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A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business : fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

The dying Christians Thanksgiving Hymn.

Blest Father in this dying hour,
I thank thee for thy grace;
Thou hast upheld me by thy power;
Through all my weary race.

Thanks, for the light and courage given,
To know and do thy will;
Thanks, for the glorious hope of heaven,
Through all things with me still.

Forever blessed be his name,
Who loved me unto death;
To save me from eternal shame,
Resigned his latest breath.

Who finished all the mighty work,
His heavenly Fa her gave;
Then the dread chains which wound him, broke,
A conqueror o'er the grave.

Thanks! for the Holy Spirit's power,
Shed o'er my soul like dew;
Which will in this last, solemn hour,
Bear me victorious through.

To Holy Spirit, Father, Son,
These latest thanks are given;
Receive my soul, thou great Three-One;
I go! I go! to heaven.

Ondow, Jan. 25th.

Religious.

Was John the Baptist's, Christian Baptism?

The following article appeared in the *Canadian Baptist* a short time since, on a discussion of the Communion question:

But, dear reader, you may be among those, some of whom I have met with, who say, "John's baptism was not christian baptism. Christian baptism commenced on the day of Pentecost. Those twelve men, therefore, with whom the Lord's Supper was instituted, were not baptized with christian baptism. Christian baptism did not precede, but came after, the Lord's Supper, and is not, therefore, a prerequisite to it." We answer, Your statements, even if true, are of no weight. First, because, if John's baptism was but a preparatory rite to christian baptism, still it was baptism; and according to your own statements, as a preparatory rite, it stood for, and represented, christian baptism, and was administered to those only who professed to receive Jesus as the promised Messiah. Now, if this preparatory rite, standing for and representing christian baptism, preceded the observance of the Lord's Supper, then it follows that that to which it was preparatory, viz., christian baptism, should also precede the Lord's Supper. Second, if, as you say, christian baptism commenced on the day of Pentecost, still the converts were then baptized and added to the church before they broke bread. You, I hope, see that the same Divine order was observed on that day as before—baptism, even christian baptism, preceded the observance of the sacrament of the Supper. These objections, therefore, fall to the ground.

But, for the truth's sake, we wish to show that John's baptism was christian baptism. In proof of this, we observe: First, John received his commission directly from God. John 1:23, "He that sent me to baptize!" Matt. 21:35, "The baptism of John, whence was it, from heaven or of men?" The whole context shows clearly that Christ meant to teach that John's commission was from heaven. It was no Jewish proselyte baptism, but a direct ordinance from heaven. When the priests and Levites asked him "Why baptizest thou?" his answer referred them to his Divine authority. (John 1:19-23.) Secondly, He proclaimed the Messiah, not only to come but as already come. "There standeth one among you." He pointed him out to the people, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Thirdly, He required evidence of repentance and faith in those he baptized. "The axe is laid unto the root of the trees; bring forth,

therefore, fruits meet for repentance; every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." And we read that those who believed his preaching "were baptized of him in Jordan confessing their sins." Confessing their sins was the evidence of their faith and repentance. Josephus, the faithful Jewish historian, bears the following testimony with regard to John's ministry, "He was a good man and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing with water would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away or the remission of some sins only, but for the purification of the body; supposing that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness." Josephus was born but thirty-seven years after Christ.

Do you not see, dear reader, that the ministry and baptism of John agree with that of the Apostles? Both proclaimed Christ as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Both required evidence of repentance and faith in those they baptized. Both baptized by a direct commission from heaven. Both made, and baptized disciples; and both were baptizing at the same time. (See John 3:22, 34:4:1, 2.) Where, then, is the difference between them?

4. The evangelist Mark, in commencing his record, calls it "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God," and then immediately proceeds to tell us of the preaching and baptism of John. This was, then, according to the inspired account, the *beginning* of the gospel of Jesus Christ. With this testimony by Mark, the records of Matthew, Luke, and John agree, for they all record the preaching and baptism of John in the *beginning* of their gospels. It must, therefore, follow that John's baptism was gospel, or christian baptism, or it would not have been "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ." See, also, Luke 16:16, "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." Here it is plainly stated that "the law and the prophets" continued until John. There the dispensation to which they belonged ended. John's ministry was the commencement of a new dispensation. "Since that time the kingdom of heaven is preached, and every man presseth into it." If men pressed into the kingdom, then John's preaching must have been the gospel of the kingdom; and his baptism the initiatory rite to the privileges of that kingdom.

5. There have been but two dispensations—the Mosaic and the Christian. There surely was no dispensation between them. The ministry of John must belong to one of the two. And to which does it belong? Does it belong to the Mosaic? If it does, then we ask why is it not recorded in the Old Testament? Where has God, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit placed it? The answer is obvious—He has placed it in the New Testament dispensation. There it belongs, and there may we let it be without cavilling about it. Against the introduction of a third era, for the purpose of discovering the ministry of John from its connexion with the Gospel dispensation, we protest as an act of injustice to one who performed the greatest act of christian baptism that ever has occurred, or ever can occur—namely, the baptism of the Great Founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ, who at his baptism by John, said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

We may illustrate the subject as follows: John's ministry was a period embracing in it the dawn of the morning, and continuing until after the sun had arisen. (For John continued preaching and baptizing until the "Sun of Righteousness" had arisen. And he could point to Jesus as he was walking towards him, and say, "Behold the Lamb of God—this is he of whom I spake.") The ministry of the Apostles embraced a period beginning after the sun had arisen, and continuing until it had attained the zenith. Now, dear reader, we appeal to your understanding, and ask, Can we sever the dawn of the morning and a risen sun from the day? Are they not a part of the day? Are they not the very beginning of it? So, in like manner, the

ministry of John belonged to the gospel day and we cannot separate it from that day, for God's word declares it to be "the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

But there may be a difficulty still in the mind of the reader, who may ask, "If John's baptism was christian baptism, then why were those twelve disciples at Ephesus, mentioned in Acts 19, who had been baptized unto John's baptism, rebaptized?" We answer, their rebaptism is no argument against the validity of John's baptism. For there is no evidence that they had ever been baptized by John. Indeed, they could not have been. And for the following reasons:

1. When asked if they had received the Holy Ghost, they answered, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." Now, had they been baptized by John, they would have heard that there was a Holy Ghost. For John proclaimed continually, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Could they then have heard John preach and been baptized by him, and yet be ignorant of the Holy Ghost? Impossible!

2. This circumstance took place some twenty-four years after the death of John, and more than two hundred miles from his field of labor. It is not therefore, likely that they ever saw John or heard him preach.

3. They were Gentiles. Paul, in his epistle to them, calls them such; see Eph. 2:11; 3:1. John's ministry was confined to the Jews—called by Luke "his showing unto Israel." (Luke 1:88.) The angel in announcing his birth, said, "and many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God." Those Gentiles at Ephesus could not, therefore, have been baptized by him. For he baptized no Gentiles.

4. In Acts 18:24, Apollos is spoken of as coming to Ephesus—and as "knowing only the baptism of John." And, although Aquila and Priscilla "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly," yet not a word is said about their rebaptizing him. Now, if John's baptism was not christian baptism, then should Apollos have been rebaptized. His not being rebaptized, though he knew only the baptism of John, strongly evidences two things. 1. That John's baptism was considered christian baptism. 2. That the twelve disciples at Ephesus had not been baptized by John, or they—as in the case of Apollos—would not have been rebaptized. Who baptized them we know not. One thing is, however, certain, viz.: that those times abounded with false teachers, who sometimes attempted to do things in the name of some notable person. And there were at Ephesus, at that very time, exorcists, who tried to expel evil spirits, by "saying, we adjure by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." (Acts 19:13.) It is, therefore, probable that some false teacher had been there, professing to be a disciple of John, and baptizing in his name, or unto his baptism. For, if they were bold enough to attempt to expel an evil spirit in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preached, they surely would not scruple to teach in John's name, or baptize unto his baptism.

5. Even supposing they were baptized by John, or by any other properly qualified administrator, still their baptism was a nullity. Not, however, on the account of any lack on the part of the administrator, but because they were improper subjects. Baptism, to be gospel or christian baptism must be administered to a *christian subject*—to one who has the inward grace of which baptism is the outward sign. The baptism of any one, ignorant of the nature and essence of christianity, is surely not christian baptism. These twelve persons at Ephesus were thus ignorant; they knew nothing of the Holy Ghost, and had not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. Paul, finding them in this unenlightened and ignorant condition, though professing to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, spoke to them of John's ministry and of Christ, "which when they heard (the word 'this' is not in the original, but is supplied by the translators. What they heard was Paul's discourse to them explaining fully the doctrines of Christ's kingdom) they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Who would not follow Paul's example and rebaptize persons (after instructing them) who had been baptized while in such ignorance and blindness, as they were? The writer

of these articles has rebaptized two persons, believing their former baptism a nullity, because they, at the time it was performed, were improper subjects.

There may be still another difficulty in the mind of the reader, arising out of what Christ said concerning John (Matt. 11:9-11), "But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you and more than a prophet. Notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." With regard to this passage, we remark: 1. Christ here declares John to be "more than a prophet." John's ministry could not, therefore, belong to the old dispensation, or he would not have been *more than a prophet*; for prophets were the highest order of teachers employed under that dispensation.

2. If we understand the phrase "the kingdom of heaven" to refer to the world of glory, then the sense of the statement, "he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he," is plain. For the *lowest* place in the kingdom above is *higher* than the *highest* place in the church on earth.

3. If we understand "the kingdom of heaven" to refer to Christ's kingdom on earth; then "the least of the Apostles was greater than John—not in the sense that he did not belong to the kingdom, but in the different positions they occupied in the same kingdom. The Apostles enjoyed the extraordinary baptism of the Holy Spirit, by which they were empowered to work miracles, and to speak in other tongues. This placed them far ahead of John, but in the same kingdom. We think, then, that we have shown that John's baptism was christian, and that, therefore, the Apostles were baptized with christian baptism.

GEORGE WILSON.

Baptist Church building in London.

The addition of nearly a thousand people every week to the metropolis is a fact that at once appeals to the energy of every Christian denomination to supply the necessary accommodation for religious worship. In this work the Baptists ought to take their share. Hence we hail with pleasure the proposal of Sir S. Morton Peto, Bart., M. P., to erect four chapels in the suburbs of London. The gratifying success of his efforts at Bloomsbury and Regent's-park may well encourage him in his present proposal. He offers to defray one-half of the cost of the four chapels, provided the Baptist Building Fund will lend the other half on its usual terms—viz., without interest, and repayable by instalments in ten years. We learn that the Baptist Building Fund is quite ready to receive donations for this special purpose, the money subscribed would never be diverted from the purposes of chapel-building, as the repayments of the loans made would be ever enabling the society to make fresh loans. Every church contributing £10 per annum to its funds is entitled to nominate one representative on the committee, thus securing to the churches themselves the proper control of the fund for the future.—*Messenger*.

Signatures of St. Paul's Epistles.

Readers of the Holy Scriptures have thought it strange that at the end of certain epistles of St. Paul, there should be statements of their being written by some other person, as, for instance, at the close of the Epistle to the Ephesians are the words, "Written from Rome to the Ephesians, by Tychicus." Almost all of St. Paul's epistles have similar signatures. Yet they are universally ascribed to him as the author, as he undoubtedly is.

How is the seeming contradiction to be explained? Simply by reference to an ancient custom. In old times, every person, or nearly so, did not learn to write, and many, who had acquired the art of writing, did not practice it sufficiently to have it easy enough to compose and write at the same time. There were persons whose business it was to inscribe at the dictation of others; even as at this day, in some parts of Italy and in other parts of the world, there are scribes and amanuenses, who write as they are called upon by the customers. Thus, the ancients seldom wrote their treatises with their own hands, but dic-