

Voltaire on Baptism.

One would, says Prof. Norman Fox, in the *Watchman*, hardly turn to the writings of Voltaire to find an argument for Baptist principles, and yet in one of his tales the great French satirist gives a vigorous presentation of the primitive order in regard to baptism. Adopting the common literary expedient of introducing a semi-civilized stranger who passes innocent criticisms on current usage, he represents a young American Indian as brought to France. The good people are anxious for his salvation, and a New Testament is given him. He reads it with the deepest interest; but when he discovers what are the usages of the Church, he continually objects to them, for he finds nothing about them in the wonderful little Book. On hearing of the Pope, he inquires who the Pope is, and declares that the New Testament says nothing about a Pope. His objection to going to confession is removed by the citation of the text, "Confess your faults to one another"; but when he has meekly recounted his sins to the priest, he sits down himself in the confessor's chair, and demands that the latter shall in turn confess to him, and he cuffs the ecclesiastic unmercifully to compel him to do his duty according to the text. He is puzzled at the arrangements made for his baptism, for the good little book makes no mention of god-fathers and godmothers, and when the bishop has taken his station at the font, and is ready to administer the ceremony, the candidate is missing. After much delay he is found at the river, patiently waiting for the bishop to come out there and baptize him. He is astonished when told that the baptism will be a mere affusion, for he says that the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized in a pool, and he demands where in the book there is a single case of baptism which is not an immersion. Whatever else may be said of Voltaire's teachings, it is plain that he understood clearly what was the apostolic act of baptism.

Nor need this be considered strange, for he was brought up a Roman Catholic, and Roman Catholic ecclesiastics make not the least hesitation in acknowledging that the primitive baptism was a burial in water. As they do not strive to conceal the fact that Peter had a wife, and that the apostles gave to the people the cup as well as the loaf, basing their usage of clerical celibacy and the communion "in one kind," not on New Testament teaching, but on the ordinances of the church, so they do not fear to admit that the apostolic baptism was different from their present ritual, for they hold that the church has full authority to make changes in ecclesiastical usage. In like manner a broad churchman like the late Dean Stanley will frankly acknowledge that the primitive church practiced only the immersion of believers, for he maintains that the spirit of Christianity is not compelled to follow apostolic usage. The Roman Catholic or the Broad Church Protestant is not troubled at being charged with a departure from the New Testament ritual, for he guides himself, not solely by the New Testament, but also by the voice of the church as given in the councils, or by popes, or in "the spirit of the age."

It is only the "Evangelical" Pedo-baptist who finds himself under the necessity of maintaining that sprinkling was practised in the Apostolic churches. He professes to take the Bible alone as his guide, and so his practice of aspersion he must find in the Scriptures, or must abandon it. The latter he is unwilling to. Having inadvertently said that the horse is sixteen feet high, he is reluctant to acknowledge that it is only sixteen hands. The denying the infallibility of the Pope, he is unwilling to admit that his Presbyterian fathers may have made a mistake. And so he tries to make it out that the jailor could not possibly have been immersed in the night, and that there was not time in one day for the immersion of the three thousand, and he indulges in much other wriggling and squirming, which, not only to immersionists in the Greek church and the Baptist churches, but also to Roman Catholics and Broad Churchmen is amusing and not seldom amazing. For instruction on ecclesiastical matters, our Princeton theologians might profitably take one or two lessons from Voltaire.

Preach the Gospel.

When I say preach the gospel, I use the phrase in a very wide sense; I mean to show by our preaching that the gospel will answer every question involved in the happiness of men. In the theological world we have gotten to a crisis of vast importance to the welfare of the kingdom of God on earth. Our theologies must be re-written from a more intensely practical standpoint, and the teaching of the New Testament must be applied more emphatically to every question involving the political, social, moral, and intellectual welfare of men. You can get rid of Anarchists and Socialists by shooting them, but you cannot get rid of the evils which make anarchy, save as you show men how their highest good can be attained by the gospel of Jesus. The gospel has the power to answer the questions put forth by the politico-social problems which are agitating the whole world. The church has something other to do than to stand apart and sigh, and mourn, and denounce, or, what is worse, to ignore the cry that comes up from the great heart of humanity. The church must get closer to the world; she must sympathize, and love, and instruct, and win. The church must prove by her works and her life that she is not divorced from Christ; that Christ is still her Master, and that he is still going about with all His love for humanity through the church. Glittering generalities have no legitimate place in the pulpit of the church that claims loyalty to Jesus, neither have sermons whose only power is to tickle the itching ear, or furnish intellectual sport for a few. The demagogue, the jingo, the man who plays to the pit, or cares more at heart to glorify himself and to make friends for himself than to glorify Christ and make friends for Jesus, will have a heavy account to settle when at last he comes to render an account of his stewardship.

The world needs the gospel, and only that church is faithful to Him who died upon the cross in order that the world might have it, which will insist upon it that its pulpit stands everlastingly and emphatically for the gospel

of the New Testament. Some day the Great Refiner will take all philosophies and theologies and religions and "isms," good, bad, and indifferent, and will put them into His crucible and the crucible into the fire, and the dross shall be consumed, and the gold will run together. And when He looks within He shall see, reflected in the molten gold, the face of the victorious Christ; the Christ of Galilee, the Christ of Calvary, the Christ of the Ascension, the Christ of Heaven, the Alpha and the Omega, the One altogether lovely, the Chiefest among ten thousand.—A. S. Gumbert, D.D., in *Watchman*.

News of the Churches.**HAVELOCK (BUTTERNUT RIDGE.)**

On Sunday, Feb. 5th, after the usual exercises, a very hearty vote of thanks was accorded to the retiring treasurer, Miss Nellie Keith, who for a long period had so faithfully filled that office, and the superintendent, Bro. W. Starret, was requested to convey the same to her. There can be no doubt, but that all the school deeply regrets her leaving and joins heartily with her other friends in wishing her success and happiness in the future as well as the present. We congratulate the friends at Moncton on her accession to their numbers.

On Jan. 30th, Pastor Rebron, of the Grand Ligne Mission, gave an account of that work, illustrating the same with the aid of the magic lantern. In spite of the snow storm a good number turned out to hear him.

HICK'S SETTLEMENT.

Since the close of the special services, a prayer meeting has been held every Monday night in the settlement. The friends here have been much helped and encouraged by the presence and hearty co-operation of Deacon Fowles, of St. Martins, who has been here getting out lumber the past few months.

STEEVES' SETTLEMENT.

A large congregation turned out to hear the pastor on Sunday last, Feb. 5th.

SPRING HILL.

We are sorry to have to record the serious illness of Bro. Thomas Scribner, but glad to be able to add that our latest advice was that he was slowly improving. Mrs. Perry has also been and still is very sick, her great age making against a speedy recovery. F. T. S.

BENTON.

Having settled on the Canterbury field, I wish to make known to the churches of New Brunswick, who desire to correspond with me as clerk of the Western Association, that my address is Benton, Carleton Co. This field includes the following churches: Benton, 1st, 2nd and 3rd, Canterbury, Lower Woodstock. Three of the churches have started on a systematic way of doing their local work. Already we see signs of a harvest. We kindly ask the churches, through the HOME MISSION JOURNAL, to remember us at the Throne of Grace.

C. N. BARTON, Pastor.