

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS; FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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WHOLE SERIES. Vol. XXII. No. 49.

Poetry.

The worth of Hours.

BY RICHARD MONCKTON MILNES.

Believe not that your inner eye
Can ever in just measure try
The worth of hours as they go by;

For every man's weak self, alas!
Makes him to see them as they pass,
As through a dim or tinted glass.

But if in earnest care you would
Mete out to each its part of good,
Trust rather to your after mood.

Those surely are not fairly spent
That leave your spirit bowed and bent
In sad unrest and ill content.

And more; though free from seeming harm,
You rest from toil of mind or arm,
Or slow retire from Pleasure's charm;

If then a painful sense comes on,
Of something wholly lost and gone,
Vainly enjoyed or vainly done;

Of something from your being's chain
Broke off not to be linked again
By all mere memory can retain;

Upon your heart this truth may rise:
Nothing that altogether dies
Suffices man's just destinies.

So should we live that every hour
May die, as dies the natural flower,
A self-reviving thing of power;

That every thought and every deed
May hold within itself the seed
Of future good or future need;

Esteeming sorrow, whose employ
Is to develop, not destroy,
Far better than a barren joy.

Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

A SERIES OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

LETTER LVII.

The Quiet Period.

From A. D. 1688 to A. D. 1792.

Continued.

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

At the commencement of this period there were but twelve Baptist churches in North America. In the year 1740 the number of churches was thirty seven, with less than 3000 members. But in 1790 there were 872 churches, containing 64,975 members. Twenty-five new churches were formed in the first half of the period; in the second half, no fewer than 835 churches. This is surely a wonderful increase.

It will be interesting to note the dates of the establishment of the first churches in the several States:—

- 1703—Welsh Tract, Delaware.
- 1705—Groton, Connecticut.
- 1714—Burleigh, Virginia.
- 1724—Golden Hill, New York.
- 1727—Perquimans, N. Carolina.
- 1742—Chestnut Ridge, Maryland.
- 1765—Newtown, New Hampshire.
- 1764—Berwick, Maine.
- 1768—Shaftesbury, Vermont.
- 1772—Kiokee, Georgia.
- 1780—Buffalo Ridge, Tennessee.
- 1781—Nolinn, Kentucky.
- 1790—Miami, Ohio.

Our Baptist forefathers had a hard struggle in the New England States. The Congregationalists were the "Standing Order," and the support of their ministers was provided for by law, in the shape of a tax, levied on all the inhabitants. They had fled from one Establishment, and they set up another! A backward movement had taken place, in the introduction of the "half-way covenant," which filled the churches with men who were strangers to godliness. The assessment for ministers' salaries, was rigorously enforced. It was in vain that the Baptists pleaded their conscientious dissent from the "standing order," and the obligation under which they lay to support their own ministers. Their

oppressors would not listen, nor abate one jot of their demands. The scourge was in their hands, and they applied it without mercy.

"From the year 1692 to the year 1728, the Baptists were everywhere, except in Boston and some few other towns, taxed for the support of Congregational ministers. The fact of their maintaining worship by themselves was not allowed to be a sufficient reason for exempting them from rates to sustain a ministry which in point of conscience they could not bear. For their refusal to pay such rates, we are told that they oftentimes had their bodies seized upon, and thrown into the common jail, as malefactors, and their cattle, swine, horses, household furniture, and implements of husbandry, forcibly distrained from them, and shamefully sold, many times at not one quarter part of the first value." And it is added "that the heavy pressures and afflictions occasioned by these distrains, imprisonments, and the losses consequent thereupon, made many of the Baptists bend, almost ruined some of our people, and disheartened others to such a degree, that they removed, with the remaining effects they had left, out of the Province."—(Hovey's Life and Times of Isaac Backus, p. 167.)

In the year 1728 an Act was passed by the General Court of Massachusetts, exempting Baptists from the tax; but as it relieved the persons only, but left the property still liable, it was of little service. Other Acts were afterwards passed, to be in force for short periods, professedly to give relief; but they were clogged with so many difficulties and obnoxious conditions that the Baptists continued to suffer, in many places, and for many years. The following letters from christian females furnish painful illustrations of these statements.

Elizabeth Backus, mother of the Rev. Isaac Backus, writes thus to her son:—
"Norwich, Nov. 4, 1752. My dear Son: I have heard something of the trials amongst you of late, and I was grieved, till I had strength to give up the case to God, and leave my burden there. And now I would tell you something of our trials. Your brother Samuel lay in prison twenty days, October 15th the collectors came to our house, and took me away to prison, about nine o'clock, in a dark, rainy night. Brothers Hill and Sabins were brought there the next night. We lay in prison thirteen days, and were then set at liberty, by what means I know not. Whilst I was there a great many people came to see me, and some said one thing and some said another. Oh the innumerable snares and temptations that beset me! more than I ever thought of before. But oh, the condescension of Heaven! though I was bound when I was cast into this furnace, yet I was loosed and found Jesus in the midst of a furnace with me. Oh, then I could give up my name, estate, family, life and breath, freely to God. Now the prison looked like a palace to me. I could bless God for all the laughs and scoffs, made at me. Oh the love that flowed out to all mankind! then I could forgive as I would desire to be forgiven; and love my neighbour as myself. Deacon Griswold was put in prison the 8th of October; and yesterday, old brother Grover; and they are in pursuit of others, all which calls for humiliation. The church has appointed the 13th of November to be spent in prayer and fasting on that account. I do remember my love to you and your wife, and the dear children of God with you, begging your prayers for us in such a day of trial. We are all in tolerable health, expecting to see you. These from your loving mother, ELIZABETH BACKUS."

Mr. Backus:—I understand that you are collecting materials for a Baptist History, in which you propose to let the public know how the Baptists have been oppressed in Massachusetts Bay. This is to let you know that in the year 1768, in a very cold night in winter, about nine or ten o'clock in the evening, I was taken prisoner and carried, by the collector in the town where I live, from my family, consisting of three small children, in order to be put into jail. It being a severe cold

night, I concluded, by advice, while I was detained at a tavern in the way to jail some hours, to pay the sum of 4-8 L. M. [i. e. Legal Money], for which I was made a prisoner, it being for the ministerial rate. The reason why I refused paying it before, was because I was a Baptist, and belonged to the Baptist Society in Haverhill, and had carried in a certificate to the assessors, as I suppose, according to law. Thus they dealt with a poor widow woman in Bradford, the relict of Solomon Kimball, late of said town;—at whose house the Rev. Hezekiah Smith was shamefully treated by many of the people in Bradford, who came, headed by the sheriff, Amos Mulliken, at a time when Mr. Smith was to preach a sermon in our house, at the request of my husband; and warmly contended with him, and threatened him if he did preach. Mr. Smith went to begin service by singing, notwithstanding the noise, clamour, and threats of the people. But one of their number snatched the chair, behind which Mr. Smith stood, from before him. Upon which my husband desired Mr. Smith to tarry a little, till he had quelled the tumult; but all his endeavours to silence them were in vain. Upon which my husband desired Mr. Smith to begin public service; which accordingly he did, and went through, then, without further molestation.

MARTHA KIMBALL.

Bradford, Sept. 2, 1774.
"N. B. The above I can attest to. It may be observed, that the tavern whither they took me is about two miles from my house. After I had paid what they demanded, then I had to return to my poor fatherless children, through the snow, on foot, in the dead of the night, exposed to the severity of the cold."—(Hovey, pp. 28, 184.)

In the other New England States, Rhode Island excepted, the Baptists met with similar treatment. The Rev. Mr. Marshall, for instance, who laboured in Connecticut, was put in the stocks for preaching in another minister's parish, and afterwards sent to jail for "preaching the gospel contrary to law." The tongue of slander was busy against them, and they were "everywhere spoken against." Unrighteously taxed, unlawfully imprisoned, the butts of all men's ridicule, they quailed not, nor did they slacken in zeal or effort; and God wonderfully blessed them.

Their success was great also in Virginia. After the revival under Whitefield and his associates, many Baptist Ministers itinerated in that State, and so preached that multitudes believed and were converted. Persecution soon broke out. Several of the ministers were arrested. "May it please your worship," said the lawyer, "these men are great disturbers of the peace; they cannot meet a man on the road, but they ram a text of Scripture down his throat." As they would not promise to desist from preaching, they were committed to prison, to which they went cheerfully, singing as they walked through the street Dr. Wall's hymn, "Broad is the road that leads to death." This was in the County of Spottsylvania, in the year 1768. The same course was pursued by the magistrates in other parts of the State. About thirty ministers, besides many exhorters and others who manifested christian earnestness for the salvation of souls, were imprisoned, some of them repeatedly.—(Benedict's History of the Baptists, p. 654.)

"The magistrates, in all parts of the Commonwealth, impelled and directed by the state clergy, and their more zealous friends, commenced a relentless annoyance of the people, and a heartless persecution of the ministers of our churches. Attempts were made to set aside the Toleration Act, and old and obsolete laws were hunted up, and essays were made to enforce their provisions. Assessments were prosecuted with new vigilance; fines were imposed and collected; meetings were disturbed and violently dispersed; and pastors, and other ministers, were arrested, dragged before the courts, browbeaten, and ignominiously punished. All this, and more, is acknowledged by the ministers and historians of the 'State Church' themselves. Dr. Hawks,

for example, says, "No dissenters in Virginia experienced, for a time, harsher treatment than did the Baptists. They were beaten and imprisoned, and cruelty taxed its ingenuity to devise new modes of punishment and annoyance. The usual consequences followed. Persecution made friends for its victims; and the men who were not permitted to speak in public, found willing auditors in the sympathizing crowd, who gathered round the prisons, to hear them preach from the grated windows. It is not improbable that this very opposition imparted strength in another mode, inasmuch as it at least furnished the Baptists with a common ground on which to make resistance."—(Hist. of the Prot. Episc. Church in Virginia, p. 121.) In all the prisons where our brethren were incarcerated, they preached daily from the windows to the crowds who there assembled to hear them."—(Howell's "Early Baptists of Virginia," p. 89.)

Irritated beyond measure at this boldness, their enemies resorted to various expedients to check it. "In some cases," says Benedict, "drums were beaten in the time of service; high enclosures were erected before the prison windows; matches and other suffocating materials were burnt outside the prison doors." But all was in vain. The servants of God would preach, and the people were equally determined to hear. Converts were multiplied; new churches sprung up all over the State; "so mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed."

You have observed that the great increase of our denomination took place after the year 1740. In the fall of that year Whitefield landed at Newport, Rhode Island, and commenced that course of evangelical labour in the United States which was productive, under the divine blessing, of such remarkable results. The revival at Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1734, had already prepared the minds of the people, in some measure, for a general outpouring of the Spirit. It was graciously touched, and so glorious was the manifestation, that "in the term of two or three years thirty or forty thousand souls were born into the family of heaven in New England."—(Trumbull's Hist. of Connecticut, quoted by Hovey, ut sup. p. 85.) Some of the converts joined the existing churches, but a large number formed separate churches, requiring satisfactory evidence that the candidates for communion were the subjects of regeneration. This New Testament rule had been departed from by the "Standing Order," and the *New Lights*, as they were called, determined to reinstate primitive principles in their proper place. The natural effect was that many of them became Baptists, the necessity of regeneration in order to christian fellowship having been insisted on by our churches, as you are aware, from the beginning.

The new converts were "fervent in spirit." They thirsted for the salvation of souls. Unexampled efforts were immediately employed for the spread of the gospel. Some went from house to house in their respective neighbourhoods, "warning every man and teaching every man," and exhorting all to turn to the Lord. Pious ministers were stirred up to unusual exertion, and old christians renewed their youth. "The Lord gave the word; great was the company of them that published it." They were not all suitably qualified for the work, as we should now judge;—mistakes were committed, and measures of doubtful propriety adopted, in some places; but such things might be expected in times of great spiritual excitement. It cannot be denied that the labourers were generally men of God, "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." They had deep convictions of the evil of sin, and the peril of a rebellious state. The love of God in Christ overpowered their souls. Their views of the solemn realities of another world were vivid and heart-affecting. They "set the Lord always before" them, and walked as in the sight of the judgment-seat. Their earnest appeals made the stout-hearted tremble, awed many a reprobate into silence, and wrung tears from daring and hardened offenders. Tens of thousands bowed before the majesty of truth.