

Correspondence.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

COLPORTAGE FOR THE LOWER PROVINCES.

To the Baptist of Nova Scotia, New-Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island.

DEAR BRETHREN,—I address you at the request of a Committee of my own people, raised in relation to the subject announced in my heading.

The following hints appear in the *Christian Messenger* of the 5th instant:—

1st. It is deemed exceedingly desirable that a Society be forthwith formed for the promotion of Colportage in this country, so consist of persons subscribing and paying from year to year not less than five shillings, to be designated, "The Society for Colportage in N. S."

2nd. That the object of said Society shall be to raise funds to procure and circulate religious books under the direction of a Committee.

3rd. That book agents or Colporteurs be the medium for carrying out the design of this Society.

4th. That the publications to be circulated shall consist of those of the Amer. Bap. Publication Society, the Amer. Tract Society, and such others as the Committee shall from time to time approve.

5th. That the Society shall be under the direction of a Committee to be annually chosen by the members at a meeting duly called by public notice.

6th. That Dr. Cramp, Rev. A. S. Hunt, and Dr. Crawley, act as a Committee until a meeting of the Society shall be regularly called, and that Mr. Aaron Thorp, Junr., be requested to act as general agent for collecting funds.

It is highly desirable that the matter referred to in these hints should be matured for action at the next session of our Convention. My present communication aims more directly at this result.

II.

Let me put before you, brethren, a distinct view of what is really involved in this movement. It is the formation of a Denominational Society for the Lower Provinces, to be called a Baptist Tract Society, a Society for Colportage, or any other name that may seem appropriate. That, I believe, is the ultimate aim of our brethren, though their plan speaks only of Nova-Scotia. The object of the Society would be the circulation of religious books, partly of a denominational cast, but still more of evangelical. We should want Depositories at fitting points, and Colporteurs. And their business would be, to penetrate into all parts of the land, especially the more retired, and bearing the Scriptures, good books, tracts; selling, giving where it seemed proper, and accompanying the whole with prayer, pious conversation, and preaching. Our Colporteur would thus be a Missionary as well as a dispenser of religious publications. The Convention would constitute the centre of our operations, and Branch Societies our working machinery.

III.

And now, brethren, let me expound some of the reasons by which such an organization is recommended to our adoption.

1. A taste for reading is beginning to pervade our community. Now people who want books will get them. If good books are not placed within their reach, bad ones will be. Is it not a Christian duty, then, to forestall the literary market? or at least to bring a good article into active competition with the bad one? as also to provide for cases which call for the exercise of a gratuitous charity? By the circulation of books, too, a taste for reading is to be extended—by the circulation of good books a taste for wholesome reading.

2. As Baptists it becomes us to bestir ourselves for the propagation of our own views. I mean, in their spiritual rather than their ritual aspect. If, with the Greek Church, we would but dip unconscious infants, none would trouble themselves about our dipping, even if we chose to plunge nine times instead of three. It is our doctrine in regard to the subject of baptism, rather than its mode, that arouses the spirit of opposers. If they declaim more against our mode than our subject, it is because here they fancy us more vulnerable, and prejudice on this point is more easily

awakened—hence our true course. It is, to bring before men the more serious part of our case—to stand up for personal religion against relative—and thus to beat down every system which rears itself in antagonism to our Lord's grand central maxim, "My kingdom is not of this world." For this purpose we must circulate good Baptist books—books which shall tell upon the thoughtful; and leave the people with the elements of a spiritual Christianity; and open the way for the entire subjugation of our provinces to the claims of an unmutated New Testament Gospel.

Add to the above, that other denominations have their eye upon these provinces, as a field for the distribution of religious books. It is well. Can it be otherwise if Christ be published no matter what the agency? But what are we to effect? One of two things, the probability of either of which goes to strengthen our appeal. They will not circulate denominational books: then it behoves us to give the people the whole truth. Or they do circulate such books: then it behoves us to supply the antidote to their errors.

3. We can no longer let the education of the masses alone. Education is the question of our age. Acadia, Horton, Fredericton, tell of our zeal in this matter. But will they do everything for us? Is there no home education—an education carried forward down to the latest period of life? Without books, men are incessantly educated—laying in new thoughts, producing new results—much more, where books minister their aid. Here, then, in the circulation of good books, we must take our part in the general education of the people. They can read: give them books, that they may read. Or they cannot read: then let them see how easily books may be obtained, that they may learn to read. And give good books, that all this reading may turn to good account.

Again the appeal lies to our denominational convictions. If we do not do this work, others will. They do it upon broad catholic grounds. They do well. But we lose an advantage. Or they do it upon denominational grounds. Then they get the start of us; and the advantage which we have lost accrues to them. As Baptists, occupying the vantage ground assigned to us by our Great Head, and with the means placed at our disposal, ought we to consent to either of these alternatives?

4. The system of Colportage combines to a singular degree the elements of efficiency and cheapness. I would by no means undervalue other methods for doing good. Which of them could we spare? But this, like every other means, possesses its own peculiar advantages. The minister and the meeting-house require large outlays of money; the book, and especially the tract, costs next to nothing, and will penetrate where the minister can find no access. The missionary delivers his message, and passes away; the book is always at hand, inviting reiterated perusal. The sermon, if it is to do any good, must be remembered, at least in its general impression; the book adapts itself to the leakage of infirm memories. The book is a priceless auxiliary both to pastor and evangelist. It may be made an important appendage to the apparatus of the missionary. Why should not the missionary be always a Colporteur? The *American Messenger* will tell us, how often the Colporteur has become the pioneer of the church and the pastorate. The book! What a book-maker and scatterer of books was Luther! The Reformation tells with what consequences. And what is our own Oncken doing, in the father-land of Luther, but treading in Luther's steps, guided by a clearer light, animated by a more loving spirit, and reaching out to larger and more enduring results? And what of China? Its missionaries have been few—its books many. "The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," has cloven that vast empire in twain, and opened a channel, broad, deep, and large, which even now invites the streams of "the water of life." The book! What do we owe to books? The Book of God above all! The Omniscient knows, and "the day will declare it." God alone knows too what books are yet destined to accomplish for us. And at how small a cost! Ample endowments are not needed here, nor large annual contributions. Here dollars, half-dollars, sevenpence-half-pennies will do the work of many pounds elsewhere. A book agency would be, to a large extent, a self-sustaining agency; so that small annual gifts from the many would meet the whole absolute outlay which our operations would require. It might indeed be ex-

pected, that these operations would interest many who care but little for other benevolent enterprises, and so break up new sources of supply for the maintenance of our holy warfare.

IV.

We need not wait for the Convention, brethren, before we take action in regard to the matter here presented. Indeed action taken now will form the best possible expression of our views for hereafter.

The brethren in this neighbourhood are expected to meet on the 8th prox., by their ministers and delegates, on the business. It is hoped that arrangements may then be made for the founding of a depository in this place, and the employment of a Colporteur in the district. Why should not similar arrangements be made in neighbourhoods similarly circumstanced?

Where churches are differently circumstanced, could not the pastor bring the subject before his brethren, obtain their suffrages and contributions, and report results, first at our Associations, and then at the Convention? An annual subscription of 5s. has been mentioned by our brethren at Wolfville as the qualification for membership. Among us it is thought 2s. 6d. would be a better sum—it would enlist the many in our schemes, and not prevent the liberal from doing liberally—of course the smallest contributions need not be rejected. At Yarmouth, at a meeting of some dozen persons, held on a stormy night, a subscription of £3 12 6 has been obtained.

An agent is in the field in Nova Scotia.—Brethren elsewhere will judge how far it may be desirable to do likewise. Meanwhile, as already hinted, the pastors might constitute themselves agents, and do perhaps about all that is needful in the way of preparatory movement.

I have done, brethren. Our ministers, I am sure, will take hold of this work; one of the very first fruits of which will be, the replenishing of their own too scanty libraries. Have we not many besides, who will respond to the present call? Here is one of the "Whatsoever things our hands find to do." Let us arise and do it. It will interfere with none of our other enterprises; it will aid them all. It will supply its own reward, and that right early. It will give us another errand to the mercy-seat, and attest our sincerity anew when we cry, "Thy kingdom come!" It will "bless us, and make us blessings;" while, in its wise and vigorous prosecution, we shall leave this world better, and find the next brighter.

Believe me,

Your fellow-servant in the Gospel,

J. DAVIS.

Yarmouth, N. S., Jan. 21, 1854.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

American Bible Union,
New-York, January 21st, 1854.

EDITORS OF THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.

DEAR BRETHREN,—Please to publish the enclosed Appeal in your next issue, and thereby oblige the Board of the American Bible Union.

On behalf of the Board,
WM. H. WYCKOFF.
Cor. Sec.

American Bible Union's Appeal for Prayer and Aid.

THE BOARD OF THE AMERICAN BIBLE UNION, profoundly sensible of the importance of the labours in which they are engaged, and conscious of their inability to perform them in their own strength, affectionately address all brethren in the same common faith who are interested in the great objects which they are prosecuting, and earnestly request them to remember those objects at the throne of the heavenly grace. They especially entreat the prayers of God's people for all who are employed by the Bible Union in the work of translation or revision.

It is a matter of devout thankfulness, that more correct views of the necessity and importance of freeing the revealed word of God from human error and obscurity, are gradually prevailing, and that greater numbers are becoming sensible of their obligation to assist in this blessed enterprise. For these mercies and the signal marks of divine approbation that have hitherto attended all the operations of the Union, the Board desire the friends of

pure versions to unite with them in gratitude and praise to the ever blessed Revealer of Truth.

The following brief statement regarding the revision of the English Scriptures, cannot fail to excite renewed interest in the enterprise, and to call forth more fervent supplications for its success.

Distinguished scholars are employed by the American Bible Union in the revision of the common version, holding their ecclesiastical connections with eight denominations:—

CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

OLD SCHOOL PRESBYTERIANS.

DISCIPLES OR REFORMERS.

ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIANS.

SEVENTH DAY BAPTISTS.

AMERICAN PROTESTANT EPISCOPALIANS.

BAPTISTS.

GERMAN REFORMED CHURCH.

Written contracts have been made with more than twenty scholars, and many of these in compliance with the stipulations, have made engagements with others to work with them, so that the number of scholars actually engaged in the service of the Union, does not vary far from forty.

More than half of the work already done has been performed by scholars not connected with immersionist denominations; and we anticipate that this will hold true until the New Testament is finished.

Seven of the revisers under written contract, reside in Great Britain, and three of these are connected with the Church of England.

In none of the above numbers do we embrace those scholars, (of whom there are many,) that render collateral aid. For instance, one furnishes a literal translation of all the passages in the Burmese version in which the translator, (Dr. Judson,) has varied from the common English version; another renders similar service in the Siamese; others in the Bengali, Sanscrit, &c.

Also our revisers of the Spanish, the Italian, the French, and the German Scriptures, afford their aid to make the English more accurate. Some of their suggestions, especially those from the Spanish revisers, are considered invaluable. All the revisers in these several languages are men of eminent ability, and the discoveries made by one necessarily assist the others.

Hundreds of scholars, of greater or less reputation, from time to time, send in suggestions for the improvement of the English Scriptures, either in the form of criticism on the parts of the revision already issued, or in that of advice regarding other portions of the work. For such purposes we invite the direct co-operation of all scholars, who are willing to render any assistance, however slight.

The revisers are furnished with the most valuable works for study and reference. In this respect no necessary expense is ever spared. Many of the books procured by the Union are most rare and costly. Every attainable facility is afforded to the revisers to accomplish their task in the most thorough manner possible.

Dr. Conant, in his late letter to the New York Recorder, fully explains the nature of the pledge required by the Bible Union of its revisers and translators:—

"It requires of me no other pledge than fidelity to the original; that 'the exact meaning of the inspired text, as that text expressed it to those who understood the original Scriptures at the time they were first written, shall be translated by corresponding words and phrases, so far as they can be found in vernacular English, with the least possible obscurity or indefiniteness,' and that this shall be done 'in the phraseology of the common English version, so far as is consistent with fidelity to the original, and a proper regard to the present state of the English language.' Such are the terms of the compact, and this is the only pledge required. Such also is the tenor of the general instructions to translators and revisers. The translator's duty could not be more justly defined than in the first of the above quotations; nor could a more scrupulous regard be shown to the personal responsibility and rights of the translator.

"These principles will live; and the Society that plants itself upon them, and is faithful to them, is destined to live with them. They have already, to a wide extent, taken possession of the popular mind. The common people are asking, at the hands of Christian scholars, a correct version of the Chris-