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TERMS.

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For the Recorder and Watchman.

ANTIQUITY OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH. No. III. Continued.

I have already shown from the gentleman's own reasoning, that although immersion was universally practised "for thirteen hundred years," yet, notwithstanding, "when corruptions began to come in," which was in the "second and third centuries," then "baptism began to be administered in different ways," and "sprinkling began to be practiced by some;" then, "those who held immersion exclusively to be baptism" were called by the sprinkling party Anabaptists. So the gentleman makes out that the name "Anabaptists" was known in the "third century." This, however, does not accord exactly with the statements of his favourite historian, who says, "We do not pretend that the primitive saints were called Baptists; all went under the general denomination of christians, and when they began to file off into parties, they took the names of the men by whom they were led. No denomination of Protestants can trace the origin of its name further back than about the time of the reformation, and most of them have originated since that period." In a note of reference it is added "The Methodists originated in 1729."

The Baptists, I presume, claim to be a protestant denomination; and according to Mr. Benedict can trace their denominational name no further back than the reformation. Proeclesia, however, tries to make out that they existed a long time before that period; but history contradicts him and says the name of Anabaptists was given in the sixteenth century; and that of Baptists in the year 1608—a company of Independents in England, who separating from their own communion, sent one of their number to Holland to receive immersion, after which they rejected the name of Anabaptists or mennonites and adopted that of Baptists.

"But that all the primitive christians would have been called Baptists, if sentimental names had been in use, &c." This is the opinion of Mr. Benedict, and I suppose of Mr. Proeclesia also.—But did the want of "sentimental names," prevent the "primitive christians" from being called Baptists? I was under the impression that the ancients were much more remarkable for significant names than the moderns are. Indeed this is too notorious to require proof, or admit of a doubt. But that the ancients were not deficient in this matter is plain from the fact, that in Antioch the followers of the Saviour were first called christians; and so conscious was my Newbern friend of the truth of what I am now saying, that either through forgetfulness or design, he in apparent triumph exclaims "upon the authority of these I say that John, the harbinger of Christ, was called 'Baptist,' that this title was suggested by his work, at least one peculiar feature of it, that of baptizing." If then this "peculiar feature" in his work suggested such an appropriate name for the administrator, how came it to pass that it died with him? Why were not his followers, or those whom he baptized called Baptists? And how shall we account for the fact, that the "significant and proper" name of "Baptists" became obsolete, or was not found in the archives of the church until after the reformation? If the denominational peculiarities of the Baptist church have always been on earth, from the earliest dawn of Christianity, as Mr. Benedict supposes, how shall we account for the backwardness of the world in assigning unto them their significant and proper "appellation." For it seems from the statement of the historian whose words I have already quoted that the name "Baptists" was first assumed by a disaffected company of Independents of England in the seventeenth century. I shall be much obliged to my friend Proeclesia if he will do me the following favor.—Mr. Benedict says, "and when they—the christians—began to file off into parties, they took the names of the men by whom they were led"—in the filing off, of which mention is here made, who was the leader of the Baptists, and from whom did they receive their name? Now, it seems evident neither Christ nor any one of his apostles was their leader, because they were not called by any such name.—If out of the "abundance of opposing testimony," he can find no information on this point, he need not put himself to unnecessary trouble to satisfy my curiosity.

Proeclesia says, "The point at issue between me and Laurentious now is the origin of the Baptist Church. He asserts that they had no existence before the fifteenth or sixteenth century, his witnesses say both." Being somewhat doubtful whether my witnesses said the Baptist church originated before the fifteenth century, I turned to them, and here is the result of the examination:—I observed "she made her appearance in Germany about the year 1524." Robertson, the oldest of the historians says, "soon after Luther's appearance &c. Mosheim says in 1523; Goodrich, 'about the year 1524.' What can be thought of a man, and a minister who

manifests such a disregard to probity? I am astonished beyond measure at his reckless course! Does he thus act because he knows that the readers of the Recorder have never seen my numbers, and are therefore ignorant of what I said? Such a dereliction from candor and honesty, deserves a severe rebuke. Hoping that he may profit by this detection, I will follow him in his onward march.—As evidence of the fallacy of what I said about the rise of the Baptist church he gave three facts:—1. The authorities which he has adduced are all enemies of the Baptists.

Does it follow as a necessary consequence that a difference of opinion must be the effect of enmity? Cannot an individual honestly dissent from an opinion or practice, and yet be a friend and even a lover of the author of said opinion and practice? But for the sake of argument suppose I should admit that all my witnesses were enemies of the Baptists; does that fact destroy the credibility of their statements, or render them incompetent to record the truth? Would such an objection annul their evidence before the judicatures of the land? Do we not sometimes appeal to the enemies of Christianity to confirm the truth of scripture events? To instance—to Narcobius in proof of the massacre of the infants of Bethlehem? To Pilate and Josephus, that Christ was on earth? To Lucian in proof of Christ's crucifixion and doctrine of love? And to Pliny to establish the truth of the prevalence of Christianity? Admitting the propriety of what I have here said, how perfectly childish is this sentiment.—"Before we can be required to receive the testimony adduced as infallible, it must be shown that peoples' enemies always tell the truth when they speak of their principles and history!"

2. "Another circumstance to be taken into the account is, that the witnesses brought forward contradict themselves.—Bishop Tomline according to the extracts given by Laurentious, allows the Baptists to begin in 'the beginning of the fifteenth century,' Goodrich in the sixteenth."

This is further evidence of Proeclesia's "aim at fair dealing?"—the witnesses contradict themselves. This is untrue. If it could be shown that they contradict each other, no man can prove that they "contradict themselves." Bishop Tomline who is here named in connection with Mr. Goodrich, was not introduced by me to prove the origin of the Anabaptists of Germany; but their establishment in England. All the witnesses who are named in Germany agree to the fact, that they made their appearance; and no doubt their evidence would be received in any civil court in christendom. But suppose there had been a slight disagreement, would that be sufficient to invalidate their testimony? If so, then I will venture the supposition that there is scarcely a fact, of long standing, in the world but what would be destroyed or disbelieved. Who does not know that the time when St. Matthew's gospel was published has been made matter of debate among critics; some fixing it as near to the ascension of our Lord as A. D. 37; others extend it to A. D. 62; and others fixing upon several intermediate dates? And that it has also been a matter of dispute whether his gospel was written in Hebrew or Greek? If the simple fact of want of agreement as to the precise date, be of sufficient moment to justify the rejection of all testimony, then long before this day, the gospel of Christ would have been cast "to the moles and bats," and a guilty soul been left to wander amidst the darkness of uncertainty, to a state of terror and despair. I will not follow up a supposition so absurd, lest I offend the common sense of my readers.

3. "But what we wish chiefly considered is, that his statements and extracts contradict other, and better testimony.—I don't know, but I should suppose that the scriptures, particularly in the English version, are as good, if not better authority than that produced by Laurentious."

Am I to judge from the above paragraph that the mind of my friend is undetermined whether to give preference to God's word or to human productions? As to my own part I feel no hesitancy in saying, "Let God be true, but every man a liar." And if Proeclesia will give me from that book one single passage where infants are positively forbidden the rite of baptism; or where the primitive christians were called Baptists, I will surrender the point. And, again, though irrelevant, if he will give me scripture to justify him, and his brethren in rejecting from the Lord's table, those whom God has received, merely because they have not been dipped by a baptist minister, I will give up the subject.

Proeclesia admits that the term "Anabaptists" was applied, in former times, to the people now called Baptists by their enemies; and so does Mosheim. What seems to afford the gentleman much pleasure, and on which he lays particular stress, is, that Mosheim says, "the true origin of the Anabaptists is hidden in the depths of antiquity, and is in consequence extremely difficult to be ascertained." To a man in ordinary circumstances such a statement as this would afford no pleasure, would bring no satisfaction. If the origin of a thing be so "hidden" as to render it "extremely difficult to be ascertained;" and yet the accurate knowledge of the fact is essentially necessary, what advantage can such profound uncertainty be to an individual, or a set of individuals? Suppose a man held in his hands an immense estate, which could only be retained on condition of his finding the original document which contained the bequest; and he in his search should learn, that that which he so much desired was so "hidden" in the depths of antiquity, as to be "extremely difficult to be ascertained;" as to be "extremely difficult to be ascertained," what effect would such an announcement have on his mind? Would it not cast a gloom over the sky of his prosperity? Not so, however,

with my friend; for rather than be deprived of a great antiquity, he will let his origin lie "hidden" in the deepest depths of "uncertainty."—How true the adage, "that drowning men will catch at straws." But, Mosheim's "depths" may not reach so far beyond the period named by the other historians as the gentleman may imagine. One thing I wish my readers to know and remember, which is this,—Mosheim quotes from Robertson, who dates their rise "soon after the reformation; and to this Mosheim himself seems to agree in these words, "this uncertainty will not appear surprising, when it is considered that this sect started up suddenly, in several countries, and at the same point of time, under leaders of very different talents and intentions, and at the very period when the first contests of the Reformers with the Roman pontiff, drew the attention of the world, and employed the pens of the learned, in such a manner, as to render all other objects a matter of indifference.

If I may be indulged a few moments while I shall paraphrase this passage, I think a key will be given to the difficulty which Proeclesia sees in it.—"This uncertainty"—as to the true origin of the Anabaptists—"Will not appear surprising when it is ascertained that this sect started up suddenly in several countries at the same period of time"—that the uncertainty, here spoken of, does not allude to the time of their origin, but the spot where they first commenced, and the individual who was the first originator of the faction, is quite evident from these words by the historian—"At the very period when the first contests of the Reformers" &c. Here, the time when they sprang up is clearly defined; and harmonizes with the statements of numerous other historians—"Started up suddenly in several countries at the same point of time"—says Proeclesia "If they started up 'suddenly in several countries at the same point of time,' then their origin cannot be fixed in any specific country,—and moreover, they must have existed previously."—This is specious, but not solid. The contests between the Reformers and their opponents, was so absorbing in its character, as "to render all other objects a matter of indifference." Availing themselves of this favourable opportunity, was an easy task for those who as Mosheim observes, "were disconcerted under the government of the lords," and "who declared war against the laws and magistrates;" to form their plans and even rise simultaneously against their rulers. This will appear still more plausible when we remember that the same historian says, "This revolution at its commencement was altogether published by them; for these persons only wished to be relieved of some of their burdens, and to enjoy greater freedom; respecting religion they did not say much. But when the fanatic Thomas Muntzer, who had before deceived others by his fictitious visions and dreams, and some other persons of a similar character, had joined this irritated multitude, from a civil commotion, it became, especially in Saxony and Thuringia a religious or holy war. Vol. 3. pp. 41—42. This is a rational and easy solution of the whole matter, and shows plainly that instead of its being "incredible that they should have become so numerous at the very point of beginning," that it was the natural consequence of such an insurrectionary commotion. What could not such a spirit as Muntzer do with such an excited mass? Ripe for rapine and blood, they only needed a spirit rendered daring by fanaticism to lead them to deeds of horror; and such an one they found in Thomas Muntzer.

Once more—Proeclesia says—"No they were driven into those countries by cruel measures, and they continued there until the circumstances which prepared the way for the reformation brought them more prominently into notice." And far better for them, and the rest if they had continued in obscurity, than to have been brought into notice by such circumstances!—But my Newbern friend, must pardon my incredulity, when I inform him that: I cannot receive his "ipse dixit" in this matter. He must tell from whence they were driven, and when their flight took place; and support his say so by indubitable testimony. Nothing short of this will suffice; and unless it be given, his assertion will be regarded as the offspring of his fancy.

LAURENTIOUS.

ON SPIRITUAL DISTRESS.

Sorrow is the common lot of humanity; but disappointments in our business, losses in our property, bereavements in our domestic circle, diseases in our bodies, or even all these combined, are light, compared with that mental anguish to which some of the children of God are at times subject. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear? It happens not unfrequently, that the Christian is troubled on every side, yet not distressed: at other times the case is reversed; and while all things around are prosperous, he is filled with a deep, exquisite, and absorbing grief, which words cannot adequately describe. Nothing indeed can surpass or equal the forcible language, and the vivid and varied imagery of Scripture, for we find such anguish is called, drinking the cup of wormwood and gall, walking in darkness, sinking in deep waters, passing through the furnace and the fiery trial. When the infinite evil and awful consequences of sin are distinctly perceived, without any clear discovery of the atonement and righteousness of Christ: when relapses and declensions, inordinately pursued, and self-indulgencies, have accumulated a load of guilt upon the conscience; when atheistical thoughts and blasphemous ideas, the poisoned darts of Satan, have been shot into the soul; and when, as the last and worst circumstance, the light of God's countenance is to-

tally hid, while a thickening cloud obscures the evidence of interest in his favour, which, by degrees, shuts out every cheering beam of hope,—how dreadful are the tempestuous terrors which flash across the mind, how tremendous and appalling is the prospect of death and judgment!—The distress of pious men is by the world uniformly attributed to fanaticism. And even some Christians are too eager to place it to the account of nervous debility, or morbid melancholy. They seem afraid lest the sufferings of religious men should, in the estimation of the world, reflect discredit upon religion itself. It is deemed therefore by them the part both of good policy and charity, to advert chiefly to the calm peace and sweet satisfaction, which the Gospel is calculated and intended to produce. It is undoubtedly true, that religion is the only source of permanent comfort and refined joy.—But it must not be forgotten nor concealed, that Christianity is a restorative system, and though all its medical prescriptions are both safe and salutary, they often prove, from the strength of evil habits and corrupt passions, exceedingly painful in their immediate effects. It must also be remembered, that the Christian life is constantly represented as a warfare; and though the combat is not always equally fierce and violent, nor do all occupy posts equally perilous, the believer has not only to engage the enemy at the outworks, fighting behind his rampart, but is frequently called to maintain the arduous conflict within the citadel itself, where he is surrounded with darkness, dismay and confusion.

When we meet with a good man strongly agitated with doubts and fears, or deeply plunged in spiritual trouble, he has powerful claims upon our tenderness and sympathy:

For, with a soul that ever felt the sting
Of sorrow, sorrow is a sacred thing.
Not to molest, or irritate, or raise
A laugh at his expense, is slender praise.
He that has not usurped the name of man,
Does all, and deems too little all he can.
"T' assuage the throbbings of the fester'd part,
And stanch the bleedings of a broken heart."

Let not any one who is severely tried, conclude that his case is singular; a conclusion which, in such circumstances, almost every one is apt to draw. Some of the most eminent saints throughout successive ages, have been exercised with the keenest inward conflicts, and at times weighed down with a crushing load of woes. Hear David: "Mine iniquities are gone sorrow is continually before me." Hear the language of Job: "The arrows of the Almighty are within me; the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.

Nor let the man filled with spiritual distress, think his case hopeless. Is there not balm in Gilead? Is there not a Physician there? Is not Jesus exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and the remission of sins? Yes, desponding soul, in him resides an inexhaustible fulness of grace. Take then the precious promises of his word, and try their efficacy. While a thorn rankles in the flesh, and the messenger of Satan buffets thee, hasten to the merciful and mighty Redeemer.—Spread thy wants and woes before him, and urge thy requests with unceasing importunity, for he will not fail to answer in due season. "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Mysterious and incomprehensible are the dispensations of Providence; but we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.

"The long existence of the christian church, would be pronounced upon common principles, impossible. She finds in every man a natural and inveterate foe. To encounter and overcome the unanimous hostility of the world, she boasts no political stratagem, no disciplined legions, no outward force of any kind. Yet her expectation is, that she shall live forever. To mock this hope, and blot out her memorial from under heaven, the most furious efforts of fanaticism, the most ingenious arts of statesmen, the concentrated strength of empires, have been frequently and perseveringly applied. The blood of her sons and her daughters has streamed like water. The smoke of the scaffold and the stake, where they wore the crown of martyrdom in the cause of Jesus has ascended in thick volumes to the skies. The tribes of persecution have shouted over her woes, and erected monuments, as they imagined, of her perpetual ruin. But where are her tyrants? And where are their empires? The tyrants have long since gone to their own place. Their names have descended upon the roll of infamy. Their empires have passed like shadows over the rock. They have successively disappeared and left not a trace behind.—But what became of the church? She rose from her ashes fresh in beauty and might. Celestial glory beamed around her. She dashed down the monumental marble of her foes, and they who hated her fled before her. She has celebrated the funerals of kings and kingdoms that plotted her ruin, and with the inscriptions of their pride, has transmitted to posterity the records of their shame. How shall this phenomenon be explained? We are at this moment witnesses of the fact, but who can unfold the mystery? This blessed book, the book of truth and love, has made our wonder to cease. The Lord her God in the midst of her is mighty.—His presence is a fountain of health, and his protection a wall of fire. Armed with divine power, his gospel, secret, silent, unobserved, enters the hearts of men and sets up an everlasting kingdom. It eludes all the vigilance, and baffles all the power of every adversary. Bars and

bolts and dungeons are obstacles to its approach. Bonds and torments and death cannot extinguish its influence."—Dr. Mason.

From the Christian Index.

FREE AGENCY.

This term is used by theological writers to express the state of men as creatures created with power every way suited to yield obedience to the laws of their Maker, while at the same time they were left free, or made to "turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." The word *agent*, in this connection, simply describes man as capable of action; and *free* is used to show that that action was the result of no compulsory coercion, but produced wholly by the violation of its agents, or that men act according to the most prevailing disposition of their hearts. This *free agency* is that whereby men are the proper subjects of moral law; bound to obey the voice of their Creator, because he have them, in their creation, the ability to do so, and therefore requires them to love him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength; but never coerces them to this obedience; for this would be to render their service a matter of necessity, and not of choice, void of virtue, and incapable of giving any honor. In order that men's obedience might be voluntary, virtuous, and honoring, to their Creator, they must be free to disobey, if they choose to do so. 'Tis this that renders them responsible for their actions—the subjects of praise or blame.—Without this they could not be blessed in their obedience, nor condemned for their sin.

The fact that men have sinned has no tendency to alter, or change, or abate the claims of their Creator on them, or their obligations of obedience to him, in the least. He has created them the subjects of moral government, and commands them accordingly; and it is their duty to obey; but their foolish heart being fully bent in them to do evil, they will not. They choose their own evil ways and doings, and return. Therefore they are without excuse, and justly condemned, and would all perish in their own corruption, if God was not better to them than they are to themselves.

But God, in the infinite provisions of his mercy, has purposed in Christ to employ such divine operations and influences as shall, in perfect accordance with his free agency of men, make his people willing in the day of his power. It is believed that all the saving operations of God in men are to bring them to this willingness, but always seeks to change it from its evil inclinations, and so to turn them to himself. The evidences of God's favor towards any, are therefore not to be sought in forcible restraints, but in the drawings and sweet inclinations of their hearts to seek the Lord, and to obtain his favor. Now are we to think these sweet drawings are the less certain, because they do not rise to coercion. The Lord, who formed the heart, knows best how to govern it, and form it anew to love and serve him with true delight.

Extract from Tholuck's Sermon.

THE JOYS OF SALVATION.

There is only one kind of joy, in which the soul is interested, and of which I never become weary. This is the joy and the peace which the testimony of our adoption by God brings with it. Oh ye, who are yet afar off, there are, yea there are, in the life of the faithful Christian, not only minutes and hours, there are days, and months, and years, which he could wish to be prolonged to all eternity, and he could never be weary of them. There is a richness in these periods, and a fulness in them, and a life and a stillness, an activity and a deep repose, and a steadiness, which fills the whole soul, and which no one can adequately understand, but one who has felt them. And the voice of the faithful Christian bears audible testimony, "We have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." In what they already enjoy here below, they have a foretaste of the future world.

From this you will understand why, in our text, the children of God are called heirs of God; and why the Spirit which is imparted to them, is called the surety of the future inheritance. The apostle says in the subsequent context, that they who have faith have received the first fruits of the Spirit. Now the first fruits of a harvest are followed by the full harvest. In these first fruits Christians are fully assured how rich a harvest is reserved for them in heaven, when they shall behold in glory what they now hope for in weakness. But so long as you remain destitute of that degree of faith, by which you may taste the powers of the world to come; so long, Christians, as you are not made happy men by the power of your faith,—tell me, how can you explain the words of your Redeemer, when he says that "the man who has faith has already pressed through death, and has passed unto life?" Tell me, does there not appear to be a sacred intimation, in these words of Jesus, that the idea of faith, involves something more, decidedly more, than that poor and starveling principle, which is all that your experience comprehends? But whoever of you in this Christian assembly can say, we have felt the powers of the world to come, since we have exercised faith; we have experienced the first fruits of the Spirit, which will one day be followed by the whole harvest: we have been sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, and have thus received an earnest of our heavenly inheritance: whoever can say this to you heaven is secure beyond a doubt. Ye happy ones, to you there remaineth not a solitary doubt that heaven shall be your home. When