

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES. }
VOL. X. No. 22.

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, MAY 31, 1865.

} WHOLE SERIES.
VOL. XXIX. No. 22.

Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

In Memoriam.

E. F. H. FEB. 12TH, 1865.

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

I said farewell and left thee,
Dear one, sister; truer friend
Ne'er drew the breath of life, nor whisper'd
Words of peace, and heaven-like assurance.
But alas for me! I left thee for all time,
Tho' knowing it not,—I parted
From thee carelessly.
'Tis ever thus; yet why, O why do we
Still wilful make these beds of thorns
And after-life regrets? More keen,
More hard to bear because the heart
We thoughtless wounded, was torn with grief
At thought of parting.
Stilled now its beatings—not stilled, but freed from
sin,
Throbbing in perfect unison with its Creator, God.
And thou art gone,—above thy head
The old trees in the church-yard wave,
And the winds sigh thy lonely requiem;
Alone, far from those whom nature made most dear,
And this thy native-land, truly beloved:
To which thine eyes (dear speaking eyes were they)
Had often turned, as doth the wanderer's,
Fain would he breathe his last
Upon thy sod, beneath thy skies, Old England.
"Must these all go? But greater
(O God thou alone know'st how great)
These later ties—This peaceful home,
Husband, and children too!
Can I leave him my chosen,
And my little ones? parts of myself,
Who close into my heart have nestled;
For whom I thought no sacrifice too great,
No love too all-enduring.

But I have dreamed,
And in my dream, my home, my God I saw,
And now content, I leave them all resigned,
Knowing that what He wills is best.
I fearless launch my trembling bark
Upon the stormy sea:
For is not Jesus at the helm, and
Through His blood shall I not reach the quiet haven?
Pray, O my husband,
That this to thy own good be sanctified."
'Twas thus she spoke;
Then joined triumphantly
The unseen host of heaven,
Her father whom she loved, and friends
Who knew her worth, and knowing, loved her well.
We left awhile to mourn alone,
To buffet yet a little these stormy waves,
"This world of opposite attractions and desires."
Till for us each, comes the dread monster death.
Forgive the sigh, O Father,
The wish that we at least had press'd
On lips and brow one long mute pledge of tenderness.

Mourning our loss—mourning
Thy early removal. Yet will we say
From hearts well school'd to patience,
"Father, Thy will be done." With
Hearts of humble thankfulness,
That wait the blest re-union.
The cry of triumph jubilant,
"Behold, behold He cometh!"

May, 1865.

E. McL.

Religious.

Baptist Churches, a necessity.

At the recent annual session of the London Baptist Union, the chairman, Rev. Dr. Angus, gave a most able address in vindication of the position which Baptists occupy. After the preliminaries, he remarked that he had chosen for the subject of his address, 'Baptists: their existence a present necessity—largely a conscientious conviction—always a representative and a defence of important spiritual truths.'

"i. The separation from Baptists from all the existing great parties in Christendom is a necessity; they are excluded not so much by their own choice as by the creeds and expressed intention of those parties themselves.

"Our Pedobaptist Congregational brethren, with whom on most points we have the most sympathy, define the baptism of infants as an act whereby parents dedicate their children to God." They hold that it

is enough 'for the water to be applied by pouring or sprinkling to the person,' nor is it necessary 'for the person to be applied to the water'; baptism with them, therefore, is the application of water, and in the case of children it implies simply the dedication of the child to God, by his parents. Herein, they say, they differ from Baptists and intend to differ; while, by nearly all their trust-deeds it is provided that these principles shall be perpetuated in their churches, be received or acquiesced in by the members of those churches, and be maintained by their pastors.

Presbyterian churches exclude Baptists by asserting in their *Confession of Faith* that baptism is either dipping or pouring or sprinkling, that it should be administered not only to those who profess faith in Christ and obedience to Him, but also 'to the infants of one or both believing parents.' They teach also that baptism is not only for 'the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church: it is also to him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his engrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ to walk in newness of life.' It is therefore not only an act of dedication; it is a sealing ordinance of regeneration and of forgiveness. This principle is included in all Presbyterian trust-deeds, and these deeds are so worded as to exclude all Baptists. The question was raised in the Westminster Assembly itself; and it was resolved by a narrow majority to set aside phrases which might have made it possible for some Baptists to join the body. Now, if we join their fellowship, we must acquiesce in infant baptism and in this theory on its spiritual significance.

"The Church of England makes special provision for the baptism of those of riper years, and who are able to answer for themselves." It also recognises 'dipping' as the proper mode of administering the ordinance. So far it seems to be on our side. Yet, in fact, dipping is not practised or provided for, while it bids every curate to admonish the people that baptism must not be deferred longer than 'the first or second Sunday next after the birth of the child,' teaches that baptized children alone are assured of salvation, refuses Christian burial to any not baptized, and holds 'that the baptism of infants is in any wise to be retained.' So much for the mode and the subjects. Now for the significance. This ordinance is not only a pledge and token of a Christian man's profession; it is a 'certain sure witness and effectual means of grace by the which God doth work invisibly in us and strengthen our faith.' It is not only a sign of profession, whereby Christian men are discerned or distinguished, from others that be not christened; but it is a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby as by an instrument they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the church; and the promises of the forgiveness of sin and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost are visibly signed and sealed. The infant after baptism is said to be 'regenerated by the Holy Spirit,' to be received as God's own child by adoption, and to be incorporated into His holy church. He is further said 'to be dead unto sin and to be made a partaker of the death of Christ.' In after years the child is taught that therein he was 'made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven.' That no Baptist can subscribe to these words is plain; and it was intended that no Baptist should be able to subscribe them. Paley reminds the clergy of his day that the Articles are to be interpreted according to the intention of the authorities who framed them; and it is notorious, he adds, that those authorities meant to exclude only Baptists and Papists—these certainly; though perhaps, as he thinks, few besides. Baptism, therefore, in the English Church is to be administered by dipping or sprinkling to all infants, and is a sign and instrument of regeneration, quickening and confirming faith; and this is the belief that church expects from its members.

"Now the case is not, it will be noticed, that private members of the Independent body, or of the Presbyterian Church, or of the Church of England, hold these views, allowing other members to hold theirs. It is the Independent body itself and the churches

that form it; the Presbyterians and the Church of England. They all expressly tell us that they hold them, and they avow the holding of them in order that the opposite opinions may be condemned. They affirm these doctrines as among the things 'most surely believed'—as first principles of faith, and they expect all who form them, intelligently to believe or silently to acquiesce. I think it is to be deplored that these practices and theories should be made tests of equal membership, and be incorporated in trust-deeds; but while they remain—while there is this expectation upon the one side and the knowledge of it on the other—we are kept out by self-respect, by honesty, by conscience. A union based on freedom and equality, and mutual toleration in things non-essential, it is easy to understand; a union that is based on the sacrifice of principle, or that requires acquiescence in what we deem error, is as fatal to our own usefulness as it is dishonouring to God.

"Sometimes we are taunted with making too much of a mere ordinance. Baptism, it is said, is not a moral precept, nor is it a doctrinal truth, it is only a positive institution. The evil of dividing and weakening the Church of Christ is unspeakably great; and surely a positive command, even if you deem it so, is less important than unity and less important than the great spiritual truths on which we agree. We might reply, If it is thus unimportant why lay it down as essential? But is it, as the case stands, a mere ordinance? All the three great parties, it will be noticed, have affirmed infant baptism, and all have affirmed that baptism is indifferently dipping, or pouring, or sprinkling. But all have affirmed besides a 'theory on the significance and effect of the ordinance itself.' The Independent maintains that in the case of infants it is only the dedication of the child to God, and that that is the Scripture view of the institution. The Presbyterian maintains that it is a sealing ordinance, assuring men of their interest in the Covenant. With the Church of England it is an instrument and a means of grace, quickening and strengthening even in infants the spiritual life. Each party has so defined and explained this positive institution as to have made it impossible, I suspect, for the rest to accept its views. The Presbyterian must think the Independent doctrine an unwarranted toning down of Scripture teaching; and both must think the language of the English Church a delusion and a snare. It is not a mere ordinance about which we are contending; it is about the spiritual significance and efficacy of it; both of which these creeds define.

"But even if it were a mere ordinance, and comparatively unimportant, when once it is made an article of faith, and men are required to assent to it before they can enter into Christian fellowship, it rises immediately into all the dignity of an essential truth. Leave it out of the prerequisites of communion, and it may create no difficulty. Ask me to concur in it as Scriptural, bring it within the domain of conscience, and I can no more profess what I believe Scripture condemns, than I can deny the Lord that brought me, or say with the fool, 'No God!' I feel, and I feel deeply, the evil of schism. The Church of Christ, the temple of God, is marred by our divisions, and by divisions on points which never ought to have divided us. But I hold with Hales and Whichcote and Jeremy Taylor, that 'he is rather the schismatic who makes unnecessary impositions, than he who disobeys them because he cannot do otherwise without violating his conscience.' And this is our case. While churches insist on avowing as an article of faith that the baptism of infants must be administered, that it is Scriptural dedication, that it is an ordinance which seals their regeneration and forgiveness—nay, more, that it is an instrument of effecting both, what can we do but stand aloof? Luther's words and spirit become our model; we dare not and we cannot yield! A necessity: may we hope a present necessity!"

"ii. While all are kept out by necessity, many of our churches are compelled by their convictions of the nature of a Christian church to preserve a separate organisation. Churches of Christ, they think, ought to consist of those only who have professed Christ, and who have professed Christ in the way recognised by inspired authority, viz.,

by baptism into His name. The church they hold to be a congregation of avowedly believing men. In the first age, belief was avowed by baptism; and, copying the primitive model, it is the duty of Christian churches to admit none to their fellowship but professed, i. e., baptized believers. Whether this is the sounder view, and whether, if it is, it does not follow that we should decline to recognise as Christians, any but those who are baptized into Christ; or whether it is not more Scriptural to affirm, with Dr. Carson, that while every Christian ought to be baptized, it is rather a personal duty than a church ordinance, and, like other duties which are sometimes neglected or misunderstood, is not to be made the ground of exclusion from the church unless the non-observance of it be evidence of a disobedient spirit; I am not here to discuss. What I wish specially to note is, that this view, which some have pronounced narrow and uncharitable, is the all but universal view of modern Christendom.

An unbaptized Christian is what the Church of England does not understand, and even our Independent brethren, who profess to receive to communion all who make a credible profession of being Christ's disciples, irrespective of the mode of baptism, do not seem prepared to receive to membership any but the baptized. *Baptism essential to membership*, is the creed of nearly every church; and therein many of our brethren concur. In their judgment sprinkling is not baptism, nor is the baptism of infants a credible profession of faith. In this last the Independent and the Presbyterian agree. Holding these views, our brethren conclude that baptism as a profession of faith must be administered to all who seek Christian fellowship; nor can I understand how this doctrine has come to be regarded by those who really hold the same doctrine as a reproach, or as an evidence of a little mind or of a sectarian spirit. I may go further. Littleness of mind and a sectarian spirit are rather promoted, as it seems to me, by those bodies that, besides requiring all the members to be baptized, require much more. I cannot join the English Church unless I hold that it is a lawful thing for a Christian man to wear arms and fight, to take oaths, and to punish Christian men with death, unless I am prepared to affirm that he who would be saved must heartily believe the Athanasian Creed, and further admit, not only that baptism is essential to church-membership, but that *the baptism of infants and the regeneration of infants by baptism is the law of Christ*. Many of these things are true: I may even believe them all; but surely they ought not to be made essential to Christian fellowship; why exclude from your Church real Christians, baptized Christians, who cannot hold them? I venture to say that if any Dissenting church had laid down such minute details, and had required faith in them as essential to membership, we should never have heard the last of it from brethren who now taunt our churches with narrowness for requiring baptism alone. So of our Independent brethren. They claim from all who join their churches not simply a belief in baptism as the prerequisite of membership, but an acquiescence in infant baptism, and in infant baptism as the law of Christ. It is not enough that I be baptized in a way they admit to be Scriptural; they insist upon my acceptance of a dogma which is nowhere laid down in Scripture as essential to church-membership, and brand with narrowness those who claim the same submission to what is confessedly a Divine institution—the avowal of faith by baptism. I do not mean, of course, to question that the doctrine of baptism is sometimes advocated in a sectarian spirit, or that we are tempted to make more of it than Scripture makes; a tendency which I fear we share with those who are not Baptists. I deem it a trial of our spirituality and comprehensiveness that, while we are called to defend the city of God itself, we have also to defend an outpost of the city. We are in danger of losing sight of the vastness and glory of the place, and have not unreasonably imagined that ours is the most important gate of all, just as those who are defending only the citadel are apt to overlook the fact that there are outposts to be defended. All I maintain is that the men who hold baptism essential to membership—a class that