

# Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

NEW SERIES.  
Vol. II. No. 43.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1857.

WHOLE SERIES.  
Vol. XXI. No. 43.

## Poetry.

### The Indian Massacre.

"But ah me! Who will give us back our dead?"  
(From a letter of an officer who has been thirty years in India.)

"Ah! who will give us back our dead?"  
Who can our martyred ones restore?  
Loved faces that from earth have fled,  
Sweet voices we shall hear no more?

The brave, the holy men, whose light  
A dark'nd land might clearly see,  
The wives, who made our homes so bright,  
The little ones who climbed our knee?

"Ah! who will give us back our dead?"  
Who, who shall tell us not to weep?  
"I heard a voice from heaven, which said,  
Blessed are they, in Christ who sleep."

Though rugged was the path they trod,  
And tribulation sore their share,  
Yet if he brought them home to God,  
Oh give them joy that they are there!

"The little while," of scorn and pain,  
The moment's agony is o'er,  
While everlasting is their gain,  
The glory is for evermore.

Soon shall the earth her blood disclose,  
And no more cover o'er her slain,  
The Lord of life who died, who rose,  
Shall give us back our dead again!

—From *The Record*.

## Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

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

LETTER XXX.

#### The Troublous Period.

From A. D. 1567 to A. D. 1688.

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

I propose now to call your attention to the history of the Baptists in England.

Henry VIII. had a keen scent for heresy. He claimed to be an infallible judge in that matter, as free from error as the pope himself. And so he was, no doubt; the one was as good as the other. Baptists were particularly distasteful to him. In the year 1538, Peter Tausch, a Baptist, was apprehended in the territories of the Landgrave of Hesse. It was discovered on searching him, that he was in correspondence with Baptists in England, and expected soon to go thither in order to aid them in propagating their opinions. The Landgrave gave information to the King, who immediately appointed a commission, of which Cranmer was Chairman, charging the Commissioners to adopt severe measures against the alleged heretics, if they should be detected, to burn all Baptist books, and, if they did not recant, to burn the Baptists themselves. They were not slow to obey the King's commandments. On the 24th November, three men and one woman escaped the fire by bearing fagots at St. Paul's Cross; that is, they were brought before the people, assembled opposite the great Cross outside St. Paul's Cathedral, London, and walked in procession, each with a bundle of fagots on the shoulder, to signify that they had deserved to be burned; after which they confessed and renounced their supposed errors. Three days after, a man and a woman were committed to the flames in Smithfield. All these were natives of Holland. Fuller, the Church historian, writes of them in his peculiarly quaint style. He says:—"Dutchmen flocked faster than formerly into England. Many of these had active souls; so that whilst their hands were busied about their manufactures, their heads were also beating about points of Divinity. Hereof they had many rude notions, too ignorant to manage them themselves, and too proud to crave the direction of others. Their minds had a by-stream of activity more than what sufficed to drive on their vocation; and this waste of their souls they employed in needless speculations, and soon after began to broach their strange opinions, being branded with the general name of Anabaptists."—(Church History, book v.

sect. 1. §11.) This is amusing enough. And yet it is a melancholy specimen of the ignorance in which some men, otherwise well-informed and even learned, have been contented to remain. Instead of examining Baptist sentiments for themselves, they have taken them at secondhand, and pronounced them "needless speculations," and "strange opinions."

The hatred of Baptists was further shewn by excepting them from general acts of pardon. Such Acts were published in 1538, 1540, and 1550; but those who held that "infants ought not to be baptized," were excluded from the benefit. Thieves and vagabonds shared the King's favour, but Baptists were not to be tolerated.

Protestantism nominally flourished in the reign of Edward VI. But there were many unprotestant doings. The use of the reformed liturgy was enforced by the pains and penalties of law. Ridley, himself a martyr in the next reign, was joined in a commission with Gardiner, afterwards notorious as a persecutor of Protestants, to root out Baptists. Among the "Articles of visitation" issued by Ridley in his own diocese, in 1550, was the following:—"Whether any of the Anabaptists' sect or other, use notoriously any unlawful or private conventicles, wherein they do use doctrines or administration of sacraments, separating themselves from the rest of the parish?"—(Documentary Annals of the Church of England, i. 91.) It may be fairly gathered from this article that there were Baptist Churches in the kingdom at that time.

A Royal Commission was issued by Edward VI., empowering thirty-one persons therein named, with Cranmer at the head and Latimer as one of the members, to proceed against all heretics and contemners of the Book of Common Prayer. The "wicked opinions" of the Baptists are specifically mentioned, and the Commissioners (or rather, *Inquisitors*, for such they were,) were directed, in case the persons accused should not renounce their errors, to deliver them up to the secular power, that is, to death. Joan Boucher, or "Joan of Kent," as she was sometimes called, was the first victim. She was a Christian lady, well known at Court, and very zealous in her endeavors to introduce Christian truth among its inmates. Strype says,—"She was at first a great disperser of Tindal's New Testaments, translated by him into English, and printed at Colen [Cologne], and was a great reader of Scripture herself; which books she also dispersed in the Court and so became known to certain women of quality, and was more particularly acquainted with Mrs. Anne Ascue [Anne Askew, cruelly tortured, and afterwards burned alive, in the year 1546.] She used for the more secrecy, to tie the books in strings under her apparel, and so passed with them into Court."—(Memorials of the Reformation, ii. 368. Ed. 1816). But she maintained the opinion held by many of the Foreign Baptists, that the Redeemer, though born of the Virgin Mary, and truly man, did not take flesh of the substance of her body. For this she was condemned to die. A year elapsed between the trial and the execution, during which many efforts were employed, but in vain, to convince her of her error. Archbishop Cranmer, bishop Ridley, and others, visited her frequently for that purpose. It was at length determined to burn her. The young king hesitated long, and would not have consented that the warrant should be issued, had it not been for the persuasion of Cranmer. He wept as he gave his consent, and told the primate that he must answer for it at the bar of God, if it should prove to be a wrongful deed. The archbishop did not relent. On the 2nd of May, 1550, Joan Boucher was burned in Smithfield. Bishop Seroy preached on the occasion, and, as Strype says, "tried to convert her;" but his misrepresentations and calumnies were so gross that she told him he "lied like a rogue," and bade him "go and read the scriptures." It was doubtless needful advice.

John Rogers, who was the first martyr in Mary's reign, approved this execution. When some one remonstrated with him on the subject, and particularly urged the cru-

elty of the mode of death, he replied that "burning alive was no cruel death, but easy enough." Archdeacon Philpot, in his sixth examination before the Queen's commissioners, Nov. 6, 1555, six weeks before his own martyrdom, said, "As for Joan of Kent, she was a vain woman (I knew her well), and a heretic indeed, well worthy to be burnt." (Examinations and Writings, p. 55: Parker Society's Edition). It is distressing to record such utterances.

George Van Pare, a Dutch Baptist, was burned in Smithfield on the 13th of January, 1551. He was charged with Arianism; but it is testified that he was a man of fervent piety and active benevolence. His behaviour at the stake was eminently christian.

Whatever opinion may be formed of the doctrinal views held by these persons, there can be no difficulty in deciding on the conduct of Cranmer and his associates. Nor need we seek excuses for them. It is customary to plead in their behalf the general prevalence, in that age, of church-and-state principles of the most *ultra* kind, and to maintain that at a time when everybody believed that the magistrate was bound to do the church's bidding, and therefore to rid the country of those whom the church might condemn, it could not be expected that any ecclesiastics would differ from their brethren, or be disinclined to carry out the common policy. I am not disposed to admit the force of this reasoning. The Apostle Paul "verily thought within himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth;" but neither did he, after he became a christian, nor do we, who walk in the light of the nineteenth century, justify the desolation he caused at Jerusalem, on the ground of his ignorance and prejudice. He might and he ought to have known better, and it was his sin that he did not inquire impartially respecting Christianity before he persecuted it. So it was with Cranmer, Calvin, and other Protestant persecutors. Rome had trained them in savageness. But she had also brought them up in the fooleries of her superstition, and instructed them to cleave to will-worship and merit. When they forsook those sandy foundations, that they might build on Christ, it was because they had learned from the New Testament the doctrine of justification by faith. Why did they not also derive from the same New Testament the great truth that the kingdom of the Saviour is "not of this world," and that therefore the use of carnal weapons in its propagation or defence is absolutely forbidden? These truths were as fully taught by the Apostles as were the doctrines of faith and grace. The Baptists were clear on these subjects. They understood the nature and limitations of magisterial rule. They anticipated Dr. Watts:—

"Let Caesar's dues be ever paid  
To Caesar and his throne;  
But consciences and souls were made  
To be the Lord's alone."

They acted on their convictions, and withdrew from a corrupt church to worship God according to his word. In doing so they committed no crime against the state. For that act they were responsible to God only. The state had no control over them. As long as they were peaceable subjects and obeyed the laws, they rightfully claimed protection. In regard to religion, they rightfully demanded freedom and independence. The Reformers had put forth the same demand in seceding from Rome. It is true, that they coupled with it the false step of asking leave of the civil magistrate to secede, and having fallen into that error, required that no one should secede from them, because the magistrate, as tutored by them, forbade it. But, I ask again, where was the New Testament all the while? and how was it that they did not see in it the spiritual church—and the spiritual king—and the absolute unlawfulness of calling for "fire from heaven," or devising other mischief against those who differed from them? The Baptists saw all this. Cranmer and his party might have seen it. In refusing to see it they were guilty of treachery to Protestant principles.

But they could not put down the Baptists. They grew and flourished in spite of

them. Congregations were discovered at Bocking in Essex, at Feversham in Kent, and other places. Their number must have been considerable, as four ministers were arrested when the discovery was made. The names of the ministers were, Humphrey Middleton, Henry Hart, George Brodebridge, and—Cole. At the time of their apprehension they were assembled at Bocking. Besides the ministers, about sixty members of the congregation were apprehended. Their christian organization appears to have been correct and complete. They met regularly for worship and instruction; the ordinances of the gospel were attended to; contributions were made for the support of the cause; and so great was their zeal that those who lived in Kent were known to go occasionally into Essex to meet the brethren there,—a journey of four-score miles, which, in the sixteenth century, was no small undertaking. When they were brought into the ecclesiastical court, they were examined on forty-six articles, and charged with pelagianism and other errors. Their religious sentiments, or those imputed to them, would be now called Arminian. This, however, is clear, that they were "Anabaptists." They held also "that we are not to communicate with sinners." In other words, they advocated believers' baptism and contended for the purity of christian churches. What became of the others, I do not know, but Mr. Middleton was committed to prison, where he remained till the death of Edward VI. The Kentish members of these congregations suffered continual annoyance and persecution in various ways. Cranmer did all he could to suppress the Baptist movement.

You will join me, I am sure, in the expression of regret that we know so little of this interesting band of disciples. Strype asserts that they "were the first that made separation from the reformed church of England, having gathered congregations of their own." As they confessed that they had not communed in the parish churches for two years, their separation must have taken place about the year 1548, which was before the Presbyterians or Independents were known in England. The Baptists were the vanguard of the Protestant Dissenters in that country. (Strype, *ut sup.* p. 384).

Yours truly,

MENNO.

From my Study,  
Oct. 24th, 1857.

### Diversity of Tongues.

It is exceedingly amusing, and not uninteresting, to observe the varied modes of expressing the same thought or emotion by persons of different degrees of culture. This is especially true in regard to religious experiences.

We recollect a Dutchman in Herkimer county, N. Y., who had enjoyed but meagre advantages for culture, and whose habits of life were by no means religious. At raisings, trainings, mowing bees, &c., he was notorious, but in the house of worship was seldom found. But by the grace of God he was finally converted to Christ.

For days he was in deep distress on account of his sins, and nearly despaired of finding peace; but while walking in the field one day, meditating upon his wretched condition, light burst into his soul, and in the ecstasy of his joy, he seized his hat from his head, and swung it in true political style, and shouted,

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah to God Almighty! Hurrah!" and run to the house to tell the news of his release.

To him this mode of expression was perfectly natural, and was just as acceptable to God as the most refined language which was ever used. We are often too formal in our religious expressions, too fastidious to be natural and fresh, and the soul does not find full and free utterance. But when we mingle in all classes of society, and find the same thoughts expressed in a great variety of ways, we are able to see through the words down into the heart, and read the workings of the inner life. And when we have done this, we are impressed with this important fact, that the effect of truth in Christ upon all hearts, of whatever degree of culture, is essentially the same.