

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Thoughts on Churchdom, for a "Sabbath School Worker."

MR. EDITOR,

In your issue of the 10th, some one, writing himself "a Sabbath School worker," whether by assumption or by authority he has that name I do not know, appears to be troubled at what he by the tenor of his article pronounces my heterodox sentiment respecting Sabbath Schools. Now, Sir, so far as his article is a criticism upon any sentiment that I expressed in my address, I do not think it worth a reply. I have long since learned that it did not pay to spend much ammunition upon small game. As respects the questions he asks, it is obvious they are not put for the sake of information. They are not the modest inquiries of one who wishes to be informed, but the pompous interrogation of one who flatters himself at having without investigation, arrived at so thorough a knowledge of the subject that he cannot even tolerate the mental vision of those that in range and type differ from his own.

Further, I am perfectly willing that all I write or speak publicly on the subject of religion shall undergo the closest scrutiny of competent persons, but I dislike ambush warfare, it savors of cowardice, I am disinclined to controversy with any person who will not take the open field and say what he has to say over his own name. Again the style of the article convinces me that the author is unaccustomed to write. Perhaps he is a young man, of some ambition, who may yet be able to write something good, and far be it from me to discourage him. These considerations would induce me to be wholly silent respecting his production, were it not for one element which has great prominence therein. That is the papal element, I do not know whether a "Sabbath School worker" is a baptist by profession, or not, but papacy is to me as detestible in one denomination as another. I would not wish to see a Baptist Church a State Church. I would be sorry to see it claiming that all law and authority should proceed from it, and that no society has a right to exist in the same locality it does without obtaining permission from it.

At the outset the attack he makes upon my position declares his conviction of the supreme powers and rights of the church to control societies besides itself. So says the Romish See. He vauntingly asks, by "what authority I would grant or refuse such powers." His idea then is that the church has a right, per se, to control other societies than itself. So says the Pope of Rome.

Hear him further. "Would he then expect individual church members who may happen to feel an interest in the matter to appoint themselves to this office without any authority, ignoring the existence of the body organized to do this very work," * * * "and conducting the affair irresponsibly."

The church then is a body organized to teach a Sabbath School. Is it? Who says so? Have we it so stated in our articles? Wonder that the apostle and apostolic churches with their advantages did not discover it. Wonder that churches existed so many centuries without discovering the real object of their own organization and existence, and that individual christians, at last happened to feel an interest in the matter, and in this way originate the institution. Let us unfold the above quotation, from a "S. S. W." a little, that its popish absurdities may more clearly appear.

For example, I happen to feel an interest in the religious welfare of a young person, and am inclined to impart some religious instruction to him. I must however first of all obtain authority from the church at some meeting of its body. And if it refuses authority. I must keep quiet, if it grants it I can proceed. This is the case too if I wish to instruct a half a dozen young people. The same also holds if a number with me wish to teach a number of young people in whom we happen to feel an interest.

How absurd it would be for me if I saw a child drowning, whom I could rescue; to go first and seek the consent of its mother to save it. Would not some men regard me as insane, and would not the law have occasion to deal with me for neglecting to save life when I had the opportunity. Equally so would it be absurd for me to seek from a church authority to do what I have already better authority for, than it can give. What is a church according to the baptist view of it? Read our articles. "A particular visible church of Christ is a number

of his saints, by mutual acquaintance and communion voluntarily and understandingly covenanting and embodying together, for upholding and promoting the worship and service of God, to show forth his declarative glory, and for their own edification." Is there any statement in this making it obligatory on me to ask a number of professors of religion, with no more authority to empower me than I have to authorize them, to allow me to speak to that young man about his soul, and tell him about Christ. We do not ignore the duty of the christian community, of the christian church in a community to see that the young are properly religiously taught. But we do avow that the Sabbath School is not necessarily either an ordinance or institution of the church. The most pious and active in the church are the most proper to lead in the Sabbath School, and it may be talked of by the church, and in the church, and disposed of according to the circumstances of the case, for we know no definite rule for this matter. And if one and all the church are alive to this matter, such will be the influence of the church in the case that no difficulty will be likely to arise. But the idea of the church acting the dog in the manger part, not willing to do the work itself, and not willing that any of its members should do it, without the authority of the church, is too preposterous a notion to entertain. If you say that it is not the authority of those growling, indolent, members that is necessary, but the church, you argue that those members wishing to take hold of the work, must consult themselves in church capacity, and like as papal infallibility rests not in the pope, nor the cardinals, nor members, but in the church, so our members would be too fallible, in a Sabbath School, to determine what is right, but in the church they may consult themselves with the utmost safety. The church can have a Sabbath School if it wishes. So can the world if it pleases, and so also can individual church members, but the claim of the church to control one originated by its individual members is absurd. Absurd also would be its attempts to veto the efforts of those members for good, because they had not acknowledged an authority in the church, which would give the church a sort of eclat, and invest membership in it with more that religious importance. As well might a church claim control over a Temperance Society, or a Bible Society, that existed in the same locality, because some of its members, happened to feel an interest in, and had become members of those societies, as to claim jurisdiction over a Sabbath School that its members had originated, and that the church did not, as a church, support. Is it so; that it is not enough that we act as christians in this matter, but authority must come to us from the church, otherwise disorder and disaffection will follow. That is: some members claiming respect for their petition, that they cannot claim for their devotion, might incite others to join with them in a crusade against the efforts of those who would promote piety and religious knowledge in the community.

If our "Sabbath School Worker" is connected with a church where all its members are alive to this question he must be in the midst of a happy state of affairs. But if I live where all are not so awake, I must first labor to infuse life into those twice dead. At least get them so far alive as to act at some Conference meeting upon the subject, not because it is probable that many of them will ever come to a Sabbath School, much less teach a class in it, but from the consideration that as a church they hold the religious destinies of the community in their hands and in its decision are life and death. No effort according to my friend should be made to instruct the young religiously which is not pre-faced with this attempt. This is giving the church a position that the Bible does not give it; that our articles do not give it, and that I never have consented to give it. I have endeavored for a number of years to preach the gospel. I have during the last twelve years baptized a number of persons, but I never asked a church to allow me to baptize, I have higher authority for both preaching and baptizing than any church in the realm can give. So also I labor some in a Sabbath School, but I never asked a church for permission. I have higher than church authority for teaching. To argue that discord and disaffection being found in localities where religious labors are performed, and that some church members being offended at the individual efforts of other members to do good, is a sufficient reason why those efforts should cease, would have been urged against Christ's labors with as much propriety, and with as little success. Was John Bunyan doing wrong, because he preached without the sanction of the church? And was it his duty

to desist when disorder and division sprung up?

Had John Wesley a right to wait till he obtained the sanction of the church to preach the spirituality of christianity, and was his acting without the authority of the church a sin?

Did Luther sin when he preached justification by faith in Christ, which the church did not approve, but raised a noise and tumult about?

Was Robert Raikes wrong in gathering on the Sabbath a few children and instructing them without first getting authority from the church? I know no greater curse to any community than a dead church arrogating to itself prerogatives and powers that belong to God only. And it is a little astonishing that under the gospel dispensation we see more of this than under the Law. And that the examples the popish church and her connections furnish us, of this tyranny and corruption so disgusting to enlightened piety has not cured all of a tendency to like assumption.

Let the church prosecute its mission of mutual encouragement, of love and good will towards mankind. Let it have one or a dozen Sabbath Schools if it wishes. But let it not be covetous of powers not intended for it. Let it not stereotype progress nor attempt to hinder any from doing good, because he does not first obtain special church authority.

The active members of any church are fully enough burdened with the infirmities of the indolent. And there is no just reason why they should act, only as they will, for the welfare of the community. Further as respects authority, no true church of Christ is a legislative body. The business of the whole church in both its officers and members, is not to legislate, but to comply with Christ's legislation, and make that known to all mankind. With best wishes for a "Sabbath School Worker," and for Sabbath Schools,

I remain, fraternally yours,
W. G. GOUCHER.

Hebron, Yarmouth, May 22nd, 1865.

For the Christian Messenger.

Have you been baptized?

Perhaps, I ought first to ask—do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Because only believers have a scriptural title to that holy ordinance. Have you received God's message of mercy? Are you resting on the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, alone for your acceptance with God, for the pardon of your sins, and for your admission to heaven when you die? Do you really love the Saviour? If so, do you keep His commandments? Not selecting some of them; but taking them all, and making them the rule of your life. He instituted the ordinance of baptism, or the immersion of believers in water, on a profession of their faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. He was baptized Himself, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps.

Now, if you are a believer, if you are building your hope of salvation on the Person and work of Christ, if you really love Him, you ought to obey Him; and you ought to obey Him promptly, cheerfully and with full purpose of heart. If you are really a believer and are not baptized, you are slighting one of the holy institutions of the Saviour, and you are despising the example He has set you. Whatever Jesus did, as our example, was good; whatever He commanded us to do, was good; if you carefully and prayerfully read the word, without prejudice, you will see that you ought to be baptized; and if you know how to do good, and do it not to you it is sin, James iv. 17. This is God's own testimony; and can you indulge the thought of living in sin, and yet hope for acceptance and honor at the last? Can you expect to be received with "Well done, good and faithful servant," if you know your Master's will and do it not? Are you at liberty to trifle with God's word, to reject His ordinance, to refuse obedience to His will, and to turn aside from following Him who is your Leader? Seriously think over this subject.

Baptism was not intended for unconscious babes, but for intelligent believers; it is not left to their option, but it is enforced by the authority of God; and it is a solemn declaration of the Apostles—"Every one of us must give account of himself to God." What account can we give for neglecting this holy ordinance? Can you say, you never heard of it? It is clearly revealed in the bible. Can you say, you were never warned not to neglect it? Then I solemnly warn you, in the name of that God before whom you must soon stand; I warn you

not to trifle with this command of Jesus, nor with any other, but "arise and be baptized, calling on the name of the Lord."

NATIONAL BAPTIST.

For the Christian Messenger.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

BY REV. CHARLES TUPPER, D. D.

CHAPTER V.

LABORS WHILE AN EVANGELIST.

(No. 2.)

At the time of my laboring in Farnborough and adjacent places there were very few schools in that region, and these were generally of quite an inferior order. To aid young people in acquiring learning sufficient to enable them to read the Scriptures I devoted time frequently to give them lessons of instruction.

At Five Islands there was a school kept—it can scarcely be said taught—by a Mr. S. an aged man, and quite incompetent. When the time for which he had been employed was nearly expired, a man much better qualified requested me to assist him in getting a school there. Though the change appeared to me highly desirable, yet I deemed it requisite to adopt a course manifestly honorable; and therefore first inquired of Mr. S. if he intended to teach any longer than the term for which he was engaged. He said that he had no desire to teach any longer. I then accompanied the applicant to some houses, and informed the people what their present teacher said.

Soon after this a report became current that my statement was untrue. On meeting Mr. S. I spoke to him of it, when he abruptly charged me with falsehood. As every thing of that nature was held in deep abhorrence by me, such a charge naturally excited me strongly. Putting my hand to my face, I perceived so much warmth as led me to judge it unsafe to give utterance to my feelings; and therefore remarking, that 'we would not quarrel, for I would have no contention with any man,' I passed on. Subsequently notice was given me of a meeting appointed to investigate this matter, with a request for me to attend it. Some of my friends advised me not to go, alleging that my enemies were endeavoring to get an accusation against me. To me, however, it was evident that my refusal or neglect to attend would be regarded as a confirmation of the charge. When a number of people had assembled at the time and place appointed, I remarked that we had met on an important occasion, and it was proper for us to seek divine guidance; and, turning to a ruling Elder, who seemed to be informally presiding, requested him to read a portion of Scripture and pray. On his referring the proposal back to me, I read the twelfth chapter of Romans, and engaged in prayer. In reply to my inquiry, What was the charge preferred against me? it was alleged that I had said Mr. S. told me 'he was determined not to teach there any longer than the time agreed for.' The only witness on whose testimony this was said to rest, was then called forward. She testified that she heard me say, Mr. S. told me he was not determined to teach there any longer than the time agreed for.' Upon this I asked him, if I was not authorized to make this statement? He at once admitted that it was perfectly correct; and declared himself fully satisfied. The matter was thus amicably adjusted; and we shook hands in token of friendship.

This event taught me an important lesson, which it would be well for many others to learn and remember, namely, the great liability there is of misunderstanding, and consequently of preferring groundless charges of falsehood. In this case the charge proceeded wholly from the misplacing of one word, by some person, in reporting my remark—'determined not,' for not determined. By equally trivial means, through inaccuracy of expression, misunderstanding, forgetfulness, &c. undoubtedly many persons have been unjustly accused of falsehood; and most pernicious contentions have arisen in families, in neighborhoods, in churches, among different denominations, and even between nations. In such cases a timely and pacific explanation might have prevented incalculable evils.

Many years after the occurrence of the event now recorded, when I was endeavoring to restore peace in a Church distracted by strife, arising, as was evident to me, from misapprehension, one of the members expressed surprise that, while he regarded me as an unusually correct man, very few were as ready to make allowance for mistakes. This case had taught me to do so. Moreover, those who mistake most frequently, are ordinarily most confident that