

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

"BAPTISM AND COMMUNION."

VI.

AN EXEGESIS ON ACTS II. 42, 46.

By Rev. George Armstrong, A. M.

What is called infant baptism stands in direct antagonism to believers' baptism. The latter only we hold to be from God, as having been sanctioned and commanded by Christ, and sustained and commended by his example.

The practice of believers' baptism is a witness and testimony to the truth. Baptists have hitherto, and at times amid much misunderstanding, if not misrepresentation and reproach, borne this testimony. Shall they now abandon their position, and discredit their own testimony? Why should they? Does truth require it?—Does charity? If my interpretation is correct and my arguments sound, neither truth nor charity make any such demand.

The practice of believers' baptism, and that which is legitimately associated with it,—baptized believers' Communion,—form a double protest against Pædobaptism, and the errors that belong to it. The protest is needed, and is neither unkind nor unbrotherly; and should not be discontinued, nor withdrawn in whole, or in part. Open communion pleases our Pædobaptist brethren only because it is in effect a recognition on our part of Pædobaptism as being not entirely out of harmony with the Word of God, or at all events, that it may be allowed to pass unchallenged, as if it were an ordinance of Christ. But this would be weakly abandoning our principles and yielding a position which ought to be regarded as impregnable. Many Pædobaptist brethren would doubtless laud such yielding as a triumph of christian charity, though in reality it might be nothing better than cowardice on our part. But there is a better charity for us and for them,—for Baptists and Pædobaptists, viz: that which holds fast the truth as it is in Christ with all faithfulness and tenderness. Truth and charity should go hand in hand,—God has joined them together in his gospel and in his church, and man has no right to separate them, and to do so, is neither wise, nor spiritually profitable. We love our brethren, but we love Christ and his truth more, and dare not, in order to please them, depart from his commands and the order he has established in his church. If our Pædobaptist brethren would look at this matter carefully and candidly they would, we think, acquit us of bigotry, want of brotherly love, or intentional hardness; and, instead of censuring our course, they would perhaps admire and commend our adherence to conscience and principle for the Lord's sake as being in itself noble and grand. Indeed some Pædobaptists have seen that our position as to the Communion is necessitated by our position on baptism,—subjects and mode,—and have ceased therefore to assail us in reference to the former. In fact Pædobaptist denominations generally agree in principle with the Baptists, as to the necessity of baptism *precious* to the Communion. For without what they consider baptism they would regard a person as disqualified for the Communion, and would consequently decline to admit him to the Lord's table, till he had submitted to what they took to be baptism.

While Baptists should be careful to maintain the ordinances of the christian church, in their integrity and order as given by our blessed Lord, they should be still more earnest to maintain and carry out the great and fundamental principle of conversion to Christ as necessary to membership in His Church,—of spiritual life in all, and spiritual works by all the members, that there may be spiritual growth, power and efficiency in the church. Much requires to be done in order to bring us all into a closer imitation of Christ, and the church of the New Testament. The spiritual should vastly and increasingly predominate among us; we should exhibit, in much fuller measure and in more exact and beautiful proportions the graces and fruits of the Holy Spirit. This would commend our principles to our Pædobaptist brethren and effect more for truth than volumes of harsh and hard controversy on Baptism and Communion.

We do not see anything better to do in closing this discussion than to advise and urge upon all more earnest, honest, prayerful and persevering endeavours for conformity to the teaching, law, doctrine, example of Christ in all things; and so far as Bap-

tists and Pædobaptist have on any matter attained to this, "let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing,"—still looking earnestly and constantly for more light and knowledge from above, a stronger faith in Christ and an exact imitation of Him in all things. So shall we learn more perfectly the will of our Lord and Master, and find in doing His will the blessings promised to the humble, thorough, faithful disciple of the Cross.

For the Christian Messenger.

RELIGION IN SIAM.

I.

"The old King of Siam, though an idolater, had his son educated by an English lady, and the result was, that when he came to the throne he sneered at the follies of Buddhism, and demolished the temples, erecting schools in their places. Though not a christian he had ceased to be a heathen, and the whole land was open to Christian Missionaries." Extract from an address of the Rev. W. S. McKenzie, Sec'y of A. F. M. Society, at Missionary Meeting in Academy of Music, St. John, N. B., as reported in the Daily Telegraph, August 24th 1874.

This very unexpected and gratifying state of things—assuming that Rev. Mr. McKenzie is fully authorized to make the announcement—and I have no desire to question its reliability—must, I apprehend, have very recently transpired.

The lady to whom Mr. McKenzie refers is doubtless, Annie Hamett Leonowens of Singapore, who has published a very readable book entitled, "The English Governess at the Siamese Court, being recollections of six years in the Royal Palace at Bangkok."

The authoress has prefixed to her book the *fac simile* of a letter from the present King of Siam to herself, under date 6th of March 1869, apparently a reply to one from her respecting the then recent death of his, the King's father. In it he makes no reference either to the Buddhist, or Christian religion, but it is five years now, since it was written, and great events may have transpired in the mean time.

At page 138 she writes, "The American protestant Missionaries have as yet, made no remarkable impressions on the religious mind of the Siamese. Devoted, persevering, and patient labourers, the field they have so faithfully tilled, has rewarded them with but scanty fruits. Nor will the fact, thankless though it be, appear surprising to those whose privilege it has been, to observe the Buddhists and the Roman Catholic side by side in the East, and to note how, even on the score of doctrine, they meet without a jar, at many points. The average Siamese citizen entering a Roman Catholic chapel in Bangkok, finds nothing there to shock his prejudices, &c."

At page 135 she gives the estimate of the population of the City of Bangkok, at about one million—80,000 Chinese, 20,000 Burmese, 15,000 Arabs and Indians, and the remainder Siamese. This from their latest census.

Speaking of Buddhism, she combats the idea that the Chang Phouk, or white Elephant, is worshipped as a deity, adding—"The notion is erroneous, especially as it relates to Siam—the Buddhist do not recognize God in any material form whatever, and are shocked at the idea of adoring an Elephant."

The present King of Siam is about twenty-two years of age.

A more recent work than that of Mrs. Leonowens, is "The Land of the White Elephant—by Frank Vincent, Jr., a narrative of sights and scenes in South Eastern Asia, &c. in 1871-72." Published by Harper & Bro. 1874.

His travels comprehend a voyage from Madras to Rangoon,—up to Amarapool and Mandalay with its 100,000 inhabitants, and down again to Rangoon. Thence by steamer he proceeded via Maulmain, passing Amherst and the hopea tree shading the grave of Mrs. Judson. From Maulmain to Malacca, Singapore, thence to Bangkok. After an excursion to Peaburi and back, he proceeded across Southern Siam by water and land, on his way to Saigon, in Cochin China, taking the lake Thalaysap, and the kingdom of Cambodia in his tour. This brought him into that marvellous country, where the Nagon Wat, and the City of Monasteries, with Angkor the Great, and their inscriptions, are the last and latest mystery and puzzle to the decipherers of ancient writings, and oriental architecture, visited also by Mrs. Leonowens.

This writer—Vincent—brings us to a comparatively recent period, and when the present King must have been at least three or four years upon the throne.

Mr. Vincent gives a pretty detailed

account of the sights of Bangkok, among others of the Wat Ching, the most remarkable Pagoda of the City, on the bank of the River opposite the Palace, with its grounds of twenty acres in extent, embracing besides the priests' dwellings, temples, preaching room, library and halls—beautiful flower and fruit gardens, ponds, grottoes, belvederes, and stone statues (brought from China) of sages, giants, warriors, griffins, nondescripts, &c., but omits all mention of any "sneers at the follies of Buddhism," on the part of the King, or of the "temples being demolished," and of "schools being erected in their places."

Again he says "I visited others of the Temples, and Pagodas of Bangkok," and he refers particularly to the Wat Sah Prub Tam. Besides the Siamese, there appears to be many temples of the Chinese population in Bangkok, the largest known is "Wat Colayer Nemit," with its immense roof, a hundred feet from the ground, and a Buddha in brass, fifty feet high, sitting cross legged.

The change spoken of by the Rev. Secretary, whereby the present King ceased to be a heathen, though not a Christian, as well as the 'demolition of the temples, and the erection of schools,' in their places, is certainly a most wonderful event! He adds as a sequel, that "the whole land is open to Christian Missionaries."

As the Missionaries Mr. and Mrs. Churchill and Miss Eaton, have been in correspondence with this Secretary of the Foreign Board bringing their dates down far into the present year, it seems strange that they should have omitted to give publicity to such a remarkable phase of heathendom as that announced at the "Academy of Music."

We shall probably hear full particulars at an early day, of the facts, and circumstances by which this change in the mind and policy of "Sundetch Chowfa Chulalonkarn," the reigning King of Siam, has been brought about, as well as the prospective results on the Independent Baptist Foreign Mission at Siam.

Then again why was no reference made in the report of the Foreign Missionary Board—read at the Convention—to this important feature of Siamese news?

It is indeed to be hoped that the reporter, who gave the speech to the Press, or the abstract rather, has made no mistake, for doubtless Rev. Mr. McKenzie had good authority for any announcement he would make on so public an occasion.

I am aware that some of the friends of Missions, Home and Foreign, are exceedingly sensitive about any remarks in the Press, which tend to invite public attention to the policy adopted by the respective Boards having these interests in charge, but I am at a loss to understand why this should be so.

In the present case for instance, when the public are furnished with the information that has not yet transpired, and which justifies the announcement, astonishing as it seems—and which the new Board or some of its members will be naturally expected to furnish, instead of damaging the cause, nothing that I can well imagine, would be so likely to inspire the denomination with increased zeal in their support of the Independent Siamese Mission.

AN ORIENTAL.

For the Christian Messenger.

REMOVED MEMBERS.

Dear Editor,—

"D." regrets that the continued misapprehensions of "E." prolong this discussion. "E's" first letter, in which he contended that the suggestions were unscriptural, showed that he misapprehended their spirit. "D's" second letter seemed to have removed this misunderstanding, so that "E" admits their scripturalness, declaring that he has "little fault to find with the action of the Association so far as it concerns the discipline of non-resident members." Very candid and satisfactory. Then and thus the discussion should end with "D." and "E." in practical agreement, for the "Suggestions" and "D's" correspondence dealt only with non-residents.

But no, "E." still strangely misapprehends the scope of both the Suggestions and "D's" remarks, saying, "According to 'D' the column ('cancelled') is not intended for the removed merely, but is, if I mistake not, to include all . . . excluded for disorderly walk generally." On this wrong assumption "E." founds all of his last letter that calls for reply. That reply is, that the term "cancelled"

was intended to apply only to non-residents excluded for disorderly walk in neglecting church ordinances and Christian duties. The term, so explained, understood and used, denotes a class of excluded members, and more, tells the reasons of their exclusion. Its use corrects rather than "perpetuates misunderstanding," for all, within and without the church, are hereby told that there are exclusions for other causes beside immorality or heterodoxy. Moreover its use can cause no wranglings, jealousies or difficulties, for the cases to which it applies are, strictly defined as above.

With reference, therefore, to "E's" strictures on the action of the Western Association it may be said, let. That its action introduces no "disturbing innovation," unless a provision for the scriptural watch care and discipline (now neglected) of over a fourth of the membership of the churches composing the Association is so called, and 2nd. That its action neither "admits," nor implies that there are "more ways out of the church than dismission, death and exclusion," for, to repeat again, the term "cancelled," is applied to persons excluded to denote the cause of exclusion. The fact that the Western Association will be thus more particular in specifying reasons of exclusion can cause no great trouble in statistics or otherwise.

In conclusion, will not "E." admit that he "acted hastily," without "deliberation" or "authority," when he applied those terms to the doings of the delegates of the Western Association? They certainly had a thoughtful prayerful regard for the Lord's will and Word when they dealt with this important matter. And will he not, admitting that he has hitherto misunderstood the spirit and scope of their action, use his influence in favor of a measure which he must now see is desirable, practicable and scriptural?

D.

For the Christian Messenger.

UPPER FALMOUTH, Aug. 20th, '74.

Dear Editor,—

I am so fully occupied with the great work committed to my hands that I have but little time to notice criticisms and objections. Lest however an unfavorable impression should be produced by the communication of "Question," in your last issue, permit me to say:—

1. That it has been my course invariably, with but one exception, not to baptise converts without a vote of the church. The exceptional case for which there seemed to me sufficient reasons, occurred neither in Berwick nor Keipt, but in Lower Granville some 8 years ago. The brother baptized subsequently joined the church and is now one of its most useful members.

2. I often, at the water side, give an invitation to any who love and trust the Saviour to come forward and obey Him, with a view to their making their statement before the church, large numbers of whom are usually present at our baptisms. Two persons were thus received for baptism during my recent labours in Berwick. I do not know that in this respect my course is peculiar or objectionable.

3. Your correspondent closes with this remarkable paragraph:—"if itinerating ministers of our denomination will give out, that they will attend at suitable places for baptism on fine Sunday mornings, and then with any or all who believe in Christ to come forward and they will baptise them, the probability is that Society whose agent thus practises will soon have a flattering report as regards numbers to publish."

The implied reference would seem to be to myself and the Home Missionary Union and may be characterized as unjust, unkind and harmful. I do not know any of our ministers who practise the extraordinary course indicated by the above paragraph. It might be interesting, however if any of your readers, versed in scripture lore and usages of our denomination would gratify your correspondent by shewing whether such hypothetical or imaginary course should be "condemned or commended."

Yours truly,

ISA. WALLACE.

For the Christian Messenger.

FROM GEORGIA, UNITED STATES.

YELLOW RIVER, GWINNETT Co., GA., August 25th, 1874.

The Lawrenceville Association, composed of churches mostly within Gwinnett Co., convened last Saturday at this place, twenty-five miles north-east of Atlanta. The country around is peopled by farmers whose

manner of life is very simple and frugal, but whose hospitality is seldom surpassed any where. The day was somewhat unfavorable, as it had rained the day previous, and thunder clouds during the morning lay embedded around the western horizon, portending more rain. When I arrived here, I found a very large concourse of people assembled, and the beautiful grove fronting the church, variegated with a small and large growth of timber, was literally crowded with buggies, wagons, ox-carts, horses, mules, and oxen; and the large new church, not long since erected, was filled to its utmost capacity, and a great many were standing out. With some little difficulty I found a place where I could be seated within, but the day being so warm and sultry I found it by no means pleasant by reason of the intensity of the heat in a house so crowded; however it was not long before the pressure of the heat was relieved by a rain which had the effect of lowering the temperature. Rev. James H. Webb preached the Introductory Sermon from 1 Cor. xv. 22. His sermon was sound and practical; and in the course of his remarks he very nobly defended some of the cardinal principles of the Baptist denomination, with which some, from prejudice or through the want of information, are disposed to cavil.

There are nineteen churches composing this Association. From the reading of the messages addressed by them, to the Association they all appear to be in peace and harmony. Some four or five lament the cold, lukewarm condition of their membership, while others manifest a cheerful hope of the work of grace in their midst. Since the last associational meeting there have been added to the churches by baptism 93; by certificate 67; and 18 members have been excluded. The number of deaths and dismissions is small.

Near the church there is a large brush arbor erected beneath which seats are regularly arranged, where services were held on Sabbath.

Monday was mostly occupied by the Association in the discussion of some questions appertaining to church discipline, and making appropriate answers to certain queries propounded by two churches.

One peculiarity of this association, is, that as an ecclesiastical body of Baptists, it stands aloof from Conventions and all Missionary Boards. Several other Associations in the State, I learn, occupy the same standpoint. These are what are called Missionary Baptists. I am told these Associations are not Anti-Missionary in principle; but they adopt this course upon the policy that it interferes with church independency, and that the work of missionary effort belongs strictly to the churches themselves which should regulate the matter in their own respective spheres.—This may to the minds of many ardent missionaries, who are working with zeal in the cause whether in some foreign field or collecting means at home to sustain those sent thither, appear to be pushing church independency to an extreme. "In union there is strength" no less so in religious operations than in affairs of state. Too much stress placed upon church independency, when a church acts in a manner regardless of the wishes of sister churches, often has a deleterious effect, and materially retards the work in the Master's cause. It is to be hoped our churches will become more a unit, maintaining the same mind and being of the same judgement.

The Temperance cause has been making some progress in this country. Hon. J. J. Hickman, of Kentucky, the great temperance lecturer and champion, during last winter and spring, produced great results in the temperance cause. Several Lodges of Good Templars were organized by him, and perhaps no man ever before produced so great results in so short a time as he did. It is a notable fact that rapid strides have been made in the way of reformation. The drinking saloons are less frequented; and we have more Temperance champions who boldly and publicly advocate the cause.

P. L. H.

Mrs. BIRT'S CHILDREN.—The following interesting letter from an American in Great Britain appeared in the Morning Chronicle. It would have appeared last week but was crowded out:

LIVERPOOL, G. B., 8th August, 1874.

Dear Sir,—

You will have heard, before receiving these few lines, of the arrival in your Province of Mrs. Birt, with about eighty or ninety children, to be placed on farms and in homes in Nova Scotia. Mrs Birt deserves the best of treatment at the hands of all Nova Scotians, for here is the work of a large, open-hearted woman, not that of one of our ambitious American would-be philosophers, who think they are reforming