

The Visitor's Pulpit.

Repentance and Baptism.

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"Repent and be baptized."—Acts ii. 38.

The change wrought in the disciples at Pentecost appears in no case so striking as in that of Peter. It is difficult to realize that the Peter of Pilate's Hall is the Peter of Pentecost. It was needful that some one should stand up on that day under the shadow of the Temple, in the face of the chief priests and people, and assert that he whom they had crucified seven weeks before was Israel's long-looked-for Messiah. Who is to do this? Peter, whose heart had failed him when charged by a servant-maid with being a disciple of the accused Prophet, now rises because "filled with the Holy Ghost," and, forgetful of danger, casts back upon the confused mockers their charge of drunkenness, "These are not drunken, as ye suppose," and proceeds to show the fulfillment of prophecy, and to press home his tremendous accusation of "crucifying the Son of God." His sermon consisted mainly of passages of Scripture, and reasoning upon them; yet, as he proceeds, it is manifest there is a marvellous power attending his utterances. The murmur subsides, the mob becomes a congregation; pride and prejudice yield to the "tongue of fire." Hearts are touched, heads are bowed, tears are falling, till at length the whole multitude is carried away, and, forgetful of everything but the overwhelming feeling of the moment, they exclaim, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" Then Peter said unto them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Our intention on the present occasion is to make a few remarks on the subject of repentance and baptism. It has been said, and not without reason, that the subject of repentance is not so prominently presented in modern preaching as in the teaching of the New Testament.

Repentance was the first and last subject upon which the Great Teacher and Divine Master dwelt.

"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, 'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand'" (Matthew iv. 17). It was the subject which, with His departing breath he commended to his disciples, commanding that "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke xxiv. 47). Nothing could set forth Christ's idea of the high value of repentance more than the fact that it was the Alpha and Omega of his teaching.

True repentance will spring from a sense of the Divine presence.

Job said (chap. xliii. 6) "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." It is when we see ourselves in the light of infinite purity that we shall be convinced of our own sinfulness, and be ready to say with Isaiah, "Woe is me, for I am undone," and to confess with Peter, "I am a sinful man, O Lord." It is true—

"The more thy glory strikes mine eye, The humbler I shall lie."

Let us seek to realize the reality of God's presence, and it will prove the best preservative against sin in the future, and lead to a repentance deep and true for sin in the past. The nearer we live to God, the more real will be our repentance, and the more real will be our repentance, and the more sincere our renunciation of sin.

A sense of the Divine goodness will also move to repentance.

"Knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom. ii. 4). David felt the bitter sting in sin to be this, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Against thee whose goodness is so great, whose care is so continued, whose providence daily protects, and whose loving-kindness crowns. How sinful does sin appear when we remember it is against so good a God and so gracious a Father! Let the thought lead to repentance, and as the Divine goodness is ever passing before us, the repentance that results from a contemplation of it will not be like the early cloud or morning dew which passeth away.

Faith in Jesus will be the companion of true repentance.

Repentance has been said to be "the tear in the eye of faith." "Repent and believe the Gospel" is the Divine command. Sorrow for sin will be followed by the joy of forgiveness when the command is obeyed. The feeling sense of pardon

for which many are waiting will not precede but follow faith. "Joy and peace in believing." "But I do not feel I have repented enough," say some. Nor could you, however long or however deep your repentance, "repent enough" if you mean by repentance to make amends for, or atonement for sin. This you never can do; but Jesus has done it, and while dissatisfied with your repentance and faith, you will rejoice, when in the exercise of both you are led to look to Jesus, and find satisfaction and rest in Christ alone.

"Repent and be baptized." Repentance is always to precede baptism.

Infants cannot repent; therefore infants should not be baptized. Tertullian, who lived in the second century, is the first of the early fathers who makes unmistakable allusion to the existence of infant baptism, and he refers to it as an innovation then coming into practice, and dissuades from it, as fraught with great peril. It is remarkable, too, that the first practice of infant baptism is connected with sponsors, who repented and believed for the child. Such an idea is strange and startling, and we have never yet met with any one who ever attempted to show the slightest warrant for it in Scripture; yet practice at once confirms the truth of our position. Repentance and faith are pre-requisite for baptism. But, it is objected, households were baptized, and, of course, there were children in those households. Let us see: (Acts xvi. 15)—Lydia was baptized and her household. She was evidently not a married woman, but one who carried on business on her own account, her household consisting of friends or helpers. Verse 33—The jailer was baptized, "he and all his;" but the apostle previously spake the Word of God unto them, and they "rejoiced, believing in God." Acts xviii. 8—"Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house." The household of Stephanas were baptized (1 Cor. i. 16) and the apostle writes in ch. xvi. of the same epistle, v. 15—"Ye know the house of Stephanas that it is the first-fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints."

We affirm without fear of contradiction that from Matthew to Revelation there is not a single instance of the baptism of babes. Professor Jowett, of Oxford, remarks, "Infant baptism and the episcopal form of church government have sufficient grounds; the weakness is in attempting to derive them from Scripture." This is the admission of an Episcopalian. No authority for infant baptism in Scripture. As Baptists, we reply, "Thank you, agreed."

Baptism should always follow repentance and faith. But we can be saved without baptism. Yes, undoubtedly, because God would never make salvation conditional upon that which under certain circumstances would be impossible. Many when sick unto death have believed and were saved without baptism. The thief on the cross was not baptized. But circumstances permitting; is your state of mind such as to lead you only obey Christ in that which is proved essentially necessary for your safety? Or does gratitude and love prompt you to say—

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads, I'll follow where he goes?"

A selfish spirit is at least open to suspicion; the whole spirit of the gospel is expressed in the words, "Let a man deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

By baptism we "put on Christ." Gal. iii. 27—"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

If a modern Baptist spake thus, we can imagine what criticism his words would call forth—How sectarian! how uncharitable! how denominational! But since the apostle thus spake, we only ask you to ponder his words—or, rather, the words of the Holy Ghost by the apostle—to judge your position by them, and see that, while you may be saved without baptism, until baptized you have not "put on Christ."

"But I do not feel fit to be baptized." Would you not be greatly offended if any one were to affirm that you are not a believer? Doubtless you would, but you have by that statement affirmed it concerning yourself. Every believer in Jesus is fit for baptism. You say you are not fit, therefore you declare yourself an unbeliever. "But we hope better things of you, and things which accompany salvation." That sense of unfitness may spring from a mistaken notion of unworthiness. False confidence is always to be deplored, but false diffidence is equally to be regretted, as by it many deprive themselves of

much comfort and many privileges. We conclude that baptism without personal repentance is vain; that repentance without baptism where circumstances permit is the neglect of a Divine command; therefore we say to all, "Repent, believe, and be baptized."

Those who were baptized were "added unto the Church." Every one who by a living faith becomes a member of Christ should be "buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Col. ii. 12.) Having thus put on Christ, you are a member of his church, and should have a name and place amongst those Christians who are united in Church fellowship in the locality where you reside, and who you consider are walking according to the Divine Word. You owe to them the weight of your influence and example, and all the assistance you can render, by which the cause of truth may be maintained. No man liveth unto himself: seek by association with those whom you believe to hold the truth to strengthen the church and glorify Christ. We have in the closing part of the 2d chapter in Acts an account of the early church from which we gather—1 (v. 42), that they were diligent in using the means of instruction and improvement, and abounded in prayer; 2 (v. 44, 45), that they manifested great liberality, brotherly kindness, and self-denial; 3 (v. 46, 47), that they were cheerful, thankful, and happy, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. Is it to be wondered that the Lord added to such a church? We pray for the world; we may well pray also for the churches, believing that, as one has declared, "When the prophecies referring to the church are fulfilled, then the predictions concerning the world shall be accomplished." May the Lord make us as a church all that he would have us to be, then shall we influence for God and truth the neighborhood around, and his name shall be glorified in the conversion of souls to Christ.

For the VISITOR.

Home Missions in the Convention.

DEAR EDITOR:

I never knew much good to come from "a compromise." I fear that the one you report in this week's issue will not prove an exception. It is either desirable to carry Home Missions into the Convention or it is not. And the Convention is fully capable of directing that work or it is not. If the Convention is not competent to manage it properly, or cannot be trusted to manage it wisely and for the best, better keep it away. And if the brethren of N. B. do not think it trustworthy, better keep their Home Missions—and perhaps other things—among themselves until they otherwise think. For nothing is more essential to success in Christian work—especially such work as this—than mutual Christian confidence. And nobody, I think, wishes to see our Home Missions in the Convention unless they are worked successfully.

The case is simply this. If there be good and sufficient reasons why there should be "a Board of Home Missions for New Brunswick," the members of the N. B. B. H. M. Society ought to have influence enough in the Convention to have one appointed, and confidence enough in themselves and the justice of their cause, as well as in their brethren, to believe that they could.

Why, then, beforehand, tie the hands of the Convention? Why tie their own hands in the Convention, should they—as is not at all impossible—then be brought to see that there is after all a more excellent way?

Beside, this action, if it prevail, controls and hampers others as well. It not only decides the question as respects N. B.—it does also and equally as respects the other Provinces. Nova Scotia and P. E. Island, or either one of them, may be unwilling to take their Home Missions into the Convention on any such terms. In that case, N. B. is either keeping them out, or compelling them to come in as she dictates. They have expressed a willingness to hand over their work to the Convention, but certainly with no other understanding than that it have full charge and control of the Home Missionary operations generally within its bounds, and by no means that it have such control only so far as they themselves are concerned. Consequently, it is far from correct to say that this action "will give N. B. a place in the Convention, in respect to Home Missions, precise-

ly similar to that of N. S. and P. E. I." New Brunswick, so long as this action is in force, will be entirely out of line with these Provinces, neither of which has ever thought of restricting the action of the Convention in the matter.

Of course the Convention can comply with the request of the Society, or decline to do so, and act entirely independent of them. But to do this latter will be to spoil the compromise made with those unwilling to go in at all, and from which so much is expected, and perhaps rouse to greater unwillingness.

But, on the other hand, to be governed by this decision is simply for the Convention of N. S., N. B., and P. E. I. to put itself under the control of the N. B. B. H. M. Society, at least in the matter of Home Missions. To this, at any rate in the present condition of that Society, I, as one member of the Convention, beg respectfully to demur. I prefer that we remain as we are.

The question of Home Missions in the Convention can afford to lie over. Even the N. B. B. H. M. Society has admitted that the principle is sound, and to be acted upon. But the Baptist Convention of these Maritime Provinces cannot afford to stultify itself, and retard a work it is seeking to promote, by going into this union fettered and controlled, or until it is prepared to go into it understandingly and heartily.

As I have always said, so I say now—Whether one Board, or two, or many, is best, is not the question, nor is it necessary at present to express an opinion respecting it. But the question is still, and will continue to be, Shall the Baptist Convention, which has control of our Education and Foreign Missions, have equal control in Home Mission work—shall the Baptist Denomination of these Provinces have charge of that upon which depends its enlargement and its ultimate existence even, or shall it continue to be conducted by, whoever may for the time being see fit to take it in charge?

Certainly, in view of the action of your Society, it is eminently wise and fitting, on more accounts than one, that you should earnestly urge increased interest in the Convention on the part of the members of that Society—if it can be ascertained who are such—as well as of the brethren generally residing in New Brunswick.

Yours very truly,
T. H. PORTER.
Ch'town, July 18, 1879.

Gems.

We can do more good by being good than in any other way.—Sir Rowland Hill.

Surely if all the world was made for man, then man was made for more than the world.

Satan selects his disciples when they are idle; but Christ chose his disciples when they were busy at their work, either mending their nets or casting them into the sea.—Farrenden.

Speaking reverently, we may say that the great religious teachers, Christ included, have given the world very little information. Their power has been the power to produce convictions.—Sunday Afternoon.

Every real and searching effort at self-improvement is of itself a lesson of profound humility. For we cannot move a step without learning and feeling the waywardness, the weakness, the vacillation of our movements, or without desiring to be set upon the Rock that is higher than ourselves.—Gladstone.

It is a high, solemn, almost awful thought for every individual man, that his earthly influence, which has a commencement, will never, through all ages, have an end! The life of every man is as the well-spring of a stream, whose small beginnings are indeed plain to all, but whose course and destination, as it winds through the expanses of infinite years, only the Omnipotent can discern.

A person at Newcastle who had a house to let took an applicant for it to the top floor, spoke of the distant prospects, and added: "We can see Durham Cathedral on a Sunday." "On a Sunday!" said the listener, "and pray why not on a Monday?" "Because," said he, "on week days great furnaces and pits are pouring forth their smoke and we cannot see so far; indeed, we can scarcely see at all; but when the fires are out our view is wide." Is not this a true symbol of our Sabbath days when we are in the Spirit? The smoke of the world no more beclouds the heavens, and we see almost up to the golden gates.—Spurgeon.

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