

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

The "Presbyterian Witness."

MR. EDITOR,

A friend has brought me the Presbyterian Witness of the 26th ult., in which I find some statements not undeserving attention.

The Witness says that "there is certainly as much scriptural authority for infant baptism as for Sabbath observance." I am sorry to hear this, for if it be true we shall assuredly lose the Lord's day. It will be impossible to retain it, if it can be proved that it has no better authority in Scripture than infant baptism has.

Again: the Witness asks the Messenger to "point out a solitary Presbyterian writer on baptism who grounds that ordinance on the authority of the Church of Rome or on 'tradition.'" I am not much acquainted with Presbyterian writers, but I believe that the North British Review is the Organ of the Free Church. The following passage occurs in the number for August, 1852:—"Infant baptism cannot be clearly traced higher than the middle of the second century; and even then it was not universal. Some, indeed, have argued that in the silence of Scripture it is fair to presume that a custom whose existence is seen in the second century must have descended from the Apostles: but the presumption is wholly the other way. Baptism appears in the New Testament avowedly as the rite whereby converts were incorporated into the Christian Society: the burden of the proof is entirely on those who affirm its applicability to those whose minds are incapable of any conscious act of faith." \* \* \* "A brighter day is dawning. Dr. McNeile, Mr. Litton, we may almost add, the Archbishop of Canterbury, are perceiving that the practice of infant baptism is not found in Scripture." \* \* \* "The language of the Apostolic Church does not apply to infant baptism." Perhaps this will be satisfactory to the Witness.

Once more. The Witness says:—"Who were the great reformers? Certainly not the anarchical Anabaptists." I pass by the offensive terms, "anarchical" and "Anabaptist"—deliberately offensive, no doubt—and merely ask permission to state, for the Witness's information, that Christian Baptists were engaged in the great work of reform long before Presbyterian Anti-Baptists were heard of—long before either Luther or John Knox was born.

SOMEBODY.

March 3, 1859.

For the Christian Messenger.

"Ask History."

—Presbyterian Witness, Feb. 26th.

MESSRS EDITORS,—

I was pained to read in your last number the quite ungenerous, not to say unjust, insinuation, which closes the article from your cotemporary, the Presbyterian Witness, aimed, as it was, at Baptists,—Have Pedobaptists attempted in vain to stand against Rome? Ask history. Who were the great Reformers? Certainly not the Anarchical Anabaptists."

Now, supposing it right to include Baptists among the "Anarchical Anabaptists," (so called), because of a single point of agreement, is it right or noble thus to implicate the former in the gross inconsistencies of the latter? In the general denomination of Pedobaptists, our Presbyterian brethren happen to be found in unpleasant company with the Roman Catholics. But I would hope that no Baptist,—no, not even the Christian Messenger,—would, on that ground, lay to their charge the peculiar enormities belonging only to that Apostate Church. Yet this is what your cotemporary has done. It is the principle on which he has acted. And in your reply I was gratified that you "left him alone in his glory." To the Baptists of England, Dr. Chalmers pays the following tribute: "Let it never be forgotten of the Particular Baptists of England, that they form the denomination of Fuller, and Carey, and Ryland, and Hall, and Foster; that they have originated among the greatest of all missionary enterprises; that they have enriched the Christian literature of our country with authorship of the most exalted piety as well as of the first talent and the first eloquence; that they have waged a very noble and successful war with the hydra of Antinomianism; that perhaps there is not a more intellectual community of ministers in our islands, or who have put forth, to their number, a greater amount of mental power and mental activity in the defence and illustration of our common faith; and, what is better than all the triumphs of genius or understanding, who by their zeal and fidelity and pastoral labor among the congregations which they have reared, have done more to swell the lists of genuine discipleship in the walks of private society, and thus both to uphold and to extend the living Christianity of our nation."

And with this testimony for the Baptists of England, may be cited that of Dr. Baird, of New York, (also not a Baptist), in favour of the Baptists this side the water, so far, at least, as their ministry is concerned, that "it comprises a body of men, who, in point of talent, learning, and eloquence, as well as devoted piety, have no superiors in the country,"—and of the denomination numerically, it might have been added, that they are more than twice that of any other, save one, the Methodist—their ratio of increase for the last sixty years having exceeded by far that of the country's population—and this, notwithstanding their proverbially Calvinistic theology, elevated standard of Church membership, unaccommodating ordinances, &c.—in view of which facts, another has remarked "It is certainly singular, and well deserving the attention of the philosophical enquirer, that a denomination of religious people,

retaining with such conscientious pertinacity, practices as unpopular as immersion in water and strict communion at the Lord's table, should have made such successful progress in the competition of sects."

The point of agreement alluded to between Baptists of the present day and the "Anarchical Anabaptists" of former times, is their common recognition of immersion as the only Scriptural mode of baptism. And if this, in the view of our Presbyterian brother, is sufficient to constitute one a Baptist, then are we happy to know that "the great reformers" were Baptists, (which answers his question) and we thankfully accept for the Denomination the honor which those noble spirits have bequeathed to their disciples and followers. Says

LUTHER—The term baptism is a Greek word, and may be translated dipping, as when we dip anything in water, that it may be wholly covered; and although the custom be now abolished among many, yet they ought to be wholly immersed, and then immediately drawn out. For the Etymology of the word evidently requires it.

MELANCTHON—"Baptism is an entire action, to wit, a dipping, and the pronouncing of these words, "I baptize thee," &c.

CALVIN—"The very word baptize, however, signifies to immerse, and it is certain that immersion was the practice of the Ancient Church."

DR. CHALMERS—"The original meaning of baptism is immersion, and though we regard it as a point of indifference, whether the ordinance so named, be performed in this way, or by sprinkling, yet we doubt not that the prevalent style of administration in the Apostles' days, was by an actual submersion of the whole body under water."

But great names, after all, are less important than great principles, and should be less honored. It matters little what names great and true principles assume, or, through what names, act from time to time; they are divine, omnipotent, and must prevail.

The principles of the Reformation, of all reformations in the church, from Luther to Chalmers, from the Apostles to the present, have been: Justification by faith: The spirituality and independence of Christ's Kingdom: The sufficiency and supreme authority of the Scriptures: "The Bible, the Bible only, the religion of Protestants": "The Bible our Great Church Directory and Statute Book," &c. And here especially, if no where else, may not Baptists pride themselves on their relationship to the "Great Reformers," and base their titles to at least equal heirship with their brethren of other names?

Merle D'Aubigne, to whom our Bro. of the Witness is probably indebted for the most he knows of the "Anarchical Anabaptists," inserts the following in the Preface to his valuable History of the Reformation:—

"On one point it seems necessary to guard against misapprehension. Some persons imagine that the Anabaptists of the times of the Reformation, and the Baptists of our day, are the same. But they are as different as possible: there is at least as wide a difference between them as there was between the Episcopalians and the Baptists, when the English Baptists separated in the sixteenth century, from the Episcopal establishment. They did it without being at all influenced by the Anabaptists of the continent:—the example of some of these had rather kept them together. So much for the historical affinity. As to principles, it is enough to look at the social and political opinions of the Anabaptists, (vol. iii p. 293) to see that the present Baptists reject such sentiments. The doctrine of the Mennonites themselves differs not essentially from that of other Protestant communions. These are truths so well known, that I am surprised there is need to repeat them."

And Fessenden, (as D'Aubigne quotes) in his "Encyclopedia" article, "Anabaptist," says:—

"It is but justice to observe that the Baptists in Holland, England, and the United States, are to be considered as entirely distinct from those seditious and fanatical individuals above mentioned; as they profess an equal aversion to all principles of rebellion of the one, and enthusiasm of the other."

Many of the Reformers were Pedobaptists, 'tis true, and conformed themselves to the Pedobaptist usages of their times, though with what Protestant consistency let their own words judge them. So hard is it to harmonize judgment and action, confession and practice even in the best. But Pedobaptism once was quite a different thing from what it now is. Unconsciously, perhaps, do we associate with that rite as indispensable to it, Sprinkling: but not such, generally, was Pedobaptism in its early history. Then, Infant Baptism was Immersion: except in extreme cases, as for the dying, the sick, the infirm, who were called "climics," and hardly considered lawfully baptized. No other mode, it seems, was practised, or countenanced, or held valid, except for the sick, affusion or pouring at first, afterwards aspersion or sprinkling, till, by degrees, the latter modes gaining ground in the popular favor, and growing more frequent in common practice—(perhaps, for reasons and arguments familiar to our ears)—it was at length declared by the Council of Ravenna, in A. D. 1311, that immersion, or pouring was indifferent. Either of them was lawful baptism. The latter, from that date, seems to come into more general use in the Papal States. And along with it still, its yet un-lawful rival,—Sprinkling, which was not introduced into England, however, till the middle of the sixteenth century, and then not sanctioned there till the middle of the seventeenth, when the Westminster Assembly, unable, doubtless, longer to withstand the bold innovator, decided, that "dipping of the persons in water is not necessary," but baptism is rightly administered by pouring, or sprinkling water upon the person,—the decision being carried "by a majority of one—there being twenty-five for it and twenty-four against it." But the churches of Asia and Africa and the Greek churches of Europe i. e. the whole Christian world besides, appear to have remained still in the practice of immersion for baptism, which practice remains even to the present wherever those churches remain.

These facts are confirmed by "asking history." The following are Pedobaptist writers of acknowledged authority:—

DR. WHITBY—"It were to be wished, that this custom, (immersion) might be again, of general use, and aspersion only permitted, as of old, in case of the climici."

DR. NEANDER—"In respect to the form of baptism it was, in conformity with the original institutions, performed by immersion.—It was only with the sick, that any exception was made—and in this case baptism was administered by sprinkling."

VALESIUS—"People which were sick and baptized in their beds, could not be dipped in water by the priest, but were sprinkled with water by him. This baptism was thought imperfect and not solemn, for several reasons."

VENEMA—"It is without controversy that baptism in the primitive church was administered by immersion in water, and not by sprinkling. It was performed in a river, a pool, or a fountain. Beveridge, on the fiftieth Apostolic Canon, asserts, that the ceremony of sprinkling began to be used instead of immersion about the time of Pope Gregory, in the sixth century, but without producing any testimony in favour of his assertion; and it is undoubtedly a mistake. Martene declares in his Antiq. Eccles. that in all the ritual books, or pontifical manuscripts, ancient or modern, that he had seen, immersion is required; except by the C-nomanesian and that of a more modern date, in which pouring on the head is mentioned. In the Council of Ravenna, also, held, in the year 1311, both immersion and pouring are left to the determination of the administrator,—and the Council of Nismes, in the year 1284, permitted pouring if a vessel could not be had; therefore only in case of necessity."

DR. WALL—"France seems to have been the first country in the world, where baptism by affusion was used ordinarily to persons in health and in the public way of administering it."—"It being allowed to weak children to be baptized by aspersion," (in England, the reign of Elizabeth) "many fond ladies and gentlemen first, and then, by degrees, the common people, would obtain the favour of the priest, to have their children pass for weak children, too tender to endure dipping in the water. As for sprinkling, properly called, it seems, it was, at 1645, just then beginning, and used by very few. It must have begun in the disorderly times after '41. They," (the Westminster divines) "reformed the font into a basin. The Greek church does still use immersion, and so do all other Christians in the world except the Latins. All the Christians in Asia, all in Africa, and about one third part of Europe are of the last sort, (immersionists,) in which third part of Europe are comprehended the Christians of Grecia, Thracia, Servia, Bulgaria, Prussia, Wallachia, Moldavia, Russia, Nigra and so on—and even the Muscovites, who, if coldness of the country will excuse, might plead for a dispensation with the most reason of any."

The practice then of sprinkling for baptism, is of comparatively recent origin, and the authority for it evidently human—not divine. But as the act of sprinkling is not essential to Pedobaptism, and did not originally pertain to it, in common usage, another line of investigation will have to be instituted in search for the authority of that rite—which with your permission, Messrs. Editors, and the permission of Divine Providence, shall be resumed in a future number. Meanwhile I remain yours, in love of the truth,

HOIT.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Home Mission again.

DEAR BROTHER,

I am about tired of seeing my name in your columns in connexion with the above object, and I imagine that others also must be weary of seeing it. But servants must do as they are bidden, and the H. M. Board have commanded me to write thus and so again.

Since the valuable remittance of the Amherst church, a worthy brother of the Portauquique church communicates the good news of a subscription there to the amount of about £20. And what is better, he sends in cash 20s. from Mrs. J. P. Crowe, of Upper Economy, and 12s. 6d. from Mr. Isaac Fulton, of Barre River.

I have also the pleasure of acknowledging the receipt, on the 4th inst., of £9 12s. 6d. from the church and people of Pleasant Valley, Cornwallis.

The matter is better explained by the following letter,—

"BERWICK, March 1, '59.

"Dear Bro. Bentley.—I read the Circular to the first large congregation that came together after I received it. Bro D. Freeman was present, and laid before the audience the extent and state of the mission field. I then told the people they would be called upon to contribute to this good cause.

"I divided the country over which the church extends into small sections, and then appointed persons residing in these sections to call on the people. I gave about a fortnight, and at the end of this time the sum of £9 12s. 6d. was handed me with the names of the donors.

"I want of systematic effort, in our country places, is often the secret of poor success. If the knowledge of our plan will serve the cause you are at liberty to publish it.

"God is pouring out his Spirit upon us. The people would have done more for the H. Mission but they have much on their hands now. They have just purchased a parsonage, and the meeting-house is not wholly paid for.

"I have baptized 58 persons, and more stand ready to obey their Lord.

"Yours in Christ,  
"E. M. SAUNDERS."

All this is gratifying. It needs no comment. The list of donors is headed by Bro. Saunders and wife, and Father Wm. Chipman, and is filled up to the number of 70 by the names of sundry good deacons and brethren, and Christian women, and by persons of both sexes young and old. I reserve the list for publication in next Annual Report.

Let me invite others to "Go and do likewise."  
Yours in hope,  
S. N. BENTLEY.

Halifax, March 7th, '59.

For the Christian Messenger.

Mr. Chambers on the "Messenger" and Baptist Ministers.

MR. EDITOR,—

I was somewhat surprised at the remarks alluded to in your issue of the 16th ult., wherein the hon. member for Newport (Mr. Chambers) indulges in remarks respecting the freedom of the Baptist organ—the Christian Messenger—and of the pastors of our numerous Baptist Churches. Such remarks are a libel upon a body of ministers and people who have ever felt the greatest jealousy for their liberty of thought, freedom of speech, and uncontrolled action. No excuse can be made for such gratuitous assertions, but that of ignorance; and living, as the member does, in the midst of a Baptist community, he can hardly be excused on that score. He asserts that the Messenger is under the control of the Attorney General—that therefore our Baptist ministers cannot speak through that organ but with his permission. What would be said if a similar remark had been made respecting the Presbyterian Witness being under the control of Mr. Young, or the Provincial Wesleyan under the censorship of some leading member of the Methodist body in the Legislature? Would not Mr. Chambers have been the first to resent such an aspersion? When a member last winter, perhaps unfortunately, applied the term "fraud and forgery" to some transactions connected with the Protestant Alliance, what an ado was made about slandering the ministers connected with that society; and if now an allusion is made to that organization being a political one, a great hue and cry is raised because the word of its Secretaries or officers is doubted when they deny the charge; but a wholesale, slanderous charge can be made against over seventy ministers, pastors of Churches in Nova Scotia, and it is thought so little of as hardly to cause a remark from a member in the House. Are our seventy Baptist ministers indeed so tongue-tied that they dare not state their grievances? and are they so controlled by slavish fears as to be unable to make known their position? Baptist ministers, I call upon you to vindicate your honor! Come out, if the Messenger dare not, state your grievances. Write a full statement of your treatment by the Attorney General, and of the editors of the Christian Messenger, sign your names to it like men, and enclose it to your sympathizing friend Mr. Chambers, and he will get it published for you, and will no longer see your dearest rights and privileges invaded.

Does not Mr. Chambers know that we have one hundred and thirty-five Baptist Churches in this Province, and that each of these is a separate organization, that they on principle acknowledge no ecclesiastical combination, and each body, be it ever so small, acts entirely independent of the others—so Mr. Johnston must have more power than I think his opponents would themselves allow, could he combine the large number of Churches, and control so large a number of their ministers. But some persons, to serve their purpose, willingly remain ignorant. Does not Mr. Chambers know that on politics our denomination is largely divided, acting out their own individual views on matters of government, whilst fully and firmly united on their religious principles? Are not many of Mr. Chambers' own supporters Baptists? and are they and their venerable minister so degraded as to be under the ban and proscription of Mr. Johnston and the Christian Messenger? Are not many of the leading Liberals in King's County, as well as a majority in Cumberland County, Baptists? Are they under the restraint alluded to? If I mistake not, a large number of Mr. Johnston's opponents in Annapolis County are Baptists. Are they so servile as to support a press, controlled by an individual they oppose with their political strength? Let those ministers and members who are proscribed by the organ they have for so many years adopted to speak their sentiments, and for whom Mr. Chambers has appeared as a champion, arise and let the truth be known.

If Mr. Chambers is correct, then the sooner we Baptists are acquainted with the fact the better, that we may remedy the evil, as it should never be a libel permitted to stand against a large denomination, that they have sold their independence, either religiously or politically. Although Mr. Johnston is now at the head of the Government, and many Baptists are pleased to see him in that position, not because he is a Baptist, but because they believe him highly competent as a gentleman of ability, experience and integrity to lead in the affairs of the Province, they have received perhaps less favors and offices during his administration than any other body whose numbers are so large in this Province; but whilst the denomination has never sought to control him in carrying out his views of Government, they at the same time would not allow Mr. Johnston or any other member of the Government to trespass upon their civil and religious privileges, although Mr. Chambers may venture to assert the contrary.

A KINGS CO. BAPTIST.