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Messenger and Visitor.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, 1893.

THE SEPARATE CONVENTION

MOVEMENT AND NEW TESTA-

MENT CHURCH POLICY.

In the discussion of the above

subject complaints have been made of

centralization and individual influence

prevailing to the injury of the churches.

Be this as it may, it is important that,

in the solution and settlement of the

question, the rights, authority and

responsibilities of the individual church

should be respected and preserved in

their integrity.

It must never be lost sight of that

all our organizations—associations, con-

ventions, Boards of Convention and

ministerial conference, and all other

meetings of whatever kind—are vol-

untary organizations which have no

power or authority to bind any church,

however small it may be in num-

bers or feeble in influence. Churches

volunteer to enter into combinations,

such as associations and conventions;

but they do not, they cannot, they dare

not, according to their interpretation of

the New Testament principle of church

government, surrender their right to

withdraw from such unions whenever

it may seem to be in the interests of

Christ's kingdom so to do. Any church

now connected with any association is

at liberty to dissolve its connection

with such body at any time, and, if it

chooses so to do, remain ever after un-

connected with any association of

churches. This is the right of every

Baptist church. If the church judges it

to be the will of God, it is not only its

right, but it is its duty to do so.

At the present time, then, any num-

ber of churches can withdraw from the

Convention, and, if they so determine,

form another convention for purposes

judged by them to be in the interests of

the religion of Christ. Provincial lines

have nothing to do in regulating the

rights and privileges of the churches in

this respect. Any churches in Nova

Scotia, P. E. Island or New Brun-

swick may discontinue themselves with

the Maritime Convention for reasons

deemed by themselves to be sufficient,

and form or not form a second organiza-

tion. If a certain number of churches

in New Brunswick choose to withdraw

from the Maritime Baptist Convention

and unite in another Convention, no

one who understands the Baptist view

of New Testament church government

could, for a moment, question the right

of these churches to take such a course,

if they judged it best to do so. On the

other hand, if any of the churches, now

members of the Maritime Convention,

think it best to remain in the Conven-

tion, their right to remain where they

are is equally good and sound.

Let this right be clearly understood

and loyally admitted by all individuals,

popular meetings, conventions and as-

sociations, and the matter of a separate

Convention, now engaging the attention

of the body, will be greatly simplified

and irritation avoided. If every church

now in the Convention distinctly under-

stands that it has a perfect right to re-

main where it is, or to disconnect itself

with the body, and either remain un-

associated with any organization of the

kind, or unite with other churches in

forming a new one; and that no public

meeting, such as the one held on the

11th of May last, or Convention, or any

body or individual whatever, has any

right to dictate in the matter, the way

is made clear, and heated discussions

are unnecessary.

If the associations about to assemble

should decide that it would be better for

the churches to remain in the Convention,

that would be no more than an ex-

pression of opinion or advice at most.

Such a deliberance would not bind in

the slightest degree the smallest church

in any one association. Should any one

of those bodies conclude by vote, after

careful deliberation, that the churches

of the association should withdraw from

the Convention, that would have no

binding effect upon any church. At

least it would be for the church to decide

whether to go out of the Convention or

remain in it.

The committee appointed by the late

meeting at Brussels street to confer with

a committee of the Convention in regard

to the cooperation of two Conventions

that may be formed in sustaining and

controlling Acadia College and foreign

missions, has no power or authority to do

anything of the sort beyond the instruc-

tions given by churches. The churches

themselves must act in the matter.

Any number of churches that may by

vote authorize the Convention or one or

both of the committees to act for them,

would be in honor bound by such ac-

tion; but, otherwise, anything that may

be done by the Brussels street commit-

tee, or that committee combined with a

committee to be appointed by the Con-

vention, cannot be more than an expres-

sion of opinion of their constituent

members; at most it is advice merely.

Now is the time to see to it that no popu-

lar meeting, association, committee or

Convention usurps any authority over

any one of Christ's churches. Let every

church have room and liberty for the

exercise of its New Testament freedom.

No individual or organization has any

right to lord it over God's heritage.

But while every church is independ-

ent of all other churches and outside

bodies, it is not so, however, in the sense

of possessing a right to do as human

feelings or mere expediency may dic-

tate. It is its imperative duty to

seek to have the mind of Christ, to

know the will of the Lord, and carry

that out according to the Word of

God and the directing wisdom of the

Holy Spirit, sought and obtained through

humiliation and prayer. To learn and

do what the Head of the church would

have done is the duty of every church

of Christ and every member of every

church.

In this matter of having a separate

Convention, or of readjusting the work

and improving the spirit and methods

of the one now in existence, the time

has come, so it seems to us, for every

church and each member to seek to be

divested of all self-seeking, prejudice

and mere human reasoning and willing

about this or that course, and to seek

earnestly for Divine direction, so that

whatever may be done shall be for the

glory of God in advancing His kingdom

in the world.

It seems to us that, as the subject now

has been thoroughly discussed, each

church in the Convention should, by vote

before the Convention meets in St. Mar-

tins, decide on the policy best to be acted

upon, whether to maintain the present

Convention with changes and improve-

ments from time to time, or to have

two Conventions, one for Nova Scotia

and one for New Brunswick, leaving

the churches on the Island to take their

own choice in case two Conventions are

thought preferable to the one now ex-

isting. This will save a long and un-

profitable discussion at the coming

meeting at St. Martins, and it will settle

the matter on the principle of New Testa-

ment ecclesiastical policy. Some of

the churches have already done this.

Let all others follow their example, and

the question will, we are persuaded, be

decided in a quiet way, and according to

the will of Him who is the head of

every Christian and every Christian

church.

At one of the meetings in connec-

tion with the American Baptist Publi-

cation Society, held last month in

Denver, Col., an animated discussion

took place on the report of the special

committee on the Sunday-school lesson

system, which approved of the plan

adopted by the Board as follows:

First. That we publish an alternative

course of Bible study on the inductive

plan, to include both the Old and the

New Testament, to begin with the

life of Christ in chronological

order. Second. That there be two

grades, Junior and Senior, the present

"Inductive Quarterly," constituting the

letter. Third. That we publish an ad-

ditional course of lessons for the pri-

mary department, beginning with the

life of Christ, and including such

selections from both the Old and New Testa-

ment as may be deemed best adapted to

that department.

Different opinions were expressed as

to the propriety of abandoning the in-

ternational series of lessons and striking

out on independent lines. But what-

ever opinion may prevail on that point,

we think the feeling must be growing

stronger that some change in the pre-

sent system is becoming imperative.

Much fault has been found, and justly,

with the lessons of the last quarter.

Earnest and mature students will doubt-

less have derived profit from their work,

though they must feel that on a more

judicious plan their study would have

been far more profitable. But when it

comes to teaching such lessons to chil-

dren of tender years, it seems to be

about on a par with compiling a primer

of selections from Butler's Analogy.

If those who prepare the series of Inter-

national Lessons can't be expected to

be as wise in their generation as the

children of this world, they might

surely have just a little sense in regard

to the kind of topics adapted to the

capacity and the needs of Sunday-school

children.

—It is not what its proprietors say

but what Hood's Sarsaparilla cures,

that tells the story. Hood's Sarsaparilla

cures. Hood's Sarsaparilla cures.

—Get rid of your indigestion before the

threatened outbreak of cholera. K. D. C.

will cure the worst form of indigestion.

It will prevent cholera.

The Southern Baptist Convention.

The Southern Baptist Convention is

the organization of the white Baptists of

fifteen Southern States and District of

Columbia, who number 1,321,540, in

17,710 churches, for the purpose of

eliciting, combining and directing their

energies in foreign and home missions

and Sunday-school publication work.

It has three Boards of Managers, annual-

ly elected, located in three cities—Rich-

mond, Va., Atlanta, Ga., and Nashville,

Tenn.—to whom is committed the con-

duct of these objects, and who report an-

nually to the convention. These Boards

seek the closest possible affiliation with

the State conventions. A vice-president

for each Board in each State is appoint-

ed by the convention, who is expected

to make systematic effort in any and

every way for the efficiency of the

association for that year, in which the

committee deplored the doleful state of

affairs. A very prominent and influ-

ential minister and educator, writing in

this week's issue, devotes a half column

to answering my assertion, in which

he would make it appear that my

presentation of historical facts is

not to be trusted. He does not ex-

plain away the evidence I adduced in

proof of my statement. He does not

even mention it. This was wise, as per-

sons who had not read my article would

not know that I had furnished proof.

In opposition to my apparently un-

supported assertion, he quotes the report

on home missions at the Western Asso-

ciation as saying there was received dur-

ing the year by the Board, \$367.69.

Very many readers would be likely to

think this a clear proof of untruthful-

ness on my part, especially when he

goes on to calculate that there must

have been \$1,238.71 raised that year for

home missions. It will hardly be

believed that he was here referring to

the very sentence from which I quoted.

Here it is: "The amount received by

the Board during the year was only

\$667.69; and of this meagre sum \$367.

50 came from the trustees of the Es-