

CORRESPONDENCE.

For the Christian Messenger.

North Baptist Church Proceedings.

MYSTERY OF NORTH BAPTIST CHURCH, Halifax, 28th July, 1876.

The Committee appointed to take into consideration the proceedings of the Central Association, in recognizing and receiving "The Third Baptist Church," so called, in June 1876, which they refused to do in 1875, beg to report as follows:

The North Baptist Church of Halifax was organized on the 16th Jan., 1848. Under the pastorates of the Rev. John Miller, of Rev. Mr. Bently, deceased, of Rev. A. H. Munro, and the Rev. J. E. Goucher, its members increased until in the year 1874 (when owing to ill health, Mr. Goucher removed to Truro,) the church numbered about 337 members. On the 15th day of June, 1874, Rev. Mr. Avery who had recently arrived from England, accepted the office of Pastor. He held it for one year and a few months of a second, when he gave the church notice of his intention to resign. On the next week, he tendered his resignation, which was accepted. Almost immediately it was discovered that action was being taken by certain disaffected members, the object of which was, to secure their dismission, and set up a new church, to be known as the "Halifax Third Baptist Church," and already some 60 to 80 persons were found to have pledged themselves in writing to this project. Subsequently, and soon after, they accordingly applied to the North Church for their dismission. Upon being interrogated, and asked their reasons for so unusual a step, they could furnish no reply. They preferred no complaint—nor have they done so up to this hour. They had none. The Third Church under such circumstances declined hastily to entertain so unusual a proposition, or to grant their request.

Rev. Mr. Avery was acting as their leader, a relation he has sustained toward them up to the present time. At the then ensuing Association held in Granville Street, Halifax, in 1875, this so called "Third Baptist Church" made a formal application to be recognized and received. Observe now—the North Church was not called upon for any explanation, nor did they make any statement of these, or any other facts to the Associated body.

The Committee on Questions in Letters, among other things, as will appear by reference to the Minutes for 1875, page 17, reported as follows:

"The second letter, is from the brethren who now maintain worship in Gerrish Street, Halifax, and who in their communications state, that 'they have organized a church,' and request admission into this Association, as the 'Third Baptist Church' of Halifax.

It appears from the letters sent to the Association, that a large number of these persons are still members of the North Church, Halifax, not having been dismissed from that church for the purpose of forming a separate organization, and that they profess to have formed themselves into a distinct church, although as they themselves acknowledge, by taking irregular steps."

Your Committee have not deemed it necessary to take into consideration the various points of difference between the North Church, and the separating brethren, which, it may be stated are of a very serious nature, inasmuch as it is not the custom of the Association to receive churches which have not been formed in a regular and orderly manner, the Committee cannot recommend the admission of this Church, but your Committee express their earnest desire that measures may be adopted for the reconciliation of the North Church with these seceding members, and they trust that there will be a willingness on all sides, to make such concessions or acknowledgements, as may be justly required, so that brethren may walk together in unity and peace, and the interests of the Saviour's Kingdom among us, be saved from harm. When that reconciliation has taken place, which it is hoped will not be now long delayed, the way will be opened for the customary recognition of the new church and its admission into this Association."

(Signed) A. W. SAWYER, Chairman.

The report was received, and after some brief discussion adopted with great unanimity.

We mark some clauses of this report in italics. It was a document prepared with care, by some of the leading men of the denomination. The principles it enunciates, are of the gravest kind and underlie the whole fabric of our denominational organization and relations.

It therefore became a Record of the

deepest interest, and one well adapted and likely to govern in like cases in all future time. It was said the other day in the Association at Hantsport, while discussing the report on Question and Letters, that the New Testament had not recorded the manner of the formation of churches. But notwithstanding this dictum, as far back as the history of the denomination is traceable, Baptist Churches so far as we know, have followed some uniform proceedings, by which the regularity of newly constituted churches, has been recognized by other churches of the same faith and order, namely by the call of a Council. That the members of this dissenting minority, could not be released from their solemn covenant individually entered into with the North Baptist Church, and so frequently reiterated, except by and with their consent, is a truism and a sentiment unmistakably pointed to, and sanctioned by the report of the Committee of 1875, and ratified by the Association in adopting it. With a view then as far as in our power of facilitating any action this misled, mistaken minority thus dissenting, might be disposed to take, to secure a recognition by other Baptist Churches, and admission into the Central Association, on the evening of 26th July, 1875, a resolution was passed unanimately, by the North Baptist Church, granting them a conditional letter of dismission, for the purpose of forming a new church. This Letter recites that "as soon as this (North) Church is duly notified, of their being organized into a separate church, all further watch-care over them do cease." No action however followed on their part, (so far as your committee are aware) having for its object to form themselves into a separate regular church, or to secure recognition as such, according to Baptist usage, and the terms of their dismission.

In this state of things these dissenting members at the recent Association held in Hantsport renewed their application for a recognition, and admission. It was strongly opposed by your delegates and others.

The following is a minority report submitted by the Rev. Dr. Cramp, the Chairman, (Minutes Central Association, 1876 page 20) and which was adopted by a majority of 35 to 11. There were upwards of 100 delegates present.) The Committee have to report that a communication from "the church in Gerrish Hall, Halifax," (here they are called a church, it will be noted) has been placed in their hands representing their progress, and present state, announcing certain contributions to the benevolent funds of the Association, amounting to \$78.00, and expressing the assurance of their co-operation and sympathy with this body, if admitted into it. The Committee would have been better satisfied, if the evidence of the compliance "of the church in Gerrish Hall" (when did they get to be a church?) with the recommendations of the Association last year had been clearer, and more complete." (No compliance was pretended.) "Nevertheless, believing that in all essential matters, the above mentioned church, has established its claim to be considered a Baptist Church in harmony with our Associated body, notwithstanding any irregularities that may have occurred in the transaction of the business. (What business?) The Committee recommend that the request of said church be granted, by its admission into this Association. (The Italics here are also of our marking.)

The facts in connection with this singular and remarkable case, are now substantially before the reader. It is no longer a question, as will be perceived, between members of the same church, nor between two churches of the same faith and order, it resolves itself into a state of things, challenging attention, and the gravest consideration, not only of the members of this Association, but of all who take an interest in like matters.

A number of churches of the same faith and order, acting upon precedents and traditions received, and for purposes set forth in their organization, constitute themselves into "an Association." The subjects of "Missions," of "Education," as well as divers others, of less importance, command their attention. Hence an annual convocation of churches within certain limits, and a Record of their proceedings, known as the "Minutes." It is not pretended that these are of authority to bind, or that the present or

future proceedings of any Association, should necessarily control their successors, but one would hardly expect, that in the Records of the same Association for two consecutive years, such marvellously inconsistent discrepant findings should appear. That these two Reports, to which reference is made, are hopelessly inconsistent with each other, are perfectly irreconcilable, can never be questioned or denied. They can never now be made to harmonize, nor can they both be defended. We pen these observations with grief, because the exposure affects the entire body, and must tend to lower the principal actors in the estimation of the denomination. What we want now to do is to bring public opinion so to bear, as to keep the body consistent at least for two years together.

When the matter came up on discussion of the minority report at Hantsport in 1876, which was adopted, this same line of argument was taken, and a prominent member, a Professor of Acadia College, in strong language, remonstrated against the Report. He declared publicly, that if passed, the Association would "STULTIFY ITSELF." The language was strong, stronger than we use, but none too strong. It required but little foresight however to perceive that by the sheer weight of numbers the Association was about to trample under foot the principles of the report of 1875, and adopt the minority report of 1876. They did it. Hence this exposure, criticism and review.

One of the remarkable characteristics of the transaction was that the chairman who had signed the report of 1875, in debate strongly opposed the minority report of 1876, and then voted for it—and the Chairman for the Committee of 1876, who now strongly advocated its principles, and voted for it, as strongly advocated the report for 1875, and voted for it.

The North Church have now no controversy with the "Third Baptist Church," so called. With the view of carrying out what they considered a recommendation of the Association in 1875, they granted them a conditional letter of dismission, to enable them to overcome the obstacles referred to in the Committee's report for that year. But the Gerrish Hall folks, refused to act on this letter, preferring to make straight for the Association. Their estimate of their influence, (the Record of the year 1875 to the contrary notwithstanding) proved to be well grounded. But what is the value, or worth, or weight of Associational deliverances, on any matter while these two contradictory decisions stand recorded? Will they, should they, do they command any respect? How can they?

It was not the hasty act of a few uneducated laymen that has thus complicated our condition, and unsettled the practice of our churches for three quarters of a century at least, in one of its most important aspects. Far otherwise. The brethren who led up, and established the precedent of 1876, "recognizing a Baptist Church, without the Report of a Council," and then within five minutes voted it into the Association, were not novices—were some of them at least, experienced men, well-informed and well-read, and from whom the denomination, we think, had a right, to expect better things. They knew that the delegates of the North Baptist Church present took a deep interest in what was transpiring. Their earnest remonstrances were warmly pressed and the Association body must have known that the North Baptist Church which they represented would keenly criticise any action taken, and resent any affront offered them.

Had the fathers of the denomination, who laid its foundations in this Province, the Hardings, Mannings and Munro, some of them been present, no such results we think could have been reached. No such humiliating spectacle would have been presented as these records now exhibit. So far as the North Baptist Church are concerned, and they have a voice in such a case, they now take this, perhaps the only way open to them; at present, to lift it up loudly, fearlessly, in order in the most solemn manner to protest against these proceedings. They propose to file this report with the Church Records, for reference in all future time.

Wherefore Resolved unanimously that the foregoing report be received and adopted.

Also Resolved unanimously that the Clerk of the Church do furnish a copy of this Report and these proceedings to the Editor of the Christian Messenger with the request of the Church, that he will be pleased to publish the same.

(Signed) A. W. CLARK, Church Clerk.

For the Christian Messenger.

The College Question.

Dear Sir,—

As important consequences are likely to follow the decision which shall be reached at the approaching Convention touching this question, no carelessness or forethought should be spared to make it all that the circumstances demand.

No one, it may be assumed, has any other wish than that the wisest and best course be adopted. If it shall be made to appear that the affiliation of Acadia College with the Halifax University will be every way beneficial, or more beneficial than injurious, every Baptist should favor the step; but if not, every Baptist should oppose it.

For myself, after thinking over the project and carefully weighing what has been said and written in its favor, I fail to see that much good can result from it either to higher education in general or to Acadia College in particular; on the contrary, I find myself growing stronger in the belief that the Baptists of these Provinces will better serve the interests of both by steadily adhering to the line of policy they have hitherto followed, retaining their educational work in their own hands and under their own control.

For the following reasons:—

1. The degrees to be conferred by the Halifax University will be worth no more in themselves than those which Acadia College will continue to grant. This point has been disputed, but not successfully. If it be only admitted that the standing of the Faculty at Acadia is equal to that of any of the other College Faculties, and that the standing of the several College Faculties as a whole is equal to that of persons outside their circle in the Province, then, also it must be admitted that degrees granted by Acadia will be intrinsically as valuable as those bearing the names of the examiners of the new University, whether those examiners be drawn from the existing College Faculties or have no connection with them. If it be said that examiners or examination papers for the Halifax University may be imported from abroad, I reply the same privilege is open to Acadia or any College that chooses to avail itself of it.

2. The degrees of the Halifax University will be worth no more in the public mind than those granted at Acadia. This follows immediately from the foregoing. No piece of parchment can have a greater representative value than belongs to it intrinsically. At home and abroad, every degree by whatever College conferred will be taken at its face, which the public as well as individuals will accurately read. Some of the friends of the new University seem to think its degrees will be worth more than their face—that their very name will possess a virtue and command a respect abroad greater than could belong to those of any independent or unaffiliated College. But this is a mere fancy. In the very nature of the case an examining University can impart no merit to the Colleges cooperating with it, but only serve the purpose of testing the merit they already possess. This testing power—this means of estimating the quality and value of the work done, every College worthy of the name should possess within itself.

3. The students of Acadia—the more ambitious ones especially—will not be satisfied with the degrees of the new University—will not find in them the promotion they desire. Those looking for honors beyond what their own Alma Mater can confer will prefer to go to London, as Schurman has done, or to Harvard as have done Elder and Tufts and Hartt, who are now filling eminent positions as scholars and teachers. It speaks not a little for Acadia that her graduates are permitted to enter the junior class at Harvard without an examination—a standing quite equal if not superior to any that a degree from the Halifax University could give. One of the latest utterances of President Elliott is, that this arrangement with Acadia is among the most satisfactory of the many similar ones Harvard has entered into. With such affiliations abroad, Acadia can hardly be expected to seek less honorable ones at home.

To argue as some have done, that because Mr. Schurman went from Acadia to Halifax to be examined for a place in the London University as a Gilchrist Scholarship man, therefore other stu-

dents will go from Acadia to Halifax to be examined for the degrees of the Halifax University, is simply to assume that the standing of the latter University is equal to that of the former, and that it is equally desirable to obtain its degrees. But this is assumption only. The Halifax and London Universities are indeed each an examining body, but the resemblance ends when we pass beyond the mere name to the work and merit of each.

The whole texture and contour of the Halifax University are too small and insignificant comparatively to warrant the expectations which many of its friends are founding upon it. Nova Scotia itself is not more populous than a third class European city, and can boast of only a few first class intellectual stars. To draw comparisons therefore between the University of Halifax and the University of London, which last has a population of over three millions, and is the renowned centre of the mightiest, most brilliant learning and culture on earth, may be gratifying to the vanity of those who indulge in them, but can be of little service beyond. Indeed all things taken into account, the students of Acadia ought not to feel that the highest promotion lies in the direction of taking a degree from the Halifax University.

4. In affiliating with the University of Halifax, Acadia must lower instead of raising her standard.

I am not unaware that the Citizen of Halifax has pronounced this allegation a piece of boasting and conceit. It has "compared the courses of study pursued at Acadia and other Provincial Colleges," and found the latter to be every way equal to the former. But what is the testimony of facts? Take Dalhousie, which has taken particular pains to proclaim itself the best of all the Provincial Colleges. If the editor of the Citizen will go over his comparison more carefully, he will find that the standard of matriculation is higher, the course of study more comprehensive, and the term of study longer at Acadia than at Dalhousie. To take only the last of these points: the whole period of study at Dalhousie consists of four years of six months each or twenty four months, while that at Acadia consists of four years of nine months each or thirty six months: that is to say, the course of study at Dalhousie is but two thirds as long as at Acadia; so that if the standard of matriculation were even the same, that of graduation could not be. If therefore at the outset the examinations of the new University be adapted to the state of the Colleges as a whole—and all admit this must be done—then Acadia must descend to examinations less searching and complete than she now imposes on her own students. If it be said that, starting at the common level in which all the colleges can unite, the University of Halifax will continue to elevate the standard of collegiate education, I reply that Acadia College, starting at the point she has already reached may do this also, and without affiliation as well as with it.

5. As the Halifax University is only an examining body, its work can never be of more than secondary worth and importance. It is teaching rather than examining that makes the man. After the teaching body has performed the principal work in training the student, the examining body simply pronounces upon it. This last is confessedly important and should not be dispensed with. But it is very questionable whether the work of examining is so peculiar that it should be delegated to a body constituted for this purpose alone. Many take the ground, and with some show of reason, that the teaching should also be the examining body. Certain it is that those who train the student and narrowly observe his habits of study and mental unfoldings through his whole course are as well or better prepared to pronounce upon him than any outside board of examiners can do. The Colleges that have chosen to affiliate with the Halifax University have given as their chief reason for doing so the desirableness of having an examining body independent of themselves, and the London University is quoted in support of their position. But the fact that the London University chooses to confine itself to the work of examining does not prove that another University, or itself if it chose, might not combine this with the work of teaching as well. In the best Universities of Germany the