

## Messenger and Visitor

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### A History of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces.

As intimated in a note last week, we have been favored with the opportunity of looking over the advance sheets of Dr. Saunders' forthcoming history of the Baptist denomination in these Provinces. We are glad to be able to speak of this work, which is the outcome of prolonged labor on the part of its author, in terms of most cordial appreciation and praise. We were indeed quite prepared to expect a valuable work. Dr. Saunders' recognized ability as a thinker and writer, his long and intimate connection with the counsels and activities of the denomination, his untiring industry, excellent opportunities for investigation and the fact that the subject was one in which an eager personal interest would call forth his best efforts, caused us to anticipate a work of uncommon interest and value. To say then that the result more than fulfills our anticipation is not small praise. Dr. Saunders has conceived his work on broad and philosophic lines and in the true historic spirit. He has clearly perceived that his task must mean something more than a mere record of the beginning and growth of the Baptist denomination in these Provinces. The picture, in order to be effective, must be portrayed in proper relations to its natural background, and the law of perspective must not be disregarded. It was therefore not sufficient to show that at a certain time Baptists came to have a name and existence in this country, that they have held certain principles, formulated certain plans, entered upon certain courses of action and achieved certain results. It was important also to indicate whence, and through what influences, Baptists came to be in this country, and under what influences, natural, civil and religious, their life and work developed. This idea seems to us to have been happily realized. The historic imagination has played its legitimate part, and facts are so presented as to enable the reader to form a fairly correct mental picture of the time and conditions with which the writer deals. The many side-lights especially in the earlier chapters of the book, in reference to the material, social, civil and religious conditions of the country and the origin, development and attitude toward the Baptists of other religious bodies, with some account of their more prominent ministers, afford information not only deeply interesting in itself, but also essential to a clear understanding of the history of our own people.

The history of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces, Dr. Saunders finds, "is plainly traceable to the coming of German immigrants to Halifax in 1752, the coming of the New England people in 1760, to settle the lands vacated by the expulsion of the French in 1755, to the coming of the Puritans to the new world in 1620 and subsequently." Among those who came to New England in the early days of the Plymouth and Massachusetts colonies, there were a few who held principles distinctive of the Baptists, and among these were some men of remarkable strength of character and withal of liberal education. Such were Roger Williams, John Clark, Obadiah Holmes (who was publicly whipped in Boston for attending a religious service at the house of one of his friends)—Henry Dunster, the first President of Harvard College, and Charles Chauncy who succeeded him in that office. Persecution of Baptists, however, soon came to an end in New England and there was a gradual, though not rapid, increase of the denomination in that country up to the time of the revolution. In the immigrations to this country from New England in 1760, after the expulsion of

the Acadians, and again at the close of the revolutionary war, there was a sprinkling of persons holding Baptist views, but the great majority were either connected with the Church of England or were Congregationalists. These latter were mostly of the "Standing Order," and their ministers entirely so. But among the people there were some who had felt the influence of the great Whitefield revival, and were known as Newlights. It was probably through this Newlight element—though the steps do not appear to be clearly traceable—that Henry Alline, the apostle of the Newlight movement in these Provinces, experienced his conversion and received the inspiration for the great work of evangelization which he accomplished during the eight years of his brief ministry.

The state of the churches at the time when Henry Alline began his ministry, 1776, Dr. Saunders describes as one of "apathy and gross worldliness." "Episcopal and Puritan ministers and churches were droning away their lives. Godless living in its manifold forms was in the ascendant. Doubtless some of the ministers, and not a few of the members of the churches, were pious; but their influence had been neutralized until it had diminished almost to the vanishing point." When Alline was converted he felt himself distinctly called to the work of evangelization. To quote his own words from his journal—"In the midst of all my joys, in less than half an hour after my soul was set at liberty, the Lord discovered unto me my labor in the ministry, and call to preach the gospel. I cried out—'Amen, Lord, I'll go, I'll go, send me, send me.' Alline was indeed a burning and a shining light, his zeal was intense. "Before his fiery zeal mountains of difficulty melted to level plains. The holy passion to save souls consumed him and blinded him to all obstacles." Dr. Saunders compares Henry Alline and Joseph Howe. "Howe was Alline in the State, Alline was Howe in the realm of religion and church life. Both came up from the ranks; in each was the gift of poetry, the love of leadership, the passion for adventure; and each was a democrat through and through, having an undying passion for the welfare of the people as a whole, and in respectively contending for their sacred and civil rights they were as fearless as the wind." The effects of Henry Alline's brief ministry were great and far-reaching. He was not indeed an organizer of churches but a breaker up of tallow ground, and his work was a necessary antecedent to the work of the planters and builders who came after him. His emphasis was powerfully on the spiritual side of the religious life. Politics, forms, names and ordinances were little or nothing to him. To him it seemed true in an almost unlimited sense, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty."

The immediate successors of Henry Alline were John Payzant and Thomas Handly Chipman, and to them were soon added Harris Harding, Joseph Dimock and James and Edward Manning. These men were at first Congregationalist or Newlight ministers, but one by one they all, with the exception of the first named, adopted Baptist views and became known as the fathers of the denomination in these Provinces. It is not easy to trace all the influences through which this transformation was effected. There was no doubt a Baptist leaven in the Newlight churches. Some Baptist ministers came to the country from the United States and elsewhere, who had an influence, upon the Newlight ministers and their congregations, but an important consideration in this connection is the fact that the Alline reformation had greatly broken up prejudices in respect to church ordinances. When the leaders began to recognize, what Alline had not recognized—the importance of ordinances and church organization—their minds were open without prejudice to the acceptance of that which commended itself as most in accord with the letter and spirit of the New Testament.

These successors of Henry Alline possessed a large measure of his spiritual fervor and evangelistic zeal, but, unlike him, they were pastors and builders. Churches were organized and cared for; Theodore S. Harding, Joseph Crandall, Lathrop Hammond, Thomas Ainsley, and others known among the fathers, were added to those already mentioned as ministers; a denomination began to take shape, and more and more, as it developed, assumed a Baptist character, until in 1800 an Association was formed, and finally, in 1809, the flag was unfurled under

which the denominational ship has now braved wind and wave for nearly a century.

As previously intimated, this history does not leave out of view the work of other denominations which grew up alongside of the Baptists in these Provinces. Accordingly we have chapters touching the early development of the Church of England, in the country, the Presbyterians and the Methodists. Farther on we find a sketch of the history of the Free Baptists of Nova Scotia, by Rev. Edwin Crowell, M. A., and a similar sketch of the Free Baptists of New Brunswick, from the pen of Rev. Joseph McLeod, D. D. There are other chapters on the moral, intellectual and civil condition of the people and the relations of the Christian denominations in the early history of the country, and these side-lights, as they may be called, while detracting nothing from the reader's interest in the main subject, add much to the completeness and value of the history as a whole.

The later chapters of the book are of course taken up with the discussion of matters and events more or less within the recollections of persons now living. Much interest attaches to the history of our educational work, beginning with the establishment of Horton Academy in 1828 and the Seminary at Fredericton eight years later. The history of Acadia College, including its relations to the Episcopal King's College and the Provincial College, Dalhousie, will be read with peculiar interest. In the light of this record it is not hard to understand why the Baptists of these Provinces are so strongly attached to their educational institutions. Here, too, we have the history of our Mission work, Home and Foreign, which has advanced *pari passu* with our educational work, and which now occupies so large and important a place in our denominational life. The history of the inception and growth of our mission work is of great interest. But we are in danger of overstepping the limits of space which must be assigned to this article. It has not been our purpose to present here a thorough review based upon careful study of the book. Necessarily we have written from a somewhat cursory examination of it—especially its later chapters. Contemporaneous history of course has its difficulties and the author's point of view and conclusions may quite possibly not agree in all cases with those of some of his readers. But we believe that we have good grounds for the conclusion that in this work, Dr. Saunders has made a very substantial addition to an important department of Christian literature, and has produced a book which will perpetuate his name to many generations, and one of which the Baptists of these Provinces may justly feel proud. It will be a volume, we judge, of some 550 pages or more. Its pages will be adorned with finely executed photographs of a large number of the men and women who have been or are still prominent in the different departments of the denomination's work. It is also the author's intention to add an appendix containing brief biographical sketches of all the ministers, and a few of the more prominent laymen now deceased, who have been connected with the denomination in these Provinces.

### Editorial Notes.

—Referring to that Western editor who has undertaken to publish the whole Bible in his paper by weekly instalments, the *Sun* notes several instances in which secular journals have shown a disposition to provide religious instruction for their readers by printing in each issue longer or shorter portions of the sacred Scriptures. Our contemporary adds that "it is within the bounds of possibility that the custom may extend to the religious press." We recall having once heard Henry Ward Beecher in a lecture on Education make a remark to the effect that, it was much less important to have the Bible in the schools than to have the Bible in the schoolmaster. Perhaps with a due application of the *mutatis mutandis* principle, the aphorism might do duty in the case of the Bible and newspaper question.

—The Chicago *Standard* explains the character of the British Educational Bill which is being so strenuously opposed by the Non-conformists of England, by the following comparison: "If the Protestant Episcopal Church owned and controlled 1,000 schools in the state of Illinois; if the trust deeds of these schools provided that no Baptist or Methodist or Congregationalist should be allowed under any condition to teach therein; if the sectarian teachers in these sectarian schools diligently indoctrinated the pupils in the peculiar beliefs of this particular sect, we should have a strange state of affairs. But if the state of Illinois should vote immense sums