

Pastor and People.

CHRISTMAS BELLS.

Sweetly chime the Christmas bells,
Over all the world to-day;
Peace on earth, good-will to men,
Chant the echoes far away.
Not unto our ears alone
Their sweet voice its message tells,
But unto our hearts they come,
Sweetly chiming Christmas bells.

Peace on earth, O, glorious gift!
More than wealth or wisdom's lore,
Let this precious boon be ours;
Peace on earth forever more,
Unto every troubled soul,
Every heart where sorrow dwells,
Father, bring sweet peace, we pray,
With the chime of Christmas bells.

To our fellow-men good-will,
In a brotherhood most true,
May we ever do to them,
As we would that they should do;
Banish pride and envious thought,
Which each kindly act repels;
Let old feuds be done away,
With the chime of Christmas bells.

Peace on earth, good will to men,
Sang the angels long ago;
May we keep this precept pure
In our hearts where e'er we go;
Till within the promised land,
Where are no more sad farewells,
We shall list to music strains,
Sweeter far than Christmas bells.

—Althine F. Sholes.

Written for THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.
**PRESBYTERIANISM IN SOUTH-
ERN CALIFORNIA.**

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I have no need to write of the journey across the continent to this land of "sunshine and flowers," since it was not marked by any noteworthy event except that it was accomplished in comfort and safety, and in itself, very enjoyable. The route was the Santa Fe. The weather was agreeably cool. The scenery from west of Kansas was new, varied, grand and impressive. This reached its climax in Southern California, which is so altogether different from what we are accustomed to in the east that it is hard to describe. There are many things that are new to a stranger about which one might write. He may have read or heard of them before, but the hearing of the ear is always different from one seeing for himself. The climate, the scenery, the people and their ways, the soil and its products—all these are interesting to a visitor, and different from what we meet with in Canada. Passing by these things at present I will confine myself in this letter to church matters as more suitable to your paper and perhaps more interesting to the majority of your readers.

Then first of all be it remembered that Southern California is a great natural sanitarium, especially for throat and chest troubles and a goodly number of "fathers and brethren" from the North, Eastern and middle States, with a few from Canada, feel constrained to take advantage of it. The writer is thankful to say it was not on account of health in his own case that he came to the country. The climate has also a sedative and restful effect on exhausted nerves and many a worn out pastor from the east comes here for recuperation. Most of them receive benefit more or less, and many are inclined, if not impelled, to stay. The natural result is that the country with its sparse population is considerably over-stocked with ministers, especially in the South and in the cities of the Northern part of the State. Los Angeles Presbytery, which is the largest in the Synod, has, as reported at a meeting recently held, 70 congregations and 96 ministers, San Francisco, at the Synod of 1893, reported 30 ministers and 15 churches; Oakland 37 ministers and 25 churches. The other Presbyteries, would about average an equal number of each, some having more ministers than churches, others more churches than ministers. No doubt a number of ministers, whose names are on the rolls of Presbyteries, either do not care or cannot do pastoral work on account of poor health, or because they have retired from the regular active duties of the ministry. But, on the other hand, there are some active,

vigorous men who can and wish to work, if needed, who have not given in their letters. These would probably balance the others and leave the net result as above indicated. One of the Synodical missionaries said lately that there was not a practical vacancy in Los Angeles Presbytery, and there were about 40 ministers without work. I mention this as a variety from the frequent cry for more labourers which certainly does not come from here, and because it is not generally known, I think, in the east. It is, however, I believe, generally understood that there are comparatively few pastorates, many engaged as "stated supply," frequent changes, a constant coming and going. These are characteristics of the country as a whole and will naturally be found in church, as in other relations.

I attended the meeting of the Presbytery of Los Angeles recently held at Santa Anna and found it interesting. Los Angeles, as already mentioned, is the largest Presbytery in the Synod of California and has grown rapidly the last few years. It holds its stated meetings every six months. These are not held in the plain business way customary in the Canadian Church but with much more ceremony and circumstance. The members of Presbytery, both ministers and elders, were received and hospitably entertained by the people. The court met in the evening, and was opened by devotional exercises, and sermon by the Moderator, after which the roll was called, the court constituted, and new Moderator elected as in our (and their) Synod and Assembly, and so the business was conducted throughout, all being done in an orderly and business-like way. The matters that came up were such as we are mostly accustomed to. The division of the Presbytery was reported on which was deemed desirable but for the present not practicable. A licentiate was ordained, a Mr. Sinclair from the Presbytery of Whitby, Ont., and who had studied partly at least in Knox College. The examination was carried on chiefly in open court and at greater length than is usual in the Canadian Church. The knotty points in Theology were freely dealt with such as Inspiration, election, criticism, higher and lower; now was a knowledge of the shorter catechism overlooked. I need hardly say that the young Canadian acquitted himself creditably and showed a steady head and well-balanced mind, even on points where there was room for doubt, whether his examiners had got quite out of the fog, or had found solid bottom. I infer this from the form in which some of the questions were put. Altogether the tone was strictly orthodox; if any latent Briggsism existed it kept out of sight. Other Canadians met with were Rev. R. Logan, of Santa Paulo, formerly of N. S., and Rev. Messrs. Fraser and Mills from B. C. Dr. Ormiston, whose name is widely known and respected in the Canadian Church, and who is a member of this Presbytery, was not present. He is passing through a severe attack of illness that has kept him at the very gates of death for several weeks. A slight improvement had taken place, but recovery was regarded as very doubtful. The Presbytery graciously passed a resolution of sympathy with the "reverend father."

Another matter, and that perhaps the most important before the Presbytery, I must mention in the fewest words possible—the Home Mission Work. Here, besides the chronic difficulty in common with our own church—want of funds—there are others peculiar to the country. The H. M. Board, it was stated, was between \$200,000 and \$300,000 in debt, and the order was: Grants to be curtailed as much as possible, and no new work entered on. A special difficulty was the aversion of even the smallest Californian congregation to share its pastor with another, so that a small mission field that, in the Canadian Church, would probably be one in a group of two or three stations will claim a minister for itself. The necessity for "doubling up" was strongly urged. It was further urged that ministers should cease to claim a full support when laboring in such places as did not require their full time or energies. The difficulties of the

situation can be understood. Many of these fields, if deprived of a forenoon or evening service, might as well be abandoned, and, if a minister is obliged to engage in some other calling, it hinders his spiritual work. These things were recognized. One member said that what was wanted in California was a Sabbath with two forenoons, or ministers who could fill two pulpits on the same forenoon and at the same hour, but in different places. It is hoped, and no doubt will be realized, that these difficulties will modify as the country fills up. The Synod, which embraces the State of California, is essentially a H. M. Synod, and the church, as there represented, seems to realize its responsibility, and to be earnest in seeking to meet it. Of its 228 churches, only 80 are self supporting, and of these only three or four had been established without the aid of the Mission Board. The Synod met at Los Angeles the day on which the Presbytery adjourned at Santa Anna, and I had also the privilege of attending most of its sittings. Space will not permit me to refer to these, nor is it necessary. What has been said of the Presbytery may be taken as generally applicable to the Synod, allowance being made for different localities, and I trust it will be interesting to your readers.

Covina, Los Angeles Co., Cal.

MY REDEEMER.

"The Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me!" So does Paul exult in his Redeemer. Thus does he interpolate an item of his most secret experience into the midst of a closely reasoned proposition, with the effect of both strengthening the argument and illuminating the thought.

(1) Turning it about, that it may flash on us its many-sided significance, we perceive it to be the language of Faith. In his perception of the universality of the Atonement, St. Paul was second to none. Born a Hebrew and trained a Pharisee, we should not have been surprised had he proved to be a man of narrow sympathies and national antipathies. The purest water will take on flavor from storage in an old wine cask. But in Paul's teachings we find such a conception of God's love as admits of no class, or national, or racial distinctions, and in his life we find strenuous effort to render it effective. But the core of his theology and the inspiration of his activity was a personal faith, which appropriated and rejoiced in the salvation, about which he preached and wrote.

Herein is an object lesson. Many among us are interested in the evangelization of the people. Most of us rejoice in the beneficent sweep of God's all-embracing love, in the gift of His Son. Do we remember to appropriate it personally? To Paul's theology let us be very sure to add Paul's confident trust which dares daily to say: "Me!" "The Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me."

(2) This is also the language of gratitude. In one of the Northern Provinces of Russia, where the highway runs through lonely forests, there stands by the way-side a simple monument bearing the inscription:

"He loved me and gave himself for me."

Travelling late in the fall a nobleman and his family were pursued by wolves. To divert their attention a horse was cut loose which dashed away in terror. To pursue, overtake, drag down and devour the terrified beast was a work of minutes for the wolves, during which the carriage made what speed it could. All too soon the wolves came on again, and escape seemed impossible. But in the crisis of their fate the faithful driver thrust the reins into his master's hands, crying, "Drive! drive!" and with a pistol in each hand leaped down among the oncoming pack. The carriage reached a place of safety, but search in the early morning revealed nothing of the servant, save the bloody fragments of a feast of wolves. He had given his life for the life of his master. All that could be done in return was gratefully to mark the spot where affection had crowned itself in sacrifice.

And if, when the servant gives himself for the master, gratitude is met, how is it when the master gives himself for the servant? For He whose love Paul exults in, and whose sacrifice he appropriates as made for him, was none other than his Divine Lord. Clearly as the Apostle perceived the universality of Christ's atonement, so clearly did he perceive Christ's essential Divinity. It was "the Son of God who loved him and gave himself for him," and the consciousness of this, coupled with the realization of his own sinfulness, overwhelmed him. How could he do other than give thanks?

And if we appropriate as our very own the redeeming love of Christ, it will fill our hearts with gratitude. We cannot realize Him, pouring out His life for us, without being moved to thank and praise Him. Possibly the circumstances of the past trying financial year have tended to render us querulous and fretful. Personal trial has been added in the case of some, perhaps, and the mind has clouded over and the heart hardened. Think, then, upon that great gift, in whose presence all other possible or desired gifts fall into eclipse. In Christ you have the expression of the highest love and the pledge of the most liberal care. Compel yourself to remember that: "The Son of God loved you and gave himself for you," and that recollection will surely unseal the fountains of gratitude in your heart, and in their happy flow, querulousness will give place to thanksgiving, and complaining will be turned to praise.

(3) Paul's confession is also the language of consecration. Because Christ "loved him and gave himself for him," he loved him and gave himself to Christ. The perception of this gracious fact constrained him to live, not unto himself, but unto his self-sacrificing Lord. For Christ's sake he was henceforth debtor to all men for whatever loving service could be rendered them. He would go anywhere; he would search under any circumstances; he would carry the Gospel to any people; he would bear all possible hardships; he would brave all necessary danger; he would lay down his very life and die with a smile on his lip and the light of love in his eye. His constant song was:

"Dismiss me not Thy service Lord,
But train me for Thy will;
And I will seek for no reward,
Except to serve Thee still."

And just in proportion as we actually and vividly perceive that "the Son of God loved us and gave Himself for us" shall we be constrained to consecrate ourselves to His service. At the root of all our coldness and half-heartedness, our self-pleasing and self-sparing, in the Christian life, is a defective faith. We do not apprehend the great love wherewith He loved us; consequently we do not love him in return; therefore our service drags and our minds weary.

When the late Bishop of Madras was visiting Travancore, there was introduced to him a little slave girl by the title of, "The Child Apostle." She had earned the title by the zeal with which she talked of Christ to others. Her quiet, steady persistence in this had won several converts to Christ. But she had suffered persecution too brutal to relate. When she was introduced to the Bishop, her face, neck and arms were disfigured and scarred by stripes and blows. As he look at her the good man's eyes filled and he said: "My child, how could you bear this?" She looked up in surprise at the question, and her eyes dilating with wonder, she said: "Don't you like to suffer for Christ, sir?"

Why should such suffering, borne so joyously, surprise the Bishop? Why should what surprised him seem so natural to the little convert from Paganism? Just for this reason: with the Bishop, as with so many of us, the love and sufferings of Christ had hardened into a creed to be held with the intellect and confessed with the lips, whilst, with the child, the loving, suffering, dying, reigning Saviour was a vivid reality. "The Son of God loved her and gave himself for her," and therefore consecration to his service, even to suffering, was a gladness and a joy.

Dear friend! look away to Jesus! There is no inspiration to a consecrated life half so potent as a vivid realization of the cross of Christ. Under its shadow only such feelings as humility, gratitude and consecration can live.

"When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of Glory died;—
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride."

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small,
Some, so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."