

# Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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WHOLE SERIES.  
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## Poetry.

### Happiness.

BY BISHOP HEPER.

One morning in the month of May,  
I wandered o'er the hill;  
Though nature all around was gay,  
My heart was heavy still.

Can God, I thought, the just, the great,  
These meaner creatures bless,  
And yet deny to man's estate  
The boon of happiness?

Tell me, ye woods, ye smiling plains,  
Ye blessed birds around,  
In which of nature's wide domains  
Can bliss for man be found?

The birds wild carolled overhead,  
The breeze around me blew,  
And nature's awful chorus said,  
No bliss for man she knew.

I questioned Love, whose early ray  
So rosy bright appears,  
And heard the timid genius say  
His light was dimmed by tears.

I questioned Friendship: Friendship sighed,  
And thus her answer gave:—  
The few whom fortune never turned  
Were withered in the grave.

I asked if Vice could bliss bestow?  
Vice boasted loud and well,  
But, fading from her withered brow,  
The borrowed roses fell.

I sought of Feeling, if her skill  
Could soothe the wounded breast?  
And found her mourning, faint, and still,  
For others' woes distressed.

I questioned Virtue: Virtue sighed,  
No boon could she dispense;  
Nor Virtue was her name, she cried,  
But humble Penitence.

I questioned Death—the grisly shade  
Relaxed his brow severe;  
And "I am happiness," he said,  
"If Virtue guides thee here."

## Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

### SERIES OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

LETTER XIX.

#### The Reformation Period.

From A. D. 1516 to A. D. 1567.

#### MY YOUNG FRIEND,

The period on which we are now entering is one of wondrous interest. The shackles with which the nations had been long bound were broken, and it was said "to the prisoners, Go forth, to them that were in darkness, shew yourselves." A great revival of religion took place all over Europe. Popery was renounced by a large portion of the German people, by the Swiss, the Dutch, the Danes, the Swedes, the Norwegians, the English, Welsh, and Scotch, and by great numbers in Austria, Hungary, Bohemia, Bavaria, and France. The leading events of the period are indicated in the following Table:—

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|-------|---|
| 1517. | Publication of Luther's Theses against Indulgences, Oct. 31.                        |
| 1520. | Bull of condemnation issued against Luther by the Pope.                             |
| 1521. | Luther at the Diet of Worms.  |
| 1522. | Publication of Luther's German New Testament.                                       |
| 1524. | The Danish New Testament published.   |
| 1525. | Publication of Tyndale's English New Testament. The mass abolished at Zurich.       |
| 1526. | The Swedish New Testament published.  |
| 1528. | The Belgic Bible published.   |
| 1529. | The Reformation established at Berne.   |
| 1530. | The Reformation completed at Basle. Diet of Spire. Origin of the term "Protestant." |
| 1530. | The Diet of Augsburg. Protestant Confession presented.                              |
| 1531. | Death of Zwingli, Oct. 11.  |
| 1534. | Eccolampadius, Nov. 23.   |
| 1534. | Abolition of papal power in England.  |
| 1535. | The Reformation established at Geneva.  |
| 1536. | Tyndale burned.   |
| 1537. | The Reformation established in Denmark.   |

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|-------|---|
| 1540. | Publication of the Icelandic New Testament.                             |
| 1541. | The Swedish Bible published.  |
| 1546. | Death of Luther, Feb. 18.   |
| 1548. | English Book of Common Prayer published.                                |
| 1551. | The Danish Bible published.   |
| 1552. | English Articles of Religion published. Polish New Testament published. |
| 1553. | Popery restored in England.   |
| 1555. | Ridley, Latimer, and many more burned.                                  |
| 1556. | Archbishop Cranmer burned.  |
| 1559. | The Reformation settled in England.                                     |
| 1560. | Death of Melancthon, April 19.  |
| 1563. | The Polish Bible published.   |
| 1564. | Death of Calvin, May 27.  |
| 1567. | The Reformation settled in Scotland.                                    |

When Luther blew the trumpet of religious freedom, the sound was heard far and wide, and the Baptists came out of their hiding-places, to share in the general gladness and take part in the conflict. For years they had lived in concealment, worshipping God by stealth, and practising the social duties of Christianity in the best manner they could, under the most unfavourable circumstances. Now, they hoped for peace and enlargement, and fondly expected to enjoy the co-operation of the Reformers in carrying into effect those changes which they knew were required in order to restore Christian churches to primitive purity. They were doomed to bitter disappointment. The Reformers had no sympathy with Baptist principles, but strove to suppress them. Papists and Protestants, Episcopalians and Presbyterians treated them in the same manner. The Baptists travelled too fast and went too far; if they could not be stopped by other means, the fire must be lighted or the headman's axe employed. Thus the men were silenced; the Emperor Charles V., whom historians have delighted to honour, ordered the women to be drowned, or buried alive! Hundreds were sent out of the world by these methods; thousands more lost their lives by the slower processes of penury and innumerable hardships. The demon of persecution reaped an immense harvest in those days.

Although there was not absolute uniformity of opinion among the Baptists, for they were shy of creeds, knowing how they had been used to serve the purposes of soul-bondage, certain important truths were viewed by all of them in the same light. Modes of expression varied, but they were substantially of one mind, those of Poland only excepted, who leaned to the system which was afterwards termed "Socinianism." Baptist theology harmonised with that of the Reformation in regard to the leading doctrines of the gospel, such as justification by faith, the necessity of divine influence, &c. The sole authority of scripture in matters of religion was carried out to its legitimate issues, and everything was rejected which would not abide the test, so that all rites and observances that were not expressly enjoined in the Word of God were swept away at once. Stedfastly maintaining that believers, and believers only, were the proper subjects of baptism, they pleaded for a pure church. The Reformers were astonished at this demand. They said that the thing was impossible; that there always had been tares among the wheat, and that so it would be till the end of time; that the good and the bad would be indiscriminately mixed in the Christian commonwealth. We need not wonder at this; Popery and pædobaptism had blinded their eyes. They had never seen a New Testament church, and they practically kept out of sight the teachings of the New Testament on the subject, as it is quite necessary to do when the Pædobaptist theory is fully admitted; for if infants are baptized, and all who are baptized may claim church fellowship, the church which is so formed must be a very different organization from that which was instituted at Jerusalem, when "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." Children, you perceive, are not mentioned. The historian seems to take special pains to exclude them, as if he desired his readers to note the difference between Judaism and Christianity, the former being the establishment of a national institute, which was kept up by the ordinary

increase of the population, the latter the gathering together of individual servants of the Saviour, who "were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." One point more may be alluded to:—the Baptists sternly asserted the rights of conscience. All men might believe and act in religion as they pleased, without the interference of the civil magistrate. His duties, they said, were confined to the preservation of good order and the protection of property and life; God had not given him the power to regulate religious affairs, nor authorised him to impose any mode of worship, or to punish such as might refuse to admit his usurpation. I have mentioned these principles before, but it seemed desirable to repeat the statement, because the Baptists of the sixteenth century have been singularly misrepresented.

In some other particulars there were also great differences between them and other dissidents from Rome. They would not take an oath. While they obeyed magistrates in all things civil, they regarded the magistrate's office as altogether needless among christians, who, they said, would not commit crime, and therefore such officers would not be wanted among them; and besides, a magistrate could not discharge his duties but by force, which is not allowable to Christ's servants. Neither would they engage in war. They denounced it as utterly unlawful. The use of equal weapons, whether for attack or defence, was abjured; hence they never resisted their persecutors. When the oppressions exercised by the rich and noble engendered hatred of the higher orders, some of the Baptists were disposed to plead for a general equality, or at any rate for such restraint on power and wealth as would take away the means of doing mischief. Among themselves, too, the spirit of true brotherhood, so prevailed, in acts of sympathy and kindness, that they were regarded as advocates of the community of goods and opponents of separate personal property. On these accounts they were treated as enemies of civil society, fit only to be exterminated. You will see, however, that though they were more scrupulous than most religionists are now, their very peculiarities sprung from the love of peace. Such men could not be dangerous to the commonwealth. All they asked was to be let alone, that they might serve God according to their consciences. And yet they were hunted up and down like wild beasts.

Impartiality requires me to mention one opinion which some of them held. Unable to conceive how the Lord Jesus could be the child of the Virgin without partaking of human depravity, they imagined that though born of Mary he did not "take flesh" of his mother. Joan Boucher was burned alive in Edward the sixth's time for maintaining this alleged heresy. I will not trouble you with any observations on it. It is often better to confess ignorance than to dogmatize. Suffice it to say that among the Baptists of those days the matter in question was a harmless speculation. They believed that the Lord Jesus Christ was "God manifest in the flesh." That was enough. If they did not choose to adopt the current modes of expression, they were at any rate sound at heart. We ought to be very careful how we make a man "an offender for a word."

You have been told of the horrible proceedings of the German and Dutch "Anabaptists," who have been held up to view as the very incarnation of all wickedness. That portion of the history will be brought before you in its proper order, and such considerations will be adduced as will tend to remove from your mind any unfavourable feelings, if you have cherished them. At present, I will only remark that the Baptists of the sixteenth century, generally, were a godly, upright, honourable race. They hated no man, but all men hated them. And why? Because they testified against the abominations of the times, and wished to accomplish changes, which would indeed have revolutionised society, because it was constructed on anti-christian principles, but which were in accordance with the word of

God. An outcry was raised against them, as if they were "the offscouring of all things," and their blood was poured out like water. Even the Reformers wrote and acted against them. The writers of that age searched out the most degrading and insulting epithets that the language afforded, and applied them with malignant gratification. Latimer speaks of the "pernicious" and "devilish" opinions of the Baptists. Hooper calls those opinions "damnable." Bacon inveighs against the "wicked," "apish Anabaptists," "foxish hypocrites," that "damnable sect," "liars," "bloody murderers both of soul and body," whose religious system he denounces as a "pestiferous plague,"—with many other foul-mouthed expressions which I will not copy. Bullinger designates them as "obstinate," "rebellious," "brain-sick," "frantic," "filthy knaves." Zwingli speaks of the "pestiferous seed of their doctrine," their "hypocritical humility," their speech, "more bitter than gall." But enough of this. Yet these men could appeal to those who witnessed their sufferings, and boldly declare, with the axe or the stake in view, none venturing to contradict, that they were not put to death for any evil deeds, but solely for the sake of the gospel.

It has been a common practice to ascribe to a whole community the follies or wrongdoings of a few. In the controversial works of the period now before us you will meet with heaps upon heaps of representations respecting the opinions and conduct of the Baptists, which, if true at all, can only affect individuals, and ought not to be imputed to the body. There will be frequent occasion to call your attention to this remark.

Notwithstanding the deadly onset that was made upon them from all quarters, they spread and increased most astonishingly. Leonard Bonwens, an eminent Baptist minister in Holland, who died in 1578, left in writing a list of upwards of ten thousand persons, whom he had baptized. Menno Simons and other labourers in the cause, introduced "great multitudes" to the churches. The spirit of reform must have taken fast hold of the minds of the people or they would not have embraced so readily a system, the profession of which was a sure passport to persecution in its most painful and revolting forms. Luther and his coadjutors opened the door of the temple of freedom to others, but remained themselves in the porch. They feared to penetrate into the interior. The Baptists passed by them, entered in, and explored the recesses of the hallowed place. For this they were reviled and oppressed. Thousands of them fell in the fight. But multitudes pressed after them, to be "baptized for the dead;" and each could say,

"I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,  
If thou remember me."

See how the Lord blessed his faithful servants. Algerius was burned at Rome in the year 1557. Thus he writes, a short time before his martyrdom:—

"I will relate an incredible thing; that I have found infinite sweetness in the lion's bowels. Who will believe that which I shall relate? Who can believe it? In a dark hole I have found cheerfulness; in a place of bitterness and death, rest and hope of salvation; in the abyss or depth of hell, joy. Where others weep, I have found laughter; where others fear, I have found strength. Who will ever believe, that in a state of misery I have had great pleasure; that in a lonely corner I have had glorious company; and in the hardest bonds, perfect repose? All these things (ye, my companions in Jesus Christ), the bountiful hand of God has granted me. Behold! he who at first stood far from me, is now with me; and him whom I imperfectly knew, I now see clearly; him whom I formerly saw afar off, I now contemplate as present. He for whom I longed, now stretches forth his hand; he comforts me; he fills me with joy; he drives bitterness from me, and renews my strength and consolation; he gives me health; he supports me; he helps me up; he makes me strong. Oh! how good the Lord is, who suffers not his servants to be tempted beyond their ability. Oh! how