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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE FIRST SNOW.

B. K.

Fast fall the feathery snow-flakes
Eddying and whirling around
Through the quiet air of evening
Till they rest on the frozen ground;
And with the breath of winter,
And with the falling snow,
Come recollections of sorrow
That came to us winters ago

Cheerless they seem and cruel,
As the pity the world bestows,
On the heart that wounded and bleeding
Has fallen beneath its woes;
Coldly, silently falling,
Laying a shroud of snow
On the beauties of summer and autumn
That have faded long ago.

I gaze on the frozen river,
On the landscape withered and drear
And a sad and lonely feeling
Comes o'er me tinged with fear,
But saddest of all are the shadows
That before me come and go
As through the haze of the twilight
I gaze on the falling snow.

Till I feel the nameless horror
The dark foreboding of woe
That came with the guest unwelcome
Who came to us winters ago.—
But yet was it not an angel
He came a blessing to bring,
For even that gloomy winter
Has left us dawns of spring.

And there in the hours of darkness
And anguish o'er thee died
There seemed so much that was holy
That we would have laid aside,
For the simple faith they uttered
The seeming earnest of heaven,
All that the future promised
All that the past had given.

Ah heart that is sad and patient,
Turn not to the darker hours,
And ask not why were gathered
Those newly budding flowers
By the hand of mercy taken
In a fairer land they bloom
Who were laid in the silent dwelling
That we darkly name the tomb.

But if it be ours in the glory
Of a best eternity
To behold with unclouded vision
What on earth we darkly see
We shall know that life has not brought us
A mingling of good and ill,
But even God's darkest dealings
The purpose of love fulfil.

Earth's many and long dark winters,
With their frost and falling snow;
Life's sadly cruel changes,
That have wrought so much of woe,
When we reach the blessed presence,
Of God shall sweetly tell
That in works and ways mysterious
He doeth all things well.

Selections.

The Origin, Antiquity and Claims of the Baptists.

The Baptists are the most ancient portion of the Christian church, having existed upwards of 1800 years; from the beginning of the Christian dispensation, through the dark ages, to the present period.

The Author of Christianity, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the World, and the Judge of all, was a Baptist. The Baptists own no more man as their founder, but the Head of the church, himself. He was himself buried beneath the water of Jordan by his fore-runner, John the Baptist, Matt. 3: 13-17. He requires all his followers to be buried with him in baptism, Matt. 28: 19. The Apostles and primitive Christians were all Baptists, Acts 2: 41; 9: 18; Rom. 6: 4; Col. 2: 12. Those called the Greek and Latin fathers were originally Baptists. Some of them had believing parents, and yet they were not baptized till manhood. The first British Christians, for upwards of 400 years, were Baptists, from the introduction of Christianity into Great Brit-

ain till the introduction of Popery, about 600 years after Christ.

Infant baptism and Popery were introduced into Britain at the same time; and while infant baptism remains, Popery will: they rose together, and the will both fall together. Infants cannot obey the command to be baptized, and none is required to obey for them; nay more, they cannot be baptized, for baptism without the faith and obedience of the individual baptized is no more than bathing, and goes for nothing, as it cannot possibly be accepted of God, Rom. 14: 23. There is no such thing in the Word of God as religion by proxy, Ezekiel 18: 19, 20. Children have no claim to religious ordinances, whether they have believing parents or no, Matt. 3: 8, 9. The child of a savage, an idolater, a Mahomedan, or an infidel has as much right to baptism as the child of the holiest man in the world; that is to say, none of them has any right at all. We cannot give baptism to our children, because there is no command nor example for it in the Word of God. We do not read in all the New Testament of one child being baptized. Christ did not baptize babes, he only took them up in his arms and blessed them. Let the ministers of Jesus Christ, if they think this a duty, only do the same. Repentance, faith, and the new birth must go before baptism, Acts 2: 38; 8: 37.

The burial of the body in water is essential to baptism. Sprinkling is no more baptism than drinking is baptism. Sprinkling is not dipping, but dipping is baptism; therefore sprinkling is not baptism. The person on whom water has been only sprinkled is not baptized, no more than the person on whom a few drops of water have been sprinkled is not bathed. Baptism is a figurative death, burial, and resurrection; in which the person consciously and voluntarily goes down into the water, and gives himself up to be buried in it, showing forth his union with Christ, his death unto sin, and his resurrection unto a new life, Rom. 6: 3, 4; Gal. 3: 27. Dipping has been practised in every age from the days of John the Baptist until now. Sprinkling or pouring was not brought into use till long after the days of the Apostles; and dipping was the practice in Britain till the days of John Knox and Thomas Cranmer, about 300 years ago, when sprinkling by degrees crept in. And still dipping is the rule of the Church of England, and the universal practice of the Greek, Russian, Abyssinian, and other Eastern churches. The Baptists are not of yesterday; their antiquity is coeval with the antiquity of Christianity. Ye who love the Lord Jesus, keep his commandments, follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

PRAYING WIVES.

The following is the public testimony of a young man who had been a Free-thinker, and who was led to reflection, and subsequently to Christ, through the example of an affectionate wife, who was not permitted to express to him her own feelings, but who lived near to Christ, and at length drew her husband with her to the Cross. "It is only a short time that I have hoped that I was a Christian, I was always as I called myself, a moral man. To be this was all that I supposed necessary for happiness here or hereafter. In religion I was a Free-thinker. I made little account of Christianity in the world; I thought all professions of religion a mere sham; I thought that all that would be required of a man was a moral life; I prided myself on mine. I was well read in all the creeds and forms of religion of the day. My head was full of arguments against religion; I felt that no one was able to confute them. Two things made a deep impression upon my mind—a sentiment and an example. I will say a word of the example. I married a young pious wife. She set before me a consistent Christian example. She never argued with me on the subject of religion; she knew this would do no good. I could have overwhelmed her with arguments, but she reproved me every day by her consistent, Christian life. I felt the power of that reproof. If she had not been so consistent, I would have got along better with myself; but she said nothing, and kept living religion out in her life. She did not conceal the fact that she made me the subject of daily, earnest prayer. This troubled me. I

did not feel easy to have her continually praying for me. I knew she would not pray for me unless she knew I needed prayer—needed the blessings which she endeavoured to procure by prayer. What a commentary on my life! My wife had a calm, quiet, sweet repose of spirit. She enjoyed her religion. I could see she did. I had to admit it. I knew that her religion was of priceless value to her; and if it was beyond all price to her, I wondered why the same experience might not be beyond all price to me. I was troubled and anxious, and she seemed to be in a state of perfect rest. My mind became very much aroused and all peace fled away from my mind. I knew not what to do. Not a word had as yet passed between us. I knew she was anxious about me, and was praying for me, and I thought she was well aware that I was anxious for myself. The struggle was an awful one. Here I stood, a self-condemned sinner.

"Now let me say a word about the impression. I had heard my minister say, in one of his discourses, when I was not more than ten years old, 'that men should think of the world as they will think of it when they have been in hell or heaven a hundred years.' This made a deep impression. I could never controvert the sentiment. How poor it made everything appear. I had nothing but the world, and at such stand-points how worthless it was. I was very miserable. I felt guilty and very wretched beyond expression. I thought of prayer, but I had never prayed in my life—how would I begin? You cannot think how wretched I was; it was an awful struggle for me to get down on my knees; but God brought me on my knees; I was completely humbled; I could only say 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'

"My wife, with a Christian woman's instinct or penetration, soon found out my state of mind. She prayed now with me. I was not ashamed to acknowledge that I needed prayer, and that I prayed for myself. I loved my wife, and how unspeakable was my sense of the blessing to my soul of that consistent Christian example which adorned her life. At length I was led to embrace the Saviour just as He was offered to me in the Gospel. He became my joy and hope. I trusted him without a shadow of wavering and doubt. I look back to those two things as the means of hopeful conversion: the light and influence of a consistent Christian example, and the influence of the sentiment which fell upon my mind from the lips of the living preacher, when I was but ten years old, that we should think of it when we have been in eternity one hundred years, whether it be in heaven or in hell."—*Five Years of Prayer and the Answers.*—By Rev. S. Irwin Prime, D. D.

A CHOICE IN DEVILS.

Mr. Spurgeon is reported as saying that

"Lately a great deal of infidelity had broken out in the church, and he thanked God for it. It seemed as though God had let the devil loose among them to stir them up to renewed exertions. He trusted that God would deliver them from a sleeping devil, for a roaring devil was a blessing rather than the reverse."

This is stating the case rather strongly, but it has a solid and consoling truth at bottom. The assaults of opposition and of error in all ages have been overruled to the great advantage of the truth.—its clearer statement, its more complete establishment, and its wider diffusion. Faith is invincible. They that put their trust in the Lord can never be confounded. They conquer in His might. Infidelity, assailing the ground of the believer's hope, compels him to have recourse to those weapons which are mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.

While, however, the truth is sure to prevail, and faith cannot be disappointed, it does not follow that every organized Christian enterprise (or ostensibly Christian) is sure to succeed. We do not doubt that now or soon there is to be a great shaking of so-called churches, hierarchies and priesthoods. The gates of hell cannot prevail against the church which Christ founded. But whether worldly, political churches, in which the standard of appeal is to human law, custom or expediency,

can abide in the impending strife, is a question which may well perplex those who put their trust therein. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."—*W. & R.*

THE WATCHWORD.

In one of the great rock galleries of Gibraltar, two British soldiers had mounted guard; one at each end of the vast tunnel. One was a believing man, whose soul had found rest upon the Rock of Ages; the other was seeking rest, but had not found it.

It was midnight, and these soldiers were going their rounds, the one meditating on the blood which had brought peace to his soul; the other darkly brooding over his own disquietudes and doubts. Suddenly an officer passes, challenges the former, and demands the watchword.

"The precious blood of Christ!" called out the veteran, forgetting for a moment the password of the night, and uttering unconsciously the thought which was at that moment filling his soul. Next moment he corrected himself, and the officer, no doubt amazed, passed on. But the words he spoke had rung through the gallery, and entered the ears of his fellow soldier at the other end, like a message from heaven. It seemed as if an angel had spoken, or rather as if God himself had proclaimed the good news in that still hour.

"The precious blood of Christ!" Yes, that was peace! His troubled soul was now at rest. That midnight voice had spoken the good news to him, and God had carried home the message. "The precious blood of Christ!" Strange but blessed watchword; never to be forgotten. For many a day and year, no doubt, it would be the joy and rejoicing of his heart.

OUR FATHER.

"I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."—2 Cor. vi. 18.

Tried Christian, thou art not an orphan! Thou hast a Father. God, in all the glory of his nature and perfections, is thy Father. He has adopted thee for his own. He has regenerated thee by his Spirit. He has called thee out of the world, and has promised to do a Father's part by thee. He says, "I will be a Father unto thee." Dost thou want advice? Consult thy Father. Dost thou need supplies? Ask them of thy Father. Art thou tormented with cares? Cast them on thy Father. Art thou alarmed at foes? Cry unto thy Father. Do thy difficulties appear insurmountable? Appeal to thy Father. God is not merely a Father in name; he has a Father's nature. He not only calls us his sons and daughters, but wishes us to act towards him as such. We should exercise confidence in his love. We should trust in his promises. We should appeal to his paternal heart. We should look for our supplies from his hands. In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, we should let our requests be made known unto God. He loves to see us confide in his care, rely on his promises, expect his communications, and acquiesce in his will. Believer, whatever trials may befall thee, whatever troubles may come upon thee, whatever enemies may rise up against thee, whatever changes may take place in thy circumstances, one thing can never befall thee—thou canst never be Fatherless; therefore, thou canst never be friendless. Thou art God's child, however poor thy circumstances, or trying thy path. What an unspeakable mercy! "We are the children of God; and if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." Rom. viii. 16, 17.

Throughout the whole Scripture there is not one ill word against a poor sinner who is stripped of his self-righteousness. Nay, the Scripture expressly points out such a man as the subject of gospel grace, and none else.

A believer's holy deportment often gives a check to the sins of others. The profane stand in awe, when grace comes forth, and sits, like a ruler in the gate, to be seen of all that pass by.