

For the Christian Messenger.

Church Polity.

DEAR BROTHER,—

The position taken by some writers on ecclesiastical matters is, that no mode of church polity is enjoined in the New Testament, but that Christians are at liberty to form churches and govern them as they please. Baptists, on the other hand, maintain that there is a church polity in the New Testament, and that due observance of its provisions is obligatory.

I am glad that this subject is undergoing discussion among us. "Edward Manning's" articles will doubtless be productive of much good. Whatever is human in our arrangements (and in many matters of detail we are left to our own choice,) requires to be frequently revised, lest we should unconsciously do anything inconsistent with those great principles which underlie all church action.

The *Provincial Wesleyan*, I observe, quotes a portion of one of the *Christian Visitor's* editorials, which closes with the following remarkable words—*italicised* by the *Provincial Wesleyan*:—"there is no mention made anywhere in Scripture of a church record, or of any particular mode of instituting church membership."

I say that these words are "remarkable," because they are not such as ordinarily fall from Baptist lips, or are written by a Baptist pen. And I would caution the *Provincial Wesleyan* against regarding them as expressing Baptist principles. They may represent the private opinions of the Editors of the *Christian Visitor*, but I do not think they would be endorsed by the Baptists of New Brunswick. I am quite sure that they will not be received by the Baptists of Nova Scotia. We do not believe that there is no "particular mode of instituting church membership" in the New Testament. We hold that the Saviour's commission, as illustrated and explained in the Acts of the Apostles, does enjoin a "particular mode of instituting church membership." We read thus:—"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." We find the apostolic order to be—preaching the gospel—faith—baptism—the church. We do not find such an order as this—baptism—the church—preaching the gospel—faith (possibly). We judge that we are bound to observe the "particular mode of instituting church fellowship," and that we have no authority to deviate therefrom.

Discussion of these points, carried on in a Christian spirit, cannot fail to be instructive and edifying.

Yours truly,

J. M. C.

April 3, 1868.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Scriptural Principle of Church Government.

No. III.

Having arrived, in this investigation, at the point in the development of Christianity, where the power and authority of the church are foreshadowed, it will be necessary to begin with the previous economies, and note the character of the governments which were given for them. An examination of the older dispensations in their chronological order, brought down to the days of Christ and his apostles, puts before the mind, in its clearest light, the ecclesiastical polity of Judaism, at the time when the Christian church first made its appearance. It can be seen whether the polity of the new society is like or unlike that of the old establishment. If it is admitted that Job was contemporary with the patriarchs, then under that economy adulterers and heretics were tried and punished by the judges. Job xxxi. 11, 28. Who these judges were and what were the civil and religious regulations we are not informed.

There was no visible religious structure till the days of Moses. Cain and Abel offered sacrifices, Abraham and Melchisedec were priests and potentates. It would seem that the social, civil, and religious authority were vested, prior to the days of Moses, in the heads of families and tribes; but religious duties might be performed by others. Before the appointment of priests, Moses authorized some young men to attend to duties peculiar to that office. Ex. xxiv. 6.

After Moses had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, and while they inhabited the wilderness, it became evident that it was the will of God to bring that host (about three millions) of emancipated slaves—the descendants of Abraham,—under the regulations and restraints of an ecclesiastical and civil government. Jehovah gave them laws and directions, and proclaimed himself their

Governor. Their government was a Theocracy. Laws were given, and certain persons appointed for that purpose, were called upon to execute them, holding themselves amenable to their divine Head. The rude millions in tent-life were too many for Moses to preside over as judge, and subordinate judges were therefore appointed at the instance of his father-in-law, and with the sanction of Jehovah. They were not elected by the people, but appointed by Moses who received his instructions from Heaven. The public services of religion were now given into the hands of an order of men, chosen for that purpose, and it was provided that their places should be supplied in all time to come by an hereditary succession. Moses was told to choose Aaron and his sons for this sacred office. After the priests were set apart, the Levites—a kind of diaconal order—were appointed to aid them. The body of the Jewish people did not exercise their suffrages in these elections. Had the host of Israel been called upon, by the use of a divinely appointed franchise, to elect their ecclesiastical and civil officials—the judges to rule over them and the priests and Levites to serve at the Tabernacle and subsequently at the Temple—the character of the government, thus foreshadowed, would have been the very opposite of that which was really formed.

Under this government the descendants of Abraham settled down in Canaan. After a time its civil department was modified by the change of Judges for a King. God made the office of prophets the connecting link between himself and the successive generations of the children of Israel. "God, who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets," Heb. i. 1. The genius of this government is quite evident. Certainly it was not intended to vest the governing power in the hands of the people. The few controlled the many, and the few were guided by minute directions received immediately from Jehovah. To the priests and judges, difficult matters were referred for final adjudication. Deut. xvii. 8-11. This is the character of that government to which the Israelites were devotedly attached, and which in a modified form existed in the days of the apostles.

Having now arrived at the polity of the new dispensation foreshadowed in Matthew xviii. 15, and having briefly alluded to the government of the old dispensations, we shall be able, in the next article, to enumerate the points of contrast between this phase of the former and the latter economies.

EDWARD MANNING.

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, APRIL 8, 1868.

Human Laws vs. The Gospel.

The object sought to be accomplished by the enactment of human laws, and by the sending of the Divine Gospel from heaven, so far as this world is concerned, is one and the same—the prevention of evil and the promotion of happiness amongst the human family. And yet they proceed from two opposite sources, and are the effect of two quite opposite principles. These propositions may be questioned by some minds. We would not contend that human laws universally, have so high an object, but generally they are supposed to be for the protection of the weak and the virtuous against wrong on the part of the powerful and the wicked.

Human laws suppose that the subjects for whom they are enacted are all innocent persons, and presume that there will be entire acquiescence in all the provisions and arrangements for carrying them into effect.

On the other hand the Gospel comes to man as a sinner, and regards him capable of committing every species of wickedness, and having his tendencies all in the direction of crime and disobedience to its holy and benevolent precepts. Exhortations are given even to obey what might be supposed our natural instincts—"Children obey your parents." "Husbands love your wives" &c &c., shewing how far man has departed from the right to require such exhortations.

So much does the law assume respecting a man's innocence, that when crime is alleged against a person, he is regarded as innocent till evidence is adduced pointing to guilt. Not only so, but the principle is carried so far, that a man although well known to be guilty is ordinarily instructed to plead "Not guilty," and his doing so is not regarded in the eye of the law, we believe, as a violation of truth. And when on his trial the question is put, Guilty, or not Guilty? his silence is construed, as meaning the latter. Further when such a man seeks legal advice, although he may state his crime to his advisor,

yet we understand that, in the light of the above principle, it may still be supposed that the man is innocent, and under some hallucination, until the facts of the case are produced before the proper tribunal. This peculiarity of law is often misunderstood and used to the injury of men learned-in-the-law. They are supposed, by persons of limited information in these matters, to be without the ordinary conscientiousness of other men, and equally willing to defend the right or the wrong, for a consideration. This may appear a very indifferent kind of morality, but we suppose it arises from the very necessary principle on which all human law is constructed, that of regarding every man innocent until he is proved guilty.

The gospel, however, finds men in a very different condition—far from God,—dead in trespasses and sins—under the condemnation of God's righteous law and without the power of either clearing themselves from guilt, or of recovery from their ruined state, but—unlike human laws—it does not leave man there. It attacks the citadel of his nature by its great motive power—love; and by shewing the strongest possible proof of this—Christ dying for the ungodly—it effects a new creation within.—This process being repeated, a community is made up of renewed individuals, a kingdom of heavenly origin is formed, with laws and principles from the same Divine source as their new life; having Christ as their king, his word and promises to instruct and support them; and the Comforter to dwell with them and be in them more fully to enlighten and mould them into his image. Heaven is thus begun on earth.

Whilst therefore human laws in accomplishing their objects can but reach the outward conduct and the surface of society, the gospel operates on the springs of action and life—the heart and affections, and completes what nothing else could effect. It brings forth its work in the matured Christian; and illustrates the remark, which has become a proverb, shewing "the Christian" to be "the highest style of man."

We would not undervalue just, righteous, and benevolent laws. Our liberties and all we hold dear, are dependent upon them. By them too the defenceless are permitted to enjoy the accumulations of former years, or of others on their behalf. Where such laws prevail, no combination of force can with impunity interfere with the life, property, or privileges of the humblest individual. But without the gospel, law is only a frail support, a feeble instrumentality, a sham instead of a real renovator. Whilst we should encourage obedience to just and righteous laws, we should seek for the removal from them of all that fails to promote obedience to the higher law of God; and we should above all seek to bring the more glorious facts and truths of the Gospel to the hearts and consciences of our fellowmen, so that with the benefits that godliness brings to the life that now is, they may have the infinitely greater blessings of that which is to come.

The present issue of our paper is the first under the new postage law. Of course there are many complaints. Some few have resolved to deprive themselves of all newspapers rather than pay postage on either them, one cent a paper, or five cents for a quarter of a year. But we have not heard one person complain of the change from five to three cents for letter postage! Nor do we imagine that the most determined opponent of the new law will persist in using a five-cent stamp for his letters.

One of our friends in the extreme west of the province truly says:—"Individually we shall be gainers, as the Letter post reduction will be far more than the newspaper postage costs."

No reflecting person will contend that the charge is a large or an unjust one; for where work is done it is only fair that it should be paid for. The principal ground we take in opposing newspaper postage, is, that the large cost of the Postal service over the revenue derived therefrom, is indirectly a contribution to general education, and a judicious application of the provincial revenue. As such we shall still persist in urging on all concerned in legislation the wisdom of giving newspaper postage free, and letter carriage as low as possible. Our representatives to the House of Commons should feel that they have to shew the Canadians that we were in advance of them in this as well as in several other matters.

Our thanks are due to several of our Agents for kind suggestions respecting the mailing of papers in their several localities. If the required changes are not all effected this week, we trust we shall be forgiven, as we have had a large addition of labor thrown on us by these changes during the past week.

We shall not, like one of our contemporaries, without personal responsibility in the

matter, lugubriously propose the adoption of a plan which would jeopardize the permanency of the paper. Nor insult any of our subscribers by saying that we regard their payments as "doubtful."

Nor yet shall we like another one charge \$2,50 in advance, and then offer to return them 15 cents when they make their payments.

We prefer the straight-forward honorable mode of allowing every man to feel that he gets value for his money, and pays for his paper honestly. We have too much confidence in our brethren to suppose they will expect from us anything unreasonable. Any other course than the one we propose would involve us in insurmountable difficulties.

Several of our subscribers have requested us to pay the postage for them, and they would be quite willing to repay us the amount. We should be glad to comply with their request, but the doing so would involve us in much loss of time, a most important thing just as we are mailing our papers. We should by this means be unable to get to the post office in time to allow the clerks to sort and despatch the mails on the day of publication.

Although Temperance principles have taken so strong a hold upon a large proportion of Christian people, yet there are still many who believe that it is impossible for a drunkard to be thoroughly reformed and permanently cured of the desire for the intoxicating beverage. Some of these may be found even in our various temperance organizations, and while they use efforts to reclaim the fallen and besotted ones, and have their efforts occasionally rewarded, by seeing one rescued from the way to ruin and eternal death, they rejoice over such with trembling. But the principal ground of their hope is in preventing the uncontaminated and sober youth from entering on the path of the destroyer.

The following appeal will not require any commendation from us; it will commend itself to our readers, a large portion of whom are already engaged in helping to sustain Bands of Hope and other temperance organizations:—

Appeal of the Montreal Temperance Society to Ministers, Sabbath-School Superintendents, Sabbath-School Teachers.

FATHERS AND BRETHREN.—The young are the hope of the Church and of the temperance cause. It is easier to produce impressions upon young minds than old ones, and they are more lasting. It is much easier and incalculably better to prevent bad habits than to cure them,—to avert intemperance, than to grapple with it in a deadly struggle. Total abstinence from intoxicating drinks, from youth up, saves from numberless temptations, dangers and pollutions; and experience shows that it is easy to train youth in the principles and practices of total abstinence. But if parents, pastors, and teachers neglect this training, the youth will probably be subjected to quite another kind of training in saloons and bar-rooms.

Deeply convinced of these truths, and equally convinced that the Sabbath-school affords one of the best opportunities for training the young in temperance principles, this Society has petitioned successive Sabbath-school Conventions to recommend the formation of Bands of Hope or other temperance organizations in connection with Sabbath-Schools; and at the convention of the past summer, held in Toronto, the following resolution to which we call special attention, was adopted:—

"Resolved,—That this Convention, viewing with distress and apprehension the fearful ravages of intemperance in our land, and believing that it is both safe and scriptural to abstain from intoxicating drink, earnestly recommends to the teachers and managers of Sabbath-schools the inculcation of the principle of total abstinence upon the young, as one of the most effectual remedies for this present evil."

The reasons for seeking the formation of temperance organizations in connection with Sabbath-schools are obvious. 1st. Such organizations are likely to be more lasting and better managed in that connection than any other. 2nd. It is but reasonable that the children and youth attending Sabbath-Schools should be steadily warned against the greatest danger that is likely to beset them in after life, and have their sympathies enlisted on the right side. 3rd. Sabbath school teachers are precisely the class in which the zealous friends of the temperance reformation are found in the largest proportion.

To parties so enlightened as those we address it is unnecessary to present further arguments on a matter so obvious as the need for some efficient system of training the young in temperance principles; and we think you will agree with us that judiciously managed temperance organizations, in connection with Sabbath-schools would be a most effectual means of promoting this object. It is hoped, therefore, that you will use your influence in establishing such organizations.

Signed by order of the committee,
WM. TAYLOR, D. D., President.
JOHN DOUGALL, Vice Pres.
JOHN B. BECKETT, Treas.
S. B. GUNDY, Sec.

[Newspapers throughout the Dominion favorable to the temperance cause, are respectfully requested to give an insertion to the above appeal.—S. B. G., Sec.]