

The Circular Letter.

(From the Central N. S. Baptist Association.)

TO THE CHURCHES OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED.

The relation of Christian Benevolence to christian labor, is the subject that I have selected from the many that have been suggested as suitable for this letter.

When we think of our educational institutions, and our twenty thousand Baptists, who by profession are pledged to support them, we are pained to know, that for the want of funds, they are crippled and rendered inefficient. And when we take from our treasuries the probable amount paid in by well-disposed persons outside of our churches, the sum, contributed by the actual members, is thereby reduced so small, that we are led to deplore, what seems to be, a sad deficiency in Christian benevolence.

We endeavor to search out the cause. It has been found to be, not in the hearts but in the heads of Christians—not in a lack of willingness to give, but in the absence of system in our benevolent operations. The machinery is, doubtless, imperfect; and a systematizing of our plans, would increase the amount of our annual contributions. But after all this has been done, it is to be feared, that a lamentable deficiency would still be apparent, and the chief cause would yet remain undiscovered. If we have not fallen into a great error—christian benevolence has such an intimate connection, such a close affinity with another christian grace, that it stands, rises, or falls with it. The burning desire to labor for God, and the passion of benevolence mutually influence each other and one depends upon the other for its existence.

It may be laid down as a first truth in religion, that every true laborer in Christ's vineyard has a benevolent heart. To deny this, would be to utter a plain contradiction, notwithstanding all the apparent examples to the contrary. He who has his heart set upon gold, and is, at the same time, eager, by his many prayers and exhortations to appear truly pious, makes a feeble attempt to contradict the saying uttered by Christ, that "where the treasure is, there will the heart be also." Those, whose object is to advance the Redeemer's Kingdom, are never found deficient in a large-hearted benevolence. Their liberality flows like the perennial spring. The benevolence of those whose devotedness to God is doubtful, whose labors for Christ are only superficial, is of a very different character. We are often painfully reminded of this at our annual gatherings. The sensation speaker stirs up the sympathies with his graphic features of the suffering condition of those who have not the gospel preached to them, and for the moment, calls into existence, or from some obscure corner of heart a spasmodic feeling, that passes at the time for benevolence. No time must be lost in circulating the subscription paper or collection-box, for this is a short-lived liberality. In few moments the emotions have subsided—the generous feelings have fled, and the heart is left as it was before its depths were stirred. It would be less sad if it were in as good a state. Souls that have been for years under the pinching, withering influence of avarice have been mysteriously moved, and made to feel that giving is a luxury. But that feeling, wrought up by the power, perhaps the artifice of some impassioned speaker, cannot be called up so easily a second time; and each succeeding attempt to excite benevolence in this manner, will be more and more difficult, till at last it will be utterly impossible. Our churches are now eloquent with the tendency of such tricks to make them benevolent. This is not that generous disposition that should be cultivated in the heart of every true follower of Christ, and which leads him to lay himself and his possessions upon the altar of God. But has not this been too generally the method taken to excite and cultivate the benevolence of our denomination?

The christian character is emphatically a symmetrical whole. True faith in Christ develops this inner life harmonious and consistent in all its parts. It is not in the nature of religion for one christian grace to flourish, without others flourishing with it. A healthy tone of piety depends upon faithful individual labor. However correct the outward deportment, however careful the observance of religious duties, or however high the mental and moral culture, without the influence and power of christian activity, there can be no enjoyment of religion in its highest forms, no glow of religious zeal in the soul, no fervency of spirit. When the christian narrows his duties down to the exclusion of active personal labor, an earnest and devotional piety cannot be maintained. God has made the demand for an obedience, zealous and entire, and has established the laws, by which the salutary and elevating tendency of this obedience, is secured to the christian. The growth of religion in the soul is not the sport of chance. Where the individual passes from death unto life, and surrenders his whole being to the requirements of God's word, there of necessity follows an harmonious action of the passions and powers of the soul in loving and obeying God, a rising up into spiritual nearness with the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus we see that every part of the christian character, rests, like the different stones of an arch, one upon another, and faith the keystone, giving permanency and strength to the whole structure. Is simple earnest piety dependent on individual labor?—true christian benevolence is no less so. The unfaith-

ful christian does not become eminent for fervency of spirit, neither does he become eminent for genuine benevolence. In tracing the intimate connection between the disposition to labor, and the passion to give, the truth must not be forgotten, that it is "God who works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure." It is this that gives a manhood and lends a dignity to the humble follower of Christ. We must also be careful to distinguish between real christian labor, and much that bears the name. By true christian labor we mean, the toil of those who are "laborers together with God," and who force the conviction upon the church and the world, that they are bound to the great purpose of advancing the spiritual kingdom that Christ came to set up among men.

To whatever a man may yield himself as a great life-work, and to ensure success, devotes to it his time and energies whatever that work may be, he naturally becomes enthusiastic. The opposition that is to be borne down, and the succeeding difficulties that are to be overcome, only tend to confirm his settled purpose, and invest the soul with a more intense enthusiasm. If ease and wealth are in the way, they are sacrificed with apparent pleasure, and the sweetest gratification of the heart is foregone without a struggle. This is true when applied to those engaged in the pursuits of this life, and it is more emphatically true, in the case of those who are employed in advancing the highest interests of man,—his spiritual welfare in this life and in the life to come. If the new-born soul makes the highest attainable consecration to God, no opposing influence can stay the manifestations of the work that is progressing in the heart. There will be both in labor and benevolence an intelligent and subdued enthusiasm. This must of necessity be the case, or the sanctifying processes be suspended in the soul. Through benevolence, as a principal means, religion is to be advanced in the world. Let the soul suppress the promptings of its benevolence, and that moment its labor is affected. Labor can not continue sincere and efficient, while benevolence is being swallowed up by avarice. The heart has been smitten by a blight that has spread over all its religious energies, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." The reverse will be equally true. Let the christian cease to perform his personal duties, and the stream of benevolence will cease to flow. One of the chief hinderances to efficient labor in the cause of Christ, is an undue love for the treasures of this world. Many christians fail to make progress in the divine life, and to grow in grace, by attempting to serve God, and at the same time gratify some evil propensity. But the indulgence in one known sin, proves destructive to the whole christian character. The devoted disciple shows himself not wanting in any of the virtues peculiar to the follower of Christ. Active, diligent christians are the fountains whence the streams of pure benevolence flow. While we say that devotedness to labor is conducive to liberality of spirit, we would not forget that it gives the same strengthening influence to all the christian virtues. Doing and giving, are the outward expressions of the sanctifying processes of the Holy Spirit within. The energies and passions of the soul are turned from their natural directions and are concentrated upon a new object. The soul is thereby brought into nearer and nearer sympathy and harmony with the Redeemer of the world, breathes its native air—drinks from its own fountain, and communes with congenial companions.

The aggregate of the deficiencies of our churches in benevolence is more apparent than the aggregate of their deficiencies in zealous personal labors; but upon a careful comparison the one would be found nearly equal to the other. Then if we would infuse into our churches the principles of true christian benevolence, they must be aroused to activity, and induced to make a new consecration of themselves to God. They must be exhorted to do as well as give. And if we desire to have our churches become efficient in labors of love, the spirit of liberality must be called forth, and a hearty benevolence inculcated. No substitute, no counterfeit can take the place of that great christian virtue which adorned the characters of the apostles and early christians; and the purity of which is manifest in the exhortation not to let the "left hand know what the right hand doeth."

Report on Missions.

The Committee on Missions present the following report.

As churches of this Association, the most of us have rich farms, fine horses, comfortable homes, good ministers, ample accommodations for worship, and fare sumptuously every day, but, too often, when the Macedonian cry comes from distant lands, we have ears and hear not, and while our brethren are perishing around us, we have eyes and see not. We need a renewal of the spirit and zeal of apostolic missionary feeling.

Our domestic missions are embarrassed, and beg for generous aid. As the American Missionary Union, under whose direction Bro. Crawley is laboring, is also embarrassed from the effects of civil war, the foreign field has a special claim for sympathy and liberal support. As the Monthly Missionary Concerts, where held, have been greatly productive of good, we would urge upon the churches this general observance on the first Sabbath evening of each month, and that a collection be taken to be appropriated to missions, and that Pastors prayer-

fully strive to awaken a deeper interest in this field of christian labor, by informing themselves, and keeping before their flocks, all the great current facts of general interest in both the Home and Foreign fields.

The Committee recommend that this Monday evening be devoted to a public missionary meeting, that the Report of the Home Missionary Society be read, and the following Resolutions founded upon the three excellent discourses delivered on the Lord's day in the chapel at Wolfville, be discussed: viz.

1. That the present inviting condition of the Mission field at home and abroad, calls for an immediate increase of efficient laborers, in every department of the work.
2. That in order to prosecute the work of Missions successfully, a firmness in faith and purpose which nothing can shake; a unity of plan and action which nothing can break; and a perseverance in effort which nothing can exhaust, are demanded on the part of the disciples of Christ.
3. That in view of the influence exerted by every individual of our race—an influence upon others for weal or woe, so tremendous in its range of action, its continuance, and results, involving correspondent responsibilities from which there can be no escape; we are all called upon to humble ourselves before almighty God; and earnestly to implore that grace by which we shall be enabled hereafter so to live and so to labor and pray, as daily to promote the great work of gathering in the harvest of the Mission field.

Finally we recommend that Bro. I. E. Bill be requested to move the first, bro. C. Randall, the 2nd, and bro. W. Humphrey the 3rd of these resolutions, and such other brethren, to second and support them as many feel disposed so to do.

D. O. PARKER,
Chairman.

Report on Bible Cause.

The Bible is the only infallible guide for man, it is adapted to man, and intended for him—the exclusive right of none the free boon of all.

The church of Christ is the great repository of this treasure, not for concealment, but for circulation. Intended for the world—the church is charged with its dissemination. Can she withhold it from the perishing and be guiltless?

The present time is auspicious for bible circulation. China needs and ask for the word of life. Italy that long prohibited its entrance, now readily receives it, and welcomes its color, tears—and Europe seems generally waking up to read the word of God.

Baptists ought not to be backward in the great work of bible distribution—and while in connection with all evangelical bodies, we unite in seeking its wider extension, there are pressing claims on us—nor are channels wanting through which we may co-operate.

The English Bible Translation Society—American and Foreign Bible Society, and American Bible Union afford facilities for this work. The world is suffering for want of the bible. Vast responsibilities rest upon us—let us discharge these and then be instrumental in the world's salvation.

Respectfully submitted.

D. W. C. DIMOCK,
Chairman.

Report on Obituaries.

PRESENTED AT THE LATE SESSION OF THE CENTRAL ASSOCIATION.

Your Committee have to report that it has pleased God to remove from us during the past year two brethren who are deservedly held in high esteem throughout the denomination.

The Rev. Richard McLearn was a man of rare excellence. His conceptions were clear; his judgement, discriminating and solid; his firmness, undaunted; his christian charity, comprehensive and tender. Having consecrated his powers to the Lord's service, he entered into the ministry, and was ordained at Rawdon, March 10th, 1828. At Rawdon and at Windsor he preached and laboured with all fidelity, and was the instrument of turning many to God. During his pastorate in the latter place he frequently undertook missionary tours, greatly to the advantage, by the divine blessing, of those whom he visited. He travelled also extensively as an Agent for the Horton Institutions, both in this province and the United States, and collected large sums for our educational enterprise. When the failure of his voice compelled him to relinquish the pastorate, and engage in mercantile pursuits in the City of Halifax, he continued to render essential service to the cause of religion, in various ways—as an occasional preacher, a warm-hearted advocate of benevolent institutions, and a judicious adviser in the management of their affairs. The church at Dartmouth was greatly indebted to him, and in fact would have become extinct but for his efforts. He died on the 17th of August, 1860, aged 56 years. "Devout men" of all evangelical persuasions followed him to the grave, and mourned for him as a "brother beloved."

Dr. E. F. Harding was the eldest son of the Rev. T. S. Harding, and was called by grace in early life. He acquired high reputation as a medical practitioner. His christian character was marked by humility, brotherly kindness, and undeviating consistency. The successive pastors of the church at Windsor, from the settlement of the Rev. McLearn in that place to the present time, derived great benefit from his wise counsels, his sympathy, and his co-operations with them in their labors. He was suddenly removed from the family and the church, on the 29th of April last, in the 61st year of his age. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

J. M. CRAMP,
Chairman.