

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, FEBRUARY 23, 1859.

WHAT Baptist in Nova Scotia can read the communication of the Rev. D. Freeman in our columns of to-day, without feeling, as regards much of our Missionary efforts of late years, that "we are verily guilty" in this matter? Indeed it would almost seem that our zeal for missions were in an inverse proportion to our growth in wealth and numbers. Since our worthy departed brother, David Harris, then approaching his three score and ten years, first visited our eastern shores, and planted the gospel in several of its harbours among the hardy population, which until then had scarcely ever heard the blessed sound, our churches have, we suppose, been more than doubled. For several years the little Christian colonies that he organized in those places, were fostered and fed by the care of our old Missionary Board, still quickened by the influence and prayers of the early Apostles of Nova Scotia—the Mannings, Dimocks, Hardings, and others, since gone to their rest. For a description of their present condition, we refer to Brother Freeman's letter. Of the other localities spoken of by him, as far as the Baptists are concerned, the same tale may be told. Whatever spiritual assistance may have been afforded them has mainly been by other bodies of Christians, more zealous than ourselves. We were the first to visit them, and we regret to say, seem to have been the first to leave them to themselves; for the few lonely churches that are struggling on for a doubtful existence, have in a great measure been kept up by the individual labours of a few devoted men, with but comparatively little aid from the great body of Baptist people, who, we might almost say, are rolling in the wealth of spiritual blessings and privileges in other parts of the Province. We fear that if dear old Fathers Manning, or Dimock could for a moment absent themselves from the assembly of the first-born, and look down upon us, they might well exclaim with Paul to his Corinthian brethren, "Now in this, I praise you not." We are far from the desire or intention of assuming the office of accusers of our brethren, but surely the present lifeless state of our Missionary operations, as compared with the cry for help, from two-thirds of the area over which we profess to extend our charge, is anything but creditable to our zeal in the great cause of extending the kingdom of Christ. Shall this state of things continue, or shall we not rather awake from our lethargy, and attempt something more worthy of the examples set us by our fathers.

"The Claims of the Catholic Church."

We did intend to leave this extraordinary publication, without further notice than what has appeared in our last two numbers, until after the Reply by the Rev. Dr. Cramp, now in course of preparation, had made its appearance. On further consideration, however, we think we shall hardly be doing justice to ourselves or our readers without giving our unqualified protest against the assumptions it contains.

Every true Protestant, on perusing this pamphlet, must have his feelings aroused, and cannot help raising an earnest enquiry as to the foundation Mr. Maturin has for the bold statements he here puts forth. The Roman Catholic Church, he asserts, is the only true Church; and, instead of going into the consideration of the "particular doctrines," wishes rather "to direct attention to one short, easy method of deciding all controversies in religion. It is simply this—THE CHURCH IS DIVINE, therefore all she teaches is true, certain, and infallible. There is one Church founded by our blessed Lord, which has continued to the present time, and will continue to the end of the world. To this one Church he has promised the perpetual guidance of the Holy Ghost, by which alone she is secured from all possibility of error. It follows, therefore, that every doctrine taught by that Church as an article of faith, must be received on divine authority, without the necessity of submitting it first to the exercise of reason and argument."

If this work were simply Mr. Maturin's Letter to his late Parishioners, it would be but a comparatively trifling affair; but, being brought out so soon after he has renounced Protestantism and embraced Romanism, and subsequent to his having spent some time in England under the direction of Cardinal Wiseman—the metropolitan Primate of that Church in Great Britain—and further, seeing that the Letter comes recommended by the Right Rev. Dr. Connolly, Bishop of St. John (see P.S. to his letter in the Freeman, Jan. 2), "to the perusal of all impartial men who wish to see both sides of the question," we think, therefore, we may reasonably consider

it as the latest authorized exposition of the claims of Catholicism on the points on which it treats. Whilst, then, we are dealing with this pamphlet of ninety-six pages, we not only recognize in it Mr. Maturin as a recent convert to the Roman Catholic faith, but may fairly treat it as a production of that Church, and take for granted that on its soundness they are willing to stand or fall. As "impartial men" are invited to give it an examination, and as Mr. Maturin, in his reference to infant baptism, concedes so much more to Baptists than to Pedobaptists, we think even he and Dr. Connolly will allow that we are entitled to claim the appellation of those Dr. C. invites, and we shall therefore expect the coming pamphlet by Dr. Cramp to have some weight even with them. A successful reply to Mr. M's pamphlet will consequently be not merely a refutation of his positions, but an entire destruction of "the claims of the Catholic Church."

This Letter, then, is not merely a comparison between the claims of the Church of England and the Church of Rome, but a new challenge to Protestantism. Had it been merely an effort to induce men to choose between two rival churches, other denominations would of course have felt but little interest in the matter; but when Mr. M. endeavors to show that Romanism has claims to universal submission, it is incumbent on us, and Protestants in general, to show up the fallacy of the ground he takes, expose its unsoundness, and give the system he calls "the true church," its proper designation. We have no desire to deal in invective, and call down anathemas on those who walk not with us, but when Mr. M. denounces the right of private judgment, and calls it "infidelity," he must not be surprised if strong language is used by those who hold that principle in high estimation. We are quite agreed with Mr. M. that "the great question is between the principle of church authority, and the principle of private judgment;" but the conclusion at which we arrive is as widely different as possible. Instead of "the former being the source of all truth, and the latter of all error," we consider, as far as the Roman Catholic Church is concerned, it is quite the reverse, and that the former is the fruitful source of every species of superstition and persecution. We further consider that inasmuch as many Protestant churches unwittingly retain the former principle at the expense of the latter, they have in them the seeds of Romanism, and shut out the great arbiter—the Word of God.

We may here quote a passage from page 59, headed "Necessity for Tradition," in which Mr. M. tries to show that infant baptism is an essential part of Protestantism, and rests only on tradition similar to that and other practices of the Catholic Church. This, however, we deny. Infant baptism is essentially derived from Romanism, and is a blot on Protestantism—on the true intent and consequences of which hardly two Pedobaptist writers agree. Whilst Protestants retain this as a part of their church organization, they put a weapon into the hands of Catholics against which they attempt in vain to stand. He says, in reference to the sufficiency of the Scriptures:—

"In point of fact, there is no Protestant Church or sect whatever, which has consistently applied this principle, and founded its system of doctrine on Scripture alone. The Church of England, indeed, adopts the principle in theory, but is unwilling to apply it in practice. Take, for instance, the case of Infant Baptism. Where is there any command or example of this nature to be found in the New Testament? It is vain to insist upon the analogy between Circumcision and Baptism, with those who totally deny its existence—it is vain to insist upon the necessity of Regeneration, with those who deny the instrumentality of Baptism for this purpose—it is vain to insist upon the probability of Infants being included in the households baptized by the Apostles, when we have no direct proof of the fact—and it is vain to insist upon the universal practice of the Church, when the appeal is made to Scripture alone. The truth is, on this principle, the Baptists have clearly the best of the argument, while all Protestant Pedobaptists are evidently inconsistent with their own rule."

Human responsibility demands the free exercise of private judgment. It is essential to genuine christianity. No living man has a right to interfere with this principle in his fellow man. Any man who gives up his title to this, and holds his religious opinions at the mercy of any other man or body of men, forfeits his claim to reason or manliness, and enters on a path which may lead him to infidelity and every other form of error, however gross its character. Salvation depends on a connection being formed between our souls and our Heavenly Father, and this, as we understand, can only be effected by a man coming to God for himself. A blind submission to a priest or even to the church is effectual only to prevent such a result. We therefore feel fully justified in denouncing this and everything which keeps men from God as devices of Satan for destroying their souls.

Human nature, especially where it is in connection with a weak mind, desires to have some inferior support to rest on, instead of depending on God's word alone. Mr. Maturin seems to have been yearning for this, even from his earliest days—some church having infallibility—a place of earthly security. We are not sure that Roman Catholics are the only churches which encourage this spirit of dependence. Wherever we allow the voice of the church, or the acts of parents, or other mere human authority to have any weight against our convictions of the demands of the Word of God, we give up this first principle of Protestantism. The individualism of true Christianity, if not ignored, is much beclouded in many Protestant churches by the parent being called on to make profession of faith on behalf of the child. The Roman Catholic church, however, not only sets aside the exercise of any personal faith in its members but actually allows members to be introduced to its communion, in case of necessity, by Jews, infidels, or heretics, men or women, and holds the baptism valid, however imperfectly administered, provided the person performing the office of administrator, intends it to be Catholic baptism.

We have not here sought to meet and confute Mr. Maturin's arguments, or to convict him of the grossest inconsistency, although that might be done by merely quoting passages from his letter. His account of his own ordination and the doubts then resting on his mind as to the truth of Protestantism, are an admission of his want of sincerity, highly discreditable to him as a man, and much more so as a gospel minister. Neither has it been our design to anticipate Dr. Cramp's Reply, which, we presume, will be according to Mr. Maturin's own recommendation to his late Parishioners, when he says:—

"Let me earnestly recommend you, then, always to take your views of Catholic doctrine, from the public documents of the Church itself, or from the authorized expositions of Catholics themselves, either in their writings or discourses."

This, we know, has been Dr. C's practice in his previous writings on this subject. We desire rather to show that it is a matter in which both Catholics and Protestants ought to be and are deeply interested, and we doubt not the latter, at least, will welcome, from whatever source, refutations of the "Claims" here attempted to be imposed on the world by a convert of but a few months profession.

Time and space will not allow us to say more in our present issue.

United States Slavery.

The black spot of slavery casts a gloom over the meteor flag of the neighboring Republic, and has frequently called forth allusions to the stripes much to the chagrin of the anti-slavery portion of her people, and yet frequent contact with these institutions appears calculated to blunt the sensibilities of even good men.

On our fourth page we have a revolting picture of what must be the common result of this abominable system—a man selling his own daughter.

We have before us a little different, but very unsatisfactory, phase of this system in the form of three tracts having reference to Slavery, published by the American Tract Society, Boston, sent to us for review.

The title of the first is, "The Bible against oppression." This contains simply the texts of Scripture bearing on the subject.

The second, "Slavery and the Bible," by the Rev. Enoch Pond, D. D., condemns the system, but gives great latitude, by advocating a very gradual extinction and removal of it.

The third, "Scriptural duties of Masters," is a sermon preached at Danville, Kentucky, in 1846, by Rev. John C. Young, D. D., President of Centre College, and Pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Danville. This, by implication, gives unblushing countenance to some of the worst features of this outrage on humanity. Whilst the Society, in publishing this tract, disclaim it as any expression of their views, yet we conceive they cannot shake off the responsibility of bringing forth a gloss for slave-masters, and giving them a sort of exemption from the opprobrium of holding their fellow-men in bondage. We may discover in this tract the sort of feeling which palliates the system in the eyes of Southern professing Christians. The learned Professor gives some very good injunctions to masters, for the kind treatment of servants, in case they were not slaves, but does not appear to think how he exposes the brutality of the system. For instance, in his condemnation of the severity which the law provides for the punishment of the slave, he encourages the master to sell his slave into another State rather than allow the law to take its course, that is to say in reality, —put the price of the slave into your pocket, rather than allow him to suffer the death penalty.

The 8th and 9th heads of this sermon are "The correction of servants (slaves) when they do amiss, is part of the duty of a master," and "Masters should enforce upon their servants the duty of respecting the rite of marriage." When it is remembered that men and women are here spoken of, it may be well understood what a brutalizing tendency the possession of unlimited power must have over them. The writer appears to shut his eyes to the fact that the master's retaining possession of the slave, is a great act of injustice leading to all his other wrongs, and an essential barrier to his conferring benefit upon him, either by "correcting him when he does amiss," or encouraging him "to respect the rite of marriage," when his master may at any moment destroy it, by selling him or his wife to another master, without the consent of either.

What surprises us most is that the Tract Society in Boston should, by this, in effect, endorse the slavery of the South. We are quite aware that a large proportion of our New England neighbours are as great haters of slavery as ourselves, and we are persuaded they must blush to see such connivance at oppression and wrong.

We rejoice in British freedom, and are proud that our unwritten constitution proclaims more truthfully than the boasted declaration of independence that "All men are free and equal."

THE extensive warlike preparations making by both France and Austria would certainly seem to betoken an approaching interruption of the peace of Europe. For what purpose but to gratify the longings of a blind and senseless ambition, no one can possibly imagine. But we have not yet arrived at the time when the Poet's remark is to be realized,—

"War is a game, which, were their subjects wise, kings would not play at."

So that the evil concupiscence of ambition may shortly again require its millions of gold and silver, and its hecatombs of human victims. We shall wait with anxiety the arrival of our English mails, to bring us information from time to time as to the probabilities of war or peace.

It appears that although the Home Government fully admit the value and importance of the Great Inter-colonial Railway from hence to Quebec, both as regards its local and national character, and appreciate the objects of the joint Delegation of the British American Provinces, they do not yet feel justified in lending Imperial aid to the undertaking. There is little doubt that the present unsettled state of Europe, and the probability that England, if not unhappily drawn into the strife of parties, may nevertheless be compelled to keep up an armed neutrality, has had chiefly to do with this decision. It would therefore seem that the Provinces must, for the present, forego this great national enterprise, however desirable. The heavy liabilities they have all lately incurred in these Railway operations, will, we fear, forbid so large an expenditure as the work in question would necessarily demand. Not many years, however, can elapse before this indispensable thoroughfare must be completed.

The Princess Frederick William of Prussia (the Queen's daughter) has presented her future subjects with a Prince, the presumptive heir to the Prussian crown. Both mother and child were doing well.

Notices of Books.

THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER. H. V. Degan, Boston. For sale by G. Churchill, Halifax.

This is a work by Mrs. Palmer, who, with her husband, Dr. Palmer, recently made a tour through these provinces as Revivalists amongst our Wesleyan friends. The object of the work is to show that women equally with men are called to preach the gospel, and that the Promise of the Father to send His Spirit is given, and his influences are copiously poured out, where this condition is complied with. Whilst we are unprepared to endorse all her statements, yet we think there is much unnecessary restriction placed upon Christian women. The customs of society exercise too much of a restraining influence upon men and especially upon women in the exercise of their gifts. Churches would doubtless be greatly benefited by more direct Christian effort and religious intercourse.

The work consists largely of narratives of good effected by zealous pious women.

MENTAL ARITHMETIC. By Hugo Reid.

This little work commences at the elements of numbers and proceeds through the various rules, including decimal and vulgar fractions, proportion, &c. A large number of exercises are given calculated to aid the teacher.

The value of mental arithmetic can hardly be over-estimated. Whilst it should not supersede written exercises it is calculated to give command over the faculties and promote attention to a process of thought and a combination of the powers of numbers, so as to produce certain results which are highly pleasing; as well as affording facilities which give great control over the power of thinking.