

Correspondence.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

Digby, Oct. 20th, 1850.

DEAR SIR,—If you think the following information, with respect to the Baptist Church in this place, worth a notice in your valuable paper, the Christian Visitor, please to have it inserted. Yours very truly,

W. L. BENT.

The Baptist Church in Digby has been organized several years, but still continues a feeble, and somewhat scattered body, several members reside at Broad Cove, some miles distant, who are unable to assist much in the support of ministers, and other duties of the Church. We have occasionally had the labors of several worthy and highly esteemed ministers. Last autumn, about twelve months since, the Rev. E. W. Pray, from Boston, U. S., came among us, and accepted a call to the Pastoral Office of the Church in Digby, with the understanding that a small neighbouring Church would unite with us for his support, which having failed to do, the Church in Digby were unable to sustain him, and he has in consequence returned home.

This we much regret, on many accounts, especially as his preaching talents were very acceptable, and his labors were much blessed. Several were added to the Church, both by baptism and letter, under his ministry, and we feel that the public have sustained a loss, in the removal of a gentleman of Education and Talent, who with his amiable partner were much respected in the community.

Since the Rev. Mr. Pray has left, the Rev. C. Randal has preached to us occasionally, and we have some hopes that either the Rev. Mr. Cunningham or Mr. Randal will settle in the neighborhood, and labor with us half the time, and take the Pastoral oversight of our little church.

By order of the Church.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

DEAR BROTHER.—We think with you that Truth is important, that it has on its side all the advantages you name. In alienation from it there can be no morality, no religion. The sacred springs of pure, peaceful happiness in the domestic constitution, in the retired scenes of private life, must be vitiated apart from it. But when some people write and talk about the Truth, are they not apt to do it with that sort of breath and mannerism, that just tells you, "Now all that comes from us is of this precious metal, it is out of this mint," and if you stop to see the proof, they feel a little ruffled? Some too, who talk in this way give themselves credit for an eagle-eyed vision; they can see a great way beyond their neighbours. I do not affirm this, but it is within the range of possibility, that the man who wrote, "That God's truth was not a whit the more precious because Robert Hall believed it, or less important because he rejected it," might belong to this type. This, in itself is true, but does not the manner of statement go somewhat to undervalue that good and great man? Is it not a sort of side-wind intended to blight, or a night cap to cover his nobleness? You must admit that his piety was as full grown and as expansive as that of any man. It was marked by the liberality and comprehension of the Book whence it was derived, and by which it was sustained. It had about it the beauty of cherubic intelligence. It highly valued the excellencies of other Christians, though on some points differing from himself. Perhaps, this may be one reason why he is not so well thought of by Baptists on this side the water. Some make more of that element than they do of the fire of holy love. We think ourselves that Baptism, as administered by our own denomination, is scriptural, and that all who see it to be so are not at liberty to blink it, to put it aside, but to attend to it as a sacred duty and privilege. And that infant sprinkling is not; but is an offshoot from Popery, and that Protestants who say, with one united voice, "The Bible, and the Bible only is our religion," ought to blush when they sprinkle water on the forehead of a babe, and call that Baptism. To the charge brought by the prophet they are fully open: "They have changed the ordinance." And one too when administered, as it first was, only to believers, is so replete with instruction and solemnity—changed it into a mere human, unmeaning ceremony, which throws obscurity over the simple, spiritual religion of the first Christians, goes to

keep the impression from falling with sufficient weight upon the heart; that religion to be saving must be experimental and personal. It must originate not in what is outward, but inward, that is in the action of God's spirit on the soul, changing its nature, taking away its deformity, and giving to it the "Beauties of Holiness." Hands, belonging to arms, clothed in lawn sleeves, or connected with a mitred brow, how much water soever, they may sprinkle, will do no good to man, woman, or child, in the absence of this. Robert Hall believed all this. And he believed more.—That, though the learned, spiritual and seraphic Leighton was in this error, he would deem it a privilege to sit with him at the table of their "One Lord!" Though John Howe was under its dominion, and Jeremy Taylor, and many others, yet having within them the fine gold of saintly graces, their lives, lustrous with the pure enamel of Holiness, he would feel himself honored to sit and commune with them at the table of the crucified One—Robert Hall is of the same mind still. And he has communed with those giants in learning and religion, and it is not for small men, who can say off their multiplication table, read a little Latin or Greek, to sneer and point the finger at beings so resplendent and glorious. Rather let moles lecture on the properties of light, or misers upon the beauties of benevolence. Without fear of Pope, Bishop, or Rector, and with earnest prayer for the spread of Truth, Catholicity, and Love, I am your brother in tribulation. J. D. CASEWELL.

Saint John, Nov. 19, 1850.

Missionary Intelligence.

[From the N. Y. Recorder.]

State of Religion in Germany.

We give a speech of the Rev. Mr. Oncken, missionary of our Board in Germany, which he made in Glasgow, communicating intelligence as to the progress of evangelical religion in Germany:—

Mr. Oncken, in the course of his remarks, stated that some of the errors of Luther were most injurious in their tendency and effect on the nation at large. One of the extraordinary errors of Luther was, that he received and maintained the mutilated Ten Commandments which are adopted by the Church of Rome. Why was it that on the Continent there was nothing of that respect for the Lord's day which prevails in this land? Just because the Fourth Commandment had been wrested from their hands. There was not a vestige of it left, even in the Lutheran Catechism. The Sabbath day on the Continent is abused for the worst of purposes. It is on that day especially that Satan gathers in his harvest of souls. The temples of pleasure are filled to excess; as are the temples of sin and open prostitution sanctioned by law, and all because the Sabbath was never fairly and fully established in Germany. The Sabbath there lasts merely during the two or three hours the minister is in the pulpit; so soon as he is down, the ordinary business and traffic is resumed. But amidst all this God has not left himself without a witness. And who are these witnesses? The Jews have been the witnesses against this sad departure from the Word of the living God. Passing through the gate which leads to Altona, you find the street, on both sides, on the Sabbath day, crowded with all manner of wares exposed for sale by the Israelites; but on Saturday there is the silence of death.—The Jews declare that there is a God whom they reverence. Luther, in his Catechism, which is used in all the schools throughout Germany, has taught that baptism is regeneration, in the same sense that the Puseyites do in this country, and by this means millions in Germany have been lulled asleep. In addition he maintains the doctrine of absolution and confirmation, and no individual is admitted to the Lord's table unless he has previously confessed his sins, and been absolved by the pastor, "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." In the Augsburg Confession of Faith, it is stated that the Sabbath day is abrogated—that it has no longer any existence; and while the Church is at liberty to supply a sermon for those who choose to go and hear it, still the observance of the Sabbath is no longer a binding obligation. When Luther could teach errors so delusive as that of infant baptismal regeneration, and that the prerogative which belongs alone to Christ could be wrested from his hands and intrusted to fallible men, was it to be wondered at that so much ignorance and evil prevailed? At the commencement of the present century, Ger-

many was swamped by the infidelity of France. Out of thirty pastors belonging to the Lutheran Church, there was only one who believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. But a reaction took place; and the first impulse which was given to a better state of things was by a few noblemen of Pomerania. At this time there were many praying brethren in the army, and a band of them began to preach the gospel wherever they went. Very soon there was a movement amongst the dry bones, and hundreds were converted, who came out from the dead Church. Everything was proceeding well till of late, when the King of Prussia, who is a stickler for uniformity, sent a batch of ministers to Pomerania; and thus the small church was swallowed up by the larger. But, thanks be to God, the work is not destroyed in that quarter. He (Mr. Oncken) became acquainted with one of the noblemen to whom he referred. He was a Lutheran, and received him kindly; and he was glad to learn that in that part of Pomerania there can be numbered 4,000 Christians who believe on the Son of God. The condition of the Lutheran clergy is most deplorable; and as education advances, the people begin to discover their mercenary spirit. A Lutheran minister is entirely dependent for his support on fees—fees for baptism, for confession, for absolution, and for marriage. And then they have an extraordinary way of taxing the people. One is required to supply a ham, another a few dozens of eggs, and such like; and thus there is a constant collision betwixt them and the people, as to the size and quality of the articles required to be furnished.—By this, and many other customs, the work of the man who preaches the gospel is degraded; and the people learn to detest their pastors as men who go about dipping their hands into the pockets of their fellow-men. He should next state that, while the greater part of the Lutheran Church ministers are Socinians, there is but a small portion of what are called the Evangelical party who hold the great truths. They retain all the errors which are taught in the Lutheran Catechism to this day. They teach and believe, with few exceptions, that all men shall be saved at last; and many of them go so far as to say that devils themselves will be saved. In 1823, he (Mr. Oncken) was called to labor in Germany under this state of things. And he might mention, that when in England, the first theological book which was recommended to him was the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the contents of it laid the foundation of the precious truths with which the Word of God had enriched his mind. When called to the work of a missionary, his labor was partly amongst seamen, and in circulating the Word of God, religious tracts, &c. The first time that he stood up to preach, the assembly consisted only of seven persons, and his first feeble testimony was blessed to one individual. The next Lord's day he had fourteen of an audience; the next twenty-five, and the next fifty; and so matters proceeded till the house was filled; and the Lord in his mercy gave a rich blessing on his first efforts, for in the course of a few years seventy persons were converted. Mr. Oncken proceeded to detail various difficulties which he had to surmount in the shape of opposition on the part of the authorities, before he succeeded in constituting a Baptist church. Upon the removal of the head of the police from his office, who was favorable to their cause, his successor exhibited great hostility, and the result was the imprisonment of Mr. Oncken; but all was overruled for good; for out of one assembly of worshippers there very soon arose fifteen. Mr. Oncken's place of worship was closed up, and the congregation, after his liberation, were compelled to meet in his own house. Ultimately the premises were secured, and by placing them at the disposal of the sufferers at the great fire which some time since broke out at Hamburg, the congregation was permitted to assemble for worship. From the year 1834 up to the present time, he had baptized eight hundred converts in Hamburg, not above fifty of whom have been brought from any other congregation. The church at Hamburg consists of five hundred and nineteen members, six of whom are converted Jews, and one of them has assisted him for twenty-seven years in going about establishing Sabbath-schools. During the last six months they had circulated six thousand tracts, and sold upwards of five hundred copies of the Scriptures.

In detailing the progress which had been made at Pesh, and on the mountains of Silesia, he expressed his gratitude to the Edin-

burgh Bible Society. One hundred thousand copies of the Scriptures had been circulated in Germany with Scotch money; and through the liberality of our transatlantic brethren, he had been enabled to circulate 100,000 more. Their tract efforts were of a most extensive kind. During last year they circulated 600,000 copies. In conclusion, he stated that his object in visiting this country was to solicit the aid of Christians to enable them to erect churches, and defray the expense already existing upon some of those they have reared.

[From the Primitive Church Magazine.]

SWEDEN.

Intelligence has been received from Sweden that brother Nilsson's appeal to the supreme tribunal has been unsuccessful, and that his sentence of banishment has been confirmed. The laws under which he is sentenced, affect equally all persons who secede from the Established Lutheran Church. That body has a power in the general affairs of the kingdom which has scarcely a parallel. The civil power is required by law to assist in the enforcement of ecclesiastical discipline, and the authorities of the church are required to carry into effect many of the punishments pronounced in the civil courts. The clergy are required by law to see that all the infants born in Sweden are baptized before they are eight days old; and unless a person can produce certificates from the clergy that he has attended communion in the Established Church, he cannot hold any office of the lowest rank, cannot sit as a member of the Diet, cannot marry, and cannot even obtain the necessary papers, as master or workman in any handicraft. No one is permitted to come to communion without previous confession to the clergy, and they need not admit any one whose life and conduct they do not approve. The House of the Bishops and Clergy is one of the constituent parts of the civil government, and possesses the same power as the other three Houses of Nobles, Burghers, and Peasants; its vote being as absolutely requisite as theirs to the alteration of any existing law, ecclesiastical or civil. When a bishop is to be appointed, the clergy of the diocese elect three persons, from whom the king nominates one to the vacant see. And in appointments to most of the benefices and offices of the church the clergy exercise a similar degree of power. The king has a negative voice on the resolutions of the Diet, and the right to introduce measures for their consideration. For two hundred and fifty years it has been the law of Sweden that any Swedish subject who changed his creed and left the Established Church should be banished from the country. The alteration of this law so as to permit persons to secede from the Established Church at pleasure, would evidently to that extent destroy the necessity established by law for the intervention of that church in almost every event of life public or private. A class would exist to whom many of the provisions running through the whole code of constitutional, civil, criminal, and ecclesiastical law would not apply. Great numbers, there is reason to think, would be glad to avail themselves of such a position; but that circumstance must render any proposal to effect such a change so much the more obnoxious to the clergy, without whose consent it cannot constitutionally be accomplished. The only hope seems to be in an entire reform of the national representation of Sweden. The Established Church does not appear to possess a strong hold on the affections of the people; its power is chiefly that which is secured to it by the existing laws, and hence it is natural for it to adhere to them with the utmost tenacity.

From information recently received, the impression appears to have been erroneous, that liberty to dissent from the Established Church exists in Norway any more than in Sweden. All forms of religious belief, it is said, are tolerated even in Sweden, provided those who hold them have not seceded from the Established Church, and the exercise of their worship is said to be protected by law. In Norway, those who secede from the Established Church are liable to imprisonment and hard labour, instead of banishment; and we find it questioned whether the measure adopted by the Storting of 1847, with respect to the removal of disabilities in Norway on the Society of Friends, went further than to permit members of that society to establish themselves in Norway, which was previously prohibited by law.

Great as these difficulties are, our own land has presented in time past some little less ap-

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