

Messenger and Visitor

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The "Messenger and Visitor" from this time to the end of 1885, for One Dollar. Do not forget. Get your friends to send in their dollars at once, so as to make the most out of our Special Offer.

—PROF. KIERSTADT threw out a suggestion at the Southern Association which is worthy of greater attention than could be given it at the time, when it came out incidentally. It was this: that at our conference there should be not only a declaration of our feelings, but a real conference in respect to Christian work—that at these seasons we should not only tell of our love or want of love, our joy or want of joy, but also of what we have done for the Master. We believe this would be of great advantage. It would hold before the mind of Christians the idea that the Christian life is for work, and not merely for feeling. As it is now, when there is nothing expected at conference but a description of the way we feel, there is much to encourage the false idea that the Christian life is a mere succession of heart exercises, rather than of life labors. We cannot insist too much upon the idea that the value of feeling is chiefly in its power to move us to right action, and that feeling which exhausts itself in its own exercise, is like a blind fountain which sends forth no waters to refresh and cheer.

—We are bound to speak a word about our very bad practice, in connection with our associations,—yes more than one. There are many of the delegates who become late; there are more that leave before the business is half done; there are more still, as it appears, who do not come at all. If we are to have associations let us do our best to make them as interesting as possible. To fail in this is to lose prestige as a body, and do injury rather than good. At St. Stephen the attendance was not large at any time. All did not arrive till Wednesday afternoon, and a large majority left on Thursday morning, leaving the best part of the work to be done by a very few, and preventing action except on questions which came in according to the accustomed routine. To have an association or any other meeting dwindle down toward the close to a handful is most unfortunate, as the concluding meetings give the impression that remains. There are brethren who are prevented from attendance during the whole session of an association, but there can be no reason why there should be a general stampede at the time when it is gathering its chief interest. If the business is of so little importance that it can be left when half done, let it be abandoned altogether.

—If it be the duty of an editor to rebuke and exhort his large congregation, as well as any other preacher, we would mention another point. Committees on all the great topics of denominational interest are appointed a year in advance, that a report may be presented which shall embody facts and suggestions the most profitable and stimulating to the churches. If it be well, under these circumstances, to have the reports made out at some odd moment of the association, or not made out at all. These things ought not to be, brethren.

—These are sacred duties entrusted to brethren by their brethren, and ought not to be neglected. If well done, they may be made to tell powerfully on the work, and therefore should be carefully attended to. Let us think upon these points, dear brethren, and we are even sure we shall all look upon our associations as involving duties and privileges too sacred to be treated with any measure of indifference.

—Two thoughts are suggested by the sketch of the Baptist Church at St. Stephen, which we give in connection with the account of the Southern Association. The first is the propriety of establishing interests in the thriving towns, where we have none already. Unless we do this we shall be subjected to loss as well as fail to reap the gain we might. Many from our country churches go to these towns, and, if we have no church there, they are lost to us and their families grow up to become members of other denominations. Besides, here is where there is room for growth, and where self-sustaining churches may soon be gathered. The second thought is the desirability of having places of worship erected at the beginning of new interests. This meets the people understand that we have come to stay, and give confidence in the permanence of the effort. There are many who hesitate to commit themselves to a new interest until it is secured. Rather can an interest hope to grow very netherly under all the disadvantages of worship in hired halls, and such like places. The English Baptists have taken a new and long step forward since their building fund has been gathered, and they can plant new interests with places of worship where there is need. Perhaps we are not in a position to have a permanent building fund yet, but we should devise some way to assist struggling congregations in houses of worship. If there were any rich people who desired to leave

behind a legacy of blessing, we know of no way in which it could better be done than in providing a church building loan fund. We hope, at least, that appeals to aid in building meeting houses on new fields will meet with a generous response, when they come before us with proper endorsement.

—A STATEMENT in the letter from the Sussex Baptist church is worthy of note. This church has six out-stations, stretching over a wide area. The church does not expect its pastor to carry on all the services at these many points. He visits them all as often as he can; but devoted brethren assist him, and week by week go here and there to lead meetings, and labor for the Master. What a grand example is here given! There are many strong churches surrounded by districts where Christian work is imperatively demanded. Many brethren in these strong churches are dying for lack of Christian work, and souls are perishing in these destitute sections around, for want of this very work, which is necessary for the spiritual growth of these brethren. Does not this show that it is God's will that this double need, be supplied by such work as this being undertaken. Our Home Mission Board is at its feet and to these fields supplied, and all the chief points can be reached. If all our strong churches should take the good example of this not very strong church to heart, and should feel the duty to take hold of work on all sides, as opportunities offer, how many desert places would blossom as the rose. Brethren, how can you stand at the judgment seat of Christ side by side with those from these fields around, for whom you have attempted to do nothing? Are there not some other churches and other devoted and talented brethren of various churches, who shall hold meetings here and there, and tell of Christ and his salvation?

—THE LETTER from the Carleton Baptist Church laid down a principle which cannot be too much kept in mind and insisted upon. It is this, that a church formed on New Testament principles as in our own, needs no other organization to oversee and do the work of Christ on earth.

We are glad that this principle is recognized. In these days there is danger lest the church be ignored by her own members, in many respects. From the way in which outside societies are formed, when any vigorous work is to be attempted for the Master, it does seem as though many thought the church a trammel and a fetter, rather than God's own appointment. There is need of the most serious thought on this subject, or the drift of the times which is sweeping so many into organizations which disclaim all church standing, may leave our churches little more than names.

What we want is to infuse full life into our churches, and there will be no place for agencies outside of the church which now threaten gradually to overturn New Testament order, according to which the church was to include all believers and none else, and to be the one working body to oversee and execute all God's work in the world. It will be a sad day if she is ever left only as the body from which other organizations, which usurp her prerogatives, draw their working force.

—BETTER PAPER.—We have not been satisfied with the paper upon which the MESSENGER AND VISITOR is published. The present lot will be used up in a week or two, when we expect to have a better quality. This will make the letter press more clear and distinct than it has been. We hope to satisfy our patrons.

—HOW SOON we might have our 6,000 subscribers and be able to reduce the price of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR to \$1.50 per annum, were all to do as a brother not a thousand miles from Lookport did the other day. Hearing that a community a distance away had not been canvassed, he engaged a carriage and went out, and in a little time had a list of ten new subscribers. There are plenty of communities where this might be done, were there brethren or sisters who would do as this brother. The editor of this paper will be at all the Associations in N. S., the Association in P. E. I., and the Eastern in N. B. He hopes to have the pleasure of adding many new subscribers to the lists of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR. Shall he not have many helpers? Please send a little time on your fields, brethren, before you come, in this work, and bring the names along. Money is always acceptable.

—THE APPROX of the work done, and the success achieved by our Presbyterian brethren in the Northwest, as given at the General Assembly now in session in Montreal, should stimulate—perhaps shame—us. They have spent \$130,000 in Manitoba in the erection of manse and houses of worship. \$88,000 have been expended there this year in Home Mission work. As a result 614 preaching stations are supplied every Sunday. There are 81 congregations, and the Manitoba people raised \$100,000 themselves last year. Presbyterianism is said to be spreading over Manitoba. Of course it will, if they make efforts like these, and others do not. Let us emulate

their zeal, and do our best to do our part to plant the more complete truth as we hold it, in this great country. It is to be hoped that the union of the Baptists of the Dominion in Manitoba missions may soon be effected, and that we shall begin work there in earnest.

—WE CLIP the following from the Religious Herald, Richmond, which explains itself:

"The MESSENGER AND VISITOR, of St. John, New Brunswick, reports what the two Boards of our Southern Baptist Convention have done, during the past year, and kindly adds: 'It must be remembered that the South is poor, and the reports show good work under the circumstances.' Will our brethren do us the kindness to remember, too, that the reports of those two Boards give only a portion of what Southern Baptists are doing in mission work? Our State and Associational missions are not included, and they would reach beyond \$100,000. It is small enough at best, and we have abundant reason for humiliation; but still it should be known that not more than half of our mission work is reported, by the Boards of the Southern Baptist Convention."

What Constitutes a Christian.

READ BEFORE THE YARMOUTH CO. MINISTERS' MEETING, BY REV. J. A. GORDON, AND PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

The seeming simplicity of this question renders a discussion meretricious. If we are to judge by the frequency with which the term *Christian* is used, we would be persuaded that its full import is universally apprehended; or, if we are to interpret it in the light of the wide field of moral qualities, so opposite, which it is made to cover, it must be a very elastic term indeed, more calculated to cover the broad way which the many find and walk upon, than it is to be contracted within the compass of the *strait gate, and narrow way* which the few find and walk in. The general use of the term *Christian* is misleading. It is applied to all who do not bow to stocks of wood and stone, or who are not avowed infidels—as many as theoretically accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the world's redeemer, and the Scriptures as a revelation from God to man, while they may practically scorn the stoning block, disobey every command, and ignore every precept of that supreme law.

The term *Christian*, which once was fraught with significance and expressive of Christ-likeness, has been sadly degraded until it has lost its former divine image, and has now become a miserable caricature.

What is responsible for this sacrilegious counterfeit of the spiritual fact—this stamping of the image and superscription of the King of Kings upon so worthless metal as an unregenerate life? This is to incarnate so many living, walking, paleohodes, against the most emphatic protest of the Master as well as of all inspired teachers. The whole trouble of the general secularization of the church, as well as scepticism, agnosticism and weakening unbelief within her borders, can be traced back to *two facts*.

First. To the perverting doctrine of *salvation by generation*, which the first Baptist vigorously protested against, as he said to the Jews "Begin not to say within yourselves we have Abraham to our father," &c. Do not give it room for one moment in your thoughts. For bad or false thoughts are dangerous things because they are formative. In harmony with which protest the clear and distinct teaching and testimony of all Baptists have been given down through all the centuries, a thankless service, often we know—

"Starring their gains
And martyrdom their price."

Second.—The *unnatural outcome of the former—the unsriptural fabric of Christening*, which logically sweeps away the foundation of a spiritual kingdom, and leaves no place for that which the human heart needs the most, regeneration by the spirit and word of God. In perfect keeping is this doctrine with another, growing from the same parent stock—the doctrine of transubstantiation, that professes by priestly manipulations to convert material bread and wine into the *body and blood of Christ*! Each of the above notions is as reasonable as for a mechanic to undertake to manufacture potatoes, apples, wheat, or even horses and sheep; or an artist to undertake to cause a marble statue's lungs to heave, its heart to beat, its brain to think, and its tongue to speak forth the greatness of its creator and its gratitude to him.

Life is impossible apart from God. Spiritual life is the highest, the divinest form of life, and surely we ought to conclude, even if scripture were silent upon that, that it is as dependent upon the creative act of God as vegetable or animal life at least.

Regeneration or spiritual life is the intercourse which the spirit and word of God hold with the spirit of man, begetting in his heart Christ the hope of glory, thus constituting him a Christian.

Those teachers of the past, who mingled with the "Faithful saying" endless genealogies and fables, made ship wreck concerning the faith. These teachers of the present who teach salvation by generation and the fable of christening are guilty of as serious a mistake, and produce the same fatal result. They wreck the one God given life boat that can save this drowning world.

The scriptural act of baptism is not in any way a condition of, nor ought it ever to be prior to regenerating grace, as the following reasons will show:

1. Baptism is a command of Christ, Matt. 28:19. Christ says "if ye love me keep my commandments," John 14:15. And Paul says, "the fruit of the spirit is love." The root precedes the fruit. The root of love is the spirit, and love, the fruit of the spirit, conditions baptism, so that the spirit's changing the heart from hate to love antedates baptism.

2. Baptism is a law of Christ, but "the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God," Rom. 8:7. Thereupon the unregenerate soul is not a proper subject of baptism, for it is carnal.

3. The gift of the spirit is a good evidence of regeneration, and the possession of that has been urged by the Apostle Peter as an argument why Cornelius and his friends should be baptized. Acts 10:44-48. The possession of the Holy Spirit was not regarded in those days as a substitute for water baptism, or a sufficient reason to set it aside. The Apostle Peter never entered to rebellious hearts by such presumptuous remarks as "if it does not matter if a man has the baptism of the Holy Ghost."

The possession of the Holy Spirit will lead us cheerfully into harmony with, and submission to, the word of God inspired by the same Spirit. Any conflict betrays a difference between the spirit in the heart and the spirit in the word. If the former reject and antagonize the latter, it gives the leading ring upon, the touchstone that indicates its worthlessness, and on the scale of life's deficiency in weight, that sets it aside as the enemy's counterfeit. This doctrine may come with sweetest emotion, or as an angel of light drest in the liveliest of heavens. Still it is from the old devil, the archfiend, all the same.

4. The Apostle Paul claims to have been taught the Corinthian Christians by the Gospel, but he disclaims to have baptized any but a few of them. 1 Cor. 1:14, 15. He did not then regard baptism as the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. It is just here that many of the theories and logical stagiards of the day are at a dead lock with the Apostle. Who is right? Is the question.

These false notions have opened the floodgates of scepticism, agnosticism and general debility of faith upon the Christian church, by leading many who were never born of the Spirit to conclude that they possess all the power which Christianity can give. They, possessing only the *fine senses* which have to do with material and mathematical truths, and unable to comprehend spiritual things, deny or doubt their existence.

The Christian has the *eternally received* in the new birth by which he is enabled to "see the kingdom of God." By this he appreciates spiritual things, and knows God. As long as spiritual or moral questions are investigated in the realm of physics and by the fine senses exclusively, *doubt and ignorance will prevail*.

Astronomy is not to be understood by geological studies however earnestly pursued, nor are moral or spiritual facts by unenlightened nature, or by intellectual acumen, however great. These things are "spiritually discerned."

A false conception of what constitutes a Christian has opened fountains from which putrid streams have issued, and the doctrine of salvation by generation and christening or baptismal regeneration—which are really one and the same—have directed those streams into the city of the great King, until its once royal palaces are befouled. As the Christian life is not the product of human power, so it cannot be transferred by parental will or bequest, any more than physical life can be. "Not of blood nor of the will of man, but of God." Neither can priestly jugglery inject this vital principle into human hearts. It is by the intercourse which the Word and Spirit of God hold with the human soul or spirit. So Christian action is not the struggle of a dead man to get life, but the willing exercise of a living, loving, grateful soul, working out into shape beauty and fruitfulness *His power wrought by God*.

How suitable and expressive then are the terms that the Holy Spirit has seen fit to employ to express that change. "Born again." "Born of the Spirit." "Born of God." "Born from above."

The fact thus expressed sustains the same relationship to faith, hope and obedience that life sustains to action, fire to heat, or cause to effect.

What can be a greater change than that

in which a man comes under the influence of the invisible and eternal, once for all, in which self is dethroned and Christ enthroned and gratefully accepted as prophet, priest and king in which he sweetly and thankfully yields himself to be governed by the Word and Spirit of God: a change in which he is brought into friendship with the King of kings, into whose face he now confidently looks through the ancient Son, and says "Abba Father!" How expressive and proper then is that ordinance that meets us at the very threshold of this new life. At the dawning of this new existence in which we become "dead to sin," we are to be "buried with Christ in baptism," and "rise again to walk in newness of life." Here and only here is it really *Christian baptism*. Any where before this it would be a voiceless enigma. Here and now it becomes vocal with spiritual language, and luminous with heavenly light; the real "form of sound words." Let us hold it fast, in its form and order, and it will save the Christian church from the secularizing influence of the unregenerate, and from the scepticism and agnosticism which the devoid of grace will naturally carry with them, by which the faith, and consequently the efforts of many true disciples, are weakened. "It is only a form," cries the sophist, "but you take away the form and how much have you left?" asks common sense. Demoralized churches and corrupt Christianity of the past speak the words, *beware at this point*.

We ask then in the light of the foregoing, Who is a Christian? It is not he who is a member of so called *Christendom*—not he who is born of *Christian parents* merely—not he upon whose brow a few drops of water have fallen, as priest or preacher said in the awful presence of the most high God "what is open to question, if not the opposite of the fact?" I baptize thee." Neither is it he who has been buried in the yielding wave in the likeness of Christ's death, while the fact of death to sin was absent. It is he who is born of the Spirit of God, who is begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ, who sits at the right hand of the Father, and whose life is marked by an energetic effective zeal for the salvation of souls, and for the extension of the Kingdom of Christ; it is he who, to the extent of his ability, will enable the battling host of the Lord to march against error, sin and darkness, even to the music of his silver and gold, it is he who, with the love of Christ and perishing humanity in his heart as great constraining motives, converts his secular employment into divine worship, and becomes a fellow worker together with God, knowing that every mite given, every Bible distributed, every missionary sent, become factors in the great combination of means by which God is purifying the world from the blighting curse of sin, and restoring all things to Himself to the praise and glory of His grace, as he ushers in that happy morning when His redeemed and regenerate people shall no more forever feel

"Disproportioned sin
Jaring against nature's obimes, and with harsh din,
Breaking the fair music that all creatures make
To their great Lord."

Such an one possesses the Spirit of Christ the true and only head and vitalizing heart of Christianity, and consequently is the legitimate heir to the name and honors of those who were first called Christians, and is the true and only apostolic successor.

May the number of them be multiplied until the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ.

Words from the May Meetings at Saratoga.

We have come to an emergency. Our danger always is that Christian work, beginning with enthusiasm, will after a time get topheavy. We stand face to face with a large, depressing debt. Who is responsible? We shall learn this when we remember that as the roots of the oak reach into the earth, so the roots of this Society reach into the churches. If there is defect or disease, we shall have to trace it right back to our churches. Have we pastors seen to it that our churches are kept saturated with the spirit of Jesus, or has the spirit of worldliness crept in? We must cultivate the roots that the tree may have abundant life. It is easy to pass resolutions—easy for me to talk to you in this way—easy to excite enthusiasm in a gathering like this; but not so easy to excite an enthusiasm that will go home and dare do under a burden of sorrow. The question is, What will we do to meet this exigency? The mighty Cesar was given to short letters. He once sent to Cicero, besieged, this letter: "Cesar to Cicero: cheer up—expect help." Let us send such a message to our missionaries: "The American Baptist Missionary Union to their outposts on the skirmish line: Be of good cheer—look for reinforcements." (Loud applause.) What shall we do? In

a case of great distress, one said to a Quaker in relating it, "I could not but feel for him." "Thou didst well in that," was the reply, "but didst thou feel in the right place—in thy pocket?" This is the kind of feeling that is now needed. Not talking but doing will alone meet the emergency.

—Dr. Judson.

"It was early morning as a tourist stood on the top of Kellebury, that lifts its head into the clouds above the valley of Zermatt. The stars were shining, with a lustre that grew dimmer and dimmer in the light from the rising sun. In the valley, there was darkness and silence, broken only by the sounds of waterfalls. Suddenly, a lofty peak was illuminated, then only by one the whole amphitheatre of the mountains was kindled by the king of day, and as he rose his light fell far and wide, until the shadows were chased from the valley, and the night was gone." So, from our point of vision here today, let our eyes sweep the world-wide field of the church. Behold! The morning light is breaking! The Sun of Righteousness is rising. See, his light is tipping with splendor the heights of faith. See, the shadowed skies are being transformed into russet and purple, and the clouds we dreaded are transformed into piles of crimson and gold, that are as glorious as the thrones of the four-and-twenty elders. The darkness that brooded over pagan lands is scattered and gone, and a new earth is flooded by falling light of the new heavens.

"Christ has clasped the energy of his cross to his commission, which he has given to his church as her standard to be displayed because of the truth.

"Fling out the banner, let it float
Seaward and skyward, high and wide,
Our only glory is the cross,
Our only hope the crucified."

—Conclusion of Dr. Ellis sermon at Saratoga.

Don't Be a Boarder.

We don't mean if you have no wife, and can't get one, you should not board with somebody that has. But don't board a church boarder. The church is a home. Don't help to make it a boarding-house. When you go to church, if you are a Christian join it. Become a member of the family. Assume your share of the burden, work joy and glory. Our churches are being turned into caravansaries, where the religious moral and spiritual lodging are furnished for so many "bits." We are afflicted with migratory church boarders. They lodge awhile in one church, and then when a new center appears in another pulpit, or they get tired dissatisfied with their own, they fold their tents like the Arabs, and as silently steal away. Their wisdom, their effort, their interest are withheld. All the church gets from them is the patronage of their presence, and sometimes their contributions. They are very apt to be religious dyspeptics, for they are always taking in food, and never exerting themselves in religious labor. They are very apt to be fault-finders. Church boarding develops this selfishness, and gives no opportunity for them to appreciate the difficulties and responsibilities of a church enterprise. The hand and brain that are active in the home and not those, generally, of the critic and fault-finder!

As compared with the home, the boarding-house has never been a success. And as compared with a church, well compacted, having all the Christians under its ministry active members, loyal to its aims, united to its life, participants in its work, exponents of its triumphs, a church where half of its supporters are only "boarders," bearing a loose and temporary relation to it, is not a success. Therefore, we say, if you are living in this loose relation to any church, don't. If you are ever tempted to live so in the future, do. Don't be a church boarder.—Pacific.

"I believe," says Grace Greenwood, "that for one woman whom the pursuits of literature, the ambition of authorship, and the love of fame, rendered unfit for home-life, a thousand have been made undomestic by poor social striving, the follies of fashion, and the intoxicating distinction which mere personal beauty confers."

—CONTAGION.—Some moral forces are wrapped in secrecy, and though least dreaded are the most dreadful. Modern science has discovered that contagion may be conveyed in most subtle ways. Flies, in passing from the surface of offensive substances, that of material give human consumption, may convey contagion by their feet and proboscis. The food they alight upon may thus undergo poisonous change more readily, or may be the carrier of material of a highly specific character. The contagiousness of moral poisons is effected in ways so subtle and mysterious, while parents do well to guard their children against the rank poison of infidel teaching in secular halls, and of immorality in singing saloons, they must also avoid the angry look and the low jest at home, and make sure that neither in the kitchen nor the nursery the poison is insinuated into the susceptible mind of childhood through frivolousness of manner and delicacies of speech.—Christian Journal.