

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XXI., No. 30.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, July 26, 1876.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XL., No. 30.

N. S. WESTERN ASSOCIATION DOCUMENTS.

Christian Principle the basis of Christian Work.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER OF THE NOVA SCOTIA WESTERN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCHES OF WHICH IS COMPOSED.

(Published by Special Request.)

Dear Brethren,—

In presenting this Annual Letter your attention is called to the necessity of Christian workers making principle rather than feeling the basis of Christian work.

Some may say, "Why this subject? Do not all the members of our Churches thus do?" The reply is a question, Do they?

The Holy Scriptures teach us that not only are Christians workers together with God but also for God, since such is His good pleasure. "Go work to-day in my vineyard," "To every man his work," "Remembering without ceasing your works of faith and labor of love and patience of hope," "A workman that needeth not to be ashamed," "God is not unmindful to forget your works of faith, &c.," "Their works do follow them, &c."

The example of Jesus "who went about doing good," who said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish His work," "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day," and who on the evening of his betrayal could say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," that example left for us declares the Christian a worker.

With this teaching agrees the lives of the Apostles so far as we can catch glimpses of their lives in what they wrote and what was written of them. And yet, notwithstanding these precepts and examples of the Bible, how many professed followers of Jesus are idlers, of whom the Lord of the vineyard might with appropriateness ask, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?"

It is a fact that many who bear the name of Christ do but little or nothing for Him; drones in His cause, idlers in His vineyard. Not that of these we would say hard things, for the cause of much of the inactivity is not far away, and their attention once directed to it will of itself be sufficient to make of them ever after patient toilers in their Master's service.

How many, too, that work with zeal during times of religious awakenings, are soon found relaxing their efforts, and leaving to the faithful few, who in sunshine and storm are ever found at the post of duty, the real burdens of the day.

What reason can we assign for the fact that the few toil twelve months of the year, only now and again aided by those who, at all times, should be their fellow co-laborers?

Why are there so many with harps unstrung who, in seasons of the past, from a heart overflowing with gratitude, sang,

"Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all."

Is it not that these unfortunate ones have been too largely influenced by feeling? Do we not do well to urge upon them the necessity of letting the past suffice, and for future days make principle, not feeling, the basis of work?

Brethren, is not the real answer as to the cause of Christian slothfulness among so many of our church members, in at least nine out of ten cases, that these are more largely the subjects of feeling than of principle?

Does not the same ruinous cause affect all the phases of Christian duty, the giving and toiling, the steadfast standing, the being strong in the Lord and the growth in grace? Is this so?

Are pastors, to whom especially has been intrusted the work of the Lord, to any degree guilty of making their efforts depend on anything less than principle? Are church members, who look to these under shepherds for example, imitating them? Is it to be urged by principle or feeling that we, as workers, may with most confidence expect the religion of Jesus to become a world power? Is it by making principle or feeling a basis of work that one with assurance can pray, "Thy kingdom come?" Alas! how often is the sacredness of the Christian calling—a calling of God—debased by being made subservient to the feelings of man.

Does the farmer, because his limbs are sore and stiffened by the toils of yesterday, keep his house to-day as feeling suggests? Do men in the daily walks of life, in following their lawful calling, consult mere feeling? Nay, a superior criterion have these. And surely the Christian, if he will but for a little reflect, will see the necessity of his rising above feeling that savors much of self, and of making of himself in his Lord's cause a workman through grace worthy of his calling.

We are pointed to Jesus as our exemplar. His life on earth, as given by the sacred historians, so holy and pure, so filled up with doing good, so glorious as a marked exhibition of a life based upon principle. Again and again the truly good of the past are brought before us as worthy of imitation. Their works and love labors, their self-denying efforts, their zeal and faithfulness may cause many of this age to blush for shame as they think of themselves. These were men of faith who in confidence relied upon God; men who at the Throne of Grace learned their duty, and looking heavenward for strength went forward; who, even in the cross-bearing way, could say, "We delight to do thy will"; men who accomplished much in the cause of their Master; whom faith sustained so that with untiring effort they sowed the seed, and, trusting the God of the harvest, were willing to wait His time; these who have graced every age of the world's history, and won a name more enduring than the stars of the firmament, made principle the basis of their work. True, many of them were men of great depth of feeling, but, resting on a surer foundation, were incited to noble endeavour.

Faith may be said to be one of our great wants. The Christian, would he enjoy the riches of his adoption, would he be instrumental in his Master's cause of accomplishing great good like the successful workers of the past, must be strong in faith. By faith he is to make his conquests, through faith, as an individual, he is to conquer, by faith when weak is to become strong. Faith that "laughs at impossibilities" is his best possible possession. The seen is not always for the child of grace, and beside trusting this is not faith.

It is in the unseen, the invisible, that faith has her province. But even faith must have a foundation, and what but principle affords a foundation worthy of the building? Feeling, by whose impulses alone by far too many move, is too fickle for a foundation, and if used would be making a change of base almost every day.

That the Christian should be actuated by principle rather than by feeling is taught us in our being. The earnest longings of our moral natures are religious, and learning that there is a God, powerful and all-wise, to whom we look for life and being, we find these longings based on the principle of right.

Our first teacher is duty, and duty throughout man's whole course of training is the Alpha and Omega.

The instructions given us by Jesus, the commands left for us to keep and do, are to be kept and performed because of right. The Christians of Rome had urged upon them as the ground of religious duty the mercies of God. The Bible has much that plainly shews from what basis the Christian should work: principle always, feeling alone never.

The relation in which the believer stands to God and man is more than once expressed in the Scriptures, and this relation brings with it obligations, to Creator and creature. Every where do we find this. To God, whom we regard as "Our Father in Heaven," we owe a debt of gratitude, and Him we are to love and serve with soul, mind, strength; not merely because our feelings always prompt us thus to do, rather because it is right.

To the Son whose blood has sealed our redemption ours to ask, "What wilt thou have me do?" and to ask with the will to do, because it is right. Ours it is to listen with attention to the teachings of the Holy Spirit, and implore aid to profit thereby. To our fellows the command of long standing and solemn import is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," a command always binding, always to be remembered, and always honored because it is right.

Ours it is to do good, to labor in prosperity and not cease in adversity; ours as children of God to rise above the minor things by which feeling is so often biased, and which, if heeded, would cause many to relax the efforts now from principle put forth in the advancement of the cause of God. Let the Christian ever keep in mind that he is saved by grace, that he is not his own, and that he is to glorify God in body and spirit, and this do from principle.

I urge the necessity of principle as the basis of our work, since feeling is so often sadly vitiated by sin, and made use of by Satan to the injury of the cause. It is admitted that we find it more easy to work when principle and feeling are in unison, as they often are, and more often should be. It is then one can truly toil and faint not. But frequently the Christian finds the tendency of feeling not with duty, and if he should heed its promptings would find to his sorrow, as many have, his soul robbed of the best of blessings and the cause of God grievously wounded.

To the individual laboring in the vineyard of the Lord—and here every lover of Jesus should be found—there are many things to discourage. Many are the difficulties, many the trials of faith. If not by principle actuated, frequently even the heartily begun effort would be abandoned. More than one pastor's hands have fallen helplessly at his side because feeling to too great a degree was the prompter. More than one Church has seemingly failed in its noble mission because pastor and people suffered feeling, "fickle as the weather vane," to be the ground of duty and basis of work. Relying upon feeling alone and acting thereon is taking upon us what is not ours. Ours it is to trustingly "attempt great things for God," who makes known to us his will, and then, resting upon principle, "go forward," ever remembering "not by might nor by power but by my spirit saith the Lord of Hosts."

The necessity of making principle the basis of our work is urged because God's glory demands it. In this way the Christian, as a worker, can but please Him who has bought him with precious blood, and it is in this way the noblest graces of the soul can be most fully developed.

Principle as the basis of work rather than feeling is urged because the condition of the world is such that men thus acting are needed to raise the standard of truth and unfurl the gospel banner. We want to-day not so much the eloquence of words as the eloquence of principle, to make known to a sin-cursed humanity the way of peace and life by the Cross. We want not those who by spells can glowingly set forth the way, and then, not seeing the immediate yielding to Jesus, become disheartened, and yield to despair, but those whom principle urges on until the going down of the sun. We want men whom God calls to "blow the trumpet in Zion," and who will not leave their calling for any other, no matter how honorable or lucrative.

In our Churches we want men in whose minds gospel truths find a sure resting place, who, urged by sacred principle, dare in this age be decided; men who will cling to truth, abide by principle as did our honored fathers in earlier Baptist history. Church members are wanted to-day who will not bow to the world, whom gold cannot swerve nor policy debase; men and women who with soul imbued with love to God and man shall, with many a self denying effort, toil in the cause of Jesus, ever seeking its advancement and best interests. To-day is needed those whose feet are firmly fixed upon the rock of eternal truth, whose hearts glow with love, to press the battle to the enemies' gates.

In this age, when the tendency is towards ritualism and scepticism, the followers of Jesus need be those whom principle prompts "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."

If we think of Patriarchs, Prophets and Apostles, of martyrs whose blood was given to the cause of truth, we shall think of men whom principle urged on the pathway of duty. Such as these have most honored God in time, and been earth's greatest benefactors.

If the Christian will but make the Bible a daily companion and study, will but seek guidance from the source of all wisdom, then will he in the work assigned him make principle the incentive to noble undertakings; then, too, will he in this pathway most fully know the strength of the arm laid bare in his salvation, then know what is meant by the Prophet, when speaking of those who wait upon the Lord, says: "They shall mount as on the wings of eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

Here then we see a part of a pastor's work in relation to his flock. By example he is to show to those under his care one whom principle,

with its untiring zeal, urges on. By precepts taken from God's book to enforce upon all that name the name of Jesus the necessity of rising to the dignity a calling of principle.

The new made convert is to be taught that his is a way of duty and would he glorify the Saviour whom he professes to serve, would he adorn the doctrines of the Cross, he must suffer no other basis of duty than principle.

Finally, we urge upon all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity to ever give to principle that prominence assigned it in the Bible. Thus doing Churches will become nobler and purer. Then though there be fewer words there will be more deeds—though less show more real work. Then will there be less chance for a cold world to point the finger of scorn, as now it often does, at many who at times talk grandly but in the end do but little.

The following is the draft of a general Act of Incorporation for Baptist Churches in these Provinces, adopted by the Western, and subsequently by the Central and Eastern Associations, which it is proposed shall be obtained from the Legislature at its next session. A committee of the delegates from each Association will confer together with reference to this subject at the Convention at Sackville.

An Act securing to Baptist Churches of Nova Scotia the benefits of Incorporation.

SEC. I.—It shall be lawful for any Baptist Church now organized in this Province, or that may yet be organized, to secure the benefits of incorporation, according to the provisions of this Act, by calling a meeting as hereinafter to be defined.

SEC. II.—Members of any such churches assembled at the place of worship of said church, and by a majority of votes, shall elect from the members of said church three, six, or nine persons as a Board of Trustees; and such Trustees and their successors in office shall be a body corporate on behalf of said church.

SEC. III.—Public notice shall be given of the meeting for the first election of Trustees under this Act, and also of all subsequent meetings for the election of Trustees, at one regular service of the church on each of the two Sabbaths next preceding such election, the object, time and place of such meetings to be distinctly stated in said notice.

SEC. IV.—The Trustees thus elected shall be so divided by lot at the first election that one-third of them shall go out of office at the expiration of one year, one-third at the expiration of two years, and one-third at the end of three years, and thereafter the term of service of one-third of their number shall expire annually, and their places shall be filled by a new election, as provided in section third; it being understood that those going out of office shall be eligible for re-election.

SEC. V.—The Trustees first elected shall file or cause to be filed in the book of records of church business an account of their election duly signed by the Chairman and Secretary of the meeting at which said election took place, and thenceforth the Board of Trustees so organized shall be a body corporate. Such Trustees shall hold regular meetings for business at such time and place as they may appoint, and special meetings may be called by any three of them; a majority of the whole number shall be a quorum for the transaction of business, and a majority of the votes cast on any question shall decide such question.

SEC. VI.—Such Trustees shall take charge of the property of said church, both real and personal; but such Trustees shall have no right to divert the property of said church from uses appointed by the church, or to alienate, sell, or encumber the property of said church, or to incur debts beyond what is necessary for the proper care, repairs and preservation of the property of the said church, unless such authority is especially conferred by such church on such Trustees; and such authority to alienate, sell or encumber shall be valid only when approved by a majority present at a meeting of persons qualified to vote for Trustees, such meeting to be called as provided in section third of this Act.

In other respects the Trustees shall have all the rights, powers, duties granted by law to Trustees of religious corporations.

SEC. VII.—When a person elected Trustee shall for the term of six consecutive months cease to attend or to support the worship of said church, his place may be declared vacant by an official notice of the Board of Trustees to the church, and a new election shall be ordered to fill such vacancy as provided in Section 3 of this Act.

SEC. VIII.—This Act shall in no way interfere with the churches that are now enjoying the benefits of incorporation.

The following amusing article from the *National Baptist* teaches a pretty good lesson in a very pleasant manner. The facetious Dr. Dobbs has a very happy style of striking at the weaknesses of his fellow ministers, which, like sugar-coated pills, may be quite as effectual when administered with a smile as when given with undisguised faultfinding:

The Minister and his two I's.

BY THE REV. L. PHILETUS DOBBS, D. D.

[To the Editor: I send you a few of the choicest passages, the gems, I may say, of my recent address to the young brethren of the theological seminary. It was much admired. The students voted unanimously that it be published; and many of them asked me to supply them with copies.

L. P. D., D. D.]

In addressing you on this momentous theme, my dear young brethren, I give you a choice as to the matter of spelling. You may spell it "His two I's," or, "His two Eyes"; or those of you who are addicted to the classics may write it "ego" or "oculus," as you choose. Or you may take as the subject of the lecture: "The minister and his other eye"; or, "The minister and his other I." 'Tis a free country.

But what do I mean by all this? Let me illustrate. You sometimes see a man who has but one eye. He looks, of course, at everything from but a single point of view. He cannot tell, when he looks at an object, whether it is merely a skilful representation on a flat surface, appearing to stand out. But when one has