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A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

Redemption.

Ere Heaven was formed or Earth's foundation laid,
The self-existing ever-living God,
Who dwells amidst his own immensity,
Foresaw the malice of man's deadly foe,—
Foresaw man's fall and sin's destructive course,
With Death and Hell, their offspring, in the rear.
Death's reign of terror stirred the Heavenly mind,
When he, the Great Philanthropist, decreed,
That David's son should be anointed king,
And have all power, in Heaven and Earth to reign,
Till all his foes, beneath his feet were placed,
And vanquished death should yield his lawful prey.
"I come to do thy will, O God!" he cries—
"Tis in the volume of thy Book inscribed."
"The work is mighty, but my kingdom's sure:
My foes are numerous, but my arm is strong."
"Thou of the people there are none to help,
In the dread conflict I alone will stand."
"My soul stoops downward eager for the hour,
To rescue men from sin's terrific sway,
Destroy Death's power, and take his sting away."
Thus spoke the Son. The Eternal Father cried,
"Let all the angels worship him as God."
Then rose a countless host of Cherubim
And Seraphim, the Morning Sons of God,
In radiant circles round a dazzling throne,
On which the Prince, in robes of glory, sat,
Within the Palace of the Eternal God.
Now on his head, the oil of gladness flowed,
From God the Father, who a glorious crown,
Placed on his head, and then proclaimed him King.
With odours rich, the Heaven became perfumed—
All Heaven grew bright—effulgent glory flowed—
Th' assembled myriads bowed before the throne,
And veiled their faces from the radiant blaze.
Harps in their hands, and robed in hues of heaven—
Overwhelming tides of rich toned music rolled,
They sung, "Salvation, glory, honour, power,
To him who sits upon his Father's Throne,
To Father, Son, and Spirit, all in one:
Firm as the heavens, the throne is still secure,
While David's Son the righteous sceptre sways:
The King of Kings shall enter Death's dark door,
And from the mighty take the lawful prey:
The Everlasting Gates shall lift their heads,
And all heaven's host hail their triumphant King."
Thus angels praised whom God the Father sealed,
And named above the highest in the heavens. [bow,
His name pronounced,—the Heavens and Earth shall
And every tongue confess him Lord of ALL.

Onslow.

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Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

A SERIES OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

LETTER XLIII.

The Troublous Period.

From A. D. 1567 to A. D. 1688.

Continued.

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

The darkest time in the history of the Dissenters during this period was the interval between the autumn of 1685 and the summer of 1686. Macaulay says:—"Never, not even under the tyranny of Laud, had the condition of the Puritans been so deplorable as at that time. Never had spies been so actively employed in detecting congregations. Never had magistrates, grand juries, rectors, and church-wardens been so much on the alert. Many Dissenters were cited before the ecclesiastical courts. Others found it necessary to purchase the connivance of the agents of the government by presents of hogsheds of wine, and of gloves stuffed with guineas. It was impossible for the sectaries to pray together without precautions such as are employed by coiners and receivers of stolen goods. The places of meeting were frequently changed. Worship was performed sometimes just before break of day and sometimes at dead of night. Round the building where the little flock was gathered together sentinels were posted to give the alarm if a stranger drew near. The minister in disguise was introduced through the garden and the back yard. In some houses there were trap-doors through which, in case of danger, he might descend. Where Nonconformists lived next door to each other, the walls were often broken open,

and secret passages were made from dwelling to dwelling. No psalm was sung; and many contrivances were used to prevent the voice of the preacher, in his moments of fervour, from being heard beyond the walls. Yet, with all this care, it was often found impossible to elude the vigilance of informers. In the suburbs of London, especially, the law was enforced with the utmost rigour. Several opulent gentlemen were accused of holding conventicles. Their houses were strictly searched, and distresses were levied to the amount of many thousands of pounds. * * * Dissenting ministers, however blameless in life, however eminent for learning and abilities, could not venture to walk the streets for fear of outrages, which were not only not repressed, but encouraged, by those whose duty it was to preserve the peace. Some divines of great fame were in prison. Among these was Richard Baxter. Others, who had, during a quarter of a century, borne up against oppression, now lost heart, and quitted the kingdom. Among these was John Howe."—(History of England, vol. i. ch. 5.)

Then the king suddenly changed his policy. Assuming power to suspend the laws, by the exercise of the royal prerogative, he first caused licenses to be issued, which protected the parties holding them from all persecuting annoyances, and permitted them to re-occupy their places of worship; and this was followed, in April 1687, by the celebrated "Declaration of Indulgence," removing, during his majesty's pleasure, all restraints on nonconformity, whether Protestant or Popish. The design of these acts was the establishment of Popery, but it was cloaked by a pretended regard for liberty of conscience.

Some few of the Baptists were induced to join in an Address to the king, thanking him for this unlooked-for freedom. The majority, however, viewed his proceedings as altogether unconstitutional, and would not compromise themselves by taking any step which might be construed as an admission of their legality. While they availed themselves of the newly acquired liberty, they regarded it as the restoration of a right of which they had been unjustly deprived, and not as the bestowment of a boon.

Hoping thereby to gain assistance in carrying into effect his ulterior purposes, James II. courted the Dissenters. Among them was William Kiffin. The king had taken away the charter of the city of London, and undertaken to remodel the government of the city by arbitrary appointments of his own. "Kiffin," says Noble in his *Memories of the House of Cromwell*, "was personally known both to Charles and James; and when the latter of these princes, after having arbitrarily deprived the city of the old charters, determined to put many of the Dissenters into the magistracy, under the rose he sent for Kiffin to attend him at court. When he went thither in obedience to the king's commandment, he found many lords and gentlemen. The king immediately came up to him, and addressed him with all the little grace he was master of. He talked of his favour to the Dissenters in the court style of this season, and concluded by telling Kiffin that he had put him down as an alderman in his new charter. 'Sire,' replied Kiffin, 'I am a very old man, and have withdrawn myself from all kind of business for some years past, and am incapable of doing any service in such an affair to your majesty in the city. Besides, Sire,'—the old man went on, fixing his eyes steadfastly on the king, while the tears ran down his cheeks—'the death of my grandsons gave a wound to my heart, which is still bleeding, and will never close but in the grave.'—The king was deeply struck by the manner, the freedom, and the spirit of this unexpected rebuke. A total silence ensued, while the galled countenance of James seemed to shrink from the horrid remembrance. In a minute or two however, he recovered himself enough to say, 'Mr. Kiffin, I shall find a balsam for that sore,' and he immediately turned about to a lord in waiting."—Vol. ii. p. 463.)

You know what followed. The English

were not to be cajoled. They had no taste for popery and arbitrary power. The deliverer came. The tyrant fled. The persecution ceased. Thanks be to God for the Revolution of 1688!

Having thus brought down the history of the English Baptists to the end of the period, I will close this portion of the narrative by a few observations on the character and state of the denomination, and some biographical notices of the principal ministers.

The distinguishing principle of the Baptists was clearly discerned by our British forefathers, and consistently maintained. They owned no master but Christ, no rule but his word. Hence they were Protestants. When Protestants required submission to human forms, whether the Common Prayer Book or the Directory, they withdrew and became Dissenters. Differing from other Dissenters on some important points, they separated themselves, following the light of the word, and endeavouring to render strict obedience to all the Lord's injunctions. They acknowledged no authority in any "traditions of the elders." They abhorred all "will-worship."

They claimed the right to profess what they believed, and to reduce their faith to practice; and they demanded that all others should be allowed to exercise the same right; for religious freedom, in its broadest sense, was regarded by them as the inalienable patrimony of all mankind. No exceptions were made. The magistrate was bound, in their judgment, to protect all, and to interfere with none, however foolish, superstitious, or perilous to souls their opinions might be deemed, as long as they obeyed the laws in things civil, and refrained from disturbing the peace of society. As I have before remarked, they were in this respect far in advance of other religious communities, the Friends excepted; and they had published their sentiments before the Friends were known.

Closely allied to these views was their requirement of true piety as an indispensable pre-requisite to church membership. Whenever Infant Baptism is an introduction, directly or indirectly, to the fellowship of the church, the process of corruption is at work. In national establishments it is unavoidable. No such communities can be pure. But Baptists have always maintained that religious character is essential to union with a Christian church. The measures they adopt, in accordance with New Testament precepts and precedents, afford the best guarantee for purity. They open the doors to the godly—all besides are excluded. If they are sometimes mistaken in their judgments—if, now and then, a fanatic or a hypocrite creeps in undetected—they are reminded that even in apostolic times such cases occurred, and they take the earliest opportunity to expel the intruder.

The discipline of the English Baptist churches was in harmony with their doctrines. It was a commentary on 2 Cor. vi. 17. As they would not admit any to fellowship, knowingly, who did not appear to be the subjects of regenerating grace, so they placed members under censure, or excluded them, for immorality, or any unscriptural or disorderly conduct, without respect of persons. I will adduce a few examples, illustrative of their care in this matter.

The Broadmead church would not admit Mrs. Bevis to fellowship, "by reason of her selling of drink, and some defects in her conversation about her husband's debts that he had contracted." The same church has this record of "Sister Watkins":—"Tidings came to the ears of the church, that she walked disorderly and scandalously in the borrowing of money, up and down, of many persons—of some ten shillings, of some twenty shillings, of some more, some less, as she could get them to lend—and took no care to pay it again, promising people and not performing, spending much if not most of her time going up and down; and so did not work, or but little, to endeavour honestly to live, and eat her own bread. And thus, she walking disorderly and scandalously in borrowing, contrary to the rule, 2 Thess. iii. 6, 10-12, the church,

after her crime was declared, and proved to her face by divers in the church, and what they had heard she had so served some not of the congregation, they consented all universally, to withdraw from her. Then the ruling elder, brother Terrill, declared to her, before the church, how that for her so sinning against the Lord, she rendered herself among the wicked ones, as Psalm xxxvii. 21; and therefore the church, in faithfulness to the Lord and to her soul, must withdraw from her, seeing she had by several of the members been admonished once and again, and by several together witnessing against her evil in so doing: yet she had lately done the like, so that there was a necessity upon them to do their duty. And also acquainted her, that if the Lord should hereafter give her repentance of the evil, that she should reform to the satisfaction of the congregation, they should be willing to receive her into full communion again. And then the sentence, by the said ruling elder, was passed upon her; viz., That in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the authority he had given to the church, we did declare, that sister Watkins, for her sin of disorderly walking, borrowing and not paying, making promises and not performing, and not diligently working, was withdrawn from, and no longer to have full communion with this church, nor to be partaker with them in the holy mysteries of the Lord's Supper, nor privileges of the Lord's house [that is, "if she doth come to the meeting, not to be suffered to stay when any business of the church is transacted"]; and the Lord have mercy upon her soul."—(Broadmead Records, pp. 211, 413.)

The Fenstanton church made an order, "that if any members of the congregation shall absent themselves from the assembly of the same congregation upon the first day of the week, without manifesting a sufficient cause, they shall be looked upon as offenders and be proceeded against accordingly," and "it was desired, that if any member should at any time have any extraordinary occasion to hinder them from the assembly, that they would certify the congregation of the same beforehand, for the prevention of jealousies, &c." Several members were excluded by the same church, at different times, for marrying irreligious persons, or such as were not "members of the congregation." Joan Parker was excommunicated for "absenting from the assembly of the congregation," for "running from her service, without the consent either of her master or dame, and letting herself to another man," and for "contemning all reproof." John Blows, a preacher, was not only absent on a day appointed for fasting and prayer, but was that day "at a great foot-ball play, he being one of the principal appointers thereof." Being called to account for it, he was at first disposed to justify himself, but at length confessed that he had been wrong, and "promised to abstain from the like for time to come." Nevertheless, as he had "dishonoured the Lord"—"grieved the people of God," and "given occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully," it was resolved that "he should not be suffered to preach, until further fruits meet for repentance did appear."—(Fenstanton Records, pp. 126, 169, 244.)

The church at Warboys withdrew from Mary Poulter, "for forsaking the assembling with the church, and neglecting holy duties, and walking disorderly in pride and vanity;" and from John Christmas, "for not loving Ann his wife as he ought, and for speaking hateful and despising words against her, giving her occasion to depart from him by his unkindness." But "John Christmas, afterwards sending for Ann his wife again and promising amendment, after her coming again to him desired to be a partaker with the church, in holy duties, was joined in fellowship again." "Mary Drage, for sundry times dissembling with the Church, and out of covetousness speaking things very untrue, at length it being plainly proved against her in her hearing, and she having little to say for herself, was withdrawn from." "Thomas Bass, for telling of lies and swearing was withdrawn from." "Ellen Burges, for lying and