

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, WEDNESDAY, JULY 6, 1859.

WHOLE SERIES.
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Poetry.

The History of Life.

I saw an infant in its mother's arms,
And left it sleeping;
Years passed—I saw a girl with woman's charms,
In sorrow weeping.
Years passed—I saw a mother with her child,
And o'er it languish;
Years brought me back—yet through her tears
she smiled,
In deeper anguish.
I left her—years had vanished—I returned,
And stood before her;
A lamp beside the childless widow burned—
Grief's mantle o'er her.
In tears I found her whom I left in tears.
On God relying;
And I returned again in after years,
And found her dying.
An infant first and then a maiden fair—
A wife—a mother—
And then a childless widow in despair—
Thus met a brother.
And thus we meet on earth and thus we part,
To meet, oh never!
Till death beholds the spirit leave the heart,
To live forever.

U. S. Gazette, 1853.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Introductory Sermon

Preached before the Western Baptist Association held in Upper Wilmot, N. S. on Monday, June 13th 1859, by the Rev. George Armstrong, and now published by request of that body.

"Walk about Zion, go round about her; tell the towers thereof; mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following," Ps. xlviii. 12-13.

SUBJECT:—A Survey of our Zion; or the strength and weakness of the Baptist Denomination in Nova Scotia, the cause of the latter, and its remedy.

(Concluded.)

5th. Another source of our weakness lies, we apprehend, in the abuse of our doctrine of Church independency. The Baptists are and ever have been, strong believers in, and advocates of Independence. We allow no Pope, no Bishop, no Church, no Conference, no Association, and no Political organizations to dictate to, and control us as churches. Some seem to have taken this as equivalent to being cut loose from all responsibility, and that they were under no obligation to regard the relations, the rights, the feelings or the advice of others; or that they were not bound to act in concert with their brethren in furthering the cause of God. This we regard an abuse and perversion of the doctrine. Such persons seem to forget that the church is made independent of all foreign and extraneous ecclesiastical dictation and control, in order that she should be more dependent on her Divine Head, and feel more deeply her responsibility to act in conformity to his laws, and under the guidance of his Holy Spirit. Independence is not equivalent to irresponsibility, and it is a great mistake so to view it. Let us hold fast to independency, but beware of abusing it.

6th. Allow me to state my conviction—that Political differences also have helped to weaken us and our influence spiritually, as a Denomination. An abatement of confidence, union, and co-operation has in some cases been the sad result; nay in a few instances, it is feared, a total alienation has been produced. We do not believe that mere political difference is necessarily an evil among the members of a church, or in a state; but the misunderstanding, misrepresentation, disaffection, bitterness, or perhaps even violence of party feeling that sometimes unhappily accompany such differences on both sides, invariably work injury to the spiritual interests of the church. And it is in this view of the case we refer to the matter here. We do not subscribe to the sentiment that Christian men ought

to take no part in politics. We believe they ought; and that they are held accountable before God for their action, and the influence they exert in this matter, as well as everything else they do. Nor do we sympathize with those who maintain that a minister of the Gospel ought to take no interest in politics. A minister who professes to take no interest in a matter so important, and that touches and effects society on every side—that effects his own church and congregation—nay, himself and his family, is either lacking in mental power to perceive the relations and bearing of Civil Society, and the nature of those influences by which it is controlled, and the social condition of men determined; or is wanting in moral courage and honesty to declare his convictions or show his preference. Questions relating to the management of public affairs in our province having divided the people into two parties, have also unfortunately become the occasion of dividing to some extent our Denomination. This is to be regretted, but it seemed, in the state of things, unavoidable. Our enemies, to further their own particular ends, have, under specious professions, endeavoured to disunite us, and have partially succeeded, while at the same time they scarcely conceal their contempt for the Baptist Denomination and their principles. Yet some perceive it not; nay, help on the enemy.

These seem to be the things that operate to cause the weakness to which it has been our painful duty to refer.

Let us now present the Remedy.

1st. We should bring out with distinctness and frequency the great fundamental principles of the Gospel—the doctrines of grace in their length, and breadth, fulness, particularity, and glory. To make strong men there must be strong meat, at the right time, and in proper quantity. Baptists need not fear to speak out plainly the truth,—the whole truth;—they are pledged to do so. The pulpit should present with perspicuity, firmness, faithfulness and love, the principles we hold as contained in the Gospel, all of which we regard as requisite to the complete triumph of the truth, and the full development of the Kingdom of Christ on earth. The press is a mighty auxiliary in the cause of the gospel and should be more extensively employed by us a people. Colportage too should be made to contribute its aid to the extension of our cause.

2nd. The cultivation of a deep, earnest, living piety,—one fully conformed to the scriptural standard and example. Such a piety is essential to spiritual power in the ministry and the church, and to enlarged success in bringing sinners to Christ. Strong faith in the Saviour, ardent love to God and his children, denial of self, and devotion to Christ would remove much of the evil under which we suffer, and help us to attain an elevated, safe, and useful position on the heights of Zion. Great and continued success would be the happy result.

3rd. The faithful enforcement of Gospel discipline upon offenders, who, notwithstanding the use of Scriptural means for their recovery, will not be reclaimed. This is highly necessary. No church can long be pure and healthy where offences are allowed to go uncorrected, perhaps unnoticed, or the offenders unreprieved.

4th. All that truth, righteousness, and consistency with our principles require or admit, should be done in order to cultivate and establish Union throughout our Denomination in this Province. The scriptures enjoin union in the church. See Rom. xv. 6. 1 Cor. i. 10. Phil. ii. 2, 3. We should act together in all matters touching the great interests of the Gospel and the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom in the world; and not only so, but we should endeavour to act together in respect to the movements that bear on the great questions of Civil and religious liberty. Union is strength. We shall never be as strong in this province as we might and ought to be, till we become more united in our action, and in the use we make of our influence. Baptists above all people should be united among themselves; it is the policy and for the interest of our enemies to disunite us.

Let us not be so unwise as to weaken ourselves. Baptists have been proscribed on account of their conscientious, and, as they believe Scripture—derived principles; but never have they proscribed any man or class of men for his or their religious sentiments. Nay, we are now a proscribed people in certain quarters. The Baptists have been in former ages, and are now as a body, the truest and most consistent friends and advocates of liberty, civil and religious. No true and consistent Baptist can knowingly and deliberately take a course, subversive of a principle so closely identified with the system he professes to receive, and which is essential to the integrity of that church organization with which he is connected, and which he loves.

In this province we have suffered as a Denomination, because in relation to Public Matters, and movements connected with the interests of our Body, we have allowed ourselves to become divided; and some we fear have drifted away from Baptist ground and principles, showing a disposition to make their religion, and the interests of their Denomination succumb, and do homage to their politics. Such conduct we abhor in any professor of religion. If brethren differ politically, why should they not endeavour to maintain the cause of God in that from which they both profess to believe, accords most nearly with the doctrines, laws, and example of the Divine Teacher, and his Apostles? Why should either forsake his own church, and denomination, or withhold his aid from mere party political considerations?

It is to be hoped we will learn wisdom from the past. We ought to be able to distinguish our friends from our enemies. We ought not to forsake or pull down our own men; at least, not till others more worthy of our confidence and respect, and sympathy present themselves. Those members of our Denomination in prominent positions who had the moral courage, the love of truth, and the self-denial, to sever their connexion with a highly respectable and influential Denomination, and to be baptized, and join ours, and that too, before Baptists were numerous or had become popular in this province, and before any provincial government showed them respect, or politician courted their favour, and who have since in many ways endeavoured to serve the cause we love, ought not to be reckoned as enemies, and as if they had no place in our Zion.

They are worthy of being recognized as brethren, and treated as having claims to our confidence and support. Nor ought we too readily to lend our ears and our regard to those who misrepresent their actions, and misjudge their motives.

The cry raised against political combinations, though ostensibly directed against Popery, is, we believe, used in many cases for mere party purposes, without any regard to religion, and is in some instances, prompted more by a dislike to the Baptists than by any particular dread of Roman ascendancy. This is not the only ascendancy we ought to fear. When we consider that over twenty members belonging to one Denomination in this province are expected soon to occupy the responsible and influential position of Legislators; and when we reflect that this number is largely in excess of what it is entitled to have, according to the population it represents, we have some reason to apprehend the ascendancy of that Denomination as a result not distant, unless a timely check be employed by our own, as well as by other Denominations.

Let us be united in love to our Lord,—to each other,—to our principles,—to our Denomination and its Institutions, and act accordingly, and as far as possible, endeavour to act together in all movements that relate to Public affairs. This is the way to become strong,—to advance the cause of Truth,—to make our influence felt and ourselves respected, and to obtain that amount of consideration from those who are in power, which our numbers entitle us to expect, and which would be accorded to us as a Denomination, if we were more united.

5th. We should seek a continuation and

extension of revival influences in our churches and congregations. This is indispensable to our strength, progress and preservation. We should pray much that the Holy Spirit may abide with us and work mightily and effectually among us. We shall thus be enabled to maintain the ground already won, and by means of the spiritual weapons we shall be made capable of wielding, we shall be in a condition to operate aggressively and successfully against the forces of Sin, Satan and Anti-Christ. Let us as churches and ministers labour, as in the presence of God, and under the eye of our Master, to win souls to Christ, and we shall be greatly blessed. Thus shall we become stronger in grace, influence and numbers.

It is not enough, my brethren, that our zeal, faithfulness and activity equal that of other Denominations: we ought to be greatly in advance of them in spirituality and purity as churches.

1st. Because we recognize the spiritual element as necessary to qualify persons for the ordinances of the Gospel, and for membership in the church of Christ. This no other Denomination does; or at least not to the same extent.

2nd. Because of our professions. We profess unreserved and unwavering allegiance to Christ, his doctrine and laws, independently of any aid or authority from Tradition or human enactments. None but Baptists do this truly, or at least, consistently.

3rd. Because of our Antiquity. We have a noble pedigree. We look back to our origin in the ministry of John the Baptist, in the teaching, authority and example of our blessed Lord and Saviour, and his Apostles. We find our peculiar principles in the New Testament, and can trace them in the period immediately succeeding the close of the Sacred Canon. Those who assign our origin to the sixteenth century when the great Protestant sects arose, misinterpret or pervert the facts and teaching of the New Testament, and also of early Christian History.

4th. The prospects of the future for our Denomination. The time is fast approaching when our principles will be better understood, be much more extensively embraced, and be held in greater veneration than they are now. There is a glorious future for the Baptists. Their power is felt in the world—the East and the West afford evidence of their faith, zeal, and labours in evangelization and translation, and also of their success. Many of the most able and candid of other Denominations have in some form, and to some extent done homage to Baptist principles, by acknowledging their scriptural correctness, and their accordance with Christian Antiquity. We may well look forward with hope to the future, and labour earnestly for the extension of those principles to the truth of which there are so many witnesses, and which we are assured will triumph in proportion as the pure and unadulterated gospel of Christ is fully embraced, loved and obeyed by Christians.

In this province we have a goodly heritage. We have near fifteen thousand communicants in our churches, with four or five times that number attached to us in sentiment, and who prefer to attend our ministrations. Our province affords a wide field, inviting labour and easy of access; let us in humble dependence on Divine grace, declare the truth faithfully and in love, and labour to win sinners to Christ, and build up ourselves in our most holy faith; thus shall we glorify God, do good in our generation, and obtain enlarged and growing success.

Faith in God,—fearlessness and faithfulness in proclaiming the truth, and carrying it out,—confidence in each other,—union in effort, and enlarged liberality to sustain the cause of the Redeemer in connexion with our Denomination, are especially demanded of us now. Let us respond to the call duty makes on us—let us hear our Master say—"be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," and let us endeavour to repair, and strengthen the walls of our Zion, to multiply true converts, and to edify ourselves in love, so