

# Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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## Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

### The Whiten'd Fields.

"Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest."

Hark! the blessed Saviour calls us,  
In that mild and heavenly voice,  
Which has often sweetly charmed us;  
Made our glowing hearts rejoice.

List what words are gently flowing,  
From those lips of truth and love;  
Of the treasures to be gathered  
For his Father's home above.

Lift, he says, your drooping eyelids,  
Gaze upon the fields around;  
Whiten'd, ready for the harvest,  
Pray that labourers be found.

'Tis the blest command of Jesus:  
He who reigns and rules in heaven;  
He who came to earth and suffered,  
That redemption might be given.

And shall those who know and love him?  
They who cry he died for me?  
All unheeding, hear the message?  
"God forbid" that it should be.

Thoughtful, then, we'll look around us,  
On the world-wide field of sin;  
View the precious and immortal  
Harvest to be gathered in.

Safe forever in the garner  
Of Almighty Sovereign grace,  
Till in heaven their happy spirits  
Find a high and holy place.

Jesus says that those who labor  
Glorious wages shall receive,  
Joys whose height man never dreamed of,  
Mortal heart hath not conceived.

Who would not be waiting, willing  
Ever faithfully to toil:  
Tilling, sowing, hoping, reaping,  
In and from the spirit soil.

Then, with faith and hope undaunted,  
Let us pray and labour on;  
And, ere long, the fruitful clusters  
We shall look with joy upon.

And the blissful songs of angels  
Shall resound through heav'n's high dome,  
As their Master's faithful servants  
"Bear the harvest treasures home."

Onslow.

meetings in town and country. We concluded that the books might be disposed of as intended; the family books for the benefit of well-disposed folks: the "Annotations" to be for particular qualified persons. The other books for the public use, for our leading brethren to resort to, are lodged here in the city, to be lent and returned again; whereby the rising generation may have the benefit of them as well as the present. The contents of the letters, and a catalogue of the books, are recorded in our church-books, to prevent all mistakes.—An acknowledgment was also forwarded by the Association, at its annual meetings, held September, 1717. An extract from their letter will shew the nature of the struggle which the Baptists in Pennsylvania had at that time to maintain:—"We think, that the very minds of the people in common here are tainted with Arminianism, Socinianism, and what not. The common notion of religion among them is like a leprous house; it is not to be mended by patching, but must be pulled down, and re-built upon the right foundation, the covenant of grace. This we labour to do, and therefore go against the current of the times, that others who succeed us may see no cause to lament our having gone before them; and this we will still do, God permitting."—(Ivimey, iii. pp. 127, 131, 133.) They did it, and that right well. None of their successors have lamented "their having gone before them."

I have adverted to the remarkable increase of our denomination in the latter half of the period now under notice. It was the fruit of a series of revivals. The ministers of those times were not satisfied with discharging the duties of their pastorates. They undertook long journeys, preaching as they went, often with no preconceived or definite plan, but travelling and labouring as they believed themselves to be directed from above. Mighty effects followed, "the Lord working with them, and confirming the word," not indeed by "signs following," such as apostolic churches saw, but by still greater displays of power and mercy,—by the conversion of souls. These manifestations were not confined to any particular part of the country; they were everywhere enjoyed. Rhode Island experienced a rich blessing in 1774. The churches in the northern parts of New England were more than doubled in number in the ten years preceding 1792. Many thousands were added in Virginia and other Southern States; there were but ten churches in Virginia, in 1768, but in 1790 there were two hundred and seven, containing more than twenty thousand members. In 1791 there was an extensive revival in Massachusetts, which reached far into the State of New York. Two hundred and ninety-three members were added to the churches of Saratoga and Stillwater in that year.—(Hovey's Life of Backus, p. 258.)

We need not be surprised at some oddities. All society was in a ferment; strange things bubbled up to the surface, now and then, and were gazed upon, or smiled at, or it may be, wept over, till they sunk into oblivion. If the churches composing the Sandy Creek Association in North Carolina were tenacious of the kiss of charity, the laying on of hands upon members, the appointment of elders, and such things; if a large Baptist body in Virginia were so mistaken as to choose, in the year 1774, three of their number, and designate them "Apostles," investing them with a power of general superintendence; and if, in some respects, the fervency of New Light feelings got the better of discretion and decorum, we must bear in mind the peculiarities of the times. After a long season of cold and drought, the Lord "poured water upon him that was thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground;" the spiritual vegetation sprung up thick and strong, requiring skilful cultivators; and some detriment was experienced for want of care in pruning and training. In the course of a few years these wants were supplied, and arrangements constituted. Surely we ought to prefer a revival of religion, though dashed with some irregularities, to the death-like coldness of mere orthodoxy and form.

The year 1764 was memorable for the founding of Rhode Island College, now called "Brown University." This Institution originated with the Philadelphia Association. The desirableness of the measure had been long felt. The Rev. Morgan Edwards was the principal mover in the undertaking, and his views were zealously forwarded by the Pennsylvania Baptists. They chose Rhode Island as the seat of the proposed College, because it was supposed that the preponderance of the Baptists in that State would secure the bestowment of a suitable charter of incorporation. The Rev. James Manning, then of Philadelphia, being at Newport, R. I., in 1763, on his way to Halifax, Nova Scotia, called a meeting of the chief Baptists, and laid the subject before them. The result was that a plan was formed, preliminary measures taken, and application immediately made to the Legislature for a charter. Some difficulties arose, from the dishonest dealing of a Presbyterian minister whose assistance had been asked in the preparation of the charter, and who actually drew it up in such a manner that the Presbyterians would have had the control. The design was defeated, and the original promoters of the object obtained their wishes. The College was founded on the following plan:—

"That into this liberal and catholic institution shall never be admitted any religious tests; but, on the contrary, all the members thereof shall forever enjoy full, free, absolute, uninterrupted liberty of conscience; and that the places of Professors, Tutors, and all other officers, the President alone excepted, shall be free and open for all denominations of Protestants; and that youth of all religious denominations, shall and may be freely admitted to the equal advantages, emoluments, and honours of the college or university, and shall receive a like fair, generous, and equal treatment during their residence therein, they conducting themselves peaceably, and conforming to the laws and statistics thereof; and that the public teaching shall, in general, respect the sciences; and that the sectarian differences of opinions shall not make any part of the public and classical instruction."

"The government of the college is vested in a Board of Fellows, consisting of twelve members, of whom eight, including the President, must be Baptists; and a Board of Trustees, consisting of thirty-six members, of whom twenty-two must be Baptists, five Friends or Quakers, four Congregationalists, and five Episcopalians. These represent the different Denominations existing in the State when the charter was obtained. The instruction and immediate government of the college rests in the President and Board of Fellows."—(Hovey, *ut sup.* p. 151.)

Mr. Manning, afterwards Dr. Manning, was chosen President. He commenced his labours at Warren, in 1766, and was soon encouraged by the resort of students to him for instruction. The erection of a college building became necessary, and Providence was chosen as the site, that city having offered the largest contribution towards the object. The work was accomplished in 1770. On the breaking out of the American war the Institution was suspended for six years, and the building was used for barrack and hospital purposes by the army. Dr. Manning died in 1791, and was succeeded by Dr. Maxey, who resigned his office in 1802, when Dr. Messer became President. He was followed by Dr. Wayland, who resigned, "full of honours," in 1856. The University is now under the presidency of Dr. Barnas Sears.

This venerable Institution is nearly a hundred years old. About two thousand students have graduated there, upwards of five hundred of whom have become ministers of the gospel.

It is pleasant to be able to record that England assisted in starting the enterprise. Valuable aid was received, both in money and books, chiefly on the application of Morgan Edwards, who went to England for the purpose, and was very successful, "considering," as he said, "how angry the mother country then was with the colonies for opposing the stamp act."

Rhode Island College was named "Brown University" in 1804, in honour of Nicholas Brown Esq., to whose liberality it has been largely indebted. In the year above-mentioned he founded a Professorship in Rhetoric and Belles Letters. He afterwards erected "Hope Hall," a spacious structure, designed to afford the increased accommodation required for the students, which cost 30,000 dollars. "Manning Hall," more recently built by the same generous benefactor, has the library on the ground floor, and the upper part is used for a chapel. The library contains between thirty and forty thousand volumes.

The importance of providing means of instruction for those who intended to enter the ministry was early felt by our brethren on this Continent. A considerable sum was raised for the assistance of such persons by the Philadelphia Association. Private seminaries of education were established in different parts of the country, which were attended by many who afterwards became ministers of the gospel. The first Academy of the kind was opened by Mr. Eaton, at Hopewell, New Jersey, in 1756. Dr. Samuel Jones established another, at Lower Dublin, Pennsylvania, in 1766; and a third was founded at Wrentham, Mass., in 1776, by Mr. W. Williams, one of the first graduates of Rhode Island College. These were useful efforts. They were the germs of the noble undertakings which have characterised the present age.

I will bring this brief account of the American Baptists to a close by furnishing a notice of the more prominent ministers of the period.

Shubael Stearns was a New Light preacher in Connecticut. He became a Baptist in 1771. Three years afterwards, under the influence of an impression that he was called of God to a great work in a distant land, he left New England, accompanied by a number of his friends, and after a short residence in Virginia, settled at Sandy Creek, North Carolina, in 1755. A Baptist Church, consisting of sixteen members, was immediately formed, and active operations were commenced, much to the surprise of the neighbourhood.

"The inhabitants about this little colony of Baptists," says Benedict, "although brought up in the Christian religion, were grossly ignorant of its essential principles. Having the form of godliness, they know nothing of its power. Stearns and his party, of course, brought strange things to their ears. To be born again, appeared to them as absurd as it did to the Jewish doctor, when he asked if he must enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born. Having always supposed that religion consisted in nothing more than the practice of its outward duties, they could not comprehend how it should be necessary to feel conviction and conversion; and to be able to ascertain the time and place of one's conversion, was, in their estimation, wonderful indeed. These points were all strenuously contended for by the new preachers. But their manner of preaching was, if possible, much more novel than their doctrines. The Sermons in New England had acquired a very warm and pathetic address, accompanied by strong gestures and a singular tone of voice. Being often deeply affected themselves when preaching, correspondent affections were felt by their pious hearers, which were frequently expressed by tears, trembling, screams, and exclamations of grief and joy. All these they brought with them into their new habitation; at which the people were greatly astonished, having never seen things on this wise before. Many mocked, but the power of God attending them, many also trembled. In process of time, some of the inhabitants became converts, and bowed obedience to Redeemer's sceptre. These uniting their labours with the others, a powerful and extensive work commenced, and Sandy Creek church soon swelled from sixteen to 606 members."—(History of the Baptists, ii. 38. Edit. 1813.)

Mr. Stearns was pastor of the church, Daniel Marshall, his brother-in-law, full of zeal and love, went from place to place

## Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

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

LETTER LVIII.

#### The Quiet Period.

From A. D. 1698 to A. D. 1792.

Continued.

#### MY YOUNG FRIEND,

A few years after the establishment of the Philadelphia Association, a correspondence was opened with the Baptist ministers of London. In a letter dated Aug. 12, 1714, Abel Morgan says—"We are now nine churches. \* \* \* In these churches there are about five hundred members, but who are greatly scattered on this main land. Our ministers are necessitated to labour with their hands. We hope, if it please God to supply us with more help, we shall be more churches in a little time. Most churches administer the sacrament once a month. These ministers are all sound in the faith, and we practise most things like the British churches."—Another letter, written the following year, contained a request for assistance, in books &c., "for the preservation and further promoting of the truth in those parts." Two gentlemen responded to the request. "Mr. Thomas Hollis and Mr. John Taylor gave a supply of books: Mr. Hollis sent twelve copies of Mr. Burkitt's Annotations on the New Testament, directing that each minister in those parts might have a copy; and Mr. John Taylor gave twenty pounds worth of old books, and several copies of the Baptist Catechism." Acknowledging the gift, the church at Philadelphia wrote as follows:—"your letter was read in our