

The Christian Messenger.

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WHOLE SERIES.
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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.
To the Undecided.

My friend if to-day you were with me,
And your hand in my own I could take,
I would ask, "Do you love the dear Saviour?"
What reply do you think you would make?
Could you give a glad Yes, for your answer?
Or only a sorrowful No?
If you're burdened with sin and temptation
Ask Jesus his grace to bestow.

At the feet of the crucified Saviour,
In faith and true penitence bow;
If you've never received His forgiveness,
I entreat you to seek for it now.
You understand fully your duty;
You were taught it in earliest years;
And Christ's offers of life and salvation,
Are sounding to-day in your ears.

I entreat my friend to accept them;
If His love you continue to slight,
He will leave you to sink in the darkness
Of eternity's terrible night.
Perchance you have had praying parents,
Who laboured to win you to God;
And it may be your mother is sleeping
Now peacefully under the sod.

And you have not heeded her counsels,
Your feet have turned lightly away;
But remember the Heavenly Shepherd
Is seeking the wand'rer to-day.
I know He will gladly receive you,
There is pity and love in His face;
O come my dear friend I entreat you,
And be clasped in His tender embrace.

His love to poor souls is amazing!
Their sins He delights to forgive;
He came to this earth full of pity,
And died that poor sinners might live.
Now! now is the day of salvation;
Yes now is the time to decide
Who it is that you'll take for your Master,
Your counsellor, leader, and guide.

O come and accept the dear Saviour,
Do not grieve His sweet Spirit away;
The day of grace soon will be ended;
My friend do not longer delay.
Ask Jesus to pardon and save you,
He will answer your penitent prayer;
And the trials of life will seem lighter,
When His love and forgiveness you share.

H. COLE.

Milton, Queens Co.

The Baptism of Jesus.

[By Abraham Coles, M. D., LL. D., in
"The Evangelist"]

O happy River! conscious in each drop,
From thy clear bottom to thy smiling top,
Deep calling unto deep, as rapids swift
To foaming cataracts their voice uplift,
In eager proclamation, far to near,
And near to far, loud shouting, "God is here!"

Thou, ever reverent, o'er many a steep,
With kneeling many, and prostrations deep,
Falling and falling, low and lower fall
And kiss His feet, who is the Lord of all!
He is not here for cleansing, He is clean;
A purity like His was never seen.

He can that wash, and washing holy make
The guilty, bitter, deep Asphaltic Lake.
Breast-high in thee, not snow is half so
white;
Nor half so spotless is th' unsullied light.
Caressing eddies round and round Him
whirled

In circling dance, the Wonder of the world.
He stoops to thee in all His heavenly charms:
I see Him sinking in thy jewelled arms;
Lost one amazing moment to the sight,
Then rising radiant, dripping gems of light.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.
About Burial Services.

There are some customs among us, connected with the burial of our dead, which demand an immediate reform. We seem to cling to some of our old-fashioned and absurd practices in this matter, simply because our great-grandfathers have set the example, and because many narrow-minded persons regard any change in funeral rites as a sort of desecration or slight shown towards departed friends. Christian ministers are afraid of expressing their candid opinions on the subject or of suggesting any improvements in the existing customs lest they shall incur the displeasure of their parishioners. But it is time to speak out in this matter, and we are pleased to find that there are some clergymen who are courageous enough to do so.

The Protestant ministers of West-

chester, Mass., and a Catholic priest, have just issued an appeal to the public for a needed change in funeral customs. They recommend that funerals should not be held on Sundays, except in cases of absolute necessity. Many families contrive to have their dead buried on Sunday for mere display. They hope in this way to have large processions so as to gratify their vanity in proclaiming their own importance. The fact that Sunday is the clergyman's hardest working day is a matter of no concern to such people. They care not whether the minister is doubly burdened, or his congregation are deprived of their usual sermon.

The appeal referred to also suggests that there should be no exposure of the body at funerals, but that the leaving-taking should be private, as the sacred privilege of kindred and friends. We have noticed that in some rural districts the remains of the departed are not only exposed at the house of mourning, but also in the chapel to which they are subsequently conveyed. This rude display has always impressed us as indicating coarseness of taste, and a lack of good breeding on the part of those who adhere to this semi-barbarous custom. It seems but proper to permit friends and relations to look upon the face of the departed before the remains have been conveyed from the house of mourning. Anything further than this would seem to be mere vulgar display.

The character and extent of the services at funerals also claim attention. It seems almost incredible that there are communities in Nova Scotia in which the monstrously absurd practice prevails of holding no less than THREE services at each funeral. Even if a mere infant is to be buried there must first be a service, consisting of reading the Scriptures, singing and prayer at the late residence of the deceased, then a second service is held at a neighboring chapel or school-house, with the inevitable funeral sermon; and, finally, a short service is held at the grave. The mummeries of Romanism scarcely exceed in absurdity this empty round of ritualism. Persons who are seldom ever seen within the church doors on other occasions are the loudest in demanding this multiplicity of ceremonies. Their going to meeting is all done at one time, and they rest till the next funeral.

The carrying of the remains of departed friends to chapels, and even funeral sermons, are but relics of Popery. Romanists convey their deceased relatives to their cathedrals in order that by means of incense, masses and sundry other hocus pocus operations the spirits of the departed ones may be purified and fitted for heaven, after having secured purgatorial cleansing. The Church of England, with its inherited ultramontaniam, retains this custom in its almost pristine significance. And we are not altogether without fear that a taint of Romish folly has so far affected some Baptists that they are a little afraid to put their departed friends under the ground without affording some ritualistic aid to the vanished spirit, in the way of a preparation for paradise. It is of course a matter of small consequence whether our deceased friends ever professed faith in Christ or not. A good funeral sermon, lauding their virtues and picturing out their entrance into heavenly mansions, will not only gratify the feelings of surviving relatives, but may act as a gentle persuasive to the tender heart of Peter, constraining him to turn the great key for the admission of the new saint.

In all reason, these follies should be abandoned. The gospel, which is faithfully proclaimed from week to week in our pulpits, is designed to warn and awaken the thoughtless. If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would they hear though one should rise from the dead. The custom of having protracted services at funerals, on the grounds that fitting occasions are thus afforded for doing good, is not endorsed by those who have given this matter the most careful study. As a rule, the services are used for display rather than for any good that they may accomplish.

A short appropriate service at the house of mourning, and a brief prayer or hymn at the grave, are all that reasonable persons ought to expect. With the increase of population, funerals are becoming so frequent that our prolix ceremonies are making exorbitant and unnecessary demands upon the time and energies of both ministers and people.

Let pastors of churches speak their thoughts on this subject to their congregations with kindly frankness, and the much needed reformation will be speedily effected.

A BASTOK.

March 16th, 1880.

For the Christian Messenger.

"Twelve manner of Fruits."

A very common mistake is made in interpreting Rev. xxii 2, where it is said that the tree of life "bare twelve manner of fruits." The passage is one of the most beautiful descriptions in the sacred Scriptures and should be clearly understood. The idea which is generally held regarding the import of these words is that the tree of life produces twelve kinds or varieties of fruits. So scholarly a periodical as the *Princeton Review* falls into this error. In its issue of the present month there is an able article from the pen of Dr. Le Conte, on a collegiate topic, in which the essayist remarks that "the educational tree, like the tree of life must bear not three only but twelve manner of noblest fruits." The connection shows that the idea of variety is what the writer is setting forth. From our pulpits we frequently hear the same incorrect allusion.

A glance at the passage shows us that the words "manner of" are not in the original, but are mere interpolations to express the erroneous exegesis of the translators. The literal renderings of the Greek—*ποικίλον καρπων δωδεκα*—is, "producing twelve fruits," or fruit-harvests. By dropping the "and" which, without any authority, follows these words, and by retaining the original participial construction of the "αποδιδουν," we have in the verse itself an explanation of the twelve fruits, namely, "yielding its fruit each month." The plain and only meaning of the passage is that the tree of life bears monthly, or produces twelve fruit-harvests during the year. An authority or two may be quoted in confirmation of the correctness of this exegesis.

"Producing twelve fruit-harvests; not (as in our version) twelve manner of fruits."—*Prof. Moses Stuart.*

"Twelve fruits; that is, fruit twelve times in the year, as is immediately explained, yielded the fruit every month."—*Dr. Adam Clarke.*

"The idea is, that the tree bore every month in the year, so that there were twelve fruit-harvests. It was not like a tree that bears but once a year, or in one season only, but it constantly bore fruit—it bore every month. The idea is that of abundance not variety. The supply never fails; the tree is never barren. There is a succession of fruit crops, but it is the same kind of fruit."—*Dr. Albert Barnes.*

This interpretation gives meaning and beauty to a passage which our version has rendered inexplicable. It seems remarkable that a leading Review should be found reproducing an idea so manifestly erroneous. Let us hope that the new version which is about to be published will correct many of the current misconceptions regarding biblical statements.

March 10, 1880.

Dr. Vance Smith, the Unitarian Bible reviser, has received a presentation of £697 from his co-religionists as an acknowledgement of his services on the New Testament Committee.

The rabbi of the Jewish synagogue at Strasburg has become a convert to Christianity.

For the Christian Messenger.
Dean Stanley on Baptism.

A late Essay on Baptism by the Very Rev. the Dean of Westminster, has attracted much attention, possibly more than its intrinsic merits demand. The name of its author would of itself be a passport, and make the performance more efficacious for good or evil than it would otherwise be. As, in the opinion of many, the Essay is likely to be quite as productive of injury, as of benefit, a brief examination of its contents will not be inappropriate.

The purpose of the Essay is thus stated by the author. "It is intended," he says, "to consider what was its original form in early times, and what is the inner meaning, which has more or less survived all the changes through which it has passed, as well as the lessons suggested by these changes."

It is necessary, although at the risk of being charged with captiousness, to make a remark or two upon these opening words. They are to some extent inexact, and so far unworthy of the subject, admittedly an important one, and of the author, a prominent writer and theologian. If there is inaccuracy and apparent want of care to be discovered in the very outset, it would not be unreasonable to surmise that defects of more or less importance might characterize the whole performance; and indeed such will be found to be the case.

First, it is to be remarked that the antecedent of "its" is to be discovered on other grounds than those of Grammar. The reference is presumably, or perhaps unquestionably, to *Baptism*, but a whole sentence intervenes between the two words, and what is more, it is an important one, both from the matter it contains, and the momentous subjects it suggests. Another proof of absence of care is furnished by the phrase, "in early times," which the epithet "original" before used renders unnecessary and tautologous. These lapsus may not be in themselves of much moment, as they do not change or obscure the meaning, but on the ground above alluded to, they are not wholly destitute of importance.

Besides such defects as those of language, there are to be met with throughout the Essay examples, as they seem, of mistiness and confusion of thought, which mar the production to a more serious extent. This might be accounted for on the ground that while some of the author's views are derived from the Scriptures, others are to be traced to an ecclesiastical system, to which he gives his adhesion, and of which he is in some sense a part. The Word of God is appealed to as an authority that should be regarded; but "the church" also has a voice and must be obeyed. According to the Dean, the teachings of the New Testament in respect to Baptism are plain and unmistakable. But the church has decided that they may, when she so determines, be varied from or set aside, and he enters no protest; but, as we shall discover, approves and even commends. Some of the changes he pronounces expedient, some desirable and all lawful. "The Church" would here seem to be the ultimate authority, but that is not asserted in so many words, nor perhaps is it consciously admitted at all. But it is plain nevertheless that the decisions of ecclesiastical dignitaries have shaped or modified the views of a large portion of christendom. In some cases at least, even by the admission of the Essayist the Scriptures and the church do differ in their requirements. And here is the difficulty under which many, even good men, sometimes labor. They would not discard the Scriptures, but they are not prepared to act independently of human authority, nor can they rise superior to the system under which they have been trained. The attempt to reconcile the two would result in just that kind of uncertainty and obscurity which must be admitted to be one of the most marked characteristics of the Essay that is engaging our consideration. A few examples in proof of the positions assumed may be adduced.

The Dean first directs our attention to the *mode* of Baptism; to ascertain and establish which, he appeals to history, both apostolic and patristic. On his authority there were no baptisms known, to New Testament times and the early church, but immersion. His views are unfolded in language such as the following: "The scene of the transaction," i.e. of the administration of the rite, "was either some deep wayside spring, or some rushing river, or some vast reservoir, in whose pure and refreshing waters the converts were plunged," as the divinely appointed means of entering the christian brotherhood. The spacious baptistery afterwards took the place of the pool or flowing stream, furnishing equally with them facilities for a total submersion, with superadded conveniences for the easy and becoming performance of the ordinance.

Thus far many candid students of the early history of the church have gone, and among the christian denominations, Baptists at least will not be disposed to take exception to the statements. But at this point—almost the very first touched upon—the Essayist, diverging from the Scriptural record, introduces one of the grossest and most fatal errors under which the church has labored. He proceeds to say that from these waters of baptism, which had "closed over the heads of the converts, they rose into the light of heaven *new and altered beings*."

Here is another instance of the author's looseness of style, and confusion of thought as well. If the converts, after arising from the water were "new beings," the epithet "altered" is unnecessary and superfluous. But we will search in vain in the Scriptures for any evidence that the baptized were "new and altered beings" by reason of the act, and as a consequence of it. They were regarded as possessing those characteristics before the rite was administered, and they were admitted to it, because they were so regarded. There was no other newness or alteration but that which pertained to their relation to the visible church or Christian brotherhood. Consequently all that the Essayist says in this connection of "Regeneration," "Illumination," "A new Creation" and "Forgiveness of Sins," as consequent upon the rising, referred to, from "the pure and refreshing water," has no other foundation than what is furnished by his own imagination and the teachings of a Church that substitutes an outward act for an inward grace; or, what is as unreasonable and unscriptural, renders the latter dependent upon the former.

But to confine our attention a little longer to the form of the ceremony, we have the testimony of the Dean that "for the first thirteen centuries" of the *Christian Era*, "the almost universal practise of Baptism was that of which we read in the New Testament, and which is the very meaning of the word baptizo." Without staying to notice again the want of exactness in the language employed, we may accept of the statements in reference to the proportion of Christendom, in which immersion is held to be the only Christian baptism—only remarking that the Dean's knowledge of English ought to have supplied him with some more kindly epithet to apply to a denomination, which, according to his own shewing, has ever held to the Scriptural view of Baptism, than that of "austere." But even if such is the appropriate term, the Baptists need not be ashamed or particularly concerned, that their fidelity to truth has cost them the loss of the approval of other Christian bodies and even of dignitaries themselves of "the church." In any case however the Essayist would have been better employed in shewing, if he could, the consistency of those churches whose "rubrics enjoin immersion," and which nevertheless have substituted for it "the sprinkling of a few drops of water on the face;" for he admits not only without compunction, but even with approval, that the communion to which he belongs has done so, and that with a very few exceptions, among which is