

I regret to be compelled to state that nothing was done in pursuance of these recommendations. So much indifference was shown, that even the "forms," said to be "annexed" to the first resolution, were omitted in the Minutes, thus practically nullifying the whole business. Registration is in the same unsatisfactory state still, and it will probably remain so till the loss of property, sustained by some influential family in consequence of being unable to prove a certain marriage or birth, shall excite attention and awaken feelings which a regard to the general good would have failed to stimulate.

Yours truly,
MENNO.

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, APRIL 23, 1862.

"Ye have been called unto Liberty."

Much has been said and sung in all ages in praise of Liberty. It has been used as the war-cry of every battle. Every nation has had its martyrs, who have suffered because they valued what they esteemed as liberty above even life itself. A million of men are now in deadly conflict in the neighbouring Republic, endeavouring to secure for themselves and their country the enjoyment of what they consider essential to national liberty; and, on either side, seem determined to die rather than yield to what they suppose would follow a triumph of their opponents,—the yoke of their enemy.

Liberty is often confounded with entire freedom from restraint. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. This may possibly be the error which, more than any other, has produced amongst our neighbours, first the revolt, and secondly the determination on both sides to spend the last dollar and the last man in the effort to subjugate the enemy.

The supposition that the essentials of liberty are not enjoyed, unless every man may do what is right in his own eyes, without consulting the general good, is licentiousness; which is subversive of all permanent freedom. Where that state of things exists for any length of time amongst a people, a reaction follows; and the arm of power sooner or later falls upon and deprives the people of the proper exercise of rational freedom, and sinks them to the level of enslaved and degraded nations. Men commonly like to enjoy the privileges of liberty without performing its duties, and strive to evade the restraints of law and justice. Free license to gratify our passions and propensities is not liberty. Restraints by which the weak may be protected from violence, and the industrious enjoy the fruit of his labor, harmonize with the highest exercise of freedom. We give up a small part of our liberty then in order that we may not be deprived of the whole, we relinquish a portion of our property that we may be protected in the enjoyment of the remainder. In a state of civilization we may not hold and use property without letting it bear its quota of the burdens of government and protection.

But whilst civil liberty—the power of the people of any country to choose their own rulers and make their own laws,—is a boon of inestimable worth, we hold it to be altogether subordinate in value to religious liberty—the right to adopt whatever articles of faith and practice, our own conscience may dictate to be in accordance with the Word of God.—As in civil liberty so here we must relinquish a portion that we may secure to ourselves the fullest exercise of this blessing. What then is religious liberty? and how may we most effectually enjoy and preserve this precious inheritance, for ourselves and our posterity? We refer not so much to securing by law the right to worship God according to our conscientious convictions, as to the practical development and exercise of the principle, as seen in the combination of religious communities. Must it be by the formation of religious societies?—We reply, yes; religious liberty can only be guaranteed, by Christians, in the exercise of the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free, combining themselves into churches, and practically applying the principle of submission to Christ alone in his laws and ordinances.

Civil society is an ordinance of God for the protection of life and the promotion of the largest amount of human happiness; but the Christian Church is an institution for the preservation of Divine truth and its extension throughout the world. Instead of having to make laws it has but to proclaim and execute those already made. No State Establishment is required for this. Nor can any body composed of unregenerate men, or of members who are so by virtue only of their parents' faith, be a church of Christ. "My kingdom is not of this world" is our Saviour's emphatic

declaration. The combination of believers into churches is the effect of the law of love, and for the purpose of mutual protection.—When such unite together into a Christian Church, they bind themselves to act in accordance with its constitution. They give up to the body with which they unite and agree, their liberty to follow that which before they might have practised with impunity. As in the marriage contract and other voluntary associations in life, so we bind ourselves to act, to a certain extent, in conformity with the will of others, and be guided by other considerations than those of personal convenience and conviction.

But it may be asked, Is this sacrifice required? Cannot a Christian live outside of the church and be equally happy and useful? To this we would reply—a believer outside the portals of the Christian Church may be considered but as a partial development of Christian principle, and until he assumes his place with those who are "partakers of like precious faith," he is not in a position to fulfil the duties or enjoy the blessings of the Divine institutions of the Gospel. Let no one desiring to confess Christ before men, suppose that because he fails to discover a body of believers such as he thinks absolutely perfect, that therefore he is justified in standing aloof from them—cherishing a sort of personal exclusiveness because on some particular point he may have learned more of what is taught on a given subject than some others.

Each denomination demands more or less of a deposit of religious liberty in return for the guarantee it gives of provision for spiritual blessings and protection in their enjoyment. Any violation of the expressed or understood laws of the church, by a member, must necessarily interfere with the bond which unites him to the body. For instance, a good churchman may think the order of Confirmation unnecessary, and, because he can find no foundation for it in Scripture, he concludes that he will not submit to it; but by this he deprives himself of fellowship with that body; or the Methodist who would partake of the privileges of that body, must indulge no scruples about the class-meeting, under a leader appointed by his ecclesiastical superior; or again, the Presbyterian must be willing to accept the minister sanctioned by the Presbytery and must hold in abeyance any doubts he may entertain on the unscripturalness of infant baptism; or he forfeits his claim to fraternity with that denomination. In Baptist churches, too, a member, to retain his standing as a consistent and faithful member, must be willing to conform to the laws of Christian life as understood and practised by them. Of course we believe that no sacrifice, inconsistent with religious freedom, is required by membership in Baptist Churches; on the other hand we think that facilities for its enjoyment are obtained there not to be found in any other body. Liberty of conscience is the inherent right of the believer; and no man or combination of men, can justly deprive him of the possession, but in his church capacity he has no liberty to violate that which he has made engagements to observe, or he renders himself amenable to the laws and open to the reproofs of his Master, his conscience, and his brethren.

The practical lessons to be drawn from these considerations are that the church being the proper depository of Divine truth, is the conservatory of religious liberty, and that a faithful, consistent church member is the only true and legitimate defender of religious liberty, as well as being a soldier of the cross. Whilst the believer recognises Christ as his Saviour and King, and lives in obedience to his precepts, and in anticipation of heaven, he is the real patriot and the true friend of his race. We commend this subject to the careful and prayerful consideration of those who desire to become the servants of Christ, walking in all his ordinances and commandments blameless.

"Infant Baptism."

We are informed by an editorial article in the last week's *Provincial Wesleyan*, under the above heading, that "Methodist controversialists, from the days of Wesley to the present, have always appeared as apologists, never, we believe, as aggressors." Such a statement coming from so reliable a source we ought perhaps to receive without questioning its accuracy; and yet such a bold assertion may possibly find some who will think a good deal of explanation necessary before they can reconcile the statement with their own observation.

In the same article we find it said of their body that,

"It is just possible that we have yielded more than was proper for the sake of peace" and "we may have done too little to enforce some of those practices which we regard as right and scriptural. Our reference at present is to infant baptism. We have known some families in

which the parents were members of the church, but their children were unbaptized. Other cases have occurred in which the children of our people have renounced the communion in which they had been nurtured, and for the mere matter of a ceremony, have gone where their spiritual privileges have been both fewer and less efficient."

Now, we are not certain what this "mere matter of a ceremony" may have been, but can easily suppose that, in the cases referred to, it was considered by the persons concerned something more than "a mere matter of a ceremony." It might have been with them a question on which they had to choose between obedience to Christ's command, and submission to a mere ordinance of human tradition—not only the observance of "a mere matter of a ceremony" but the rejection of a Divine command. If the persons referred to were capable of appreciating "spiritual privileges," they might also have been better able to judge in their own cases whether or not those they preferred were "less efficient" than those they left. We have heard of some of these cases; where converts—finding the Scriptures give no countenance to infant baptism, either by precept or example, have adopted the principle of believer's baptism, and on a profession of faith in Christ, have been baptized by a Methodist minister, but of course would not bring their children to have "a mere matter of a ceremony" performed even upon them and pronounced Christian baptism—an introduction to the church of Christ. In all other respects amongst the best members of the society, these must now feel that their wishes were yielded to only "for the sake of peace."

As we desire to give our readers the benefit of all the light which can be obtained on the subject of baptism, we may inform them that our cotemporary in treating of "the authority" on which infant baptism rests, notices first the fact of Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, and concludes that these blessings having been secured to the children through the faith of the parent, bears "directly upon the point in hand." He further adduces 1 Peter iii. 20, to show that "in like manner the faith of a Christian parent may prevail in the ordinance of his child's baptism, for the securing to it of many blessings, both as pertaining to this life and the life that is to come." In quoting the passage our worthy brother surely loses sight of "the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ," or he could never imagine that it afforded any support to infant baptism. Job's sacrifices for his children, too, he conceives a sufficient reason why Christian parents should "sanctify, set apart, or dedicate their infant offspring by the ordinance of baptism." The covenant made with Abraham by the seal of circumcision, performed on "every man-child," is also noticed as so very conclusive, that he believes there is "actual proof that children ought to be brought into union with the church, as it now exists."

These three cases seem to be "the authority" in the mind of our good brother for a Christian ordinance. If he and his readers are content with such a conclusion from such premises, why, we can only say they are easily satisfied. Their credulity is about equal to their logic. Because the ancient patriarchs consecrated their children and the Jews circumcised their male children, therefore Christian parents should baptize their infants. What profound argument! Surely it is not surprising that "We have known some families in which the parents were members of the church, but their children were unbaptized."

Such reasoning we think not only fallacious, but highly injurious and dangerous, and may well produce scepticism, the only wonder is that infidelity does not more prevail than it does, when such a course is taken to support an institution which is not to be found in the Holy Scriptures. Such a mode of argument contains all the elements of baptismal regeneration. All the errors of Popery might be sustained by pursuing a similar course of reasoning.

The *Church Record* of last week also contains an article signed "T.M.," dated "Guysboro'," affirming that "Infants should be baptized." Fifteen paragraphs follow that heading, each beginning with "Because." Some of these are of the same character as those noticed above in the *Wesleyan*,—that because the ancients consecrated their children, therefore "infants should be baptized." But we will give our readers two or three of these paragraphs, that they may know why Episcopalians think "Infants should be baptized."

Because in this Church (the Church under the Jewish and Christian dispensation), the consecration of infants has never been forbidden by God:

Because until they are so admitted they are not in covenant with God; and have not scriptural claims to the benefit of the covenant:

Because as in the Jewish Church circumcision was the seal of God's covenant; so is water in the Christian Church:

Because as faith was required of the Jews in the circumcision of infants; so also is it requisite in their baptism; and therefore children of believing parents receive believers' baptism.

Now, that we think will be quite enough for those of our readers who have learned what the Scriptures teach concerning baptism. The idea that children of believing parents receive "believers' baptism" is a slight perversion of terms which, if applied to unbelievers, would become not a little inconvenient.

Not only do we believe that error is taught by this practice, but we believe in thousands of cases, "the mere matter of a ceremony"—infant baptism, so called, is, by parents, put in the place of teaching and consecrating the child; who, being so received into the church, while in a state of nature, a condition of carnal security is induced, and although he grows up "a child of wrath, even as others," yet the avenues for an appeal to him as a sinner are closed up, and the soul is thus helped down to perdition by the perversion of a gospel ordinance.

South Sea Mission.

The *Home and Foreign Record* of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces for March, contains highly interesting letters from the Rev. Mr. Geddie, Mrs. Geddie and the late Mrs. Gordon. One from Mr. G. dated Aneiteum Nov. 4, 1861, says:

"The clouds, I feel thankful to say, have begun to pass away, and a bright and glorious day is dawning on the New Hebrides."

The work advances hopefully on this island. The Lord's Supper was dispensed last Sabbath, and 29 persons were admitted for the first time. This is a larger number than we have admitted at any previous communion. The whole congregation numbered about 1200 persons. We met in our new Church which was opened on the Friday previous. It is much superior to what it was before the fire. The walls have been raised and the centre windows in the sides and ends have been arched, which improves its appearance. The internal arrangements are the same as before, but the workmanship is better. The pulpit was ornamented with a beautiful blue covering and velvet cushion sent from Nova Scotia, by my daughter Charlotte, who purchased them with money given to her for this object. I trust that the building which has cost the natives so much trouble may be valued by them, and that it may become the birth-place of many souls.

"I have just returned from a voyage among the New Hebrides and Loyalty Islands, in the *John Williams*, in company with the Rev. A. W. Murray of the Samoan Mission. It occupied six weeks. We visited several new islands and placed teachers on some of them."

"You will see by one of the accompanying resolutions that we want a larger vessel. I think it will not be difficult from various quarters to raise the money for her purchase, her maintenance is a more serious matter. The annual expenses of such a vessel as we propose, with a crew of native seamen, will be about £600 sterling. Now our Loyalty Island brethren engage to raise half that sum yearly for half of her time. The remainder divided between the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland and ours will be £150 each. In addition to all this we have the certain prospect of help from New Zealand and Australia, to supplement any deficiency on the part of those pledged for support."

The truth, as we understand it, with regard to the ordinance of Baptism, seems to be progressing even there, for Mr. Geddie writes:

"Mr. and Mrs. Murray late of the Samoan Mission are on this island at present. They are waiting for a vessel bound to Sydney. The declining health of Mrs. Murray has compelled them to leave. Mr. Murray is one of the most successful and honoured Missionaries on the Pacific Isles, and the work sustains a great loss in his removal from it. I have seldom met with a man for whom I have a greater esteem. Mrs. Murray is a Baptist, and a very amiable woman; and he also is one in principle and may probably join that body when he leaves the Mission field. It was with Mr. Murray that we commenced our Missionary life on the island of Tutuila and it seems somewhat singular that he should close his with us on the island of Aneiteum."

SAILORS' HOME.—A public meeting at Mason Hall is called by His Worship the Mayor for this afternoon at 3 o'clock, to take into consideration the establishment of a "Sailors' Home." An institution of this character, on a proper basis, would be highly beneficial in Halifax, and should have the warm support of every Christian merchant and man in the community.

Not long since, the Bishop of London wrote to Mr. Spurgeon as follows:—"Indeed when I think of the thousands of souls in this metropolis whom the efforts of all the ministers of religion among us fail to rouse, how can I fail to thank God that those powerful means of influence which you possess, are enlisted in Christ's cause." Quoting this in the *Baptist Magazine* Mr. Spurgeon says:—"These are halcyon days when servants of Christ thus speak one of another. Now Lord send us prosperity."