

# Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

"Not slothful in business: serpent in spirit."

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## Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

### A BELIEVER'S PRAYER.

Father of life! eternal Love!  
Alone and limitless in might!  
Look from thy glory's throne above,  
And flood my darkling soul with light:  
Vile as I am, and weak, I dare,  
In Jesus's name, to urge my prayer.

I plead Thy promises, O Lord!  
In Christ immutably revealed;  
Mercy and truth in Him accord;  
In Him Thy love shines unconcealed:  
Jehovah—Jesus! save, I cry—  
Forgive, convert, and sanctify.

Repentance, not the righteous seek;  
The healthful no physician need;  
I come, because corrupt and weak,  
To Thee, who didst for sinners bleed:  
O Thou Redeemer of my soul,  
Thy fiat breathe, and make me whole.

Hadst Thou Thy sacred law reversed,  
And granted pardon free to sin;  
And left Thy creatures half-accused,  
Without the hope of life within;  
Such mercy could no peace impart,  
It could not ease my aching heart.

Not thus doth Thine Anointed save  
And leave us banished, foul, abhorred:  
He who descending sought the grave,  
Leaped from its jaws its mighty Lord;  
Wrenching from death its sharpest pain,  
And rising, Prince of life, to reign.

Jesus a full redemption earned;  
And gifts unmeasured hath received;  
By his own people blindly spurned,  
At Thy judicial anger grieved,  
Drooping Thy fury's dregs He quaffed—  
Poured out His soul, and drained the draught.

My Saviour God! Thy crown of thorns  
Every command of Thine endears;  
Thy quenchless love Thy law adorns;  
Thy dying anguish quells my fears:  
Thy final woe—Thy piercing cry  
Conquered for us, on Calvary.

Oh, by Thine own unflinching faith,  
When of Thy Father's light bereft,  
Conform me Master! to Thy death;  
Lest, inly lurking, guilt be left;  
And, long before earth's last appointed hour,  
Teach us, O Lord! Thy resurrection's power.  
B. M.

## Religious.

### THE ADVANTAGES OF BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER FROM THE PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, TO THE CHURCHES OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED.

Dear Brethren,—

We have been led to the formation of the "Prince Edward Island Baptist Association," and have now entered upon the first year of our new-born organization. We think we have solid reasons for the steps which we have herein taken. It may be well to place these reasons on record; that we may, first of all, stand justified in these things to our own consciousness; and that, next, we may be able to vindicate our course to others. Hence our present subject. It is this,—

THE ADVANTAGES OF BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS.

But now, before entering on this subject, there seems to be required some preliminary statement. There is the third Article of our Constitution, as adopted by us at this our constituent meeting. It contains these words:—"It,"—that is, the Association,—disclaims all authority over the Churches; and shall in no case interfere with their internal concerns, or their entire Scriptural independency." This body has not been formed, then, for the purposes of church-discipline, or church government. We have nothing to do directly with the reception of members into our Churches, or their exclusion—with the settlement of pastors, or their removal—or with any other act pertaining to our Churches as such.—These Churches are, for all purposes, com-

plete within themselves—within their own borders, so many distinct and independent spiritual republics; accountable to none in the universe save Christ, their one and only King, and Head, and Lawgiver, and Judge. You perceive thus what a Baptist Association is not, and what this Association does not claim to be—what it could not pretend to be without an utter forgetfulness and renunciation of the Baptist name, and of our whole Baptist polity.

But again, this third Article of our Constitution is affirmative as well as negative. It reads thus likewise:—"The objects of this Association [are], the cultivation of Christian union, the promotion of individual godliness, and by mutual consultation, to seek, in the use of Scriptural means, the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom."—And thus you see, brethren, why, as at this time, we come together,—for mutual association, as our title has it, and not for combined government. It is the love of Christ which brings us together, and love to each other, as bearing his image, and love to souls, the purchase of his blood; that we may get good, and do good—get good to ourselves, and do good to each other, and send forth waves of good, which shall refresh our Island, and bless the whole world.

Now a Baptist Association, constituted on the principles, and for the purposes here suggested, may be useful in various ways. As,

I. In the cultivation of Christian brotherhood.

We would recall, here, our Lord's "new commandment," with all its weighty enforcements, that we "love one another."—But how are we to keep this commandment? In proportion, plainly, as we come to know each other. Thus we love, as those who loved our Lord, all the New Testament saints. But which of them do we love most? Is it not a Paul, or a John?—And why so, if not because of our intimate acquaintance with their story, and their heart, as opened to us by sacred records? So among contemporaries whom we have never seen, none can fill so large a space in our affections as the beloved Spurgeon, simply because we know so much more about him than about his fellows. Just so it is with brethren and sisters in Christ residing on our own Island. There are excellent people at East Point, at Cape Wolfe, and towards North Point. But do they love one another as they would, and yield the fruits of love as they might, if brought into personal intercourse? Now, these Baptist Associations bring our people together from far and near. They meet in the house of God, and in the home of Christian friendship. They read, and sing, and pray, and hear the Word, and converse together. They carry home with them a personal acquaintanceship which could have been obtained in no other way. They find "how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity"—

"When sorrow flows from eye to eye,  
And joy from heart to heart."

They "know that they know Christ," while they feel that they "love one another."—And thus the golden chain of "brotherly love reaches from settlement to settlement; binds together remotest points; produces a blessed oneness throughout our whole Baptist community; prepares us for harmonious action while it joins us in harmonious affection; and fits us for the period when we hope to worship and serve together in heaven, even as we now do on earth.

II. There is the collection of important facts.

You remember Paul's exhortation to the Philippians—"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." That is, seek not to live wholly at home, within your own borders, and without taking any interest in the welfare of others: Paul once proposed to Barnabas that they should set out on a wide and difficult visitation of the Churches, for this purpose among others, that they "might see how they did;" and by and by we find him and Silas going forth on the errand thus described. As we follow these good men in their career, we mark how they did many things which could never have been accomplished, if they had hug-

ged their pleasant quarters at Antioch, and so had fallen beneath the spirit and power of the exhortation as above cited.

Now our Associations involve the carrying out of this apostolic exhortation. We do not here indeed go to the brethren; but the brethren gather together at some appointed place. And this, not merely to exchange Christian greetings, and cultivate Christian satisfactions, but to collect statistics—to take note of changes—to learn each others' circumstances and condition—to enter into each others' trials and difficulties; and all this, in order to the exercise of an intelligent sympathy, a commingling of well directed prayer, and the interchange of appropriate teaching and exhortation. In which ways, not only is information collected, but turned to profitable account; the gifts and graces of the Churches are called into action for the good of the whole body of those Churches; the distressing sense of isolation is counteracted; and, in a word, that beautiful proverb attains to a lovely and Christian exemplification, which tells us that, as "iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."

III. There are the purposes of mutual consultation.

This topic has been already implied; but its deep importance demands distinct notice and illustration. Our Churches are indeed independent. Yet what would become of them when difficult and critical cases arise among them, were they always thrown upon their own unaided resources, and precluded from obtaining help from abroad? We can never forget the Council of Jerusalem, with its occasion, its deliberations, and its happy consequences. To be sure, we dare not claim, as too many have done, most falsely and injuriously, an inspiration such as was enjoyed by that Council. Yet why should we not avail ourselves of the piety and wisdom of our brethren, as our circumstances from time to time may seem to demand? Does not Paul suggest a thought of this kind, when he says, "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the Churches of God?" The Corinthian Church is thus directed to learn how other Churches think and act, that they may so gather how themselves should think and act; and the like lesson is through them conveyed to us. In other places this same apostle says to the same Corinthians, "Let all things be done unto edifying—Let all things be done decently and in order." Here certain general principles are supplied for the regulation of Church matters. They are plain enough in themselves; but their application may not always be quite clear. Were it not well, therefore, for us to be able sometimes to appeal to the collective judgment of our brethren, that we may the more easily ascertain what things may be regarded as decent, or orderly, or edifying, and be assisted thus to form a judgment for ourselves?

And now, bringing together the inspired hints to which we have here referred, we may perceive, by their light, one of the most important uses of an Association.—It constitutes a standing advisory body, to which our Churches, as occasions arise, may address themselves. "Brethren, here is something that perplexes us. What would you recommend in the case?" So may the Churches say to the Association: and the Association considers, and advises accordingly. Advises, observe; not decrees but advises. And who shall say how many difficulties have thus been healed? or, better still, prevented from breaking out?—Or who shall recount all the benefits which have thus resulted to our Churches? And that without any compromise of those grand principles of independency on which, as New Testament Churches, our whole polity reposes, and, which at our peril, we slight or forget? Without forgetting or slighting which, however, we may both lawfully and laudably unite and organize into Associations, for that mutual counsel, among other things, whereby the stronger aid the weak, and the wiser the less instructed; so that the strength of all, and the wisdom of all, become the common stock of all, and all work lovingly together, for the glory of our common Lord, and the preservation and welfare of the whole body.

IV. And lastly here, there is the promotion of Christian enterprise.

You remember, brethren, William Carey's famous Missionary sermon. You may find its text, Isa. liv. 2, 3. There was its quickening division,—"*Expect great things from God—Attempt great things for God.*" We have not a word of the sermon. But what need? The division comprehends the sermon. That sermon became, by God's blessing, the germ of our modern Missionary enterprise; while its division has supplied fitting mottoes for that enterprise. Now that sermon was preached at the meeting of a Baptist Association, held at Nottingham, England, in May, 1792. That same Association, a few years before this, had recommended the setting apart of the first Monday in every month for special prayer for the spread of the Gospel; from which recommendation has sprung the Monthly Missionary Prayer Meeting, which has now for so long a period been an institution among Christian Churches the world around; and which, within the last few years, has come to be so happily supplemented by our Annual week of Prayer. Surely we have here Pentecostal movements, Pentecostal prayer, with Pentecostal action, and the whole crowned with Pentecostal success. And thus we see what God wrought in the last century, extending the benefits into these later days, by means of Associational gatherings.

Take another, and a later instance of the same kind. In November, 1811, at an Association of Baptist ministers held in Boston, Mass, a resolution was passed, "recommending it to the members of their body, to make known to their respective congregations, in whatever mode they should think proper, the subject of Eastern Translations,"—these being, in fact, the translations then carried on by Carey and his associates,—and to express their readiness to receive and transmit to the authorized persons whatever contributions any of their people should be disposed to make." In less than three years after this, in May, 1814, the American Baptist Triennial Convention was formed. The happy results of that movement are everywhere known.—And now we cannot attend a meeting of our Baptist Associations without listening to reports and discussions on Missions, Domestic and Foreign, the circulation of the Scriptures, on Education, both secular and sacred, and on topics kindred to these.—There, too, monies are received for these various objects; while, in many ways, a spirit of benevolent zeal is cultivated, and the cause of God and souls, at home, abroad, throughout the world, fills the hearts, the prayers, and the hands of God's people. Nor, indeed, can the most obscure, the remotest, and the feeblest of these bodies—not even our own little and far-off Association,—come into being, and hold its gatherings, without making the world the better for their action.

We come now to remark, that we, as Islanders, have not been blind to the advantages above enumerated. On the contrary, our Churches have been accustomed to identify themselves with the Eastern Nova Scotia Baptist Association, whose meetings we have found it good to frequent. We have received much valuable aid from our Nova Scotia brethren. They have sent their missionaries among us. Their venerable veterans, Harding, Manning, and others, now passed to glory, have traversed our Island, preached the Gospel among us, and left behind them precious memories. Their funds too have aided our resident ministers and missionaries. The Eastern Nova Scotia Association has also held one of its Annual Sessions on our Island. For these things, and for all else which they have done for us, we would here record our gratitude, first to God, and then to our brethren. Thus have they raised us up towards the growth, small as it is, to which we have now attained. Our present movement is, in some sort the work of their hands, and the answer to their prayers. And as dutiful children cease not to love and honour their parents, even after they have founded houses of their own, and themselves have risen to the dignity of parentage, but love and honour them to the end, even so would we ever look to our Parent Association, and