VERMONT TELEGRAPH.

TWO DOLLARS PER ANNUM: "I AM SET FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE GOSPEL." [PAYABLE WITHIN FOUR MONTHS]

BY ORSON S. MURRAY. BRANDON, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 1843. VOL. XV. NO. 30.

POETRY.

For the Telegraph.

LOVE.

What is Love? The Life of Truth—
'Tis that which sparkles most in youth—
That which creates;—true wisdom gives—
It is the Soul of all that lives.
It is the germ that fell from Heaven,
To give all life, where life is given;
It paints the way that leads from Evil—
And binds the man to God or Devil:
In short 'tis what we all shall find
The life of God, the life of mind.

"A city set upon a hill,
Its light's cannot be hidden,"
'Tis mind upon the mountains top
To learn as Proplret bidden.

A city in the vale of Earth,
It *lies* like empty fables—
'Tis mind upon its Idol's back,
At breaking "holy tables."

A word of *fear* is wrapt in clouds,
And Sinai quakes, and thunders:—
A word of *Love*; is plain, and bright,
And Nazareth doubts, and wonders.

A word of truth, expands its flame
To light the growing nations;—
A word of Sense surrounds its name
With fear, with fame, with stations.

A word of *Love* is sure to heal;—
A life of truth to save us
In a joyous, blissful state,
Which *love and truth* have gave us.

J. S. A.

"Thank God! that I have lived to see the time,
When the great Truth begins at last to find
An utterance, from the deep heart of mankind,
Earnest and clear, that *all revenge is crime!*
That Man is holier than a creed. That all
Restraint upon him must consult his good.
Hope's sunshine linger on his prison wall,
And Love look in upon his solitude.
The beautiful Lesson which our Savior taught,
Thro' long, dark centuries, its way hath wrought
Into the common mind, and popular thought,
And words, to which, by Galilee's lake shore,
The humble Fishers listened, with hushed oar,
Have found an echo in the general heart,
And of the public faith become a living part."

Whittier.

DISCOURSE

On the *Transient and Permanent in Christianity*— by THEODORE PARKER, *Minister of the Second Church in Roxbury.*

LUKE XXI: 33.

Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my word shall not pass away.

In this sentence we have a very clear indication that Jesus of Nazareth believed the religion he taught would be eternal, that the substance of it would last forever. Yet there are some, who are affrighted by the faintest rustle which a heretic makes among the dry leaves of theology; they tremble lest Christianity itself should perish without hope. Ever and anon the cry is raised, "The Philistines be upon us, and Christianity is in danger." The least doubt respecting the popular theology, or the existing machinery of the church; the least sign of distrust in the Religion of the Pulpit, or the Religion of the Street, is by some good men supposed to be at enmity with faith in Christ, and capable of shaking Christianity itself. On the other hand, a few bad men and a few pious men, it is said, on both sides of the water, tell us the day of Christianity is past. The latter—it is alleged—would persuade us that, hereafter, Piety must take a new form; the teachings of Jesus are to be passed by; that Religion is to wing her way sublime, above the flight of Christianity, far away, toward heaven, as the fledged eaglet leaves forever the nest which sheltered his callow youth. Let us, therefore, devote a few moments to this subject, and consider what is *Transient* in Christianity, and what *Permanent* therein. The topic seems not inappropriate to the times in which we live, or the occasion that calls us together.

Christ says, his Word shall never pass away. Yet at first sight nothing seems more fleeting than a word. It is an evanescent impulse of the most fickle element. It leaves no track where it went through the air. Yet to this, and to this only, did Jesus entrust the truth wherewith he came laden, to the earth; truth for the salvation of the world. He took no pains to perpetuate his thoughts; they were poured forth where occasion found him an audience,—by the side of a lake, or a well; in a cottage, or the temple; in a fisher's boat, or the synagogue of the Jews. He founds no institution as a monument of his words. He appoints no order of men to preserve his bright and glad revelations. He only bids his friends give freely the truth they had freely received. He did not even write his words in a book. With a noble confidence, the result of his abiding faith, he scattered them, broadcast, on the world, leaving the seed to its own vitality. He knew, that what is of God cannot fail, for God keeps his own. He sowed his seed in the heart, and left it there, to be watered and warmed by the dew and the sun which heaven sends. He felt his words were for eternity. So he trusted them to the uncertain air; and for eighteen hundred years that faithful element has held them good,—distinct as when first warm from his lips. Now they are translated into every human speech, and murmured in all earth's thousand tongues, from the pine forests of the North to the palm groves of eastern Ind. They mingle, as it were, with the roar of the populous city, and join the chime of the desert sea. Of a Sabbath morn they are repeated from church to church, from isle to isle, and land to land, till the music goes round the world. These words have become the breath of the good, the hope of the wise, the joy of the pious,—and that for many millions of hearts. They are the prayers of our churches, our better devotion by fireside and field-side, the enchantment of our hearts. It is these words, that still work wonders, to which the first recorded miracles were nothing in grandeur and utility. It is these, which build our temples and beautify our homes. They raise our thoughts to sublimity, they purify our ideal of purity, they hallow our prayer for truth and love. They make beauteous and divine the life which plain men lead. They give wings to our aspirations. What charmers they are! Sorrow is lulled at their bidding. They take the sting out of disease, and rob adversity of his power to disappoint. They give health and wings to the pious soul, broken-hearted and ship-wrecked in his voyage through life, and encourage him to tempt the perilous way once more. They make all things ours: Christ our brother; Time our servant; Death our ally and the witness of our triumph. They reveal to us the presence of God, which else we might not have seen so clearly, in the first wind-flower of spring; in the falling of a sparrow; in the distress of a nation; in the sorrow or the rapture of a world. Silence the voice of Christianity, and the world is well nigh dumb, for gone is that sweet music which kept in awe the rulers and the people; which cheers the poor widow in her lonely toil, and comes like light through the windows of morning, to men who sit stooping and feeble, with failing eyes and a hungering heart. It is gone—all gone! only the cold, bleak world left before them.

Such is the life of these Words; such the empire they have won for themselves over men's minds since they were spoken first. In the mean time, the words of great men and mighty, whose name shook whole continents, though graven in metal and stone, though stamped in institutions and defended by whole tribes of priests and troops of followers—their words have gone to the ground, and the world gives back no echo of their voice. Meanwhile the great works also of old times, castle and tower and town, their cities and their empires, have perished, and left scarce a mark on the bosom of the earth to show they once have been. The philosophy of the wise, the art of the accomplished, the song of the poet, the ritual of the priest, though honored as divine in their day, have gone down, a prey to oblivion. Silence has closed over them; only their spectres now haunt the earth. A deluge of blood has swept over the nations; a night of darkness, more deep than the fabled darkness of Egypt, has lowered down upon that flood, to destroy or to hide what the deluge had spared. But through all this, the words of Christianity have come down to us from the lips of that Hebrew youth, gentle and beautiful as the light of a star, not spent by their journey through time and through space. They have built up a new civilization, where the wisest Gentile never hoped for, which the most pious Hebrew never foretold. Through centuries of wasting, these words have flown on, like a dove in the storm, and now wait to descend on hearts pure and earnest, as the Father's spirit, we are told, came down on his lowly Son. The old heavens and the old earth are indeed passed away, but the Word stands. Nothing shows clearer than this, how fleeting is what man calls great; how lasting what God pronounces true.

Looking at the Word of Jesus, at real Christianity, the pure religion he taught, nothing appears more fixed and certain. Its influence widens as light extends; it deepens as the nations grow more wise. But, looking at the history of what men call Christianity, nothing seems more uncertain and perishable. While true religion is always the same thing, in each century and every land, in each man that feels it, the Christianity of the Pulpit, which is the religion taught; the Christianity of the People, which is the religion that is accepted and lived out, has never been the same thing in any two centuries or lands, except only in name. The difference between what is called Christianity by the Unitarians in our times, and that of some ages past, is greater than the difference between Mahomet and the Messiah. The difference at this day between opposing classes of Christians; the difference between the Christianity of some sects, and that of Christ himself, is deeper and more vital than that between Jesus and Plato, Pagan as we call him. The Christianity of the seventh century has passed away. We recognize only the ghost of Superstition in its faded features, as it comes up at our call. It is one of the things which has been, and can be no more, for neither God nor the world goes back. Its terrors do not frighten, nor its hopes allure us. We rejoice that it has gone. But how do we know that our Christianity shall not share the same fate? Is there that difference between the nineteenth century, and some seventeen that have gone before it, since Jesus, to warrant the belief that our notion of Christianity shall last forever? The stream of time has already beat down Philosophies and Theologies, Temple and Church, though never so old and revered. How do we know there is not a perishing element in what we call Christianity? Jesus tells us, *his* Word is the word of God, and so shall never pass away. But who tells us, that *our* word shall never pass away? that *our notion* of his Word shall stand forever?

Let us look at this matter a little more closely. In actual Christianity, that is, in that portion of Christianity which is preached and believed, there seem to have been, ever since the time of its earthly founder, two elements, the one transient, the other permanent. The one is the thought, the folly, the uncertain wisdom, the theological notions, the impiety of man; the other the eternal truth of God. These two bear perhaps the same relation to each other that the phenomena of outward nature, such as sunshine and cloud, growth, decay, and reproduction, bear to the great law of nature, which underlies and supports them all. As in that case, more attention is commonly paid to the particular phenomena than to the general law, so in this case, more is generally given to the transient in Christianity than to the permanent therein.

It must be confessed, though with sorrow, that transient things form a great part of what is commonly taught as Religion. An undue place has often been assigned to forms and doctrines, while too little stress has been laid on the divine life of the soul, love to God, and love to man. Religious forms may be useful and beautiful. They are so, whenever they speak to the soul, and answer a want thereof. In our present state some forms are perhaps necessary. But they are only the accident of Christianity; not its substance. They are the robe, not the angel, who may take another robe, quite as becoming and useful. One sect has many forms; another none. Yet both may be equally Christian, in spite of the redundance or the deficiency. They are a part of the language in which religion speaks, and exists, with few exceptions, wherever man is found. In our calculating nation, in our rationalizing sect, we have retained but two of the rites so numerous in the early Christian church, and even these we have attenuated to the last degree, leaving them little more than a spectre of the ancient form. Another age may continue or forsake both; may revive old forms, or invent new ones to suit the altered circumstances of the times, and yet be Christians quite as good as we, or our fathers of the dark ages. Whether the Apostles designed these rites to be perpetual, seems a question which belongs to scholars and antiquarians, not to us, as Christian men and women. So long as they satisfy or help the pious heart, so long they are good. Looking behind, or around us, we see that the forms and rites of the Christians are quite as fluctuating as those of the heathens; from whom some of them have been, not unwisely, adopted by the earlier church.

Again, the doctrines that have been connected with Christianity, and taught in its name, are quite as changeable as the form. This also takes place unavoidably. If observations be made upon Nature,—which must take place so long as man has senses and understanding,—there will be a philosophy of Nature, and philosophical doctrines. These will differ as the observations are just or inaccurate, and as the deductions from observed facts are true or false. Hence there will be different schools of natural philosophy, so long as men have eyes and understandings of different clearness and strength. And if men observe and reflect upon Religion,—which will be done so long as man is a religious and reflective being,—there must also be a philosophy of Religion, a theology and theological doctrines. These will differ, as men have felt much or little of religion, as they analyze their sentiments correctly or otherwise, and as they have reasoned right or wrong. Now the true system of Nature which exists in the outward facts, whether discovered or not, is always the same thing, though the philosophy of Nature, which men invent, change every month, and be one thing at London and the opposite at Berlin. Thus there is but one system of Nature as it exists in fact, though many theories of Nature, which exist in our imperfect notions of that system, and by which we may approximate and at length reach it. Now there can be but one Religion which is absolutely true, existing in the facts of human nature, and the ideas of Infinite God. That, whether acknowledged or not, is always the same thing and never changes. So far as a man has any real religion—either the principle or the sentiment thereof—so far he has that, by whatever name he may call it. For strictly speaking there is but one kind of religion as there is but one kind of love, though the manifestations of this religion, in forms, doctrines, and life, be never so diverse. It is through these, men approximate to the true expression of this religion. Now while this religion is one and always the same thing, there may be numerous systems of theology or philosophies of religion. These with their creeds, confessions, and collections of doctrines, deduced by reasoning upon the facts observed, may be baseless and false, either because the observation was too narrow in extent, or otherwise defective in point of accuracy, or because the reasoning was illogical and therefore the deduction spurious. Each of these three faults is conspicuous in the systems of theology. Now the solar system as it exists in fact is permanent, though the notions of Thales and Ptolemy, of Copernicus and Descartes about this system, prove transient, imperfect approximations to the true expression. So the Christianity of Jesus is permanent, though what passes for Christianity with Popes and catechisms, with sects and churches, in the first century or in the nineteenth century, prove transient also. Now it has sometimes happened that a man took his philosophy of Nature at second hand, and then attempted to make his observations conform to his theory, and Nature ride in his panniers. Thus some philosophers refused to look at the Moon through Gallileo's telescope, for, according to their theory of vision, such an instrument would not aid the sight. Thus their preconceived notions stood up between them and Nature. Now it has often happened that men took their theology thus at second hand, and distorted the history of the world and man's nature besides, to make Religion conform to their notions. Their theology stood between them and God. Those obstinate philosophers have disciples in no small number.

What another has said of false systems of science, will apply equally to theology: "It is barren in effects, fruitful in questions, slow and languid in its improvement, exhibiting in its generality the counterfeit of perfection, but ill filled up in its details, popular in its choice, but suspected by its very promoters, and therefore bolstered up and countenanced with artifices. Even those who have been determined to try for themselves, to add their support to learning, and to enlarge its limits, have not dared entirely to desert received opinions, nor to seek the spring-head of things. But they think they have done a great thing if they intersperse and contribute something of their own: prudently considering, that by their assent they can save their modesty, and by their contributions, their liberty. Neithe is there, nor ever will be, an end or limit to these things. One snatches at one thing, another is pleased with another; there is no dry nor clear sight of any thing. Every one plays the philosopher out of the small treasures of his own fancy. The more sublime wits more acutely and with better success; the duller with less success but equal obstinacy, and, by the discipline of some learned men, sciences are bounded within the limits of some certain authors which they have set down, imposing them upon old men and instilling them into young. So that now (as Tully cavilled upon Cæsar's consulship) the star Lyra riseth by an edict, and authority is taken for truth and not truth for authority; which kind of order and discipline is very convenient for our present use, but banished those which are better."

To be Continued.

VERMONT TELEGRAPH.

Saturday, April 22, 1843.

For the Telegraph.

A Voluntary Political Government.

Sir:—Many readers probably will think that so long a note as my last was not needful to prove the positions claimed in it. But these friends may keep in mind the fact that there is a larger portion of society that does not yet see how easy is the transition from despotism to freedom, from monstrous to humane government. Almost *a priori* it might be asserted that all the operations which are limited to the township might be committed at once to the voluntary principle; therefore no very strong arguments are needed for its proof. If the neighborhood will not take care of itself, either on the ground of selfish regard, or on the superior principle of the common good, there must certainly be so great a defect of heart and head that such individuals ought not longer to be trusted with the management of their own affairs, and still less should they be permitted to a participation of authority over other men.

But as respects the collective body of towns, or that association which forms the state, a different course of reasoning may be considered necessary. Not that this is so very certain, for it might be concluded that if each township provided for its separate wants, the wants of the whole would be provided for, and no further steps need be taken. And why this should not be done, and the whole costly and immoral machinery at once swept away by a god-like reliance on man I know not. If gold may be bought too dearly, that is to say, at a greater outlay of gold than you afterwards have in hand, so may state protection be purchased at a greater outlay of moral life and social security than you have remaining after all the labor.

In order that we may meet the question fairly, and see, step by step, what is the value, if any, which the present political machinery can boast, we should with fairness trace it throughout. In the first place we have to choose a man as delegate to construct laws for us; to determine what actions shall be criminal, and what consequences shall result from them upon the actors; to regulate the cutting of canals, the construction of wharves, rail-roads, lunatic hospitals, armies, navies, and to regulate intercourse with neighboring nations. To the selection of such a man what a number of doubtful or objectionable steps are taken. What canvassing, what finesse, what intrigues. What a loss of money, time and temper. And then the antagonisms of parties; that old, hollow, but still successful, means of stepping into office. The mischief that all countries, adopting the representative system, have suffered by party is scarcely exceeded by that of the feudal system which it supplanted. To name only one of the serious disadvantages of this system of giving up our own government, the perception is now almost universal that the best neighbors seldom or never are chosen. The best men are not party men, and never can be, and none but a man espousing, or rather chained to, one party or other has any chance of appointment. The best men can not be selected for another reason also; that the law is so well and truly made, according to its own principles, that the mass or majority of voters are faithfully represented. The representative is an exact reflex of the power, which makes him. But the mass is not the best, and it is impossible that at any time they should be. The very integrity and presumed perfection of the representative system therefore preludes the admission of the best men to those offices which depend on the voice of the mass.

It is not to be denied that men of considerable talent are chosen as well as many of moral integrity; but it is admitted every where in private, that we shall in vain seek progressive and wisely inspired souls in legislative halls. What remedy can be found for this misfortune, consistent with the purity of the representative system, it is not easy to divine. Government by *the best* is an *aristocracy*. That is the literal meaning of this Greek term. But we do not desire an aristocracy, in either the common view of a set of hereditary legislators, or in the literal interpretation of the best and purest selected men. The people desire persons to make their laws who are most like themselves. Idle schoolboys if left to choose their own teacher would make a selection on the same principle as grasping and selfish men choose a representative.

Let us suppose all the unworthy and unpleasant processes of election to be passed. The men are fairly chosen. In due time they are collected in the metropolis, and proceed to business. First, however, comes an adjustment of parties. Intrigue, finesse, and ill-will, commenced at the town house, are repeated on a magnified scale at the state house. Business delayed, time dissipated, temper destroyed, wealth wasted *there* for a day or two, are *here* extended to months.—In the Massachusetts legislature during the session just closed how many days how many thousand dollars were absolutely wasted, according, not to my assertion merely, but by evidence of the members of the representative body, may be seen by any one who will take the trouble to search the records or to read the newspaper reports. I believe it would not be too much to say the choice of speaker alone cost 15,000 dollars. And to supply these funds sane and honest men are to be sent to jail, terrified, coerced or cajoled, for the amusement of a gaping nation, the satisfaction of party, or the corruption of place hunters.

But these it may be said, are accidental evils and not necessarily parts of the system. They have, however, clung so closely to representation ever since parliaments were invented that it is pretty evident they are essentially vices in the representative plan. "If you would have your work done, do it; if you would not have it done set some one else about it," is an adage as applicable to nations as to individual men of business. On calm investigation it will be found as fatal to moral justice thus to make a profession of hireling statesmen, as it is deathful to religious love to set up the profession of hireling priests. Nations and people have been unhappy under the representative system, not on account of the defects in its several modes; but because itself is one huge defect. It is utterly a defection from the principle of self-government, or conscience-government, or God-government in the human soul. These are but three expressions for one fact, which, while men, as religionists, profess to uphold, they as statesmen practically subvert. Ideally they set up a goal, but they are determined it shall be no more than talked about; for they put the greatest obstacles in the way of its actual attainment, and denounce any one who seems likely to get over them.

Supposing however all these disagreeables, which at least they are, to be overcome, or that they are accidents, let us see what the legislative body actually does. Like the town assembly, the apology for much of what they do, when they meet, is only to be found in their meeting to do it. Like a poor benighted oppressed negro servant who in his ignorance and simplicity makes as much work as he does, these simpleton people are themselves the main occasion for their services. Having run up an account of 15,000 dollars they must pass enactments to raise the money. But their charges do not end here. Other payments are contrived, and altogether a large sum, say perhaps $50,000 has to be levied. People do not like to pay so much in addition to their local taxes. Well, then, some indirect contrivance must be adopted which will work easier at the moment, though it may entail heavy consequences. They proceed therefore to pawn the State to the money mongers who in the form of banks extract from the people by the license thus obtained, at least twice as much as they pay over in the shape of taxes which are apparently imposed upon themselves, but really on the people; the banks being merely the tax gatherers at the modest rate of 100 per cent commission. Another most ingenious contrivance for involving the people is that of public works. This is a most consummate gloss. It looks so praiseworthy to promote manufacturing industry, it is so scientific, so civilizing. Canals, bridges, railways, and the like are such progressive, useful, honorable works that they dazzle or delude easily. So the state encourages these for the common good; and, while the legislators are on one hand borrowing money to meet their own exigencies, they lend money to railway companies on the other. If private adventurers cannot be found willing to undertake these works, it is pretty good evidence against their profitableness. Capitalists are as ready as laborers to lay out their means to the best advantage; and as soon as these works are really wanted they will be erected on private speculation as ships and large warehouses are built without the especial interference of the state. But these expedients are adopted like education of the children by the town assembly, as a purifying and popular sanction to the existence of the state assembly; with this further motive that sources of personal income are created by members of influential talent.

My feeling upon the subject of these so called improvements is that they are no real advantage to human welfare. I see that if science could enable us, in one month, to compass all the sea and land on the globe, we should compass no more virtue or happiness. On the contrary in most countries the march of manufacturing and travelling skill has been the march of misery. However, it is needful to meet the popular opinion where it is, and I must therefore show that these public works could be erected and maintained without a forced government.—Supposing it should be deemed desireable by parties interested that a railway should be constructed over a given space; and, further, that they have convinced the capitalists their money might be advantageously laid out thereon, there then remains nothing but to pursuade the land holders to sell portions of their land for a fair equivalent. If they will not consent, the road may take another direction where the proprietors are willing, or the execution may be deferred until reasoning or the opinion of their neighbors has accomplished their consent. If the work is clearly a public advantage there will be no dissentients, or if one should be churlish, public opinion will sustain the project against him, and justify, as it does now, the proceedings of the company. To this ordeal every disputed point on such questions has now to be brought, and it would be as efficatious without the government as with it. In many cases a legislative enactment by tying down a public company to certain forms, is found so fettering that its protection is a hinderance, and the capitalists prefer to be without it. So, in an enlightened community, would it be felt for even the largest public works. As to any assistance which the state should give to specific speculations, America, I think has had experience enough. It will be many years before the United States can recover the wealth and credit they have lost by thus going out of their way. The fact that national assistance is needed to accomplish any public work is proof absolute that Capitalists think it will not give them so good a return for the outlay as other uses of their money.—Why then should we be taxed or exposed to taxation when the first principles of those very political economists are against them? The argument is briefly this; if the work is desirable, it will as surely be done as any other voluntary association is formed. One feels here rather to be combatting against nobody; and that the real difficulty lies in finding reasons why the nation should interfere, and not why it should leave alone.

I know of no other legislative acts which present more difficulties to my position than this of a railway, laid down a long line passing through many private properties, many townships, and several states. Lunatic Asylums, Schools, and all establishments of a moral nature should be left to moral control. In some countries you are aware that not a book or a newspaper can be published without the revisal and approbation of the government. A proceeding which to us appears outrageous. Yet we seem to be bound to