

CHRISTIAN VISITOR.

SAINT JOHN, FRIDAY, JUNE 8, 1849.

WHEREFORE DIDST THOU DOUBT?

There was a time in the history of the Christian Church when doubts and fears were regarded by many as an essential feature of the reality of a Christian's faith, and interest in the Gospel; and that to be without them, was at least indicative of pride and self-sufficiency. Though a departure from these views, might appear to some to be somewhat impious, yet we cannot in view of what the Bible teaches with respect to the truth and influence of Christianity, but offer our dissent. To live in daily consciousness of our own demerit, and of the inherent depravity of our nature, is a different doctrine, and its truth must be acknowledged by all to whom the commandment came, or the entrance of the word of God has given light. A knowledge of the latter produces watchfulness, and humility; while the former genders depression and moroseness of spirit, which will necessarily suppress the believer's joy and cripple his usefulness in the church and in the world. What is there in the character of the gospel of the Son of God, to justify such a disposition, or to influence believers to think that Christ can regard it in any other light, than dishonouring and sinful? Doubts on the part of Christians arise, either from an incorrect view of the way by which God can be just in justifying the ungodly, or from an unreconciled spirit to the will of Christ.

Christ came into the world to deliver them who by fear of death were subject to bondage, to rescue the lawful captive, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. The Holy Ghost most emphatically declares that "He was bruised for our iniquities," "that God made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," that "He is the propitiation for our sins," and that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. Now the Scriptures reveal, that "whosoever believeth in Him is justified from all things," and by apprehending this truth; and relying on it, the heart becomes sprinkled from an evil conscience, and the believing sinner obtains an intelligent conviction that Christ has power on earth to forgive sins. From a reliance on this testimony of the Father concerning the Son, and from a consciousness of love to Jesus, and a disposition to do His commandments; the believer has the witness in himself that he is born of God. But if he, in the place of resting his hope of heaven on this foundation, trust to his own emotions, or to the profession which he made, his hope must yield and his joy evaporate.

In order to maintain our confidence, and arrive at "the full assurance of hope," Christ has ordained that we should continue in His word, for it is by this we know that we love God, when we keep His commands. Doubts, darkness, and depression of soul, are as certain to follow disobedience to Christ's laws, as pain is to result from placing the hand too near the fire, or the exposure of the body to over-much cold. How many professors of the Christian religion, are forever harassed with fears respecting the reality of their conversion to God, without a ray of the consolation which the gospel inspires; and yet looking for the peace and comforts of the Spirit, which only the willing and the obedient are intended by God to enjoy.

Communion with God, and an increased knowledge of His will, as revealed in the scriptures, are as necessary to the preservation of Christian confidence, and spiritual growth, as pure air, and wholesome food, are to the healthy action of the human constitution.—If therefore the means which God has ordained for the development of Christian character and the enhancement of spiritual joy are disregarded, mental decrepitude and pain are inevitable.

A want of Christian confidence on the part of professors presents religion in an unlovely aspect to the men of this world. If those who have been begotten of God unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus, talk and act afterwards, as if *dejection* and *fears* were a necessary part of Christianity, the unconverted most generally will judge of the importance of religion by its influence on men's character and their enjoyment in hope of life.

These hastily written thoughts are submitted for the consideration of the reader, in the place of the usual editorial by the Editor, who is absent this week in attending the educational meeting in Fredericton.

A. McD.

Mr. Winterbotham, late of England, delivered during the present week two interesting addresses in the Hall of the Mechanics' Institute, to very crowded assemblies, which we believe gave general satisfaction to the friends of the Temperance reform. He occupies high ground on the subject of Total Abstinence, which he sustains throughout. The introduction of "Temperance Melodies" in support of the cause, is in our estimation a decided improvement, when the sentiment is purely moral; in this department Mr. W. is certainly very happy.

Mr. W. since his arrival in North America, has visited Charlotte Town, P. E. I., Pugwash, Pictou and Halifax, where he occupied the most of the winter in the advocacy of the Temperance cause, and other subjects of a philanthropic character. We hope that his visit to this city will give a fresh impetus to the cause of Total Abstinence.

LETTERS RECEIVED RECENTLY.—Rev. D. Crandal, with remittance; Rev. J. Tozer, with remittance; Rev. A. D. Thompson; Mrs. Sarah Kieth, with remittance; Rev. W. L. Hopkins.

The Rev. W. Jackson's communication came to hand too late for insertion this week.

Correspondence.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

SABBATH SCHOOLS.

No. VIII.

Objects and Modes of Sabbath School Instruction.

A discriminating observation of the minds submitted to his instruction, with a view to discover the varieties of mental power, the peculiarities in the habits of thought, of mental association, of perception, and the differences of temper and disposition, with which he has to deal, will enable the intelligent teacher to apply his instructions with the happiest effect. For want of such discrimination there is often a singular unadaptedness of instruction to the mind for which it is designed, and, as a certain consequence, a very partial success attending the attempt to impart it. Many a false judgment, too, is passed on minds whose latent faculties remain dormant or are imperfectly awakened, merely because the right kind of motive has not been applied. The impatient teacher, disappointed in his exertions to convey knowledge to some member of his class, arrives at the conclusion that he has to do with a dunce, and that effort is wasted in striving to sow the seeds of science in so barren a soil. He does not dream of imputing his failure to any lack of skill in himself. He would be amazed, perhaps indignant, if it were suggested that his own not very profound acquaintance with the diversities of intellect may have been at fault, and that a slight change in the manner of instruction, a little more address in guiding the efforts of the disheartened scholar, and a little more patience, would soon compel him to retract his hasty opinion, and to acknowledge that a mind may be slow and heavy in its operations without being imbecile. It is both unwise and cruel in the teacher to allow himself to treat a pupil of tardy apprehension so as to make him feel that he is regarded as dull and inert; for if his capacity is feeble, it is not the best way to strengthen it to reproach him with its feebleness, and no generous mind would make a natural inaptitude to learn a subject of harsh or contemptuous remark.—Sullen indifference or depressing despondency is the result of such treatment. A kind encouraging tone of address, an unruffled temper, a varied and forcible exposition of thought, will do much towards starting into lively motion the most sluggish and weak understanding. But, as has been already stated, weakness is not necessarily connected with a tardy and laborious exercise of mind. Some of the mightiest intellects that have ever appeared, have not been remarkable for precocity.—And on the contrary, many of those distinguished for quickness of perception and general mental activity in early life, have soon exhausted the expansive power of their minds.

While the mode of teaching should be varied to suit differences in mental mood, and mental capacity, it should be made to conform also to the differences of age. This is important, even in those cases where ignorance is found associated with advanced years. It sometimes occurs that young men and women become members of the Sabbath School, whose education has been very much neglected in

earlier life. Their solicitude to rise above the position of mental inferiority in which they have unfortunately been so long held, is worthy of high approval, and should receive cordial sympathy and encouragement. They need teachers of ripe knowledge and discernment, and of delicate sensibilities; who will command their respect, win their confidence, and deal gently and wisely with that consciousness of inferiority which they painfully feel. Such instructors would not treat this class of pupils as children. They would bear in mind that their understandings are those of adult persons, although their knowledge may be very limited. They would not, therefore, use the language of the nursery, nor give to their remarks the character of childishness. While careful to avoid the opposite extreme of a too refined style of thought and expression, they would be careful to give a manly tone to their instructions. In order to discover the wants of such minds, and to elicit their unused powers, it would be well to encourage them to ask for information on such points as might be obscure to them. This remark indeed may be made in relation to pupils of all ages. There is many a doubt and query and difficulty presenting themselves to scholars, the settling of which would be highly satisfactory, and give them a much clearer mental sky, but which they are too modest, or it may be too proud, to confess. If, then, they were incited to a candid revelation of their dilemmas and their curiosity, to the teacher, several benefits would accrue: they would be the gainers of desired knowledge, they would be relieved of impediments to their advancement, and would be inspired with courage to look other obstacles boldly in the face. The teacher, also, would gain the advantage of a clue that would conduct him through the mental labyrinth.

The senior classes in Sabbath Schools require a much wider scope of inquiry and of knowledge than the junior classes. In the study of the Scriptures many sources of information and many kinds of illustration may and ought to be opened to them, which could not be brought within the reach of untrained minds. The light which is shed upon the sacred Word by the discoveries of travellers in Palestine and other countries named in it, by the successful researches which have been made into the history, the manners, customs, laws, and social condition of the natives therein mentioned; the great additions which have enlarged and corrected the geography of oriental lands; the various helps to clear and accurate biblical interpretation,—should be rendered available, as far as is practicable, to the exposition, the elucidation, and the enforcement of divine truth. There is a prejudice existing in some minds against the application of such knowledge as is here adverted to in the study of Scripture. It arises as much from a conscientious reverence for the Bible as from the inability to appreciate the value of historical and other information in relation to the divine word. It has its source in a jealous respect for the grand essential doctrines of religion, which, it is feared, will lose their commanding supremacy over the mind, if its attention is in any measure shared by those parts of Scripture which are not of capital importance. And there would be ground for this fear if the student of the Bible were led to bestow undue regard upon questions of history, geography, and philology. But there is no reason why this should be the case.—The great truths of salvation may be preserved in all their grandeur and in all their solemn claims on the heart and mind, and yet some attention be paid to subjects of lesser moment. It surely is neither unprofitable or unnecessary that the reader of God's word should know something about the history and character of those countries which have been made the theatre of the most stupendous scenes and events that earth ever witnessed! Can any Christian esteem it an idle or useless desire that seeks acquaintance with the places hallowed by the presence of God, manifest in the flesh, the spots where his blessed footprints were left, the scenes of his miracles and teachings, his prayers and fastings, his temptations and sufferings? Or can any Christian read the inspired narrative of the Acts of the Apostles, and feel no wish to possess the amplest knowledge of the cities, villages, and countries through which they published the glad tidings of the kingdom, and in which they planted the first churches of our Lord Jesus Christ?—To be ignorant of these things is not creditable to any one, and no one ought to be ignorant of them in a Christian land.

S. ELDER.

Fredericton, June 5th, 1849.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

HOW TO PROMOTE THE UNION SOCIETIES.

MR. EDITOR.—I have been for some months waiting with a degree of patience, thinking, as the Union Board has failed to procure the services of a *Financial Agent*, that some of your Correspondents would before this time have marked out through the columns of your paper some other method by which the attention of the Churches would be directed to the work, and their contributions secured. This is no time to allow our energies to flag, or to think because money is scarce, that no efforts should be put forth to support the institutions of Christianity; but on the contrary the "hardness of the times" demands a more vigorous, and consolidated effort, to maintain the claims of these objects whose very existence depends on the united liberality of the Lord's people. To exclude any of the objects which the Union embraces, from our sympathy, and from a share of our earthly goods, at this juncture of our history, will not only expose us to public reproach, but our most solemn pledges to God, at the time these institutions were established will be most egregiously violated. And is this the way that we can expect the divine blessing to attend the labours of our hands, or to secure the confidence of those who are looking to us for the words of eternal life, and for a pattern of self-denial and benevolence? Shall not their destiny be affected by the character of our zeal and the nature of the means brought to bear on their conversion to God? What do we more than others, if we refuse to give the support of the cause of God its proper place among our different items of expenditure? Is it of less value? and has God promised that His reign will prosper in the absence of the benevolence and holy exertion of His church?

These are questions which we wish every one to answer who is expecting to hear from Christ when He will appear to judge the world in righteousness, the "well done good and faithful servant," and immediately to lay by "the portion of goods" which an enlightened conscience may prescribe for the support of these objects.

There are in connexion with our associations in this Province twenty-three churches without pastoral oversight, and many of them are for months together without hearing the gospel preached, and even forsake the assembling of themselves together, for want of some competent man to guide and instruct them in the knowledge of the scriptures. In the place of having these churches as burning and shining lights in the moral waste in which they are situated, and their obedience to the gospel of Christ an exponent of our views, of the doctrines and laws of Christ's kingdom; are they not in too many instances a stumbling block and a by-word among the people who listened to their vows at the time that they acknowledged their allegiance to the Lord Jesus, and who at that season might be expecting the instructions and example which would light their way to the redemption that is in Christ? But what have been the chief things which have contributed to this alienation and disparagement? was it not the neglect of those means which God in His wisdom has ordained for the perfecting of the saints in knowledge and purity?

The most of those churches to which I refer, have been gathered through the labours of our Missionaries, but because those who were instrumental in their conversion could not obtain a livelihood from their field of labour, and the Missionary Boards unable to continue their support from the paucity of their funds, these very men who could be more useful to this people than any other, and at a time when instruction would be more likely to give a practical and holy direction to the infant churches than at any other period, have been compelled from the wants of a depending family to retire from a field of so much promise. To expect these churches to improve under these circumstances in piety and knowledge, or that the Missionary Boards can remedy their condition is morally impossible. In view of this state of things certainly, this is not the time "to rest upon our oars," and shrink from the self-denial and exertion which our exigencies require.

The manly efforts, and undaunted perseverance, which characterise worldly men, when they have to grapple with difficulties which involve their credit and interest, should rebuke any symptom of apathy on our part, in a work which affects the condition of immortal spirits in another state of being; because