

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XXII., No. 41.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, October 10, 1877.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XLII., No. 41.

Poetry.

Nigh at Hand.

Through mists that hide me from my God,
I see
A shapeless form! Death comes, and
beckons me,
I scent the odours of the spirit land—
And with commingled joy, and terror,
hear
The far off whispers of a white-robed
band!
Nearer they come—yet nearer—yet
more near!
Is it rehearsal of a "Welcome" song?
Do those bright spirits wait till death
may give
The soul its franchise—and I die to live?
Does fancy send the breeze from yon
green mountain?
(I am not dreaming when it cools my
brow)
Are they the sparkles of an actual foun-
tain
That gladden and refresh my spirit
now?
How beautiful the burst of holy light!
How beautiful the day, that has no night!
Open! ye everlasting gates! I pray—
Waiting, but yearning—for that perfect
day!
Hark! to those Allelujahs! hail! all
hail!
Shall they be echoed by a sob, and wail!
Friends "gone before" these are your
happy voices.
The old familiar sounds: my soul re-
joices!
Ah! through the mists the great white
throne, I see:
And now a saint in glory beckons me—
Is death a foe to dread? the death who
giveth
Life—the unburthen life that ever liveth!
Who shrinks from death? come when he
will or may—
The night he brings, will bring the risen
day:
His call—his touch—we neither seek nor
shun;
His life is ended when his work is done—
Our spear and shield no cloud of death
can dim!
He triumphs not o'er us,—we conquer
him!
How long O Lord, how long ere I shall
see
The myriad glories of another sphere?
And worship in Thy presence—not as
here
In chains that keep the shackled soul
from Thee,
My God! let that eternal home be near?
Master? I bring to Thee a soul oppress!
"Weary and heavy laden," seeking rest;
Strengthen my faith! that, with my
latest breath,
I greet Thy messenger of mercy—Death!

Religious.

The Baptists; their position, and duty.

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COLCHESTER COUNTIES.

(Published by request.)

Many schisms have rent asunder the so called "christian church." The party spirit that early manifested itself in Corinth was not cast out of the church by the words of Paul. The force of his utterances have not proved sufficient to exorcise the demon of sectarianism even to the present day. The process by which the formation of the modern sects was accomplished is not difficult to explain: How the evil has been perpetuated is equally apparent.

In the first place innovations upon the original order were introduced. Practices and doctrines that were stoutly opposed when first advocated, made progress, by degrees, until, corruption succeeding corruption, the word of God was set aside by the commandments of men. The "man of sin" sat in the temple of God, and ruled the nations with a rod of iron, by the power they, in their servility had yielded up to the usurper of divine prerogatives. But it had been written "When the enemy comes in like a flood the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard

against him." The 16th century witnessed the fulfilment of this prophetic word: the Spirit "moved upon the face of the waters;" God said "Let there be light, and there was light." It was "the light of life." Men under the new inspiration shook off the incubus that lay so heavily upon their souls, and asserted their right to liberty of thought and speech. Here originated the sects that now divide the christian world. Lutheranism, Episcopalianism and Presbyterianism were so many secessions from Rome. These went out from the apostate church, protesting against its usurpations, and asserting the supreme authority of the word of God. But they failed to free themselves wholly from its corruptions. The virus had too deeply entered to be easily expelled. Luther retained the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and all the great leaders of the Reformation brought out with them the popish notions of a State Church, baptismal regeneration, and kindred errors. These false doctrines have been perpetuated in the sects that have since broken off from those of earlier date. True many of the errors of the papacy have been eliminated from the creeds, but so long as infant baptism is retained a connecting link remains, through which those subtle influences will continue to operate to the endangering of the interests of true godliness.

Men may scoff at the pretensions of the Romish Church in claiming them as her children, "very wild and disobedient, but children still": but so long as they retain ordinances that are administered under the authority, not of the word of God, but of Popes and Councils, there is more of sober reason in the claim than they are willing to admit.

With that church, Baptists, as a people, can never harmonize. They never broke off from her communion because they were never in it. From the first they were the opposers of the various innovations upon christian doctrine, and hence became, what they have continued to be, the objects of her greatest dislike, and persecuting hate.

Mosheim confesses that "the true origin of that sect which acquired the denomination of Anabaptists is hid in the remote depths of antiquity"—and further—that "the Mennonites (Dutch Baptists) are not entirely mistaken when they boast of their descent from the Waldenses, Petrobrussians and other ancient sects who are usually considered as witnesses of the truth in the times of universal darkness and superstition." (Vol. III. Part II. chap. 3.)

Rev. J. J. Dermont and Dr. Ypeij, were appointed by the king of the Netherlands to prepare a work on the history of the Reformed church, which was published in 1819. They say of the Baptists that they "were formerly called Anabaptists, and in later times Mennonites," and that they "were the original Waldenses;" and they add, "on this account the Baptists may be considered as the only christian community which has stood since the days of the apostles, and as a christian society which has preserved pure the doctrines of the gospel through all ages."

Sir Isaac Newton gave it as his opinion that "the Baptists were the only christians who had never symbolized with the church of Rome."

Cardinal Hosines, President of the Council of Trent, says "None for these 1200 years past have been more grievously punished than the Baptists."

I might quote from other authorities bearing upon the same subject to prove that Baptists are no modern sect, but that the grand principles upon which they are established have been held, and defended from the beginning. Obadiah Holmes was publicly whipped in Boston because he denied the validity of infant baptism, on this account Roger Williams was banished from Massachusetts. For this Benjamin Keach of England was placed in the pillory. Starck says of the Waldenses that they rejected infant baptism. Paulicians of the 7th century and Donatists of the 4th century, and other sects that arose

from time to time, protested against the perversions of gospel order, and contended for those same distinctive truths that are dear to the heart of those who bear the name of Baptist. We are not, however, anxious, at all to prove the existence of the Baptists, under whatever name they may have been found through all the periods of the past. If they can be shown to be in conformity with apostolical doctrines, as made known in the New Testament, nothing more is needed to establish their claim.

This then is their position, amongst their brethren of opposing views. First as to the doctrine of baptism. As to the mode they see no room for doubt or controversy. By the same law of interpretation that they employ in the translation of any Greek word they read baptizo, to immerse, and baptism an immersion. They cannot find a single passage that enforces the baptism of the unconscious infant or that even implies that such were ever baptized by Christ or by his disciples: but they do learn, from the clear statements of holy writ that this was required of believers in the Lord Jesus, and that such to the end of time are in baptism to "put on Christ." They are therefore compelled to form separate churches. They cannot do otherwise, to be true to their convictions.

Baptists again differ from others in their view of the nature of the church. With many the Jewish congregation is regarded as furnishing the true ideal of what the christian church must be. They hold that the church is the same in all ages, and to its privileges believers, with their children, are to be admitted. The outcome of this doctrine is seen, more particularly in Europe, where the State affords nourishment and protection to the church, and power for the punishment of offenders. If the union of Church and State is an error, then is it also an error to cast the christian community into the Jewish mould.

Baptists hold that the christian church is made up of believers in Christ who have yielded to the gospel requirement in respect to baptism. Unconscious infants cannot believe, and therefore have no place in the household of faith. To admit such is virtually to strike at the very root of the church's life. Foreign elements are thereby introduced, and the grand distinction between the church and the world removed.

Baptists differ from others in their teachings concerning the design of baptism. Infant baptism is the result of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration: and wherever this practice has obtained, it is proof of the existence of that notion in some form or other. It is accounted a terrible thing for a child to die unbaptized, even by those who are ashamed to make an open avowal of their opinion, or by those who are scarcely able to define their position. That I am not uncharitable in this judgment could be easily shown by a reference to the creeds of pedobaptists. Nothing is more easily demonstrated. Baptists believe christianity to be a religion of common sense, and that any departure from the New Testament order is a violation of its requirements. "Teach all nations—baptizing them." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Faith in Christ—baptism as the outward expression of it—an expression positively required by Him who not only gave the law, but gave himself the example of obedience that we should follow in his steps.

Baptists cannot coalesce with pedobaptists. The line that divides them is as wide as the ocean, and as deep. The points of dispute are not concerning water, whether little or much, as some seem to suppose. Subjects most vital are involved in the controversy. They contend for a regenerated church, for the doctrine of salvation through Christ alone, not by ordinances nor by the church,—for the necessity of simple unquestioning obedience to what God has commanded. If in taking this position they come in conflict with others, it is not from any choice of theirs. They love christians of every

name, but they can never sanction their errors; and if they must incur the ill will of those whose approbation they wish to enjoy, they prefer to endure it rather than to incur the displeasure of their Lord. From this position they can never retreat—nay, they feel day by day the growing consciousness of power, and the ultimate spread and victory, throughout the world, of these grand old doctrines that have been their strength from the beginning. Thus far they have survived the severest shocks of the enemy, and are now permitted to gaze upon many a shivered and broken weapon, fallen forever useless from the hands of those who used them, and to behold the sacred banner of truth waving where once error seemed impregnable established. From the beginning they have never abandoned any of their distinctive doctrines—while other denominations, as may easily be proved, have been gradually coming around to the adoption of those very doctrines and practices, for which Baptists have always contended, and for which they have suffered. By the light of the past and of the present they are led to the strong conviction that the christian mind and heart of the future will accept their views. There has been a wide departure from the primitive faith. The church must yet be restored to the ancient paths. The return may be slow. It took nearly a thousand years for error to develop fully into the hydra-headed monster of the papacy. We need not wonder if a millennial period be required to dethrone the man of sin, and to restore to the church her ancient glory. The work of reform will advance in such communities as have vital force sufficient to save them from falling back into popery. Human inventions will lose their charm and power—and God's word be elevated to its rightful place. Then will there be a coalescing of the sects by a process natural and easy. There will be no surrender of truth, no compromises, no violence to the convictions of believers. Separating lines will vanish. The heralds of the cross will no longer contend for supremacy within a contracted sphere, but will vie with each other in holy zeal to carry the gospel into the regions beyond. Then shall the world confess the truth of the Apostle's word, "There is one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism; one God and Father of all who is above all, and through all and in you all."

The distinguishing views of Baptists must become universal before this grand consummation can be effected. The words of Hubmeyer, the martyr, uttered 530 years ago are worthy of note; "Christendom shall not receive its rising aught, unless baptism and the Lord's Supper are brought to their original purity." But to whom is this work committed? Will pedobaptists do it? Can they who follow the false misleading lights of tradition lead on in such a reform? The hope is vain. Men will not cast away their infant baptism without a struggle. They will not come back to the baptism of the New Testament until the arguments, by which they support their practice of sprinkling in the stead of immersion, are proved to be worthless. The truth must be brought to bear upon men's consciences before they will receive it. This work devolves upon the Baptists. Their responsibilities are great. Let them prove faithful, and their record shall be honorable, and their recompense sure.

In the words of Neander the great historian, "There is a future for the Baptists"—but they will realize their mission only as they are faithful to the truth. With many truth is subordinated to charity—to charity that is not such in reality, but a wretched caricature of that which rejoiceth not in iniquity but in the truth. This false charity says "Do not inquire what a man believes. Is he sincere? then receive him—Baptism will make him no better, without it he is no worse; then do not contend about mere water. Whatever a man thinks is right is right to him." "My soul come not thou into their secret, unto their honor be not

thou united." Baptists must not be beguiled by such fair words as these. "Buy the truth and sell it not" is God's command. "By speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in Him in all things." We are to grow up in Him: How? by surrendering the truth in our love and favor for error? By no means—by speaking the truth in love." Let that word brethren weigh heavily upon our hearts. We are to speak out—to proclaim the truth in love. Men will ridicule, revile and hate us. Let us bless them with the truth, in return for their cursing. By our fidelity to duty we shall bring blessings upon the heads of our opposers, and win the favor of the Master.

The first President of Howard College became a Baptist. He subsequently failed to give the weight of his influence to the advocacy of the cause which he had espoused. The second President held similar views with reference to the ordinance of baptism, but agreed to keep them in abeyance. Had these men been faithful to their convictions, they would have been more honored and useful. The late professor Hackett possessed a nobler spirit. Required, during the last year of his course at Andover to prepare an essay on infant baptism, he was led to a careful examination of the whole subject, which resulted in his adoption of Baptist sentiments. He had, as one who differed from him remarked, "one single aim, and that was to learn and do the right." These words indicate the duty of every one. He is neither true to himself, to his fellow men, nor to his God who is not willing to learn and to do the right. How many, even among Baptists, are ashamed of their own principles. They would like to apologize for holding sentiments adverse to those held by others. They cannot avoid the conclusions to which they have arrived from the study of the Word, but they mean no offence to others, and would humbly beg pardon of all. Instead of going cap in hand, cringing among their fellows, Baptists should stand erect as kings among men, conscious of their strength under the sacred banner of truth, and assured that they are the people to whom, if faithful, God will give the kingdom.

Baptists should be a holy people. In the New Testament times they were called saints; but now we scarcely dare to employ the term when addressing a company of baptized believers. We have a fear that it may not be correct, or we dread the adverse criticism of the world. There have been scoffers from the beginning. Christians should not give them occasion to blaspheme. They should have their "conversation honest" among the ungodly, who are only too willing to speak against them as "evil doers." With "well doing" they should "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Of all believers the baptized are expected to exhibit the peculiar excellencies of Christianity. They have been buried with Christ in baptism. This can be affirmed only of those who have been immersed into Christ. Paul affirms of such that they "have put on Christ." Let all ponder these words—"Buried with Christ," "Risen with Christ." "Have put on Christ"—and let them test their piety, not by their profession, but by the principles that rule within their breasts and control their lives.

Baptists should be careful in the reception of members, and in the maintenance of scriptural discipline in the church. Those who are acquainted with the history of Christianity in America have learned of the "Half way covenant," and of the evils resulting therefrom, "according to which," as the Rev. G. B. Ide, D. D., remarks, "persons making no profession of a change of heart, if they only exhibited a fair outward morality, were permitted and required on the ground of their baptism in infancy, to appear before the church, recognize their connection with it, acknowledge their covenant obligations, and bring their children to baptism." The church thus opened its doors to admit the world within its sacred precincts, and paved