

The Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

NEW SERIES.
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WHOLE SERIES
Vol. XX. No. 21.

Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

Consolation in Bereavement.

[The following lines were written by request in reference to the sudden death of Mr. James Austin Nichols, which occurred on the Fitchburg Rail Road, Oct. 10th, 1853; as narrated in C. M., Nov. 3rd, of that year.]

How deep, how dark, are God's mysterious ways!
Yet all demand submission, love, and praise.
Overwhelming scenes of anguish and dismay,
Conduct from night to everlasting day.

God's children from their idols must be freed:
The severing stroke may cause their hearts to bleed!
But 'tis inflicted by unchanging love,
Designed a special benefit to prove.

He who removed this darling only son,
Gave up to sorer death His Holy One,
That through His death might endless life be given,
And guilty sinners be received to heaven.

There will be solved the mysteries here deplored
The wisdom, grace, and love of God adored,
There sever'd friends unite in joyful lays,
And ever sing the blest Redeemer's praise.

C. TUPPER.

Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

A SERIES OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

LETTER I.

The Primitive Period.

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

You ask me for some information respecting the history of our distinctive opinions and practices. You tell me that statements so various and even contradictory have been made in your hearing, that you are very desirous of being put on the right track, so that you may be able to correct the erroneous and expose the false. I shall endeavour to meet your wishes.

We must begin with the New Testament. Who can read that blessed book with serious attention without coming to the conclusion that the religion of which it treats is personal and voluntary, and that none are worthy to be called Christians but those who "worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh?" When Moses addressed the Israelites, and exhorted them to obedience, he included their children in his exhortations, because the children were in the covenant. Judaism, with all its privileges and responsibilities, was hereditary. The rights and duties of the parents became the rights and duties of their offspring, as such. It is not so under the new dispensation. Men are not born Christians, but they become Christians, when they repent and believe. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 12, 13. Judaism was a national institute: Christianity is an individual blessing. The Jews were a nation, dealt with as such, and separated from other nations; Christians are believers, taken out of all nations, and in Christianity "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all." Col. iii. 11. Hence, when the Apostles wrote to Christian churches, their mode of address was altogether different from that adopted by Moses. They did not say, "you and your children," or represent the children as in covenant with God, and therefore entitled to certain rights and bound to the perform-

ance of certain duties. The churches to which they sent their epistles were spiritual societies, that is, associations of individuals professing "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," to whom they had surrendered themselves, as their prophet, priest and king. If those individuals were parents, they were taught to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" but their children were not *classed with them*, as the children of the Jews were, nor could they be, till they themselves also repented and believed. It is an obvious inference, that no modern society deserves to be called a Christian church, which is not founded on such principles as have been now explained.

If you were to place a New Testament in the hands of an intelligent, impartial person, who had never heard of our divisions and denominations, what idea would he be likely to form of the spirit and design of Christianity, or of a Christian church? Would he not see, in every part of the book, appeals to men's understandings and emotions, and such requisitions as could only be addressed to those who were capable of thinking and acting for themselves? Would he not conclude that Christianity has to do with *mind*, that a Christian must be a man of repentance and faith, and that a church is a voluntary society, formed of such men?

But I need not continue in this strain. I come to the question of baptism. What is baptism? It is "the answer of a good conscience toward God." It is "putting on Christ." It is the voluntary act of a believer, an act of obedience and self-dedication. Such is the uniform tenor of the history. So the multitudes went out to John, even "all the land of Judæa, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan." So the Samaritans, "when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, were baptized, both men and women." Mark it well—"men and women,"—no children! So, in later times, the baptized were reminded of their obligations; "we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

The New Testament tells of the baptism of believers, and of churches composed of believers. We read of no other baptism, no other churches. It will not do to say in reply that all who were baptized were not believers, and that all the members of apostolic churches were not sincere. There were doubtless hypocrites then, as there are hypocrites now. Even the Apostles were sometimes deceived. But this does not affect the case. All who were baptized professed to be believers, and were baptized as such. The profession of faith was held to be essential to baptism and to church fellowship. None could profess faith who were incapable of understanding the faith. The act of profession implied approbation, conviction, choice.

This, then, is the starting point. Here is the beginning of the history of baptism. With the New Testament only before us, we find baptism connected with the profession of faith. It is a personal, voluntary act; and such an act only is befitting Christianity.

But in the Christianity of the nineteenth century, or what is called such, there is a service of another kind. It is sprinkling—not immersion; and the subjects are infants—not believers. How is this? In what manner was it introduced? How and when did it originate?

It will be my object, in subsequent letters,

to answer these questions. I shall conclude this communication by placing before you a few extracts from Pædobaptist writers of the nineteenth century, showing you how the learned men of these times regard the subject, in an historical point of view.

NORTH BRITISH REVIEW, Presbyterian, (Ascribed to the Rev. Dr. Hanna.) "Scripture knows nothing of the baptism of infants. There is absolutely not a single trace of it to be found in the New Testament."

S. T. COLERIDGE, Episcopalian. "There exists no sufficient positive evidence that the baptism of infants was instituted by the Apostles in the practice of the Apostolic age."

REV. DR. HODGE, OF PRINCETON, Presbyterian. "In no part of the New Testament is any other condition of membership in the church prescribed than that contained in the answer of Philip to the eunuch who desired baptism. The church, therefore, is in its essential nature, a company of believers."

REV. DR. WOODS, Congregational. "We have no express precept or example for infant baptism in all our holy writings."

NEANDER, the Church historian. "It is certain that Christ did not ordain infant baptism. We cannot prove that the Apostles ordained infant baptism. Faith and baptism were always connected."

HAHN. "Baptism, according to its original design, can be given only to adults who are capable of true knowledge, repentance and faith."

PROFESSOR LANGE. "All attempts to make out Infant Baptism from the New Testament fail; it is totally opposed to the spirit of the Apostolic age, and to the fundamental principles of the New Testament."

SCHLEIERMACHER. "Baptism is only then complete and right, when it is performed under the same conditions, with the same spiritual pre-requisites and the same influences, as were found in those who were baptized in primitive times."

DR. CHALMERS, Presbyterian. "The original meaning of the word baptism is immersion; and though we regard it as a point of indifference whether the ordinance so named be performed in this way or by sprinkling, yet we doubt not that the prevalent style of the administrations in the Apostle's days was of an actual submergency of the whole body under water."

DR. BLOOMFIELD, Episcopalian. "There is here (Rom. vi. 4) plainly a reference to the ancient mode of baptism by immersion; and I agree with Koppe and Rosenmuller (two German commentators), that there is reason to regret it should have been abandoned in most Christian churches, especially as it has so evidently a reference to the mystic sense of baptism."

DR. ANTHON, OF NEW YORK. "There is no authority whatever for the singular remark made by the Rev. Dr. Spring, relative to the force of *baptizo* (viz., that in the New Testament it has no definite or distinct meaning, but 'means to immerse, sprinkle, pour, and has a variety of other meanings'). The primary meaning of the word is to dip or immerse; and its secondary meanings, if it ever had any, all refer, in some way or other, to the same leading idea. Sprinkling, &c., are entirely out of the question."

Many more quotations might be given, but these will be sufficient. You will observe that none of these writers are Baptists. But they do not venture to affirm that infant sprinkling is derived from the New Testament. They all agree in confessing that it is not there.

This, then, is our starting-point. The baptism of the New Testament is the baptism of believers. Our next inquiry will be, how the post-apostolic church thought and acted on this subject.

MENNO.

From my Study.

May 8, 1856.

For the Christian Messenger.

LETTER FROM BURMAH.

Rev. Arthur Crawley attacked by Robbers.

HENTHADAH, February 5th, 1856.

My dear Mr. Editor,

The present letter will contain a "picture of Missionary life," rather different from any which I have yet given to your readers, and if it had for them a tithe of the peculiar interest which it has had for me, it will be worth a place in your paper.

Returning from one of my tours, we had, on the night of the first of February, reached a place distant about sixty miles from home. Our boat was moored for the night by the bank, whose dark outline of deep-jungle was broken only by one solitary human habitation. All in the boat had fallen into a profound slumber, after a day spent in unusual exertion, at least all but Ko Eim, one of my faithful assistants, who, kept awake by the severe suffering from rheumatism, was, as he afterwards told me, trying to while away the long night by singing and praying in a low voice. While thus engaged he saw two small boats, each containing four men, gliding swiftly up the stream and towards us. Scarcely had he exchanged with them the usual Burman salutation, when they came along side, and, with loud shouting and flourishing of their dangerous darts, leaped upon him. I was sleeping so soundly, that tho' Ko Eim assures me he pulled and shook me violently, still I did not awake until the noise and confusion of the short struggle occurred. And when I did awake, it did not at once occur to me that we were at the mercy of Burman robbers, a class of men famous for their wanton and unprovoked cruelty and brutality. More effectually to complete their work they had unmoored the boat, and we were drifting rapidly down the current. I can not convey to you any idea of that interval of horror, from the moment that I comprehended that we were hopelessly at the mercy of the robbers until they departed. The noise which aroused me lasted but a moment, and was succeeded by a fearful silence, broken only by a low moaning, suggestive to me, of course, of my poor men lying fatally wounded at the bottom of the boat. Then the gleam of that dah in my face, and the harsh voice of the robber, imperatively demanding where my valuables were secreted, and threatening to take my life if I did not shew him. They became much excited when they found but little money to reward their hasty search. They had transferred to their boat every thing they could find in the dark, and I knew now that I must make the desperate struggle which would probably be my only hope of escape from a horrible death. How hopeless would have been that struggle you may judge from the fact, that I had not even a stick to defend myself with, while I was literally surrounded by armed men. How vividly, at that moment, was revived to my mind the case of poor Capt. Madigan who under circumstances not dissimilar to mine, was attacked by the same number of men, and, tho' surrounded by faithful Bengali servants, and having ample means of defence, was yet butchered in cold blood, and died with more than a dozen wounds