

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, NOVEMBER 16, 1864.

TO OUR PATRONS AND READERS GENERALLY.

The religious press we believe to be second only to the living preacher as an instrument in the service of Christ's kingdom upon earth. It is acknowledged to be an important auxiliary to the ministry of the gospel. Every copy of the *Christian Messenger* is read, we believe, on an average, by five or six individuals, and whoever succeeds in putting one additional copy into circulation, every year conveys to that number of persons, fifty-two weeks' valuable information, on matters relating to general improvement and christian truth. By the simple means then of introducing a religious newspaper where it has not before been taken, one may set in operation an amount of influence for good which cannot be estimated. It may operate on the minds of those who read it and benefit them throughout their lives, and even be the medium of carrying to them truths which will make them "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Respected Reader, with these prefatory remarks we would take the liberty of soliciting from you a word of commendation on behalf of the *Christian Messenger* to your neighbours and friends. There may be some of them who do not now see the paper, and only need reminding, at the proper season, as to how they may obtain it, to become subscribers at once. Others might require speaking to more than once or even twice, who would afterwards be very glad that you had not given them up on your first effort being unsuccessful.

As an educator in the family we believe a weekly paper is often more efficient than the Teacher. In conjunction with the living preceptor, we may appeal to almost every family into which the *Messenger* finds its way, for evidence of its beneficial influence. The members of such families become more intelligent, and attached to the home circle, than others where no such visitor comes to the fireside. The payment for the *Messenger* is an amount which need not burden any. Those who prefer to pay for half a year, at first, can do so with One Dollar. The payment of that sum regularly every half year would be easily accomplished by almost every family desirous of having it. Others might prefer paying for a whole year—Two Dollars. This we prefer when it can be done as conveniently. Perhaps there is no more economical expenditure for the family generally, during the year, than the sum paid for the family newspaper. The members of the family who are most detained at home, and do not mix with the busy affairs of mankind, are especially benefited by its weekly visits.

We respectfully commend this matter to our friends every where, and hope to have their co-operation, so as to secure a large addition to our list of subscribers before the end of the year. By way of inducement for New Subscribers to commence forthwith, we propose to place on our list all the names received, with the payment in advance, before the end of the year, crediting their payments from the first of January forward; the papers to such New Subscribers sent previous to that date will therefore be free. Pastors and People, old and young, male and female, we want your help; and we doubt not if a united effort were made, it would add to our list five hundred new names before the New Year.

SPECIAL RELIGIOUS SERVICES.

If ever there was a time when religion was unnecessary or that its claims could be safely put aside, and in any measure dispensed with, that time is not now. It is very evident that an observance of the outward forms of a religious life, a devout attention to the means of grace, and a general recognition of christianity, are now part and parcel of good manners, with the world as well as with the church. Does not this, then, render a more positive confession of Christ before the world less necessary than heretofore? May be a question which occasionally arises in the minds of many. In reply to this, we may remark, that an admission of the claims of religion is no guarantee of possessing saving faith in Christ. A profession of religion in the mass is nowhere shown to be that which is acceptable before God. Various forms of expression are used in the Word of God, showing that religion is an individual matter: "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature," &c. "Ye must be born again."

"Whoever believeth and is baptized shall be saved," &c.

What may be the peculiar phase of christianity most required at the present day may be determined differently by different persons, but we have no hesitation in concluding that there is a want of earnest enquiry into the vital truths of the gospel, and a disposition to cling to preconceived opinions, which produces a sense of security without effecting a change of heart and life.

Whilst fashion may change in the opinions men may tolerate, there can be no change in what is required to prepare men for heaven and future happiness. The demands made by the Word of God are not changed; they belong to no age or class in particular, but, in all ages, Repentance towards God and Faith in the Lord Jesus are indispensable to salvation.

Whether this is the proper time to expect a Revival of religion, we have no special means of determining. It certainly is a time when a revival is required. We make no hesitation in affirming, what we believe will not be questioned by the best part of all denominations, that there is in all a lack of vital earnest piety. Special services have often had the effect of arousing from a state of lethargy those who had sunk into a state of declension. God in his providence, sometimes by his judgments, sends special visitations upon individuals and upon communities. These call up special enquiry and examination into the cause of such calamity, and make men search their hearts and lives, and often the result is that they turn and seek Him whom they had almost forgotten. In such cases the judgment becomes a channel for blessing, and what was regarded as evil becomes an occasion of bringing forth the greatest good. When the streams are cut off, men go to the fountain. Special services are then considered quite proper, even by those who are indifferent at other times.

We have no idea that extra services are essential to a revival of religion; but, as they afford opportunities for christian intercourse, prayer and exhortation, they are frequently the precursors of God's gracious visitations to churches and communities, and become the means by which a revival of religion manifests itself. A regular continuance in the ordinary course of attention to worldly affairs is thus broken in upon, and men are led to think that there is a greater good to be sought than earth can supply. When such services have this effect the interruption shows them that these earthly things, together with the ordinances of religion, are but the scaffolding for erecting the building in which we are to dwell for ever. Our frail tabernacle must soon be taken down, and we must have a mansion where we are to remain throughout eternity and be at home with God. The title to this can alone be obtained by personal application to Christ. Whatever may awaken men to this subject should command the earnest attention of christians.

With these feelings we shall not think special services a burden, but a source of the highest joy, and fraught with incalculable blessings to all participating in them.

Since writing the above we have learned that His Excellency the Administrator of the Government has, by Proclamation, appointed THURSDAY, THE 1ST DAY OF DECEMBER, AS A DAY OF THANKSGIVING TO ALMIGHTY GOD for the manifold blessings received at His hands, and especially for the abundant harvest and the continuance of Peace. All "Her Majesty's loving subjects" in this Province are exhorted to observe reverently and devoutly, the said Day.

It will be observed that this Day of Thanksgiving is to be on the same date as that named for the Day of Humiliation and Prayer in the Baptist Churches throughout the Province. A similar coincidence occurred in 1862. It was then, as now, undesigned, and purely accidental, that the same day should be appointed for both observances. We are glad to find the notice given earlier for the Provincial Thanksgiving Day than it has been heretofore. We see no necessity for any change to be made by our churches; the subject of Prayer and Humiliation does not conflict with that of Thanksgiving. Indeed the latter rather suggests a very important association which should be preserved between the two. Gratitude for blessings already conferred is commonly the precursor of new favors. If we fail to recognize the hand of the Giver in the good already conferred, we do but show ourselves, not only unworthy of greater and higher blessings, but unable to appreciate what we have, and liable to have them withdrawn.

Let, then, Thursday, the first day of December, be made a day of Special Prayer and Thanksgiving. Faithful self-examination and enquiry into the necessity for a state of higher spiritual life, and more thorough devotedness to the service of Christ, should characterize all the services. Thanksgiving for the bless-

ings conferred will follow. Earnest petitions will then arise to Heaven from hearts sensible of their need and their responsibility. We trust that a Pentecostal visitation will be the result, causing men everywhere to enquire, What shall we do? Christians should be prepared to sympathize with their fellow sinners, and give them a prompt and decisive answer, and an invitation to believe on the Lord Jesus, and partake of the same blessings they have themselves received. Thus God will be glorified in the salvation of men.

THE ENGLISH BAPTIST UNION.

THE late Autumnal session of this body held at Birmingham, on Wednesday and Thursday, the 12th and 13th ult., was one of very unusual interest—calling together about four hundred ministers and delegates in that great centre of British manufactures. The names are given of two hundred and fifty ministers who were present.

It was opened by half an hour spent in devotional exercises, over which the Rev. J. H. Hinton presided.

The President of the Union, Rev. Mr. Mursell's Inaugural Address is very highly spoken of. "A looker-on," writing in the *Freeman*, says of it:—

"The President was in his most genial mood; and he read his masterly address with, for him, unusual clearness and emphasis. It is pretty well known throughout the denomination, that Mr. Mursell does not often read his discourses; and that the great heart within him dislikes to be trammelled by a mechanical subserviency to manuscript. Yet, the rev. gentleman has too keen a sense of honour ever to slight either an audience or an occasion; and whenever he occupies a representative or a specially responsible position, he weighs well his words, and when his words are well weighed, we know what weighty words they are."

After treating on the nature of the union existing amongst the members, and the good it is calculated to confer, he proceeded to the following statements concerning its spirit and objects:—

"It is not for me, perhaps, my esteemed associates, to indicate objects worthy of this united body, but there are two or three which might well come into our councils and fill our thoughtful and prayerful attention. Among these, permit me to enumerate the raising of funds for the erection of meeting-houses in populous and necessitous districts; the supercession, on practicable, sound, and safe principles, of the distinction between General and Particular Baptists; the removal of all national and ecclesiastical exactions from Nonconforming communities; a careful attention to the Governmental system of education, which in the hands of a great party is worked adversely to the principles and interests of Dissent; and the establishment of a denominational fund for the relief of the widows of ministers and of superannuated labourers. This last I take the liberty of pressing upon you. I am aware of local societies which within their assigned limits meet this necessity; but surely there is magnanimity enough among us, or at least there ought to be, to merge these limited arrangements in one great denominational institution. If the ministers of the present day would contribute an annual amount towards such a result, it would be supplemented by the wealthier friends of the body, and the churches of Christ, when we are gone, would inherit the advantage and appreciate the grace. To hand down to posterity a beneficial institution, the proceeds of which we cannot personally inherit, would be to lend the fragrance of a high and generous example, and to stir to noble deeds unborn generations."

"While, in all propriety, the Baptist Union gives its chief attention to questions affecting the welfare and the progress of the body it represents, it repudiates a narrow and exclusive spirit. Questions may sometimes arise of interest, which lie beyond a strictly denominational range, which belong to a sphere common to all Evangelical or Nonconforming bodies, matters which relate to the commonwealth of free and enlightened Christendom. Events may transpire or movements occur on this large arena which may call for the smile of approbation or the frown of rebuke. Such co-action with kindred institutions may occasionally be appropriate, and have all the force of moral and of natural obligation. But if I might be allowed to utter a note of advice, it would be on the side of very mature deliberation and nervous caution. A readiness to respond to every call which may be made on sympathy and aid has, I submit, rather a tendency to lower than to elevate the institutional standard of confederate assemblies; they cannot, in my opinion, cherish too habitually the element of self-respect, or guard too wisely against lending their support to the numberless claimants who may seek the advantage of their influence and their name. A hasty promptitude to adopt every case which may arise, and to hearken to appeals from every quarter of the busy heaven of social and philanthropic enterprise, might be construed into a panting for a notoriety which modest procedure and intrinsic merits had failed to ensure. The Baptist Union should maintain a high though not a haughty position. And while we disclaim the spirit of exclusiveness, we discard a religiously sequestered temper. Our motto and our prayer are, 'Grace be with all them who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.' We have sometimes been charged as a denomina-

tion with bigotry, but upon us, in the language of another, 'the poisoned arrow will fall point-less.' People who undertake to hurl epithets at their Christian brethren should take the trouble of trying to understand their force. Bigotry does not consist in an earnest attachment to, and firm advocacy of, tenets we conscientiously approve, but in denying to others the liberty of doing the same."

The circumstance of there being a large number of General Baptists present by special invitation appears to have afforded great satisfaction to all. The success of the movement leads to the supposition that a union of the two Baptist bodies will follow, or, at no distant day, if a formal combination do not take place, at least a union of heart, which is far better, will be formed by these two branches of the Baptist family.

A number of valuable papers were read by leading ministers in the denomination.

The Rev. George Gould read a paper on "Romanism and Scepticism viewed in relation to Baptist Principles."

Rev. W. Underwood next read a paper on "the General Baptist Denomination, its past History, distinctive Peculiarities, and present Position."

The Rev. Mr. Pike, of Leicester, said that Mr. Underwood had no doubt given a faithful view of the whole question as it presented itself to his own judgment, but he must beg leave to say that the confession of faith contained in the paper did not at all agree with his ideas, and that he did not wish to be bound by it.

The Rev. Mr. Lewitt said he believed the expressions of opinion contained in Mr. Underwood's paper, and the statements he had so clearly made, would be subscribed to by five-sixths of the General Baptist ministers, though of course their brother Pike had a right, if he thought fit, to protest against it. He (Mr. Lewitt) owed all he was as a minister to the existence of the General Baptist denomination, but during the last few years his own convictions had become much broader than they were before, and he saw but few obstacles in the way of a more entire union between the two divisions of the Baptist body. They all held the same great doctrines, and he was satisfied that there were greater differences between Particular Baptists themselves, than between the Particular and the General Baptists as bodies. He would rejoice to see the distinctive names dropped, and he thought the time had come when this ought to be done. Meetings of that kind had a tendency to lessen the distinctions and differences that existed among them, and he hoped that as they were all one in Christ Jesus they would before long be all brethren in the connection that had been referred to.

Rev. W. Robinson introduced a form of petition to Parliament, praying for enquiry into the subject of a separation of Church and State. This called up warm but friendly discussion, and was finally referred to a committee.

At the public Dinner to the ministers and delegates, the Rev. Mr. Dale, an Independent minister, in obedience to loud calls, rose and said he desired to express, most cordially, on behalf of the churches of the Congregational order, the gratitude which he was sure they would all feel when they heard of the very kind and Christian terms in which they had been spoken of again and again, in the course of the meetings of the Baptist Union. They had so long lived in affection together, that he almost began to ask whether there had been a lovers' quarrel which had occasioned the particular expressions of goodwill which had been made again and again during the last day or two. (Laughter and applause.)

The Rev. J. H. Hinton introduced the subject of aid to the Freed Negroes in the United States and coupled it with the aid rendered by America to the Lancashire operatives, and recommended sympathy and subscriptions.

The Rev. C. M. Birrell gave an excellent Address on "The influence of the present time on Personal Religion," showing that a time of prosperity was a far severer trial of christian faithfulness than a time of adversity and persecution. He alluded to the bad influence on the young of certain amusements sometimes allowed in christian families.

The Rev. J. P. Chown read a most important paper on "Church work in large towns" and noticed Sabbath Schools, Street missionaries, Bible women, tract distribution and lecturing. The Rev. W. Brook spoke on the same subject affirming that having lived in St. Giles's for fifteen or sixteen years and witnessed the effect of church work in that neighbourhood, he deemed it an entire success, and gave encouragement to similar labor.

The Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel read a paper on "Individual effort for the conversion of sinners." He spoke faithfully to christian parents on the importance of their pressing on their children the necessity of seeking Christ and not leaving that duty wholly to Ministers and Teachers.

It is proposed to have these several papers published together. We doubt not they will form a very useful volume, and give in a permanent form these expressions of the sentiments of the body on subjects of general importance.