

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

A Winter Night.

Silence is round, the restless minds are still,
And moonlight glistens on each snow-clad hill;
The broad blue ocean slumbers calmly now;
Beneath the firmament's star-brother'd brow;
The lakes and streams in one unbroken sleep,
The secret of their summer gladness keep—
Earth wears her robes of pearly snow to-night,
Gemmed with a coronet of starry light,
While lending contrast to the bridal scene
The fir-tree lifts its spire of changeless green;
The pale cold moon looks from her realm of blue,
And gives to earth a radiant silver hue,
While dwells on all, the seal of beauty's light,
Beneath the holy canopy of Night.

MAUDE.

Lawrenceston, Halifax Co.,
Feb. 10th, 1865.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Rev. George E. W. Morris vs.
Spurgeon's Sermon on Baptismal Regeneration.

DEAR SIR,

The *Christian Messenger* containing Mr. Spurgeon's sermon on Mark xvi. 15, 16, recently came into my hands. Permit me, in the columns of your paper, to offer some remarks upon it which appear to me neither uncalled for nor inconsistent with the high and holy object which by your weekly issues from the press you desire to promote. The sermon accuses the Church of England and her clergy of being guilty of disseminating great and pernicious error. You, by printing the sermon, have assisted in spreading far and wide this grave accusation. I trust that your sense of justice will dispose you both to hear and publish what may be said in our defence.

For more than forty years I have used the Prayer-book, believing that its doctrine is in harmony with that of the scriptures. But if Mr. Spurgeon's accusation be just I have been employed during the whole period in promoting not the truth that saves, but the error that destroys. I may err no doubt, but I do not think that in using the catechism and the offices for baptism I have erred. On this point I have no misgivings. Nay I feel assured that if Mr. S. had considered more attentively what he has argued from them as evidence in support of his accusation he would not have made it. On the questions whether Christians ought to bring their children to that Divine ordinance, which is the door of admission into covenant with God, and into His Church and Kingdom, or whether immersion is essential to its validity, his opinion would remain unchanged. He would still account it a serious error to assert the former or deny the latter. But he could scarcely avoid seeing what ought to convince him that baptismal regeneration in his sense forms no part of the creed of the Church of England. To produce such a conviction it appears to me nothing more is necessary than to compare baptismal regeneration as understood by Mr. S. with the Church's doctrine of Baptism.

How Mr. S. understands it, is evident from his sermon. He is confident that all who hold it, believe, that the application of the outward sign alone to any one, regenerates him, and that, always, and in every instance, whether he be infant, or adult, and whether qualified or not. So regenerates as to save him and that not conditionally but absolutely and for ever. And this is the doctrine which he imputes to the Church of England. Has he evidence sufficient to support the imputation? Is this really the doctrine of the Church? Before entering upon this question it will be well to state what the church means by the word regeneration. Certainly not what Mr. S. means by it. He uses the word in the sense of a change of heart, of that change which takes place in a man when by the grace of God preventing, he first receives the Gospel, is enabled to see clearly the way of salvation through Christ revealed in it, and fully

resolves to be a Christian; both believes and repeats.

But this is not the church's meaning. How can it be? When the fact is that she declares infants to be regenerate and yet says of them, that "by reason of their tender age they cannot perform" either repentance or faith. In her judgment, regeneration is a change not of heart but of state, of the state and condition of the soul in the sight of God. A change by which they who (to use the words of the catechism) "were born in sin and the children of wrath are made the children of grace," grafted into the body of Christ's Church, accepted in the beloved and adopted into the family of God. And it is to the act of passing into this state, the Church of England gives the name of Regeneration or the New Birth. Such being the sense in which she uses the word, it is evident she does not mean what Mr. S. does. Let this be borne in mind during the discussion of the question, whether Mr. S. had sufficient ground, plain and convincing testimony, to support him in the grave accusation which he has so solemnly and publicly recorded against the church and her clergy.

That accusation consists of three or four distinct propositions. The first of these is that they, the said church and clergy, teach, that regeneration is effected by the use of the outward and visible sign, and by that alone, to the exclusion of every other agency. As proof of this, certain sentences from the catechism and baptismal office are produced. They are these, "In my baptism wherein I was made a member of Christ," &c. And, "We thank thee that it hath pleased Thee to regenerate this infant with Thy Holy Spirit." The former of these sentences does indeed prove that the church teaches that children are regenerate in baptism, but not in Mr. Spurgeon's sense. Both these words regenerate and baptize have here a very different meaning from that which Mr. S. attaches to them. What the church means, and what Mr. S. means by the former of them we have already seen. By the latter of them he means the outward and visible sign only. But the church calls baptism a sacrament. And by sacrament she means an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given to us, ordained by Christ himself as a means whereby we receive the same and pledge to assure us thereof. When she says that any one is regenerate in baptism, her meaning is that having received both the outward sign and the inward grace he is regenerate. The other sentence "We thank Thee" proves indeed that the doctrine of the church is regeneration in baptism, but not exclusively, by the outward sign. For what are the words? "We thank thee that it hath pleased Thee to regenerate this infant." How? In what way? By the outward sign? No. But "by Thy Holy Spirit." The point then that Mr. S. undertook to prove was, "the church teaches the doctrine of conversion or a change of heart merely by the use of the outward sign." Has he been successful? His testimony goes no further than this, that the doctrine of the church is, that, when an infant has received both the outward sign and the invisible grace (not his heart, but) his spiritual state is changed. He is not in a state of nature but of grace. He is no longer reckoned in Adam, but in Christ.

Another proposition in the accusation, is this that the church teaches, that all that are baptized are regenerate, whether adult, or infant, whether qualified for baptism or not. As evidence of the truth of this proposition he relies upon the same testimony as that by which he would have proved the last. Is that evidence sufficient? It is sufficient to prove that the church regards the children that came to be catechized as having been made members of Christ in their baptism. But does it prove that she regards in the same light all that are baptized whether adults or infants whether they rightly received baptism or not? It could not be evidence of this. For the catechism plainly teaches that repentance and faith are required as necessary qualifications for baptism in all that are capable of them. And in her 25th Article she expressly says "In such only as worthily receive the same, they have a wholesome effect and operation." How then can Mr. S. truly and justly charge the church with teaching that all that are baptized are regenerate

whether duly qualified or not. If she thus speaks of infants it is not because she believes their hearts are changed, but because Christ having said "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven," she is assured that they are all qualified for receiving baptism. There is yet another proposition to be noticed. It is a part of Mr. S's faith that no one can ever be lost who has been once regenerated. Assuming that this is also the Church's faith it seems to him that she teaches that all that are baptized are forever saved. Almost every page of the Prayer-book is a reiteration of this charge. But to show that he is mistaken in this also I refer to the prayers in the baptismal offices, that the baptized may lead the rest of their lives according to this beginning, "may continue to be the servants of God," may ever remain among the number of God's faithful elect children; and that petition in the Burial Service, "Suffer us not at our last hour for any pains of death to fall from Thee."

I trust that I have now offered proof sufficient to satisfy any candid mind, first, that the church does not teach baptismal regeneration in Mr. Spurgeon's sense. 2nd. That it is, no part of her doctrine that the use of the outward form alone in baptism regenerates; or 3rd. That all that are baptized are regenerate, whether qualified or not; or 4th. That all that are regenerate are saved. To such as are satisfied with the proof it will be evident that Mr. S. in accusing the Church of England of teaching gross and pernicious error may himself be justly charged (I will not say nor think) with wicked calumny, but certainly with most gross and injurious misrepresentation.

To conclude, Mr. S. does it a great error to say, baptism saves. But rightly understood far from being an error it is certainly true. For it is an inspired Apostle who says "baptism now saves us."—1 Peter, iii. 21. The very text of his sermon also says as much "He that believeth, and is baptized shall be saved." If it is here declared that faith saves, is not the declaration that baptism saves equally plain? And now heartily desiring and praying that the power of the evil one so apparent in lamentable division, that defile and weaken the Church of God may be speedily so limited that he shall be unable to deceive the nation any more, and that all who profess and call themselves christians, may be led into the way of truth and hold the faith, in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and righteousness of life, I remain, Dear Sir, yours truly,

GEO. E. W. MORRIS.

For the Christian Messenger.

"Let that which is lost be for God."

MR. EDITOR,

The origin of the above Spanish proverb is as follows. "The father of a family making his will and disposing of his goods upon his death bed, ordained concerning a certain cow which had strayed, and had now for a long time been missing, that if it were found, it should be for his children, if otherwise for God; and hence the proverb." *Lessons in Proverbs by R. C. Trunch, B.D.*

The treachery of many hearts is laid bare by the above aphorism. In no one thing, perhaps, are we more likely to deceive ourselves, than in the principles which guide our acts of benevolence. Convenience is frequently the regulator. The gift and the amount given are alike subject thereto. If convenient, I give liberally, if not I give sparingly or not at all. It is apparent, that those who give as a matter of convenience only, adopt the sentiment of the proverb. Giving is not to be controlled by convenience. More clearly is the influence of the spirit of this proverb seen in cases where giving is made dependent on success in any object of pursuit or enterprise. How many make failure in a crop, and perhaps failure in any one article of culture, a loss of a vessel, or of an insurance, or a bad debt, or an unprofitable speculation, a failure of health, or even a general depression of business, whether materially affected thereby themselves or not, a pretext for rejecting some or all of the calls

of christian benevolence. Do such persons know that they have made the principle of the Proverb their guide in this matter?

But it is more fully recognised when the lame, torn, the sick or the blind, or the refuse, or even the residue after all our wants, plans, purposes, desires have been satisfied; that for which we have no further use, or cannot make a better market for, is devoted to some charitable or benevolent object. This is saying "Let that which is lost be for God."

If not unfrequently happens that a loss in some one speculation or disappointment in some single enterprise is made, while every other effort is crowned with success, a reason for not honoring pledges for benevolent purposes. Is this not something like saying, "God has not made my efforts successful and therefore he may bear the loss. Such conduct might cause a shudder as the impiety thereof is thought of. How aggravated the offence, how intensified the insult; and yet how often is it done, agents and treasurers of benevolent institutions are made acquainted with such transactions much often than is desirable. Pastors of Churches, Professors of Colleges, even in Theological Institutions, Beneficiaries and Editors and proprietors of religious periodicals, are made too often, to feel the effects of such an unreliable liberality.

Christian benevolence rests its claim on an infinitely higher authority than what the world calls "the wheel of fortune." "Honor the Lord with thy substance and the first fruits of thine increase." Mark the words "first fruits," not the refuse or residue, but the first fruits. Much or little, lay these by according as God hath prospered. Under the old dispensation a tenth was required besides the ritual demand; under the new the amount is left for the law of love to regulate, and should it be less than under the former, when now so many additional blessings are bestowed? A position at the foot of the Cross, while the redeemed soul is asked, "how much owest thou my lord," should teach the amount required.

The injustice of making that Proverb the rule of duty ought not to escape our notice. The outlay, whether for Churches, Colleges, Academies, School houses, support of Pastors, Missionaries or Evangelists, Professors, Teachers, Ministerial Students or for whatever object, is all directly or indirectly authorized by the parties obligated for, and on whom the support depends. Our religious enterprises are not concocted and established in secret by hierarchical prelacy, they are submitted to, and discussed by, the bodies whose enterprise they become, by their own act and choice. This is true in relation to every object enumerated above. The congregation agrees and builds a house for worship;—the Church calls and settles the Pastor;—the denomination agrees and builds a College Edifice, appoints its executive, and thereby engages its Professors, and so through the whole train of measures to support and enlarge the Redeemer's Kingdom on earth. It is not individual enterprise, but the enterprise of the whole, or perhaps more properly speaking it is a part of Christ's great enterprise on earth, and the action of associated bodies binds each member of such bodies to bear his or her proportionate share of such enterprise. Without this individual responsibility, there could be no execution of any plan or purpose, however wise that plan or desirable that purpose; and in proportion as individuals shall fail to accomplish their respective part and to honor their engagements, must others do the same for them, or the enterprise must fail. How unjust then to make our efforts or to consider our obligations, in any way subject to casualities unless these are of such a character as to render naturally impossible the fulfilment of that which under other circumstances would be our duty; to do so is to leave our work, or benevolence, for others to perform, and often for those, of all others, less if not least able to bear them. Such are the burdens often bound upon the shoulders of Pastors of churches, when their salary is dependent on the subscriptions of their hearers. One and another fails from some cause or other to pay their promised portion of his salary, and the entire loss has generally to be borne by the Pastor.

It is presumed that all who have acted in harmony with the proverb have not heard it, nor is it necessary to their guilt that they