

# Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS; FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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## Poetry.

### Mother, Watch.

Mother! watch the little feet  
Climbing o'er the garden wall,  
Bounding through the busy street,  
Ranging cellar, shed and hall;  
Never count the moments lost,  
Never mind the time it costs,  
Little feet will go astray,  
Guide them, mother! while you may.

Mother! watch the little hand,  
Picking berries by the way,  
Making houses in the sand,  
Tossing up the fragrant hay,  
Never dare the question ask,  
Why to me this heavy task?  
These same little hands may prove  
Messengers of light and love.

Mother! watch the little tongue,  
Prattling eloquent and wild;  
What is said and what is sung,  
By the happy, joyous child,  
Catch the word while yet unspoken;  
Stop the vow while yet unbroken;  
This same tongue may proclaim  
Blessings in the Savior's name.

Mother! watch the little heart,  
Beating soft and warm for you;  
Wholesale lessons now impart;  
Keep, O keep that young heart true,  
Extricating every weed,  
Sowing good and precious seed;  
Harvest rich you then may see  
Ripening for eternity.

### The poor Man's day.

Sabbath holy  
To the lowly!  
Still thou art a welcome day;  
When thou comest, earth and ocean,  
Shade and brightness, rest and motion,  
Help the poor man's heart to pray.

Still God liveth,  
Still he giveth,  
What no law can take away;  
And the Sabbath bringing gladness  
Unto hearts of weary sadness,  
Still art thou "The Poor Man's Day."

## Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

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

LETTER XXVII.

The Reformation Period.

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

Continued.

#### MY YOUNG FRIEND,

Menno Simon was a voluminous writer. His works have been collected and published in a handsome folio volume. I will mention the principal treatises contained in it.

I. "An evident demonstration of the saving doctrine of Jesus Christ." In this work he discusses the following subjects: 1. The time of grace. 2. Repentance. 3. Faith, which he defines, "An embracing of the gospel through the agency of the Holy Spirit." He shows that the believer relies upon Christ and his grace; that he embraces his promises; and that he is justified, not by works, but by faith, which is not of men, but the gift of God; and that this faith is not without fruits, but worketh by love. 4. Baptism. He defends the confining of baptism to believers from Matt. 28. 19., Mark 16, 16., and by the arguments usually adduced by Baptists, and replies to the arguments in favour of paedobaptism. In this chapter he employs a very severe style of writing. It was common to the authors of that and the next age. The Reformers, and after them, the Puritans, treated their adversaries with very little courtesy; and certainly they received none from their opponents. 5. The Lord's Supper. 6. Secession from the Church of Rome. 7. The calling of ministers in the church. 8. The doctrines to be preached by ministers, shewing that the scripture is the only rule of faith. 9. The life of ministers, and their support. He denies the lawfulness of ministerial stipends. This was one of his mistakes. In this

chapter, also, he cautions magistrates, learned men, and the common people, against false ministers, meaning those who had identified themselves with insurrections against the civil power. He shews that the only sword which the Christians ought to use is the sword of the Spirit, and that with this sword Christ so protects his church that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. He also admonishes the church, under persecution, to walk in the practice of all christian virtues.

II. "Fundamental Doctrines from the word of God." This treatise closely resembles the first. He writes very clearly and fully on the spirituality of the kingdom of Christ, and contends that none but the regenerate are true members of the Church.

III. "A consolatory admonition to the people of God under persecution." Having adverted to the ordinary topics of consolation he warns his brethren, very earnestly, against taking up arms in defence of religion.

IV. "The doctrine of Excommunication." It is shewn that excommunication is designed to bring sinners to repentance and preserve the church in its purity. This is well. But when Menno goes on to maintain that the pious must withdraw altogether from the excommunicated, and have no dealings with them—and that excommunication dissolves all society between father and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives—union with Christ by faith being infinitely more important than any earthly union—we cannot but confess that his scheme was far harsher than the New Testament would warrant. There was much disputing on this subject between the men of severe measures and their moderate brethren: but the latter were in the minority during the period now under consideration.

V. "Reply to Gellius Faber minister at Embden." All the peculiarities of the Baptists were stated and defended in this work. Faber had not only written against them; but had also stirred up persecutions and inflamed the minds of the people. Hence Menno hits him hard. Faber, too, gives sturdy blows. They were both rough men.

VI. "A piteous supplication of poor christians, addressed to magistrates, &c."

VII. "A brief vindication of miserable christians and dispersed strangers, &c., addressed to all divines and preachers in the Netherlands." In these two works Menno defends himself and his brethren against the accusations brought against them. He exposes the calumnies of their foes, and indignantly remonstrates with magistrates and ministers for allowing themselves to be led away by misrepresentations and lies, invented for no other purpose than the accomplishment of the ruin of innocent people.

VIII. The most interesting of all Menno Simon's Works is the "Narration of his secession from Popery," in which he traces and describes the various experiences through which he passed, and the struggles he endured ere he attained full deliverance.

In common with the Baptists of that period, generally, Menno Simon held that no christian should undertake the office of magistrate, or bear arms, or bind himself by oath. Whatever may be thought of these sentiments, now, it is evident that they originated in the views entertained by Baptists respecting the purity of the church. Maintaining that a church of Christ should consist exclusively of pious persons, they concluded, necessarily, that such persons would not be law-breakers, that they would abhor all violence, and that their word might be relied on. Among them, therefore, no magistrat would be required: Their principles would be incompatible with the employment of force, even in self-defence. It would be outrageous to call upon them to confirm any statement by an oath, since the word of true men ought always to be taken. All this may be admitted. Menno Simon and his friends seem to have forgotten, however, that they were living "in the world," and that there were certain duties incumbent on them as members of society. Yet these were harm-

less notions, and might have been borne with. They would have been, had forbearance been the temper of the age. As to the oath-taking, I must confess that the old Baptist views are much to my liking, and that I should be glad to see them generally prevalent. The multiplicity of oaths is a disgrace to modern legislation.

It is manifest that the doctrinal opinions of the Baptists of this period harmonised, with few exceptions, not of great moment, with those entertained by the Reformers of all persuasions. With regard to the constitution and government of christian churches, they and the Reformers materially differed. According to the latter, infant-baptism formed the basis of church-membership, and the church and the nation were identical. The Baptists, on the contrary, would admit no members to their churches but on personal profession of repentance and faith, on which profession the parties were baptized. All their subsequent arrangements were founded on these pre-requisites. Every church was a family of believers. When they sat down at the table of the Lord they felt that they were one in Christ and "members one of another." The church, in their estimation, was a holy society. All the rule and discipline tended to the preservation of that holiness. So Baptists have thought and practised from the beginning.

I do not find any material difference between them and ourselves in regard to the organization and management of churches. The opposition was so violent that they were compelled to meet in secret, and at such times as they were able. Doubtless, whenever it was practicable, they spent the Lord's day together in spiritual exercises, "according to the commandment." On those occasions, if the ministers were present, they preached and taught, and administered the ordinance: if not, there was mutual exhortation, with prayer and praise. Care was taken to ascertain who among them were possessed of suitable gifts; and these, after a season of probation, were solemnly set apart to the ministerial office, by prayer and imposition of hands. Sometimes they sent out brethren on missionary tours, to gather together scattered disciples or comfort afflicted churches. This proved not unfrequently a perilous task. Several instances of martyrdom are recorded, resulting from the discharge of the duty. The itinerant missionary was apprehended as a suspected man; for the fact of his being a stranger, and often a foreigner was sufficient to arouse suspicion. Examination disclosed the secret, and death followed.

I will give you a few extracts from the "Martyrology," which will illustrate this part of the subject.

Jurien Simons and Clement Dorks, together with Mary Jones, "fell into the hands of the tyrants at Haarlem," in 1557. "From the very gates of their prison they made known the word of the Lord, for the reformation of all." When called on to declare their faith, they said, "that they had been baptized on a confession of their faith, according to the command of Christ," and that "infant baptism was not from God, but in opposition to his word." They observed the Supper of the Lord "agreeably to the institution of Christ, after his own usage and blessing when with his apostles." They "could not acknowledge the Pope and the Romish church to be the church of God." They acknowledged "no other punishment of offenders in the church than evangelic excommunication, thereby to separate the bad from the good, that a pure church might be presented to the Lord, in which there might be nothing impure or defiled," (ii. 166).

It was observed of two godly women who were beheaded at Ghent, in 1564, that "they had separated themselves (agreeably to the direction of the holy scriptures) from the popish church of antichrist, as corrupted with many impurities, and filled with the unfruitful works of darkness, and doctrines and commandments of men, in opposition to the holy word of the Lord. They had also united themselves with the true members of Christ, and with them, according to their weak ability, endeavoured to observe their Lord's commandments and

ordinances. They were therefore deprived of life by the persecutors and haters of the truth." (ii. 357).

In 1559, "Jan Bosch, commonly called Jan Durps, was a pious, worthy man, a linen-weaver by trade, living at Maestricht. Though the truth was very much obscured by the papacy, yet the light of divine grace shone into his mind, and genuine gospel truth was brought home to him: He repaired to the church of God, and yielded the obedience which Christ, the Son of God, prescribed and commanded. After he had for a season adorned his christian calling, the church ordained him, and the charge of it was entrusted to him, that by reading and exhortation he should serve them. After many refusals he consented, and discharged his duty with fidelity, and employed his talents to the best of his ability." (ii. 240.)

"Jan de Swarte, a man of excellent character, from Nipkerke, and his wife and children, came to the knowledge of the truth, and were united to the church of God. He was afterwards chosen and ordained to be a minister of the church. In this office he, according to his ability, and in meekness, so conducted himself (not only as deacon by caring for the poor, but also, according to the gift he had received from God, in the dispensation of the word of exhortation) that he became greatly endeared to all that knew him," (ii. 338). I have noticed his martyrdom in a previous letter.

"In the year 1560, the brother Claes Felbinger, a locksmith, a willing servant of the word of God (he was then on trial) was apprehended," and put to death. This brother "was called to the ministry of the gospel in the year 1556, but had not received the imposition of hands," (ii. 279.) "In the year 1562, the brother Franciscus Van der Sach, a native of Rovigo, in Italy, a minister of the word of God (being still on probation), with another, his fellow messenger, named Antonius Walsch, was apprehended at Capo d'Istria." He was subsequently drowned at Venice, as I have before stated, (ii. 335).

The following cases illustrate the statement respecting the danger attending missionary excursions in those days. "In the beginning of the year 1536, Jeronimus Kels of Kufstein, with Michiel Zeepsieder of Walt in Bemen, and Hans Overacker of Etschland, were commissioned to go into the earldom of the Tyrol; but being come to Vienna in Austria, they were seized, having been betrayed by the innkeeper with whom they lodged. While at supper, the people there sought to discern who they were by drinking their healths; and when they found out their views, by their declining to respond to the toasts, the landlord sent for paper, and wrote a letter in Latin, which, among other words, contained the following—"Here are three persons, who, I think, are all anabaptists." They were arrested, and died in the fire at Vienna (i. 157.) You observe that Baptists were at that time detected by their refusal to drink healths.—In 1537, "Jurien Vaser, by desire of some zealous brethren, was sent to Pogstall in Austria, where he joyfully began to teach the word of the Lord, notwithstanding that he was just come out of prison at Metlyng. He gathered the faithful together, and formed a church agreeably to God's command. But he could not escape the foils of a crafty knave, who feigning a desire to learn from him, as a minister, the nature and ground of the truth, brought with him many servants, whom he ordered to lay hold and capture this Jurien Vaser, when a suitable opportunity should occur. This was faithfully performed" (i. 161). Vaser was beheaded. It the year 1545, brother Hans Blietel, having been sent by the church to Riet in Bavaria, was there apprehended; for money had been offered by them of Riet to any one that should take him. There was in consequence a traitor who gave him good words, affected much zeal, wished ardently to be with him, and drew him to his house. The brother thought it was for the welfare of his soul, and went with him." The wretch endeavoured to extort money from him, and failing in that, betrayed him to the magistrates, who con-