

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

By Rev. Charles Tupper, D. D.

CHAPTER V.

LABORS WHILE AN EVANGELIST.

(No. 9.)

In December, 1818, Bro. David Harris first, and subsequently Bro. Theodore S. Harding, spent a few days in Parrsborough. Their acceptable labors tended to cheer and encourage me in the work of the Lord. Elder Harding visited Five Islands, and expressed much gratification at witnessing the good effected there through my efforts.

Although a considerable number of persons had been baptized by me in Parrsborough and vicinity, yet I did not deem it prudent to organize any Church. My reason was, because there did not seem to me to be a sufficient number in any one locality; with brethren possessing the requisite gifts and graces, to maintain the public worship of God. It is manifestly inexpedient to undertake the building of a house without suitable materials, and a reasonable prospect of its standing. Either a failure at first, or a subsequent fall, will be attended with injurious effects. So the attempt to establish a Christian Church prematurely, is likely to be attended with pernicious results. Where it proves unsuccessful, the state of things with regard to religion is much worse than it otherwise would have been. From these considerations—abundantly attested by lamentable facts—I have always regarded it as the part of prudence to exercise much caution with reference to the organizing of a Church.

As may be naturally supposed, the thought of removing from these people at the expiration of the time agreed upon, under existing circumstances, produced a serious trial in my mind. On mature consideration, however, the prospect of usefulness appeared to me greater and brighter in the field to which I was invited. Moreover, one-fourth part of my time was to be reserved, in which it was my avowed intention, in accordance with their desire, to visit the people in this region from time to time. Though they were desirous of my continuance with them, yet it was a pleasing consideration that no disaffection or complaint arose from my removal. I had endeavored to declare faithfully what appeared to me to be taught in the inspired Scriptures; but it had been my aim to observe the apostolic direction, "Speaking the truth in love": and many seriously disposed people of other denominations indicated regret at my departure. I was credibly informed that two worthy Magistrates attached to the Episcopal Church, who had uniformly treated me with courtesy and kindness, in conversation on the subject mutually expressed sorrow that they had not made an earnest effort to retain my services, noticing in terms of strong approbation my indefatigable attentions to the poor and afflicted. This reflected credit on these men.

One of these same friends on handing me his subscription toward my support, gave me double the amount subscribed, and remarked that he had intended to do so from the first; but that he wished for others principally to make up my salary, and designed to give me something extra. He added, however, that he believed he had erred; for that many people observing the comparatively small sum set down by him, who was regarded as a wealthy man, had graduated their subscriptions in some measure according to his, as compared with their respective abilities; and subsequently less had been raised than would have been had he signed the whole when the paper was presented to him. In this view he was undoubtedly correct. As, however, I had not entered the ministry, neither had I labored there, with a view to the acquisition of wealth, I was fully satisfied with the amount received, especially as the people were generally in quite limited circumstances, and they had furnished me with food and clothing, and some additional means to meet future emergencies. Indeed, the support afforded me had far exceeded my anticipations at the time of my entrance on the work of preaching the gospel.

While it was gratifying and encouraging to notice the general readiness of people of various denominations to attend my ministry, and their reluctance to be deprived of it, exceptions might be naturally expected. An instance illustrative of the strong power of the prejudice of education, occurred at one of my meetings on Parrsborough Shore. After its close I remarked

to a new and unexpected hearer, that I was glad to see him there. Without flattery, but with remarkable candor, he replied, 'It was not my intention to be at your meeting; but I came on an errand, and the people crowded in so that I could not get away. If I could have helped it, I should consider it a great sin to hear you.'

The recording of a reminiscence of a marriage scene, may suggest some useful reflections. Of course in such cases no names are mentioned; nor is there here any probability of the wounding of any person's feelings. This I would studiously avoid.

The parents of the bride were very poor. According to my recollection they had not a chair in their house. But rows of benches were fitted up with boards, and about thirty guests were invited and assembled; and a rich and costly entertainment was provided for them. Thoughtless hilarity abounded; but the consideration that this needless and lavish expenditure would unquestionably subject the parents and other children to privation and want during the approaching winter; filled me with grief. Doubtless this was an extraordinary case; but there are many instances in which extravagance is indulged on such occasions. That a few near relatives should enjoy an agreeable interview at such a time, appears unexceptionable; but it is obviously imprudent and unjustifiable to collect so great an assembly, and incur so much expense, as will occasion the contracting of debts not easily liquidated, the future inconvenience of the family, or inability to aid in works of beneficence. Indeed, in a small company convened on such an occasion there is usually more comfort to be enjoyed, with less exposure to temptation, than in a large assembly. Furthermore, as a general rule, in proportion to the extent of invitations to a marriage, is the increase of the number of those who consider themselves slighted, and consequently take offence. In some instances there is manifestly a reform with regard to this matter. Its extension is desirable.

Having terminated my engagements with the people in Parrsborough and adjacent places, at the close of the year 1818 I took, so far as that was concerned, an affectionate leave of them, and proceeded to Amberst, a part of the contemplated field of my future labors.

As this No. closes the recital of the events which it has seemed to me expedient to record that transpired during the time which elapsed between my ordination, July 17th, 1817, and my entrance on the discharge of pastoral duties, January 1st, 1819, I would here acknowledge, with deep humiliation, the numerous imperfections that marred my labors in that period, and, at the same time, gratefully recognize the condescension and kindness of the Most High, who, as I humbly trust, rendered them in some small measure beneficial. To His Name let all the glory be ascribed!

For the Christian Messenger.

"No matter what you believe!"

No matter what you believe, if you are only conscientious, if you are only sincere! What is the difference what religion you believe in, or what church you join? What is the odds, whether one is a Protestant or a Catholic; whether one believes in the Bible or the Koran, Jesus Christ or Tom Paine, the Church of God or the Church of the Pope? Whether baptism saves men or does not save them? that it is an ordinance of God or of men; that it is for believers in Christ or unbelievers? that it is immersion or sprinkling? Whether God is the highest authority in the universe, or that some man is? What does it matter what you believe! and then, Has not the bible said, "As a man thinketh, so is he"?

The above is the popular theology of the present day. Such teaching is well pleasing to Satan—the god of this world—whose object for nearly 6000 years has been to dethrone God, and despoil his works. Such teaching puts the Bible on a par with the writings of men; subjects God's expressed intentions and promises and mandates, to the same criticism that men's are liable. It makes truth a mere commodity that can be dispensed with at pleasure. It makes men's inclinations the standard of piety for the world. It puts the creature in the place of the Creator. It saps christianity of its life-blood and power. It corrupts piety to the very core. And yet to oppose it is by some termed tyrannical and popish, by some who profess to sail in Baptist ships. To oppose it is to endanger ones reputation for christian charity. To maintain earnestly that there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism is not only to excite the opposition of the masses who have no correct convictions of christianity, but often to call forth the disapprobation

of others who profess to believe that the bible is the word of God, and others that it is the only rule in the world for christian faith and practice. We avow that the theology which would make every man right, and every man's notion true; which would make that pliable faculty—conscience, the standard of personal christianity, is a theology unauthorized of heaven, degrading to society and ruinous to men. What sane man in transactions merely speculative and worldly, would for a moment entertain the notion that it did not matter what he believed? Would the merchant about to ship a cargo to a specified market, having obtained sufficient evidence that that market was poor, believe that his preference for it would insure him as good return as if he sent to another that evidence showed to be good? Would a man employ as an agent, to entrust with his business, a person whom all that had employed him, declared to be treacherous, upon the principle, that if he chose to believe him to be honest and faithful, he must necessarily be so? Should a man choose to believe that he was gaining in trade one dollar per day would that make it so, when all the facts and figures showed that he was actually losing one dollar per day?

Most men act cautiously in the things of this world. It is mostly in religion that men suffer themselves to be duped; and call darkness light, and folly, wisdom.

I know that some are inclined to consider, this latitudinarianism, to be the fruit of a large hearted christianity, and are ready to apologize for its apparent defects, upon the ground that it is only pushing charity to an extreme. But this doctrine lies beyond any extreme found pertaining to christianity. It is decidedly opposed to christianity, and christianity never produces fruit contrary to itself. Besides my own observation has satisfied me that this is not the doctrine most preached by those most christian; that it is not the earnest creed of the heart of those usually preaching it, but that it is the key note for proselytism. It is a tune sung for that purpose, knowing its plausibility with the ignorant and unthinking. There is Jesuitism in this "love song"!

Surely you would not expect to hear a minister belonging to any denomination that had a published creed, which he had accepted as the exponent of his religious convictions, and to the support and promulgation of which he had pledged his honour as a man and a christian, enunciating the sentiment "that it did not matter what a man believed." And when we hear one so pledged, thus preach, have we not full authority to consider him lacking in integrity and base in motive?

The Bible very decidedly notices this subject. A few of the instances we will present. In Isaiah liii. 1. the prophet asks the Jews reprovingly, "Who hath believed our report?" that is, the report we have given of Christ and christianity. The Jews had all the while believed something else. They probably believed many things, but whatever else they believed, it was still in the prophet's estimation the duty of men to believe the announcements of inspiration. In John viii. 24, Christ says, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." You may be very sincere in your notions of the Jewish religion; however devoted you may be in your methods of religious worship, however zealous you may be in the defence of your religion, if you lack just this one thing, however simple it may seem to you, "faith in me," ye shall never get to heaven, "ye shall die in your sins."

In Romans x, importance is attached to correctly believing. It is a doctrinal, as well as appropriating faith, that is insisted upon; read the 8, 9 and 10 verses. The evangelist John in his first epistle iv. 1, exhorts us to be cautious where we place our faith. Not to believe all we hear. But try what we hear, that is, by bringing it to the bible—the light that maketh manifest. And even that proverb of Solomon in the 23rd chapter and 7th verse, which gets so violently handled by many, is with me on this subject. It teaches that a man's faith is the governing element in his character; that according to his faith so is he. If his faith is corrupt so is he. Corrupt faith and no faith are two great evils in the present age. Both the church, and the world are suffering because of them. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

I have been led to pen these remarks, by having lately heard a minister preach the sentiment referred to above, although he was pledged to the belief and maintenance of certain religious tenets. He was not a Baptist I am happy to state, yet had the effrontery to enunciate in a Baptist pulpit that unreasonable and unscriptural doctrine. Would that I could drive it into the land of oblivion. More on the subject at a future time.

Fraternally yours,
W. G. GOUCHER.

Hebron, August, 1865.

For the Christian Messenger.

Our Sabbath Schools.

By the grace of God we have done and are still doing much in this department of christian effort. A large number of the membership in our Churches, many of whom are burning and shining lights, have been brought to this high position through the instrumentality of the Sabbath School, and doubtless many who have been early called from earth have attained to the higher position of "kings and priests to God, to dwell with him forever." Saved by its efforts. Joy on earth is experienced and richer joys in heaven through the existence of this institution. It is very gratifying to know that these efforts and results do still occur. In many of our churches faithful servants of our Lord are found, both male and female, who are praying and toiling incessantly in the Sabbath School. Heaven smiles propitiously upon their work, the number of the believing young is multiplying, their own graces are strengthened by these exercises—healthier spirits are theirs, and angels are joyous at the glorious issue.

It is to be feared, however, that our Sabbath School labors instead of abounding more and more, are diminishing year by year. Is it not a fact that only a small part of our ability as churches to engage this great and good work is yet employed, and that the most of our talent thus used is unwisely and awkwardly directed?

The published statistics of our schools as well as our own personal observations appear to confirm this opinion.

1863, 94 schools reported, 6199 scholars, 947 teachers.
1864, 74 " " 5668 " 658 "
1865, 74 " " 5143 " 661 "

While it is a relief to know that in these tables our Sabbath School work is not all described, yet they guide us to the irresistible conclusion that our efforts are contracting. That instead of maintaining that enlarged and progressive position which the increase of our population and church membership demand and to which holy inwrought principles prompt us, we are really backing down and giving more ground to the powers of darkness.

Another humbling fact is brought to light by these returns. In 1864 we have 620 members of our churches reported in our Sabbath Schools. In the same year our membership is reported to be 15828 in this province. According to these statistics we have less than four per cent of our church members engaged, or if we consider these as scholars, and add the 658 teachers reported in the same year, and allow that all these are church members, we will then have only about 8 per cent of membership employed in our schools. This will in a great measure account for our want of success. Ought not effort so meagre and feeble to cover us with shame and confusion of face, in the presence of our self-denying and self-sacrificing Saviour?

While the farmer, the mechanic, and the professional man are continually making use of improved appliances for the better prosecution of their calling; so that every year records improvements in their implements and practice, many of which are conferring extensive benefits in society, we, who have a nobler work to perform in the Sabbath School, are found, many of us, plodding on without the introduction of a single improvement or change of our programme.

Twenty five years ago the usual opening exercises of the Sabbath School were, a long hymn of Dr. Watts on Predestination, Election or Justification by Faith, sung by the old folks, to the tune of "Bridgewater," or some of its competitors, followed by a long prayer, in all of which there was little to interest the children, or to attract their notice, save their abominable length. They were minus adaptation as to matter, manner and time. It is a sad thought that a quarter of a century has passed away, without bringing an entire change in this respect.

Many of our brethren and sisters are toiling on in all sincerity, and bearing heavy burdens. These earnest laborers are often sad and discouraged at their failures to interest the young in holy things. Their earnest enquiry is, "How shall we make our Sabbath School more interesting?" They see and feel the necessity of a change in the mode of operation, but are hindered from introducing any for want of aid; and frequently because of the opposition of those who look upon all the changes in society as the subversion of what is good and gracious. These persons, commonly ascribe want of success to the great perverseness of the rising generation of the present day.

How shall we advance?
The answer to this question will afford material for another article.

FACT.