

Him who created them, yet this is not an oath; or if any one swear by one of the prophets, or by some book of Scripture, having reference to Him who sent the prophet and gave the book, nevertheless, this is not an oath. (Maimon. Hal. Schebhuoth, c. 12.) (So the Mishna Schebhuoth, c. 4.) If any one adjures another by heaven or earth, he is not held bound by this. It is easy to see that oaths of this nature, with authoritative interpretations and glosses so lax could hardly fail to loosen moral obligation and to lead to much practical perjury and impiety. Minute casuistical distinctions undermine the moral sense. When a man may swear and yet not swear, by the same formula appear to bend himself and yet be free, contract with his associates an obligation from which he may be released by religious authorities, the basis of private virtue and the grounds of public confidence are at once endangered. Besides, the practice of unauthorized and spontaneous oath-taking, which seems even in the earlier periods of Jewish history to have been too common, became about the time of our Lord of great frequency, and must have tended to lower the religious, as well as weaken the moral character. Peter's conduct is a striking case in point, who began to curse and to swear, saying, 'I know not the man.' (Matt. xxvi. 74.) An open falsehood, thus asserted and maintained by oaths and imprecations, shows how little regard there was at the time paid to such means of substantiating truth. The degree of guilt implied in such lamentable practices is not lessened by the emphasis with which the Mosaic Law guarded the sanctity of the divine name, and prohibited the crime of perjury and profanation. (Lev. xix. 12; Exod. xx. 7; Deut. v. 11; Matt. v. 33.)

These remarks, tending to exhibit the state of mind and the manner of conduct prevalent in our Lord's time, show with what propriety he interposed his authority on the point, and not only disallowed the vain distinctions of the Pharisees (Matt. xxiii. 16), but also forbade swearing entirely (Matt. v. 33.) Before, however we submit his doctrine on this matter to some remarks, there are yet a few words to be added, in order to complete our statement touching the ceremonial observed in connection with an oath.

We have already intimated that it was usual to put the hand under the thigh (Gen. xxiv. 2; xvii. 29). On this practice Abenezra observes: It appears probable to me that the meaning of this custom was as if the superior said, with the consent of this slave. If thou art under my power, and therefore prepared to execute my commands, put thy hand as a token under my thigh. Winer, however, thinks that as it was usual to swear by the more important parts of the human frame, so this was a reference to the generative powers of man. But see on this interpretation as well as on the general question of swearing by parts of the body. Meiner's *Geschichte der Religi.* II. 286, sq. It is however certain that it was usual to touch that by which a person swore;

'Tange precor mensam, tangunt quo more precantes.' Other instances may be seen in Nidek. *De Populo. Adorat.* p. 213, sq. At p. 218 of this work, with the plate relating to it an instance may be found which cannot be mentioned, but which goes immediately to confirm the idea advanced by Winer.

The more usual employment of the hand was to raise it toward heaven; designed probably, to excite attention, to point out the oath-taker and to give solemnity to the act (Gen. xiv. 22-23). In the strongly anthropomorphic language of parts of the Scripture, even God is introduced, saying, 'I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live forever (Deut. xxxii. 40.) It can only be by the employment of a similar licence that the Almighty is represented as in any way coming under the obligation of an oath (Exod. vi. 8; Ezek. xx. 5.) Instead of the head, the phylactery was sometimes touched by the Jews on taking an oath (Maimon. *Schebhuoth*, c. xi.) Even the Deity is sometimes introduced as swearing by phylacteries (Panch, fol. vi. 3; Othon. *Lex.* p. 757). In cases where a civil authority adjured a party, that is, put a person to an oath, the answer was given by *Amen*, *Su cipias*, 'thou hast said' 1 Kings xxii. 16. Num. v. 19; Matt. xxvi. 63; *Schebhuoth*, c. 1; Misch. ii.) Women and slaves were not permitted to take an oath (Maimon. *Hilch. Schebh.* ix. 10, 11.)

The levity of the Jewish nation in regard to oaths, though reproved by some of their doctors (Othon. *Lex.* p. 351; Philo, ii. 194), was notorious; and when we find it entering as an element into popular poetry, (Martial, xi. 9), we cannot ascribe the imputation to the known injustice of heathen writers towards the Israelites. This national vice, doubtless, had an influence with the Essenes, in placing the prohibition of oaths among the rules of their reformatory order. Certainly, 'The Great Teacher' forbade oaths altogether. The language is most express (Matt. v. 34-37; James v. 12.) Equally decided was the interpretation put on this language by the ancient church. Justin, Irenaeus, Basil, Chrysostom, Augustine, held oaths to be unchristian (De *Welte Sittenhre* iii. 143. Even modern philosophy has given its vote against the practice (See Bentham's 'Swear not at all.') That no case has been made out by christian commentators in favor of judicial swearing we do not affirm; but we must be excused if we add that the case is a very weak one, wears a casuistical appearance, and as if necessitated in order to excuse existing usages, and guard against errors imputed to unpopular sects, such as the Quakers and Mennonites. If inferential and merely probable conclusions, such as the case consists of, may be allowed to prevail against the explicit language of Jesus and James, Scripture is robbed of its certainty, and prohibitions the most express lose their force. For instance, it has been alleged that our Lord himself took part in an oath, when, being adjured by the high-priest, he answered 'Thou hast

said' (Matt. xxvi. 63, 4.) But what has this to do with his own doctrine on the point? Placed at the bar of judgement, Jesus was a criminal, not a teacher, bound by the laws of his country, which it was a part of his plan never unnecessarily to disregard, to give an answer to the question judiciously put to him, and bound equally by a regard to the great interest which he had come into the world to serve. Jesus did not swear, but was sworn. The putting the oath he could not prevent. His sole question was, Should he answer the interrogatory?—a question which depended on considerations of the highest moment, and which he who alone could judge decided in the affirmative. That question in effect was, 'Art thou the Messiah?' His reply was a simple affirmative. The employment of the adjuration was the act of the magistrate: to have objected to which would have brought on Jesus the charge of equivocation, if not of evasion, or even the denial of his 'high calling.'

The general tendency of this article is to show how desirable it is that the practice of oath-taking of all kinds, judicial as well as others, should at least be diminished, till at the proper time it is totally abolished, for whatever is more than a simple affirmation cometh from the Evil one, *ekton ponerou* (Matt. v. 37.) and equally leadeth to evil.

Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature edited by JOHN KITTO, D. D. F. S. A., article OATH.

For the Christian Messenger

IN MEMORIAM.

LOWER STEWACKE, APRIL 2ND, 1869.

Dear Editor,—

We have experienced both joy and sorrow.—Through sorrow, deep and unlooked for, God has called us to pass. Our little church in this place has been bereaved, our families, and community. Indeed a Christian minister cannot but feel momentarily sad, and at the same time startled, at the havoc death makes within the circle of his pastorate. Since I came to this valley in the summer of 1865, death has sadly thinned the ranks of our little band. In connection with the Baptist church at Upper Stewacke, four of our valued and valuable sisters have been removed to Heaven. In Lower Stewacke the first Christian friend I had the joyous privilege of baptizing and introducing to the fellowship of our church, has been, in infinite wisdom, transferred to the happy spirit land. Shortly before her departure, another, who closely followed her example in baptism, was removed from her earthly home and from us to the holier and happier sphere of heaven.

Subsequently a sister and a brother in the flesh also in Christ, both connected for a longer or shorter time with the church died. Also no less than five others, outside the ranks of our church—but not all out of Christ—have been called to pay the last tribute of nature. And quite recently our Heavenly Father took to himself our dear sister and brother John Banks. This makes in all fifteen deaths which it has been my solemn duty to note within the last three and a half short years, besides a much larger number doubtless in other denominations and family connections.

Since the spring of 1865 the writer also has lost a beloved father, a sister, an aunt, a half-sister and her husband. Oh how fearfully does death abridge the circles of human kindred and of earthly joys. But thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord, that this "last enemy" shall be destroyed, and that even now, through grace, we may triumphantly say respecting the decease of our Christian friends, "The spoiler aimed a fatal dart, but lost the victory."

The foregoing facts and reflections have been suggested by the object for which I sat down, namely to perform a last duty of respect to the memory of

MR. AND MRS. JOHN BANKS.

Though naturally domestic and retiring persons, they were somewhat wide and very favorably known. This was due, first, to the grace of God, secondarily, to their rare Christian excellence and social virtues.

Early in life they were both brought under the power of Divine Grace and hopefully converted to God. Sister B. was soon enabled and constrained to come out from the world and enter the service of Christ and his church. She was probably baptized by Rev. I. E. Bill, when living on Nictaux mountain. Her husband did not leave the world and put on Christ in baptism until many years afterwards.

About fifteen years ago there occurred a happy and memorable day in connection with that home and community. The father and youngest son were together "buried with Christ" and welcomed into the Nictaux church by Rev. Willard Parker.

From that time until their death, although themselves exceedingly sensible of imperfection and unworthiness, their "path was that of the justs;" it was "as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

In a truly commendable and happy measure they regarded the fatherless and the widows in their need, and kept their garments unspotted from the world. In a rare degree they were found "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."

They were both remarkably amiable—if so by nature, more so by grace; they were—for these times—unusually cheerful christians; they were self forgetful christians. In the dispensation of charities and other liberalities—which to the extent of ability and opportunity was their delight—brother and sister Banks sought not to let their left hand know what their right hand did.

From such characteristics it may be correctly inferred that they were very happy in domestic

life. It is the writer's privilege to know that few parents have been more ardently beloved and respected by their offspring, and that on behalf of the conversion of their children parental prayers and daily example were not in vain.

This family furnishes one among many illustrations, of a believing and baptized household. With the exception of those transferred to the church triumphant, the rest are we hope, both in Christ and in his church militant. Our oldest deacon and church clerk are members of this family. Thus another happy verification is afforded of those precious divine statements, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth."

Our lately deceased bro. and sister had also a large circle of friends in Nictaux and Stewacke, both in the world, and in the two churches with which they were at different times connected.

As members of the Lower Stewacke Baptist Church they were "living epistles;" therefore we now especially miss them. But we rejoice that, "Though dead, they speak in reason's ear, And in example live."

Sister B.'s age was only sixty-seven, that of bro. B. seventy-one. But they had doubtless been "immortal" long enough for earth. God their Redeemer had more abundant life and immortality in store for them in His Heavenly glory, whither He had taken them.

Mrs. Banks' last illness was short, after three days' suffering and struggle she fell asleep in Christ. Very marked regard for her worth was shown by the attendance at her funeral.

Within one month and one day, on the evening of the seventh of March, our brother, her husband, followed her in death, and, we doubt not, joined her in heaven. He was just able to sit up to see his earthly companion die, which he did with great composure, and ever afterward as the month passed, his frame of mind was a truly patient and expectant one. Like Saul and his son Jonathan, this couple were "lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided." "The memory of the just is blessed." "and I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."

I have not left space to speak of another kind of sorrow we have of late had in this place.—Suffice it now to say that a very peculiar work of grace—for the days of modern Christianity—is now going on in one section of this field of labor. For four and even six weeks past several have been passing through great soul-distress, and have not yet found liberty. But we have strong hopes respecting those cases that deliverance will ere long through sovereign grace be granted. Therefore our sorrow even on their behalf is mingled with joyful hope.

Others have found peace in believing. As intimated by bro. Miles, I had the great privilege of baptizing four—out of one family—on the 21st ult. I hope also to baptize again tomorrow.

Is there not a sound of abundance of rain?—Let us be preparing and prepared for it.

A. CHIPMAN.

MR. WILLIAM MCKENNE,

of Tremont, Aylesford, obtained a hope in Christ in his youthful days, during a gracious revival in Yarmouth, under the labors of the late venerable Harris Harding. He did not, however, unite with a Christian Church till after his removal to Nictaux. While resident there, on the 3rd day of September, 1815, (as appears by the writer's Diary,) he was baptized by Rev. T. H. Chipman, with 5 others, of whom Rev. Henry Saunders was one.

About the year 1817—52 years ago—brother McKenne purchased a lot of wilderness land on the South Mountain, in what is now called 'Tremont,' Aylesford. There were then very few inhabitants in that region: and for about a mile he had to go back and forth to his place by the guidance of a marked tree. There, however, he settled, and remained to the day of his death. In the midst of many inconveniences and much hardship at the first, with continuous toil, by honest industry and frugality he converted the forest into a fruitful farm, and raised a numerous family.

Brother McKenne was a kind and affectionate husband and father. He was a serious Christian, and constantly maintained the worship of God in his house. When a Baptist Church was formed in the region in which he resided, he transferred his membership to it, and walked with it to the termination of his life. He had the happiness to see nearly all his children professing faith in Christ, and uniting with the same Church.

In the former part of his protracted illness, though steadfast in hope, he seemed at times somewhat depressed in spirit, but toward the close he had seasons of increasing joyfulness. Exhausted nature gradually sank, and our justly venerated brother quietly expired on the 2nd day of April, 1869, at the age of 81 years. He has left a widow and 11 children, to mourn their loss, indeed, but to be consoled with the assurance that for him "to die is gain."

At his burial a discourse was delivered by the Pastor from the words of Obadiah (1 Kings xviii. 12.) "I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth."—Communicated by Rev. C. Tipper. Yarmouth papers please copy.

For the Christian Messenger.

DONATION.

SPRINGFIELD, APRIL 6TH, 1869.—Dear Bro.—Will you please allow me again to acknowledge a very interesting donation visit paid me by my brethren and friends in Springfield on the evening of March 17th, at the residence of Russel

Darling, Esq. After a time of pleasant social intercourse and kind greetings Elijah Roope, Esq., was requested to take the chair, who at once introduced Rev. Dr. Robertson of Wilmot (Episcopalian) who delivered a handsome, instructive and appropriate address on the relation between pastor and people. At the close of his speech which held all in breathless silence Mr. R. in behalf of the interesting and happy group presented the purse, which with other articles of utility amounted to the handsome sum of \$60.50. The exercises of the evening were closed by the reading of the Scriptures by Dr. Robertson and prayer by the Pastor. After singing the Doxology the company left with cheerful hearts, beautifully illustrating the 133rd Psalm, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." For this and the many favours and gifts received I would tender my sincere thanks.

AUGUSTUS SHIELDS.

Religious Intelligence.

HALIFAX.—On Lord's Day last nineteen persons were baptized by the pastor of the North Church Rev. J. E. Goucher. They were received into the Church in the evening. In both Granville Street Church and the North Church there were services every evening last week, and are being held the same the present week.

SHELburne COUNTY, WOOD'S HARBOR, April 5th, 1866.—Dear Brother Selden,—You and many of your readers will doubtless be pleased to learn that the work of the Lord is still progressing in Wood's Harbor. After an absence of more than four weeks, I have returned to find more candidates for baptism. Yesterday, I had the privilege of immersing eight believers. Twenty-seven have submitted to the ordinance since the work began and several more are "almost persuaded."

Yours in the truth,

W. H. RICHAN.

YARMOUTH, APRIL 5TH, 1869.

Dear Brother,—

According to urgent request I have been for nearly three weeks assisting my esteemed brother Dr. Day, Pastor of the 1st Yarmouth Baptist Church, in holding extra services. I am happy to inform you that a very interesting and precious work of grace is in progress. Four converts were baptised on Sabbath evening March 14, six on the 21st, eight on the 28th, and ten last evening. Thus the work goes on with gradually increasing power; and present prospects for an extensive ingathering are decidedly hopeful.

Rev. H. Achilles baptised several converts recently at Hillsburn, Granville Mountain.

Yours truly,

ISAIAH WALLACE.

P. S. It is but right that I should state that Joseph Shaw, Esq., of this town has generously engaged to pay \$20 a year for the next three years toward the support of a professor of Natural Science in Acadia College; thus relieving to that extent my \$40 pledge to that object.

I. W.

Dominion and Foreign News.

OTTAWA.—A cable despatch was received by the government on Monday announcing that the shareholders of the Hudson's Bay Company had, by a large majority, agreed to the transfer of their territory on the terms proposed by Earl Granville. A snow storm, accompanied by thunder, occurred yesterday afternoon about 2 o'clock, in north Ottawa.

Several changes are to be made in the Customs Department relative to making out of returns. All ports to be classified. The most competent clerk to be transferred to Ottawa. All returns to be compiled from entries, and monthly statements, whereby much time will be saved in closing statement. This will make a saving of at least \$30,000 per annum.

MONTREAL.—Extra precautions are being taken for watching the Banks in consequence of information received by the Bank authorities that an organized robbery was to be attempted. The various Bank agencies throughout the country have been notified by telegraph to place a double guard on the Banks at night.

The new military control system goes into effect in Ontario and Quebec on the first of June. Steamers are now running from Rimouski to Quebec.

The Welland Canal opens on the 21st of April.

The Ontario Government have appointed Thomas White, Editor of the *Hamilton Spectator*, travelling Emigrant Agent to England.

Small-pox is raging terribly at L'Islet and at Bic.

A Canadian woman named Mary Ann Baptiste, who has lived at Prairie du Chien nearly a century, died on the night of the 1st of February, at the advanced age of one hundred and twenty-nine years.

New Brunswick.

The Temperance Orator Mr. Edward Carswell is expected to spend a month in New Brunswick on a lecturing tour.