flowed in the times of the early Nestorians."

### DECADES OF LIFE.

CHARLES RAINFORD was a fine, forward boy, of ten years old, when it was deemed right that he should begin his career at a public grammar-school; on which occasion his private resolution was made to distance all competitors, and to carry off all the prizes. Going to school was a great event, and Charles had friends who desired that he should carry into that little world of little men, principles which would lead him to reject the evil and choose the good.

Having given an impatient hearing to many wise cautions and admonitions, he soon found himself introduced to the sports and mischiefs of the playground, as well as the exciting routine of public education. Home precepts were speedily forgotten, but school discipline prevailed; and in due time the youth emerged from classes and lecture-rooms well furnished for all the demands of respectable society, and the mercantile firm in which his father's interest destined him to figure. On Sundays he generally heard something about heaven, and on week-days he considered that he had quite enough to do to attend to the business of earth.

At twenty he was a person of no inconsiderable importance. His career in business was begun with the same spirit and energy which characterized his school days, and everybody prognosticated Rainford's success.

"Twenty years ago I was born," said he, "which was a pleasant event; ten years ago I went to school, which was a prudent event; now I am fairly launched in business, which is, I think, a very lucky event. I wonder what will happen in another ten and other twenty years. I suppose we shall be steady old gentlemen, plodding away like our ancestors from the time of Noah. Hey, Archer, what do you think?"

Archer was a young clerk in the office, who sat nearest to Rainford's desk. "It is not of much use to calculate about that," replied Archer, "since we cannot foresee what even a day may bring forth. So far you can say, 'I bless thee for creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; and I hope you may do so until full of years and honour, you exchange this world for a better.'"

"Fshaw! you are such a grave fellow—I cannot make any thing of you. However, I am bound to thank you for such a pretty birth-day wish.—My duty now is to work, and see what that will have done for me in ten years' time. I mean to have a little time for play in the bargain, or else I shall be but a dull boy."

A time for play, as he called it, was not neglected, and had very nearly cut short all time for future work. A few days after this conversation he joined two young men in a boating excursion; and having spread sail in a strong breeze, when prudence would have trusted to the oar, the little skiff capsized, and by the time assistance arrived the whole party had become cold and insensible.—

They were with much difficulty restored, and in Rainford's case a dangerous illness ensued.

While he was dull, and weak, and irritable, his pleasantest friends kept away, and Archer was the only acquaintance who found time to go in and chat awhile with the invalid; and Rainford protested that "a saint" was lotter than anybody, though "saints" never took much trouble to remember the news. Sometimes Rainford challenged his visitor to argument upon some abstract point of doctrine, as a decoy, he said, to lead him off from points where it disturbed his complacency to be attacked; but Archer seldom humoured him in this particular. "I do not think you are a competent judge of God's Word," he would say; "your reason is quite equal to judge upon the evidences of authenticity; but no man is fit to form opinions upon its doctrines until the mind of Christ is within him—until the Spirit that indited has instructed his spirit to receive it."

"Well, you know I dislike the egotism of your narrow personal views. I think true religion is a matter between my conscience and the Almighty, and that no one has any occasion to meddle with what he cannot possibly read or appreciate."

"Surely nothing can be more narrow and personal than such a contact as that," said Archer, quietly; "but those who shake off the offensive intrusions of a fellow-sinner under such a pretext seldom seem to risk it. A human conscience awakened in immediate contact with the piercing scrutiny of a perfectly holy God is intolerable agony. There are only two ways of escape, and only one an infallible and everlasting way."

"Well, what are they?"

"One, a temporary way, is by lulling conscience to sleep, or deadening its sensitiveness by continual neglect. The other, the safe and eternal way, is by casting one's self wholly upon Christ, and leaving all contact with God's justice and purity to him, while we clasp in faith and peace God's love and mercy manifested towards us in him."

"I can inform you that conscience is pretty lively and wakeful when a man thinks himself drowning."

"I have no doubt of it, Rainford; and are not the balm and the good Physician needed then?—But conscience, when cleansed by the atoning blood of Jesus, need give no trouble even to a drowning man."

"Well, then, since you have gone so far, let me have your receipt for keeping conscience in a state of comfortable repose under any circumstances.—I suppose you will hinge every thing upon your pet virtue, faith."

"The pet root of every virtue, if you please; but suppose I disappoint your expectations, and say, love is the downy pillow on which conscience may repose in peace."

"Love! I have no objection to that."

"God is love. He so loved as to give his own Son to suffer our penalty and pay our debt; and when, by his Spirit applying that truth, we are assured of such deliverance, we love Him who first loved us. This is the love that presides over duty, and secures its fulfilment to the best of our ability; and when acting under such a motive, all our services are accepted through Him who blots out all our sin, and conscience merely occupies a sort of honorary post, as the guardian of 'duty made easy.' Then you may mark the perfect, and behold the upright; and wherever and however it may come, the end of that man is peace."

"You make it out so smoothly, that I wonder your receipt is not more generally acceptable, Archer."

"It requires a surrender of self and sin, and that is not palatable, I fear. But," continued Archer, "what does your conscience say to you, now that you are recovering Rainford?"

"Hump! It says, You have had a narrow escape, and take care that you make a better use of your life in future."

Let it follow up, then, until it bring you where you say that true religion lies—between it and God, and drive you to the Refuge of sinners. Do not say to it, 'Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.'—When ten more years were added to the life of Rainford, he was about to settle in gentlemanly style and comfort, and to take upon himself the chief responsibilities of the business which, on his father's death, reverted in full prosperity to him. He still had his "time for play," and the shooting season was a particularly favourite time.

One bright exhilarating day he was rambling with a friend in search of game. The fading leaf and mellow tints of a late autumn yet lingered on the scene; but the sportsmen were not in meditative mood, and the open moor was more attractive than sunny glade or verdant dell. On they went, laughing, talking, thoughtless of every thing but present pleasure, when a hedge impeded their progress. Doubtless there might be a gate somewhere; but it was waste of time to look after it when symptoms of a gap invited a quicker method.—Rainford quickly cleared the fence, gaily calling on his friend to follow him, when the sudden firing of a gun was heard, and a groan of agony recalled him to the spot. His companion's trigger had been caught by a twig, and the contents of the gun were lodged in the body of its owner.

"Oh, save me! I am not fit to die," murmured the wounded man. Rainford, in grief and horror, looked around for help. Again the pale lips quivered with some incoherent sound; and, hastily deciding to seek for assistance, Rainford gently laid the head he supported on the grass, and darted away to a cottage they had not long passed.—Accompanied by two stout labourers he returned; but the spirit had meanwhile departed, and the body, so lately vigorous with health and strength, was all that claimed his care.

The shock was great. Those melancholy words haunted Rainford's memory. "Oh, save me! I am not fit to die." "Surely," thought he, "had our fates been reversed, I had entered the same despairing cry, for neither am I fit to die."

He attended the funeral, and his presence was missed at many a scene of gaiety. Twice on the Sabbath-day, for at least two months, his place at public worship was filled by an apparently devout worshipper. His friends remarked that "the melancholy incident seemed to have produced a great effect on Rainford." But as the vividness of the impression wore away, he began to think there was really no occasion to mope and be gloomy about a circumstance that he could not have prevented. People must all die some time; but it was possible to prolong life by proper care and thought. He certainly should not be so fond of shooting as formerly;—and in a little time all went on as before.

Another ten years. Rainford was forty now,—a pleasant companion, a firm friend, an upright, honourable man of business, a kind husband and father; and, in fact, everybody respected and liked him. However, he still considered it a piece of impertinence in any man to speak about the soul of another. Still he had no patience with the word, except in the pulpit: it was a Sabbath word—a very proper word in a sermon. It was very well for ministers that there happened to be such things as souls; but when heard from other lips, the word savoured of cant and methodism; as if a man could not be religious without letting everybody know it! "No, no," said he, "shallow streams always make the most noise; the deepest feeling is the most silent and reserved."

Notwithstanding, it was becoming and right, as men advanced in life, that they should be serious and religious too, in moderation; and so should he, but at present he had not time, and a private consultation with conscience was continually deferred until a more "convenient season." It was not necessary to begin to think so much about another world before he had half done with this.

About this time some important business in a distant colony claimed attention; and Rainford, after some prudent consideration, resolved to go thither himself. His absence need not extend over more than two or three months. The trip would be highly beneficial in every way; and he could be as comfortable in the splendid saloon of the great steamship as in his own drawing-room. His arrangements were all made; and cheering himself and his family with hopes of speedy reunion, he departed.

The voyage was delightful, and Rainford enjoyed it. One only circumstance ruffled him for a moment in the midst of a meditation upon the prosperities of his life. A gun was suddenly fired from the deck, and a bird fell into the sea. A faint remembrance of the uncertainty of life, the dying moments of his sporting companion, his own forgotten resolutions, recurred to his memory; he felt uneasy, but land was not far off, and he took out his memorandum-book, and began to reconsider his plans.

The business which had attracted him so far was satisfactorily completed; and after enjoying all the opportunities his time afforded of viewing places and observing character in that locality of another hemisphere, Rainford engaged a berth in one of the mail steam-packets, having previously written to apprise his family of the period of his return.—Beautiful weather and favouring winds made pleasant speed for the homeward-bound, and the captain calculated upon reaching port twenty-four hours before the usual time. Rainford was an excellent sailor, and spent the chief of his time on deck. At night he would sometimes share the watch for an hour or two; and on the last-expected night of the voyage, wapped in his clock, he declared his intention of inhaling the last breath of the Atlantic before retiring to rest.

As evening closed, the moon shone out at intervals between fleecy clouds from a deep blue sky; the wind was somewhat on the increase, and the silver crest of the moon-lighted waves sometimes dashed over the deck as the stately ship swept through them, or rose and dipped with their graceful swell. One after another the passengers had gone cheerily below, as their footing became less agreeable in the rising gale and the last, as he groped his way past Mr. Rainford, remarked that he must be a daring sailor if he stood these unceremonious lurches much longer.

"I must have another half-hour's fresh air," said Rainford, as he stepped to a greater elevation, and threw his arm over a rope to steady his position.—"It is a magnificent scene, and will be passed before dawn."

The wind still rose higher, and the ship tossed before it with increased speed. Suddenly the passengers below missed the dull, heavy thump of the engine; there seemed to be some confusion, and a shouting of orders on deck, and several gentlemen rushed from the saloon in alarm.

"Hark!" said the captain: "I thought—I scarcely know why—but a strange sound reached my ear, and I thought there was a man overboard. I hope I am mistaken."

Hark again! there was a sound. Was it only the wail of the night wind? Ah, no! Ropes were thrown out—voices roared directions—but the ship was driving before the wind, and no human strength could buffet with the swelling sea. In vain the effort to put back; in vain brave men were ready to risk their lives to save a fellow-creature. The frightful suspense was unbroken by a repetition of the cry; no form appeared in the straining eyes that watched; and the captain broke the dead silence in a hoarse voice to demand who was missing. The