

# The Wesleyan.

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"WISDOM IS THE PRINCIPAL THING; THEREFORE GET WISDOM."

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## Theology.

### CHRISTIAN LIBERALITY.

Let the people of God bethink themselves; let them bring their present liberality to its legitimate tests. Let them have done with the folly of "measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves amongst themselves;" of estimating what they do or what they give, by the false and invidious standard of such comparisons. The question is not whether their deeds and gifts will bear to be compared, according to their means, with the deeds and gifts of others, but whether they will bear to be compared with Bible principles and Bible obligations. These are the tests by which they will be estimated at the bar of their Saviour and Judge, in the great day of final assize. Let Christians apply to them now the standard that will be applied to them then. Measure them by the love of God; measure them by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; measure them by the preciousness of your spiritual blessings, the grandeur of your heavenly hopes, and the depth of your unworthiness of either; measure them by the worth of immortal souls; measure them by the vastness of eternity; measure them by the fearfulness of perdition; measure them by the unbounded and everlasting joys of God's salvation;—and you will be deeply and abasingly sensible how infinitely every one of these measures goes beyond them! Let Christians remember that the God to whom, as creatures, they owe their being, and, as sinners, their redemption, says with authority—"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine." Do they sufficiently feel the imperativeness of this claim, and respond with sufficiently grateful generosity to the appeal which it involves? If they did, there would be, to a greater extent than ever heretofore, an instant and spontaneous opening of all their treasures to supply, to the full extent of its demands upon them, the treasury of God. Christians and the men of the world belong to two different kingdoms; and there is nothing in which the distinction between them ought to be more marked than in the spirit with which they devote themselves and their substance to the interests of each. There is no lack of pecuniary resources in the church. The lack is only in the principle of their appropriation. Self has too prominent a place. The world has too prominent a place; which is the same thing under another form, the love of the world being only one of the modes of self-indulgence. "The kingdom of God" is not, to the degree in which it ought to be, "sought first." Were its primary claims more imperatively felt, we should soon cease to hear, in regard to any part of our country, of spiritual destitution. The means of eternal life would every where abound. By their immediate provision of these means for all, the subjects of the king would commend their grateful loyalty to their divinely generous Lord. We should no longer see,—what too often presents itself now,—hundreds for self, units for God:—gold for self, silver for Christ;—the house of cedar for self, and the desolate ruin for the Lord of all. The present controversy [between establishments and voluntarism] would arrive at the most desirable of all terminations—in the more unreserved surrender, on the part of Christians, of themselves and their substance to the glory of their common Lord, and the extension, to its promised universality, of his spiritual kingdom;—in the love of Christ overcoming the love of the world and laying the world at the foot of the cross;—in the more entire dispossession of their hearts of the spirit of worldliness by the expulsive power of the new affections of the gospel;—in the realization, in the soul and character of every Christian, of the apostolic maxim, "To us to live is Christ."—*Dr. R. Wardlaw.*

### THE FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S FINAL REWARD.

(From Rev. R. S. M'Alister's sermon on Luke xii. 42-44.)

We must remind you that there is, in the language of this parable, the most striking reference to the elevation and greatness of that final reward, which shall be adjudged to the faithful minister, who is found steadfast to the last, and diligently seeking to discharge his stewardship at the coming of his Lord—"Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath;"—in intimation so singular, that we almost shrink from the task of attempting its elucidation,—yet which teaches us, evidently, that the recompence of such services on earth will not be the mere rest and security of heaven,—not alone the companionship of the blessed, or the bright and beatific vision of God,—but some station and degree of honour, amongst the inhabitants of that better world, correspondent to the sphere of our former exertions, and to the fidelity and diligence with which it was filled up. But how shall we conceive of a felicity so exalted! How shall we describe it! Are there, then, awaiting us, in the sanctuary above, diversities of order and of service in any wise resembling those we have left below? Shall we find the apostle, the prophet, the faithful and suffering witness for the truth, wearing the same form, and elevated to the same proportionate superiority above the less distinguished and zealous of the Saviour's followers, which it was their privilege on earth to possess? What means the declaration,—he who was once but a faithful steward of the household shall be made ruler over all the possessions of his Lord!—In the realms of final bliss, there needs no teacher to instruct, no comforter to console, no guardian to protect, no watchful guide to lead us. All is safe, and peaceful, and happy; all is light, and knowledge, and holiness.—But is it so! Does the faithful pastor, when he lays down in the dust the burdens of his office, and bids farewell forever to his anxieties and its cares, retain its sacred honours, and its endearing relation to those happy spirits whom it was his highest joy to cheer and animate, and urge upon their way? We do but suggest the inquiry;—we cannot follow it. But O how truly might the Saviour say "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things!"

### MODE OF BAPTISM.

We call the reader's attention to the objection lying against the Baptist theory, arising from climate.

When the missionary penetrates northward into those regions traversed by the sixtieth parallel of latitude, he finds himself already in a temperature where wells are frozen at a great depth, and where, for the most part of the year, water can be obtained only by melting snow or ice. In the region of the Esquimaux, the lakes and standing waters, unless deep, are generally in winter frozen to the bottom. They continue frozen from seven to nine months of the year. "In Greenland, Lapland, and the coldest countries of this region, brandy and mercury freeze during the winter." "During the winter, the inhabitants of the coldest parts remain crowded together in small huts. The whole inside of a hut, or ship, is usually lined with ice, formed from the vapour of breath, which must be cut away every morning. The inhabitants of Siberia stop the openings of their houses with ice, and use it instead of glass. It the cold air suddenly enter the house, the vapors fall in a shower of snow. Every part of the body must be covered in going out, or it is instantly frozen. The air when breathed seems to pierce, and even rend the lungs. The cup often freezes to the lips, if it be touched in drinking. The provisions must be cut with hatchets and saws. Trees and the beams of houses are split by the frost,

and rocks are rent with a noise like that of fire arms."

In a country thus bound in 'thick ribbed ice,' for most of the inhospitable year, can it be supposed that immersion is practicable? For how, we demand, could they obtain their supply of water during the severe season? Could they obtain it by melting snow or ice? Could they furnish baths? Could they endure the process? No sensible man would maintain that they could. And yet in these regions of terrible frost dwell millions of the human species. How difficult it is to practice immersion in our own climate during the severer parts of the year! But we are not in the habit of having our deep wells frozen, or the mercury congealed in the bath of our thermometers. But allowing the abstract possibility (and this is the utmost that candour can demand, or truth concede) of practicing immersion generally, during the wintry season, in Labrador, Lapland, Siberia, Iceland, Greenland, and other countries lying within the polar and frozen regions, where the mean annual temperature is often below, and seldom much above freezing point, still there will be found none presumptuous enough to pretend that such a requisition, which for the inhabitants of those countries would be enormously expensive and burdensome, would bear any analogy to the mild and merciful character of Gospel institutions. Let not the reader dismiss this argument with a leering suspicion of its candour or its justice. Can it be doubted that the condition of this portion of our race, now under consideration, forms a fair and necessary exception to the universal practicability of immersion? As Humboldt and others have traced the isothermal lines, not less than eight millions of human beings inhabit the polar and frozen regions. To these the Gospel must be promulgated. Churches must arise in the very bosom of their heartless winters. To these must the Gospel ordinances be administered as well as to us. But to the administration of immersion nature has interposed a barrier for two-thirds of the year,—a barrier which, to them, would render immersion more galling than the bloody rite of circumcision. Does it argue well for either the wisdom or goodness of the Author of Christianity, that he has established an ordinance of perpetual obligation, which, though it may be tolerably adapted to the condition and convenience of some of the human family, must in the nature of things bear oppressively upon others?

Even with us, there may be reckoned six months of the year wherein immersion cannot be performed without great inconvenience, and producing those unpleasant and even painful sensations of body, which possess no imaginable power to improve the heart, and are altogether at variance with the analogy of New Testament institutions. If, indeed, we are to attach a merit to such physical sensations, according to a papist's idea of penance, or a Brahmin's notion of self-mortification, we readily acknowledge, that so far from regarding snow, and ice, and arctic winds, and a temperature of two degrees of Fahrenheit, as impediments to immersion, we should exult in them, as being joyful circumstances, which would enhance the merit of our obedience, and insure its acceptance. But we have not learned divinity in such schools; and we repeat it, that the theory of exclusive immersion lays very unequal, and in many instances, oppressive claims upon the human family.

The universal practicability of immersion has never yet been proved; and the Baptists, in their confident exultation and boasting on the subject, are altogether premature. Happy for their theory, that they have always kept themselves within prudent latitudes. In this they have done wisely. While other Protestant sects of Europe have extended their lines far north into Norway, Lapland, and Greenland, the Baptists have prudently kept themselves mostly

confined within Germany, the southern part of Poland, and some of the northern states of Austria. The Baptists have sent out their missionaries to India, Africa, and among the aborigines of North America; but we have never seen the experiment of a Baptist Church rising up in Labrador, Siberia, Greenland, or central Russia.—*Rev. F. G. Hubbard.*

### MORAL CLASSIFICATION OF MANKIND.

The reception or rejection of these essential truths, the depravity of man, the atonement and deity of the Saviour, and salvation by faith in its three stages of justification, sanctification, and glory, divide the whole world into two classes, which it is of essential importance never to overlook or confound. The first class, by receiving these truths, become the heirs of the divine promises, and of the heavenly kingdom; the second, who reject or neglect them, remain the heirs of wrath, and continue under the curse pronounced upon all flesh as transgressors of God's holy law. However similar they may be to each other for the present, they are as different, as the twilight of morning from that of evening, the light of the one will grow brighter and brighter unto the perfect day, while the gathering gloom of the other will deepen till it closes in utter darkness, unless they repent, and turn again to Him, who is the light of the world. This great division among mankind, it is the chief object of the adversary of souls to obscure. If Christians recognized each other as belonging to the same great body, of whom Christ is the living head, and the children of the same heavenly Father, they would act together and pray together. United with the force of moral union, and combined under their heavenly leader, no obstacles or enemies could withstand them; they would go forth conquering and to conquer, but the enemy knows they would be irresistible if united, and, taking advantage of their corruptions and lusts, sows strifes and divisions amongst them, knowing that if a house be divided against itself it cannot stand.—*J. Douglas, Esq.*

## Biblical Literature.

### OF INTERPRETATION IN GENERAL.

1. *Necessity and utility of interpretation.* The interpretation of the sacred books is the highest and most difficult task of the theologian. This may be shown from the nature of the case, from experience, and also from the consent of all enlightened periods. All solid knowledge and judicious defence of divine truth, must originate from a right understanding and accurate interpretation of the Scriptures. The purity of the Christian religion has shone brighter or been obscured, in proportion as the study of sacred interpretation has flourished or decayed.

Finally, those have always been reckoned as the most distinguished theologians, who have excelled in this kind of learning.

As Christian doctrine is preserved only in written records, the interpretation of those is absolutely essential to a knowledge of it; and unless we know what Christianity is, we can neither maintain its purity, nor defend its principles to the best advantage.

2. *Difficulties attending interpretation.* The science of interpretation in general is difficult, because it requires much learning, judgment, and diligence. Not unfrequently a felicity of talents, or a more than usual degree of understanding, is requisite to manage an exegetical inquiry with success. But the interpretation of the sacred books is, from various causes, (a) still more difficult; as the general consent of the learned, and the wonderful paucity (b) of good interpreters fully evince. (Morus, p. 4. 11.)

(a) These causes are, their antiquity; the peculiar dialect of the Scriptures, which great