

# Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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## Poetry.

### Only One Life.

'Tis not for man to trifle; life is brief,  
And sin is here.  
Our age is but the falling of a leaf,  
A dropping tear.  
We have no time to sport away the hours;  
All must be earnest in a world like ours.  
Not many lives, but only one have we;  
One, only one—  
How sacred should that one life ever be—  
That narrow span!  
Day after day filled up with blessed toil,  
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil.

### Longings.

When I beheld this fickle, trustless state  
Of vain world's glory, fitting to and fro,  
And mortal men tossed by troublous fate,  
In restless seas of wretchedness and woe,  
I wish I might this weary life forego,  
And shortly turn into my happy rest,  
Where my free spirit might not any more  
Be vexed with sighs that do her peace molest.  
—Spenser.

## Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

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

LETTER XXXVIII.  
The Troublous Period.  
From A. D. 1567 to A. D. 1688.  
Continued.

MY YOUNG FRIEND,  
It is not likely that the king saw the publications adverted to in my last letter, or any other publications in which the principles of the Baptists were explained and advocated. Nor is it probable, had he seen them, that they would have induced him to change his policy. Immediately after Venner's insurrection, Hanserd Knollys and many more were apprehended and lodged in Newgate and other London prisons. "Above four hundred," says Crosby, were crowded into Newgate, besides many more in the other prisons belonging to the city and parts adjacent. Vavasor Powell, then preaching in Wales, was treated in the same manner, and many of his brethren in the principality shared his fate. Throughout the kingdom the Baptists were exposed to outrage. "They have been haled from their peaceable habitations," says John Sturgeson, "and thrust into prisons, almost in all counties in England, and many are still detained, to the utter undoing of themselves and families, and most of them are poor men, whose livelihood, under God, depends upon the labour of their hands. So that they lie under a more than ordinary calamity, there being so many thrust into little rooms together, that they are an annoyance each to other, especially in the city of London, where the Lord Mayor crowds them very close together, that it hath been observed, the keepers have complained they have had too many guests. And whilst they suffer there, some of their wives and tender babies want bread at home."—(Traets &c., p. 328).

The execution of John James was a horrible illustration of royal malice. John James was a Sabbatarian Baptist. His meeting-house was in Bulstrake Alley, Whitechapel, London. On the 19th of October, 1661, he was dragged from his pulpit and committed to Newgate, on the charge of uttering reasonable words against the king. The principal witness against him was one Tipler, a journeyman pipe-maker, a man whose character was so well known, that the magistrate before whom Mr. James was taken refused to receive his deposition, unless some other witness would corroborate it. Others were found, who confirmed Tipler's testimony; but one of them afterwards confessed that "he had sworn against Mr. James he knew not what." In fact, there can be little doubt that the witnesses were suborned, probably bribed, to commit perjury. There is the more reason to believe this, because when the Lieutenant of the Tower read the in-

formation laid against Mr. James in the presence of his congregation, and asked them how they could bear such doctrines, they all replied, "that they never heard such words, as they shall answer it before the Lord, and they durst not lie." But the death of the victim was predetermined. It was no difficult matter to procure a verdict against him. He was tried and convicted on the 19th of November, and sentenced the next day to be hanged, drawn, and quartered.

So flagrant was the injustice that his wife was advised by her friends to present a petition to the king for his life, setting forth the facts which I have mentioned, and entreating his majesty's interposition. But they had miscalculated. Charles treated the heart-broken woman with gross brutality. "With some difficulty she met the king, and presented him with the paper, acquainting him who she was. To whom he held up his finger, and said, 'Oh! Mr. James—he is a sweet gentleman'; but following him for some further answer, the door was shut against her. The next morning she attended again, and an opportunity soon presenting, she implored his majesty's answer to her request. Who then replied, 'That he was a rogue, and should be hanged.' One of the lords attending him asked her of whom she spake. The king answered, 'of John James, that rogue; he shall be hanged; yea, he shall be hanged.'—(Crosby ii. 170).

On the 26th of November, Mr. James was dragged on a hurdle, after the manner of traitors, from Newgate to Tyburn, the place of execution. His behaviour under those awful circumstances was dignified and christian. In his address to the multitude, referring to his denominational sentiments, he said, "I do own the title of a baptized believer. I own the ordinances and appointments of Jesus Christ. I own all the principles in Hebrew vi. 1. 2." He charged his friends to continue their religious assemblies, at all risks. His closing exhortations were remarkably solemn and impressive, reminding the people of the days of the old martyrs. "This is a happy day," said one of his friends; "I bless the Lord," he replied, "it is so." When all was ready, he lifted up his hands and exclaimed, with a loud voice, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." So he died. His quarters were placed over the city gates, and his head was set upon a pole, opposite the meeting-house in which he had preached the gospel.—(Irviney, i. 325-327).

I have mentioned the Act of Uniformity. It received the royal assent on the 19th of May, and went into operation on the 24th of August following. By this Act, five things were required of all ministers then in possession of livings, as essential to their continuance in the Establishment. 1. Re-ordination, if they had not been episcopally ordained before. 2. A declaration of "unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained in the Book of Common Prayer, and administration of the sacrament, and other rites and ceremonies of the church," (a new and corrected edition of which was then published, but which great numbers of the clergy could not possibly see before the time specified), affirming that there was nothing in it contrary to the word of God; with a promise to use the prescribed form, and no other. 3. An oath of canonical obedience and subjection to the bishop. 4. Abjuration of the Solemn League and Covenant. 5. A declaration of the unlawfulness of taking up arms against the king and government upon any pretence whatsoever.

The interval that elapsed between the time when the Act was passed and the day on which it was to take effect was a period of anxious suspense, both to the people and their ministers. It was a trial of character. Some came to an immediate decision, and left their livings before the appointed day; others waited till the time had expired; and when at length the 24th of August came there were found more than two thousand worthy, learned, pious ministers, ready to say, "We ought to obey God rather than men." And they acted on the principle. Regardless of con-

sequences, they sacrificed all to truth and to God, and cast themselves on Providence for supply and defence, exhibiting to the world and to future ages a noble example of disinterested virtue and conscientious integrity. The loss which they sustained was by no means trivial; they were not only sentenced, and forbidden to exercise their ministry under severe penalties, but they were left without any visible means of subsistence. No provision was made for them, no mercy was shewn to them;—on the contrary, one persecuting decree was followed by another, and the governing powers seemed only to be engaged in racking their brains to devise some new method of vexing and tormenting their more worthy fellow-countrymen.

On the list of the ejected ministers stand the names of Richard Baxter, John Howe, Joseph Alleine, John Owen, Stephen Charnock, John Flavel, and many more, whose writings are still rendering service to the cause of God. About thirty of the ejected belonged to the Baptist Denomination. The Church of England sustained a blow from that ejection from which she has scarcely yet recovered. Her best men were driven away. Uniformity was the idol set up, and all who would not bow down to it were sacrificed without mercy.

The hand of power was heavy on the Nonconformists, in every part of England. In Buckinghamshire the persecution raged with intolerable fierceness. So numerous were the prisoners, that the magistrates were obliged to hire two large houses for their accommodation, the County jail being too small. On one occasion, in 1664, the Baptist minister and eleven of his congregation were seized, among whom were two women. They were placed before the justices at the quarter session, and advantage was taken of the 35th of Queen Elizabeth to require them either to conform to the Church of England and take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, or to abjure the realm; and they were told that if they would not do either, they would be declared guilty of felony, and sentence of death would be passed on them. Unawed by this prospect, they replied, that as they could not comply with the requisitions, they threw themselves on the mercy of the court; on which they were sentenced to be hanged, and sent back to jail till the day of execution. This was an unheard-of atrocity. Twelve persons condemned to death in Protestant England—not for any crime—but solely for nonconformity to the established church! And the sentence would have been executed, had not measures been promptly taken to lay the case before the king, and obtain his interference. The son of one of the condemned persons hastened to London, and by the assistance of William Kiffin procured an interview with the lord chancellor, who immediately proceeded to the king. Implacable as Charles had proved himself to be in John James's case, he saw that the wholesale murder contemplated at Aylesbury would bring his government into disrepute, and might stir up resentment not easily to be appeased. He was willing enough to worry his subjects into submission, or at least to attempt to do so, by confiscation and the duageon; but the thought of sacrificing twelve lives at once to the demon of intolerance was too shocking even for Charles 2. A reprieve was placed in the hands of the applicant, and at the next assizes his majesty's pardon was produced by the presiding judge, and the prisoners were released. But what an illustration is hereby furnished of the state of society at that time, and of the perils which our forefathers encountered for the sake of religion! And how thankful we ought to be that "the rod of the oppressor has been broken."

Let me now give you an instance of interference with the freedom of the press. Benjamin Keach, an eminent Baptist minister, of whom I shall hereafter give some account, wrote a small book for children, entitled, "The Child's Instructor, or, a new and easy Primer." In the catechetical portion of the book Baptist sentiments were inculcated. It was affirmed that "believers, or godly men and women only, who can make confession of their faith and

repentance," should be baptized. The personal reign of the Saviour on earth for a thousand years, held at that time by some Baptists, was taught. And, which was peculiarly offensive, Mr. Keach said, that "Christ's true ministers have not their learning and wisdom from men, or from universities, or human schools; for human learning, arts and sciences, are not essential to the making of a true minister; but only the gift of God, which cannot be bought with silver or gold. And also, as they have freely received the gift of God, so they do freely administer; they do not preach for hire, for gain or filthy lucre; they are not like false teachers, who look for gain from their quarters, who eat the fat, and clothe themselves with the wool, and kill them that are fed. Those that put not into their mouths they prepare war against. Also, they are not Lords over God's heritage; they rule them not by force and cruelty, neither have they power to force and compel men to believe and obey their doctrine, but are only to persuade and entreat; thus is the way of the gospel, as Christ taught them."

For this he was indicted at the assizes. The language of the indictment may amuse you. "Thou art here indicted by the name of Benjamin Keach, of Winslow, in the County of Bucks, for that thou, being a seditious, heretical, and schismatical person, evilly and maliciously disposed, and disaffected to his majesty's government of the Church of England, didst maliciously and wickedly, on the first day of May, in the sixteenth year of the reign of our sovereign lord the king, write, print, and publish, or cause to be written, printed, and published, one seditious and venomous book, entitled, 'The Child's Instructor; or, a new and easy Primer;' wherein are contained, by way of question and answer, these damnable positions, contrary to the Book of Common Prayer, and the Liturgy of the Church of England."

The Trial took place Oct. 9, 1664. Chief Justice Hyde, afterwards Lord Clarendon, presided, and conducted himself with a malignity wholly unbecoming his office. Under his direction a verdict of "guilty" was recorded, and the judge then proceeded to pass sentence, in the following terms:—"Benjamin Keach, you are here convicted for writing, printing, and publishing a seditious and schismatical book, for which the court's judgment is this, and the court doth award; That you shall go to jail for a fortnight, without bail or mainprize; and the next Saturday to stand upon the pillory at Aylesbury, in the open market, for the space of two hours, from eleven of the clock to one, with a paper upon your head with this inscription—'For writing, printing, and publishing a schismatical book, entitled, The Child's Instructor, or, a new and easy Primer.' And the next Thursday to stand in the same manner, and for the same time, in the market of Winslow; and there your book shall be openly burnt, before your face, by the common hangman, in disgrace of you and your doctrine. And you shall forfeit to the king's majesty the sum of twenty pounds, and shall remain in jail until you find sureties for your good behaviour, and appearance at the next assizes, there to renounce your doctrines, and make such public submission as shall be enjoined you."

The punishment of the pillory is now abolished. The instrument so called was an upright frame placed on a scaffold, upon which the offender stood; his head appearing through one hole of the frame, and his hands fixed in two others. As this punishment was generally reserved for persons guilty of perjury and other infamous crimes, the mob were accustomed to pelt them with rotten eggs or various kinds of filth, and even with stones and brickbats, so that death sometimes ensued. To such an exposure the lord chief justice of England delivered up a worthy minister of the gospel. The sentence was duly carried into execution, and the sheriff, who was himself a fierce opposer of the truth, took care that the judge's directions should be obeyed to the very letter.

It was market day at Aylesbury. The town was thronged. People flocked thither