

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Rev. J. Davis and the "Articles."

DEAR BROTHER,—

"The sixth Article" of the P. E. I. "Associational Constitution" either defines the views of the body on other matters than Baptism and "so-called" Calvinism, or it does not. If it does not, our brethren on the Island have seen fit to declare to each other and the world their sentiments concerning but two great questions. But if it does, it can only be because Calvinistic Baptists are sufficiently idolatrous to have a "creed," and the P. E. I. Association so far sanction its use as to render the study of it necessary to a right understanding of their principles. In what other way could be known, for instance, their opinions respecting the relation of church and state, and the form of church government, otherwise "soul-liberty" and "Baptist polity?" But it is not unusual for men to rail at that of which they largely avail themselves, and which they could hardly dispense with.

But even this supposition admitted, leaves at least two important points still undefined.—These are their views of the Christian Sabbath and the Communion question, as it is well known that there is a respectable body in the United States called Seventh-day Baptists who only differ from us, so far as I can learn, in their observance of the seventh instead of the first day of the week, and it must not be forgotten that many of the English "Calvinistic Baptists" are open communions. It would seem unfortunate that, especially at the present time, the P. E. I. Association should be so completely non-committal on this latter much-disputed yet vital question. There is then emphasis indeed in the declarations that "Thus far, and only thus far are we definite," and "Our position is left as little defined as possible."

I beg to remind my esteemed and revered brother that he alone is responsible for public attention thus being directed to the incompleteness and imperfection of this "sixth article." I would also assure him that, opposed as I always was to the formation of a separate Association on the Island, I would not have been less so had I supposed that one of the prominent designs of the movement was to get rid of the bondage of "Articles," and secure vantage-ground for an onslaught upon them.

As respects the question of creeds, it might be interesting and profitable for your readers to be made acquainted with the opinions of Baptists much better informed and much more influential than your present correspondent. I will therefore conclude with a quotation or two.

Crowl, in his Church Member's Manual, page 120, writes thus:—

"It is the duty of every church to decide for itself what doctrines the Scriptures reveal; and having done so, these doctrines form its creed. These the church agrees to maintain. If an individual adopts views of doctrine radically different, he ought not to be injured therefore in person or estate, yet he ought not to be admitted to the church; or if a member of the church has renounced its creed, he has deprived himself of the right to continue in its membership. As to written Confessions of faith, each church follows its own views of propriety. This is a necessary result of their strictly independent character. If a church has no written articles, it is liable to be annoyed by members, who, having adopted dangerous errors, declare that they understood such to be the doctrines of the church when they became members, that they can maintain their views from the Bible,—the only creed of the church,—and thus deny the right of the church to censure or exclude them. To prevent such troubles and promote unity and peace, it is customary for churches to have their Articles of faith and Covenant printed, and to furnish each candidate for membership with a copy, and if afterwards he shall see fit to renounce it, he cannot complain if the church withdraw from him their fellowship. A creed so formed and used, does not fetter the church, nor oppress the conscience of any member, for it is in the hands of all the members for daily comparison with the Scriptures, and can be altered by the church when necessary, with far more propriety when reduced to clear, written propositions, than if entrusted to the fallible memory of men. A written creed, then, may be useful to the sound, consistent, and quiet members of a church, and is inconvenient to none but such as wish to remain in it while they reject its doctrines, and wantonly destroy its peace."

Dr. Hiscox in his Directory, page 152, says:—

"It is contrary to the enlightened conscience and judgment of every Christian, for any church or individual to construct a religious creed, separate from and independent of the Bible, and require each member of a church to assent and subscribe to that even though such a creed be professedly founded on, and in many things in accordance with the Scriptures. If

one believes what the Bible teaches, and as the Bible teaches, he believes enough. But since different persons understand and interpret the Bible differently, and draw contradictory doctrines from the same Scriptures it is perhaps desirable that each church and each individual should have carefully drawn out and written down, in concise and expressive language, what they understand the Scriptures to teach. These are sometimes called "confessions of faith." They are the understood teachings of the Bible, expressed perhaps in other words for convenience, and important as a standard of reference, and information briefly expressing and explaining what are believed to be the fundamental doctrines taught in the Scriptures, and are also a convenient method of ascertaining whether the faith of others agrees with, or is contrary to, their own. The most of churches have a Confession of Faith printed and distributed among the members."

In the volume of "Madison Avenue Lectures," page 416, Dr. E. G. Robinson of the Rochester Theological Seminary, on the "Relation of the Church and the Bible" thus speaks:—

"Only by keeping in mind the distinction between the use of the creed and the abuse of it, can we shield it at once from abuse by ineffective and abuse by misuse. There are certain men who never wax so eloquent as when declaiming against creeds. The thought of a well defined doctrinal formula throws them into oratorical spasms. But do these declaimers ever remember what a creed really is, and at what cost of anxious thought, of painful inquiry, of spiritual struggle, of protracted controversy, of final sacrifice of all that the world holds dear, the contents of the creeds were worked out by those who subscribed them? The symbol that embodies the inmost beliefs of a man, to which, with creeds on his lips, he signs his name, and if need be, stands ready to seal his subscription with his blood, is not to be tossed aside at the beck of the flippant talker. A creed is something for a devout man to look upon with feelings of respect, if not of reverence. As against those theological vagabonds, those semi-apostates in religion, who having squandered their own beliefs and convictions, are impatient that other people should so tenaciously hold to theirs."

After alluding to the "misuse" of creeds by other denominations, he says:—

"In contrast with the sects just named, the Baptists have always persisted in a maintenance of the true use of creeds, and of the true relation of church prerogative to Scripture authority. They have no one authoritative creed to whose wording all must bow, no ecclesiastical judicatories, no canons, no directory, no book of discipline, and yet not a sect in Christendom is more completely one in its faith, more uniform in its ecclesiastical usages, or more prompt and rigid and efficient in its discipline."

It having formed no part of my design in this matter to make myself prominent, I again beg leave to subscribe,

A N. S. DELEGATE.

For the Christian Messenger.

A Sketch.

The following is sent to us by a ministering brother. He says it is a sketch of one of his friends and adds, "It may contain a hint to those seeking to save souls."

In a large room in a private house a solemn meeting is convened. The Spirit of the Lord is among them, and anxious souls are crying, "What must we do to be saved?"

The man of God with streaming eyes and burning heartfelt words describes the awful and of the impenitent, and the future glory—the suffering, bleeding Saviour taking the sinner's place and dying in his stead. As he proceeds, sobs and cries are heard from every corner of the house: strong men are bowed like giant trees shaken by a mighty wind, while mild-faced gentlewomen are wildly sobbing in very agony of grief, and even little children are not unmoved by the "Old old Story," for one little girl sits in an obscure corner crying, "Oh so bitterly to herself, wondering if it were indeed true that her very sins had helped to kill the Blessed Saviour. And then she shudders as she thinks of the miseries of the lost, and in the intensity of her feelings the burning, yawning gulf seems to open before her. In an agony of suffering she cries in the Spirit, "Oh God! Dear God! help me!"

Near the close of the meeting the minister goes from one to the other asking each their condition and giving the advice best suited to their several cases. As he passes from one to the other the little girl quietly moves into a more conspicuous seat so that she may not be passed by. How her heart beats as she approaches her; she thinks to herself, "He'll just show how I may go to Jesus and be saved." But as she almost reaches out her hands in her eagerness he passes her and speaks to the one next to her. Poor child she shrinks back into her corner almost broken-hearted, crying to herself "Who now will shew me the way to Jesus! the minister has passed me by!"

Soon the meeting closes, each takes his own way; some go home to pray, others to laugh away solemn impressions. The poor little forsaken one treading the ground with careful steps, lest some unseen pitfall should suddenly precipitate her unforgiven soul into the world of woe. On reaching home she hid herself in a dark closet, sobbing wildly, when suddenly, like a gleam of light in the dangerous gloom flashed into her mind the thought that Perhaps God would not pass her by, with eager agonizing cries she pleads, "Please God! Dear God! shew me the way to Jesus!" and God did not pass her by.

For the Christian Messenger.

Reminiscences of the Baptists in Queens County.

DEAR EDITOR,—

Having been a reader of the Christian Messenger ever since its first beginning, and even before, a reader of the old Baptist Monthly Magazine, which contained denominational interest, I have kept myself acquainted with the movements of the Baptist Associations of these Provinces, and it is but in fairness to you and the contributors to its interest to state that it is still a welcome weekly Messenger to myself and family. I appreciate it as a denominational paper, and am now stronger attached to my Baptist Brethren than ever. It was with deep interest I looked over its pages for the discussions that took place last year, upon the all important question of church independence. And now the excitement is subsided I have to say to my brethren, especially my younger brethren in the Ministry, you have my hearty prayers and wishes that you may ever maintain the same noble position you have taken in New Testament Church freedom, and in all this the spirit of the New Testament, or the Spirit of Christ, which is the same, must be held in profound reverence. And now, Dear Editor, if you think the following remarks worthy a place in the Christian Messenger, you will give them, or if you think not, you will withhold.

I have been a member of a Baptist Church about forty years; that brings my beginning back to 1828. Ever since that I have had a deep interest in all these principles for which the Baptists are considered peculiar, I was deeply impressed at a very early age of life with the necessity of conversion to God by the operation of his Spirit. Sometimes I prayed, sometimes I repented and promised to consecrate myself more fully to God; but it was not until the age of 22 years that, by the grace of God, I got strength enough to come out and unite myself to a small Baptist Church. And here it is that I wish to send you some items of God's gracious dealing with us—as a church, and say no more of my own history, or history of my life than is interwoven with the rise and progress of our little highly-favoured Zion, in this township vicinity. At the time, I begin to write from, there was no Baptist church of the particular order in the county, except one in Port Medway.—There had been one organized by Rev. David Nutter on the Bristol side of the river, and although composed of some heavenly minds, yet being small had lost its visibility at the time I am writing. A number of them I shall have occasion to bring forward again in a new organization. About this time I went thirty miles into the country to see the baptism of my Brother Jacob who is now a member of Kempton Church, this was the first time I ever saw old Mr. Thomas Ansley, the minister at Bridgetown. The baptism took place near Mr. McPherson's of Brookfield, in the Lake, it was in the Autumn. The surface of the lake was all in a ripple with the cold Autumn winds, and the leaves were falling all around. While Mr. A. stood in the water and addressed the audience with affection and great solemnity, the whole scene to me was deeply affecting, there were two women baptized at the same time. This was the beginning of a revival of religion that resulted in the building up of a noble band called the Caledonia Baptist Church. I returned home with a new determination to consecrate myself more to God, and begun to pray in secret right earnestly, and I could not help looking away to the scenes of the Autumn and pray the Lord to send again Mr. Ansley. I chided myself but still I could not help praying for the Lord to send him, and yet I could not tell for what purpose. But very early in the spring, about the first of March, he came and commenced preaching in dwelling houses almost every evening. A revival of religion soon commenced. One night at my Father's while he was preaching upon the final perseverance of the saints; that it was through unfeigned faith in the atoning blood of Christ and humble obedience to the truth we should persevere; my soul seemed for a moment to burst its bands, and the Bible appeared so plain,

I could not help crying aloud, "Glory to God in the highest." The revival still went on, and I was baptized and a number of others—young people, among them my Brother Allen, saw into Bible truth very clearly, and the old minister began to talk very strongly of reviving up the members of the old church that Mr. Nutter organized, which was now scattered, together with those he had baptized, and form a new organization. Now began with me one of the greatest struggles of my life. I had now formed an acquaintance with Deacons Dexter and Samuel Freeman, and other members of the old church, and felt myself one with them, both in heart and sentiment, but I had up to that time been brought up in the congregation of old Mr. John Payzant. My Grandfather had lived and died a member of his church. My Father and Mother and elder sister were also members of the same, though my Father and sister had been baptized by immersion. At the ringing of the bell I was almost always with my brother there, and now to join the supposed Church not yet organized, where we would have no meeting house or minister, except occasionally, to leave almost all my young associates to form new acquaintances, on the Bristol side of the river, and worship in dwelling houses! However I made up my mind after much private prayer and reflection, that it was the path of duty. And now I am about to give you an account of one of the most extraordinary meetings I ever beheld, or ever expect to behold on earth. The meeting for reorganization took place at the house of Brother Isaac Dexter, Junr. Old Deacons Dexter and Samuel Freeman, with a number of the members of the former Church, spoke of their former joys in church fellowship, and wished to be set right again. Father Ansley read the Articles and Covenant of the Baptist Associations, and then asked the lately baptized young people, if they could adopt these as the articles of their faith and practice. They nearly all felt very much plagued respecting the close communion question. They had all been accustomed to hear the mixed communion advocated. He kindly and tenderly tried to remove every scruple, until late in the afternoon, and then called upon as many as could acknowledge the Articles and Covenant together to maintain the worship of God and walk together as brethren. They then all arose, and as they did so lifted their hands together, with the most united shout of "Glory, Glory to God!" that I ever heard. The whole room was filled apparently with the divine presence. I looked up to see Father Ansley, for he was a tall man, he stood with his hands extended to the ceiling of the room with tears streaming, his face pale, uttering the same cry "Glory, Glory to God!" Such a countenance I never saw before. It is now about 40 years, and to night the whole scene passes as fresh before me almost as at the first. We were then in Church Covenant, in number, about forty, to commence our church career with not one man and wife in our number except an old coloured friend William Turner and wife. The pious old man still lives, he is blind and must be considerably above 100 years old by the account he gives. He was a slave in one of the New England States before the revolutionary war, made his escape at the end and came to Nova Scotia, he does not know his age. The minister then in a short time must leave, but he thought it advisable as Deacons Dexter and Freeman were quite infirm with old age to add two more to the number, consequently Isaac Dexter, Jr., and Mr. Harrington McLeod were set apart by the imposition of hands to the office of Deacon, and the minister went home. We went on with our prayer-meetings for a while at Deacon Dexter's house, and then moved up to Bristol to Sister Dolliver's house, she and her widowed daughter living in it at the time, and letting it to us on Sabbaths and evenings, here we had some very refreshing seasons. The brethren from Caledonia being frequently in Liverpool on business, attended our meetings on Sabbath day, and greatly refreshed our spirits, for they were a noble band of brethren. The Missionary Board assisted us very much by sending ministers to our help, and we still continued to hold on our way, additions being made very often to our number. At length our old Father Ansley returned and we had a very good revival season. He continued with us some time, and additions were made to the Church. But our Deacon McLeod had become very refractory about some points of doctrine, and the old minister thought it not prudent to leave things so, consequently he was expelled from the Church. Our old Deacons were not now able to attend regularly on account of infirmity and old age, and Deacon Dexter, Jr., was the only active one left. It was thought proper to add two more before the minister left again, consequently the church gave forth their lots and the choice rested on me and my Brother Allen before named, and at the house of Sister Dolliver's in our meeting room, we both knelt side by side with the hands of Father Ansley, good old Deacons Dexter and S. Freeman, upon our heads, very solemnly setting us apart to the office of Deacon. We remained, brethren indeed, until about 5 years ago, he went to his grave under the withering hand of consumption. The time was drawing nigh again for the minister to leave, in a very affectionate address he bid us farewell, saying he was going to St. Andrews to see some of his brethren there, perhaps he should never see us again. It so happened he laid his body there. Old Deacon Dexter died a very old man, rich in faith and good works. Deacon Freeman died never having seen a Baptist Meeting house built in Liverpool, but he predicted there would be one, and a burying place at Milton, and gave orders to his sons to bury his body in his own field until there was one, and then carry him there, which was accordingly done. Deacon Dexter, Jr., died some 12 or 13 years ago. I am therefore the oldest Deacon left to tell this story of times' changes. While meeting at Sister Dolliver's Bro. Anthony Dimock was ordained to the work of the Ministry, and continued with us for a season. The next place for divine worship we held was in the centre of Liverpool Town, a room rented of Sister Harriet McGill. While there the Missionaries and brethren of other churches visited