

CIRCULAR LETTER.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER FROM THE P. E. ISLAND BAPTIST ASSOCIATION TO THE CHURCHES OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED.

Dear Brethren and Sisters.

In God's good providence we are permitted once more, in our Associational capacity to send you our yearly greeting. And if we depart somewhat from the usual style and make this more in accordance with the original idea of a "Circular Letter" i.e. A Pastoral, we hope it may be with God's blessing. We have rejoiced, dear brethren, with "exceeding great joy," as your letters have been read, bearing the glad tidings of God's precious dealings with you in maintaining your spiritual life, and his manifest mercy in the salvation of souls. And now, as the purpose of our Association is the furtherance of the cause of Christ, and the better prosperity of God's churches, with an earnest desire for the upbuilding of Zion, we would call your attention to some facts which are, in God's hand, important factors in the Master's work.

1. "OUR GREAT NEED OF NEW CONSECRATION AND INCREASED EARNESTNESS OF PURPOSE."

Those who have studied the history and the spirit of the early Christian churches tell us that with the ideas of Christian life prevalent at this time—we can scarcely understand the living spirit, the burning zeal, the fixity of purpose, the ardent enthusiasm, and the complete self-consecration of the disciples in the time of the Apostles and their immediate successors. Their conversion was a complete revolution in their life currents. Their waking up to the realities of eternity and the importance of salvation, was a complete arousing of every moral and spiritual faculty, and their sense of devotion and responsibility enthused the soul in such a manner that their after lives were the lives of "new creatures" indeed! These disciples drank life-giving draughts from the lips of Christ and the Apostles, and should be regarded as model Christian characters. A little handful, with God's blessing, they accomplished a work so grand that it astonishes us, and are therefore worthy of imitation! The supreme need of the church to-day is a new consecration to the Lord's work—a consecration which, directed and vitalized by the Spirit, will fill the heart with enthusiasm, and make the unseen fountains of the soul overflow with burning zeal. A consecration which, made in reliance on God's covenant-keeping character, with faith in his ability to cause "a shaking amongst the dry bones" at the word of his power, to make the breath of his spirit a potent life-giving agency to dead sinners, will go forth to do wonders in God's name! Look around you, brethren, at the deadness of Christian churches, the formality of service, the lukewarmness of devotion, and then remember that all the time souls are dying and being lost. And may the sight bring us to our knees, weighed down with eternal responsibilities, and the spirit quicken every heart to new life, and every ear be open to heaven's call, "IN CHRIST'S NAME, TO THE RESCUE!" The question was recently asked by an American Bishop: Has the church of to-day lost its wonted power to save souls? The question is readily answered from God's Word—"The church never possessed the power to save souls!" God alone can save: "It is not by might or by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." God has been pleased to make the church an instrument in winning souls to Christ that they might be saved. And God is yet willing to crown her labors with as grand success as that which astonished the world and filled heaven with new gladness in times past.

An American paper, "The Interior," lately said, It might be well, after all, to ask ourselves the question, are we in earnest when we pray for a revival? Do we want the experience it involves? Are we willing to be broken vessels? Do we want the worldly renunciation it implies? Do we want to do the work it means? Success we want, of course! but success in spiritual things comes through battles which scar and break and humble us! Now God knows, when we pray for a revival, precisely what that prayer means. He knows when we perhaps do not, and if our prayer means O Lord give us more church members, but do not hurt or crucify us, do not

make us give up ourselves in any new consecration, it need not tax our faith very much to believe that we will have no revival! God's promise of old is God's promise to the church to-day: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room to receive it."

And this renewed consecration of our hearts and our lives, will, directed by the Spirit, discover efficient means and channels of increased usefulness. We would particularly direct your attention, Brethren and sisters, to the prayer meeting, which, if not an infallible exponent, is a tolerably correct expression of the spiritual life of the church. In too many of our churches the prayer meeting is sadly neglected! While the Sabbath services are quite well attended and sustained, the weekly prayer meeting is allowed to languish, principally from two causes—First "A want of appreciation of our individual responsibilities in the matter." The majority of church members, too frequently, feel that the conduct, the responsibility, and the success of the prayer meetings belong to a few, of which number they are not. Why should it be so? Are we not all equally interested in the cause? Do we not all hope for salvation through the same source, even Christ? And does not God make the same demands upon all that he does upon any one? If it is permissible for any one member to neglect the prayer meeting, then it is equally so for another and consequently for all! But would not the very fact that your weekly prayer meeting had ceased to exist startle you as would the sight of a mysterious hand writing "Ichabod" upon the walls? And yet how many are adopting the surest course to lead to this result? Brethren there is no excuse which is sufficient in God's sight, to absolve each one of us from the responsibilities of the prayer meeting. We can hide behind no hedge through which God's eye does not penetrate. Each one who absents himself from the prayer meeting is a clog on the chariot wheels of gospel triumph. And believe us, however much we may try to persuade ourselves that it is a little thing, "God will not hold us guiltless." The second cause is "a want of appreciation of the power which the prayer meeting in God's hand, exerts. Fill our churches with church members on prayer meeting evenings, and before one month you will fill them with revival influences! and broken hearts! And in this connection we would remind you of the "SABBATH SCHOOL." All that has been said in reference to the prayer meeting, applies equally to the Sabbath School. Let us truly and divest our minds of the idea that the Sabbath School is only a place for children. It is not only a place where all may study and learn the glorious truths of God's Word: but it is an institution in which every parent and every Christian should be deeply interested. The Sabbath School has been appropriately called the "Nursery to the church." To every parent's heart it has a still deeper significance! God has made it the instrumentality of converting the children whom you love. With unflinching devotion you toil six days for their temporal wellbeing. Should we not embrace the opportunities of the seventh, with more eager interest, in seeking their spiritual welfare? The Sabbath School is not the work of the Superintendent and Teachers alone, but it is an institution of the church, and as much a part of the church's work, as any other service. We would remind all interested in the welfare of Zion and of the youth of our country, that their presence in the Sabbath School, even though they may not participate in its exercises, is largely instrumental in its success. But our Sabbath Schools, brethren, to be interesting and efficient, must be furnished with the requirements which they demand. Grateful for our privileges we would remind you that all necessary supplies are now within the reach of every school. A good Sabbath School literature, pure in its teaching, sound in its doctrine, practically written or carefully selected, is now published by the press of our own denomination, and is furnished at reasonable prices, by the "Visitor Book Room," St. John, N. B., or the "Baptist Publication Society," Philadelphia, U. S. In some of our

Sabbath Schools, may yet be found a pernicious literature, published by houses which labor only for the pecuniary compensation of the business, or by societies which, doctrinally teach erroneous views of vital truths. Let us be loyal to God, loyal to the truth, and loyal to our own best interests, by placing in the hands of our children a literature which will not mislead them in the things which God's Word teaches. And again, brethren, we have another suggestion to which we would earnestly recommend your attention. The needs of our Home Mission fields are large, and their demands imperative. If our churches which are supplied with ministerial labor, would cordially consent to allow their pastors to devote a portion of their time, say every fourth or fifth Sabbath to mission work "beyond," it would enable us to reach masses of the people whom we cannot reach in any other way, and we doubt not, with God's blessing, would yield a rich and abundant harvest. We have called your attention, in this direct manner, to these "labors of love" and acts of devotion for the reason that our annual "Circular" hitherto has chiefly treated of doctrinal matters, "which while we would do, we would not leave these things undone." But we would not have you receive the impression, that while we have spoken thus particularly of externals, we undervalue or forget the great source of all spiritual life, all power and all success, "The indwelling Spirit." That which we need to vitalize and set in active operation all these human instrumentalities, that which is needed to crown every effort with success, and without which all must fail, is the potent influence of the Holy Spirit in the churches, and to be in the churches it must be in the hearts of believers. We believe the Bible teaches the active agency and the all subduing power of the Spirit. Beware of the abuses to which some men would subject this fact, some would restrict it to the performance of startling miracles or the communication of extraordinary gifts, while there are those, on the other hand, who would make it a pretext for sloth and inactivity, by saying "God can convert sinners when he pleases without our instrumentality." It is true he can, and probably will, but God has committed to us a dispensation, He has made us the instrumentalities, and promised the Spirit to give success. Every effort must be made in reliance on the Spirit's help. Every effort should be made with unflinching expectation of God's promise of fruition. Humbly, earnestly, persistently, at a throne of grace, ask God for the power of the spirit in your souls.

In closing our epistle, we have to note, with gratitude to God, that the advancement of our Redeemer's kingdom, in connection with our own denomination and our own feeble efforts has made gratifying progress, through the past year. Our Foreign Mission work, though suffering a diminution in the staff of workers, has been efficiently maintained, and God has blessed it as the means of "bringing light to those who sit in darkness," and leading precious souls to the only Saviour. Our Home Missions have prosecuted with commendable vigor and reaped a rich harvest: Our educational institutions at Wolfville have passed through a trying year, owing to the withdrawal of the government grant, and a slight agitation outside for the Consolidation of all denominational colleges into one provincial institution, but in the hands of a wisely chosen Board of Governors and a tried and trusted "Faculty" they have with God's blessing, come safely through and still maintain the place of the most efficient educational institution in the Maritime Provinces. All these interests, however, make demands not only on our sympathies and our prayers but on our benevolence. If they are to continue and do good work for the Lord, they must be sustained by the contributions of God's people, and as they are distinctively New Testament in their teaching, they appeal directly to Baptist people.

Brethren, they are all our own, and we are God's. As God has prospered us, He expects us to generously support them. The Convention Scheme, which was submitted to our churches two years ago, asking each church for a sum equal to at least one dollar for each member

per annum for the Lord's work outside of their own immediate field of operation, is slowly making progress toward the point of actual realization; nearly all of the churches and many individuals have done nobly "verily I say unto you, they shall in no wise lose their reward." Dear Brethren and Sisters, farewell! "Receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved. Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and Godly fear" and unto him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding great joy" we commend you, and devoutly add with the Apostle: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all" Amen.

tion, the clergymen of Windsor purpose presenting before their congregations the importance of all the friends of sobriety taking hold of this matter earnestly, and of casting their votes in favor of the Act on the day of polling, and it is probable they will take Sabbath Sept. 4th for this purpose. We beg to suggest to clergymen elsewhere in the county, who may not have already given attention there to that the first Sabbath of September would be a suitable time to take up this question, and that it might be advisable to stir up the minds of their people on this point on the Sabbath immediately preceding the day when the vote will be taken.

JOHN McMURRAY,
President of County Convention.
D. P. ALLISON, Sec'y.
Windsor, 23rd Aug., 1881.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.
Foreign Missions.

EXTRACT OF LETTER FROM REV. R. SANFORD TO REV. DR. CRAMP.

BIMLIPATAM, INDIA,
July 9, 1881.

"We are in the midst of the south-west monsoon. It came on mildly this year during the latter part of May, and has continued without any severe storms thus far. It is during the first part of each monsoon that experience has taught us to look for cyclones.

Travelling on the field is unpleasant on account of frequent showers. The ground is well saturated, and the arable land is all under cultivation. Since the first of June I have been giving special attention to a class of seven native brethren who, with one exception, are our helpers in Christian work at this station. We have been pursuing studies in Theology, taking Mr. Timpany's 'Compendium of Theology,' (in Telugu), as the text book. We are also studying, as carefully as we can, the Epistle of Paul to the Romans. These exercises, together with the time spent in giving Christian instruction in the school, take three hours each day.

The school contains 43 children of both sexes. In connection with it our native Christians in the compound receive some instruction. We might have twice as many pupils if we so desired it, and would make provision for them. But it is our aim to have the school serve the purposes of the mission, rather than have it an educational institution for the heathen. We feel pretty well convinced that it is shooting wide of the mark to make the mission school other than very closely allied to evangelistic work. This is a fruitful subject, and deserves a treatise.

How encouraging it would be to have two missionaries with their wives sent out this year! I think it just the thing our brethren should do, if the men are available. We have made a fair start; have become established. Two men coming now would find themselves in a vastly different position from that through which we have been struggling. I believe that a few years of earnest, faithful labor on this field would realize the Lord's blessing in many souls converted. Besides it also appears to me that our brethren would be greatly enriched in heart, and in their home mission work, if they would give a little extra attention to their Foreign Mission interests.

Notwithstanding our many discouragements, let us rest assured our adorable Redeemer has not led us upon a barren enterprise. He himself is in it, and He makes even feeble efforts wonderfully successful."

For the Christian Messenger.
The Scott Act in Hants County.

It may be desirable to remind the friends of Temperance in Hants Co., that the polling in regard to the Canada Temperance Act is appointed to take place on Thursday, the 15th Sept., and it is hoped that the several temperance bodies throughout the county will make in due time all necessary arrangements by the organization of efficient committees, so as to secure as large a vote as possible in favor of the Act. Every effort should be made to accomplish this object.

In agreement with the recommendation of the County Temperance Conven-

For the Christian Messenger.
The Baptist Union of Canada.
MONTREAL, Aug. 16, 1881.

Dear Sir,—

I was very much surprised when I read the remarks you made in your issue of the 10th instant, respecting the Baptist Union of Canada. Your statements are of such a nature that though I hate newspaper controversy, and really have no time for it, I feel compelled to solicit the privilege of giving your readers more correct information about the Union than you have furnished them.

1. You say, "The Baptist Union of Canada has not yet succeeded in superseding the Convention of Ontario and Quebec, as it was supposed it would." It is impossible, to be sure, that no one has entertained the supposition you mention, but this is quite certain that no one had any reason to do so. From the first it was explicitly stated by those most active and prominent in the organization of the Union that it was intended that the two Conventions should remain intact and not be superseded by the Union. It was well understood and admitted by all those brethren that local organizations must sustain and control Home Mission work, but that the united strength of the denomination could and ought to be given to the support of Ministerial Education and Foreign Missions. This the Union will achieve while its affiliation of all our denominational institutions and enterprises will give each other and itself with their increased sympathy, means and enthusiasm, through their annual presentation at a great denominational meeting. These are the purposes and the effects of the Union.

2. You say, "One of the principal difficulties urged is the distance required for brethren in Quebec to travel to any of the great Western towns, and vice versa, so that no fair representation of the two provinces can be got to attend the meetings of the Union." I am almost tempted to ask whether in addition to all his other gifts the mantle of the prophecy rests upon the shoulders of the editor of the Messenger! Not having the seer's vision of the future I am not prepared to say how the meetings of the Union will be attended, but I am quite ready to inform your readers concerning the attendance at the only meeting of the Union that has yet taken place. Our new organization was convened for the first time last October in Jarvis Street Church, Toronto. The meeting was the largest ever held by our Denomination in the Dominion. As many as 138 churches were represented, and 131 ministers and 147 delegates were present at it. Such having been the attendance at the only meeting of the Union yet held, what can justify your assertion that "no fair representation of the two Provinces can be got to attend the meetings of the Union?" The distances to which you refer are less than you appear to imagine. The Union cannot meet further east than Montreal, or further west than Toronto. These two cities are 333 miles from each other. In the nature of things the average length of journey to be travelled by the delegates attending the Union will be less than that distance. Is it one that appears very formidable to a member of the Maritime Convention, that may meet in places as far apart as Halifax and Woodstock, N. B., or as Charlottetown and Yarmouth?

3. You say "Several of the Ontario leading men have stood aloof from any active coöperation with the Union."