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Nova Scotia Church History,

For the Christian Messenger.

The Baptists of Nova Scotia.

PERIOD VI.

From A. D. 1828 to A. D. 1833.

LETTER XLIV.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE EDUCATION SOCIETY.—OPENING OF THE ACADEMY—MR. CHAPIN—REV. J. PRYOR—ERECTION OF BUILDINGS—EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORTS—THE COLLEGE ANTICIPATED.

My Young Friend,

You have already been informed that an Academical Institution was planned in 1828, and that the project was cordially adopted by the Association at its meeting that year. The Executive Committee then appointed prosecuted their labours with great energy. Wolfville was selected as the location of the Academy, and a tract of land admirably situated for the purpose, comprising fifty acres of upland and fourteen acres of dyke land, with some small buildings on it, was purchased of the late Mr. James Graham, for the sum of £550. The principal building was repaired and fitted up for a school house, and the services of Mr. Asahel Chapin, of Amherst College, Mass, were engaged for one year. The Institution was opened in March, 1829. At the meeting of the Association in June following it was reported that about fifty pupils were in attendance, "with every prospect of a rapid increase in numbers." A primary school was shortly afterwards attached to it, "for the instruction of children in the vicinity."

Mr. Chapin was a very acceptable and successful teacher. He "applied himself to the duties and interests of the Institution with the most assiduous attention, and conciliated the esteem and affection of all ranks of society." At the expiration of the term for which he was engaged he returned to the United States, to pursue his theological studies, and was succeeded by the Rev. John Pryor, A. M. Mr. Pryor was a graduate of King's College, Windsor, and was studying at the Theological Institution, Newton, Mass., when he was invited to take charge of the Academy. In reference to this appointment the Committee observe, in their second Report—

"Having every confidence in Mr. Pryor's fitness for the situation he has consented to occupy, although at the sacrifice of completing his intended course of studies, and feeling that he deeply identifies the all important interests of religion and knowledge in this his native Province, with his own, we would commend his and our future success to the prayers and earnest exertions of the Society and friends of the Institution."

The small buildings in which the Academy was commenced soon proved inadequate and inconvenient. Encouraged by the success they had met with the Committee resolved to act vigorously, and to deserve the confidence of the denomination by venturing on it. They reported in 1831 that they had "erected a suitable building for an Academy on the farm purchased by them; and which will afford ample accommodations for the purpose of tuition." It cost about £1000.

Accommodation for boarders was still needed, but it was not judged prudent to risk any further outlay, and arrangements were made for the establishment of a boarding house in the village, where the students were comfortably provided for at a reasonable rate.

The report for 1832 states that "under Mr. Pryor's auspices the Academy continues to support the character which the Committee anticipated from the commencement," and that the Principal is most ably and efficiently aided by Mr. Thomas Soley, a native of this province, and educated within it." That document contains some observations on the subject of ministerial education which may not be unprofitably reproduced.

"However important the object of general education, and your Committee highly appreciate its importance, as a necessary basis of both civil and religious liberty, as well as a most powerful handmaid to the arguments of Christian Truth, they nevertheless deem the education of religious teachers to be the most important part of that general object. They are of opinion that piety must take the lead in literature, must throw herself boldly on the same arena, and effect a union of their efforts,

before either will produce all their genuine influence on society. It is therefore with peculiar pleasure that they can announce a commencement in the department of pious scholars, being candidates for the Christian Ministry, or actually engaged in it; which beginning, although small, they are happy to say is of a character highly encouraging and satisfactory. They have the most pleasing assurance of the piety and promising talents of their little class of *students for the ministry*.

Four are now steadily pursuing a course of study. Two more occasionally visit the institution for several weeks at a time, being unable to quit permanently the stations of active ministerial labour into which the pressing wants of this country have prematurely driven them. Your Committee have likewise a promise of a yet greater number. These all receive tuition gratuitously—two are beneficiaries of your society to a greater extent."

"In view, especially, of the urgent religious wants of these several provinces, your Committee feel themselves particularly impelled to address, through this report, the young persons who are beginning to feel their way into the Christian ministry. They would beseech them not to be deceived by supposing that society is in the same state it was forty years ago; that because their aged fathers in the Gospel began with few advantages, their juniors, without any previous study, can be competent to enter on their labours, and fill the stations of those, who have grown grey in ministerial exertions and experience. They exhort them to remember, that those whom, in the order of nature, they may expect to succeed, have for many years, if not by a regular education, yet, from every source within their reach, been acquiring information; have, perhaps, in many instances, gone far beyond their people in knowledge; but that now, obviously, society is making new and rapid advances with the general increase of schools and education in the country. They would remind them of the testimony, so strongly and candidly given, frequently, in their hearing, by their experienced seniors, of the extreme importance of mental cultivation; and, however highly useful, often, the labours of very unlettered men—however worthy of cordial affection and respect such brethren in the Lord's work—and sad, and ominous to the Church, would be the day when the labours of modest and pious men should ever come to be despised, merely because they were not learned—yet, they beg the youthful candidates for ministerial service to believe it is no less certain, that there are stations, and will be many more, where it is of vast importance to place labourers uniting *education and piety*.

"And they appeal to modest and ingenious young men, who sincerely desire to preach to their dying fellow sinners 'the glad tidings of great joy,' whether, as they survey the extensive regions around them, most of which are rapidly filling up with the tide of human life; where, are men possessing intelligence, acuteness, and in some instances, a good degree of learning, employed, alas! too often in opposition to evangelical truth; they do not feel oftentimes their hearts shrinking away from the field, as one for which they are utterly unqualified? And at such moments, they would appeal to their consciences, whether so far as mental culture may aid in qualifying for such a work, they are not in some degree guilty, if, with the means in their hands, they neglect that qualification?"

"Your Committee are far from desiring to encourage a sinful timidity; they wish every man to be ready, at all times, to bear before *Kings and Princes* the testimony of Jesus; but their aim, at present, is at the duty of *removing positive obstructions*—the want of knowledge is often found to be such; and when this is the case it ought, if possible, to be removed.

"Your Committee, however, fearing that the tenor of many of their preceding remarks may be misunderstood, desire most explicitly to state, that they strongly reject the idea that religion cannot advance without learning; that the Almighty is *restricted* to the use of this means; or to assert that he may not choose to employ some other means—especially significant of his *sovereignty*, for the final triumph of the Cross. Christianity originally made mighty progress, with the aid of very little human knowledge—supported however

by various miraculous gifts. They know, that now, if God please, He can make the humblest and most uncultivated individual the vehicle of truth to the great men of the earth; and that oftentimes in particular instances, more attention has been attracted to the message from the very obscurity of the messenger. They need only look around at these Provinces, and the numerous churches which the Lord has mercifully raised by labourers on whom science had lavished no superfluous smiles, for a sermon on this subject—But after the most ample concessions to this point most cheerfully proffered, your Committee cannot but see the *duty* of men as beings *accountable for the use of means* placed within their reach, to remain as imperative as ever—They see literature, or learning, or education, or mental improvement, or whatever other term may be preferred as expressing useful knowledge, actually, and to a great extent, sanctioned in the Providence of God, as a means that has undeniably tended to the extension of his Kingdom; unless it can be believed that no benefit has resulted to the church from the cultivated minds of Paul of Tarsus, and Apollos of Alexandria, and Luther, and Calvin, and Latimer, and Ridley, and Henry, and Usher, and Baxter, and Martyn, and Judson, and a thousand others.

"They no where see benefits *equally extensive*, and in the *same ranks* of life, resulting from the labours of men very deficient in knowledge, except when sustained with miraculous powers and gifts, or in other words, into whom knowledge was in fact infused by the immediate interposition of the hand of God—and therefore they find themselves brought to this alternative; either, that preachers as well as private Christians must wait for a miracle to give them preternatural knowledge; or they must toil for ordinary cultivation, as faithful servants of Christ—Either they must expect their limited knowledge to be made "as the hammer and the fire," producing effects, by none of God's *ordinary* laws connected with limited knowledge, or by meditating on the things of God, and "giving themselves wholly" to them, they are, as preachers, to "light their lamp," and "gird their loins," while in this accommodated sense they "wait the coming of the Lord"—His coming in the power of the Holy Ghost. They cannot but see that "the things of God" embrace a wide circle of knowledge—that in fact all useful learning is from Him [Prov. 8; 12] and that therefore those who having the means voluntarily neglect that useful learning, especially so much of it as stands nearly related with the truths of the Bible—the business of preaching—the work of the Gospel—omit a means which is likely to be blessed in the furtherance of Truth."

"But if there be any measure of guilt in this neglect, may it not lie, your Committee would ask, with those who do not furnish the means to others who are willing to use them—with those churches and congregations, who possessing the ability, have not brought up to the Temple of God this offering which his service demands? and your Committee would now turn to the members and friends of this Society, and, through you, to all who profess in these Provinces, a friendly regard to the Gospel of Christ, and respectfully, but solemnly, call on all, without backwardness, to provide suitable labourers, the Lord first calling them to their work, to fill the varied field before you, and not to restrict them to a mere childish *smattering* of knowledge."

The Report for 1833 informs the Society, that "the establishment of a boarding house, under the eye of the preceptors, by affording comfortable accommodations at a low rate, has had the anticipated effect of considerably increasing the number of scholars, so that since the last report there have always been from fifty to sixty six young persons of different ages receiving their education at the Horton Seminary; and while there has been no remission of the most careful attention to the morals of the scholars, and a strict enforcement of the most Christian and pious principles in governing them, it is pleasing to observe, that, by judicious management and entire freedom from all mere sectarian influence, confidence has been given to persons of various religious denominations to seek here an education for their children. In the list

of scholars during the past year appear Methodists, Presbyterians, Churchmen, and Catholics, as well as Baptists." The Committee add, that they were "called with regret to part with the valuable assistant teacher, Mr. Soley," who was succeeded by Mr. Borden.

No report was published in 1834. Next year the Committee reported that "in 1833 the hired boarding house not having been found sufficiently commodious, the Committee felt themselves called on to use their utmost efforts to attempt the erection of a suitable Boarding House on the premises, and accordingly sought subscriptions to that object, and having obtained a sufficient amount to justify the undertaking, the present Boarding House was commenced in the autumn of that year. The projected building was to contain suitable apartments for the Principal and his family, as well as for the Assistant Teacher and the Steward of the Establishment, and afford accommodation for at least 50 scholars. All which has now been completed at an expense of about £1200.

It was further stated that "the Rev. Mr. Pryor, the Principal, continues to discharge his duties with unwearied assiduity, and has received very competent assistance during the past year, from two young gentlemen who have obtained their education at this Seminary; and the government of the institution has continued to be as originally projected, "mild and paternal without laxity, and religious without sectarianism," all denominations being equally admitted to its advantages." Five students were then pursuing their studies in the Institution, preparatory to the work of the ministry.

Encouraging statements of progress were contained in the reports for the year 1836, 1837, and 1838. The Academy was attended by "large and thriving classes," and "the system of boarding in the establishment" proved exceedingly beneficial." The assistant teacher who had been successively employed were Messrs. Laird, E. Blanchard, and Charles Randall.

It was a very successful experiment. That it should awaken desire and excite higher hopes was to be expected. The importance of making enlarged provision for the instruction of students had been felt for several years. In 1836, the Committee said—"the Seminary at Horton is not, even yet, such an Institution as the present wants of the country justify them in seeking to make it"; and they added, that "not only the Baptist denomination, but all the friends of a liberal and practical education, and of Evangelical Truth, ought to feel themselves deeply interested in the establishment of a seminary in which the public wants in these respects shall be adequately supplied—a seminary which shall become so fully possessed of the highest literary merit, as to deserve every immunity that the law can grant to chartered institutions." In 1837 they informed their constituents that they were engaged in correspondence with reference to the appointment of a mathematical professor. The wants of the Institution in a theological point of view, and the necessity of taking steps to supply them were thus forcibly set forth in the report for that year:—

"It is quite apparent that the Lord is directing our pious youth to Horton as the means by which they will in future ordinarily seek an enlarged qualification for ministerial labour; their numbers are already considerable, and will doubtless increase; soon they will need the guidance of an instructor peculiarly devoted to them; nay even now some of them begin to feel this deficiency. They must require a knowledge of the Hebrew language; a critical acquaintance with the correct interpretation of the Bible; enlarged information on ecclesiastical history, on Jewish antiquities and oriental customs; and on the philosophy of the human mind and heart; all this is work enough, and more than enough for one man. To this department it would be unadvisable to devote any portion of the Provincial allowance, and to this therefore we as Baptists are especially called to contribute. We ought to bear in mind that unless the same means are provided for mental cultivation in these departments which may be obtained elsewhere at no great expense, it will be impossible for us to retain amongst us our own native youth. It is very easy for those who are ignorant of such subjects to say all