

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS.

I have thought much recently of our approaching Association, and am debating with myself whether I had better attend if appointed a delegate, I have attended pretty regularly for thirty years past, but don't feel satisfied with seeing so little result from the annual gathering of churches by their delegates. I wonder if delegates ever ask themselves what particular object they have in view in accepting their appointment; and I wonder if churches ever think it necessary to give any instructions to those they appoint to represent them. It seems, to a looker-on at least, as if a number of Ministers left home in a hurry without any definite object in view, beyond meeting each other at the place appointed; and after a short greeting, getting excused, to return hurriedly home again. On Saturday the Letters are read and Committees nominated; on Monday a sermon is preached to suit the occasion, after which an adjournment takes place for dinner. In the afternoon a portion of the delegates begin to leave. On Tuesday morning a good many are missed, and it is whispered around that the business must be got through in that morning session; and this usually occurs. So the actual business is crowded into two sessions of about four hours each; now I ask if this is sufficient time to transact business connected with our churches, which is to reach over a full year? The Committee's report, but time is not given for discussion, or rather it is supposed not to be taken, and many subjects that formerly interested the churches are now put aside or passed, by a simple resolution, without remark. Formerly, stirring speeches used to be made—on Education, Sabbath Schools—Observance of the Sabbath—Religious Literature, &c., but now they are not discussed, as there is no time; and consequently much of the influence sought to be brought to bear on the churches through their delegates is lost.

I have sometimes on returning home been asked, "Had you a good Association?" and have replied, "Yes, there was great harmony and good feeling," but to tell what was really effected of a practical nature I could not.

Now I would suggest that churches send delegates who will be prepared to stay till the business is completed, and if necessary take a week for this, and let the matters be fully discussed, and time given to mature and form plans to carry on the benevolent schemes of the churches—and let there be such an arrangement that each department of business may be taken up in its proper order.

And let all consider, when met, that they have gathered to do the Lord's business, and it must not be lightly hurried over. I pen this in hopes it may be taken as a timely

HINT.

Kings County, May 1871.

For the Christian Messenger.

LETTER FROM REV. WILLIAM SOMMERVILLE.

Mr. Editor,—

There is no man in Nova Scotia who, at the present moment, has more of my compassion than Rev. S. T. Rand. When, without provocation, he rushed into controversy, he made a sad miscalculation of his strength. He has acquired a high character in the community for faith and spirituality. Let him not presume too much upon it. If he will take the trouble to read Taylor's "Loyola and Jesuitism," he will find that the Fathers of the famed Society of Jesus had a reputation, in both respects, not inferior to his own. When God speaks, His word is accepted as decisive on all subjects of which he treats; but it is too much for Mr. R. to expect that his word is to be accepted as an ultimatum, to the vindication of the Plyms or the condemnation of Dr. Carson for instance. To claim this is to take the place of God, and to concede this is gross idolatry.

Now when he has cause to fear that your readers may wake up to the extravagance and impiety of his pretensions, he has abandoned any attempt at vindication, and would divert the minds of the public from the main argument to the question of the comparative claims of himself, and Mr. Somerville, as Christians, to the consideration and confidence of the Churches:—Is Mr. R. or Mr. S. the more holy man? My God is the God of the hills it seems, and on

this low ground he expects an easy victory. What Mr. R. is the searcher of hearts must determine. I have dealt with his published utterances, or his public acts, and have characterised them with no greater severity than they merited. I have tried them by the standard of the Word and have shewn them to be utterly at variance with its principles. He does not care to meet me on this ground, but asks your readers to determine which is the better Christian by comparing one of his legends with one of my letters!! The Word of God must determine the character of our acts or utterances, and I will not allow an appeal to any other standard. As God shall enable me, where that Word points, according to my best judgment in dependence on the Spirit of Christ, I go forward, without regard to what men think, or say, or preach or write; it may be to poverty, or reproach, or contempt, or desertion. Mr. R.'s course is well fitted, whether designed or not, to rouse the prejudices and wrath of his numerous relatives and more numerous admirers (worshippers?) against me. I will not fight with them. If my cause is just, God will fight for me; if not, let him "lay mine honour in the dust." "Arise. O God, plead thine own cause."

Mr. R. has taken the Plyms under his protection. They will not be ungrateful. Some of them are rich. He may not get "solid lumps of gold," but he will get some gold pieces. He differs from them "on several important points of doctrine and practice." What these important points of doctrine and practice are, he has not said. Perhaps after all, these may be the very points which Dr. Carson exposes. When he praises them so liberally, surely he should, as an honest man; have put Christians on their guard against their errors.

He bespeaks the support of the Presbyterians by telling us,—"In fact we like the Presbyterians a little better than we do the Plyms." Of course he means those of the right kind: and it would be amusing, were not the subject too grave for laughter, to observe with what coolness he claims to be able, as an infallible eclectic religiousist, to distinguish the godly Presbyterians, godly Baptists, godly Plyms, &c., &c. among the crowd of professors.

We accept his testimony in favour of his grandmother, with all confidence and cordiality, believing her to have been a very excellent person.

We accept his testimony to his own faith, as given in all sincerity, while we have a very strong opinion that the high commendation of Timothy's "unfeigned faith" comes more gracefully and acceptably from the pen of Paul than it would come from Timothy himself.

From my heart I thank Mr. R. for his testimony concerning myself. He did not intend praise, but I thank him not the less. In an age when you cannot always tell what Professors or Preachers are, or where to find them, whether they are Baptists, Plyms, Methodists, or Presbyterians, it is a great matter to be known, and to occupy a well-defined position. If a man, in that case, is in error he has the advantage of being open to correction. When many years since I published, over an assumed name, an article in one of the Halifax papers, the late Dr. McCullough, I was told, remarked that no one in Nova Scotia but Mr. S could write it. Sending by a friend a communication to a Saint John paper, he told me I might as well add my name, as there was no mistaking what I write. Mr. Hennigar, the Methodist minister, offering some remarks on a lecture I delivered in Canning, was pleased to refer, in very complimentary terms, to the undeviating consistency of the professional course I had pursued from my entrance into the Province. And now Mr. R. in speaking of my last letter, says "THAT'S HIM" EXACTLY.

If I live to go to Halifax I intend to have his undesigned eulogium printed, to be framed and hung up in my study. He will pardon me for presuming to give him an advice. In describing me, he has not expressed himself happily. When he writes at any time, no matter how severe or unpalatable things he has to say, let him avoid the slang of the street rowdy, and use the language of a scholar and a gentleman.—How little soever we may respect another, we should never forget the respect we owe to ourselves.

I am, &c., &c.

W. SOMMERVILLE.

For the Christian Messenger.

REPLY TO THE REV. MR. SOMMERVILLE.

Dear Brother,—

As you and your readers must be tired of this discussion. I will answer Mr. Somerville's next article in advance, that the

only point to be discussed is this! Do the so called Plymouth Brethren deny or fritter away the fundamental doctrines of Evangelical Religion? Do they deny the divinity of Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the atonement, of Regeneration, or any of those grand truths which are held in common by Baptists and Presbyterians and other Evangelical Bodies?

Now how is this question to be settled? Certainly not by personalities, not by any of those side-issues that have been introduced, such as Indian Legends, &c., &c., but by an appeal to their own works. Those works are easily obtained. They are scattered every where over the country. If Mr. S. cannot lay his hand on them I will undertake to furnish him with comments on the Epistle to the Romans, on Genesis, or other portions of Scripture and I can also send him tracts and newspapers, all issued by men of repute among the people in question. Let him search those works, and if he finds that those doctrines are either "denied" or "frittered away," let him cite the passages, name the "book, chapter and verse," and then we can judge for ourselves. Let him come to the point and keep to it.

I will only add that if what has been written by either of us has tended to the disparagement of Mr. Somerville, I shall deeply regret it. To those of your readers who are not aware of the fact I may be permitted to state that Mr. S. is a highly esteemed Presbyterian minister, and one who is much respected and beloved by his own people, in Horton and Cornwallis, where he has labored for about forty years, and one whose character both public and private—if a minister has any right to such a distinction, as I for one certainly think he has not—stands high in the community where he resides. Sorry indeed would I be to detract one iota from his well-earned reputation.

I know nothing of the contents of Mr. Somerville's next communication. I have simply been informed that it has been sent on for publication. I do not anticipate that it will need any further reply, and simply wishing that to him, and to me, and to you and your readers, grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, may be multiplied.

I remain,
Yours truly,
S. T. RAND.

Hantsport, May 24th.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE LATE EXAMINATION PAPERS.

I think more attention should be given to the preparation of the questions submitted to the candidates for school-licenses at the Semi-annual Examinations. Some of the questions, at least, ought to have reference to principles, and be in reality, what they pretend to be, test questions. The C paper on Geography used in March last is a case in point. The questions refer almost exclusively to matters of detail, and require of the candidates, in order that they may be correctly answered, a most extensive and minute acquaintance with the minor details of the text book.

We quote some, for example:—"Name the rivers flowing into James Bay. Name the ports situated on Lake Erie. What counties of Quebec are north of the St. Lawrence? What counties are on the Ottawa River? How many counties in Scotland and Ireland? Name those of Wales. Give the boundaries of the Tynhere Sea. Describe the coast line of Asia from Macao to Martaban. Name the five rivers of the Panjab, also its chief cities. Give the position of the following cities:—Yarkand, Tokay, Tours, Lubeck and Timbuctoo."

These are questions candidates might be able to answer, it is true, if they had happened to look up those particular points before the Examination. But while some might familiarize themselves with the minutiae of one country, others might devote their attention to the details of another; for we can't expect them to learn the name of every county and position of every obscure town on the globe. It thus becomes a mere matter of chance whether the candidates may have acquired the requisite information or not. One might be thoroughly posted in the principles of Geography, might be able to explain ocean currents, trade winds, unequal distribution of rain, climatic effects on races, the variations of the isothermal line and kindred subjects that really test one's mental calibre, and yet not be able to locate Macao, Yarkand, or Tokay.

I doubt if the Professors in our Colleges

or the Provincial Examiners themselves could pass a creditable examination upon the questions we have quoted. They were doubtless suggested by Mark Twain's celebrated enigma: My 7, 9, 4, 4 is a village in Europe. My 11, 13, 13, 9, 2, 7, 2, 3, 6, 1, 13 is a peculiar kind of stuff, &c., &c. Mark adds that several answers have come in which (unlike the answers that are returned to the Education Office) have been filed for future reference. He suspects some of them may be correct but is not positive. He found no difficulty in getting up the questions but has been somewhat puzzled to find correct solutions. We leave it with the reader to make the application.

Seriously however the questions ought to be so framed as to ascertain the candidates' real acquaintance with the subjects. At the last examination some of our best and most successful teachers failed to get the grade they certainly deserved, while others with no experience and not half the practical knowledge of the subjects embraced in the syllabus, were successful. This is not certainly the way to encourage teaching talent. Our teachers should be stimulated to generalize their information and search for underlying principles instead of being induced, by the questions they are required to answer, to content themselves with mere superficialities and details.

CHAS.

For the Christian Messenger.

ESSAYS ON DENOMINATIONAL MATTERS. NO. 2.

LARGE OR SMALL CHURCHES.

A question must often, I apprehend, have suggested itself to others as it has to me, whether it were better, for all the objects in view, that Baptist Churches be multiplied within a given area, where numbers would warrant and denominational views prevail, or the reverse. Of course much must depend upon circumstances. No rule can probably be laid down applicable to all localities. In Cities and Towns, the same reasoning would not apply, that might be appropriate and weighty, as regards country places and less compactly populated communities.

But let me suggest a class of cases known to exist in many of the shire-towns of the Province. And it is in reference to these, and places similarly situate where churches have long existed and communities more or less Baptist have sprung up around within limited distances, say from five to ten miles from a common centre, where a pretty large place of worship exist, and seldom if ever more than one half of the members of the church are enabled to meet at the same time. Would it not be better as a rule under such circumstances that the more distant members, where numbers warrant it, organized into churches, than that they should nominally be associated with the larger organization, and with whom, except in the finest weather of the season, they rarely ever assemble? There are many places in Nova Scotia where one, two, three, four, or more outlying districts have provided themselves with commodious house of worship, five, eight or ten miles distant from some common centre, where a church was originally formed, and where at certain seasons, pretty large congregations assemble, but no churches exist in these outlying localities, the members assembling, being members of the church which has its home (if I may so say) in the centre and is designated accordingly. There the business meetings of the church are usually held. There the monthly conference commonly takes place. There probably the pastor resides. And there he preaches once in the morning of each Lord's day, reserving the afternoon or evening service for one of the poorly served distant sections, that enjoy a sermon in this way once in three weeks, or once in a month as the case may be.

The advantages derivable from such a policy consists in this that where church members are few and their circumstances such that they may not be able unaided to support a Pastor, and they reside at a distance, making it inconvenient for them to attend the ordinary Sunday Services of the central house, they are supplied with preaching, once a fortnight, once in three weeks, or once a month, and contribute to support a Pastor who nevertheless once at least on each Sunday preaches at the centre.

But as it lies in my mind, there are arguments of great weight opposed to this policy, and making it desirable that whenever, owing to distance, or numbers or both, the great majority of the members of a Baptist church cannot steadily meet together, it were far

better that churches should be multiplied and additional organizations take place. This reasoning will apply as well to cities and towns, as to country places. It is a law of nature, that a healthy plant of every kind should reproduce itself. When families become large, they separate and the members set up for themselves. I am not prepared to say that the rules prescribed for the government and regulation of churches, as the Baptists understand them, cannot be adapted to great numbers, whether dwelling compactly in cities or towns or in sparsely settled country places, but sure I am, it is desirable that the members and the Pastor of every church should be together as frequently as possible. And in order to have a healthy prosperous church, it is not only desirable but perhaps indispensable in more populous communities, that there should be public services as a rule twice each Lord's day.

I do not propose to quote for our guidance in such cases, the rules practiced by men of the world; and yet Our Lord did not hesitate occasionally to point his teachings and illustrate his meaning by reference to their conduct; saying that they were wiser in their generation than the children of light. The farmer also attempts to cover too much ground, whose enclosures are out of all proportion to the amount of labour and capital he has at command, is certain to fail. The commander who successfully assaults an enemy's strong-hold and expects to effect a breach, concentrates his fire on some supposed assailable point. And so the successful Pastor as a rule, it seems to me should hold at least a morning and evening preaching service. Prayer and social meetings should doubtless be held and sustained in every church; and, twice or three times stately during the week evenings, but it is "by the foolishness of preaching" as the apostle puts it—that it has pleased God to save them that believe.

Again, unless there are preaching services twice a day, it is practically almost impossible to keep that control of a congregation that is so desirable. The families of the members of the church are but too apt, as many of us know, especially the younger portions, to drift away to the services of the nearest preacher of some other denomination, when there is no sermon at their own place of worship, and they thus acquire roving habits not easily restrained in after life.

It may put the members of Central Churches more upon their metal to sustain Pastors, when unaided by outlying districts, but these by combining, and extra exertions on their part, may then secure pastors for themselves, and in this way the whole field be better much better, cultivated than previously.

It is a delicate operation I am aware, one that requires the exercise of great prudence and forbearance to set off new churches, but where the common cause is likely to be benefited, if, after seeking divine wisdom the judgment of the majority is in favour, minorities should acquiesce, and at once commence to double their diligence and endeavour by the blessing of the great Head of the Church themselves to become centres, with outlying districts in turn ere long, to be subjected to a like process.

ESSAYIST.

For the Christian Messenger.

IN MEMORIAM.

JOHN McDONALD,

deacon of the Baptist Church at Belfast, P. E. I., died on the 24th ult., in the 81st year of his age, leaving an aged widow with whom he lived in mutual conjugal affection for a long series of years, and a number of sons and daughters with many grandchildren, friends and relatives to mourn their loss. He was born in the Isle of Skye and emigrated to this Island with his father in the year 1803, in the 13th year of his age; though outwardly moral he lived unconcerned about the state of his soul until about the time of his marriage. The Lord awakened him to his guilt and danger, and graciously led him to the Cross, enabling him to rejoice in the salvation purchased by Christ for sinners. He afterwards embraced Baptist sentiments and joined the church, of which he continued a useful member for fifty-one years. I cannot speak with certainty of the time in which he was ordained as deacon, for he served in that capacity when I came to the Island in 1829. During my acquaintance with him, which has been long and intimate, his ardent piety and