

The Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

NEW SERIES.
Vol. I. No. 26.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26, 1856.

WHOLE SERIES
Vol. XX. No. 26.

Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

Thoughts, not Words.

Think not the poet's easy task
Is forming smooth but empty rhymes;
Not words alone, but thoughts we ask,
An earnest voice, not idle chimes.
No melody expressing nought,
Can charm like true and simple thought.

Try not, O youth! in verse of thine
To hide a void with subtle art;
But let there shine in every line
Thy understanding and thy heart;
For only when thou feelest much,
Will hearts obey thy magic touch.

Strive not with sentimental phrase
To suit the foolish and the vain;
But show thy spirits changing phase,
Or workings of thy busy brain.
Write from thy soul if thou would'st claim
The worthy poet's noble name.

Break thou the bonds which keep thy pen
Back from the poets higher themes;
Write as a man to thinking men,
Dispensing weak and childish dreams.
Then on some mind new truth will shine,
Some heart will echo back to thine.

But empty words of silver sound,
Like bubbles on the shallow wave
Appear, and then no more are found
The brook that bore them to their grave;
While deep clear streams, with silent force,
Cut their own channel in their course.

Write not to suit the lowered taste
Which some may have and more but feign;
There rise around thee, grand and vast,
The glorious heights thou may'st attain,
For noble ends employ thy pen,
And write thy name in hearts of men.

Weymouth, Digby Co.

HENRY.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

Concessions to Baptist views.

Is an intelligent person of Baptist views after a thorough examination of the Scriptures, should desire to gain further corroboration of his conclusions by resorting to the works of commentators and historians, he can find in these secondary sources of proof, any amount of satisfaction in the shape of immense concessions to his principles by those who nevertheless differ from him variously both in belief and practice. It is seldom pleasing to our brethren of other communions thus to see their own men brought to fight our battles, and they often suspect and complain of some unfairness in the matter. While, however, the amount of Baptist sentiments in other denominations is almost incalculable, it is but reasonable to expect that our views will find tongues and pens in professedly opposing ranks. In the mean time due care should be taken never in speaking or writing, to misquote or in any respect to misrepresent the language or arguments of a writer. General, sweeping assertions are frequently untrue in part, and do injustice to authors. We are by no means bound to swallow the whole of any merely human author's teaching, but are justified in quitting him when and where he departs from truth. We may fairly use and cite the works and authority of learned men for the most part with respect to particular points—their views for instance of certain words, passages, doctrines and the like, of the Bible. When disinterested, unsought and often unwilling testimony to the general truth of our principles is yielded by profound historians and the best Biblical scholars of the age, it is

rightly esteemed as in some sort more valuable than when rendered by Baptist writers of equal ability.

Having premised thus much, I adduce first, the meaning of *baptizo* as given by the learned Dr. Robinson, professor in the Union Theological Seminary, New York, in his "Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament," Harper's edition, 1855. "To dip in, to sink, to immerse, to dip in a vessel, to draw water." "In Greek writers from Plato onwards . . . *baptizo* is everywhere to sink, to immerse, to overwhelm either wholly or partially." So much for the classical meaning. Under the second meaning of the word which he gives as found in the New Testament, he renders the phrase *en hudati*, so often mistranslated in King James' version by the words *with water*, by the words "in water" in Matt. iii. 11, Mark i. 8, John i. 26, 31, 32, comparing with these Matt. iii. 6, in which our translators are obliged to render the preposition correctly by *in* rather than *with* Jordan. The phrase *eis ton Jordanen* Mark i. 9, he translates, "into the Jordan," thus rendering the Saviour's baptism in any other way than immersion impossible. Baptism in the Holy Ghost and in fire, Matt. iii. 11 and Luke iii. 16, he explains thus, "to overwhelm, richly furnish with all spiritual gifts, and to overwhelm with fire unquenchable." The same idea of copiousness with regard to spiritual gifts he finds also in Mark i. 8, John i. 33, Acts i. 5 and xi. 16, where the direct allusion is to baptism. "The indirect allusion to the rite," Matt. xx. 22, 23, he thus explains, "to baptize with calamities, to overwhelm with sufferings." And furthermore, to the credit of Dr. R., Congregationalist as he is, be it noted that he does not venture to propose *sprinkling* as a possible mode of performing the ordinance.

But after all, it would be very incorrect to report of this high authority that he "agrees with us and thinks as we do,—that immersion is the only scriptural mode."

For among the meanings he assigns to *baptizo* in the New Testament we find "to wash, to lave, to cleanse by washing, to perform ablution," and he argues in a note, that "especially in reference to the rite of baptism, it would seem to have expressed not always simply immersion, but the more general idea of ablution or affusion." In support of these *washing* and *affusion* senses, the Dr. refers to Luke xi. 38 and Mark vii. 2—4, 9, to the scarcity of water in Jerusalem, &c. Now inasmuch as the maker of a Lexicon is not infallible, and as Dr. R. is here at war with many of the most eminent scholars, Pedobaptist as well as Baptist, we propose to examine the grounds of these latter renderings. This has already been done in a masterly article by Dr. Ripley, in "Baptismal Tracts for the times," and also by the author of "Progress of Baptist Principles." Dr. R. would have us believe that *nipsontai*, Mark vii. 3, from *nipto* I wash, is of similar import with and may serve to explain baptisontai (from baptizo) in verse 4; and both are rendered *wash* in our English version. He would then fetch this new meaning into Luke xi. 38 where *ebaptisathe* (a past tense of baptizo) occurs, rendered also in our version by *wash*. Now *nipto* and baptizo are not interchangeable, Dr. R. and our English version to the contrary notwithstanding; in this case the one expresses "a comparatively slight washing and the other a copious ablution." Dr. George Campbell thus translates the passage in Mark, "For the Pharisees . . . eat not until they have washed their hands by pouring a little water upon them." In his note he says, "the two verbs rendered *wash* in the English translation are different in the original. The first

is *nipsontai*, properly translated *wash*; the second is baptisontai, which limits us to a particular mode of washing; for baptizo denotes to plunge, to dip. By this interpretation, the words, which as rendered by the common version are unmeaning, appear both significant and emphatic; and the contrast in the Greek is preserved in the translation." The candor of this eminent Pedobaptist philologist is truly commendable. Olshausen, Fritzsche, DeWette and Meyer find essentially the same distinction as it regards the signification of the two words here used; so that in the language of that very accurate scholar, Dr. Ripley, "the judgement of Dr. Robinson in regard to Mark vii. 2, 3, 4, as employing *nipto* and baptizo in the same sense opposes leading authorities of the present age."

Dr. R. cites 2 Kings, v. 14, compared with verse 10, in which we have the two Hebrew words *tauwal* and *rauhatz* (Septuagint Greek version baptizo and louo). But the reference is unfortunate as it regards his interpretation of the passage in Mark; for *louo* (I bathe) does not correspond to *nipto*, and hence when "Elisha had directed Naaman to go and wash (properly bathe) in the Jordan" (verse 10) he went and dipped himself. Louo and baptizo are kindred in idea, but not so louo and nipto. See John xiii. 10, in which it is said that one "who has been bathed (leboumenos) needs after that only to wash (nipsasthai) his feet." The distinction between the two verbs here is similar to that between baptizo and nipto in Mark vii. 2—5, where the washing by immersing in verse 4 is to be understood of the whole body. This was deemed peculiarly needful after returning "from the market," where in a public concourse they were in danger of defilement. A passage from Rabbi Maimonides shows how extremely scrupulous were the stricter Jews in these matters, "whosoever in the law washing of the body or garments is mentioned, it means nothing else than the washing of the whole body. For if any wash himself all over except the very top of his little finger, he is still in his uncleanness." In Luke xi. 38, we learn from a literal rendering of the passage, that "the Pharisee wondered because he (our Lord) did not first immerse himself before dinner." The allusion is to the use of the bath, so customary before dinner. Dr. Campbell, Notes on John xiii. 10, says "those who had been invited to a feast bathed themselves before they went."

"Bathing themselves in water" was required in many cases by the Mosaic Law, Lev. xv. 5—13; Numbers xix. 18, 19. The Pharisees added many "cases of constructive, or probable uncleanness." Our Saviour took this opportunity to reprove the pharisaic observances as to ceremonial purity. "Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup," &c. This view of the extent and strictness of such observances is confirmed by Spencer, Hnan, Grotius, &c. If in many instances only the hands were washed by dipping, still they were immersed, and the universally established meaning of baptizo is not departed from. It is sufficient with Meyer to remark of the "washing (literally baptisms) of cups and pots, brazen vessels and of tables (literally couches) in Mark vii. 4, that "it is to be understood of the cleaning off by dipping in." In regard to the smaller articles no one will imagine any difficulty, and the larger ones were capable of immersion part by part, if not the whole at once. See the direction for "putting into water," Lev. xi. 32; and the Jews had doubtless extended the rule subsequently. The bedstead was generally an elevated part of the floor, on which the couch proper was laid. In Persia at this day the latter often consists only of "two cotton quilts"

easily spread. Upon these couches instead of chairs, they reclined while eating, and hence they would often need dipping in water to be ceremonially clean." Dr. Robinson might then have spared himself the trouble of attempting to bring out baptizo in a new costume on the ground of the above passages.

Leaving for the present a couple of the Doctor's frail bristles, imported from the Apocrypha, to take care of themselves, we come to the business of inspecting that still surviving mummy relic of the times of ignorance, which our good Dr. very seriously calls to his aid, viz. the frightful scarcity of water in Jerusalem, when the persons named in Acts ii. 41, and iv. 4, are said to have been baptized! Happily he has himself furnished some bits of information in "His Researches in Palestine," which will help us to form our own opinion. And moreover, in the progress of time, it seems that certain other witnesses have taken a peep at things in the Orient. The reader may therefore breathe freely and not suffer himself to be unduly pained with commiseration for the poor dry Jerusalemites. It is really possible that they had sufficient water to drink and even a surplus in which to be baptized. Thanks to the Giver of all good, he never gives his people impracticable commands.

Well, Dr. R. urges that from "the mere run of Siloam, a few rods in length" and from the "cisterns and public reservoirs" of the city, a supply "could not well have been obtained" for the "full immersion of eight thousand persons;"—3,000 baptized "apparently in one day at the season of Pentecost in June, and the same rite necessarily implied in Acts iv. 4, in respect to 5,000 more." The whole, however, who had embraced the gospel gradually "up to that time" seems to be included in this latter number (Dr. Hackett on the Acts); so that the baptism of the 3,000 at the Pentecost is chiefly to be considered. How much water, then, would be consumed by the immersion of 3,000 persons, supposing they were all baptized in one day? If Dr. R. computed the number of quarts, he has not condescended to inform us. Places of sufficient length, breadth and depth of water there were; but what about this great waste of water! It is worthy of notice here that he does not urge the worn out skeleton plea of scarcity of administrators; his only trouble is a hydrophobia (water-fear). "The ancient geographer Strabo testifies that Jerusalem was 'well watered,' and the Jewish religion required all the adult males of the nation to repair thither at the time of the Pentecost. This does not look like scarcity."

But submitting all the subsidiary proof relative to conveniences for baptism in the form of baths, cisterns, reservoirs and fountains, of the existence of which in eastern cities generally, and instances give us ample information, we mention first the Pool of Bethesda, 360 feet long by 130 broad, and 75 deep according to the measurement of Dr. R. himself. Here then, in the open air close by the temple, existing before Christ's day, and covering more than an acre of ground, was just such a body of water as was needed for the purposes of bathing, by the thousands of Jews who of old came up to Jerusalem, bringing their oxen and sheep for sacrifice; here by whatever gate they entered the city, they could perform the washings demanded by the law; and here the "great multitude of impotent persons, John v. 2, 3—were free to bathe in ample room; and here has remained since Christ's day, if we regard the testimony of Tacitus Eusebius, Jerome, the Crusaders and modern travellers, the same."