Messenger and Visitor,

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Messenger and Visitor.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1885.

INDEPENDENCE AND UNITY.

Baptists have ever been the stanchest independents. Theirs has been the sternest protest against all domination over the church, whether it be by state or ecclesiastical authority, or Pope. To resist this they have given up their lives in the past, and, if the material of which martyrs are made has not ceased to exist, would do so again, were the need to arise.

Neither do we believe their glorying in this principle to be vain. Our churches may be a little over sensitive on this point, and resent advice as dictation. But the principle, in its legitimate sphere, is an excellent one. It helps to make men intelligent in their beliefs, it develops deep convictions in matters of faith and practice, it assists to make christians staunch and loyal.

There are some, however, who think our independence is perilous to our unity as a denomination. They point to other bodies where superior ecclesiastical power comes in to settle disputes in churches, and regret the absence of any such means among us to compel peace.

It is more than doubtful, however, if any unity secured by external pressure of authority is of real worth. It is like the unity of the staves of the barrel, kept together by the hoops. There is no gain in strength. What is needed is the unity of the tree, where fibre clasps fibre by virtue of an inner power of cohesion.

But the question still remains, how can denominational unity be secured and the independence of the churches be left intact?

To get to the bottom of this question, we must start with the individual; for the independence of the churches is but the outcome of that of the individual. Upon what, then, is the independence of each man based? Is it not upon his supreme obligation to God and his own conscience? He feels by an instinct, the deepest and holiest, that he must be left free to obey God, and follow his own conscience. Should man or angel thrust himself in between himself and these, and seek to compel him to be disloyal or disobedient to either, he knows, with an assurance which cannot be increased, that the intruder must be thrust aside. In subjection to God and his conscience he is to cast off all lower and conflicting bondage, thus becoming their freedman.

In the relation in which a man stands to a church, where his duty to God and loyalty to his truth and his own conscience are at stake, no compulsion can be exercised. The space between himself, his conscience and his God, must be left unoccupied. He will be as foolish as he is vain, if he does not accept instruction as to truth and duty, but no power is to foist upon him a belief or practice involving these two, and back it by a "thou shalt." Much less, if this were possible, can a man force his own belief upon the church; for this would be as much a violation of the rights of the church, as it would be of his, for the church to press her ideas upon him.

How, then, can the unity of the church be preserved, and the independence of the individual not sacrificed? This is evidently not a case for majorities to rule. The only way is in each member of the church preserving the same ideas of truth and duty. If, by the freest exercise of thought a man comes to conclusions opposed to what a church thinks obligatory upon its members, he has no resource but to keep or place himself outside her pale.

Just as the individual must be left to act out his own beliefs and ideas of duty, free from all but moral influences, so must each church enjoy the same right in reference to the denomination of which it forms a part. The only way for churches to preserve the independence, which supreme duty to God and their own conscience requires, and still be united in a general body, is for them to have unity of belief in all that binds the conscience, or is felt to be within the limit of divine demand or command. There can be no compact of silence, no agreement based upon expediency.

What we have written bears very directly upon any question of union between denominations. The fundamental question must ever be whether they can unite and not prove recreant to duty to God, and loyalty to truth and conscience. No truth coming from the mind and heart of God can be left in abeyance or ignored. No practice which is believed to have the stamp of his ordering, can be abandoned. If there can be union, and all feel that they can look up to God with untroubled eye, in the consciousness that they have treated his truth as sacred, and have paid more deference to his slightest whisper than to the loudest call of expediency, it is well; let it come, the sooner the better. If, however, to unite means to agree to be silent on certain parts of what we believe God has taught and enjoined, then let us wait until by the clear shining of truth into all minds and hearts, we are brought to the unity of the faith. That this day may be hastened must be the prayer of all who are in sympathy with our Lord's last petition.

Just in the line of the remark of this article is an evidence of the substantial truth of our beliefs as a denomination. Staunch independents though we are, our body is compacted into as firm a unity as any that have had the bands of ecclesiasticism around them. In the utmost freedom of thought, with no mould of authoritative creed to shape our beliefs into a single form, two million and a half of Baptists on this continent have come to essentially the same conclusions, and have almost all embodied their beliefs in one of three or four statements nearly identical. None will doubt but that these deserve to be treated with deferential respect.

ARE THESE THINGS SO?

Shall we say a word more on the question of the location of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR? We may be wrong, but we see no reason to *herald* jeremiads abroad over this matter. The consolidation of the papers was a necessity, as all unbiassed minds must admit, and a single paper could not be published in two provinces. If one province has a right to resent the publication of the paper in the other, so would that other, were it not published among themselves. Must, then, all the obvious benefits of a single paper, in consolidating our people and making them stronger and broader souled, be abandoned, because neither province can endure the loss of a printing press and two or three compositors? This is about all involved, as the loss of the editor need not trouble any one much.

We ask, how many would know it was published in one province rather than the other, were they not told? Would it be better fitted to benefit N. S. Baptists by being mailed from a N. S. Post Office? Is it a sufficient reason why any should refuse to help it do its mission in their own families and in those of their neighbors, that it comes a few miles further in the mail bags? Can any be justified at the judgment seat of Christ, in seeking to lessen its influence for good, on such grounds as these? Men read Bibles published on the other side of the ocean, and think them as good as those published where they can hear the rumble of the press. If a newspaper is good, why let anything else than its own quality affect our attitude toward it? If the paper is not strong for the truth, if it is not pure and sweet, if it does not seek to arouse in the young noble thoughts and aims, and help on the work of God towards the ends of the earth, and souls toward heaven, then seek to lessen its influence, and may God bless you in it. But if it is striving with all its might with these high purposes in view, then for the sake of the work it longs to do, give it a helping hand, and do not instil suspicion and distrust, which means the loss of power to make men better and heaven fuller.

But in writing all this, we feel we owe an apology to our true-hearted, broad souled brethren and sisters in these provinces. Outside of a very few, we believe, who feel keenly on this subject, because they have not given it the thought needed to see its real insignificance, our people are not so narrow, on either side of the Bay of Fundy, as to be unable to stretch their good will across to what is on the other side. They recognize each other as parts of the great Baptist brotherhood. And whether brethren live near or far, or whether an institution has its location in one place or another within our Convention limits, it matters little to them, so long as it is striving for the glory of the Redeemer, and the salvation of lost men. We hope soon to see such a tide of brotherly love flowing back and forth among our people, as to bury out of sight forever all seperating lines, as they recognize the oneness in faith, aim, hope, labor, and Saviour. Just give this matter a very little thought, carry it to God in prayer, and then ask the question: Shall I help the MESSENGER AND VISITOR to the widest influence, or shall I seek to limit the sphere of its usefulness, and we have no doubt what the decision will be.

This is the first we have said on this question. Unless it assumes greater importance, that we can see in it at present, it will be the last.

COMPARATIVE SUCCESS IN MISSIONS.

From a statement in the Examiner it appears that the whole number of communicants at the foreign stations of the six leading denominations of America, and the amounts raised by them for foreign missions last year, are as follows:

Denomination.	*Communicants.*	*Cost for Year*
Congregationalist	21,176	$288,358.51
Christian (Campbellite)	1,511	26,601.84
Episcopalian	2,700	134,861.58
Methodist	34,390	377,926.35
Presbyterian	18,907	713 039.20
Total	78,744	$1,790,856.98
Baptist	113,263	440,552,85

American Baptists have more converts at their foreign stations by 34,519, than all these five denominations put together, although they give but abont one sixth of the money.

The following table shows the additions during the year and the amount which each convert cost each of the denominations named:

Denomination.	*Added during the year.*	*Average cost per convert.*
Congregationalist	2,371	$244.14
Christian (Campbellite)	365	72.88
Episcopalian	298	592.03
Methodist	2,781	117.91
Presbyterian	3,037	234.91
Total	8,782 average cost	203.91
Baptist	11,891 " "	37 05

It thus appears that one dollar given by American Baptists is as much blessed to the salvation of the lost as six given by three other denominations.

Have we not reason to thank God for the success he has given to our foreign mission work? Ought it not to stimulate us to the largest giving?

—Bro. W. J. Gates, of Truro, in sending a donation to our Foreign Mission treasury, writes: "In response to your touching appeal, I enclose a "special" which is all the whole dollars I can just now put my hands on. I wish it was $100 instead, it would go just as cheerfully." He also adds the following, which speaks for itself: "The announcement of an empty treasury is indeed startling, and every christian reader of the fact should at once remit a special contribution of at least one dollar. If so, how soon would the hearts of these noble workers abroad and the Board at home, "sing for joy." Surely this can and should be done. There are not many true lovers of the Master among the forty thousand Maritime Baptists but could respond to this call at once. "Let all who read these lines carry this mission matter to the Lord in prayer, then help the same Lord answer the prayer, "thy kingdom come," by sending to the treasurer a large or small sum as may be in their hearts or pockets or banks.

Our Missionary Appeal.

DEAR EDITOR.—The friends of missions are responding to the call. Praise the Lord for putting such good resolves in so many hearts. Note the following, which, although private, it did my heart so much good that I want all to see it:

REV. MR. STEWART: Dear Sir,—Seeing your remarks in the MESSENGER AND VISITOR, I thought it would be well to comply with your request. I send you by this one dollar, as this is all I can give at this time. I only wish I could make it fifty. I trust that he who has power to multiply the loaves and fishes may put it into the hearts of many more of our sisters to do likewise. I wish you great success. Yours, BRUSSELS ST.

Dear brethren, remember the statement that I made last week in the MESSENGER AND VISITOR. Five thousand dollars wanted within three months from February 1st, to meet the liabilities of your Foreign Mission Board. Write soon and give me your name, if not the cash, for a part of this large demand. Address,

W. J. STEWART, Portland, N. B.

The responses to the appeals on behalf of Foreign Missions, made in our editorial columns, and by Bro. Stewart, are cheering. One brother desires to be put on the $50 roll and others are sending in smaller amounts. Brother Stewart's own church has done nobly, as the subjoined list shows. So has the Sunday School at Wolfville and some other churches as can be seen by the acknowledgments of the Foreign Mission Treasurer. Send on your pledges and your money, brethren. It is all the better because these special donations are not to lessen the general contributions to the Convention Fund, which is under very heavy demand for all our denominational work.

CONTRIBUTORS.

Portland Baptist Church.	$187 00
Rev. C. Goodspeed,	50 00
J. T. Trites, Sussex,	50 00
J. R. McLean, St. John,	25 00
W. J. Stewart, Portland,	10 00
Mrs. W. J. Stewart, Portland,	5 00
A Friend, Portland,	5 00
C. W. Saunders, Yarmouth,	5 00
W. J. Gates, Truro,	4 00

For the Messenger and Visitor.
The Communion Question.

BY H. H. B.

None of the distinguishing features of our Baptist faith so excites the antipathy of our Pedo-baptist brethren, or calls forth such severe animadversions, as do our doctrine and practice in respect of the Lord's supper. In this matter there is scarcely one of our brethren of other churches who does not look upon us as narrow-minded, exclusive, and bigoted, not to say, unchristian. This attitude finds expression in private life as well as in the religious press; and it is worth while seriously to consider whether they have any grounds for cherishing this opinion. To do so requires a careful examination of the concessions demanded of us, before we reach the "breadth of view," and freedom of action, they themselves profess to enjoy, and to which they exultingly call us.

With few exceptions they all, equally with ourselves, insist upon baptism as the first step in the life of the young disciple, and therefore of necessity, a pre-requisite to admission to the Lord's table. What they really demand is, therefore, that we give the most solemn of sanctions to the acts which they designate christian baptism. But something more is involved than a sanction of the validity of the acts performed. These, in themselves, apart from the principles which underlie them and the doctrines they represent, are mere empty forms. The principles then, in which the rite of infant baptism is based, are the things for which our sanction is demanded.

What is this mess of pottage for which we are asked to surrender our birthright, the priceless heritage of a pure church, Christ's body made up of professing believer's only, of disciples who have denied themselves, taken up their cross, and followed Him?

Let us imagine, for instance, four professing christians, a Presbyterian, a Methodist, an Episcopalian, and a Roman Catholic, as presenting themselves for admission to the Lord's table, at a communion season in any Baptist church. The churches they represent are bound together by the common bond of infant baptism, they recognize each other's baptism as valid, and they are united in opposition to our basis principle,—the spirituality of the church; but the principles on which they are built are as wide asunder as the polls.

The Presbyterian rests his baptism on the theory that Divine grace flows in the line of hereditary descent. "We have Abrahaun to our father," say they, and in the covenant of circumcision we find the perpetual charter of our church. Because the child of a Jew is of necessity a Jew, and a member of the Jewish church from the moment of his birth, therefore the child of a christian is of necessity a christian, and a member of the christian church from the moment of his birth. In other words, because a person is a Jew if his parents are Jews, therefore a person is a christian if his parents are christians, or even if only one parent is a christian. The hereditary quality of christianity is therefore doubly as strong as that of Judaism.

It is this principle, and not the Presbyterial form of church government, which forms the main cornerstone of the Presbyterian church as an ecclesiastical organization.

The Methodist avers that all children, the world over, are at birth regenerated, "by the spirit and the blood," and therefore "members of Christ's spiritual church," and on this ground he was baptized.

The Episcopalian rests his baptism on the theory that the body of the priest furnishes the channel through which the Divine Effluence passes, with the consecrated drops, upon the soul of the babe, transforming him into a child of God. The rite is itself the instrument through which the new birth is effected.

Now these doctrines cannot all be true. Two of them must necessarily be false, yet we are called upon to sanction them all.

In the case of the Roman Catholics, we are asked to sanction not only the theory that the water and the words used afford the vehicle for pardoning and regenerating grace,—a theory which differs from the Episcopalian in providing a different channel, though agreeing in regard to the supernatural efficacy of the rite itself; and from the Presbyterian and the Methodist, in that these declare the babe already regenerated, the one through parental faith, and the other in natural birth, while the baptismal rite simply signifies their "engrafting into Christ," and their "reception into the visible church,"—but also, we are asked to sanction the following ritual, taken from the Encyclopedia Britannica, 9th Ed. vol. 111, p. 351.

"When a child is to be baptized, the persons who bring it wait at the door of the church for the priest, who comes thither in his surplice and his purple stole, surrounded by his clerks. He begins by questioning the godfathers, whether they promise in the child's name to live and die in the true Catholic and Apostolic faith; and what name they would give to the child. Then follows an exhortation to the sponsors, after which the priest, calling the child by its name, asks, 'What dost thou command of the church?' The godfather answers, 'Eternal life.' The priest proceeds, 'If thou art desirous of obtaining eternal life, keep God's commandments,—'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, &c.; after which he breathes three times in the child's face, saying, 'Come out of this child, thou evil spirit, and make room for the Holy Ghost.' Then he makes the sign of the cross in the child's forehead and breast, saying, 'Receive the sign of the cross on thy forehead and in thy heart;' upon which, taking off his cap, he repeats a short prayer, and, laying his hand gently on the child's head, repeats a second prayer; then he blesses some salt, and putting a little of it in the child's mouth, he says, 'Receive the salt of wisdom.' All this is performed at the church door. Afterwards the priest, with the godfathers and godmothers, come (sic.) into the church, and advancing towards the font, repeat the Apostles creed and the Lord's Prayer. Arrived at the font, the priest again exorcises the evil spirit, and taking a little of his own spittle, with the thumb of his right hand, rubs it in the child's ears and nostrils, repeating as he touches the right ear, the same word *Ephphatha*, 'be thou opened,' which our Saviour made use of to the man born deaf and dumb. Lastly they pull off its swaddling clothes, or strip it below the shoulders, during which the priest prepares the oil. The sponsors then hold the child directly over the font, observing to turn it due east and west; whereupon the priest asks the child whether he renounces the devil and all his works, and the godfather having answered in the affirmative, the priest anoints the child between the shoulders in the form of a cross; then taking some of the consecrated water, he pours part of it thrice upon the child's head, at each perfusion calling on one of the Holy Trinity. The priest concludes the ceremony of baptism with an exhortation. It may be added that the Roman church allows midwives in cases of danger, to baptize a child before the birth is completed. A still-born child thus baptized may be buried in consecrated ground."

This piece of pagan mummery is recognized as christian Baptism by all Pedobaptist churches, and we are imperiously called on to imitate their example. But in order to do, or to listen to the demand for "open communion," the words of John, "The children of God * * were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" and the words of Jesus, "Except a man be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God," must be blotted out of the Bible.

For the Messenger and Visitor.
A Reverie.

BY NOVA SCOTIA.

We have a child, one beloved, one that in days of yore came in and went out—lived—before our eyes, to whom we expressed our heart's desire, and who responded in accents of filial affection.

But our Isaac left, not long since, his parental abode and went to a neighboring land, among those near of kin, and took unto himself a wife—a goodly command, this no one dares, and we, least of all, wish, to deny. Alas, however, she returned not with him to adorn our family circle, to add to our family attractions—if this were only the case we would in perfect content *requiescat in pace*—but he remains with her. Alas! Alas! How shall we be consoled? What do in this hour of sore calamity?

"Is your boy dead?" inquires a friendly voice.

"No."

"Is his health destroyed?"

"No."

"Are his prospects blighted, that you thus weep and lament so loud?"

"We will be candid," the parents reply, "and say that on the contrary new vigor seems to have come to our boy; more resolution and higher ambitions seem to have seized him; a broader, richer, better promising field for attainment seems to stretch out immediately before him."

"Are his affections alienated? Is his interest less in the home of his nativity, and in those who sustained and directed his early steps?"

"We see little change in this regard. Not a week passes without his letter coming full of assurances, full of strong words that reveal to us his sterling Christian manliness and answerging straightforwardness and integrity. And, do you know, it is but just that we should confess it, between our tears we are constrained to acknowledge that by reason of the new life our child has acquired of the increased strength that seems to have come to him through the union; of the very fact it may be of his absence, he, by his words, quickens us, rejoices us, helps us in a manner and to an extent hitherto unknown."

"And permit me," the friend continues, 'to ask you one question more: Dropping self out of the account, and looking at your son's situation from the point of view of greatest usefulness to himself and more especially, in the Christian sense, to others, what are his prospects now compared with what they would have been had he remained single at home, or, if you make no exception to his marriage, had he brought his affianced back to his native province?"

"In regard to the suitableness, nay more, desirability, of the union, we never have had a doubt. It seemed to be the one thing to be looked forward to for many years. Our families, both influential, and having previously joined hands in forwarding many good enterprises, seemed to need but this one tie more to become thoroughly fused into one—'to be no more twain but one flesh.'

"In regard to the latter question we acknowledge that either our family or theirs had to be losers for the common weal. In some respects perhaps we are the stronger and more able to submit, and we remember that Paul said, 'We, then, that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.' Every opportunity presents itself in St. John that Halifax has to offer, and some additional ones, it may be, could readily be discovered."

Yes, a little consideration has done us good. We will not endeavor now to conceal what we plainly showed at first, namely, that our grief was bitter, the separation keenly felt, but the more we meditate the more do we recognize in this, as ultimately we recognized in many another affliction—as in that we so named—sorely lamented over at the time, the directing hand of our Divine Father—altogether inscrutable at its first appear-