

10-02, CW

CENTENNIAL APPOINTMENTS FOR DR. WM. BELLTON

I will address the people on the subject of the Centennial and of the endowment of the Southwestern Baptist University at the following times and places:

Spring Hill—Tuesday, Feb. 29.
Head of West Sandy—Wednesday, March 1st.
Spring Creek—Thursday, March 2d.
Manlyville—Saturday, March 4th.
Union—Sunday, March 5th.
Friendship—Tuesday, March 7th.
Point Pleasant—Thursday, March 9th.
Beecham—Friday, March 10th.
Oak Grove—Saturday, March 11th.
North Fork—Sunday, March 12th.
Palmerville—Tuesday, March 14th.
New Hope—Thursday, March 16th.
Raleton—Saturday, March 18th.
Dresden—Sunday, March 19th.

Let the brethren of the Western District Association have these appointments extensively circulated, so as to secure large concourses. Let every body attend—not Baptists only, but all. Wm. BELLTON.

A PROSPEROUS CHURCH.

REV. Dr. Fisk, pastor of the First Baptist church, Newark, N. J., has been with his people twenty-five years. When he commenced his labors, the church had 273 members. Two other small churches had just been organized. Newark contained less than 400 Baptists. Now there are 11 churches and 2,933 members. The Baptist element has gained twice as fast as the population, and its increase has been greater than that of any other denomination. The First church has received by baptism 1,101, an average of 49 a year, by letter, 620; total 1,721. Present membership 961. The benevolent contributions for twenty-five years have been \$200,000; regular home expenses, \$131,000; special expenses including new church \$60,000. Total for Christian work at home, and abroad \$350,00, an average of \$14,000 a year.

Dr. Fisk says that the prosperity of the church proves that the policy of sending money outside strengthens it rather than weakens it. He further says, that when the liberality of the church was the greater its own growth was the greater, "there is that seedtime and yet increase." "He that watereth shall be watered."

God has no blessings for lazy and stingy churches. He loves cheerful givers.

APPOINTMENTS FOR REV. G. A. LOFTON.

LIST of centennial appointments for Rev. Geo. A. Lofton, during month of February, 1876:

Galway—Sunday, 27th, 11 o'clock A. M.
Bartlett—Sunday, 27th, at night.
Big Creek—Tuesday, 29th, at night.
Mt. Pleasant—Wednesday, March 1st, at night.
Bethel—Thursday, March 2nd, at night.
Brethren will please meet me and forward me in my work from place to place.
G. A. LOFTON, Gen'l. Ag't.

HELP THIS BOY.

THE following letter from a Texas boy has fallen into our hands, and, as he evidently has the stuff in him that men are made of, we desire to enlist some friends in his behalf. He wants to "educate," and we want to put him through the Southwestern University. For obvious reasons we suppress the names of places and persons. The orthography and syntax are set up to the standard, but these will improve after a while. Who will help bring out the man in him?

Rev. Wm. B. BELLTON—Dear Brother: You said in the Baptist that you wanted agents for the Graves-Ditler debate. I would like to act as agent in county. I went the people in Texas to see how Bro. Graves thrashed Ditler in the debate. I was a Methodist till about ten months ago, and I took the Baptist three months, and borrowed the Iron Wheel and read it, and I seen that I belonged to no church at all. Then I joined the Baptist church at —, Texas, and was baptised by Eld. —. If you want to do anything about me, you can write to Eld. —; he will give me a recommendation if you want him to. I am going to school in —, Texas. It is a Presbyterian school. I am educating myself for the ministry. A Presbyterian school is not much of a place for a boy to study for the Baptist ministry. I will go till I can do better. I ain't able to go off and pay heard. I will stay around this summer. I would like to do what chance the Southwestern University would give

me. I want to prepare rite for the ministry. I ain't able to educate myself as I want to do. I could go to school with the Presbyterians free if I would educate myself for a Presbyterian minister, but I would work my hands off first, before I would preach false doctrine. Please answer my questions. ***

OUR PRAYER-MEETING.

OUR Prayer-Meeting opens on each Sunday afternoon, at three o'clock, and it is proposed that every Christian who reads this will consecrate that hour to prayer or subjects presented in these columns—Ed. BAP.

"There is a scene where spirits blend,
Where friend holds fellowship with friend;
Tho' sundered far, by death we meet
Around one common mercy-seat."

CONSOLOATION ALONE IN THE CROSS.

There are parts of our life we do not like to think about. When we are suddenly reminded of them we call, "Wine!" We turn aside a little to some one and say, "Play something." There is a time when wine and music have lost their power of enchantment, and we shall be turned right round—forced to look at the past! O, sir! it is then that we shall have no little quibbling, wretched questions to put about Christ's Cross and Christ's atonement. When we see life from that point, and feel the bitterness and torment of sin we shall know that the Lamb of God never shed one drop too much of His blood, never suffered one pang too many, for the sins of the world. We shall not be critics then, pedants then, little technical inquirers then. We shall feel that the Cross, and that alone, can go right into our life, with the answer to our difficulties, and the balm for our wound and sorrow.

CARRYING OTHER PEOPLE'S TROUBLES.

We carry other people's troubles very easily. It is possible to say that though fig-trees may not blossom our religion shall not be touched, simply because we have no investment in fig-trees. Understand that? the great point is this: "Although my fig-tree shall not blossom, although no fruit shall be in my vines, although the labor of my olive shall fail, and my fields yield no meat, and my flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herds in my stalls, though my fig-tree be barked, though my one ewe lamb be taken from me, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." It does us good to speak in that key sometimes, because it shows that our education is yet far from completeness. We see how poor is their religion which is dependent upon the external. It is not a religion at all. It is a theory, it is sentiment, it is a kind of natural instinct. But religion—deep, true, wise, tender—is not in it.

CENTENNIAL THEMES.

1. The indebtedness of the Nation to Baptists for complete religious liberty.
2. The peculiar principles of the Baptists as a safeguard of the Republic.
3. Educators and education among the Baptists during the past century.
4. Patrons of education in the Baptist denomination—their work and their honor.
5. The best attainable education of all the members essential to the complete character and efficiency of Baptist churches.
6. In the next century education will be, more than ever, the ground of personal and social power.
7. Baptists in the Revolutionary period.
8. Baptist heroes and martyrs.
9. Equal facilities for education a debt of our churches due to woman.
10. The endowment of Christian Institutions of earning proved by history to be the most enduring investment of money, and the most powerful instrument for the advancement of Christianity and civilization.
11. The education of the laity in the Baptist denomination not less important than the education of the ministry.
12. The money expended in education of our sons and daughters the best investment on their behalf.
13. The influence of better education upon the character and condition of our Sunday-schools.
14. The benefits of civil and religious liberty the privilege of all and hence, the duty commemorative of the duty of all.
15. The impossibility of permanent fruits of missionary labors without educational institutions.
16. The power of the churches of the future and their personal consecration, their evangelizing labors, and in the education of their sons and daughters.
17. The special duty of Baptists, to their own institutions of learning.

THE PAPACY.

ONCE give Catholics the ascendancy in this government and religious freedom is at an end. Let those who doubt read the following utterances from high papal authority and be convinced:

"Heresy and infidelity have not, and never had, and never can have any right, being, or they undeniably are, contrary to the law of God."—*Pope's Quarterly, Jan. 1852.*

The Shepherd of the Valley, a Catholic paper published in St. Louis, says: "In the future, when we shall have gained the ascendancy in this country, as we surely shall, then it will be true, even as our enemies now say, that there will be no more religious liberty, as there ought not to be."

"Protestantism of every form has not, and never can have any right, where Catholicity is triumphant; and, therefore, we look for the day when we shall be able to gain the ascendancy, and in favor of religious liberty, or the right of any man to be of any religion as best pleases him."—*Catholic Review, Jan. 1852.*

"Religious liberty is merely endured until the opposite can be carried into execution without peril to the Catholic world."—*Bishop O'Connor, of Pittsburgh.*

"If the Catholics ever gain, which they surely will, an immense numerical majority, religious freedom in this country will be at an end."—*Archbishop of St. Louis.*

"Heresy and infidelity are crimes; and in Christian countries, as in Italy and Spain, for instance, where the Catholic religion is the essential law of the land, they are punished as other crimes."—*Archbishop Kendrick.*

"The Catholic church numbers one-third of the American population, and if its membership shall increase for the next thirty years as it has for the thirty years past, in 1900 Rome will have a majority, and be bound to take this country and keep it."—*Father Hecker's Lecture in New York.*

THE SCHOOL QUESTION.

Doubtless the great question of religio-political significance in our country to-day is that which relates to the preservation of our schools, and their relation from the destruction threatened by the Roman hierarchy. That our schools have been our glory, none will deny. We have felt an honest pride in their advancement. Indeed, we have felt too much pride in them. We have forgotten that there are other systems of education of equal advantage. We have, in our enthusiasm over their excellencies, forgotten that they have monstrous defects, that they are not perfect of their kind, and that the opponents of popular education have fair chance for criticism and satire. But with all their faults, our schools, next to our religious institutions, are the glory of our land. From the University at Cambridge, down to the humblest primary school taught in some new settlement in the far West, we see something to excite our admiration. Consequently, it is no wonder that we feel alarmed when a great religious sect claims to have under its control one-fifth of our whole population, demands the abolition of the system, and asks that parochial schools, sectarian schools, be substituted for those unsectarian institutions which have been of such benefit to the nation.

Notwithstanding the solitary utterance of an inconsequential priest here and there, in defence of the school system, and the Jesuitical affirmation that no real injury is intended, and the loud, out-spoken declarations of a few Catholic laymen, that the public schools should be maintained, we have no faith in the church of Rome. We know her to be an enemy of the public schools, and we doubt not that she will demolish them if she ever obtains political power sufficient for the purpose. Our only safety is in keeping the power out of her hands. In vain politicians may tell us there is no danger, that Rome is changed, that she no longer has a proscriptive spirit. Facts prove it to be otherwise. As often as the real voice of the church is heard, it comes with the same old ring. We submit to every candid reader how much mercy and forbearance we are to expect of a church one of whose leading organs puts forth a declaration like this which comes from the *Tablet*:

"They have as Protestants no authority in religion, and count as nothing in the church of God. They have from God no right of propagandism, and religious liberty is in no sense violated when the national authority, whether Catholic or Pagan, closes their mouths and their places of holding forth."

How much forbearance towards our schools can we expect from a church which claims the right to close our mouths and our churches?

Let no man be deceived. Rome proposes to break up the common school system—peaceably if she can, forcibly if she must. We must expect intrigue, as in the manipulations of the New York Legislature, by which the Act was secured giving the "Order of Grey Nuns" certain rights which monstrously infringe on the right of all other sects. We must expect diplomacy, as in the case of Father Hennessy, of Jersey City, who proposes to turn over to the School Board his

parochial school with its six hundred scholars, agreeing to find buildings, teachers, and his own services as Superintendent. We must expect a combined political action at the polls, as in the late elections in Ohio, where the priests headed their people at the ballot box.

The question is not, "Shall the Bible be retained in our schools?" It has got beyond that. The question is, "Shall our common school system be permitted to exist?" On the first of these two questions there is an honest difference of opinions among Protestants themselves. We believe the Bible should be in the public schools. We are open and avowed in his conviction. No papal demands, no infidel clamor should be allowed to drive it out. But without the Bible in the schools the system would be an inalienable blessing. The Bible we can teach elsewhere, but if the common schools is broken up the day that beholds it will be the darkest which has been known in a whole century.

We are no alarmist. We care not to frighten any one, but the question must be met. The church of Rome is forcing it on us, and we must be prepared, for our great fear is, that our people will sleep until the mischief is done, until a break is made in the system. It is easier to keep it intact than to mend it after it is broken. We should say to the church of Rome, and to any other church disposed to meddle with our schools, "Hands off." We should meet every attempt to injure them, and we cannot too soon begin to scan the motives and the measures of this enemy of popular education. More care should be taken in the selection of members of school committees. None but trustworthy men or women should be elected to this office. School Boards should be composed of safe persons. No one should be allowed to tamper with our schools unless he is a friend of the system. The election of Catholics to the school Board, while the church of Rome maintains its present attitude, is, to say the least a very questionable policy.

CENTENNIAL WAY-NOTES.

THE Agent has had the opportunity of visiting only two churches during this last week of January, '76.

LAGRANGE AND GRAND DIVISION.

The former place gave us in all \$300. The latter \$400 for the centennial endowment of our beloved University. When it is remembered that these two churches are "weak" and that out of their "liberality," the agents like Paul over the Corinthians, has a right to "boast" of them and to hope that their "seed" will "provoke many." This is not all: Brethren Shelton and Prewett, the respective centennial agents of these two places, have taken each a book of "bonds" and a book of "certificates," and are bent upon filling each, including the present contribution. Many who could not give to the General Agent, at the time, have agreed to give their bonds to, and to take their certificates from, the church or sub-agents, both of whom are active and efficient men. By this means we have a clear assurance of at least \$1200.00 from these two churches. The brethren in both these places are wide awake and thoroughly aroused upon the centennial movement.

BOND AND CERTIFICATE BOOKS.

I do hope, I do pray, I do urge, that every Baptist church in Tennessee will send to H. W. Butterff, Nashville, and get a book of certificates; and to Jackson, A. W. Campbell, Treasurer of the University, for a book of bonds. At the same time get instructions for their use. I have just finished the distribution of a lot of thirty-five books of certificates and also a number of bond books—all of which are being filled. Some of our agents are receiving as much as \$100 contributions and bonds. Let each agent do his best to emulate all the rest in this glorious work. I have just sent for another lot of twenty-five certificate books and bond books to distribute in Big Hatchie during the month of February. But don't wait, brethren, for there'll be many places which the General Agent cannot possibly visit during the centennial year. Send and get your books immediately and finish your work before the 4th of July.

THE MASS-MEETINGS.

The two grand Mass Meetings, one for Jackson, April 29th and 30th, Saturday and Sunday, and for Nashville, on the 6th and 7th of May, Saturday and Sunday, have been agreed on. The Agent will send a circular to every Baptist in Middle and West Tennessee. The clerks of each Association are earnestly

requested to send a copy of his Associational minutes to the General Agent at Memphis. The Agent will give each clerk \$1 for a copy of minutes, except from Big Hatchie, Central, Cumberland and Unity, all of which he has. Rally Baptists, rally to this grand work, and let us meet the whole matter before the 4th of July.

This will be a convenient time and these will be convenient places, I mean Jackson and Nashville. Think of it, brethren, and let every church send its ministers and deacons and laymen to represent it in these grand mass meetings. A great work is before us, and it must be accomplished—if accomplished at all—by a simultaneous movement of our forces along the line. The 4th of July, '76, is almost here! Though we have already done much, yet much more remains to be done." Thank God who ruleth over all, Tennessee, as a mass, is rising from her slumber—the numbers of ages—and upbore the great questions of education, publications, missions, etc., she is taking her stand, from the Mississippi to the French Broad, with other noble States in denominational enterprise. Let us move up brethren and finish our work immediately. We have just as well do it in a month as in ten years. The pastors of Tennessee will—they must—give, at least, one or two months to the finishing up of this centennial work, betwixt now and the glorious 4th. Amen.

G. A. LOFTON, Gen'l. Agent,
Jackson, Jan. 29th, 1876.

MINISTERS AND DEACONS MEETING.

THE next meeting of the Ministers and Deacons meeting of the Duck River Association, will be held with the Smyrna Baptist church, Marshall county, Tenn., on Friday before the fifth Sabbath in April. And all those who failed to be at the last meeting that had subjects assigned them, are requested to bring their essays to this meeting, and all others are most earnestly requested to select subjects and write for the occasion.

This is a new church, and has a good house, located in the rich valley of the Duck River, and all the churches of the Association are requested to send delegates. We wish to make a grand rally for the centennial, and the church has invited Bro. Lofton, the agent, to be with us. Will he not take notice of this invitation and govern himself accordingly. At this meeting we want to open the spring campaign that the centennial here may reach every Baptist family in the Association. And as chairman of the Domestic Board, I ask all the churches to take up a collection for domestic mission, and send up by the delegates. The missionary is in the field, and needs help. Brethren do not fail.

P. S.—The committee appointed at the last meeting, to select and assign subjects, does not know who are without subjects, therefore they ask the brethren to select and write.

Farm and Home.

Under this heading we propose to write our own thoughts, and gather the best thoughts of others, that we think may benefit the farmer.

This is to certify, that in the spring of 1875, I secured of Eld. J. R. Graves, one bushel of the "Java" Prolific cotton seed, and planted them in about 1/2 acre of ordinary upland. From some cause I got a bad start, and many places were planted in corn. The yield was 1200 pounds seed cotton, and 20 bushels of good corn. The land was prepared and cultivated in the ordinary way. I regard it as the very best cotton that I have ever seen.

Eudora, Miss., Feb. 11th, 1876.

To TELL THE AGE OF SHEEP.—A Salem (Ind.) correspondent to the Progressive Farmer says: I often hear persons disputing about the age of a sheep, to my surprise, he said, for than to tell the age of a sheep nothing is easier. A sheep's front-teeth the first year are eight in number, appearing all of a size. Second year the two middle ones shed out and are replaced by two much larger than the others. Third year two very small teeth appear—one on either side of the eight. At the end of the fourth year there are six large teeth. Fifth year all the front teeth are large. Sixth year all begin to show wear—not till then.

A correspondent of the Western Farmer says: "I used to have a great deal of trouble to make currant and gooseberry cuttings or slips grow, until I tried the following plan: I boiled some potatoes until they were nearly done, and then stuck one on each slip and put it in the ground. Every slip sprouted and grew well all summer, with one or two exceptions. The idea of putting the boiled potatoes to the end of cuttings to furnish and keep moisture enough for them to grow until the roots become large enough to gather the moisture and substance from the soil."

A CENTENNIAL EFFORT

"THE BAPTIST."

THE greatest effort is to raise the list of THE BAPTIST to 10,000 on or before the first day of May. This will greatly increase the influence of our paper for good. It will enable the editor to put his entire paper in a new and beautiful dress, new type, which will make it a more beautiful paper than will be easier to read.

You give to the Education movement. We want you to work for this. Each one sending a new subscriber shall receive "Bible Baptism," worth \$1.00 each; and each new subscriber shall receive a copy of Challen's Pilgrim's Progress. And sending \$5.40 at one time without premium, shall be enrolled among the Young Guard. If you cannot send every Young Guard to read it in this effort.

We will report weekly our increase and the number sent by each worker—and our epistolary—that all may see our advancement.

Whose name shall we record first?

NAME. No. NAME. No.

ITEMS.

A NEW DEPARTURE.—In order to dodge the force of the baptismal arguments to the communion question, our Pedobaptist brethren, in many instances, are taking the position that baptism is not a necessary prerequisite to a participation in the communion. All the fitness required is that you have been converted! Is not this broad? The invitation is extended to all who feel that they are "the chosen of the Lord," without any reference to orthodoxy or church connections. What next?

The Holston Methodist, in speaking of the Carrollton debate says: "We think Ditler erred in one thing; that is, in discussing the question as to the churchship of the Methodist church at all. This is not a debatable question. The claim of the Methodist church to being a church of Christ cannot be disputed except by men who are either ignoramus or bigots." Will Brother Price please inform us to which of the above classes John Wesley belonged? We think he always spoke of it as the Methodist Society. Did he not live and die a member of the Episcopal church? Could he have been a member of two churches at the same time. If Wesley called it a Society, and the discipline spoke of it for years as a Society, when did it cease to be a Society, and get to be a church.

A darkey who was stooping to wash his hands in a creek, didn't notice the peculiar action of a goat just behind him, so when he scrambled out of the water, and was asked how it happened, he answered, "I dunno zactly; but 'peared of de shore kinder h'ated and frowned me."

THE BAPTIST

FOR

THE CENTENNIAL YEAR.

1876

WILL BE A

YEAR OF YEARS

In our National and Denominational history, and, to keep our people thoroughly informed in regard to What the Baptists are Doing,

We shall make THE BAPTIST brighter and better than in any former year. That we may accomplish this, we appeal to all

OUR FRIENDS

To act as agents in doubling our circulation. This is our Centenary plea.

TELL YOUR NEIGHBORS

How much you enjoy the reading of THE BAPTIST, and urge them to take it. For a

NEW YEAR'S PRESENT

Send us a thousand new names within the next month.

NOW IS THE TIME.

Begin at once, and keep at the work for the whole round Centennial year

1876.

Not only will the reports of the DEBATE be published weekly and several of the speeches entire and the historical series be continued, but the best articles from the pen of the editor, advertised on last page, will commence in January. Turn and look at them, and show them to your brethren and friends, and ask them if they do not wish to see them printed, and take their names.

In a recent number of the *Illustrated Christian Weekly* is a case in point illustrating the public school system under their manipulation. A lady, teaching in a free school, where there was a mixture of Protestants, Romanists, Pagans, and infidels, reproved a boy for profane language, and he said, "I don't believe much in education, and especially in ministerial education." Yes, you have heard of, and

your liberality in this work, and afterwards married rich, left off preaching, found himself better fitted for some other calling, and you feel that a tainture is recorded. Well, be it so; you have illustrious examples, and I advise that as often as Judas transgresses and goes to his own

place, cast lots for a Matthias, live godly in Christ Jesus,
as ye will have persecution, and shall receive a reward.
Saul of Tarsus from the other side, which will abundantly
repay for the loss of a Judas. Now if ye have not taken
care, don't expect education for many have and after-

We must educate pulpit and pew, preachers and hearers. If we cannot do so enough to educate all at once let us do as the Lord did during the ages of his revelation to men, educate leaders directly or indirectly and they, in turn, train the people. Now don't go back

On this plan, for it was observed from Egypt, the place of Moses' nativity, to Patmos, the asylum of banished John. Just in the degree men think for themselves they are educated; just as they believe the gospel for themselves, are they Christianised. Individual development of mind, individual development of heart in man.

Now ye Davids of the Lord, "go back" in the "alcove of time, "behind the enemy, and when you hear the going in the mulberry trees, bostle yourselves," for "the Lord will deliver the Philistines into your hands." "The sound of the going" is heard, and our people are glad themselves in surer patriotism and greater fidelity

Let each Baptist family in the State do as did the Simmons family at Kossuth, twenty-five in number; give each a dollar, and the work will be done.

and the descendants of the Smiths are expected to sing the ample chorus round," while the Smiths, who engaged in every good word and work, will not look idly on. Chas. Creek church, Pontotoc county, has given and promised \$70 on the dollar roll, and will do much more. A must say, her Sunday-school quit itself like a young hopeful.

May the good Lord give these people much in this, known to the North of his principl- o. Bur-

much more in the next centennial. Bro. Pettier is of this influential church, and it is hoped that he have power from God to mould vessels unto honor. met Dr. Slasoik and W. W. Finley, whose words mighty and convincing. Bro. Finley said it was chas- that ignorance was a Baptist peculiarity, and if so,

many people were right Baptists. Let us now make a general education, education of preachers and laity, a rich and poor, in country and in city, a Baptist people, and see if it will not spread. The world learns good many things from Baptists, as they have learned religious liberty.

L. R. BURMAN, Gen. A.

MEETING IN BIG BEAR CREEK ASSOCIATION
DEAR BRO. LOWERY:—By order of the Sabbath-
 Convention of the Big Bear Creek Assoc-
 which was organized on the 29th ult., at Harmony
 Pleasant Site, Ala., we send you, for THE BAPTIST
 following digest of proceedings, viz: Officers

Eld. Jas. S. Stockton, of Pleasant Side, Ala., presided. Eld. J. F. Benson, of Itawamba county, Miss., was the visitor; and Bro. J. C. George, of Pleasant Side, Ala., Treasurer; and the writer, Secretary. The meeting was prettily attended, and the session harmonious. Among a number of important resolutions adopted, was one making the Sabbath-school in each church within the bounds of the association a condition of membership.

The next meeting of the Convention will be held at the Providence church, Ilwamha county, Miss., before the fifth Sabbath in July next. The following is the programme adopted for that session:

1. Introductory sermon—R. M. Farny.
2. A lecture "The advantages growing out of

3. A lecture—Eld. J. F. Benson.
4. A lecture, "In what light is the Sabbath
to be considered the nursery of the church"—R. L.
5. An essay, What is the best plan for raising
to support the Sabbath-school—Bro. John McE.

6. An essay, "Unity of the churches to their pastors"—Eld. Wm. Matthews.
7. An essay, or lecture, "The condition of the churches in the east"—Eld. Jan. E. Rockland.
R. M. Faus

Arkansas Department.

The Christian should make everything bend to his religion, and allow religion to bend to nothing.—J. L. JAMES

There is no middle ground between Catholics and Baptists. All the sects providing areas as sprinkling are branches or offshoots of the Catholic olive tree, and they are with it partakers of its root and its fate.—(L. A. CHAMBERLAIN—REV. J. T. TAYLOR, Bp. of Strasbourg.

EXEGESIS OF JOHN III. 5.

There are three widely differing interpretations of this passage. The embarrassment attending its interpretation are undoubtedly the result, mainly, of the preconceived notions with reference to the teachings of other portions of the Scriptures with which men come to the investigation of it.

1. The first of the three interpretations, and perhaps the most common, makes water and spirit mean baptism and spiritual regeneration.

2. The second makes water and spirit synonymous, and translates the passage, "of water, even of the spirit."

3. The third makes "of water" mean the natural birth, and understands the passage to teach simply the necessity of a second birth.

I propose to examine, briefly, these three interpretations, in the order in which I have stated them.

Let us first, however, try to obtain a clear view of the circumstances connected with the utterance of the language, and understand what is meant by the phrase, "kingdom of heaven."

Nicodemus, "a man of the Pharisees," a Jewish ruler, learned in the Jewish law, having heard of, or witnessed, the miracles performed by Jesus, seeks an interview with him by night. We get the impression, clearly, from the narrative, that he is a man of some honesty of intention; and that in seeking this interview, he is prompted by a desire to learn something more of the character of Jesus, and of the nature of his mission. We must not regard him as a humble inquirer after truth, with the spirit which the gospel inculcates; for he comes to Jesus by night—no doubt for fear of the Jews—for fear of public opinion. Doubtless, too, there was a mixture of curiosity and skepticism in his mind. But he evidently comes as an inquirer. This is the point to be observed. At the outset, he recognizes the authority of Jesus, as a teacher. He concedes his divine authority and inspiration. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." The sacred writer tells us no more than this of what Nicodemus said. But certainly he did not seek this interview, or come to Jesus by night merely to say this—to bestow an empty compliment upon the Son of God. He evidently uses this language to prove his sincerity in seeking information from Jesus concerning those matters which must have been agitating the minds of thousands of others at this time. It seems to me, from all the circumstances, especially in view of the answer which Jesus gives to him, we may be justified in putting the following questions in the mouth of Nicodemus: What is the object of your teaching and miracles? What do you propose to do? If you are the expected Messiah, what sort of government will you establish, and when will you take possession of it? The Savior informed him, at once, in a single sentence, of the distinguishing feature of the new dispensation. He declares to him with strong emphasis, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Now what did Jesus mean by seeing the kingdom of God? I think the key to the interpretation of the fifth verse is here in the third. I take the meaning of the word "see" to be understand, or comprehend; and I understand "kingdom of God" to mean, not a visible organization afterwards called the church, but simply that government, or that kind of government, which Christ was to have over his people; that is, a spiritual government—a dominion over the hearts of men. The meaning of the Savior was what we should understand if he had said: No explanation I can give concerning the nature of my mission and work will be understood by you. The government I propose to establish will be spiritual—not of this world. I am not going to be a king like other kings. What sort of kingdom mine will be, no one can understand until he has been born again—spiritually regenerated.

Precisely the same thing is meant by the Apostle Paul when he says: "Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." And again: "The

natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." I Cor. ii. 11-14. Jesus himself, also, conveys the same thought in his language to the disciples when promising them the Comforter: "Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him."

Now, observe how this declaration of Jesus is received by Nicodemus. He understands it literally. He hears it as a strange and to him impossible thing. He expresses great astonishment—incredulity, indeed. "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answers again, in the language of our subject: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."

I see no room for dissent from the correctness of the explanations thus far given. If the meaning of the first four verses is not as I have set forth, they have no meaning to my mind. Let us now examine the three interpretations referred to in the outset.

Some of the advocates of the first view maintain that the phrase "Kingdom of God" means here the visible church; and rightly holding that, as taught throughout the New Testament, spiritual regeneration and baptism are prerequisite to membership in the church, they undertake to harmonize this passage with that doctrine, and, in fact, use it as a proof text. Others, maintaining the necessity of baptism to salvation, and entering the meaning of the term "kingdom of God" to what they call the invisible kingdom, or Kingdom of ultimate glory, hold the same view; that is, that water here means baptism.

My first objection to this view is that the order of the words forbids it. Christ says: "of water and of spirit." If two births are meant—and that, I think, is clear—that of water is first. By the general principles governing the interpretation of language, it must be so. To accept the view that water here means baptism seems to me to accept the conclusion that one must first be baptized, then regenerated by the Spirit, and then he is fit for the kingdom, or church. However such a view may consist with the doctrine and practice of those who follow the Romish theology, it is contrary to the whole tenor of New Testament Scripture.

But again, there was clearly no question in the mind of Nicodemus concerning baptism. He did not come to inquire why John was baptizing, or why Jesus sent out his disciples to baptize. Many of his people had been baptized by John, in Jordan. He had heard all about this baptizing, perhaps had witnessed it. There never was any curious inquiry or wonder about what John's baptism meant so far as we are informed; or about what connection it had with Christ's mission or kingdom. John had come baptizing, and saying to the people that they should believe on him that was to come after him. He had pointed Jesus out to the people as the Lamb of God; and we can hardly doubt that Nicodemus knew Jesus to be the person for whom John was preparing the way, and knew, also, that John was baptizing such as declared their willingness to receive him. Having so many opportunities to learn what he might wish to know of baptism and its object, he would not have come to Jesus for such information. The occasion, therefore, could not naturally call forth any allusion to baptism. Christ first shows it. The interest and astonishment of the inquirer are excited in regard to a single subject. The whole of Jesus' sermon on the occasion is full of one thought—the spirituality of his kingdom and the necessity of faith in the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

These seem to me sufficient reasons for rejecting the interpretation that finds baptism in this text.

The second interpretation, that which makes water and spirit synonymous, is less tenable. It is only an attempt to rid get of a difficulty without solving it. It is argued that, since the Greek participle *gignetai* is here used, translated and, is sometimes used merely as an intensive word, and then properly translated even; and give concerning the nature of my mission and work will be understood by you. The government I propose to establish will be spiritual—not of this world. I am not going to be a king like other kings. What sort of kingdom mine will be, no one can understand until he has been born again—spiritually regenerated.

Precisely the same thing is meant by the Apostle Paul when he says: "Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." And again: "The

sense, harmonized with the whole tenor of the passage.

2. Where in the New Testament is a passage to be found conveying the same idea? Is the idea of a birth of water anywhere else to be found as the equivalent of regeneration? Water is frequently used in the Scriptures, in some form of speech, as a symbol of purification, of cleansing, or of relieving spiritual thirst, etc. We read of "A well of water springing up unto everlasting life;" of "the water of life;" of sanctifying and cleansing the church. "With the washing of water by the word;" of "fountains of living water;" and other similar expressions. But in every such passage the literal effect of water is taken to symbolize the spiritual effect of truth, or of God's grace, or of the Spirit, or of the gospel, on the heart. Being born of water is a thought found nowhere else but in the passage before us. Not once is the Spirit called water. Further argument on this point is unnecessary, I think, as the interpretation is evidently strained, and is wholly without analogy in the Scriptures.

The third interpretation is the one that seems to me correct. Let us now examine that. But here I must repeat a little. What excited the wonder of Nicodemus was that a man could be born again, or a second time. "How can a man be born when he is old," says he. "Verily, verily," says Jesus, "except a man be born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." You must be born again, born spiritually, re-begotten, born of God. You have been born once, as a descendant of Adam; you must become, by a second birth, a son of God, before you can enter my kingdom. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. "Marvel not." If a man is flesh, with all the imperfections, lusts and ignorance pertaining to the flesh, how can he become a spiritual being with the enlarged capacity and purity of character necessary to see (or understand) and enjoy the benefits of my spiritual kingdom, without a new creation—without being re-begotten by the all-creating Spirit, and born again as a spiritual man? If you cannot comprehend how this spiritual birth takes place, I will tell you something else you cannot understand. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit." Thus I paraphrase the language of the Savior, and I think what he said to Nicodemus meant just this.

It is evident that two births are here intended. Otherwise, there is no significance whatever in the expression "born again." It is the second birth that puzzles Nicodemus. He knew nothing of any birth but that which brings a man into the world. Christ tells him of another; and when he professes himself unable to understand how this second birth can take place, he is told that, whether he can understand it or not, a man must not only be born once, naturally, of water, but a second time, miraculously, of Spirit. There is no difficulty here, except that of understanding how or why the natural birth is called a birth of water. It is true that we nowhere else find this thought. But then there was no similar occasion to call it forth. Observe that there is nothing here inconsistent with any other Scripture. We have no apparent contradiction or harmonies. We have only to account for the peculiarity of the phraseology, and since everything connected with the conversation argues, and, in fact, forces upon us the conclusion that two births are meant, and since the phrase "born of water" is wholly congruous with the manner of the natural generation and birth, this seems to me the most natural and only reasonable interpretation of the meaning of the passage.

The idea of the two births is not infrequently brought to view in the Scriptures. Take the following passages: "To them gave he power to become the sons of God . . . which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever." "But he who was of the bond-woman was born after the flesh, but he of the free-woman was by promise . . . But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now."

This last passage is so exactly the counterpart of our text, under consideration, that it seems to me decisive. Comparing the two, and noticing how clearly the apostle has in his mind, and sets forth the two characters and the two births, the resemblance of the thought expressed by Jesus to Nicodemus is too striking to be overlooked. I cannot escape the conclusion that by water and Spirit Jesus meant precisely what the Apostle Paul meant by flesh and Spirit.

It is not a fanciful deduction from this view that it was implied in Christ's teaching to Nicodemus the

development of Southern thought. We may produce fewer professional book makers, but we have the elements to produce many great writers when we are no longer compelled to submit to the discriminations which Northern publishers make against Southern authors. We must make our own books and read them. The time has come when we should declare our independence of Northern book-makers.

BIG CREEK ASSOCIATION.

THIS young body is situated northeast of Alexandria, between Red and Little rivers. Most of the churches are located in Grant parish. We learn from the report on the state of religion made by Eld. M. D. Young, one of their ministers, that six years ago there was in the large district of country embraced by the Association, only one church and one minister. They now have four efficient ordained preachers and three licentiates, one of whom has been ordained since the meeting of the Association. There are now 9 churches, reporting 31 baptized, 43 received by letter, 5 by voucher, 27 dismissed by letter, 2 excluded. Total in fellowship, 314. The last meeting was held with the Little Creek church, Grant parish. Active steps were taken to further the interest of missions and Sunday-schools. The ministers of this body are J. C. Hale, Montgomery; B. F. Brian, Big Creek; Daniel Slay, Pineville; M. D. Young, Pineville; and licentiates, J. M. Brian, Big Creek; H. M. Hutson, Big Creek; E. M. Gates, Big Creek. The latter has since been ordained.

Unanimously requested that the foregoing essay be published in THE BAPTIST, and that the Western Baptist copy. By order of District meeting.

SECRETARY

Louisiana Department.

ELDER W. E. PAXTON, Editor.

Communications intended for this Department should be sent to Rev. W. E. Paxton, Shreveport, La., but subscriptions and money should be sent to Rev. J. B. Grayson, 301 Main St., Memphis, Tenn.

WITHOUT A PASTOR.

ELDER G. W. HARTSFIELD, at the close of the tenth year of his pastorate at Mansfield, notified the church that he would not accept a reelection to the position. When Bro. H. came to this church it was feeble and without a place of worship, without a prayer-meeting, and without a Sunday-school. Under his ministry, numbers have been added to the church, a regular prayer meeting and Sunday school have been organized, and a beautiful and commodious house of worship has been erected. In the meantime, Bro. H.'s labors have been greatly blessed in the surrounding country. He will remain at Mansfield, but devote his time to several churches in the country.

This adds another to the list of our vacant pastorates. Mansfield, Shreveport, Minden, Eastport, Homer, Baton Rouge, First church, New Orleans, etc. It is a satisfaction to know that Bro. Hartsfield, who is one of our best ministers, will remain in the State. It is our usual misfortune to lose our preachers, who seek more inviting fields, not fields certainly where more is needed to be done, but where ministerial labor is more appreciated. These positions are all prominent, but only a few of them able to sustain a preacher. Besides these vacancies, some of our largest towns have no preaching by Baptists at all, as Alexandria, Monroe, Washington, Donaldsonville, etc. In twenty years we have scarcely held our own; nor does the lack of ministers affect the city and village churches only. Many of our best country churches are vacant, or able to have preaching only occasionally.

A NEW WORK.

It will be gratifying to the many friends of our beloved brother, Dr. F. Courtney, that he is engaged in writing a work for publication on the Polity of the Baptist Church Compared with that of Other Denominations. Dr. C. is well known from his connection with the Louisiana Baptist and from occasional contributions to other journals. He is a terse writer, clear and vigorous, and can safely underwrite in advance that his forthcoming book will well deserve a prominent place in our denomination.

By the way, this is one of the good effects of the organization and successful operation of our Southern Baptist Publication Society, in stimulating to activity many pens that would have remained dormant, if dependent upon Northern publishers for facilities in reaching the public. A new era is dawning upon Southern literature, and our libraries will be enriched with the productions of Southern minds. And he who throws an obstacle in the way of the success of this noble Society, is only hindering the progress and

development of Southern thought. We may produce fewer professional book makers, but we have the elements to produce many great writers when we are no longer compelled to submit to the discriminations which Northern publishers make against Southern authors. We must make our own books and read them. The time has come when we should declare our independence of Northern book-makers.

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BREVITIES.

ORDINATION.—Bro. E. M. Gates was ordained at Pleasant Hill church, Grant parish, La., on Sunday, January 30th, 1876. Presbytery—B. F. Brian, M. D. Young, J. F. Blackman. Ordination sermon by J. F. Brian; ordination prayer by M. D. Young; charge by B. F. Brian; imposition of hands by presbytery.

FAREWELL.—Bro. W. W. Landrum preached his farewell sermon to a large congregation on Sunday evening at the First Baptist church in Shreveport. It was an occasion of profound grief. During the closing prayer the solemn stillness was broken by audible sobs all over the house. His departure is universally regretted. He and his estimable lady left on the train on Wednesday, Feb. 2nd, for their new home in Augusta, Ga.

Bro. A. J. Terry, of Big Bend, Avoyelles parish, has been invited to take the vacant pastorate at Mansfield. Bro. T. is a man of ability.

DRY WELLS.

I AM traveling in a desert land, the sun with his scorching rays is beating upon my aching head. My lips are parched with consuming thirst. I would give worlds for a good drink of cool water. I shall die a miserable death in this barren land unless I can get water. O, for a drink of water to revive my perishing frame! Ah! here comes a stranger. I will ask him, it may be he can direct where I can quench my raging thirst. He tells me that just ahead there are numbers of wells on the road, and he presumes I can get plenty of cool water. O, joyful news! Now I shall not die! Soon I shall cool my fevered brow, and quench my raging thirst. I move on with renewed energies, revived by hope, the wells are in view, now one is reached. The bucket strikes a rock at the bottom, and there is no water there.

I look around. Yonder is another well, I will try it. "No water," is the answer of the bucket from below; another and another is tried with the same result. I look around me. I see carcasses of many dead men who have died from the want of water. I am driven almost to despair. Yonder are other wells, but they are all made alike, and what is the use to try any more of them? I conclude that I had as well die without further effort to save myself, as to worry myself and increase the pain in my aching head by over exertion. But life is sweet, and I will not die as long as there is a well I have not tried in sight. I rise and go to the next well, the bucket goes down, my heart beats and trembles with fear lest I shall hear the unwelcome sound of the bucket on the rock. But no, the rope slackens, and no unwelcome sound is heard. I draw the bucket up, and lo! here is water, but O, how little. I expected to have found plenty. And here is only enough to moisten my lips.

Well, I am encouraged, I will try the next. And O, how my heart rejoices; the bucket comes up full and running over with the pure water of life. I drink, I bathe, I drink again; my energies return, my life is sound. O, how joyful and happy I am!

I will spread the news abroad. I will tell all who are thirsting for the water of life where it may be found. I will not be like the stranger I met, I will know and I will tell travelers which of the wells has the pure water of life, and which are the dry wells.

Brethren, many men and women join the church, some from one motive and some from another, and a few from a desire to obey and serve the Lord. And when the poor distressed sinner who is traveling through a desert land of sin and wickedness, thirsting for the water of life, and seeking for information how to escape the wrath to come, he tells his case to some worldly friend, and is directed by that friend to members of the church for comfort. He goes and meets with those who have joined the church from improper motives; they know nothing of the way of life, and can tell him nothing; they can give no word of encouragement. They, never having tasted of the water of life themselves, have no word of comfort to give.

The poor sick soul goes from one to another, and they all give back the stony sound, "no water," until he, like many before him, who have perished amid these "dry wells," almost gives up in despair. But his desire for salvation is so great, he tries again. He says to himself, it is death if I do not obtain the water of life, and it can only be death if I keep on trying and don't succeed. Another church member is approached. The inquiry is made, Where can I find rest for my bleeding and weary feet? He tells what little of life he knows, but never having cultivated the talent given him, he knows but little, and cannot relieve the longings of the sinner's heart. He is a shallow well, and the water he yields is muddy. The poor sorrowing one goes to another follower of the meek and lowly Jesus, whose heart is filled with the love of God, whose faith is clear and strong, who has improved the talent the Master has given, and is ready and willing to minister to the wants of the weary, sick soul. He is a well of living water in a thirsty land. He can and does tell the sinner of Jesus, mighty to save, and how he can trust him, and that the blessed Savior died for him, and directs him to the "healing fount of mercy," where he can have his sins washed away, and find peace and pardon for his troubled soul, by trusting in his grace.

Brethren how many of us are "dry wells?" How many of us whose word of comfort to dying sinners is as muddy water? And oh! how many of us have improved our talent, and are able to direct the sinner to a throne of grace, and to Jesus Christ who died for them, and to our God who will abundantly pardon. "Dry wells," should be filled up, and unregenerate church members should be excluded from the church.

A shallow well with muddy water should be dug deeper and improved so as to make it a well yielding much water. So those who are weak in the faith should be nursed and talked to, and prayed for and with, until they can tell sinners the way of the Lord. Let us all cultivate our talent, that we may be able to direct sinners to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.

FROM MT. LEBANON.

BRO. PAXTON.—It will doubtless afford much pleasure to the brethren of the State to know that you occupy the chair editorial of the Louisiana Department of THE BAPTIST.

THE BAPTIST being the organ of the denomination, there is a necessity for a wide circulation of it among us. It appears to me that if the brethren would write short articles from every portion of the field about the local church interest, there would be a greater desire to see the paper and know its contents. I supply four churches and will give you any matter of interest that may occur.

I begin with Mt. Lebanon church, so widely known among the brethren. Painful duties have rested upon them for months past. The application of the knife in cutting off the withered branches has been quite frequent. We hope the body will soon be in a healthy condition. Exclusion is needful to healthy development in case of unworthiness in the membership. We have something edifying, however. Our prayer meeting lives amid it all. Our Sabbath school is evergreen. Our monthly concert is well attended and contributions liberal. The ladies (some of them) of the church have been quite active in their efforts for Conventional missions. The Sabbath-school has weekly collections for benevolence. From these sources have been raised near fifty dollars since October. We style ourselves a missionary church. More anon.

H. Z. ANDERSON.

February 7th, 1876.

