

Northern Messenger

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VOLUME XL. No. 31

MONTREAL, AUGUST 3, 1906.

40 Cts. Per An. Post-Paid



Do You Know it by Heart?

They that go down to the sea in ships,
That do business in great waters;
These see the works of the Lord,
And his wonders in the deep.

For He commandeth,
And raiseth up the stormy wind
Which lifteth up the waves thereof.

Oh that men would praise the Lord
for His goodness,
And for His wonderful works,
To the children of men!

They mount up to the heaven,
They go down to the depths.
Their soul is troubled.

He maketh the storm a calm,
So that the waves thereof are still.
Then are they glad because they be quiet.
So He bringeth them to their desired haven.

Does Everything Happen for the Best?

It sounds pious to say that everything happens for the best. But it is not Scriptural, and it is not true. Many things happen because of sin, and sin is never for the best. Paul says that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. But we are not, therefore, to suppose that God was dependent on sin for the manifestation of His grace. Of course, nothing ever happens that defeats God's ultimate purposes. God is able to overrule all evil and accident to His own gracious designs. But evil is evil, and God does not cause it, or desire it, or need it.

Because of the rascality of a brother, a gentleman lost his money and failed in business. That misfortune turned his attention to religious work, and he became a devoted lay evangelist. He always said that his loss of money was really a blessing. But the wickedness of the brother was not a part of God's plan. Indeed, that brother degenerated and lived an unblest life.

There are a great many bad things in this world for which God is not responsible, and which He does not desire. And in the wake of wickedness, partly connected with it oftentimes, is much sadness and sorrow. We must not ascribe all these calamities to God, and say, 'Everything happens for the best.' The Scripture does not say that all things are good, but that all things work together for good to them that love God. The world is not as God would have it. But God's power is such that He can bring His people to their highest development in the world as it is.

Leaving aside the mystery of the origin of suffering and evil, it is evident that they become servants in the hand of God for our moral training. What kind of a man could be produced in this way? Let him have everything that he desires, let him succeed in all his undertakings, let people fulfil all their engagements with him, let him never suffer accident, never be disappointed, never be misunderstood, never be sick, never be wearied, never be overworked? It is evident that no man could be so shielded and pampered without becoming selfish, self-sufficient, unsympathetic, overbearing. It is the veriest truism that men must fight, and suffer, and wait, in order to be strong.

Yet it is part of the essential experience of life to meet the foolishness and wickedness of men, and to live among material conditions. God may not directly cause them or bring them. We may be able to trace them all to their beginnings, and see how all might have been different. But God will be in them all if we are willing that he shall be. The blessed assurance for the Christian is that all of them may be helpful, and none of them harmful, and that all things may work together for his good.

Therein is the distinction between fatalism and faith. Islam is submission to fate: God's will is inevitable: man can only how

It was as a close and practical preacher that Mr. Sumner first riveted the royal attention. On one occasion the King is known himself to have selected the subject. He requested his uncompromising chaplain to preach on the parable of the talents. The royal command was, of course, obeyed.

The King listened most attentively to the sermon; in the after part of the day he warmly thanked the preacher, and added these remarkable words:—

'Sumner, you make me tremble at my own responsibility!'

—'The Living and the Dead.'