

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

"Thy vows are upon me, O God." "Vow and pay unto the Lord your God."

Yes, *vow*. This is a Divine command, therefore Divinely authoritative and just. But we, as professing Christians, have, "in the presence of the great all-seeing and most glorious God, and before angels and men, given up ourselves to the Lord Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and avouched Him to be our God, our Father, our Saviour, and our Leader, and received him as our portion forever. We have given up ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and engaged to adhere to him as the Head of his people in the covenant of grace, and rely on him as our Prophet, Priest, and King, to bring us to eternal blessedness. We have acknowledged our everlasting and indispensable obligations to glorify God, by living a holy, righteous, and godly life in this present world, in all our several places and relations; and have engaged, by the assistance of the Divine Spirit, to improve our time, strength, talents, and advantages, to his glory and the good of our fellow-men."

The vows of God are then upon us; and they are to be renewed and enlarged every day. The obligations under which we have thus voluntarily bound ourselves, are of the most awfully solemn character. We are thoroughly committed; there is no discharge from these obligations. If Christians, we desire no discharge.

Yet there are in our churches those who seem gravely to question whether the fact of church-membership involves any obligations; who practically ignore the fact altogether; who appear to think because they are Baptists, it is a matter entirely at their own option, whether or not they shall subscribe at all towards the support of the Gospel at home or abroad, or towards the support of our public institutions of learning.

A matter at our option? when the teachings of God's Word—our Directory—are so unmistakable on these points. A matter at our option? when, although independent of merely human control as we profess ourselves to be, we have, in solemn covenant once for all, given ourselves over to the Lord and to each other, rejoicing in the fact that we are "not our own," but are "bought" by the precious blood of Christ; and henceforth, as we "have received the gift, even so" we are to "minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Verily such independence is pseudo-Baptist independence.

There are others amongst us who utterly ignore the New Testament injunction,—“Upon the first day of the week” (I like this part of it) “let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.” If they do not verbally and boldly set aside this Pauline command, they deny its divine authority *practically* by attempting to cloak the fact that God has prospered and is prospering them.

But these are not the worst aspects of the fearful looseness now existing amongst us in regard to this matter. There is a third disgrace that needs to be wiped off from us. The number of those who unblushingly disclaim the obligations resting on them as covenant members of Christ's church, is perhaps small. It is to be hoped there are few who do not, in word, acknowledge the force of the New Testament injunction just alluded to. But it is a lamentably palpable fact that there are in our churches not a few with whom these acknowledgements are verbal admissions only; who "vow," but do not "pay."

I am not talking at random in making these assertions. Some members of our churches—here and there whole churches—come nobly up to duty. Their subscriptions to the Pastor's salary are pledged, and paid quarterly; appeals to them for benevolent objects, for our Institutions, are cheerfully and liberally responded to. But how is it with the majority of our church-members? Do they act out even "the golden rule"? Do they see to it that the Pastor and family are as comfortable as themselves? Nay more, as the demands upon his resources are greater, do they promptly contribute their part towards making his supply equal to the demand? How much of their property do they yearly lend to the Lord in other ways?

Is not Paul's complaint too applicable to us,—“All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's”? While he enjoins in another place,—“Let no one seek his own, but every one another's welfare.” Where amongst us, except in a few instances, is exhibited the self-denial spirit of the Gospel? Where the evidences of a "new creation," "old things passed away, all things become new"? Where is the line of demarcation in this matter of subscribing and paying, between us and the world?

The Divine Teacher says, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." But there are in our churches practical unbelievers, yes, unbelievers of these words of Jesus; actually holding on to the world with both hands, yet professing to be Christ's servants; embezzlers of the Lord's money, hugging it to their bosoms with a death-grasp when His claims are urged; making religion altogether a secondary, subordinate thing, discharging every other kind of obligation before Christian obligation, leaving the subscription to the Pastor's salary—if any thing has been subscribed—to be paid on the last day of the year rather than on the first, and treating other pledges of this character in the same or worse manner.

How is it my brethren (for I hope you are a brethren?) Have you not forgotten those words of Divine authority—"The laborer is worthy of his hire." "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel?" Have you not forgotten the words of Jesus—"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the last of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me?" Have you not forgotten that the promises you have thus made, have been made to the Lord, who says in his Word—"Vow and pay unto the Lord your God?"

Do you believe God's Word of Truth? "God loveth a cheerful giver." Are you "afraid to make Him your banker?" "Bring ye all the tithes unto the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Have you put his Word on trial? That Word says—"The liberal soul deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall stand. He who soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully. He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed. They shall prosper that love Zion."

Oh how little faith there is on the earth. A regard to our temporal welfare should make us liberal; and if we believed God and desired as we ought, all the blessings He bestows on the "cheerful giver," there would be forthcoming from us abundant contributions for our private charities and more public enterprises. How strange we cannot rely on the promises and trust in the providence of God. He cannot be served for nought,—nor can we withhold our services with impunity—while the promise and the threatening stand—"Them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." Religion does not consist simply in doing and giving, but the active graces form a much larger part than many of us are willing to allow. They are an inseparable accompaniment of salvation. Without a constant aim at a right discharge of all the benevolent duties of religion, no one deserves the name of Christian.

How different with some of us is the manner of given from that of the Israelites in Moses' time; an instance of which is recorded in Numbers vii: 1-9. One writer thus comments on that passage. "There is no doubt but these oxen were excellent, strong to labor, and well trained; and that the wagons were of the best materials and workmanship. We know some who, if they could not have escaped giving, would have looked out the leanest beast, and the least valued vehicle they had. And we know the complaint brought by God himself against the Jews in the days of Malachi: "Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it; and ye have snuffed at it; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering; should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord. But cursed be the deceiver, who hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen. But we may fully presume that these pious donors presented what they deemed the best they had. And we are sure they gave readily; for they did it the very day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it." They gave as soon as the things were wanted; yea, before they were wanted, in order to be in readiness. Here was no hanging back, hoping the offering might be dispensed with; or to see what others did first, to save as much as possible for their pocket, without losing their credit. They required no excitement, no sermon full of motives from Moses or Aaron to work upon their feelings—They were volunteers; self-moved; they chose to be examples rather than followers. "God loveth a cheerful giver."

We profess to be "Jews inwardly." But there is cause to fear some of us can claim "circumcision in the letter" only, "not that of the heart, in the spirit, and bear a closer resemblance to the Jews of the days of Malachi, than to the Israelites of Moses' time.

To come to facts, how is it with us this year, in our more private and in our denominational interests? Are our Pastors' salaries paid? I know more Pastors than one whose salaries have not been nearly made up. I am acquainted with one case in which the pledges of the church have without the knowledge of the Pastor, this year fallen much below the stipulated amount, and these—although the salary was to be paid quarterly—not yet half fulfilled. The Pastor must consequently be suffering trying embarrassment.

Have our pledges to Acadia College been any better fulfilled? No wonder the Agent, in a recent letter in the Messenger, announced only the first payment to the "Edward Manning" Professorship. Probably he has learned, from painful experience, that it is wise to make no account of promises except when fulfilled.

Ask the Agent if the sums pledged to meet the current expenses for last year have been half paid,—rather let us ask our own consciences.

It is vain, worse than vain, it is sinful, to urge as an adequate cause of all this deficiency "the hard times." Have we been jealous of the cause of God during these "hard times"? have we consulted Zion's welfare as much as our own private interests, or our reputation with the world? Have not other debts been paid. I repeat it, has not money passed through our hands for other purposes? And have we denied ourselves of luxuries? have we "guarded, not only against needless buying, but heedless spending"—the true way of enlarging the capacity for beneficence." I have before me an account of Karen Christians of Burmah which may well crimson with the blush of shame our faces. The Missionary, Dr. Mason, says of them; "Though it has been a year of famine for many, the subscriptions to the Mission Society have increased fifty per cent. A large proportion of the congregation have built new and more substantial chapels. The church with which we met has a large teak chapel nearly completed, on which they have expended more than seven hundred rupees (half-dollars) for sawing timber and carpenters' work. Another church raised its subscription more than fifty per cent, though it expended four hundred rupees for hired labor on a new chapel, and has had an insufficient harvest. Thus neither hard times, nor building new meeting houses at home prevents them from increasing their efforts abroad." Ah, my brethren, the sad contrast only too apparent among us, is shameful in the last degree. Regarding our actual voluntary christian pledges as made between man and man, it is too mild a way of speaking of them to say that a failure in fulfilling them is—dishonesty. Their violation is wanting only in the letter, of perjury. But taking them in their much higher and true sense, as made to the Lord, and contrasting the solemn character of our obligations to Him, surely, if we belie our word, we shall by no means escape with impunity.

It is greatly to be feared that that solemn "Declaration of the Faith, Practice, and Covenant" of the Baptist churches of Nova Scotia"—which "declaration" is naught more nor less than a systematized abstract of New Testament truths—and to which we have all at least once in our lives yielded assent, is at the present time sadly disregarded and forgotten amongst us.

How reads one of its articles? "There is a mutual obligation between minister and people: the former, to administer in things religious and spiritual, according to the gifts God has given; the latter, to communicate of their temporal or worldly substance for his comfort and support, and that by an equality, as nearly as can be ascertained, that one may not be burthened and another eased. But this is not to be effected by force or compulsion, or by the sword of civil power; but it is to be a free-will offering, agreeably to the Scriptures of truth. And every member deficient in this matter ought to be disciplined by gospel rule, as for any other breach of covenant, or neglect of performing Christian duty. 2 Cor. 8: 12-14, Luke 10: 7, Rom. 15: 27, 1 Cor. 9: 1-14, Gal. 6: 6." What has become of the last clause of this article? Has it fallen out of the pamphlet or of the New Testament?

The knife, then, dipped in love, needs to be applied to the corners of our churches, aye to cut pieces out of the interior, in some cases from the very core. What! say a member cannot be required to subscribe "as God has prospered him" toward the support of the Gospel and our benevolent enterprises? Verily this is a strange sort of freedom or voluntariness—nowhere in the Divine law-book authorized. If a christian and a church-member I am al-

ready pledged twice over. I took the vows of God upon me when I gave myself to Him, and on being baptized and uniting with the church of Christ I solemnly renewed and ratified them. Henceforth I am committed to "every good word and work:" the obligation is involved in my church-membership. And if I at any time ignore their obligation and persist in disregarding it, my brethren have a right—they are bound—to exclude me from their fellowship. The case, if I understand the words of our covenant, is equally palpable and the duty of the church as clear in ordinary circumstances, where a brother neglects month after month to pay his subscription—voluntary if he prefers so to call it. How is it, brethren? If action should not be taken, what consistency was there in the insertion of that clause of the Covenant which reads—"promising to watch against disregarding promises and not fulfilling engagements?"

Need the writer of the foregoing add that he does not in any measure regard himself in a position to say—"Stand by thyself come not near to me, for I am holier than thou?" He encourages himself with little feeling of self-complacency in this matter. The knife of discipline, faithfully applied, would perhaps cut him off. But "let God be true," and His cause honored. I have written these things with sorrow, not with satisfaction; in the earnest hope we may by prayerful examination all be led to the resolution to discharge our obligations to God's cause in nearer conformity to the Bible-standard; and so—instead of disgracing—"adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

There have been during the past year in different parts of the Province gracious and powerful Revivals of religion; in these our churches have largely shared. For all the blessings which have attended and followed these "times of refreshing" our hearts should be filled with rejoicing. May the coming year witness more abundant outpourings of the Holy Spirit; and may these reasons usher in more of that "pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father"—the essence of which is—"to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world."

A far higher-toned piety is the desideratum of to-day. There is needed in our churches a religion less spasmodic, more fruit-bearing; less selfish, more soul-expanded and expanding. We need a more generally operative faith; we need a more conscientious, God-fearing, honoring religion; in a word, more of Christian character, less of impulse, more of principle. May these things form no small part of the burden of our prayers.

A CHURCH-MEMBER.

Cornwallis, Dec. 10th, 1859.

For the Christian Messenger.

"Weston," Cornwallis.

A Public Meeting was held, pursuant to notice previously given in a section of Western Cornwallis, on the 16th inst, for the purpose of naming the District. Mr. William H. Skinner was chosen Chairman, and Mr. Charles E. Sanford, Secretary.

On motion of Mr. William H. Chute, seconded by Mr. George H. Dimock.

Resolved—That the bounds of the District be determined. On motion of Mr. George H. Dimock, seconded by Mr. Jonathan D. Sanford.

Resolved—That the bounds be as follows:—Commencing at the Town line on the West, and running East to the bounds of Somerset, thence South to Berwick bounds, thence West by the Cariboo Bog to the Town line, thence North including half the cross roads.

On motion of Mr. Jonathan D. Sanford, seconded by Mr. William H. Chute.

Resolved—That this District of Cornwallis be named, and henceforth designated, WESTON.

On motion of Mr. Francis P. Dimock, seconded by Mr. Wm. Albert Skianer.

Resolved—That copies of the proceedings of this Meeting be forwarded for insertion in the Christian Messenger, and the Wesleyan, with a request that other papers will please copy.

(Signed) WILLIAM H. SKINNER, Chairman.

CHARLES E. SANFORD, Secretary.

Weston, Cornwallis, Dec. 15th, 1859.

Provincial Wesleyan please copy.

An Irish newscarrrier, (says *The Builder*), who sometimes courts the Muses, has given his idea of the church-building taste of the people of America in the following lines, which contain more truth than poetry:

"They put up a front to the street,
Like old Westminster Abbey;
But thin they think to cheat the Lord,
And build the back part shabby."

EXPENSIVE LAUGH.—A woman was fined ten dollars with costs, at Memphis, Tennessee, for disturbing a church by laughing and refusing to stop her merriment.