

princes usually sat in the way of the gate, or public place where justice was administered. But Absalom shows his deep earnestness as a consummate politician and demagogue, by standing—as one eager to attend to the business of the people. Controversy, or, suit. Those engaged in lawsuits would be specially open to flattery, and to a suggestion of ill treatment or negligence on the part of the regular authorities. Called unto him. A distinguished honor from so elegant a prince. Absalom asked each man of what city he was, doubtless accompanying the question with professions of special regard for his locality and tribe. Thy matters are good and right, etc. There could be no more skillful flattery. Every man's cause was just; but alas, there was no chance for one's rights under the careless rule of the king. As much as to say: "My father means well, but he is in his dotage, and doesn't attend to public affairs as he did once."

Vs. 4-6.—Oh that I were made judge. He is not affected by modesty. Place seekers seldom are. How his high years over the dear people! I would do him justice. Thus speaks a man already guilty of murder, ready for rebellion and parricide, and afterwards openly guilty of incest. Note the insinuation of injustice on the part of his father. Put forth his hand . . . and kissed him. A traitorous kiss, like Job's (xx. 9); and like the kiss of Judas (Matt. xxvi. 49); but an act that seemed like one of familiar friendship to the people. What condemnation on the part of this splendid prince! Did . . . to all Israel. Meanwhile, his father was weak, doting, and apparently blind to the arts of his son. Stole the hearts. Many elements entered into his success in this matter: his personal beauty; his splendid equipage, so like a king's; his frank, engaging manners; his fascinating arts; his flattering promises; and, moreover, the loss of the king's popularity through his negligence, and his withdrawal from the people. Besides this, there was the fickleness of the people, which seems to have been a national trait. But back of it all was God's retributive justice, as prophesied by Nathan (xii. 11).

Vs. 7, 8.—Forty years. An error in the text in transcribing. Probably four years, in which Absalom was preparing for the grand coup d'etat. Now he adds hypocrisy, a pretence of piety, to his crimes. Pay my vow. Absalom pays a tribute to his father's piety, in making this plea. Doubtless, David rejoiced, as he thought he saw in this request a change for the better in his turbulent son. Such religious vows were common in that day, and were held as sacred. Hebron. The place of his birth; and, therefore, it seemed all the more natural that he should desire to pay his vow there. But the wily Absalom saw that it was the best place in which to begin his revolt; for it was the old capital, and there were, doubtless, many there who were discontented at the removal of the capital to Jerusalem. Geshur. A small principality within the allotted territory of the tribe of Manasseh, to the northeast of Palestine, whose inhabitants had never been expelled by the Israelites. It was to this wild and rugged region that Absalom fled after the murder of his brother, Amnon. Go in peace. Evidently David was unsuspecting. Contrast the kindness in his heart with the treason and murder in the heart of his son.

Vs. 10-13.—Absalom's plans were well laid. All the tribes had been tampered with, and he had his adherents in every part of the land. A succession of trumpeters had been stationed at convenient distances from each other, to sound the signal of revolt; so that the tribes should be stirred as with a single blast. There would be a great advantage in this sudden and synchronous movement; it would seem to the people like a total revolution, and would sweep along many who otherwise would have adhered to David. Absalom reigneth in Hebron. That is, the revolution is an accomplished fact; there is a new king, with his settled capital. Two hundred men. Simple-hearted men, who were invited by Absalom to his proposed sacrificial feast, and were not, let into his guilty secret, until they were committed to the enterprise by partaking of the feast. Such participation was of the nature of a pledge to aid the conspiracy. Hence Absalom sent for Ahithophel, to be present at the offering of the sacrifices. Ahithophel would be a tower of strength to him; for he was esteemed as the wisest in counsel of any man in Israel, his word being as "the oracle of God" (xvi. 23). He was grandfather of Bathsheba, and it is supposed was the more ready to rebel against David in resentment of David's sin towards her. Thus David's sin meets him once more. The name, Ahithophel, meaning brother of folly,

may have been given to this sagacious counsellor after his folly of siding with Absalom. See his end (xvii. 23). The conspiracy grew more and more formidable, and ushered in a dark day for David and for Israel.

Vs. 13, 14.—Let us flee. So secretly was the matter conducted, that David seems to have known of it only when it proved a success. The king, formerly so cool and so bold, is overwhelmed. He remembers his sin, and also that it is his son whom he arrayed against him. He doesn't know who to depend upon. Moreover, he would considerably save Jerusalem from the horrors of a siege; and he rightly judged that delay would strengthen him, and weaken Absalom.

Absalom was a specimen of a petted and spoiled child, whose beauty was his bane. The example of the two hundred who went with Absalom, in their simplicity, would teach us to beware of bad company.

Absalom's beauty and arts had no effect upon those near David's person (vs. 15). Thus, the world cannot charm those who live near Christ.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Bouths' Department.

Original and Selected.

Bible Enigma.

No. 288.

Here are fourteen Questions. Get the proper answers to them, and the initials will make a short sentence of four words, expressing a truth which is the greatest possible comfort to right acting, and restraint from evil doing: Who from his youth the Holy Scriptures knew? What evil king his predecessor slew? From what place did Solomon gold obtain? What king had a fifty-and-three years' reign? To what city did David flee from Saul? What servant was converted by St. Paul? What woman would not from her faith depart? What child to God's service was set apart? In what town was a noted giant slain? What prophet foretold there would fall no rain? Who did a historical sermon preach? What scholar wise did in Ephesus teach? What woman's good choice did Jesus commend? Who, walking with God, a long life did spend?

CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

No. 268.

Nine sentences of these form two other sentences by taking two words from each: I will be there if it is fine. Do not come if it rains. Be swift for once. Go to town if you can. Take time and don't be late. Grave offence will be taken if you do not succeed. Let all try and help a little. It will hurt no one to try. Don't pass the time again in idleness.

No. 269.

Take the following letters and from them make two words which are the name of a friend who comes to you every week laden with good things: e, s, a, 2, i, 2, n, 2, r, 1, a, 1, c, 1, h, 1, m, 1, g, 1, t.

No. 270.

Charade.

My first is a useful article Of every day attire, Whose modern styles and fancies One cannot quite admire.

My next is a common color In nature and in art. My whole, an evil passion In many a human heart.

By mitred heads my first's esteemed When it is made my second; It then becomes a prize indeed, Worth competition reckoned.

Bible Questions.

No. 271.

Who treacherously killed Zechariah?

No. 272.

Where did Ahab seize Naboth's vineyard?

No. 273.

Who was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar to govern Judea after the destruction of Jerusalem?

Find answers to the above—write them down—and see how they agree with the answers to be given next week.

Answer to Bible Enigma.

No. 287.

P eter, R ahab, E glon, A bner, C yrus, H eman,

T hus, H amon, E gypt,

W heat, O thiel, R hoda, D avid.

P REACH THE WORD.—2 Tim. iv. 2.

ANSWERS TO CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

No. 268.

H DEVIL H IVITES M ITRE L E S

No. 269.

B DIE B I B L E E L I

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

God and Natural Laws.

Reluctantly I return to this subject. While agreeing with some of my positions, Rev. Mr. Rowe challenges one, viz.: the eternity and infinity of Natural Laws. Very incredulous the worthy brother seems. It is to be hoped, however, that he is open to conviction.

I believe these laws to be what I have stated, and I have reason for my belief. They are not God, but they are the Will and Power of God. God's Will and Power are eternal and infinite. Therefore Natural Laws are eternal and infinite. I take no lower ground. Any lower ground is, I believe, unscientific and unscriptural.

Rev. Mr. R. takes lower ground—the mechanical theory. According to this view, the universe, with all its materials and properties, and powers once existing, a continued Divine Working in it is unnecessary. Our globe, for example, receiving its original commission, moves on and moves ever in its nearly circular orbit fulfilling the Divine command.

But how untenable is this will appear at a glance. The assumption that the Almighty impresses a law upon the earth at its creation, which thereafter abides in force, and under which it of itself must continue to act, is purely gratuitous.

The earth cannot receive a command, and cannot obey it. It is unconscious matter. But the earth moves. Therefore God is the direct, present, immediate, sole Cause. The laws of Nature, then, are simply the Will and Power of God. This is clear. Therefore they have, and can have, no existence except in the Divine mind. This also is clear.

"Some of our ablest thinkers," says Bro. R., "consider the Natural Laws as attributes of matter." Here is a sharp distinction drawn between the natural and the supernatural. These "ablest thinkers" thus ascribe to the material universe consciousness, volition, power. Surely Bro. R. does not agree with them.

On more serious thought, I have no doubt but that he will agree with the Scriptures. They nowhere, so far as I have studied them, draw such a distinction between the natural and the supernatural. On the contrary, they speak of all the operations of Nature as operations of the Divine Mind.

Here is a passage which bears directly on the point: "My substance was not hid from Thee when I was made in secret. . . . Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them."—Psa. 139:14-16.

The fact is, if these laws are in this material globe, then this globe possesses consciousness and volition. But if we conclude—and we must—that the earth is not even conscious of its action, then the will and power manifest in the action of this globe belong to a Being altogether independent of it. That Being the Scriptures call God.

For other reasons also, I do not accept the—using the mildest term—mechanical theory. It is opposed, as I have suggested, to the doctrines of a Physical Providence, Prayer and Miracles as they are revealed in the Word of God.

The theory that Natural Laws are the Will and Power of God, is not self-contradictory, is not opposed to these great doctrines, and is in full accord with the whole redemption scheme. Under the light of this view, we can with new interest watch the Red Sea open for the passage of the Israelites, and come again for the Egyptians' overthrow. We can record on the tablet of the heart, as a fact, Elias' wonderful prayer and God's wonderful reply. We can stand on the confines of the dark, cold tomb, side by side with the world's Creator and Redeemer. He wills and His power effects a resurrection from the dead.

"Lazarus, come forth!" And he that was dead" is alive again. With inexpressible gratitude I receive the view which, after ages of scientific opposition and research, finds, at last, a welcome place for these great doctrines of the Word.

God is not tied up to any particular course, save the wisest and the best.

It remains only to be shown that God is eternal and infinite, and we therewith prove the eternity and infinity of His Will and Power—Natural Laws. In arguing with a Christian minister the texts need be but few: "The eternal God is thy refuge."—Deut. 35:27. "His eternal power and Godhead."—Rom. 1:20. "His understanding is infinite."—Psa. 147:5.

Well, then, may Messrs. Cook and Chesley say that "Natural Laws enswathe us, saturate us, fill everything above us, below us, within us." With higher, deeper, broader, grander view than your humble correspondent, that great man Paul strikes a note which we rejoice to catch in our day: "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Yours truly,

L. M. WEEKS.

Shelburne, July 19, 1884.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Maritime Baptist Book and Tract Society.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY THE REV. J. C. BLEAKNEY, AT THE EASTERN N. B. BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, HELD IN DORCHESTER JULY 8TH, 1884, AND PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

There has been for years a growing feeling among the Baptists of these lower provinces that the denomination needs a Book and Tract Society, with an efficient Colportage.

At one time the Convention went so far as to appoint a Committee to take steps for the inauguration of such a Society, but for some cause that I have not learned, those brethren did not carry out the object for which they were appointed.

After a certain time, during which many expressed their willingness to do something for the work, the Central Association of Nova Scotia expressed their interest in the matter by appointing a committee to present the claims of such a Society, and the following report having been made, brethren were appointed to bring it before the next Convention, for the endorsement of the denomination:

"Bro S. Selden presented the following papers relating to the establishment of a Book Room."—See B. Y. B., 1880, p. 12.

Minutes of the 19th Session of the C. B. A. of N. S., page 24-25:

(B)

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON BOOK ROOM.

The Central Baptist Association at its 29th Annual Session, held at Bewick in June, 1879, adopted a report of the Committee on Denominational Literature, that strongly urged the propriety of establishing a Book Room in some central locality at an early day, and a committee consisting of Bro. A. P. Shand, Revs. S. March, J. W. Manning and Bro. Hon. Dr. Parker and S. Selden was appointed to make such arrangement as they may deem necessary, and report at the next meeting of the Association to be held at Windsor. We the above named committee recommend as follows:

1. That a Society be formed to be known by the name of "The Maritime Book and Tract Society."

2. That the special object of the Society shall be to supply the Baptist body, in the Maritime Provinces, with denominational and general literature at the cheapest rates.

3. That the capital to carry on the enterprise shall be raised by subscription, and the aim shall be for at least \$5,000.00.

4. That every person subscribing Five Dollars and upwards shall have the right to vote at the annual meeting of the Society.

5. That the Society shall hold its first Annual Meeting at the time and place of the Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces.

6. That at each Annual Meeting an Executive Committee shall be chosen to carry on the business of the Society.

7. That the Executive Committee shall report at each Annual Meeting.

8. That every ordained Baptist Minister in the Convention shall be considered an agent of the Society, and shall have subscriptions put to his credit at the rate of Ten Dollars for every One Hundred Dollars that he may obtain to the subscription list of the Society.

9. That the Society shall have a Benevolent Fund from which to supply Bibles and Religious Literature to needy families and Sabbath Schools.

10. That the profits of the Society shall be added to the capital or to the benevolent fund as the Society at their Annual Meeting may decide.

11. That the following persons shall form the Executive Committee to carry on the work of the Society till the first Annual Meeting.

REV. E. M. SAUNDERS, REV. J. W. MANNING, A. P. SHAND, A. L. WOOD, DAVID THOMSON, J. E. IRISH, JOHN NALDER, JOHN BURGOME.

12. That any alteration or amendment to the foregoing may be made by a two-third vote at any regular annual meeting.

ing of the Society, notice of which having been previously given.

(Signed),

A. P. SHAND, J. W. MANNING, S. SELDEN, D. McN. PARKER,

Committee appointed by the Central Baptist Association.

It was then "Resolved, To refer these communications to a committee consisting of Revs. G. E. Day, J. W. Manning, D. G. McDonald, E. Hickson, T. Todd, J. W. Bancroft, and J. F. Kempton."—B. Y. B., 1880, page 13.

The Committee on establishing a Book Room reported, recommending that the following resolution be passed:

"Resolved, That in the opinion of this Convention the Report of the Nova Scotia Central Baptist Association, on the question of the Book Room, should be regarded with favor, and commended to the support of our churches. Report adopted."—See B. Y. B., 1880, page 20.

This is the nature of "The Maritime Book and Tract Society," and the manner of its inauguration and commendation to the support of the churches of the Maritime Baptists by the denomination, as represented in the Convention at Hillsboro, August, 1880.

This Society has now been in operation some two years, and has so far exceeded the most sanguine expectations of the denomination. There have been nearly \$7,000 subscribed to its capital, i. e., some \$2,000 over and above what was considered by as good business men as are to be found in this or any other denomination, as necessary to make it a success. The largest proportion of this amount has been subscribed in Nova Scotia, but hundreds of dollars of which have been subscribed in New Brunswick and P. E. Island.

Each person who has contributed \$5 has the right to vote at the annual meeting of the Society, and brethren from the three provinces enjoyed this privilege at the session held during the last Convention, and the officers of the Society were chosen from each province, there being two of the vice presidents in New Brunswick, one in Westmoreland County, and one in Albert County.

These are some of the reasons why I regard "The Maritime Book and Tract Society" as the property of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces, and a denominational concern.

I deeply regret the course pursued by some brethren, who have been exerting an influence against the commendation of the Convention, and the honest, cherished, and prayerful work being performed by the members of what I regard as being a divinely approved means in the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ on earth.

I beseech you, brethren, do nothing in this Association, nor elsewhere, that will grieve or hinder your brethren in this good work, prevent the united efforts of the churches composing the Convention, or injure the cause of God, which we all love!

I feel that it would be unkind, unjust and very unbecoming for this or any other Association to do anything that would prejudice the Baptists of this province against working harmoniously with the commendations of the Convention, and especially so while we profess to be in harmony with the body. If we cannot agree to work with the denomination in all respects, do not, I pray you, act the part of obstructionists!

Let us either secede from the body, or else do what we can to promote the harmony and success of the denomination as a whole. If any feel disposed to withdraw from the Convention, do not act hastily, but ponder well the consequences, both with reference to yourselves and the cause of God.

Were I to speak for myself, I would unhesitatingly say, THE UNION OF THE MARITIME BAPTIST CHURCHES, UNDER GOD, IS STRENGTH.

As for the necessity for a "Baptist Book and Tract Society" for these provinces, I dare not presume that any of my brethren are so far behind the times and in the dark as to not both see and feel its need. And as for our ability and willingness to support such a society the astonishing success, financially, already attained puts it beyond questioning. I shall not detain you any longer, brethren, at present. Let us defer further argument until the forthcoming Convention. And may the good Lord cement the hearts and efforts of the Baptists of these Lower Provinces together, as the heart of a great and consecrated brotherhood!

P. S.—The following, found in B. Y. B., 1883, p. 27, might have been added: "Rev. C. Goodspeed submitted the following preamble and resolution:

"Whereas, It is of the greatest importance that our Sunday Schools and our people generally, be supplied with sound literature;

And whereas, At the Convention held at Hillsborough in 1880, a resolution was adopted favoring the establishing of a Baptist Book and Tract Society to supply this pressing need;

Therefore resolved, That it is with the greatest pleasure we hear of the

beginning of such a Society in Halifax, of its prosperity up to the present, and of its bright prospect of ever increasing usefulness, and we earnestly commend it to the patronage of our people as the Baptist Book and Tract Society of the Maritime Provinces.

As there is also a Colportage in connection with this Society to circulate Baptist literature we express our gratification, and urge its managers to press on this most important work as rapidly as funds will permit, throughout the bounds of this Convention.

This resolution was discussed by II. C. Creed, Rev. C. Goodspeed, and passed."

J. C. B.

For the Christian Messenger.

From France.

PARIS, July 8th, 1884.

A serious epidemic of cholera has just broken out in Toulon, the well known port in the Riviera. The inhabitants are panic-stricken, and it is stated that about eight thousand of them have fled from their homes. Drez, Rochard, Brouardel and Proust have left Paris for Toulon, where they will study the progress of the disease while doing as much as possible to prevent it spreading. M. A. Fauvel, Vice-President of the Academy of Medicine, considers that the Mediterranean port is not invaded by that terrible scourge known as Asiatic cholera, as has been reported. He seems certain that it is an outbreak of sporadic cholera resulting from bad hygienic conditions. This outbreak will be rapidly overcome, he says though there may possibly be a large mortality before it entirely disappears. The maximum number of deaths in one week was recorded on the 22nd of June, when twelve persons died. Later information received at the Ministry of Commerce says that the particular species of cholera now devastating Toulon is the cholera nostras, a dangerous variety of the ordinary disease.

Whatever its particular nature may be, it is causing considerable terror among people of all ranks throughout France. With regard to the intrusion of politics into the question it will be stated that the Radicals consider the present epidemic an importation from Tonquin, and that it is a befitting judgement upon the annexionist proclivities of the powers that be in Paris. But this is all unbecoming.

My personal opinion is that it is by no means Asiatic cholera, but the form of disease described by M. Fauvel induced by the abominable sanitary—or rather unsanitary—condition of Toulon. Toulon is a town beautifully situated as to the country that lies around it, but miserably constructed and arranged with regard to its capacity for getting rid of the matters which are no longer considered useful for the household or the manufactures. It is a town built upon piles with a substratum of alluvial soil. The sewers, if they can be called sewers, are so wretchedly constructed that foul water, which falls into them, is not effectually carried away.

Moreover, a large quantity of contaminated liquid finds its way into a sort of river called the Vieille Darre, which is only dredged with great difficulty, and when this cleansing operation takes place an unbearable odor pervades the town. It is not, therefore, astonishing that any disease, however virulent, may attack the population. Truly, indeed, the Toulonnais richly deserve to be utterly decimated, since, in spite of the lesson they learned in 1865, when 6000 persons died out of 40,000, they have not compelled their ediles to undertake some one of the many measures proposed for the improvement of their sanitary condition. The ediles in question it appears have resolutely set themselves against any movement involving increased expense to the ratepayers, for fear of losing their chance of re-election. The Toulonnais are rapidly becoming banded as social pariahs in the "Sunny South." Marseilles has closed its gates against them and established a sanitary cordon around its walls, and a quarantine is to be enforced therein upon all vessels coming from Tonquin or the Red Sea. Precautions are being taken here also in view of possible invasion. The Prefect of Police has ordered a rigid inspection of hotels, and preparations are being made in the hospitals to receive cholera patients.

There is fear and trembling in all the countries of Europe, and legislators are devising means for keeping the plague outside their doors.

There has been an extraordinary magnificent reception given to the Crown Prince of Austria by the Sultan; a new palace was specially built; £200,000 were spent on the festivities; meats were served in dishes of pure gold; and at some of the festivals the whole court, thousands of soldiers, and the entire fleet took part.

AVOUEZ