

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

"BAPTISM AND COMMUNION."

ii.

AN EXEGESIS ON ACTS II. 42, 46. By Rev. George Armstrong, A. M.

The great commission requires that those who have become disciples by means of the gospel, and obeyed the law of baptism should be further instructed in all the other things that Jesus commanded his apostles. And they proceeded to carry this out, in respect to these baptized disciples. Not converts of a day—whose convictions and exercises are superficial and evanescent, were these disciples; but they were sincere, deeply in earnest, and determined to hold fast their new-found faith and joy in the Lord. Subsequent to their baptism the conduct of these converts is thus described: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and prayers." (V. 42) They did not desert the ministers of Christ, nor the fellowship of the church, but came to be instructed more perfectly in the doctrines and requirements of the Gospel, and they continued therein; they did not as so many since have done, forsake the assembling of themselves together, but strengthened and encouraged each other much by attending at the sanctuary of God, or worshipping with the society of his people.

From the expression, "He (Jesus) broke the bread," occurring in the three Gospels, (see Matt. xxvi. 26, Mark xiv. 22, and Luke xxii. 19.) in connection with the instituting of the Supper on the night before He died, and from the subsequent use of the same phrase in one form or another in reference to the Lord's Supper, (see Acts xx. 7, 1 Cor. x. 16, and xi. 23, 24.) I understand "breaking of bread," in the position it occupies in vs. 42, amid "doctrine, fellowship and prayers," as referring directly to the significant act of Jesus on the above occasion; and that the writer meant to state, and would be most naturally understood as stating, that the Communion or Eucharist was celebrated by this large church of baptized believers in Jerusalem.

The same phrase in vs. 46 is, in my opinion, only somewhat more specific reference to the Communion as to the places where it was celebrated:—"And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart;" to which is immediately added, "praising God and having favour with all the people." Though the language here employed may admit of being interpreted in reference to ordinary meals, yet it seems more in keeping with the nature of the narrative to regard it as descriptive of religious service. The statement, "They did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart," which would seem to indicate that they partook of a meal, does not by any means conflict with the above interpretation. For we must bear in mind the fact that the Lord's Supper was instituted at the close of a meal; and it is therefore highly probable that the social feeling of the Christian brotherhood in primitive times led them, so far as taking a meal together in connection with a religious observance which could conveniently be done to imitate what had occurred at the original celebration of the Supper. This was practised, no doubt, by the church at Corinth, (see 1 Cor. xi. 20-22.) though the apostle condemns the abuse which arose in connection with the practice. The fact to which reference is had will, it seems to me, help us to understand why the "breaking bread from house to house," occurred. Accommodation could not be had at the temple for this service of the church, now increased to thousands, even if the building could be obtained for its purpose, what seems to us very doubtful; and convenience, if not necessity, would suggest the propriety of celebrating the supper in smaller companies at such houses of the brethren as were deemed most suitable for the purpose. The Apostles would remember and the disciples would have learned that in the same Jerusalem, not many weeks before, Jesus their Lord and Master celebrated the Supper with a chosen few, not in the temple, nor in a synagogue, but in an upper room of a private dwelling. If a meal even of the simplest kind were connected with the celebration of the supper, we see sufficient reason for celebrating it in the houses of the brethren. But independently of this consideration, it

seems very probable the brethren would prefer places more retired than the temple in order to remember at his table their crucified and risen Lord, and to enjoy the sacred fellowship and union of which the communion is so expressive and sacred a symbol. The members of this church of many thousands would not find it difficult to meet in companies of fifty or a hundred, more or less, as circumstances required, and thus celebrate the Supper, each company by itself, and this is what our interpretation supposes was done. "They continued likewise in prayer." This was imitating the example set them by the Apostles and associates, particularly for several days preceding the Pentecost. The religion that is not sustained by prayer is essentially defective and weak. Now if the interpretation given here, as to the "breaking of bread" in both, or either of these passages is correct, if it be the meaning of the sacred historian, then it will not be difficult to perceive and decide as to the relation existing between Baptism and the Communion. The former is connected with a profession of faith and repentance, and is the rite of initiation into the Christian church, indeed the first ordinance the disciples is required to observe after believing in the Lord Jesus; the latter is a duty to be performed, a privilege to be enjoyed after admission into the church of Christ, is one of the things to be observed subsequent to obeying the law of baptism.

For the Christian Messenger.

Dear Bro. Selden.—

In the Christian Visitor of the 22nd ult., we have the report of a Missionary address, delivered before the Eastern New Brunswick Association by the Rev. I. Wallace. In referring to his labours in connection with the 2nd Cornwallis Church he says, "The Church which had been large was in a distracted state, and fast losing its visibility, difficulties that appeared insuperable and troubles that threatened to overwhelm them disappeared" &c.

Such incorrect statements appear to me to place the Church and its late pastor in a false position before the public, I would therefore ask for a little space in the columns of your valuable paper to make a few corrections. When it is stated "The Church which had been large" (the Italics are mine,) leaves the impression that there had been a serious decrease in its membership, which was not the case. I closed my labours as pastor of the Church in October last. During my pastorate of more than five years, there was a gradual increase in the congregations, the contributions for missionary purposes were in the advance from year to year. Quite a large number were added by baptism, and up to the time to which Bro. Wallace refers there had been no diminution in the membership of the Church.

The Church is represented as being "in a distracted state and fast losing its visibility." This is a serious charge against the largest Church in the Central Association. When I removed from the place in November, the conference meetings were regularly sustained at Berwick, Cambridge and Black Rock. Two prayer meetings were regularly held in the village, and occasional prayer meetings in the other sections. These meetings were kept up, and the pulpit supplied nearly every Sabbath, from the time I left till the missionary came on the ground, does this look like a church "losing its visibility"?

True there were "difficulties," and "troubles," as there often are in churches, but we never had so little faith in God, as to imagine for a moment, that the "difficulties" were "insuperable" or that the "troubles" would overwhelm the Church. These have not however wholly "disappeared" and possibly may not for some time to come.

The Church is yet without a pastor, one highly esteemed young brother, A. J. Stephens is for the present supplying the pulpit and labouring among the people with good acceptance.

When brother Wallace came to West Cornwallis nearly all the neighboring churches were enjoying a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the county was moved by the mighty power of God. Our missionary entered into his work with great zeal, labouring most faithfully for the Master, and was permitted to reap an abundant harvest, in common with the pastors in the county, and was instrumental of much good.

In this we greatly rejoice. If our missionary agent would exercise a little more care and correctness in his public addresses,

we believe that the cause he so zealously advocates, would be more thoroughly promoted, and brotherly love would be more likely to continue.

Yours very truly,

E. O. READ.

Gaspereaux Valley, Aug. 3rd, 1874.

For the Christian Messenger.

NEBRASKA CORRESPONDENCE.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM MRS. B. F. WARD, (FORMERLY CARRIE M. GATES) TO W. J. GATES, BRIDGEWATER. LONE TREE, NEBRASKA, July 10, '74.

Dear Brother,—

I fear you will think, by my long silence, that either the Indians have murdered us or the grasshoppers have eaten us up. The former are some miles west of us, but the latter have been in our midst, and made this lovely land a wilderness, (I fear the Indians though there is no real danger.) Our beautiful little farm is completely ruined. There has been great destruction all around, and we have not escaped. Nearly all the corn and wheat are eaten up, and scarcely a green thing is left in the gardens.

We had ten acres of fine corn, the great army lodged on it and bent it down to the ground. They were a day passing over, and left nothing but stalks. We had ten acres of nice wheat: they destroyed more than half of it. Beets and potatoes were the only things untouched. The number was beyond all I ever imagined in the grasshopper line. I was afraid to go among them they seemed so fierce.

This visitation will make hard times here as most of the people depend on what they raise for their living. Many are leaving here in consequence of these discouragements, but we have toiled too hard to be frightened away so easily from our pretty little farm. We do not wholly depend on our farm for our livelihood. The heat is intense, almost suffocating. The hot South winds are almost unendurable, and there are no shade trees to give relief. Wood is scarcer than corn, in fact corn is used commonly for fuel. Then in the winter, the cold North winds are much more severe than in Nova Scotia. With all the Western advantages my heart says:

"Home dear home I never shall forget, Nor the friends dear friends, I often there have met."

I really cannot say I like Nebraska, that I find it much hotter than New York or Boston, and if all goes prosperously we hope to remove to our native land in two years time. I have not seen anything out West, either in Iowa or Nebraska to surpass or even equal the beauty and fertility of the Annapolis Valley.

Some who send home such glowing descriptions of this garden, Western County, may be surprised at this. Possibly I am prejudiced in favor of the spot ever dear to my heart.

We have an interesting Sunday School and nice meetings near our home, and attend regularly. I still adhere to my inbred Bible principles, and though so far from home and early associates, I can never forget home influence. The dear old family Bible and family altar, made so sacred by the daily offering thereon by our dear departed parents are scenes I love to think over. I try to train up my little ones in some sense in the same way, feeling assured that the impressions of childhood and youth are lasting as life itself. I need not tell you how the good news of revivals in Nova Scotia has cheered my heart as I have read of them from time to time in that dear old Messenger.

If Baptist Novascotians knew how welcome a visitor the old family paper is to absent friends, they would often forward their papers for perusal.

Your Associational gatherings must have been cheering indeed. I am glad you enjoyed one of them yourself, the Western.

Novascotians abroad view with pleasure the many improvements at home. The great Foreign Mission movement of 1873, with the Home Mission work now progressing so favourably, most greatly encourage and stimulate our Baptist people. Viewing our denominational matters at this far distant point, and noticing the advance made since I left Nova Scotia, I feel that one need not be ashamed to be connected with the body. The fuller the Messenger is of the work of the churches &c., the more interest will it awaken in the minds of absent Nova Scotians, or in the minds of some at least. "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." Every true Nova Scotian abroad is proud of his native land, and note with increasing interest every movement tending to increase its prosperity. I thought of you when I noticed some months ago an

account of the proposed railroad from Nictaux Falls to Lunenburg Co. Has it died a "natural death," or will it yet be built? Write often, I thirst for Nova Scotia news. Send all the papers you can. Kind regards to my many Nova Scotian friends.

Yours, &c.,

CARRIE M. WARD.

P. S.—The Women's Mission Aid movement is excellent. What a change since I left Nova Scotia. When things get settled here I may be able to present this matter to some of our settlers. I am indeed pleased to learn that the "Gates Brothers" Organs and Pianos are proving a success, and that the years of toil and anxiety spent by them to produce instruments of our own country manufacture, worthy of foreign competition is being rewarded by a generous public patronage. Yes, indeed I would be delighted to have them forward one; yet as we are thinking of returning to Nova Scotia so soon it would scarce be advisable.

C. M. W.

For the Christian Messenger.

OUR FOREIGN MISSION.

Mission, or Missions, shall I say, or shall I say either, or any thing on the subject? In a few days now the Annual Convention will take place—this year at Portland, N.B., when this, among other subjects will necessarily be under consideration.

But is it wise to refer to the matter in the public Press in anticipation of discussions to take place? Is it discreet, to review the proceedings of the past, to invite serious thought and contemplation as to the present and the future? Or is it better to be silent and wait the action of the Board to be submitted at the annual meeting?

I am of opinion that the subject of Missions, Home and Foreign are fair and proper subjects for public criticism in the denominational Press, and that no harm can, on the contrary, that much good may result. But then in order to accomplish such a purpose, I am satisfied that all personality and imputation of unworthy objects and motives, must be carefully shunned, and any correspondence on so important a matter, to be of any real benefit, should be located on a high level.

I have been, and I am of the opinion that a little wholesome criticism in the matter of Missions is much needed, and may be of use in preparing the delegates about to assemble, for discussing the subject intelligibly and usefully, and in the mean time inducing each of your readers, to study up the case, and so qualify themselves for pronouncing their decisions wisely and well.

The subject of Foreign Missions has been for a long time under consideration by the Baptist denomination of the Sea-side Provinces. How best to promote such an enterprise was many years an unsettled question. The first effort put forth in the case of the late Rev. Mr. Burpee, was not a success—a variety of reasons concurred, but the failure of his health, which rendered his return necessary, was that which finally interrupted the further progress of any active measures for a time, and created delay.

Miss DeWolf, and Mr. George, more recently went out, and I need say no more than that the former, after some years of good service was compelled to return invalided, and the latter drifted away into the employ of the American Board.

Within the last few years, from one cause or other a very decided Missionary spirit has evidently taken possession of the minds of quite a number of zealous devoted members of churches in different parts of Nova Scotia.

The question of an Independent Mission having been discussed and deferred for a time, was at length adopted as the policy of the Baptists of the Provinces, and the Board of Foreign Missions previous to the late Convention at Windsor, received the application of several persons, offering to go out as Missionaries, and accepted them to the number of seven in all, irrespective of Miss DeWolf, returned, and Miss Norris on the field.

Whether it was the wisest thing in the world, to accept and send out to the East seven Missionaries in one year, and that at the inception comparatively of such an enterprise, is not my province at present to require. The Board appointed by the Convention recommended the policy, and the Convention adopted it. A full and detailed summary of what was done, and what was then proposed, with the reasons annexed, may be found at pages 12 and onward, of The Year Book for 1873.

Now it seems to me, it is a matter well worthy the most serious deliberation of all who take an interest in the success of the

enterprise, and who have any tolerable acquaintance with the topography of the East, to consider what the future of this operation is likely to become.

I remember very well and others probably have not forgotten it, that while in Convention at Windsor in 1873, I invited the attention of the Board, and those present to what I considered the necessity of having some organization among themselves or otherwise, whereby the action of the Missionaries abroad would be guided or controlled. I thought it a loose way of proceeding, to send out eight young men and women to the East without any rules or regulations, so far as I knew, for their guidance and direction. The majority present thought otherwise.

In their Report, the Board stated that "Having arrived in Burmah, they (the Missionaries) will probably remain for a time at Tavoy while they acquire some knowledge of the language, or languages they will need, and also some insight into the Mission work. But just as soon as practicable they will enter the territory where their labours are to be put forth, and proceed to locate the Mission, and so their head quarters."

As a reason for sending out so many Missionaries at once, the Board had said, "It seemed desirable that as large a company as we were well able to sustain, should be sent at the outset, in order that they might have the mutual support and counsel, so necessary in a new field, and that there be no discouragement or dissatisfaction arising from lack of labourers."

Well, what do we find has occurred already? Three of these Missionaries are at Bangkok, Siam; two at Rangoon, and the remainder at Tavoy.

If so many were thought necessary to be sent out "in order that they might have mutual support and counsel," I fear that this object is not likely to be attained under these circumstances, for Rangoon is some hundreds of miles from Tavoy, and some thousands from Siam. Again, if the policy foreshadowed in the Report, has not been abandoned by the Board itself, it seems difficult to understand how the missionaries are likely "as soon as practicable to enter upon the territory where their labours are to be put forth, and proceed to locate the Mission and their head quarters."

Is it intended by the Board and Convention that there is to be but one Mission,—or several?

If but one, are the headquarters to be in Burmah, or in Siam? If more than one—how many? After reading the history of Missionary Churchill's voyage by steamer down the Straits of Malacca and thence up the Gulf of Siam, or Miss Norris's (now Mrs. Armstrong's) adventures over the mountains, one cannot but feel that the little band are already suddenly and widely separated. Bearing in mind, that it is not a land of railways, and that steam communication is infrequent, I much fear that our missionaries are not likely to be of much service to each other as things are.

It is true indeed, Mr. Carpenter being the authority, there are Karens in Siam, but whether in Siam or Burmah, they are a nomadic people of migratory habits, unsettled, and their history numbers and whereabouts not very well understood.

Three of the Missionaries Mr. and Mrs. Churchill and Miss Eaton, we may now assume, have at length settled in Bangkok with a determination to make that their headquarters, and to betake themselves to the task of learning the Siamese language. See Miss Eaton's letter of 2nd of April published in the Christian Messenger of June 3rd.

The other five, I assume are studying Karen, and if so, I think it must be admitted, that we have already at least two Independent Missions, instead of one and about as distinct and diverse, as they well could be—by sea-route the nearest stations perhaps two thousand miles apart—fifteen hundred miles at least.

In the opinion of some sanguine friends it may be no objection that we have a Siamese Mission, and a Karen Mission, but I apprehend in proportion as Missions are multiplied, it will be found that the difficulty and expense of maintaining them will also be multiplied.

But it seems that the Board have arranged to accept a tenth Foreign Missionary—see Christian Messenger of 22nd April, to be sent out so soon as the Convention's assent can be secured—whether to Siam or Burmah is not announced. Well, those who are able to furnish the tables of statistics, and can convince their less sanguine brethren that we are ripe for such additional responsibilities, will of course advocate this measure, and advise its adoption. And as I hear, that from three to five more, very eligible young people, are ready and anxious to go, why not send them all?