

Any Christians Among Protestant Parties, or, The Lunenburg Letter

by Alexander Campbell. Published in the *Millennial Harbinger*, 1837

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Introduction

This letter and Alexander Campbell's comments or remarks have affected the thinking of many, both within and without the Restoration Movement, since first appearing in the *Millennial Harbinger* for 1837.

Discussion of the issues raised in Campbell's reply to the "conscientious sister" from Lunenburg continued in later issues of this periodical. Articles by Campbell and others--particularly Christianos and Thomas M. Henley--appeared in the *Harbinger* from 1837-1840.

The following are references to the ongoing discussion in the *Millennial Harbinger*:

1837--pp. 411-414, 506-508, 561-567, 577-578

1838--pp. 348-349, 426-427, 520-521

1839--pp. 43-45, 124-128, 168-179, 213-216, 292-294, 395-401, 475-476, 529-531, 547

1840--pp. 21-22, 106-109, 125-128, 162-165, 275-277

The statement by Campbell that induced the lady from Lunenburg to write the editor of the *Harbinger* is in an article entitled "Letters to England-No. 1," which was published in the June, 1837, issue. So that it may be kept in context, we give the entire paragraph preceding the statement and the paragraph in which the statement is found. The statement to which objection was raised is printed in bold capital letters so as to be easily identifiable.

"Touching your inquiries on some matters, I hasten to observe,--that our brethren generally regard the church as the only moral or religious association which they can lawfully patronize. Hence they form not Missionary, Education, Tract, Bible, Temperance, Anti-Slavery confederations. If these are good works, they belong to the church in her own proper character; and every member of the church is, as a Christian, obliged to promote these objects as far as he has the means and the opportunity. The Christian institution, in our judgment, demands of all its subjects their best efforts to put down all profanity, unrighteousness, injustice, oppression, and cruelty in the world; and to promote every benevolent, humane, and charitable object which can ameliorate the conditions of human existence. That the gospel ought to be preached; that evangelists or missionaries ought to be sent out and sustained by the church; that the whole community should be intellectually and morally educated--every child born upon our soil so trained as to be a useful, safe and honorable member of society; that the Bible always, and sometimes religious tracts, newspapers, magazines and pamphlets should be widely circulated in the world; that Christians should be temperate in all things, and especially so in

the use of all intoxicating liquors, and perhaps sometimes wholly abstinent; that they should not, after communing at the Lord's table, unite in any secret, political, or moral combination with the Lord's enemies, Turks, Jews, or Atheists; that they should oppose all schemes of robbery and oppression, whether the victims be white, black, or yellow--bond servant or hired servant; that Christians should render to their servants every thing that is just and equal; that they should not, even when the laws permit them, violate or cause others to violate God's most ancient, venerable, and holy institution of marriage, by selling a wife from her husband, or infants from the embraces of maternal and paternal affection; that they should treat every human being, without regard to political or other factitious and circumstantial distinctions and differences, as their fellow-creatures, as subjects of God's philanthropy, to be taught his religion, and trained for immortality, are propositions or tenets held by us sacred as the precepts of Christ.

We would, indeed, have no objections to co-operate in these matters with all Christians, and raise contributions for all such purposes as, in our judgment, are promotive of the Divine glory or of human happiness, whether or not they belong to our churches: **FOR WE FIND IN ALL PROTESTANT PARTIES CHRISTIANS** as exemplary as ourselves according to their and our relative knowledge and opportunities; but we cannot form a confederacy with the troops of Satan, or tax his subjects to sustain the Christian cause; and, therefore, so long as all these associations openly and avowedly form a community on any one of these bonds of union, irrespective of citizenship in the kingdom of heaven; I say, so long as they hold communion with profane and ungodly persons, or with Gentiles of no creed and every creed, because of a single point of coincidence, whatever that point may be, we cannot unite with them, or sail under such a flag. Besides, if such schemes are really necessary, then has the church failed--then the Divine institution must yield the palm to institutions merely human. (pp. 271-273)

ANY CHRISTIANS AMONG PROTESTANT PARTIES

Lunenburg, July 8th, 1837.

"Dear brother Campbell-- I WAS much surprised to-day, while reading the Harbinger, to see that you recognize the Protestant parties as Christian. You say, you 'find in all Protestant parties Christians.'

"Dear brother, my surprize and ardent desire to do what is right, prompt me to write to you at this time. I feel well assured, from the estimate you place on the female character, that you will attend to my feeble questions in search of knowledge.

"Will you be so good as to let me know how any one becomes a Christian? What act of yours gave you the name of Christian? At what time had Paul the name of Christ called on him? At what time did Cornelius have Christ named on him? Is it not through this name we obtain eternal life? Does the name of Christ or Christian belong to any but those who believe the gospel, repent, and are buried by baptism into the death of Christ?"

In reply to this conscientious sister, I observe, that if there be no Christians in the Protestant sects, there are certainly none among the Romanists, none among the Jews, Turks, Pagans; and therefore no Christians in the world except ourselves, or such of us as keep, or strive to keep, all the commandments of Jesus. Therefore, for many centuries there has been no church of Christ, no Christians in the world; and the promises concerning the everlasting kingdom of Messiah have failed, and the gates of hell have prevailed against his church! This cannot be; and therefore there are Christians among the sects.

But who is a Christian? I answer, Every one that believes in his heart that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the son of God; repents of his sins, and obeys him in all things according to his measure of knowledge of his will. A perfect man in Christ, or a perfect Christian, is one thing; and "a babe in Christ," a stripling in the faith, or an imperfect Christian, is another. The New Testament recognizes both the perfect man and the imperfect man in Christ. The former, indeed, implies the latter. Paul commands the imperfect Christians to "be perfect," (2 Cor. iii. 11.) and says he wishes the perfection of Christians. "And this also we wish" for you saints in Corinth, "even your perfection:" and again he says, "We speak wisdom among the perfect," (1 Cor. ii. 6.) and he commands them to be "perfect in understanding," (1 Cor. xiv. 20.) and in many other places implies or speaks the same things. Now there is perfection of will, of temper, and of behaviors. There is a perfect state and a perfect character. And hence it is possible for Christians to be imperfect in some respects without an absolute forfeiture of the Christian state and character. Paul speaks of "carnal" Christians, of "weak" and "strong" Christians; and the Lord Jesus admits that some of the good and honest-hearted bring forth only thirty fold, while others bring forth sixty, and some a hundred fold increase of the fruits of righteousness.

But every one is wont to condemn others in that in which he is more intelligent than they; while, on the other hand, he is condemned for his Pharisaism or his immodesty and rash judgment of others, by those that excel in the things in which he is deficient. I cannot, therefore, make any one duty the standard of Christian state or character, not even immersion into the name of the father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and in my heart regard all that have been sprinkled in infancy without their own knowledge and consent, as aliens from Christ and the well-grounded hope of heaven. "Salvation was of the Jews," acknowledged the Messiah; and yet he said of a foreigner, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a Syro-Phenician, "I have not found so great faith--no, not in Israel."

Should I find a Pedobaptist more intelligent in the Christian Scriptures, more spiritually-minded and more devoted to the Lord than a Baptist, or one immersed on a profession of the ancient faith, I could not hesitate a moment in giving the preference of my heart to him that loveth most. Did I act otherwise, I would be a pure sectarian, a Pharisee among Christians. Still I will be asked, How do I know that any one loves my Master but by his obedience to his commandments? I answer, In no other way. But mark, I do not substitute obedience to one commandment, for universal or even for general obedience. And should I see a sectarian Baptist or a Pedobaptist more spiritually-minded, more generally conformed to the requisitions of the Messiah, than one who precisely acquiesces with me in the theory or practice of immersion as I teach, doubtless the former rather than the latter, would have my cordial approbation and love as a Christian. So I judge, and so I feel. It is the image of Christ the Christian looks for and loves; and this does not consist in being exact in a few items, but in general devotion to the whole truth as far as known.

With me mistakes of the understanding and errors of the affections are not to be confounded. They are as distant as the poles. An angel may mistake the meaning of a commandment, but he will obey it in the sense in which he understands it. John Bunyan and John Newton were very different persons, and had very different views of baptism, and of some other things; yet they were both disposed to obey, and to the extent of their knowledge did obey the Lord in every thing.

There are mistakes with, and without depravity. There are wilful errors which all the world must condemn, and unavoidable mistakes which every one will pity. The Apostles mistook the Saviour when he said concerning John, "What if I will that John tarry till I come;" but the Jews perverted his words when they alleged that Abraham had died, in proof that he spake falsely when he said, "If a man keep my word he shall never see death."

Many a good man has been mistaken. Mistakes are to be regarded as culpable and as declarative of a corrupt heart only when they proceed from a wilful neglect of the means of knowing what is

commanded. Ignorance is always a crime when it is voluntary; and innocent when it is involuntary. Now, unless I could prove that all who neglect the positive institutions of Christ and have substituted for them something else of human authority, do it knowingly, or, if not knowingly, are voluntarily ignorant of what is written, I could not, I dare not say that their mistakes are such as unchristianize all their professions.

True, indeed, that it is always a misfortune to be ignorant of any thing in the Bible, and very generally it is criminal. But how many are there who cannot read; and of those who can read, how many are so deficient in education; and of those educated, how many are ruled by the authority of those whom they regard as superiors in knowledge and piety, that they never can escape out of the dust and smoke of their own chimney, where they happened to be born and educated! These all suffer many privations and many perplexities, from which the more intelligent are exempt.

The preachers of "essentials," as well as the preachers of "nonessentials," frequently err. The Essentialist may disparage the heart, while the Non-essentialist despises the institution. The latter makes void the institutions of Heaven, while the former appreciates not the mental bias on which God looketh most. My correspondent may belong to a class who think that we detract from the authority and value of an institution the moment we admit the bare possibility of any one being saved without it. But we choose rather to associate with those who think that they do not undervalue either seeing or hearing, by affirming that neither of them, nor both of them together, are essential to life. I would not sell one of my eyes for all the gold on earth; yet I could live without it.

There is no occasion, then, for making immersion, on a profession of faith, absolutely essential to a Christian--though it may be greatly essential to his sanctification and comfort. My right hand and my right eye are greatly essential to my usefulness and happiness, but not to my life; and as I could not be a perfect man without them, so I cannot be a perfect Christian without a right understanding and a cordial reception of immersion in its true and scriptural meaning and design. But he that thence infers that none are Christians but the immersed, as greatly errs as he who affirms that none are alive but those of clear and full vision.

I do not formally answer all the queries proposed knowing the one point to which they all aim. To that point only I direct these remarks. And while I would unhesitatingly say that I think that every man who despises any ordinance of Christ or who is willingly ignorant of it, cannot be a Christian; still I should sin against my own convictions, should I teach any one to think that if he mistook the meaning of any institution while in his soul he desired to know the whole will of God he must perish forever. But to conclude for the present--he that claims for himself a license to neglect the least of all the commandments of Jesus because it is possible for some to be saved who through insuperable ignorance or involuntary mistake, do neglect or transgress it; or he that wilfully neglects to ascertain the will of the Lord to the whole extent of his means and opportunities because some who are defective in that knowledge may be Christians, is not possessed of the spirit of Christ and cannot be registered among the Lord's people. So I reason; and I think in so reasoning I am sustained by all the Prophets and Apostles of both Testaments.

A.C.

CHRISTIANS AMONG THE SECTS

In an article on a query from Lunenburg which appeared in the September number, certain sentences have been objected to by some two or three intelligent and much esteemed correspondents. We gave it as our opinion that there were Christians among the Protestant sects; an opinion, indeed, which we have always expressed when called upon. If I mistake not, it is distinctly avowed in our first Extra on Remission; yet it is now supposed by these brethren that I have conceded a point of which I have hitherto been tenacious and that I have misapplied certain portions of scripture in supporting said opinion. In the article alluded to, we have said that we "cannot make any one duty the standard of Christian state or character, not even Christian immersion," &c. Again, we have said that "there is no occasion for making immersion on a profession of faith absolutely essential to a Christian, though it may be greatly essential to his sanctification and comfort." These two sentences contain the pith and marrow of the objectionable portion of said article to which we again refer the reader.

Much depends upon the known temper and views of a querist in shaping an answer to his questions. This was the case in this instance. We apprehended that the propounder of the queries that called for these remarks was rather an ultraist on the subject of Christian baptism; so far at least as not to allow that the name Christian is at all applicable to one unimmersed, or even to one immersed, without the true intent and meaning of baptism in his understanding previous to his burial in water. This we gathered from her epistle; and of course gave as bold an answer as we ever gave--perhaps more bold than on any former occasion, yet nothing differing from our former expressed views on that subject.

My high regard for these correspondents, however, calls for a few remarks on those sentences, as farther explanatory of our views. We cheerfully agree with them, as well as with our sister of Lunenburg, that the term Christian was given first to immersed believers and to none else; but we do not think that it was given to them because they were immersed, but because they had put on Christ; and therefore we presume to opine, that, like every other word in universal language, even this term may be used as Paul sometimes uses the words saint and sinner, Jew and Gentile--in a part of their signification.

We have, in Paul's style, the inward and the outward Jews; and may we not have the inward and the outward Christians? for true it is, that he is not always a Christian who is one outwardly: and one of my correspondents will say, 'Neither is he a Christian who is one inwardly.' But all agree that he is, in the full sense of the word, a Christian who is one inwardly and outwardly.

As the same Apostle reasons on circumcision, so we would reason on baptism:--"Circumcision," says the learned Apostle, "is not that which is outward in the flesh;" that is, as we apprehend the Apostle, it is not that which is outward in the flesh; but "circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter [only,] whose praise is of God, and not of man." So is baptism. It is not outward in the flesh only but in the spirit also. We argue for the outward and the inward--the outward for men, including ourselves--the inward for God; but both the outward and the inward for the praise both of God and of men.

Now the nice point of opinion on which some brethren differ is this: Can a person who simply, not perversely, mistakes the outward baptism, have the inward? We all agree that he who willfully or negligently perverts the outward cannot have the inward. But can he who, through a simple mistake, involving no perversity of mind, has misapprehended the outward baptism, yet submitting to it according to his view of it, have the inward baptism which changes his state and has praise of God,

though not of all men? is the precise question. To which I answer, that, in my opinion, it is possible. Farther than this I do not affirm.

My reasons for this opinion are various; two of which we have only time and space to offer at this time. Of seven difficulties it is the least; two of these seven, which, on a contrary hypothesis would occur, are insuperable:--The promises concerning an everlasting Christian church have failed; and then it would follow that not a few of the brightest names on earth of the last three hundred years should have to be regarded as subjects of the kingdom of Satan!!

None of our brethren regard baptism as only outward. They all believe that in the outward submersion of the body in the water, there is at the same time the inward submersion of the mind and heart into Christ. They do moreover suppose that the former may be without the latter. They have only to add that it is possible for the latter to be not without the former in some sense, but without it in the sense which Christ ordained.

Still my opinion is no rule of action to my brethren, nor would I offer it unsolicited to any man. But while we inculcate faith, repentance, and baptism upon all, as essential to their constitutional citizenship in the Messiah's kingdom, and to their sanctification and comfort as Christians, no person has a right to demand our opinions on all the differences of this generation, except for his private gratification. He is certainly safer who obeys from the heart "that mould of doctrine" delivered to us by the Apostles; and he only has praise of God and man, and of himself as a Christian, who believes, repents, is baptized, and keeps all the ordinances, positive and moral, as delivered to us by the holy Apostles.

The scriptures quoted in the essay complained of, are all applied to the Christian character, and not to the Christian state, as contemplated by one of our correspondents. They are therefore not misapplied. It is hoped these general remarks will be satisfactory on this point.

A.C.

Ohio River, Sept. 28th, 1837.

ANY CHRISTIANS AMONG THE SECTS?

JUDGING from numerous letters received at this office, my reply to the sister from Lunenburg has given some pain to our brethren, and some pleasure to our sectarian friends. The builders up of the parties tauntingly say to our brethren, "Then we are as safe as you," and "You are coming over to us, having now conceded the greatest of all points--viz. that immersion is not essential to a Christian." Some of our brethren seem to think that we have neutralized much that has been said on the importance of baptism for remission, and disarmed them of much of their artillery against the ignorance, error, and indifference of the times upon the whole subject of Christian duty and Christian privilege.

My views of Opinionism forbid me to dogmatize or to labor to establish my own opinion, and therefore I hope to be excused for not publishing a hundred letters for and against said opinion. Only one point of importance would be gained by publishing such a correspondence; and I almost regret that we have not a volume to spare for it. It would indeed fully open the eyes of the community to the fact that there are but few "Campbellites" in the country. Too many of my correspondents, however, seem to me to have written rather to show that they are not "Campbellites," than to show that my opinion is false and unfounded.

While, then, I have no wish to dogmatize, and feel no obligation to contend for the opinion itself, I judge myself in duty bound to attempt--

- 1st. To defend myself from the charge of inconsistency.
- 2nd. To defend the opinion from the sectarian application of it.
- 3rd. To offer some reasons for delivering such an opinion at this time.

I. With all despatch, then, **I hasten to show that I have neither conceded nor surrendered any thing for which I ever contended; but that on the contrary, the opinion now expressed, whether true or false, is one that I have always avowed.** (Footnote in original reads: It is with us as old as baptism for the remission of sins, and this is at least as old as the "Christian Baptist." Read the first two numbers of that work.)

1. Let me ask, in the first place, what could mean all that we have written upon the union of Christians on apostolic grounds, had we taught that all Christians in the world were already united in our own community?
2. And in the second place, why should we so often have quoted and applied to apostate Christendom what the Spirit saith to saints in Babylon--"Come out of her, my people, that you partake not of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues"--had we imagined that the Lord had no people beyond the pale of our communion!
3. But let him that yet doubts, read the following passages from the Christian Baptist, April, 1825:--"I have no idea of seeing, nor wish to see, the sects unite in one grand army. This would be dangerous to our liberties and laws. For this the Saviour did not pray. It is only the disciples dispersed among them that reason and benevolence would call out of them, "&c. &c. This looks very like our present opinion of Christians among the sects!!! 2d ed. Bethany, p. 85.

4. Again, speaking of purity of speech in order to the union of Christians, we say, "None of you [Christians] have ever yet attempted to show how Christians can be united on your principles. You have often showed how they may be divided, and how each party may hold its own, but while you pray for the visible unity of the disciples, and advocate their visible disunity, we cannot understand you." March, 1827, vol. 4.

5. Various essays and letters on "Christian union" from our correspondents, are given to our readers with our approbation; from one of which we quote these words:--"I suppose all agree that among Christians of every name there are disciples of Jesus Christ, accepted of God in him, real members of his body, branches in the true vine, and therefore all one in Christ." October, 1826, vol. 4, p. 53.

6. In a letter to Spencer Clack, August, 1826, I have said, "As to what you say concerning the evils of division among Christians, I have nothing to object. I sincerely deplore every division, and every sectarian feeling which now exists; and if I thought there was any man on this continent who would go farther than I to heal all divisions and to unite all Christians on constitutional grounds, I would travel on foot a hundred miles to see him and confess my faults to him." vol. 5, p. 15.

7. On the evening before my departure to debate with Mr. Owen, vol. 6, p. 239, April 6, 1829, in alluding to that crisis, I say--"I rejoice to know and feel that I have the good wishes, the prayers, and the hopes of myriads of Christians in all denominations." So speak the pages of the Christian Baptist on many occasions. (Original footnote states: "Let the curious reader consult the essays on Christian Union in the Christian Baptist, so far as I have approbated them, especially my replies to an Independent Baptist.")

8. The views of the Millennial Harbinger on this subject are condensed in a work called "Christianity Restored," or, as we have designated it, "A Connected View of the Principles," &c. "of the Foundation on which all Christians may form one communion." (See its title-page!!)

9. In that volume there is a long article on the foundation of Christian union, showing how the Christians among the sects may be united. We refer to the whole of this article from page 101 to 128, as the most unequivocal proof of our views of Christians among the sects. Indeed we say (page 102) of our own community, that it is a nucleus around which may one day congregate all the children of God. In that article we wax bolder and bolder, and ask, (page 121,) "Will sects ever cease? Will a time ever come when all disciples will unite under one Lord, in one faith, in one immersion? Will divisions ever be healed? Will strife ever cease among the saints on earth?"

10. But in the last place in the first **Extra on Baptism for Remission of Sins**, we exclude from the pale of Christianity of the Pedobaptists, none but such of them as "wilfully neglect this salvation, and who, having the opportunity to be immersed for the remission of sins, wilfully neglect or refuse"--"of such," indeed, but of none others, we say, "We have as little hope for them as they have for all who refuse salvation on their own terms of the gospel." 1st Extra, 1st ed. p. 53.

With these ten evidences or arguments, I now put it to the candor of those who accuse us of inconsistency or change of views, whether they have not most evidently misrepresented us. Were it necessary we could easily swell these ten into a hundred.

II. We shall now attempt to defend this opinion from the sectarian application of it:--

1. It affords them too much joy for the consolation which it brings; because it imparts no certainty of pardon or salvation to any particular unbaptized person whatsoever.

In reference to this opinion, all the unimmersed are to be ranged in two classes;--those who neither know nor care for this opinion, and those who know it and rejoice in it. It will require but a moment's reflection to perceive that those who care nothing for this opinion will not rejoice it nor abuse it; and that those who would, for their own sake, rejoice in it are not included in it. He that rejoices in such an opinion, for his own sake, has had the subject under consideration; and it is a thousand chances to one that he is obstinately or willingly in error on the subject; and, therefore, in the very terms of the opinion, he is precluded from any interest in it. His joy, indeed, is strong presumptive evidence against him; because it is proof that he is one sided in his feelings, which no upright mind can be--at least such a mind as is contemplated in the opinion; for it respects only those who have not had any debate with themselves upon the subject, and have, without any examination or leaning, supposed themselves to have been baptized.

In no case, indeed, can there be the same certainty (all things else being equal) that he who was sprinkled, poured, or immersed on some other person's faith; or that he who was sprinkled, or poured on his own faith, shall be saved, as there is that he that first believes and is then, on his own confession, immersed, shall be saved. In the former case, at best, we have only the fallible inference or opinion of man; while in the latter we have the sure and unerring promise of our Saviour and Judge. It cannot be too emphatically stated that he that rejoices for his own sake, that he may be accepted by the Lord on his infant or adult pouring or sprinkling, because of his dislike to, or prejudice against believer's immersion, gives unequivocal evidence of the want of state of mind which is contemplated in the opinion expressed; and has proved himself to be a seeker of his own will and pleasure, rather than rejoicing in the will and pleasure of God; and for such persons we can have no favorable opinion.

2. But that the aforesaid opinion does not disarm us of our arguments against ignorance, error and indifference, is evident; because it assumes that the person in question is acting up to the full measure of his knowledge upon the subject, and that he has not been negligent, according to his opportunities, to ascertain the will of his Master; for in the very terms of the opinion he is not justified, but self-condemned, who only doubts, or is not fully persuaded that his baptism is apostolic and divine.

3. To admit that there may be Christians among the sects, does not derogate from the value or importance of baptism for the remission of sins, any more than it derogates from the superior value and excellency of the Christian Institution to admit that salvation was possible to the Jews and Patriarchs without the knowledge and experience of all the developments of the New Testament. For besides the Christian disposition, state and character, there are the Christian privileges. Now, in our judgment, there is not on a earth a person who can have as full an assurance of justification or of remission of sins, as the person who has believed, confessed his faith, and been intelligently buried and raised with the Lord; and therefore the present salvation never can be so fully enjoyed, all things else being equal, by the unimmersed as by the immersed.

4. Again, as every sect agrees, that a person immersed on a confession of his faith is truly baptized, and only a part of Christendom admits the possibility of any other action as baptism: for the sake of union among Christians, it may be easily shown to be the duty of all believers to be immersed, if for no other reason than that of honoring the divine institution and opening a way for the union and co-operation of all Christians. Besides, immersion gives a constitutional right of citizenship in the universal kingdom of Jesus; whereas with our opponents, themselves being judges, their "baptism" gives the rights of citizenship only in some provinces of that kingdom. For as far as baptism is concerned, the Greek, the Roman, the English, the Lutheran, the Calvinian, the Arminian, the Baptist communities will receive the immersed; while only a part of Christendom will acknowledge the sprinkled or the poured. Therefore, our opinion militates not against the value of baptism in any sense.

5. In the last place, to be satisfied with any thing that will just do in religion, is neither the Christian disposition nor character; and not to desire to know and do the whole will of God, places the individual out of the latitude and longitude of the opinion which we have advanced. These things being so, then we ask, wherein does the avowal of such an opinion disarm us of arguments for professor or profane, on the value of the baptism in the Christian Institution; or the importance and necessity of separating one's self from all that will not keep the commandments of Jesus; and of submitting without delay to the requisitions of the illustrious Prophet whom the Almighty Father has commanded all men to obey?

III. In the third and last place, we offer some reasons for delivering such an opinion at this time:--

1. We were solicited by a sister to explain a saying quoted from the current volume of this work, concerning finding "Christians in all Protestant parties." She proposed a list of questions, involving, as she supposed, either insuperable difficulties or strong objections to that saying; and because she well knew what answers I would have given to all her queries, I answered them not: but attended to the difficulty which I imagined she felt in the aforesaid saying.

2. But we had still more urgent reasons than the difficulties of this sister to express such an opinion:-- Some of our brethren were too much addicted to denouncing the sects and representing them en masse as wholly aliens from the possibility of salvation--as wholly antichristian and corrupt. Now as the Lord says of Babylon, "Come out of her, my people," I felt constrained to rebuke them over the shoulders of this inquisitive lady. These very zealous brethren gave countenance to the popular clamor that we make baptism a saviour, or a passport to heaven, disparaging all the private and social virtues of the professing public. Now as they were propounding their opinions to others, I intended to bring them to the proper medium by propounding an opinion to them in terms as strong and as pungent as their own.

The case is this: When I see a person who would die for Christ whose brotherly kindness, sympathy, and active benevolence know no bounds but his circumstances; whose seat in the Christian assembly is never empty; whose inward piety and devotion are attested by punctual obedience to every known duty; whose family is educated in the fear of the Lord; whose constant companion is the Bible: I say, when I see such a one ranked among the heathen men and publicans, because he never happened to inquire, but always took it for granted that he had been scripturally baptized; and that, too, by one greatly destitute of all these public and private virtues, whose chief or exclusive recommendation is that he has been immersed, and that he holds a scriptural theory of the gospel: I feel no disposition to flatter such a one; but rather to disabuse him of his error. And while I would not lead the most excellent professor in any sect to disparage the least of all the commandments of Jesus, I would say to my immersed brother as Paul said to his Jewish brother who gloried in a system which he did not adorn: "Sir, will not his uncircumcision, or unbaptism, be counted to him for baptism? and will he not condemn you, who, though having the literal and true baptism, yet dost transgress or neglect the statutes of your King?"

3. We have a third reason: We have been always accused of aspiring to build up and head a party, while in truth we have always been forced to occupy the ground on which we now stand. I have for one or two years past labored to annul this impression, which I know is more secretly and generally bandied about than one in a hundred of our brethren may suspect. On this account I consented the more readily to defend Protestantism; and I have, in ways more than I shall now state, endeavored to show the Protestant public that it is with the greatest reluctance we are compelled to stand aloof from them--that they are the cause of this great "schism," as they call it, and not we.

Now, with this exposition in mind, let us examine the meaning of the alleged concession. And first let me ask, What could induce us to make it at this crisis? or, I should more correctly say, to repeat it so strongly?

No one will say our opponents have compelled us by force of argument to make it. Themselves being judges, we have lost nothing in argument. All agree that the "concession" was uncalled for--a perfect free-will offering.

Neither can they say that we envy their standing, or would wish to occupy their ground; because, to say nothing of our having the pure original gospel institutions among us, regarding us merely as a new sect like themselves, we have no reason to wish to be with them, inasmuch as we have the best proselyting system in Christendom. Faith, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins, with all the promises of the Christian adoption and the heavenly calling to those who thus put on Christ, is incomparably in advance of the sectarian altar and the straw-- the mourning bench, the anxious seat, and all the other paraphernalia of modern proselytism. That it is so practically, as well as theoretically, appears from the fact of its unprecedented advances upon the most discerning and devout portions of the Protestant parties. No existing party in this or the father-lands has so steadily and rapidly advanced as that now advocating the religion of the New Testament. It has been successfully plead within a few years in almost every state and territory in this great confederacy, and even in foreign countries.

All agree, for a thousand experiments prove it, that all that is wanting is a competent number of intelligent and consistent proclaimers, to its general, if not universal triumph, over all opposing systems. We have lost much, indeed, by the folly, hypocrisy, and wickedness of many pretenders, and by the imprudence and precipitancy of some good brethren: yet from year to year it bears up and advances with increasing prosperity, as the present season very satisfactorily attests.

Do we, then, seek to make and lead a large exclusive sect or party? Have we not the means! Why then concede any thing--even the bare possibility of salvation in any other party, if actuated by such fleshly and selfish considerations? With all these facts and reasonings fresh in our view, I ask, Is not such a concession--such a free-will offering, at such a time, the most satisfactory and unanswerable refutation that could be given to the calumny that we seek the glory of building a new sect in religion? If, then, as some of our opponents say, we have made a new and an unexpected concession in their favor, we have done it at such a time, in such circumstances, and with such prospects before us, as ought (we think) henceforth to silence their imputations and reproaches on the ground of selfish or partizan views and feelings.

Some of our fellow-laborers seem to forget that approaches are more in the spirit and style of the Saviour, than reproaches. We have proved to our entire satisfaction, that having obtained a favorable hearing, a conciliatory, meek, and benevolent attitude is not only the most comely and Christian-like, but the most successful. Many of the Protestant teachers and their communities are much better disposed to us than formerly, and I calculate the day is not far distant when many of them will unite with us. They must certainly come over to us whenever they come to the Bible alone. Baptists and Pedobaptists are daily feeling more and more the need of reform, and our views are certainly imbuing the public mind more and more every year.

But to conclude, our brethren of Eastern Virginia have been the occasion at least of eliciting at this time so strong an expression of our opinion; and we have now many letters from that region for one from any other quarter on the aforesaid opinion. Had not some of them greatly and unreasonably abused the sects, or countenanced, aided, and abetted them that did so, and had not a few in some other regions made Christianity to turn more upon immersion than upon universal holiness, in all probability I would have answered the sister from Lunenburg in the following manner and style:--

The name Christian is now current in four significations:--

1. The ancient primitive and apostolic import simply indicates follower of Christ. With a strict regard to its original and scriptural meaning, my favorite and oft repeated definition is, A Christian is one that habitually believes all that Christ says, and habitually does all that he bids him.

2. But its national and very popular sense implies no more than a professor of Christianity. Thus we have the Christian nations, as well as the Pagan and Mahometan nations; the Christian sects as well as the sects political and philosophical.

3. But as soon as controversies arose about the ways and means of putting on Christ or of making a profession of his religion, in a new and special or appropriated sense, "a Christian" means one who first believes that Jesus is the Christ, repents of his sins, is then immersed on confession into Christ's death, and thenceforth continues in the Christian faith and practice.

4. But there yet remains the sense in which I used the term in the obnoxious phrase first quoted by our sister of Lunenburg. As in the judgment of many, some make the profession right and live wrong; while others make the profession wrong, but live right; so they have adopted this style--"I don't know what he believes, nor how he was baptized, but I know he is a Christian." Thus Adam Clarke quotes some poet:

"You different sects who all declare,
"Lo! Christ is here, and Christ is there!
"Your stronger proofs divinely give,
"And show me where the Christians live!"

Now in this acceptation of the word, I think there are many, in most Protestant parties, whose errors and mistakes I hope the Lord will forgive; and although they should not enter into all the blessings of the kingdom on earth, I do fondly expect they may participate in the resurrection of the just.

The words Jew, Israel, circumcision, disciple, are used in the same manner, even in the sacred writings: "They are not all Israel that are of Israel"--"An Israelite indeed"--"The true circumcision"--"A Jew inwardly and outwardly"--"Then are you my disciples indeed," &c.

I am glad to see our brethren so jealous of a correct style--so discriminating, and so independent. They are fast approaching to the habit of calling Bible things by Bible names. They only misunderstood me as using the term in its strictest biblical import, while in the case before us I used it in its best modern acceptation.

I could as easily at first as at last have given this reply to our sister's queries- but I thought the times required something else--and I was not mistaken. I have no doubt but it will yet appear to all that I have pursued in this the more useful and salutary course.

Our Eastern brethren were indeed, I opine, hasty and precipitate enough in expressing themselves--almost indeed before they had time to hear and consider the whole matter. I wish they had been as prompt on another occasion, and I should not have been addressed on this subject by the worthy sister so often named. But we are all learning and progressing towards perfection. If any of them, and not all, wish their communications to appear in this work, accompanied with a few pertinent remarks, I am in duty bound, according to my plan, to publish some of them.

I do not indeed blame them altogether for being prompt; for I had rather be an hour too soon as half an hour too late; yet I think some resolutions which I have received, were, upon the whole, rather premature. May the Lord bless all the holy brethren, and give them understanding in all things.

A. C.