

# Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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## Poetry.

### There's Nothing Lost.

There's nothing lost. The tiniest flower  
That grows within the darkest vale,  
Though lost to view, has still the power  
The rarest perfume to exhale:  
That perfume, borne on zephyr's wings,  
May visit some lone sick one's bed,  
And like the balm affection brings,  
Twill scatter gladness round her head.

There's nothing lost. The drop of dew  
That trembles in the rosebud's breast  
Will seek its home of ether blue,  
And fall again as pure and blest;  
Perchance to revel in the spray,  
Or moisten the dry parching sod,  
Or mingle in the fountain spray,  
Or sparkle in the bow of God.

There's nothing lost. The seed that's cast  
By careless hands upon the ground  
Will yet take root, and may at last  
A green and glorious tree be found;  
Beneath its shade, some pilgrim may  
Seek shelter from the heat of noon,  
While in its boughs the breezes play,  
And song-birds sing their sweetest tone.

There's nothing lost. The slightest tone  
Or whisper from a loved one's voice  
May melt a heart of hardest stone,  
And make a saddened heart rejoice;  
And then, again, the careless word  
Our thoughtless lips too often speak  
May touch a heart already stirred,  
And cause that troubled heart to break.

There's nothing lost. The faintest strain  
Of breathings from some dear one's lute  
In memory's dream may come again,  
Tho' every mournful string be mute;  
The music of some happier hour—  
The harp that swells with love's own words,  
May thrill the soul with deepest power,  
When the hand is still that swept its chords.

## Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

### A SERIES OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

LETTER IX.

#### The Obscure Period

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

Although certain scattered notices in historical writings render it probable that during the "obscure period" religious reformers were silently working their way in different parts of Europe, the expressions used are so general and vague that we cannot fully gather from them the opinions supposed to be held by the said reformers. Whatever their various sentiments were, we find them indiscriminately libelled as "Manichæans," which was as much as to say that they were children of the devil and should be left to their fate. It is a curious fact that Italy was the fountain-head of these heresies. Powerful and cunning as the Popes were, they could not preserve their own territories from the spiritual infection.

Now and then the hidden seed sprouted up and showed itself above-ground. An instance occurred at Orleans in France in 1022. Ten Canons of the church were discovered to be imbued with heretical notions, which they were said to have received from Italy, by means of a lady of that land. The discoveries excited great horror. Forthwith the king and queen, attended by a large retinue of prelates, hastened to the spot to make inquisition. One Arefastus, who had pretended to be an enquirer into the new opinions, and by that means had won the confidence of the leaders, became a witness against them. They were charged, among other things, with holding that there is no washing away of sins in baptism, that in the Lord's Supper the bread and wine are not changed into the body and blood of the Saviour, and that it is unlawful to pray to the saints. These were unpardonable sins. The accused were men of learning and piety, whose unimpeachable characters and holy lives were well known, and by whose benevolence many poor were daily relieved; but they did not believe in baptismal regeneration, transubstantiation, and saint-worship, and therefore

they must be burned alive—and burned they were, on the very day of their trial. First, however, they were solemnly degraded from the priestly office, the queen standing guard at the church-door while the ceremony of degradation was performed, lest the populace should push in and anticipate the execution by murdering them. Her majesty gave a striking manifestation of her zeal for orthodoxy, immediately afterwards, by knocking out the eye of one of the sufferers, who had been her own confessor, and against whom, therefore, she was especially enraged. They were then taken outside the city walls and committed to the flames. One author states that three or four other persons who had embraced the same opinions, and were of very respectable standing in society, suffered with them. Labbe and Cossart, Concil. ix. 836—842. Ed. 1671.

Three years afterwards, another band of heretics made their appearance, at Arras in Flanders. They were apprehended and brought before a Council convened on the occasion, when they gave this account of themselves:—"Our law and discipline," said they, "which we have received from the Master, will not appear to be contrary to gospel decrees and apostolic sanctions, if any one will diligently consider the same. For it is this—to relinquish the world, to restrain the flesh from concupiscence, to provide for our support by the labour of our own hands, to seek the hart of none, to shew charity to all. This righteousness being preserved, there is no need of baptism; if this be turned from, baptism cannot save. This is the sum of our justification, to which the use of baptism can add nothing, for it comprises the entire purpose of all apostolic and evangelical instruction. But if any say that some sacrament lies hid in baptism, the force of that is taken away by these three considerations:—First, the reprobate life of the ministers can afford no saving remedy to the persons to be baptized; secondly, whatever sins are renounced at the font are afterwards taken up again in life and practice; thirdly, a strange will, a strange faith, and a strange confession do not seem to belong to, or to be of any advantage to a little child, who neither wills nor runs, who knows nothing of faith, and is altogether ignorant of his own good and salvation, and from whom no confession of faith can be expected." Acta Synod. Atrobatensis, Gieseler's Ecclesiastical History, ii. 496.

You will observe that these men, up to a certain point, were scripturally orthodox. They saw clearly that religious service must be a personal, voluntary act, flowing from faith, and that therefore infant baptism could have no foundation in the word of God, since infants were unable to believe. They rejected it, and in doing so they rejected baptism altogether, for at that time infant baptism was the baptism of the Catholic church. See here an illustration of our Lord's statement to the Jews, "Ye have made the word of God of none effect by your traditions." According to the tradition, regeneration and grace were bestowed in infant baptism, and hence that ceremony, being generally adopted, superseded the baptism of believers. Hence, too, the effect produced on inquiring minds. "This baptism," said they—and they argued conclusively from the premises—"is manifestly a vain and useless thing. It cannot accomplish the promised results. It never did. If we are already pious, baptism is needless; if we are not, baptism cannot make us so." Thus a Christian ordinance was suppressed. The men of Arras were "not far from the kingdom of God"; but it is evident that they were imperfect Christians. They discerned error, but they did not perceive the whole truth, for the error eclipsed it. I think that this was the position of a large number of the reformers of the middle ages. They held Baptist principles as we now hold them, so far as regarded the rejection of infant baptism. Whether they practised the baptism of believers, historians do not say, though I would not build an argument on that silence. Those of them who were priests of the Catholic church, as the Canons of Orleans, must have been accustomed to administer infant baptism.

How they reconciled that practice with their convictions, I know not.

Berengarius is another instance. He flourished in this period, though he did not die till the year 1088, being then eighty years of age. The protest of his whole life was against transubstantiation, but he is also said to have inculcated sentiments opposed to infant baptism, which he and Bruno, bishop of Angiers "overturned, as far as was in their power." Still they retained their ecclesiastical offices. Such men were half-way towards the truth. I cannot adduce them, however, as witnesses for Baptist views. Probably there were severe struggles in their minds. It seems scarcely possible to take the decided position which they assumed with regard to infant baptism without perceiving the design and obligation of the Christian ordinance, as enjoined in the New Testament. That they should have been driven by the perversions of the age to the entire rejection of gospel institutions, is much to be regretted. One can hardly imagine the process of reasoning which led to it, with the New Testament in their hands. We feel compelled to infer, either that they have not been fairly reported to us, or that there must have been circumstances requiring to be taken into the account, with which we are at present unacquainted. Conceding the truthfulness of existing records, they were just on the threshold of primitive religion. We wonder that they did not enter in and worship in the primitive way. But we shall see encouraging progress in the right direction in the next period.

It is a remarkable fact that the decrees of councils contain no references whatever to heretics for several centuries previous to the eleventh. There are enactments in abundance touching the honours and privileges of the clergy, anathemas in rich profusion against breaches of ecclesiastical law, and threatenings of punishment for gross and unpardonable violations of chastity. But heresy is not mentioned, except in two or three individual cases. It is clear that there was no disturbing movement. The operations of the Paulicians were confined to the East till nearly the close of the "obscure period," when they entered Europe. There were men in the West who "sighed and cried for all the abominations that were done," but they mourned in secret, and they were not numerous enough to attract attention or excite opposition.

I had intended to finish the account of the "obscure period" in this letter, but it appears desirable to give you fuller details of the Paulicians, and perhaps of some other Eastern sects, whose opinions were introduced into Europe, as above stated, in the eleventh century, and produced mighty effects there in the succeeding ages. Certain miscellaneous matters will be now adverted to in conclusion. My next will contain the information just promised.

A. D. 692. Iua, king of the West Saxons, enacted a law by which it was enjoined that all infants should be baptized within thirty days after birth, under a penalty of thirty shillings. If the child died without baptism, the father's entire estate was to be confiscated. Rather hard measure! Labbe and Cossart, vi. 1925.

A. D. 741. Pope Zachary, writing to Boniface, a German bishop, affirmed that immersion in the name of the Trinity was essential to baptism, but that the moral character of the administrator was not essential. The Pope's meaning was, that a bad man might be a good priest. Certainly the Pope was a poor theologian.

The same Pope writing to the same bishop, referred to a priest, who, being ignorant of Latin, the only language then used in church services, in trying to repeat the form, said, "Baptizo te in nomine Patrie, et Filie, et Spiritu Sancta." You see what nonsense he made of it. Nevertheless, said the Pope, as the priest was not heretical, but only ignorant, and as he intended to baptize in the name of the Trinity, though he blundered over it, there was no need to re-baptize the child. It must be considered all right. *Ibid.*, p. 1505.

In another letter the same Pope mentioned one Samson a Scotch priest, who held that a person might be made "a Catholic

Christian" by the imposition of the bishop's hands, without baptism, and, as far as appears, without repentance or faith. Verily there were singular people in those days! *Ibid.*, p. 1520.

A. D. 754. Pope Stephen 2, declared that if an infant was baptized in wine, there being no water to be had, the baptism was valid. And if, the infant being very sick, the baptism was performed with water, not in it, the water being poured from a shell, or by the hand, and the proper words used, that baptism was valid. The Pope might have spared himself the trouble of giving these decisions. There was no validity in either case. *Ibid.*, p. 1652.

A. D. 787. By a Canon of the second Council of Nice all persons were forbidden to conceal heretical books. Bishops, priests, or deacons, disobeying the Canon, were to be deposed; monks or laymen, excommunicated. *Ibid.*, vii. 603. No wonder we are often so much at a loss respecting the opinions held by those who were called heretics, many of whom were not properly heretics, but genuine religious reformers. Their books were carefully gathered and burned, and it was made a crime to conceal them. You may write it thus:—

"Infallible recipe for the suppression of heresy.

"If it is propagated by preaching, silence the preacher: if he will preach, put him out of the way. If it is propagated by writing, burn the books; should the author still persist, burn him, too. *Probatum est.*"

A. D. 797. A Capitulary of Charlemagne contains the following enactments:—All infants must be baptized within a year of their birth. Penalties for neglect:—a nobleman 120 shillings; a gentleman, 60 shillings; other persons 30 shillings. *Ibid.*, p. 1152. These were heavy fines, for at that time the price of a good sheep was a shilling. A fine of one hundred and twenty sheep for neglecting the baptism of a child! Is it not monstrous?

A. D. 880. Pope John 8, was travelling in France. One night his horses were stolen. Forthwith he issued a thundering letter, excommunicating the thieves unless they returned the horses within three days. *Ibid.*, ix. 80. He was a thrifty man, I suppose, and wished to save the expense of prosecution. It was cheaper to excommunicate them.

Enough of these trifles. I might fill whole sheets with them.

Yours truly,

From my Study,  
Oct. 18, 1856.

MENNO.

### Indian Summer of Life.

In the life of good men there is an Indian summer more beautiful than that of the seasons; richer, sunnier, and more sublime than the most glorious Indian summer which the world ever knew—it is the Indian summer of the soul. When the glow of youth has departed, when the warmth of middle age is gone, and the buds and blossoms of spring are changing to the sere and yellow leaf, then the mind of the good man, still ripe and vigorous, relaxes its labours, and the memories of a well-spent life gush forth from their secret fountains, enriching, rejoicing and fertilizing; then the trustful resignation of the Christian sheds around a sweet and holy warmth, and the soul assuming a heavenly lustre, is no longer restricted to the narrow confines of business, but soars far beyond the winter of hoary age, and dwells peacefully and happily upon that bright spring and summer which await him within the gates of Paradise, evermore. Let us strive for and look trustfully forward to an Indian summer like this.

CHILDHOOD is like a mirror, catching and reflecting images all around it. Remember, that an impious or profane thought uttered by a parent's lips, may operate on the young heart like a careless spray of water thrown upon polished steel, staining it with rust which no after-scouring can efface.

MEN savagely assail the faults of others, as the wild beast springs with fury upon the mirror's reflection of his own image.