

# THE MONTHLY RECORD

OF THE

## Church of Scotland

IN

NOVA SCOTIA, NEW BRUNSWICK, AND ADJOINING PROVINCES.

VOL. XXII.

DECEMBER, 1876.

NO. XII.

"IF I FORGET THEE, O JERUSALEM! LET MY RIGHT HAND FORGET ITS CUNNING." Ps. 137. 4.5

### BIRTH AND DEATH.

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It is not easy to determine the precise lesson which the Preacher designed to convey by here coupling together the "time to be born" and the "time to die." Yet this much is evident, that he meant us to contemplate these two seasons in connection with each other. And, fortunately for the ends of instruction, these seasons present so many points both of resemblance and of contrast, that we can be at no loss to deduce useful lessons from a conjoint view of them. Accordingly, what I now propose is to direct your thoughts to a few of the aspects in which the "time to be born" and the "time to die" admit of being profitably contemplated together.

I. Beginning with points of resemblance, I remark that these two seasons agree in being alike *incident to the lot of every one of us.*

Had man retained the innocence which fenced him round with immortality, there might have been to each of us a birth-time without a subsequent liability to death. Adam, while in Paradise, possessed, in the fruit of the tree of life, a sure preservative against decay; and doubtless, had he stood fast in his integrity, that elixir of life would have remained accessible, not only to him, but to his posterity also. But sin entered, and death by sin; and the penalty being necessarily coextensive with the offence, our doom to die is now an inevitable sequence of our birth in sin. In past times there has been no exemption from this doom, except in the instances of Enoch and Elijah; nor will there be any exemption in the ages yet to run, except in the case of those who shall be alive and remain at the second coming of the Lord. Whosoever is born must

also die. The ruthless-spoiler may not come at the same period or in the same manner to all, but to all he must come. Sometimes he may seize upon the infant ere life is well begun; sometimes he may tarry till his victim is old and grey-headed. Now he may cut off by slow and sapping disease, and now by one fell mortal stroke. This year he may be content to let sickness take us away one by one, like single leaves falling from the tree in a tranquil autumn day; the next, he may command war, or pestilence, or famine, to sweep us down in myriads, like the forest foliage before a November blast. But come when and how he may, come he must to all of us. The "time to be born" must be followed by the "time to die."

II. These two seasons also agree in being alike *fixed in the appointment of God.*

To us, indeed, it is only the "time to be born" that seems fixed; the "time to die" seems indeterminate. But to God, by whom they have been irrevocably settled, both dates are alike certain. The birth of each of us took place, as we are aware, on a certain day of the month, and at a particular hour of that day. It is just as certain, though we know not the time, that there is a predetermined day and hour at which each of us must die. Some one precise moment of that day is determined as that at which our pulse shall cease to beat. O! with what deep solemnity of feeling would we keep that annually-recurring day—that annually recurring moment—did we know it beforehand as God knows it! But ought we to be less solicitous about that day—that moment—because the time is hidden from us? What though we know not the time, when the event itself is certain? Is not the bare fact that we must some day die, argument and incentive enough for earnest preparation? And ought not our ignorance of the date to have the effect of enhancing our anxiety and hastening our