

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit.

NEW SERIES:
Vol. X, No. 11.

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 1865.

WHOLE SERIES:
Vol. XXIX, No. 11.

Religious.

The Unity of the Spirit.

The Letter of the Rev. G. E. W. Morris in our last issue, closed with a paragraph deploring the divisions in the church, and praying that all who profess and call themselves christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith, in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and righteousness of life.

This desire we believe was most sincerely felt by our respected friend, and we also believe that there are many who join most fervently in that prayer; whilst there are others, not a few, who would not wish for any greater amount of unity than could be secured by all other churches being absorbed into theirs.

Seeing that a sermon of Mr. Spurgeon's is the matter in controversy, it may not be inappropriate to quote what he has stated respecting the obstacles in the way of such Union. We are informed that for several years past, that gentleman, (Rev. C. H. Spurgeon) has received a text for his Sermon on the first Lord's Day of the Year from "an esteemed brother, a clergyman of the Church of England." This year the text chosen for him, for an obvious reason was, "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. iv. 3).

The following are some of the practical suggestions in that Sermon, entitled "True Unity promoted."

"It is quite certain we shall never keep the unity of the Spirit, if this Church shall declare that it is superior to every other. If there be a Church which says, 'We are the Church, and all others are mere sects; we are established, and others are only tolerated; then it is a trouble in Israel, and must hide its head when the unity of the Spirit is so much as hinted at. Any Church which lifts up its head, and boasts over other churches has violated the unity of the Spirit. If other churches reply, 'God is our Master, and all we are brethren,' they do not violate the unity of the Spirit, for they simply claim their rights and speak the truth. That other Church which forgets its true position as one in the family, and begins to set itself up as mistress, and claim pre-eminence over its fellow-servants, has put it out of its power to keep the unity of the Spirit, for it has violated it once for all."

A Church that would keep the unity of the Spirit, again, must not consider itself to be so intangible, that not to belong to its membership, is sin. What right has any one church to set itself up as the standard, so that those who join it are necessarily Dissenters? It is true my Episcopal brother is a Dissenter, he disputes from me; it is true he is a Nonconformist, for he does not conform to me; I would not, however, call him by such names. Let us aggregate to my own Church, to be the one Church, and so should break the unity of the Spirit. If I turn to history, I may believe that my Church can claim a long line of ancestors descending from the apostles, without ever running through the Church of Rome; but shall I therefore call a brother who does not quite see this succession a schismatic, and denigrate his assembly a conventicle? If he is a schismatic because he does not come to my place, why am I not a schismatic because I do not go to his? Well, but he divides the Church! He ought to come to worship with me. Ought I not to go and worship with him? Ah! but we are the larger number! Are divine things to be ruled by the majority? Where would the Church of God be any day if it came to polling? I am afraid the devil would always be at the head of the poll. We wish to keep the unity of the Spirit, and if we have a little sister, we will treat her all the more kindly, owing to the lawness of her members. If I want to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, I must never call in the magistrate to force my brother to pay for washing my suspicion, ringing my bell, and winding up my clock. I must

not tell my brother that he is bound to pay for the support of my worship. 'Oh!' he says, 'my dear friend, I pay for the maintenance of the worship, which I believe to be correct, and I am quite willing that you should do the same for yours; I would voluntarily assist you if you were poor; but you tell me you will put me in prison if I do not pay, and yet you tell me to keep the unity of the Spirit; but, my dear friend, it is not keeping the unity of the Spirit to take away my stool and my table and my candlestick, and say you will put me in limbo, or hail me before an ecclesiastical court. You send the constable after me; and, if I say a word about it, you say, 'Charity hopeth all things.' Yes, among the rest, it hopes that you will give up your sin in this matter."

If we should stand possessed of a piece of ground where we bury our dead, and if there should happen to come a member of another Christian Church who would wish to lay his poor dead baby in our ground, there being no convenient spot anywhere else, and he asks the favour, I think we can hardly be thought to keep the unity of the Spirit if we tell him, 'No, nothing of the kind; you had your child sprinkled, therefore it cannot be buried with us Christians; we will not have your sprinkled baby lying alongside of our baptized dead.' I do not think that is keeping the unity of the Spirit. And I do not think when some Churches have turned from their graveyard gate the mourners who have brought an unbaptized infant, and when the mourners have gone back weeping to their homes—I do not think such Churches have been endeavouring to keep the unity of Spirit in the bond of peace. Again, if Churches are to agree with one another, they must not make rules that ministers who are not of their denomination shall not occupy their pulpits. I should be ashamed of you, if you passed a resolution that no one dissenting from us should stand in my pulpit. But we know a Church which says, 'No matter how good a man may be; he may be a man as venerated as John Angell James, or he may have all the excellencies of a William Jay—we would not, perhaps, mind hearing him in a Town Hall, but into the sacredness of our particular rostrum these interlopers must not intrude'; for, says this Church, 'Ours are ministers, yours are only lay-teachers; ours are sacraments: the cup of blessing which we bless is the blood of Christ, and the bread which we break is the body of Christ; you have no sacramental efficacy with you; you are not a Church in fact, but only a body of schismatics meeting together to carry out what you think to be right.' We tolerate you; that is all we can do.' Where is the unity of the Spirit there? My dear friends, I received this text from one of the most holy men in the Church of England; if I expound it slightly for her benefit he will, I trust, excuse me, for I do so in all honesty, desiring to aid him and many others in revision and reform. If this Church were in the same condition as the Church of England, I would pray to be so plain in my remarks, I say it is an anachronism; it is a thing out of date for the nineteenth century, for any one Church in this land, and that Church the only one that defies her hand by taking St. Peter's to stand up and say, 'We are the Church; our ministers are the ministers; our people are the people; and now, dear brethren, shake hands, and endeavour to keep the unity of Spirit of God.' Why, it is preposterous. Let us meet on equal ground; let us lay aside all pretences to superiority; let us really aid and not oppress each other; let us mingle in prayer; let us unite in confession of sin; let us join heartily in reforming our errors, and a true Evangelical Alliance will cover our land. If any Church will take the Bible as its standard, and in the power of the Spirit of God preach the name of Jesus, there are thousands of us will rejoice to give the right hand of fellowship with a hearty greeting to all such, and we are every day striving to get other Churches and ourselves more and more into that condition in which, while holding our own, we can yet keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Clergymen in this country are in somewhat different circumstances from those of whom Mr. Spurgeon speaks in the above discourse.

His remarks concerning compulsory support and state-pay, of course, do not apply to this province.

With regard to the church edifices, however, there is a degree of exclusiveness which is often a positive barrier to christian union. Whilst other denominations can unite in Christian acts and exercises, in each others places of worship, and even some Church of England clergymen, as individuals, join with them in those religious services, yet they are not allowed to reciprocate in respect to the use of their churches for such purposes. They may use the same prayer as that of the Rev. Geo. E. W. Morris in this respect, but they must not give such public demonstration as that would be, of "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit."

"This do in remembrance of me."

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."—MATT. 16: 24.

How many talk of love, who never feel it. How many profess to feel it, who never prove it. Love to Jesus is the root of all acceptable obedience. Love is powerful. The love of Jesus is especially so. If the love of Jesus influence my heart, I shall be willing to do anything for him, to give anything to him, and to deny myself anything for him. My nature is constantly making demands, which are contrary to my profession, but my nature must be denied. Nature lusts for evil things, profane things, foolish things; but nature must be denied. I must deny my pride; no, it shall not rule. I must deny my natural temper; no, it shall not reign. I will not doubt this. Why? It would displease my Saviour. I will avoid that. Why? I fear it will grieve the Holy Spirit. I will attempt to accomplish the other difficult duty. Why? I think it will honor my heavenly Father. The man who practices self-denial out of love, will be sure to be a happy man. It will be difficult at first, but easier afterwards. Let the passions rule, allow each one to have its way, and we must be unhappy. But there is a cross—to do that, crosses my will, my prejudices, my natural inclinations. I very much dislike to do it. It is heavy, it is rough, it will make persons talk. But Jesus wishes you. Jesus bids you. Then I will do it. I remember how he denied himself for me, what a cross he carried for me. O yes; if Jesus wishes me; if my precious Saviour bids me, it shall be done; anything, everything for him. My soul, take up thy cross daily, and imitate Jesus. Cross thy lust, thy carnal inclinations, thy natural appetites, and present thy body a living sacrifice to him.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."—LUKE 9: 23.

Correspondence.

Mission in Cape Breton.

To the Secretary of the N. S. B. Home Missionary Board:

DEAR BROTHER,

I have now spent three months in the service of the Board, and you will consequently be expecting a report. I wish it were in my power to give a more encouraging one than that I have to submit. How much good may have been done, God alone knows. The seed has been sown. As yet, however, little fruit has appeared.

I have endeavoured to do my duty as before God, and to leave the result with Him. I often have felt and still do feel that I have come short in every duty.

My field of operation has been Mira Bay, Cow Bay and Little Glace Bay. There are six regular preaching stations, five of which have been visited once in two weeks and the sixth—Little Glace Bay—but once in four weeks.

In the Baptist Church in Mira Bay there are a few who labor and hope for better things.

The state of things at the Cow Bay Mines is very encouraging. We have a much better place for preaching now than at the beginning of the Mission; but still it is far too strait for us. The interest has been steadily increasing there for the last year. There is now much less drunkenness and a much better hearing than there was 12 months ago. Now I love to meet them; then, I rather dreaded it. The place that can be obtained for worship is literally crammed; and still many are compelled to go away for lack of room. The best of attention is given to what is said; and surely, the truth will not be lost.

Two Sabbath Schools and one weekly prayer-meeting have been started at the mines this winter. And the principal mover and main stay of them all is one of our brethren—a real devoted man.

There are nearly, or quite 1000 inhabitants at these mines, within a radius of one mile; and the number is rapidly increasing. In a few years it will be a populous little town. I cannot but labor and believe that the Lord will convert many from among them and make them His "jewels."

I feel greatly interested in these people; and have spent a good many days in calling upon them. I go from door to door visiting, conversing, reading and sometimes praying with them. Nearly all receive me kindly and listen attentively. Once or twice, however, I have been insulted and abused by a drunken young man; on one of these occasions I could but pity the poor fellow; and wondered at the dreadful illustration of Paul's words—'The carnal mind is enmity against God, etc.'

Sometimes I am asked to christen infants. One good woman, who had a dying babe, said to me, a few weeks since—'Are you a minister?' On my replying, she said, with great emotion, 'Can you christen babies?' I replied, 'yes, madam, if you can show me any authority for such an act in the word of God. I could never find it there.'—She was disappointed and perplexed—said it was 'a rule of the Methodist church'—that she knew it would not do; the baby any good—acknowledged that she could not find authority for it in the Bible and said she would not have her children christened, for she felt sure that Jesus would take it to heaven without. Of course, I confirmed her in that faith; and then tried to point her to Christ for her own salvation.

My heart was cheered recently on visiting an old blind man, whom I have frequently called upon during the last two years, at hearing him tell of having found Christ precious to his soul. He is upwards of 80 years of age. He could not read a word; and cared but little about hearing the truth, till recently. He has been blind 5 or 6 years. I have often been to see him, and have read, conversed and prayed with him. Always found him willing to hear; but often feared he would die as he lived, a stranger to God's grace. During the last 4 or 5 months I have marked a change in him.

About three months since I went to see him and found him anxious about his soul's salvation; and, evidently, working with all his might, for life. He was "praying night and day" and clinging to his prayers for salvation.

I tried to make him see and understand the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, and to illustrate it, read a tract, which most clearly sets forth the doctrine. When I had finished reading, he turned his blinded eyes, filled with great tears, toward me, and raising his hands, said, with the deepest emotion, 'Oh, if I could only remember all that!' I told him he need not try to remember it all; and repeated John iii. 16-28, telling him to remember and believe that passage, and God would bless and save his guilty soul.

The next time I saw him, some weeks after, he declared his faith in Christ, and he had thought of the words I repeated, day and night, that he had seen himself in a different light from what he ever did before, but he had felt an awful sense of sin, that he had cried to the Lord and that the 'Blessed Jesus' had heard him and had taken away his load of guilt. As he told me, the tears dropped in quick succession, from his furrowed cheeks. When I left him he seized my hand in both of his and pressed it to his lips, in an instant. My heart was moved and rejoiced, I do hope