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Circular Letter.

For the Christian Messenger.
(Published by request.)
ZEAL FOR GOD.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER OF THE NOVA SCOTIA CENTRAL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, TO THE CHURCHES OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED.

Dear Brethren,—

In this our day the wants of the people are many, and the continual demand is progress, yet one is led to cry as did the wise man of old, 'there is nothing new under the sun.' But many may say, 'See what the mind and intelligence of man hath wrought.' Who caused those huge leviathans with iron sides more compact than those of which Job boasted, and whose internal power and movement, can cause them to plough the ocean against the changing wind and tide? Has he not encircled the globe as it were with a spinal cord, so as to tell from one continent to another, the thoughts and actions of kings and kingdoms, by a messenger of lightning speed, which, as quick as the flashes of thought are indicated, bears them away beneath the ocean's bosom, or over the steep and rocky mountains, through forests thick, dark, and lonesome, to make known the commands or demands of one mind to another! Thus on every side are seen the signs of progress. Carriages are whirled at fairy speed to help in developing the skill and restlessness of man; and alas as in days of yore not a few are lifted up thereby, taking glory to themselves, saying, 'See this great Babylon which I have builded,' whilst others make success their God, and offer to means, as did the heathen in olden time, to their drag and to their net, instead of acknowledging the God of means. Yet this is the tendency of the day, self-laudation, availing of subtle reasoning and so-called philosophy, instead of the gospel of Christ. The finding of a few bones and man's surmises thereon, will lead thousands to shake their heads and look wiser than Solomon, and give a doubtful glance at what Moses wrote, seeing as they think, that the remains of pre-historic man are in their grasp, which soon may be proved as authentic as the Kanassa pre-historic skull; that when just found and exhibited, caused no small stir and discussion; it was pre-historic of a truth, for when its history was made known by one a little wiser than the rest, it was proved to be a fossil shell, so that Moses' account of Adam and Eve will not be hurt thereby.

Whilst we know that 'it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, it is our duty to take heed lest we preach foolishly. May our theme ever be Christ and him crucified, the Alpha and Omega, the beginner and ender. If the trumpet give a certain sound, loyal men will be found to do battle, and join ranks with us. Let us be zealous and jealous for 'the Lord of Hosts,' and for that Word for which our fathers bled and died. Having been separated from the beggarly elements of the world, let us not mix the gospel of the peace of God so as to form a balm for itching ears, but preaching as Christ commanded, will lead men to enquire how they must be saved, and then what hindereth them from being baptized; such must be the result, if we, Philip like, from the scriptures, preach Jesus; thus we shall have as the early church had, a people added unto the Lord as well as unto us. But in these times of free-thought and soul-liberty so-called, we want zeal for the Lord, for without him and this we can do nothing, whilst religion is so toned down and adapted to men's depraved tastes, and propagated as it is by craft as well as zeal.

Brethren let us stand, and having done all commanded, we shall, our armour has been proved and never found wanting, although many times the ranks have been thinned by the malice and subtlety of Satan, yet had the furnace been made ten times hotter Jesus had not lacked standard-bearers.

During the past year we have seen the cloud arising to cheer the pastors and churches of this province, and many think they saw and see the bow in the cloud, and should we not prepare for abundance of rain, let us go down to our homes prepared to gather together as many as shall decide that 'the Lord he is God,' and resolve to follow Christ as many did of old, of whom it is recorded 'the world was not worthy.'

For this work we need zeal and great grace, for it is wearying; and for encouragement often we need consider the end of our faith. Zeal has done much. In secular history we read of men whose lives were so devoted to their country and whose hearts burned so vehemently with this flame, that they fired others and bore down all opposition. We see not only upon the page of battles the way-marks of the warrior's zeal. But what hath this influence done, and whereunto hath it led the fanatic and deceiver in past ages, reckoning from the time of Christ, how many have drawn multitudes to the snare, by beguiling words and philosophy so-called? Paul knew and knew the danger of this 'zeal without knowledge, and not according to God,' and that the church might counteract it, he exhorts 'be not weary in well doing, but be zealous of good works.' See how widely the errors of Rome have been spread by the devotees of popedom. Have they not been more zealous in carrying east and west, north and south, their creed and ordinances of men, than we in spreading and proclaiming the gospel of God's grace? If their zeal in our estimation has been that of a Jehu, many have been so well wrought upon and deceived themselves, that they honestly say, 'Come see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts,' and we must as Paul said, bear them record, that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, 'for they being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. Forgetting that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.'

Look at the zeal of idolators on Carmel, how they leap upon the altar. They cry aloud 'O Baal hear us,' and as if to move his apathy they cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out.

Moloch's fiery arms were not too hot, or their children's lives so precious, but Israel impelled by superstitious zeal, could cast their loved ones a living sacrifice into the devouring fire. Being as Paul said, 'Exceedingly zealous of the traditions of their fathers.'

'Behold what the zeal of a false prophet has done, his spirit fired millions and lives through generations. We may despise the religion of the Brahmins of India, and the Buddhists of China, and laugh at the absurdities of the Koran, yet here we see the sad and demoralising effect of error sown by misdirected zealots, continuing after many days, and bearing, like some mighty flood, multitudes away from God and the truth. Many laughed at the audacity and folly of Joe Smith and his doctrine, yet how many were ready, to follow him, leaving kindred and home, to reach the city, the joys of which he and his followers so glowingly described.

Again, within the memory of all, Ritualism was with zeal advocated and brought to the front by Dr. Pusey and a few others, and although greatly opposed at first, it has made its way not only into the universities, but from one end of Britain to the other. In village and city you will find, that for which our fathers of the Reformation counted not their lives dear to deny and destroy, even popery. True her form is modified, but for the better insertion of the wedge. Is the zeal of infidels and seepies departed? or rather have they not left their out-poken manner, thinking to take more by guile? Are they not seeking to undermine our faith in God's word? They will find dangerous work, driving this tunnel will cost the worker's life, for nothing can separate the Christian church from Christ, for the attraction of God's love is so powerful that they who seek to divide, need take care lest they be ground to powder by the 'stone-cut out of the mountains without hands.'

If then false and mis-directed zeal has done so much, are not all things possible to us who believe in an infallible God, and more sure word of prophecy? If the zeal of the Lord was with us, as in our Master Christ, would anything be too hard, and brethren would not our success extend to regions beyond, and many souls be won for Christ?

In the first place I would use the exhortation as given Rev. iii. 19, 'Be zealous therefore.' For who would predict a scholarship for the truant school boy, the merchants' wealth and position for the sloven and dilatory clerk, the skill of the cunning workman to the idle apprentice, or the groaning waggon and bursting barn to the slothful farmer? And if in this sense, 'the hand of the diligent maketh rich,' is it not more needful that the ambassadors of Christ should be in earnest? Has the enemy taken possession of our King and Master's right, imprisoned his subjects and defied his law, and shall we be quiet, crying 'peace, peace, where there is no peace?' Or would it not rather be more worthy of us to defy the tyrant's power, and proclaim, in our Lord and Saviour's name, 'liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound?' Should not the zeal of the Lord of Hosts do this, and even more, 'making us dissatisfied with any and every partial reformation, and urging us to a thorough cleansing of God's temple from worldliness and those who are therein as money-changers and sellers of doves? If Christ commands by precept, how much more should his example stir to holy zeal? We read in the history of Rome, that when Brutus killed Caesar, that his friend Marcus Antonius brought the body into the forum, and there exposing the emperor's wounds to the people, he read his will, and in impassioned words set forth his good deeds, so that the people's indignation was roused to madness against the murderers of Caesar. If Antonius was thus able to stir the Romans, because an oppressor was slain by the hand of an assassin, how much more should every power and sympathy be roused into action as we contemplate the scene enacted on Calvary? remembering the Victim thus afflicted was more than 'a good man.' For such his obedience and character that the heavens must be opened and allow the dove, emblematical of purity and of the spirit that rested upon and dwelt within him to descend, as the voice of God was heard declaring, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' This was the Messiah of whom Daniel declared 'he shall be cut off but not for himself,' it was 'this same Jesus,' of whom the prophet Isaiah saith 'he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities,' he bore stripes for our healing, not because of fault found in him, but on account of our sin which was imputed to him, he was numbered among 'the transgressors,' not that he had done anything amiss, but that we might have one able to make intercession for us who had transgressed.

If the zeal and love of Christ towards us was such as to enable him to say, when he knew that into the offered cup was compressed the bitterness of death, the wormwood of sin, and that therein was the penalty of the sin, not of one, but of many, 'Not my will but thine be done,' and knowing the Father's will, he was ready to be offered a sacrifice for sin, and whilst men mocked and made sport of God's Lamb, his last breathings were, 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do?' surely 'we whose souls are lighted with wisdom from on high,' should determine that Christ shall be our theme, his life and love our stimulus to persevere unto the end, 'knowing the end of our faith is the salvation of our souls,' and that 'our labour is not in vain in the Lord.' For the seed we sow we receive from God, who also giveth the increase, and by the sun light of his face, and the influence of his Spirit ripens it for the harvest. When many a tearful sower shall receive a glad surprise in seeing his sheaves gathered by angelic reapers, and numbered to his account by the Lord of the harvest, he will take pleasure in all who have done what they could, for not only shall the woman's mite and alabaster box be written in the eternal record, but in God's book of remembrance every good word and work shall find a place to be revealed at the last day to the praise of His grace 'who hath called us' and made us 'zealous of good works.' This zeal as to its source is from God, He is the sustainer thereof by his grace. For were it merely of the flesh and not of God, we should find on crossing Jordan 'our lamps are gone out' and ourselves among the unprofitable servants, who will have received their wages in this life. But not so those who have been zealous for the Lord, because of his first love to them, for our every effort will be owned, he that hath used well his one talent shall hear, 'Well done good and faithful servant,' as much as he that had five. Let us then brethren be in labours more abundant, remembering Jesus who for the joy set before him endured the cross. It is related that a highland chief McGregor who fell mortally wounded at Preston Pans seeing his clan waver, he raised himself as his life's blood gushed forth and cried aloud, 'I am not dead children, I am looking to see you do your duty.' His words acted as a charm. 'And is there not a charm to these O

believer, in the fact that thou art contending in the battle field of life, under the eye of thy Saviour.'

Let us endure hardness as good soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing He liveth not only to make intercession, but to supply daily grace. Let it be said by us as the little drummer boy said, writing from the Crimea to his mother, 'there are difficulties and trials, but mother, its our duty, and for duty we will die.' Let us do valiantly as did the English when pent in the rock of Gibraltar, for we are told they fired red hot shot and thus destroyed the enemy's fleet, so let us in our preaching and work be zealous or jealous as in Hebrew it might be literally rendered 'glowing fire' from a root signifying deep red, and then it will be said of us, as it is of many whom time would fail us to mention, he 'being dead yet speaketh.' As Paul whose living voice proclaimed salvation unto many, yet Paul still preaches and it was his sermons which led a Luther and Zwingle and many kindred souls, 'into the glorious liberty of the gospel of God.' Luther is dead but the Reformation lives, Calvin is gone home, but the effect of his zeal in vindication of God's free and sovereign grace will long remain. Knox the sturdy warrior for the gospel of the grace of God rests in peace, yet Scotland to-day enjoys many blessings from the reformer's zeal. Bunyan has put off the armour, but that well worn coat of mail as shown in Pilgrim's Progress, and the Holy War has done much to encourage and assure Christians that having on the whole armour of God, and having done all that faith and zeal demands, they shall stand. Baxter suffered many pains physically but his zeal for souls made his pen as well as tongue a ready writer to speak the praises of the great King, and to call the unconvinced to repentance, and the saints to rest. The success of his writings prove that God will bless that holy ambition that seeks by all means to win some for Christ.

If more were needed to show the result of this zeal of God's kindling I would mention Eliot, Henry Martin, Carey and other choice missionary spirits, who triumphed over the prejudice of the enlightened, so-called, and the difficulties of an unknown tongue, to preach Christ to the heathen. Was it not this self-same spirit that stirred the fathers of many of our churches? Harding and Manning, are names that thrill souls even now with a holy charm.

Let us resolve then brethren in Christ to labour with zeal, for 'the harvest truly is great,' and if we are not great labourers in the field, still remember, a child unable to bind a sheaf can gather up a handful of grain, and such a spiritual gathering is not to be despised if His words be true. For 'he that winneth souls is wise,' and one soul redeemed by Christ's precious blood, cannot, as to its price, be estimated by silver and gold.

May the God of all grace stir us as a people, (pastors and deacons,) and may the stirring continue till from centre to circumference the waters of blessing shall be moved and not one sick or lame shall say, 'no man careth for my soul.' But may we Jesus-like go everywhere and tell all around of that healing that is for the nations. As Napoleon's soldiers were standing on an eminence, gazing upon the pyramids of Egypt, just before he made his descent upon the Mamelukes, he cried out, 'Soldiers! from the summits of yonder pyramids forty ages survey your conduct, act like heroes.' And to stir and fire I would say, 'Brethren! ye are fighting for truth and heaven, under the command of Jesus, from the summits of the everlasting hills in heaven, and from the blazing thrones of eternity, ten thousand angels and saints, with the Almighty Sovereign for whom ye are fighting, are surveying your conduct. Be strong. Quit you like men. Be valiant for the truth. Act like heroes.'

THE GOSPEL IN SIAM.

Any information respecting mission work in Siam is interesting to our readers. We therefore copy the following letter from Rev. Dr. Dean to Rev. Dr. Malcom.

BANGKOK, June 19th, 1874.

On Tuesday, the 2nd inst., Mrs. Dean and I left Bangkok in a Chinese boat for Banplasoi. We floated down the river with the tide, and with fair winds and fine weather crossed the gulf in 24 hours from Bangkok. At Banplasoi we called on the Governor, and spent Thursday and Friday with an exchange of calls with the Chinese brethren. On Saturday morning at an early hour the people from Long-Mai Leng, Chuaki-Pi, and from over the hills back of Banplasoi, began to come into the chapel for baptism. The day was spent in an examination of the applicants, and thirty-seven were accepted by the church. In the evening two others came in from 70 Li distant, Pak Lin (Pet Rin), and were examined, and the next morning one man from 15 Li* distant arrived with a similar request, and was accepted by the church. On Sabbath morning, with the rising sun, the members of the church, the candidates, and a company of spectators walked in ten minutes from the King's Landing, where there is much water, and there, after singing a hymn and offering prayer, in the presence of a boat-load of Buddhist priests and several boats of fisherman anchored near the shore, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I baptized forty Chinese on the profession of their faith in Jesus Christ. Closing with a short prayer and the benediction, we walked back to the chapel. Then I gave the right hand of fellowship, took from each, including also the old members of the church, a pledge of a monthly contribution of money sufficient to pay their preacher, then sat down at the Lord's Table, in all seventy communicants.

The day was one of unwonted labor and of corresponding gladness and hope. Most of the forty men are tillers of the ground, and more than thirty of the number are living in the surrounding region from two to twenty Li from Banplasoi, each with his wife and children. With one exception these men were born in China, and have been in this country from three to thirty years, and most of them expect to make this their home for life. They are plain country people, and appear earnest worshippers of the true God, having given a public pledge to keep the Sabbath, and by the help of Jesus to be faithful to him to the end.

On Monday evening, having hired a buffalo cart and packed in our bed and baggage, Mrs. Dean and I started at the setting sun

*A Li is 1897 English feet.