

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XXI. No. 22.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 1857.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXI. No. 22.

Poetry.

The Intercessor.

Father! I bring a worthless child to Thee,
To claim Thy pardon, once: yet once again
Receive him at My hands, for he is Mine;
He's a worthless child—he owns his guilt;
Look not on him, he will not bear Thy glance;
Look but on Me, I'll hide his filthy garments;
He pleads not for himself, he dares not plead;
His cause is Mine, I am his Intercessor.

By that unchanged, unchanging oath of Mine,
By each pure drop of blood I lost for him,
By all the sorrows graven on My soul,
By every wound I bear, I claim it due.
Father Divine! I would not have him lost!
He's a worthless child, but he is Mine!
Sin hath destroyed him, Sin hath died in Me,
Satan hath bound him, Satan is My slave—
Death hath desired him, I have conquered
Death.

I could not bear to see him cast away,
Like as he is; the weakest of My flock,
The one who grieves Me most, that loves Me
least,
Yet, though his sin should dim each spark of
love,
Measure not My love by his returns!
And, though the stripes I send to bring him
home
Should serve to drive him farther from My
arms,
Still he is Mine; I lured him from the world;
He has no home, no right but in My love;
Though earth and hell combined against him
rise,
I'm bound to rescue him, for We are one.
—N. Y. Chron.

Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

SERIES OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

LETTER XX.

The Reformation Period.

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

Continued.

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

My last contained a general introduction to the history of this period. I shall now proceed to take it up in detail. Germany first claims notice.

On the tenth of December, 1520, Luther burned the Pope's bull against him, together with the decretals and other papal documents, without the walls of Wittenberg, in the presence of an immense concourse of people. By that act he severed himself from the church of Rome, and proclaimed the advent of a new order of things. The Baptists, who were then beginning to come out of their lurking-places, hailed it with joy, rightly judging that it indicated a great and favourable change of public opinion. They availed themselves of the advantages thus offered, and immediately engaged in active operations for the spread of truth. Luther had freed himself from the Pope; they commenced freedom from Luther, and from all other human authority, in far as religion was concerned, and called on their fellow-countrymen everywhere to claim their rights.

This was more than Luther intended. Great and good man as he was, he had not the boldness of Thomas Munzer, who said, "not only began to preach against the Roman pontiff, but against Luther himself!" Doubtless that was "an iniquity to be punished by the judge." Reference to the earthly judge, in religious affairs, was too common in those days.

Believer's baptism and martyrdom were closely connected. The first witnesses for God in Germany, in the Reformation-age, were Baptists. Hans Koch and Leonard Meyer were put to death at Augsburg in the year 1524.

You will find in most church histories careful accounts of the German Ana-bap-

tists. Storch and Stubner, the writers tell you, pretended to prophecy, and demanded submission on the ground of their divine calling. They advocated a wild millenarianism, maintaining that the day of God's vengeance was at hand, and that the saints would put down all worldly rule, and possess the earth. And Thomas Munzer, they say, not only held similar sentiments, but also headed the insurrection of the peasants, which brought so much misery on Germany, and ultimately on the poor peasants themselves.

Now, I have no desire to defend any thing foolish or wrong. Granted, if you please, that the men just spoken of were visionaries and that their conduct was in some respects indefensible; but let it be further granted that they were not the Baptist body, and that for their follies that body was by no means responsible. As for the peasants' war, Gieseler justly remarks that "no traces of anabaptist fanaticism were seen" in it. (Ecclesiastical History, v. 352). This is honourable and important.

But it is necessary to repeat the observation, that our accounts of these men are mainly derived from their enemies. Thomas Munzer is blackened in Pedobaptist histories. You would think him the very incarnation of all evil. Yet what are the facts? Just these;—that he was a pious, learned man, and an eloquent preacher, whom the people followed amazingly, and that he was driven from place to place because as fast as he learned the truth he preached it, sometimes to the great annoyance of Luther and his friends, whose misconceptions and errors, as he deemed them, he did not fail to expose. Let us listen to Robert Robinson:—

"He had been a priest, but became a disciple of Luther, and a great favourite with the reformed. His deportment was remarkably grave, his countenance was pale, his eyes rather sunk as if he was absorbed in thought, his visage long, and he wore his beard. His talent lay in a plain and easy method of preaching to the country people, whom (it should seem as an itinerant) he taught almost all through the electorate of Saxony. His air of mortification won him the hearts of the rustics; it was singular then for a preacher so much as to appear humble. When he had finished his sermon in any village, he used to retire, either to avoid the crowd or to devote himself to meditation and prayer. This was a practice so very singular and uncommon that the people used to throng about the door, peep through the crevices, and oblige him sometimes to let them in, though he repeatedly assured them that he was nothing, that all he had came from above, and that admiration and praise were due only to God. The more he fled from applause the more it followed him; the people called him Luther's curate, and Luther called him his 'Absalom,' probably because he 'stole the hearts of the men of Israel' (Ecclesiastical Researches, p. 546).

The peasants' war was an ill-advised, badly managed thing. But the peasants had right on their side. Their manifesto was a plain-spoken, noble document. It told a sad tale of oppression. The historian Robertson epitomises it thus:—"The chief articles were, that they might have liberty to choose their own pastors; that they might be freed from the payment of all tithes, except that of corn; that they might no longer be considered as the slaves or bondmen of their superiors; that the liberty of hunting and fishing might be common; that the great forests might not be regarded as private property, but be open for the use of all; that they might be delivered from the unusual burden of taxes under which they laboured; that the administration of justice might be rendered less rigorous and more impartial; that the encroachments of the nobles upon meadows and commons might be restrained" (History of the reign of the Emperor Charles 5, Book 4.) The conclusion is admirable. I copy it from Gieseler, who has inserted the entire paper. "It, the twelfth place, it is our conclusion and final resolution, that if one or more of the articles here set forth is

not in agreement with the word of God, we will recede therefrom, if it be made plain to us on scriptural grounds. Or, if an article be now conceded to us, and hereafter it be discovered to be unjust, from that hour it shall be dead and null and have no more force. Likewise, if more articles of complaint be truly discovered from scripture, we will also reserve the right of resolving upon these" (History, as above, p. 347-349). It is said that Munzer assisted in preparing this document. If so, it does him honour. Whatever silly or extravagant opinions he fell into, he may be excused, for in those days very few public men escaped connection with some weakness or other. His conduct in joining the insurgents has brought heavy censure upon him. But he paid dearly for it. Taken prisoner after the battle in which the peasants were defeated, or rather slaughtered, for it was no fight, he was subjected to cruel tortures, after the fashion of the times, and then put to death.

Though the peasant war was not in itself a Baptist affair at all, occasion was taken from Munzer's connection with it to raise a storm of indignation against the Baptists, as if they were all rebels. The persecution raged fiercely, and it never wholly ceased during the period. Baptists worshipped God and preached the gospel at perpetual hazard of liberty and life. Still they held on their way. Sometimes they met in buildings far removed from general observation; sometimes, in the woods; and not unfrequently long intervals passed between their meetings, so hot was the pursuit after them. One effect was produced which proved advantageous to their cause;—they were "scattered abroad,"—eastward, to Moravia, Hungary, and the adjoining countries—westward to Holland. Everywhere, numerous churches sprung up.

Sebastian Franck, a trustworthy historian of those times, affirms that "within a few years not less than two thousand Baptists had testified their faith by imprisonment or martyrdom" (Baptist Martyrology, published by the Hanserd Knollys Society, i. 49). I will place before you a few of the details.

Michael Satler had been a monk. He was converted to God and became a preacher. He was put to death at Rottenburg, May 26, 1527. Thus ran his sentence:—"that Michael Satler be delivered over to the executioner, who shall bring him to the place of execution and cut out his tongue; he shall then throw him upon a cart, and twice tear his flesh with red-hot pinchers; he shall then be brought to the city gate, and shall have his flesh five times torn in like manner." This fiendish sentence was executed, and the body was afterwards burned to ashes. Satler's wife and several other females who were arrested at the same time were drowned. A number of brethren who shared the imprisonment with them were beheaded (*Ibid.* p. 27). Rottenburg was celebrated for such scenes. In 1528, Leonard Schoener was beheaded and burned there, and shortly afterwards about seventy more. Schoener had been six years a barefooted monk, but had left the convent through disgust at the wickedness of the order. He learned the tailor's trade and so gained his livelihood. After his conversion he joined the Baptists, and spent the remainder of his life in preaching the gospel and baptizing throughout Bavaria (*Ibid.* p. 47).

At Schwatz, eleven miles from Rottenburg, Hans Schlafler, who had been a Romish priest, was beheaded. "He was put to the test by cruel tortures, and examined by the priests concerning infant baptism; but he answered them from the divine scriptures, and showed, both by argument and by texts of scripture, that it is commanded, and will be found throughout the New Testament, that men should first teach the word of God, and they alone that hear, understand, believe, and receive it, should be baptized. This is the Christian baptism, and no re-baptism. The Lord has nowhere commanded children to be baptized. They are already the Lord's. So long as they are innocent and inoffensive, they are in no wise to be condemned.

They also asked him on what foundation the sect of the anabaptists properly rests! To which he answered; Our faith, actions, and baptism, rest on nothing else than the commandment of Christ, Matth. 28. 18, 19: Mark 16. 15." (*Ibid.* p. 50).

Leopold Snyder was beheaded at Augsburg in the same year. The sufferings in that city were very severe. "Not only were they beaten with rods, but their backs were branded, and one had his tongue cut out for his so-called blasphemy. The few who recanted were adjudged to a yearly fine, and were forbidden for five years the exercise of civil rights."—(*Ibid.* p. 54).

Eighteen persons were burned in one day at Salzburg. Many more suffered in that city. Among them was a lovely young maiden of sixteen, who, refusing to recant, was taken in the arms of the executioner to the trough for watering horses, thrust under the water, and there held till life was extinct." The Baptists there were called Garden-brethren, from their custom of meeting by night in the gardens and solitary places of the town, to escape the notice of their foes."—(*Ibid.* p. 57).

Wolfgang Brand-Hueber and Hans Nidermair, both Baptist ministers, with about seventy others, were put to death at Lintz. "As to the said Wolfgang Brand-Hueber, there are still writings in the church which show how faithfully he taught the Christian community; likewise, that obedience and submission should be rendered to magistrates, in all things not contrary to God. He held fast the true baptism of Christ, and the supper of the Lord; rejecting the baptism of infants, the sacraments [that is, the Romish sacraments], and other anti-Christian abominations, as his writings (still extant) sufficiently declare."—(*Ibid.* p. 103).

Nearly three hundred and fifty persons suffered in various ways in the Palatinate, in the year 1529. The Burgrhof of Alzey was particularly active on the occasion. But his victims were steadfast. "While some were being drowned, or about to be led to execution, the rest who were to follow, and were awaiting death, sang until the executioner came for them. They remained altogether steadfast in the truth they had embraced; and secure in the faith they had received from God, they stood like valiant warriors. By them the nobles of this world and its princes were put to shame. On some, whom they would not altogether condemn to death, they inflicted bodily punishment; some they deprived of their fingers; others they branded with the cross on their forehead, and inflicted on them many cruelties; so that even the Burgrhof said, 'What shall I do? the more I condemn, the more they increase.'"—(*Ibid.* p. 118).

These persecutions were the fruits of royal and imperial edicts. Ferdinand, king of Hungary, and Bohemia, issued an edict in 1527, denouncing death to the Baptists. The priests were commanded to read it publicly in the churches four times a year for ten years. The emperor Charles was equally embittered against them. The Edict of Worms, by which Luther was condemned, did not meet the case; but the deficiency was supplied at the Diet of Spire, in 1529. By the edict in which the decisions of the Diet were embodied it was "clearly ordained that all and every Anabaptist, or re-baptized person, whether male or female, being of ripe years and understanding, should be deprived of life, and according to the circumstances of the individual be put to death by fire, sword, or otherwise; and whenever found should be brought to justice, indicted, and convicted; and be no otherwise judged, tried, or dealt with, under pain of heavy and severe punishment."—(*Ibid.* p. 116).

At the time of the publication of this edict, a number of Baptists ("nine brethren and three sisters") were in prison at Alzey. "The mandate was then read to the prisoners, and as they would not yield they were, without further trial, in fulfilment of the emperor's edict, led to execution; the brethren by the sword, but the sisters by being drowned in the horse-pond. While they were yet in confinement, a sister came to the prison to comfort the