

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, APRIL 11, 1860.

What is Baptism?

THE KEY TO THE COMMUNION QUESTION.

We are not desirous of unnecessarily intruding the baptismal controversy on our readers, but when the principles and practices of Christian churches, commonly called Baptist, are attacked and misrepresented, we feel called upon to attempt, at least, a defence of that portion of our patrons from unjust charges. Ordinarily we are satisfied to advise enquirers on this subject to go to the Word of God, and follow out the instructions they find there,—to imitate the noble Bereans, who "received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so." Perhaps nothing is more to be deplored in the discussion of religious opinion than the perversion of Scripture truth to suit the purpose of the parties so engaged. Every truly conscientious and pious person must shrink from such a practice, and if he has the fear of God before him he will not hesitate to correct such perversion so soon as he discovers where he has erred.

The brief article, with the comments of a number of divines, on Romans vi. 4-6, in our last issue, we wrote before observing carefully the sentence at the beginning of the editorial article in the *Presbyterian Witness*, to which we alluded. If we had noticed it before going to press, we should have quoted it, to shew our readers how difficult it is to satisfy some parties. Even expositions of Scripture from their own ablest men are stigmatized as "perversions."

The Editor, making free with the title we gave our previous article,—"*More light wanted*,"—gives his effort at reply the heading, "*The Messenger's Light*," and commences by saying,—

"Not light, but rather darkness visible," flows from the *Messenger's* exegesis of Romans vi. 3-5. Nothing in this passage justifies the perversion of language and of Scripture truth which the *Messenger* attempts to defend."

If we were to attempt to use language such as would properly characterize this, and what the writer of it deserves, we should, doubtless, be charged with uncharitableness; we shall, therefore, content ourselves, as usual, by calling our readers to bear witness for us, that it is totally inapplicable to us, and also that it is not deserved by either of the Presbyterian commentators,—Barnes, Chalmers, and others whom we quoted. Now that we are referring to this article of our contemporary, we may just notice the difficulty he appears to find in understanding another passage of Scripture, where a reference is made to baptism. And lest it should be thought by those who do not see *The Witness* that we do not give him the full benefit of his doubt, we will quote the passage from his article:

"There is one case which puts the matter beyond a doubt—for even the plainest Christian can see the force of it: Christ promised that his disciples should be "baptized with the Holy Ghost," in fulfilment of Joel's prophecy.—"And it shall come to pass in the last days saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." Now every one knows that this baptism of the Spirit had nothing whatever to do with dipping, plunging, or immersing; it was a pouring out of the Spirit."

We ought, perhaps to apologize to our readers for making this quotation, but it would be difficult to make our corrections of what we deem the error, without doing so. The connexion which the editor tries to establish between the outpouring of the Spirit, prophesied by Joel, and fulfilled in Acts ii. 17, and baptism, has no existence, except by an unsound application of figurative language. If he tries to put the word "baptize" or "sprinkle" in the place of "pour out," he will perceive how easy it would be for him to find himself landed "in ludicrous absurdities." What appears to him a difficulty, certainly a very far-fetched one, we find capable of the most satisfactory solution; and as we give him credit for honesty in this enquiry, and as some of our readers may meet the same objection, we are perfectly willing to give them our views, and such other "light" as we may find upon it.

When it is borne in mind that going into the water is only preparatory to baptism, and not essential to it—that the primary idea in baptism is simply being covered over with water, and then emerging from it, the difficulty at once disappears,—a figurative use of baptism is found in some passages of God's Word, such as the above text, which only embodies this thought, without reference to the administrator or the action of the baptized. A person is said to be baptized by being covered or overwhelmed either from above or below. Any other idea, either

sprinkling or pouring, in connection with those passages would make nonsense. When Jesus said "I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened until it be accomplished," he evidently referred to the sorrow by which he would be overwhelmed.

Doddridge, in his *Family Expositor*, paraphrases this "I have indeed a most dreadful baptism to be baptized with, and I know that I shall be shortly bathed, as it were, in blood, and plunged in the most overwhelming distress."

JAMES HARVEY says:—"He was even straitened under a kind of holy uneasiness till the dreadful work was accomplished, till he was baptized with the baptism of his sufferings, bathed in blood, and plunged in death."

Sir H. TRELAWNEY says; "Here I must acknowledge our Baptist brethren have the advantage: for our Redeemer's sufferings must not be compared to a few drops of water sprinkled on the face, for he was plunged into distress, and his soul was environed with sorrow." And the parallel passage in Matthew xx. 22, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" Dr. Barnes paraphrases as follows:—"Are ye able to be plunged deep in affliction, to have sorrows cover you like water, and to be sunk beneath calamities as floods, in the work of religion? Afflictions are often expressed by being sunk in the floods and plunged in the deep waters."—Psalm lxxix. 2, cxxiv. 4, 5. Isaiah xliii. 2. This evidently carries out the idea of an immersion. How feeble would any other idea in baptism but an overwhelming, illustrate the sufferings of our Divine Redeemer!

Again, the Israelites are said in I Corinthians x. 2, to have been "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." On this Professor Stuart remarks, "I do not see how, on the whole, we can make less of it than to suppose that it has a tacit reference to the idea of surrounding in some way." "It is therefore a kind of figurative mode of expression, derived from the idea that baptism is surrounding with a fluid." He certainly does not give any countenance to the absurd idea that the baptism spoken of here refers to the drops which fell from the cloud and the sea.

The above authors are all well-known Pedobaptist Divines of first reputation. This is their defence of truth. We do not require their defence of practices, these very admissions shew to be erroneous. It is evident the Israelites went down into the bed of the sea, and by the cloud and the sea they were figuratively covered, from which they emerged on reaching the opposite shore. The fact from which the figure was drawn, was evidently an immersion, a surrounding, or a covering. We are not here conscious of robbing these passages of their true meaning! Rather are we endeavouring to remove the obscurity which has been given to them by the error of calling sprinkling baptism.

In the pouring out of the Spirit, referred to by our contemporary, and being baptized with the Holy Ghost, he must admit that there was such an effusion of the Spirit's power that they were as if surrounded by his presence, or filled (as if saturated) with the Holy Ghost.—See Acts ii. 2, 4.

We often hear, in the language of earnest prayer, especially amongst our Methodist brethren, Baptize us with the Holy Spirit! Is this a prayer for only a partial covering such as might be given by sprinkling or pouring? Is it not rather a prayer for so much of the Spirit's influence as may pervade the person or the Assembly? Why endeavour to "rob Scripture of its true sense by injecting into it ideas utterly repugnant to the meaning conveyed by the inspired writer?" We often speak of being bathed in perspiration, meaning covered, not put into a bath filled with perspiration; also of being immersed in business, not a literal dipping, but an immersion in the sense of being overwhelmed. We can understand these terms when applied to our common affairs. Why then make them a difficulty in religious matters? We have no desire, by "gross literalism," to "rob the most precious texts of Scripture of their greatest value."

Our contemporary has admitted some of our "light,"—or "darkness visible," if he prefers calling it by that name,—when he says, "We have no doubt that baptism may be administered by dipping or immersion," but adds, as a saving clause, "we do most emphatically deny the *Messenger's* assertion that baptism is immersion, and only immersion." His admission may be taken as a step in advance. We may at some early day give some attention to another text,—"*One Lord, one faith, one baptism.*"—Ephesians iv. 5.

SABBATH SCHOOL ANNIVERSARY.—An interesting public meeting was held in the Granville Street Chapel on Monday evening. We regret that our notice of it must be deferred till next week.

The "Chronicle" Lachrymose.

Politicians are often not very scrupulous in seizing hold of matters which do not belong to them. If they suppose that by doing so they can serve their own purposes, nothing appears sacred from their touch. It has ever been so, and we presume it will continue to be while human nature continues as it is. Those who battle for the truth must not expect that they will be allowed to escape such attempts. Having had experience of this we were not surprised to find our neighbour of the *Morning Chronicle* on Thursday last, coming forth to the rescue of his accomplice, the *Witness*, and with his characteristic want of modesty, interfering in the little correction we have felt it our duty to make of certain statements we found in that paper, and the *Provincial Wesleyan*. Just as if they are not able to take care of themselves. When we attack him we think it will be time enough for him to trouble himself about our matters. Until then, we recommend him to mind his own business, and study the words of the wise man in Proverbs, xxiv. 17.

As our readers, on both sides of politics, are not blind, we can afford to copy the remarks of our contemporary. They will doubtless smile to see how the Editor attempts to tinge the question to which he refers, and give it some other complexion than that which it really possess.

The following are his two first paragraphs: BELLICOSE.—"Our old neighbour, the *Christian Messenger*, has recently worked himself up into a very warlike condition. The Methodist and Presbyterian bodies, in a particular manner, are singled out as the subjects of attack. The whole tenor of the editorial department of late is spicily belligerent."

"But then the *Christian Messenger* declares its entire neutrality on all political questions! It is so consistent, too, with all its own antecedents! The last number has a fling at the old Bible and School question, and quotes from a recent number of the *Colonial Presbyterian* to support its policy on that question. We can see nothing at all in the quotation to sustain their views."

The idea of our attacking Presbyterians is really too ridiculous for our contemporary to impose on sensible people. Those of his readers who are also readers of the *Messenger* will know at once what value to attach to such a statement. We suppose he must have smiled sardonically himself when he penned that sentence. The quotations we made to confirm our statements were from Dr. Barnes and Dr. Chalmers both Presbyterian authors of the highest reputation, and in every other instance, also, we sustained our remarks by quotations from Presbyterians, Episcopalians and Methodists, and not one from a Baptist. How then can it be said with any truthfulness that we have attacked "the Methodist and Presbyterian bodies." On the other hand our position in each case has been that of defence from attacks, not upon the sentiments we hold, for this we could well endure, but from misrepresentations of them, and of our principles and practices. If we had allowed these attacks to pass unnoticed we might well have been charged with cowardice and pusillanimity, but little creditable to the principles with whose defence we are charged, and the history of the body to which we have the honor to belong.

In the reference the writer of the above editorial makes to "that outrage" we will only say in reply to his insinuation. If any outrage was committed, he knew it; and why was the *Chronicle* silent about the matter from the 17th of March to April the 4th? and then only to give his readers the two following brief sentences respecting the affair?

"The attack upon Mosely has been a subject of a vast deal of interest to the editor of the *Christian Messenger*."

"But they are so neutral in politics, and so afraid of a Protestant ascendancy in Nova Scotia, that they only feel it necessary to drag Mr. Mosely week after week before their readers, in order to quiet all suspicion that he had been unfairly dealt by."

If that gentleman was "unfairly dealt by," why did not the editor of the *Chronicle* or some other of his friends call on the Mayor to use some means to detect the guilty parties. We have not once mentioned the name of the gentleman, and but for the above remarks from the *Chronicle*, our readers would not have known who "the Protestant member of the House" was. We may ask then who it is that has "dragged Mr. Mosely before his readers?" Certainly not the *Messenger*. Not being acquainted with that gentleman we could have no desire to drag him where he had no wish to appear, and but for the erroneous representations calculated to damage the reputation of the city of Halifax sent forth by a contemporary, we should not have made the most distant allusion to this matter.

The *Chronicle* and its associate the *Witness* have been very anxious to persuade their readers that we pretend to be "neutral in politics"; a position we have never professed. Whilst we do not choose to take our

stand as partisans on either side, we do not see that we must therefore necessarily be "neutrals." We feel ourselves perfectly independent to speak on all public matters and are restrained only by our own self-imposed limits in the discussion of any question which comes up for public examination. We are happy that we live in the nineteenth century in a free country, and can listen to "plain talk," from any parties, however exalted; and we are happy also that we have no party trammels which will prevent us talking, just as plainly, in return, so long as we confine ourselves to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Religious newspapers, like religious men, are not to be dictated to by those who would make use of them to accomplish their designs, or silenced by threats of "plain talk."

We have before advised our neighbour that in matters of civil government we can consent to no "Ascendency," on account of religious opinion, Presbyterian, Episcopal or Methodist; Protestant or Catholic. He may promote hypocrisy and religious rancour and may cause bloodshed and even death by his efforts to make "Geneva the master of this field," but he will not promote true religion or righteousness. Whenever a triumph is gained by the use of either of these names, as a war-cry, it can be but temporary, in a free country, where Civil and Religious Liberty is properly valued.

It will not be difficult to account for the supposed appearance of "a ghost in the Astor Library" a week or two since, of which an account is given on our fourth page. The exhausted system of Dr. Cogswell by the continued close application to his labour was just fitted to produce such an illusion. The investigation of his previous course of thought would doubtless give a clue to the hallucination, and satisfy all, but those wishing it to be otherwise, that the ghost was rather in the Dr's disorganized optics than in the library.

The contents of our pages this week will, we doubt not, be highly acceptable to our patrons.

MENNO'S LETTERS on "The Baptists of Nova Scotia," must strike all our readers as growing in interest. Our fifth page contains a comprehensive and yet succinct view of the state of Education in the two provinces, and other important matters, which may supply material for much reflection.

SPURGEON'S letter from London; the Letter of OUR ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT; and the deeply interesting RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE, will all be received with much satisfaction by our readers. It affords us pleasure to be enabled to furnish so rich and varied a repast. Will our subscribers endeavour to shew their appreciation by giving invitations to their neighbours to partake with them. Send in the names of respectable and reliable new subscribers, and we shall be happy to place them on our list at any time in the year.

OUR MAILS last week presented some rather peculiar features. In addition to those from various parts of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Cape Breton;

One letter was from our Correspondent in *England*,

One from our friend Cyr, in *Montreal*,

One from *Burmah* with its East India Postage Stamps in *annas*,—this will appear next week.

One from *China* with its Hong Kong post marks; and, acceptable as they always are from that quarter, one from *PARADISE*!

THE HUMAN VOICE: its right management in Speaking, Reading, and Debating, by Rev. W. W. Cazalet. A. M. Fowler & Wells, New York, pp. 46.

"The author of this work says, in his preface "Having myself suffered from relaxation of throat and the feeling of exhaustion after speaking and reading, I set to work to consider the cause. This led me to investigate the mechanism and action of the vocal organs, and the result has been the present work, in which I have endeavoured to show the natural action of all the organs concerned in the formation of speech! The American publishers add, "This work contains many suggestions of great value to those who desire to speak and read well."

News Summary.

THE R. M. Steamer *Niagara* arrived on Saturday with the second March Mail. London dates are to the 24th ult.

The news she brings is important, as regards Italy. The following governments or provinces of Italy, viz., The Duchies of Tuscany, Parma and Modena, and the Romagna, or Æmilian province, late the northern portion of the Papal dominions, have, by an overwhelming majority under vote by ballot upon the principle of universal suffrage, declared for immediate annexation to the Sardinian Government, which declaration, it is generally understood, will be considered by the surround-