

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Various Readings of the Scriptures.

Messrs. EDITORS, It is written, 'Take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people.' (Isa. lvii. 14.) This command is evidently of extensive application. It tacitly, but distinctly, forbids the laying of a stumbling-block, or an occasion of injuring in any respect, in the way; and it expressly enjoins the removal, as far as it can be done, of any that may be found.

In accordance with this requisition, I have endeavoured to afford some assistance to such persons as may be disquieted on account of apparent or seeming contradictions discoverable in the Bible, as also with reference to diversities of translations. It may be equally requisite and useful to offer some plain explanatory remarks with regard to the various readings of the original text.

It would be inexpedient, as well as useless, to attempt to conceal from ordinary readers the fact, that some diversities exist, not only in translations of the Scriptures, but also in copies of the original text of the Old Testament in Hebrew, and of the New in Greek. These are usually called "Various Readings."

It is to be observed, that prior to the invention of the art of printing, every copy of any book was necessarily transcribed by hand. In the writing out of numerous copies, by many different persons, as might be reasonably expected, some deviations have occurred. These have arisen from various causes, such as inadvertence, the obscurity of the hand-writing of some copyists, the mutilation or blotting of copies, &c. Such diversities of reading are found in all ancient writings.

A special Providence has evidently watched over the Sacred Scriptures, and transmitted them to us in a state of general purity: but no man can reasonably imagine, that the Most High would miraculously guide the pen of every transcriber in the writing of every sentence, word, and letter. The only real cause of wonder is, that the numerous manuscripts, which have been transcribed by a great number of copyists, during many ages, are found to agree substantially.

The general practice of those who have published printed editions of the original Scriptures, whether Hebrew or Greek, has been, to collate with care the manuscripts to which they could obtain access, and, where diverse readings were found to exist, to consider their comparative numbers, antiquity, estimated accuracy, &c., as also the ancient versions, quotations made by early writers, &c., and to adopt that reading which they have judged to be genuine. In a vast majority of cases the true reading can be easily ascertained beyond all doubt. As, however, every intelligent man would naturally expect, the editors of different editions have in some instances arrived at different conclusions. Hence those translators who have not adopted the same edition of the original text, have consequently, in some passages or words, differed in their versions.

Sceptics sometimes allege, that these various readings render the Scriptures unworthy of credence. But according to this view we must utterly reject all the writings of antiquity. The fact is, however, that the various readings of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures in general no more affect their meaning, than does the adoption of a different mode of spelling certain words, as honour, or honor, inquire, or enquire, that of two editions of the Bible in English. Moreover, in those cases in which some editions retain a clause or sentence which is not retained in others, the difference is not usually material. In illustration of this an instance may be noticed that has been formerly presented to the readers of the Christian Messenger.

In Mark xv. 3., all editions of the Greek, and all translations, so far as I am aware, agree in reading and translating, "And the chief priests accused him of many things." The words, however, "But he answered nothing," are found in James, while they are not in others. My copy of the edition of the Greek New Testament, published at Frankfort, in 1597, which follows that of Stephens, has the words (Autos de oiden epekrinato) "But he answered nothing." In a note appended it is stated, that this clause is contained in the Complutensian edition; but that (in quibusdam deest) "in some it is wanting." In a majority of the versions in my possession it is omitted; but as it is found in the Common English Translation, so is it also in the Italian by Diopati, the French by Osterwald and that by Martin, the Portuguese by Ferriva, my Protestant version in Spanish, the Modern Greek, and the Hebrew by Greenfield.

Whether Mark wrote these words or not, can not be determined with certainty. From the absence of them in many manuscripts, and the most ancient translations, it would seem probable that he did not. It is well known, however, that a transcriber is much more liable to omit words than to add them. The liability for such omission is still greater where, as in this case, similar words occur in proximity with them. If an early copyist incidentally omitted this clause, and his copy became an exemplar, from which many copies were made, the omission would naturally extend and be perpetuated.

It is obvious, however, that neither transcribers, editors, nor translators, could ever have any inducement either to add these words, or to take them away, intentionally; since no point of doctrine or of practice is involved. Indeed, no statement of fact is at all affected either by the addition or omission of them. Whether Mark recorded the fact or not, it is distinctly implied in his statement, that "Pilate asked him [Christ] again, saying, Answerest thou nothing?" It is also expressly stated by Matthew, that "When he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing." (Matth. xxvii. 12; Mark xv. 3, 4, 5.)

There are, indeed, various readings of same texts that may be denominated doctrinal, as 1 John v. 7. Any point of doctrine, however, that may seem to be affected thereby, can be decisively proved by passages of which the genuineness has never been questioned.

It is manifestly desirable that in every case the true reading, as it came from the hand of the inspired writer, should be ascertained with all possible accuracy, and should be universally adopted. To this end a most careful and thorough revision of the original text ought to precede the revision of any translation of the Sacred Scriptures.

It is obvious, however, from the brief view of the subject which has now been presented, for the benefit of those unacquainted with it, that there is no cause of alarm or disquietude, on account of the various readings of Scripture, which have occasioned some slight discrepancies in different translations; since they, in reality, affect no point of doctrine or of duty, but may be justly regarded, in comparison with what is indubitably genuine, "as the small dust of the balance."

Yours, in Gospel bonds, C. TUPPER.

Aylesford, Jan. 27. h, 1857.

For the Christian Messenger.

FRENCH MISSION.

Many of our Brethren and friends scattered abroad through Nova Scotia, are doubtless enquiring with some anxiety, what of our Acadian Mission? What its prospects? what its prosperity? To such we would write without circumlocution, all is well. By this however, we mean not to say, that nothing remains to be desired, that we are moving swimmingly on, borne forward by a full tide of prosperity. But we mean to say, that we find the people generally free and accessible, and have not unfrequent seasons of much interest and encouragement, when talking of the things of the Kingdom, of the necessity of giving earnest and immediate attention to the concerns of the soul. We see not all that might be desired, but for the time, we are encouraged, and cheered, by seeing all and more than all that we could reasonably expect. Kindly reception, and marked attention to the truths of the pure, uncorrupted Gospel, are things if not of daily, yet of very frequent occurrence. Yet there are adversaries. Were it not so, well might we fear that the Lord had not sent us among this people.

We have been cheered by the Rev. N. Cyr, who, has been for some weeks prosecuting his agency in behalf of the Grand Leigne Mission. He left for Boston in the Eastern State, day before yesterday. His coming we hope and believe will be mutually benefited. His experience acquired in the great Mission-field of Canada, will, we trust, inspire confidence in his suggestions, as to what we need and must have to prosecute our work effectually in Nova Scotia.

In our late visit through the country as far as Wolfville, collecting in behalf of the Mission-house, though we found money unusually scarce, yet a ready response to duty was given, as far as present ability existed. We hope that our friends who found themselves unable to give us at the time, their dollar or pound, will be enabled to forward them to us with as little delay as possible, as we were never more in need. Instead of slackening our hand, may we all take hold of this good work, with renewed earnestness, zeal and energy.

Let the prayers of faith go up to God in be-

half of this portion of our fellow countrymen, who have for so long a time been "sitting in darkness, in the region and shadow of death." Let the Missionaries feel and know that they have the hearty co-operation and sympathy of their brethren.

Collected in different localities, in behalf of Mission-House. - - - - - £26 7 6  
Donation of Rev. N. Cyr, - - - - - 1 5 0  
Brother C. Rainsforth, - - - - - 1 0 0  
Brother Aaron Potter, - - - - - 12 6

Collected in behalf of General Miss., - £5 10 1  
Donation of bro. Charles Pinkey, - 1 0 0

Our friends may expect to hear from us again shortly, if the Lord will.

Affectionately yours in Christian love,  
O. CHUTE.

Tusket, Yarmouth, Nov. 17, '56.

For the Christian Messenger.

Letter from Rev. J. C. Plumb.

MR. EDITOR,

Dear Sir, I have thought that a few lines respecting my visit to Westport, might be interesting to some of your readers. I feel it also a duty demanded of me, and therefore submit the following:—

Last summer my health became so much impaired in consequence of bleeding at the Lungs, that I deemed it prudent to abandon the labour of preaching for a little season. This was a great trial, in view of the need of ministerial labour in this place, in Springfield, and in Dalhousie, East—the field of my labours. I thought a visit to Westport, my native township, rest, the sea-breezes, &c., might serve as restoratives—consequently in August last, in company with Mrs. P., I left, intending to be absent three or four weeks. This time fulfilled, with health somewhat recruited, I set my face homewards. At Petite Passage, I had a violent attack of Cholera, which reduced me very low, so that life was nearly despaired of. But by the blessing of God, and the attention of kind friends, I began to revive after a few weeks. This lengthened our stay over nine weeks. On resuming our journey, we arrived at Little River, and were kindly received at Deacon Westcotts, where we remained over the Sabbath.

Oh how inscrutable is the Providence of God. Scarcely had the clouds dispersed which had lowered in a storm on my frail bark, threatening shipwreck, when another overclouded the horizon, and threw a shadow of darkness on my path-way; for in making ready to pursue our journey on Tuesday morning, my horse was found to have one of his legs broken. I was ready to say, "all these things are against me"—but soon again the clouds dispersed, and light arose in the darkness. Friends showed their sympathy and love in a substantial manner. Digby Neck, and the Islands of Westport being canvassed—the sum of twenty-six pounds was obtained—another horse was purchased, and on Thursday we again resumed our journey with a horse as good as the one lost, and some money in pocket besides. Here I would with a submissive, thankful heart, acknowledge the manifold goodness of God, and bow in humble obedience to His will and ways. I would also, thus publicly acknowledge the generous assistance of the people rendered in those times of trial—praying that God who has the hearts of all at his control, and can turn them as the streams in the south, may richly reward them in this life, and at last give them "a crown of righteousness that fadeth not away."

We arrived at home safely the latter part of October. My health would not allow me to immediately resume my labours in each of the several places, owing to the distance to be travelled over bad roads. I am now enabled to labour the most part of the time.

Yours in hope of Eternal life,  
JOHN C. PLUMB.

New Albany, Annapolis, Dec. 18, '56.

For the Christian Messenger.

Letter from Cape Breton.

MR. EDITOR,

It is not my intention to occupy your columns to any large extent, having already taken up more room in them than I intended,—I would merely say that I am highly pleased to see that a person with the experience and business talent of bro. J. W. Bars has taken up the subject, and suggested a method of reviving the Home Mission enterprise. Might it not be well to carry out bro. B's plan a little further, and have life members and life directors, as is the practice with religious societies in the U. S.? Many persons have the means, and would no doubt be pleased to constitute themselves members or

directors for life; thus largely increasing the funds of the Society.

The letter from bro. W. G. Concher in your last, relative to the French Mission, is a strong appeal for the adoption of bro. B's plans, or some similar one. I hope no time will be lost, as souls are perishing daily for lack of knowledge, and measures ought to be matured previous to the meeting of our Associations, so as to be at once acted on, and prevent the loss of another year. I do not think so important a mission as that to Pictou would have been abandoned, had there been a proper missionary organization. I could name a brother who was prepared to give £20 or £25 to that mission last year if it had been continued.

C. H. H.

Sydney, C. B., Jan. 29th, 1857.

For the Christian Messenger.

OBITUARY NOTICES.

DEACON PELEG HOLMES.

Mr. Holmes was born in Yarmouth, N. S., in 1785. His father was a Deacon in the first Baptist Church of Yarmouth, under the care of the late Rev. Harris Harding. His mother was also a member of the same church, a woman of great faith and prayer,—one of the excellent of the earth. The blessings she so frequent and fervently sought of God have been copiously poured out upon her numerous offspring.

Mr. H. was converted under the ministry of Mr. Harding. He was married to Miss Mary, daughter of the late Capt. J. P. Trefey, of that place, in 1806, who together with himself made profession of faith in Christ and were both baptized by Mr. Harding about 1809,—the time of the "great reformation," so called, when over two hundred persons professed religion and were baptized by Mr. Harding. Mrs. Holmes was a woman of great piety and possessed of a mild disposition which made their life both peaceful and happy.

Mr. H. being connected with sea-faring life was induced to remove his family to this place, which he did about the year 1820. Shortly afterwards he removed his membership also to the Baptist Church in Windsor, then under the charge of Rev. D. Nutter. There was no Baptist Church at that time in Falmouth, although several of the members of Windsor Church resided in the township to whom Mr. Holmes's christian character greatly endeared him as well as to christians generally. The comfort and happiness of this christian family were soon after interrupted by the sickness and death of Mrs. Holmes, which took place five years after they came to this place, an event which greatly affected this good man. While he deeply lamented the death of one so deservedly loved, he sorrowed not as those that have no hope, but his faith in the christian system sustained him in this great trial, in this dark day of adversity, with the best assurance that she whom he mourned though "absent" from him, was "present with the Lord." Mrs. Holmes was born also in Yarmouth, 1786, and died in 1825. She lived by faith on her Saviour and his hand supported her in the hour of death. She now sweetly sleeps in Jesus until the great day of the Lord. This cheering hope supported him and enabled him to bow in christian resignation to the will of God.

Some time after recovering from this bereavement he solicited the companionship of Miss Mary, daughter of deacon Daniel Lockhart, Esq., of Horton. They were married on the 16th of February, 1826. She also was a pious person and subsequently united with the church of which he was a member. By this arrangement of Divine Providence Mr. H. felt that God had graciously restored to him both his domestic and religious enjoyments in his family, which uninterrupted happiness continued to the end of his life.

He was possessed of a mild and amiable disposition. While the religion of the Cross was the theme of his conversation and its wide diffusion the subject of his most earnest prayers and the enjoyment of it the very pinnacle of his glory, yet he was in all things a practical man, especially in religion. His house was a house of prayer. The faith of Christ sanctified his heart and life and he consecrated all to God in the habit of daily prayer. This believing prayer was not lost. He had the great pleasure of seeing eleven of his children profess the religion of Christ and united with the Baptist Church. He saw a beauty in the ways of Zion, and well understood God's design in church fellowship and gospel ordinances. His discerning mind perceived that this place was destined to become populous, both from its situation on the margin of the River Avon, as well as from the industry and enterprising character of the people. He felt therefore anxious that a church should be established in this place. Accordingly it became the subject of conversation and a requisition for dismission for this purpose was signed by twenty members and presented to the Church at Windsor, then under the care of Rev. Richard McLearn. A church of twenty-one members was organized by Rev. Mr. McLearn, on the 13th of January, 1830. At that time the church made choice of Mr. Holmes to the office of Deacon, to which he was set apart by prayer and laying on of hands according to apostolic order—the duties of which he faithfully discharged to the end.

In his latter moments, when reviewing his life and calling to remembrance the goodness and mercy of God to him, amid still his losses and the trials of life which had fallen to his lot, his grateful and holy soul unable to suppress the depth of his emotion broke out in sweet strains of praise to God for the wisdom of his ways and the supply of his grace which had been given him. He also