

# 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.

### LINES

SUGGESTED ON VISITING A YOUNG FRIEND SUFFERING UNDER A SEVERE ATTACK OF TYPHOID FEVER.

RELEASE thy victim, dire Disease, nor dare  
This trembling form thus rudely to invade!  
O cease thus cruelly to persevere,  
Till courage fail and strength is quite decayed.

Give o'er thy grasp tenacious, nor thus hold  
In cruel bondage, 'neath thy iron chains,  
Force to the cheek no more the unnatural glow,  
Nor send life's current boiling through the veins.

Are there not those within thy wide domain,  
Borne down with sorrow and with grief oppressed,  
Who, wearied with life's turmoils, cares and woes,  
Would gladly leave earth's scenes and join the blest!

To distant lands where despot tyrants rule:  
Where law's forgotten and where terror reigns:  
O speed thy way, and to some sufferer bring  
A sweet release from all his toils and pains.

But oh! where peace and quiet love to dwell,  
Where youth and beauty with their train repair,  
Do not invade; but our petition hear,  
And those we love a little longer spare.

"Mistaken Mortal, stop thy plaintive theme:  
"Surely of me thou mak'st a bold request,  
"Since not at random I my victims choose,  
"But serve that One who doeth all things best.

"It is not me of whom thou dost complain:  
"I'm but the bearer of His Sovereign rod,  
"Tis mine His mandates promptly to obey,  
"Thine to be still and know that he is God.  
Horton.

S. A.

\* In allusion to the sufferings in India.

## Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

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

LETTER XLIV.

#### The Troublous Period.

From A. D. 1567 to A. D. 1688.  
Continued.

#### MY YOUNG FRIEND,

Under the Commonwealth and the Protectorate the freedom which was enjoyed was improved by the churches. Itinerating excursions were frequently made by acceptable preachers, whose aim was not so much to proselytise men to their sect as to convert them to God. Great numbers were converted by their instrumentality. And the stated labours of many of the pastors were extensively blessed. The good work prospered in those days.

Freedom implies the right to differ. We must not be surprised at the lack of uniformity among our ancestors. There were controversies among them, which were not always carried on with courtesy and forbearance; those qualities were but little valued in the seventeenth century. The greatest virulence was displayed in the disputes about doctrines. The advocates of Arminianism contended with the Calvinists. The former charged the latter with uncharitableness, and were in their turn accused of latitudinarianism. Each looked on the other with a jaundiced eye. This controversy has ceased to rage. There have been tacit concessions on both sides, or at least, an abandonment of certain extreme views—perhaps it would be better to say, incautious expressions.

The question of communion was another cause of agitation. Bunyan's gentle temper was sadly ruffled by it. His zeal for open communion led him to speak in such disparaging terms of "water baptism" as no other writer of our denomination in that age would have ventured to employ. He was ably answered by D'Anvers and Kiffin.

Singing in worship was another subject of dispute. Strange as it may appear to us, many good men in those days refused to join in it or allow it. Benjamin Keach had great difficulty in introducing the practice in the church under his care. He wrote a book in defence of his views, entitled, "The breach repaired in God's wor-

ship; or, singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs proved to be a holy ordinance of Jesus Christ." Ivimey observes, that "in the present day, when this practice is universal, it will appear unaccountable that our forefathers should require arguments to prove the following particulars, viz:—What it is to sing—That there can be no proper singing without the voice—'Tis not simple heart-joy, or inward rejoicing without the voice—A metaphorical singing mentioned in scripture—No mental singing, as there is no mental praying—The essence of singing no more in the heart or spirit than the essence of preaching, &c—Singing is a musical melodious modulation, or turning of the voice, &c, &c—with a number of other particulars equally curious, and to us self-evident. Crosby says, 'Though he had very great success in this controversy, yet it brought upon him much trouble and ill-will. When he was convinced that singing the praises of God was a holy ordinance of Jesus Christ, he laboured earnestly and with a great deal of prudence and caution to convince his people thereof; and first obtained their consent to the practice of it at the conclusion of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and had but two of the brethren in the church who opposed him therein. After his church had continued in this practice about six years, they further consented to practise the same on public thanksgiving days, and continued therein about fourteen years; and then by a regular act of the church, in a solemn manner agreed to sing the praises of God on every Lord's day, excepting about five or six persons that dissented therefrom: and if I am not mistaken this was the first church that thus practised this holy ordinance. But so far was Mr. Keach, or the church, from imposing on the consciences of those few that dissented (though the church then consisted of some hundreds) that they agreed to sing when prayer was concluded' after the sermon; and if those few who were not satisfied could not stay the time of singing, they might freely go out and the church would not be offended at them; for they did not look upon singing the praises of God as an essential of communion, nor for the being, but for the comfort and well-being of a church. "Notwithstanding this care and consideration, however, the malcontents would not yield. They withdrew, and founded another church, "upon the same principles, singing only excepted;" so difficult was it to remove long-standing prejudices.—(History, ii. 373-375.)

Laying on of hands after baptism was practised by some, but strongly objected to by others, and sometimes churches differing from each other on this subject refused inter-communion. In a Confession of Faith prepared by the General Baptists, and presented to Charles II, in 1660, the following is the twelfth article:—"That it is the duty of all such who are believers baptized to draw nigh unto God in submission to that principle of Christ's doctrine, to wit, prayer and laying on of hands, that they may receive the promise of the Holy Spirit, Heb. vi. i. 2; Acts viii. 12, 15, 17; 2 Tim. i. 6; whereby they may mortify the deeds of the body, Rom. viii. 13; and live in all things answerable to their professed intentions and desires, even to the honour of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light."—(Confessions of Faith—Hansard Knolly's Society, p. 113.) Thomas Grantham, a celebrated minister in that Connexion, thus explains it:—"That as God has promised to give the Holy Spirit to all that are called of the Lord, so he hath appointed a solemn way wherein his servants and handmaids are to wait upon him for the reception thereof, which way is the prayers of the church, performed by her ministers or pastors with laying on of hands, and this as a principle of Christ's doctrine, belonging to them in the minority of their Christian state."—(Quoted in "Fenstanton Records," p. 157.) The practice was first introduced about the year 1645.

Some few believed in the perpetuity of the Jewish Sabbath; but the majority observed the first day of the week, in common with christendom in general.

Here and there a church observed the washing of feet, and had a love-feast before the Lord's supper.

But though in these and some other points the English Baptists were not altogether agreed among themselves, in one thing there was entire union. They were of one mind in resisting Antichristianism, even "unto blood." They were united in pleading for the rights of conscience, and they shrunk not from suffering. They could not all subscribe the same confession, nor take part in the same ceremonies. But they were "of one heart and one soul" in readiness to "endure all things" for the truth's sake. The plunderings, and imprisonments they suffered were frightful, and will never be fully known on earth. Some of their ministers were very cruelly dealt with. Francis Bampffield was eight years in Dorchester jail, and spent the last year of his life in Newgate, where he died. John Miller was confined ten years in the same jail. Henry Foety was twelve years in prison at Exeter. John Bunyan was in Bedford jail twelve years. Joseph Wright lay in Maidstone jail twenty years. George Fownes died in Gloucester jail. Thomas Delaune and many other servants of God died in Newgate.

I will now proceed to give you some account of the principal English Baptist Worthies of the seventeenth century.

It is much to be regretted that we know so little of the personal history of John Smyth, Thomas Helwisse, and John Spilsbury. All the information I have been able to gather respecting Mr. Smyth has been already communicated to you. I am not able to add much to the notice of Mr. Helwisse, whose settlement in London has been recorded in a former letter. He wrote several small treatises, which were much prized. His sentiments on persecution, and on the unlawfulness of the magistrate's interference in religious affairs, were so unacceptable to John Robinson, the celebrated Independent minister, to whose church the New England Pilgrims had belonged, that he published a reply, shewing that though he and his friends suffered so much from that interference they were not willing to give it up. Mr. Robinson held that the magistrate might "use his lawful power lawfully for the furtherance of Christ's kingdom and laws." He observed—"It is true, they [the magistrates] have no power against the laws, doctrine, and religion of Christ; but for the same, if their power be of God, they may use it lawfully, and against the contrary."—(Tracts on Liberty of Conscience, p. 92.) This is a surrender of the whole case, as you will doubtless perceive. Mr. Helwisse's views, which were fully expressed in "Persecution judged and condemned," were far sounder and more scriptural. Crosby says, "How long Mr. Helwisse lived, and continued the elder of this church of Baptists in London, I cannot find. The books wrote against them at this time shew that they went on with great courage and resolution; and notwithstanding the severities used against them by the civil power, increased very much in their numbers.—(i. 275.)

Neither can I satisfy your curiosity respecting Mr. John Spilsbury, the pastor of the first Particular or Calvinistic Baptist Church, which met in Broad Street, Wapping, London. I can only say that his signature is affixed to the Confession of Faith published in 1646, and to sundry other public documents, the last being the "Humble Apology of some commonly called Anabaptists," presented to Charles II. in 1660, as a disclaimer of sympathy with Venner's insurrection. I observe that though he joined William Kiffin in a letter to the Baptists in Dublin, persuading them to submit quietly to the Protectorate, he afterwards united with a number of others in an Address to Cromwell, earnestly protesting against his assumption of the kingly title. It may be concluded that Mr. Spilsbury was a man of influence in the Denomination. How long he lived after the Restoration does not appear. Hercules Collins became pastor of the Church in Broad Street in 1677. Whether he was Mr. Spilsbury's immediate successor, I have not the means of deciding.

Henry Denne was a man of note. He was educated in the University of Cambridge, where he acquired a respectable standing. Having received ordination from the bishop of St. David's, about the year 1630, he was presented to the living of Pyrtón, in Hertfordshire, which he held for ten years, greatly to the profit of the inhabitants, by whom he was justly esteemed as an instructive and faithful preacher. During all this time he had been an attentive observer of the state-church system. In 1641 he was appointed to preach at a visitation held at Baldock, and he determined to embrace the opportunity of exposing the evils which had long grieved and vexed him, particularly "the sin of persecution, the vices of the clergy, and the corruptions in doctrine and worship which he apprehended to be in the established church." His text was John v. 35. After an ingenious introduction he proceeded to execute his purpose, and laid on the lash quite freely. The pride and covetousness of the clergy, their pluralities, their neglect of duty by non-residence, and other evils, were held up to view, and reformation boldly demanded. "I must call upon those in authority," he said, "to make diligent search after these foxes. If the courts had been so vigilant to find out these, as nontconformable ministers, surely by this time the church would have been as free from them, as the land from wolves. But they have preferred the traditions of men before the commandments of Almighty God. I tell you, that conformity hath ever sped the worse for their sakes, who breaking the commandments of God think to make amends with conformity to the traditions of men."—(Crosby, i. 298, 301.)

You will not be surprised at hearing that soon after this he announced his change of sentiments. In the early part of 1643 he was baptized by Mr. Thomas Lamb, pastor of the church in Bell Alley, Coleman Street, London. His gifts were thankfully recognized by the church, and by their direction he engaged in a mission to the Counties of Staffordshire and Cambridgeshire, where he preached the gospel with great success and formed many churches. This roused the ire of the Presbyterian authorities. He was arrested and imprisoned at Cambridge. By the interference of a friend his case was brought before Parliament, in order to which he was removed to the Peterhouse, Aldersgate Street, London. The notorious Dr. Featly was in the same prison, as a royalist. Mr. Denne challenged him to a disputation. They met and fought, in the usual way, with propositions and syllogisms, till the Doctor was tired, and withdrew from the conflict. Mr. Denne carried on the war with his pen, and published a reply to Dr. F's famous book, "The Dippers dipt," &c. He was soon released, and was appointed minister of Eltisley parish, Cambridgeshire, from which place, as a centre, he itinerated in various directions, preaching and baptizing. In 1645 he visited the County of Kent, and his labours were blessed to many. In 1646 he was apprehended at Spalding, in Lincolnshire, for baptizing; but as his enemies were unable to substantiate the charge, for want of sufficient evidence, they were compelled to let him go.

The opposition Mr. Denne met with issued in his leaving Eltisley. He then entered the army, and served several years. But he did not desist from preaching, nor was it necessary, for praying and preaching were no strange things among the parliamentary soldiers. "Cornet Denne" was his military title, but "Parson Denne" was the appellation by which he was known among his associates. I cannot tell whether he saw any fighting or not, nor in what parts of England the regiment to which he was attached was from time to time quartered. The only recorded event is his narrow escape from death as a mutineer. In May, 1649, he took part in a mutiny of the troops, partly occasioned by the men's unwillingness to join the expedition to Ireland, and partly by discontent with the existing state of affairs. Prompt measures were taken, and the revolt was quelled; but Mr. Denne and three others were sentenced