

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, MAY 16, 1860.

The Christian Ministry.

EVERY general awakening of the Church of Christ and enlargement of the number of its members should result in giving a corresponding increase in the number of ministers, or it may be doubted if such enlargement will not ultimately deteriorate the character of the church and render it doubtful if any real progress has after all been made.

With the democratic form of government in independent churches, it is essential that the members generally be not only genuine disciples of Christ, but that they should all be well instructed in "the things of the kingdom," and be able to act in every position to which they may be called in an intelligent manner worthy of the name they bear. In the matter of calling out men and setting them apart to the work of the ministry, there is a necessity for much wisdom and prudence. "Like priest, like people," is a proverb which in those bodies having a popular form of church government, may with much truth be transposed into "Like people, like priest." The character of a people most greatly affects the ministry. The more the churches are governed by the voice of the people, the more will this be the case. The ministry should be the highest type of the character of the churches. The people are but the embodiment of the truths and the principles they hold. How much does this view of the church shew the importance of a high tone of piety in christians generally.

It is supposed by some that there being no church court or intermediate body to control the action of a church is a disadvantage. If such were the case in any of its operations, it would be peculiarly so in that of initiating men to the sacred office of the christian ministry.

We feel this to be a subject of great delicacy, but one from which we dare not shrink. The direction to "pray the Father that he would send forth laborers into his harvest," we think was not restricted to ministers, but was given alike to all. Great responsibility rests on the people of God. Perhaps in nothing may they do so much good as in endeavouring to send forth men with the Word of Life. On the other hand, perhaps there is no part of their duty which requires more wisdom and Divine direction, than that of giving their recognition to a preacher of the gospel, commonly, but not very correctly, called, giving a license to preach.

Dr. Wayland, in his "Principles and Practices of the Baptists," has some excellent remarks on this subject, which we will take the liberty of laying before our readers. He says:—

I have often heard our mode of licensing ministers spoken of with marked disrespect. It has been said, how can we have any improvement in the ministry while the authority of licensing ministers is held by the church? What do common, uneducated brethren know about the fitness of a man to preach the gospel? I do not say that other men have heard such questions, I only say I have heard them myself.

Now with this whole course of remark I have not the remotest sympathy. I believe that our mode is not only as good as any other but further than this, that it is, more nearly than any other, conformed to the principles of the New Testament. Let our churches then, never surrender this authority to single ministers, or to councils, or to any other organization whatever. I believe that Christ has placed it in their hands and they have no right to delegate it. Let them use it in the manner required by the Master, and it can be placed in no safer hands.

In the Episcopal Church the candidate is admitted to the ministry by the Bishop. In the Lutheran Church, I believe, substantially in the same manner. In the Presbyterian Church it is done by Presbyteries. Have these means been successful in keeping the ministry pure in doctrine and holy in practices? How is it in the Established Church of England? How is it in the Lutheran churches in Germany, of whose tender mercies our own brother Oncken has had so large an experience? How is it with the old Presbyterian Church of Scotland? Of the former condition of this church we may inform ourselves by reading "Witherspoon's Characteristics." How much they have improved of late years, the secession of the Free Church might possibly inform us. But to bring this matter to a test, would we exchange our ministry, just as it is, for the ministry of either of these churches at the present day? Or, take our own country, where freedom of opinion, and the watchfulness of other denominations has had a powerful influence over these churches in matters of admission to the ministry, and look at the result. The object of a church of Christ is to subdue the world to God. Which mode of admitting men to the ministry has here been most successful in this respect? For a long time after the settlement of the colonies, Baptist sentiments were confined almost exclusively to Rhode Island. Some of our Rhode Island ministers were whipped and imprisoned for holding a private religious meeting in Lynn,

Massachusetts. The Revolution, however, abolished, for the most part, the power of the established orders, and our sentiments began to extend. At this period we were few and feeble. The men have but recently died who remembered when our whole denomination embraced but two or three Associations. The land was filled with Congregational, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian churches. We now, I presume, outnumber them all, and we should have outnumbered them to a vastly greater extent, had we not swerved from our original practices and principles for the sake of imitating those of our neighbors. We need not certainly speak lightly of a ministry, or of a mode of introducing men to the ministry, which has led to such remarkable results.

We want no change in our mode of licensing candidates. We do, however, need that the subject should receive more attention, and that in this, as in every thing connected with the church of Christ, we should specially act in the fear of God. If a church will act in this matter with conscientious desire to please the Master, we know of no better hands into which we could intrust the power of admission to the ministry. Some twenty-five years since, I knew a church refuse a license to two young men, to whom I presume, it would have been readily granted by a most any Bishop or Presbytery. Both were graduates of college; one was among the first scholars in his class, but his delivery was so exceedingly dull that he could by no possibility interest an audience. He was refused a license because the brethren could obtain no evidence that he was called to the work, inasmuch as he had no aptness to teach. He however, persevered, obtained a license from some church less scrupulous, and if I mistake not, went through a Theological Seminary, and received what is called a thorough training, but I think he was never called to be the pastor of any church and so far as I know, never entered upon the work of the ministry. The other was the case of a young man of brilliant powers of elocution, and very respectable scholarship, but of erratic and eccentric character. The same church refused to license him, because they deemed him wanting in the sobriety of character and consistency of example which are required in a minister of Jesus Christ. Subsequent events proved that they did not act without good reason. If all our churches would act in this manner, we should want to go no further to find a safe depository of the power of admitting men to the ministry. I, on the other hand, we are false to ourselves, and treat this subject as a matter of form, to be acted upon without thought or consideration, it is not our principles but ourselves that are in fault. Any system that man could devise would make mischief, if it were treated with the thoughtlessness which I fear is fast overspreading many of our churches.

We cannot afford space for the whole extract this week, but will give the remainder in our next.

We were somewhat surprised to see in the St. John Church Witness the organ of the Episcopalians in New Brunswick, a highly respectable and useful Religious Journal, a short article on the Mode of Baptism, of a very latitudinarian character. We give the article at length, and certainly if it be correct in the sentiment it conveys, nothing can be more unimportant than Baptism altogether.

MODE OF BAPTISM.—We suppose there are few subjects which have concerned Christian people, so unimportant as the manner in which a person shall be baptized. Whether in a river, or pond or baptistry; whether by dipping, or pouring, or sprinkling; makes just the same difference as whether a person shall wear straight shoes or rights and lefts. and yet to think there are Christian people, and otherwise sensible people, who can see baptism in nothing else but plunging the whole body under water; so that if a hand or a nose should unfortunately not get wet, the thing would turn out to be no baptism only a ducking! And yet sensible people believe this. They base their belief among other reasons upon the custom of Christ and his Apostles. They were immersed, they say. But the London Quarterly gives the following opinion of a learned missionary in the East, which to say the least, makes it very doubtful.

It is certain that "dip" in our English version is never baptize in the original, as it is impossible to say where three thousand people could be immersed in a day in Jerusalem. Besides, we do not believe that any living soul ever saw one man immersed by another—unless he were a European Baptist—in all the East on any one occasion. We have watched for the phenomenon in India, in Egypt, Arabia, Palestine; but never saw a native of those countries immerse himself. No doubt they do dive or duck sometimes; but we never saw it. They go down to a piece of water, sit down in it, and dash it over themselves; go in to the shoulders or swim—though seldom; but diving or ducking must be very rare. There was a tale told, we know not how true, of a baptist translation into Bengalee, which, in making the word "baptize" mean "immerse," got a term which meant "to drown." When the people heard of multitudes being "drowned" by John they innocently murmured, "What a sinner."

And another strange thing is that these same Christian people, and on every other subject but baptism, sensible people, tell us, no one can be baptized unless he is immersed by one who has himself been immersed. Now read the following:

But neither he nor any of them having been baptized as they understood the rite, and there being no minister in New England who had been baptized by immersion on a profession

of faith, in March, 1659, Ezekiel Holliman baptized Roger Williams, who then administered the rite to Holliman.

Now if this doctrine be true, then as Mr. Holliman had never been immersed, of course he could not immerse Mr. Williams; and hence Mr. Williams was not baptized, and therefore he could not baptize Mr. Holliman. And yet from this source in 1659, all the Baptists in the United States owe their origin. What strange whims takes possession of the mind!

Who the "learned missionary" is that considers it very doubtful whether the word baptizo means to immerse they do not say. We can only repeat what has been already a hundred times stated and proved, that their own church formulary, their stoutest and most learned champions for Infant baptism, and the most able and erudite writers on the subject of every Denomination, are in direct contradiction to the assumptions of the Church Witness. All those authorities plainly admit or assert that the original command of Christ was to immerse, plunge, or dip. Baptists,—be they "sensible people" or not,—having a like view, do not think they can lightly trifle with the literal import of an express command of the Saviour, because fastidious human reason may deem it unimportant. The excellent Richard Cecil, in reference to the nature and strictness of the Divine commands, very forcibly observes: "If a pious Jew, under the ancient dispensation, were directed by the law of Moses to bring a lamb to the altar for sacrifice, he had no option left him to bring a kid, and if he did so it would be disobedience and presumption instead of compliance with the command. Suppose some sect of religionists should spring up who should, instead of wine at the Lord's Supper, substitute a cup of Tea or a glass of Beer. As well might we in such case assert that "nothing could be more unimportant," than such a substitution. We hardly think our contemporary is prepared to go thus far, although we really cannot see, according to his view of the case, why he should not. We believe God's commands, in all cases, to be plain and certain to those who search diligently to know them, without preconceived notions or having their minds warped and mystified by general example, tradition or human glosses, and that we have no more right to substitute sprinkling for immersion, than a pious Jew would have had, under the law, when directed to sacrifice a sheep or a bullock, to bring a kid or a goat. As regards the other part of the question referred to by the Witness, we believe the command to be baptized is addressed to the subject and not to the person who administers the ordinance. We have no authority to say that John the Baptist had been himself baptized. He might or might not have been. We believe that our own churches, if convinced of the Christian character, of an applicant for admission to their communion, do not hesitate to receive those who have been baptized (immersed) by evangelical Pedobaptist Ministers. The whole question is mainly one of form, but it is a form, as we believe, distinctly prescribed by Christ himself.

WHAT IT MEANS.—The Editor of the Witness thinks it strange that we did not understand what was meant by "the facilities asked of Government for his (Rev. Donald Sutherland's) safe conveyance over the hills from one settlement to another." With his characteristic readiness to get over a difficulty when he gets into one, he remarks:—"Why man! nothing is plainer than that roads are meant." This may perhaps satisfy his readers but it seems a curious interpretation of "facilities for his safe conveyance over the hills." It looks very much like dust. If however "roads" and roads only, "are meant," we presume they will be for others, as well as "his safe conveyance." To say the least, it is a most clumsy mode of expressing the thing. But we will nevertheless take that as the best explanation which can be given of this "language" which the editor says "might have been clearer."

"Our contemporary," he says, "errs, in saying that it is to 'Anti-state church' principles that the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia owes its existence." He may endeavour to surround with ambiguity the term by which the most numerous body of Presbyterians in Nova Scotia are known, but if the secession from which they have descended did not arise from Anti-state church principles we should like to know what was their origin. Will he please inform us why they left the Established church?

Our contemporary seems much grieved too because grants are made to Denominational Colleges and asks, "Will the Messenger assist us now in asking the withdrawal of all grants to denominational Colleges?" We believe he is already aware that the Baptists were the first body who declined a grant to their college, and Acadia College we are proud to say has since been sustained by that denomination themselves, as no other college in Nova Scotia

has. If the whole body were animated by the same determination as an increasing portion of them are, we might safely commend them to the admiration and imitation of all other bodies of Christians.

Whenever the other Academies which receive £250 a year are desirous of having their grants withdrawn, of which we at present see no necessity on denominational grounds, we believe Baptists will not offer the slightest impediment.

MISAPPLIED INGENUITY.—"Darkness visible."—We find the following in the N. B. Colonial Presbyterian:

A QUESTION FOR BAPTISTS. Who, professing faith in Christ, are to be baptized? Table with columns: Are Adult Jews?, Are adult Heathens?, Are adult children of Church members?, Pedobaptists say, Baptists say, The Scriptures say.

The only controversy between Baptists and Pedobaptists, is about the filling up of the blank. Let Baptists fill up the blank by a Scripture reference, as explicit as that which establishes the common answer to the first and second questions, and their cause triumphs.

If our readers should think the above unworthy our notice, we entirely concur with them on that opinion. But as it shews how hard it is to get rid of prejudice, and how easy to conjure up difficulties where none really exist, it may lead us to be thankful for the clear light of Divine Truth on the subject.

The writer gives no reason for his "No," in the third line. We presume he thinks the adult children of church members must have been baptized in infancy. But in cases where those children were adults previous to their parents becoming church members, how would he then be able to say "No"? We apprehend he would instead of that have to say "yes," and we think there would be no very great misapplication of Scripture by "filling up the blank" with "yes, Acts viii. 37, or Matt. xxviii. 19, or Mark xvi. 16."

* We give this text as it appears in our contemporary. There must be some mistake in it, however, as there are only 30 verses in the 11th chapter of Acts.

IS BAPTISM INTO THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH VALID IN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES?

—This is a question which has long agitated the Presbyterian body. In 1845 it was decided in the General Assembly by a vote of 173 to 8, that "baptism in the Romish Church is not valid." The enquiry has been again revived by the Old School Presbytery of Chicago, in consequence of their receiving Father Chiniquy and his church without re-baptism.

It affords us pleasure to call attention to the advertisement on another page of THE PORTRAIT OF REV. JOSEPH DIMOCK. The account of the labours of this godly minister of Jesus Christ, given by "MENNO," will shew to our readers not previously acquainted with the facts, the important part he took in the early history of the denomination. We doubt not very many who are now reaping the fruits of his self-denying exertions, will be glad to have this really good likeness in their possession. We thank Mr. Smith for his perseverance, under many disadvantages, in bringing out this portrait, and hope that he may not be allowed to suffer pecuniary loss by the enterprise.

Anti-Temperance Legislation.

We regret that the bill which we informed our readers two weeks since, Avard Longley Esq. had brought into the Assembly has been virtually rejected by a majority of the people's representatives.

We think this a subject which concerns the people at large far more than who should be the Chairman of the Railway Board, or whether he should retain his salary at \$2800 a year. Intemperance does more to injure society and corrupt legislation than all other agents put together, and yet we find but little desire on the part of any of our contemporaries to give information to their readers with regard to this matter. Not one has given the names of those who voted to destroy this bill, which, after all, would only have given the people the power of saying whether they would have the death-traffic in their midst or not. That the people may know the nature of this measure and what are the merits of the vote their representatives gave, we have procured a copy of the clauses which the majority rejected.

The 1st and 2nd clauses, we understand, were merely to remedy defects as to dates in the License Law.

The motion made by Mr. Munro was that all the Clauses in the Bill, after the first two, be struck out; which, after a short debate was carried by 21 against 19, as follows:—