

✠ We would invite particular attention to the two following letters, the one from a Baptist Pastor to his Congregation, the other from a Methodist Local Preacher, whose long service, and whose present solemn circumstances, near to the rendering up the account of his stewardship, must give force as it certainly does earnestness to his appeal to his brethren.—The former is published by the English Baptist Tract Society, the latter we copy from the London Baptist Reporter for March.

FROM A BAPTIST PASTOR TO HIS CONGREGATION.

MY BELOVED HEARERS.—Recollecting that I must give account to God of my ministry among you, I feel intensely desirous that I may do so with joy, and not with grief. Allow me with all affection to propose a few enquiries for your serious consideration: and let me beseech you to answer them honestly, in secret before God.

First, Are you really converted to God?—You have often heard our Lord's declaration, "Except ye be converted, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;" Matt. xviii. 3. You see conversion is indispensable; you must be born again, or perish everlastingly.—You have perhaps been often impressed, you have thought seriously, you have purposed at some future time to turn to God! and yet perhaps you are still unconverted. Conversion is a change of heart, which always produces a change of life. It includes faith in Christ, repentance toward God, and entire consecration to his service. It is the root of happiness, the commencement of holiness, and a preparation for heaven. It is a turning from sin to God, from the world to the Saviour, from error to truth. It is a permanent change. It is produced by the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the word of God, and prepares for the enjoyment of all gospel privileges. *Are you converted?* Have you carefully examined yourself on this point? Are you deeply concerned about it? Can you sit under the gospel as you do, and yet be indifferent respecting it? Take one text on this subject, take it as from the mouth of God, think over it very seriously, for it is as much intended for you as if it were addressed to you by a voice from heaven. O! may the Holy Spirit impress it upon your heart! It is this, "*Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*" Acts iii. 19. You may profitably connect with it the following passages: Acts. xvii. 30, 31; xx. 21; xxvi. 20. Matt. iii. 2, 8, 9; xxi. 23—32; Mark i. 15; Rom. ii. 4—11; Rev. iii. 18—20.

Secondly, If you are converted, are you baptized? Baptism should *always* follow conversion. Every believer should be solemnly immersed, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: for so has the Saviour commanded, and thus did primitive Christians act. Then there were no unbaptized Christians, none objected to the ordinance, none delayed, neither should they now. The ordinance is sacred, solemn, and important; it should never be treated lightly, much less with neglect. It was instituted for believers *only*; but it was intended for *all* believers, not for some few. All who gladly received the gospel on the day of pentecost, were baptized, not one objected, not one delayed; then why are not you baptized? Why do you delay? The Holy Spirit speaks to you, as Ananias did to Paul, and says "*And now why tarriest thou?—arise, and be baptized.*" Acts xxii. 16. If your heart is changed, profess it. If you do believe in Christ, publicly put on Christ: Gal. iii. 26, 27. If you do love Jesus, then keep his commandments. Be not afraid, for God will be with you. Be not ashamed, for Christ has set you an example. Do not delay, for time is on the wing. Propose yourself to the church at once, and say, "I will go in the strength of the Lord." Why should you delay? will disobedience recommend you to God? will neglecting the plain commandments of God, make you happy? If you are really sorry for your sins, if you are depending on Christ alone for salvation, if you desire so to walk as to please God, you are the person that should be baptized immediately. Your fears may be many, your doubts may be painful, your sense of unworthiness may be acute; but these are no bar, they should not cause delay, you should "*be buried with Christ by baptism*" at once. Seriously consider these two texts, "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ.*" Acts ii. 38. "*Wherefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*" James iv. 17. Read also, John xiv. 15, 21, 23, 24; xv. 14. Acts.

viii. 12, 36—39; x. 47, 48! xxii. 14—16. Rom. vi. 3, 5. Col. ii. 12.

Thirdly, if you are baptized, are you in church fellowship with us? If not, why do you remain without? Ought you not to be of that church with which you regularly meet for worship? Can it be consistent, to be a member of one church, and regularly meet with another? Is this sanctioned by scripture? Does this tend to edification? Can you under such circumstances perform the duties which devolve upon you, or enjoy all the privileges to which you are entitled? If God in his providence has removed you from your former residence, ought you not to remove your membership? You may almost as good be a member of *no church*, if you are not a member of *that church* with which you constantly meet. We know the excuses that are made, and the predilections which are indulged, but are they scriptural?

The point is this, "*Is your present course of conduct consistent?*" Ought you not to encourage the pastor you regularly hear, and assist to the utmost of your power the church with which you constantly meet? No consistent minister of Christ, would wish to retain your name on his church-book, if you can no longer fulfil your engagements as a church-member; nor feel his mind hurt for one moment, because you seek to unite with a church where you can. Imitate Paul, do as he did, he was baptized at Damascus, and joined the church in that place; but when he was removed to Jerusalem, "*He essayed to join himself to the disciples*" there. Acts ix. 26.

Fourthly, if you are a member of the church, do you fill up your place? Are you regular and early in your attendance upon the means of grace? How many despise these means altogether? And how many professors, by their careless and irregular attendance sanction them in so doing? When you joined the church, you became pledged to the officers, to the saints, and to the cause; you said, "This people shall be my people, and their God my God;" you solemnly engaged to seek the peace and prosperity of the church. You became part of a body, every member of which should fill up his place, and supply his part toward the prosperity of the whole. Nor can you neglect this duty, without at once injuring yourself and the church. You are in covenant with the church, and the habit of running after popular preachers, or attending partly at your own place and partly somewhere else, except weakness, distance, or family duties, require it, is *covenant breaking*,—a sin which must be offensive to God, painful to your pastor, and discouraging to the other members of the church who do fill up their places. No church can prosper except its members make it their *home*, feel a deep interest in its welfare, and refuse to forsake its assemblies, except other duties demand. The habit of wandering is very injurious, unlovely, and unprofitable; we never knew a person to be really happy, or deeply spiritual, or very useful, while living in *this sin*. Such persons may be excited, but they are not sanctified; the fancy may be pleased, but the heart is not benefitted, they may become wise in their own conceits, but they are not truly devoted to God. It is a course which God will not bless, and which no judicious Christian can approve. Wanderers are generally very critical, contentious, and self-conceited; and are never any blessing to a church.

Let me entreat you to be regular in your attendance, early in your place, and very prayerful in every ordinance. Consider Heb. x. 23. Psalm cxvii. 1, 2, 6, 9. Matt. xviii. 20. Acts i. 13, 14; xii. 12.

Finally, If you are active for God, are you happy? Religion is holiness. Holiness is happiness. Everything in the gospel is intended and calculated to promote holiness, with a view to our present and everlasting happiness. If you are truly converted to God,—if you are baptized, as Jesus commanded, if you are united with a scriptural church,—if you prize and diligently improve all the means of grace,—if you are actively employed for God, you may expect to be happy. Not to be free from trials, not to be beyond temptation; but to joy in God under trials, and feel happy in conquering temptations.

Beloved, the fountain is ever open, to cleanse you from the guilt of sin; the righteousness of Jesus abides, to justify you from all things; the Comforter is still with the church, to shed abroad the love of God: Jesus is before the throne, and ever liveth to make intercession for you. "*Be diligent, that you may be*

found of him in peace, without spot and blameless." Brethren, receive with christian kindness; this my address, I aim at your welfare, the prosperity of the cause and the glory of God alone. Grace be with you.

Yours very affectionately in Christ Jesus,

To Wesleyan Christians.

We have received a copy of a printed letter, copies of which were addressed personally to the religious friends and acquaintance of the writer; the purport of which will be ascertained on perusing the substance thereof as given beneath. We have only omitted a sentence or two of a local character.

"The person who now addresses you is advanced in years. He writes from the chamber of affliction; and in the name of the Lord Jesus. Bear with him, and give him an attentive hearing. He has spent many years humbly, but defectively, in the service of his God; and yours. He has been forty-four years a member of the Methodist New Connexion, and eighteen years a local preacher, (having relinquished this office thirteen years ago on account of ill health,) and for a number of years a leader, steward, and trustee.—He cordially sympathizes with you in admiration of the labours, and veneration for the character, of the great founder of methodism. He is, however, no longer a member of any section of the Wesleyan community. His withdrawal has been the result of nothing less than a conscientious sense of duty. In perusing the word of God, his attention was attracted to a subject, which, the more he examined and prayed over it, he felt to be of deeper and deeper moment. Anxious for the success of the blessed gospel, he read the accounts of its remarkable success in the apostolic times. In connection with the numerous conversions recorded, there appeared to his mind something new—something to which there was no parallel in the methodist community. He observed that after the conversion of the 3,000 by Peter's sermon, "they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day" were "added unto" the church, Acts ii. 41. He found also that when the Samaritans "believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God," &c., "they were baptized, both men and women."—Acts viii. 12. These accounts refer to large conversions. He perceived that it was the same in individual cases; such as that of the Eunuch, and that of Saul of Tarsus.—He found that conversion and baptism were invariably connected in the case of each individual, and that it was so in the baptism of households. For, having read that the jailor was baptized, "he and all his," we read also that he "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." He also found baptism often alluded to as a matter of great importance—spoken of as an emblem of our death to sin, and resurrection to newness of life—Rom. vi.; and connected with the saving act of faith in Christ—"He that believeth, and is baptized shall be saved."

But when he turned his attention again to the society with which he was connected, he found no parallel to any of these things. The baptism practised was not that of believers in Christ, but of unconscious babes. It did not follow conversion, as in the primitive age; neither was it a personal and voluntary act, but the very opposite; and it was connected with no solemn consecration to God, nor public profession of his name, with which the baptism of the scripture was evidently identified.

He also discovered that infant baptism is fraught with very serious evils. In the first place, it deceives the parents. Many look upon it, if not as a saving ordinance, yet as closely connected with salvation; and are unwilling that their children should die without being "christened." In the next place, it exerts an injurious influence upon the children. Many, as they grow up, substitute it for christianity. It has also led to the confounding of the church with the world, by admitting unconverted infants, and afterwards unconverted adults, into the church. It was this inroad upon the purity of the church fellowship—this confounding of believers with unbelievers, that paved the way for that worldliness which especially characterizes one section of the professing church; and which, alas! is too much associated with other sections. These are a specimen of the fruit of infant baptism. "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit." With regard to the mode of baptism, he met with little difficulty in the way of deciding.—Almost all learned divines agree that original-

ly it was *immersion in water*, and that the word signifies this. It is moreover styled in the sacred scriptures a burial, Rom. vi. 4. He could discover no rational or safe ground for departing from the original practice; and therefore "made haste, and delayed not to keep" this commandment. He acknowledges with regret that he ought to have investigated this subject long ago. The causes of his neglect were simply a want of thought, and the almost entire absence of any allusion to the subject which prevails in paedobaptist societies. It is generally regarded by them with great and unaccountable indifference.

And now, dear brother, allow him, feeling this subject of great importance, to recommend to your prayerful and serious attention a tract or two enclosed. Compare their contents with the word of God. Do not give up the investigation until fully satisfied: and may the Lord the Spirit "guide you into all truth." The object of the writer is not to proselyte.—He solemnly disclaims so sinister and bigoted a motive. His object is specifically to direct a more immediate and critical attention to the proper mode of administering the rite of baptism according to the apostolic usage, and claims for that mode and usage the prominence of position which they ought to occupy in the estimation and practice of the churches. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Christ is our "example, that we should follow his steps," even in reference to adult baptism. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you."—"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."—"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous." Finally, as Noah, by his obedience in building the ark, received the answer of a good conscience, the like figure of obedience to the commandment of baptism, doth now save us, by the answer of a good conscience toward God." G. S.

Sheffield, Eng.

Disproportion of Churches and Pastors.

The disproportion of churches and pastors in the West, is thus dwelt upon by a Milwaukee correspondent of the Watchman of the Prairies:

"There is a great disproportion of churches and pastors, and a lack of those rightly moulding men, of whom, of all others, a new country needs the most, because of the haste of so many small companies of brethren, living a few miles apart, to have in their own vicinity a church, which will they hope, afford them the convenient use of the ordinances of the Lord's house. Disappointment too often follows such policy; whereas, were the neighboring towns and companies to join in one, the necessities of all would be met.

One of the surest means of begetting a poor ministry in every sense, is the multiplication of small churches. For these can generally obtain such men only as are not called to occupy the pulpits where the best gifts are required. Besides, to suppose that brethren will come from the East, where hundreds wait on their ministry regularly, and satisfy themselves with congregations varying from fifty to one hundred persons, when in the pursuance of another policy they would be greatly increased, is allowing them little credit in the choice of fields for usefulness. Or further, to suppose that such brethren as are demanded will all come and put up with the sacrifices necessary, and pinch along on limited salaries, when the members of the churches evidently refrain from like sacrifice, and consult their own convenience, is unjust. If our Western churches complain of a deficiency in the ministry, either in number or in the kind of men needed, the cause and cure of the difficulty lies, to a great extent, with themselves. I could wish that the importance of this thing would receive the consideration which it deserves.

WHICH IS THE RIGHT MINISTER?—The late Rev. S. Pearce, being one week-day evening in town, and not engaged to preach, asked his friend where he could hear a good sermon? Mr. S. mentioned two places.—"Well," said Mr. P., "tell me the character of the preachers, that I may choose." "Mr. D.," said his friend, "exhibits the orator, and is much admired for his pulpit eloquence."—"Well," said Mr. Pearce, "and what is the other?" "Why, I hardly know what to say of Mr. C.; he always throws himself in the back-ground, and you see his Master only." "That's the man for me, then," said the amiable Pearce; "let us go and hear him."