

The Christian Visitor,

A Religious Family Newspaper. Published every WEDNESDAY, at 99 Germania Street, St. John, N. B.

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REV. J. E. HOPPER, EDITOR.

NOTICE.

To Correspondents, Subscribers and Others. Items of Religious Intelligence are solicited from all parts of the world; also, communications upon other subjects of interest, especially educational, social, and industrial topics. Correspondents should write upon only one side of the paper, and make their letters as brief as the facts and circumstances will permit. As a rule, all matter to be published should be sent by letter or post card. It is not enough to send back the paper marked refused, as in most instances we have no means of finding out the address without much searching.

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The Christian Visitor.

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MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Our calendar reminds us that we are just about reaching another milestone on the journey of life, that before another VISITOR goes forth the civilized world will have celebrated Christmas, 1884. Indeed, we need not that reminding, for on all sides are active preparation and eager expectancy. We could not be oblivious if we would. Periodicals are presenting Christmas stories and accounts of various methods in which different nations observe the day; merchants are anticipating and already realizing profits from its coming; little folks are asking new descriptions of Santa Claus and canvassing possible results of his visit; mamma's ingenuity and papa's purse are subject to drafts more or less heavy; and the occurrence of private conferences and arrival of mysterious packages argue careful preparation of many a pleasant surprise. It is to be a day of joy? God grant that it may be so to many a home and heart! Around many a hearthstone will gather from different spheres of activity those whose young days were spent together there. Old associations will be recalled, old friendships renewed, old affections restored from the incrustation of time and worldly toil. Tender thoughts will come to stern minds, awakened by evidences of kindly remembrance, the world will seem brighter from simple proofs of affection; men's hearts will warm towards their fellows.

All this is surely well, and obviously appropriate to this anniversary of peace and good will. But there are those who have not the means to share this general enjoyment, and who, regarding their own poverty, will be only the more sad by reason of the contrast. That book which has precepts for all time and circumstances does not forget them, nor fail to commend them to the interest of those whose lot is more happy, "The poor ye have always with you." "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye?"

Here are opportunities for Xmas remembrances, where no return presents need be expected, but where gratitude of the recipients, the satisfaction of relieving want and bestowing happiness, and the consciousness of doing right, will be amply great reward. Locked in banks, hoarded in stocks, heaped up in lands and goods, is wealth destined to remain there until its possessors, reluctantly leaving it, pass away to their final accounts, from which a fraction scarcely to be missed would brighten many a sad eye and bring joy to many a needy household, while the charity, "twice blessed," would bring even the greater blessing to the giver. There are those who will experience this blessing; would that the number might be multiplied!

Even at the feast there will be mourners, vacant chairs will be but emblems of voids in loving hearts,

and echoes of merriment will strike into vibration sad chords of memory. But, if the season stir these jarring chords, the thought which it suggests should be potent to soothe and attune them to the harmony of praise and gratitude. If the years have brought sorrows which cannot now be forgotten, let not thought dwell on these alone, but send it back even through the centuries until it reach the manger in Bethlehem, and in the life there begun, find solace, and strength, and courage. He whose sympathies were wide enough to take in the world is still "touched with the feeling of our infirmities;" He does not willingly afflict; the dispensations of His providence are in tender love, as well as unerring wisdom. Let us trust Him.

Another milestone on the way! How has our life developed? When we look within, is the retrospect satisfactory? An honest introspection shows us all room for improvement. That heart is cold in which no good aspirations and impulses now stir. Let us cherish and foster them, and, relying upon Him who is able to help, begin another stage with full determination that our life shall be dominated by purer thoughts, and filled up with better deeds; so shall this Christmas time be productive of good in ourselves and, through us, to others, and peace and good will be promoted to the extent of our influence.

In nothing that we have said do we mean to depreciate the innocent gaiety and enjoyment that are associated with the day. Let the glad bells ring! Let the children shout! Grandfather may unbend without any loss of dignity, and it will do papa no harm to forget his business and his ambition, and bring his quota to the general happy fun. Some evidence of youth in father's heart would in not a few homes contribute pleasant memories of the day. Not with a backbone that will not bend from the exact perpendicular, nor a tone that is modulated only to professional gravity, but in sympathy with harmless mirth and pleasure that leave no sting. THE VISITOR, to all its readers, presents

THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON.

BAPTIST UNION.

The VISITOR has advocated that in order to promote a union of the Baptist and Free Christian Baptist denominations in this province there should be representative committees appointed by the Associations and Conference, to draft a basis to be submitted to each of these bodies for approval. This it advocates because numerically the two bodies are nearly equal, and are equally enjoying the blessing of God in additions to their numbers. In other provinces and in the United States this is not so. The Free Will Baptists in the United States are comparatively a weak body, and they are not increasing. In fact there are no F. C. Baptists as an organized body elsewhere. And further, these brethren are now in essential agreement with the Baptist body in this province, and it only needs courteous, christian, and fair consideration of the subject, to bring about an amalgamation that is a real union and essentially Baptist.

The Messenger objects to any efforts looking to union being made, and plants itself squarely upon the ground that if any individuals or denominations wish to unite with Baptists there can be no conference as to a basis of union being drafted, and there can be no new statement of doctrine and practice even thought of or produced. In other words, some one set of the articles used by Baptist churches has about it the finality of inspiration, or all the different sets of articles used by our churches are productions that can never be equalled, and that any attempt to produce anything to take their place would be akin to sacrilege.

Now, while the VISITOR has no objection to these articles for itself, and freely admits they voice, in a general way, its faith, yet it believes there is intelligence and piety enough in the two denominations to write a set equally good. The VISITOR's position is, that in order to effect a

union of the two bodies, a basis should be agreed upon, and that articles of faith and practice, harmonious with the basis, should be drafted. For itself the VISITOR proposes no essential modification of either belief or practice, and don't believe a conference of the Committees proposed would develop the need of any. At the outset of the Union there would have to be a little generous toleration permitted on both sides. On the Lord's Supper question, where there was considerable variety of view, all could harmonize on the Scripture basis of giving no invitation either close or open. Both bodies know there is no dogmatic Scripture teaching as to the giving of an invitation to the Supper of any kind. All that the VISITOR would ask is that the basis of union should recognize the facts as to doctrine and practice as they are taught by both denominations in the planting of their churches. If in any matter there were found to be beliefs and practices that were irreconcilable, and neither party was prepared to make any modifications or admit any toleration on the point, why that would end the matter. The Messenger assumes this ground, and on it bases its argument in opposition. We have said that we believe there would be found no questions upon which we could not formulate a statement that both parties to the Union would accept as honorable and scriptural. From the first we have urged no union on compromises, and we still desire none. The F. C. Baptists and Baptists in New Brunswick are much nearer each other in faith and practice than are Baptists and Free Will Baptists in the United States, and this fact should be recognized. The Messenger has altogether failed in recognition of this fact, and its attitude while it sounds the old Shibboleth is lacking in breadth, comprehension and knowledge of the question as it really is. Perhaps there is some apology for the Messenger's position from the fact that there are no F. C. Baptists in Nova Scotia, and it judges them by an ideal standard. It should not be forgotten that all the reasons thus far presented in opposition are a begging of the question. The basis which the two bodies may agree upon may be thoroughly evangelical and Baptist as to all fundamental doctrines and practices. We believe it will. Those who are calling "spirits from the vasty deep" merely to frighten them back again, may in the end find that it was only legerdemain or boyish trick on their part, without there really being anything in this proposed union to frighten even the ghosts of our fathers.

QUESTIONS ON BAPTIST UNION.

Question. What is to be the policy of the new paper, *The Messenger and Visitor*, on the matter of the Union of the Baptists and Free Christian Baptists?

Answer. We don't know, but we have assurance that it will view the matter favorably.

Question. Where there are Baptists and Free Christian Baptists to come into one church in the Union, how could the communion matter be adjusted?

Answer. Baptists and Free Christian Baptists both begin their work and carry it on in the same way in planting churches. They preach that men should repent, believe, be baptized, be organized into churches and observe the Lord's Supper. Neither denomination believes there is any scripture command for giving either a close or open invitation to the Supper. This being the fact the matter would stand in the Union just where it now stands in many of our churches. Let no invitation, close or open, be given. This would violate neither conscience nor scripture teaching.

Question. Would there not be apt to arise some clashing in the choice of a minister for a united church, that is as to whether formerly he had been a Baptist or a Free Christian Baptist?

Answer. Possibly. Clashing arises in our separate churches, but a few years would obliterate this, as a dozen

or more ministers would be ordained every year who had never been members of any but the united churches, and who would be thoroughly acceptable to all.

Question. You suggested last week that committees to consider the matter of union should be appointed by the Associations. Why by the Associations rather than the Convention?

Answer. For this reason, that the Convention as such has no "Articles of Faith and Practice." The Associations have these, and consider the questions growing out of their use. The individual churches adopt these articles, as a rule, and exercise discipline for their violation. If a church should develop into unsoundness in the faith, the Association and not the Convention would deal with the case. For this reason we judge the Associations should be the body consulted in this matter. If the Associations adopt articles which the Convention don't like it can make such remonstrance as it thinks best, but the Association will decide according to precedents in our denomination what articles it will set forth as its declaration of faith and practice. The churches forming the Southern N. B. Association, when in the Associations they left had the old Maine Articles. When they organized the Southern Association they adopted the New Hampshire articles. If the Associations in New Brunswick agree to consider the matter of union with the F. C. Baptists, there is no power to say to them they shall not, in loyalty to the essential Baptist faith, agree to re-write their creed statement with a view to adoption if it is satisfactory. The sanctity thrown around human statements of creed is mischievous when it arrogates to itself the importance of inspiration.

GREEN APPLES.

Bishop Foster has been recently insisting that the Methodist minister in any community ought to be intellectually the "topmost man." This involves a good deal—much more than a sound mind to begin with. It means thought and study that shall tend to constant development and storing. There are few congregations that do not include some thoughtful, reading men, and the minister who, with little preparation at the beginning, attempts to lead and feed these minds, will have no sailing before the wind. The old farmer who sympathized with the pastor of waning popularity, because he was reduced to the necessity of feeding his people green apples, in part expressed the difficulty. "The man," said he, "who contracts to deliver so many bushels of apples per week the year round, has got, either to break his contract or deliver some of his fruit green." Now the preacher who clogs the palates of his people with green fruit, until they cannot distinguish between it and that which is mature and mellow, is manifestly failing in his duty. He should be educating their taste, and rendering it more delicate and reliable. There are probably few of us who cannot recall some community which we have known, where the influence of one man has been powerful in refining the people and stimulating their intellectual progress. This man has not always been the minister. As we write we recall an instance where the influence of a quiet, cultured man of a generation past, is acting upon the world now through a number of vigorous, educated minds. And yet it failed of the best results in all cases because, though in its origin healthy and moral, it was not entirely and avowedly controlled and directed by the religion of Christ. Where it recognized and accepted this power, it has produced useful lives; where it failed to be thus dominated, it has tended to misanthropy and cynicism. Now, had the minister of that past generation been a man of sufficient breadth and culture to stand intellectually beside the originator of this influence, to command his respect and share with him the homage of the promising and aspiring minds of the neighborhood, it can be easily understood how the minister's faith and doctrine would have colored and directed this influence. That Freemasonry which has been recognized

between strong and cultured intellects would have given the gospel access to the heart, and its herald power over the life and thought of the other man, would have tinged the whole fountain whose streams are still flowing.

If it be asked whether it be possible for the minister to maintain intellectual superiority, or at least eminence, in the community, we should, in general, say yes. Grant him a fair start, a sound mind, and such equipment and training as shall enable him to use all his powers to advantage, and we think he ought to hold his way. He will not know so much of medicine as the doctor; he need not have the statutes at his tongue's end, like the lawyer; the engineer will beat him in practical mechanics; he will yield somewhat to the specialist in any direction; but he will follow each so far as to inspire their respect and friendship; and from every field of knowledge he will gather so much that his cultured mind will be able to weigh facts gathered from the remote corners of all, to appreciate the results of others' research, and anywhere to offer an opinion that will be received with respect. His people ought to give him time and means for this, and, as he attempts the research, and gives them a share of the results, he will broaden their views toward the required liberality.

Let some one should want to misunderstand us, we will state in plain words that we consider no mental power or culture in itself sufficient preparation for the ministry, nor do we think it permissible to any minister, to regard the lifting up of his people morally and intellectually as the end of his mission. We believe he should be called of God, and should preach Christ. But, having the calling, we believe he should avail himself of every means to render his preaching acceptable and availing.

Even at this day, some objections are made to an educated ministry. Through want of space to consider them, in detail, we will mention several together: One young man says, "I have not time to get an education;" another, "I am afraid it would destroy somewhat of my originality;" another, "I fear I should lose the Spirit;" and still another, "Would it not make me less acceptable to common people?"

Did you ever see those western grain fields, stretching away to the horizon? Say that a solitary farmer with sickle in hand, approaches one of these; as he looks out over the myriad heads of nodding, ripe grain, a cold blast tells him that winter with frost and snows is at hand. He bends to his task, fearful that he shall not have time to gather all his harvest. A friend passes and tells him, "There are reapers and threshers a few miles away which you may have on almost any terms to do this work, if you will but go after them." What would you think of that man's wisdom if, while gathering with slow step and bent back his handful from these broad acres, he should say, "Oh! I have not time to go for them. The grain would be lost?"

As to the originality, we have listened to not a few in whom we would very gladly see it destroyed.

The man who is afraid of losing "the Spirit," places narrow limits to its power, when he thinks that it can rule a mind innocent of culture, but would be unable to dominate it when stored and developed. Is it likely to lessen a man's spirituality to bring his mind into contact with the best thoughts of the best men through the ages? To get a fuller view of God's truth, a wider conception of His attributes, a better understanding of His works? Was Luther the less spiritually minded, because he could maintain his thesis against the learned doctors of Germany; had Paul less of the Spirit because he was able to confront Grecian Philosophy at Athens?

Paul's learning did not appear to make him less acceptable to the jailer at Philippi. Newton, beginning to understand how much knowledge lay beyond his grasp, probably knew less in his own estimation than the average college freshman. If education, and especially fuller knowledge of Christ, through his word and works, does not bring humility—well, it has got hold of a hard subject.

THE WYCLIFFE ANNIVERSARY.

The last day of this month and year will be the five hundredth anniversary of the death of the great English Reformer, John Wycliffe. He has been aptly termed the "morning star" of the Reformation. He resisted the payment of the tribute money by his country to the Pope. He opposed the rapacity, avarice and vicious habits of the priests, monks, and friars. He held to the sufficiency of the Bible as a rule of faith and practice, and preached against penance, transubstantiation, confession, absolution, and worship of saints. He was several times arrested by the order of the Pope, but his powerful friend John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, and others stood by him. His great work was the translation of the Bible into English. The Lollard Reformation movement largely sprung from his efforts, and though it was seemingly stamped out, yet it reappeared in the Protestantism of Elizabeth, Cromwell and Milton. The punishment which Rome was unable to visit upon Wycliffe while living fell upon his lifeless remains. His coffin, by the Pope's order, was torn open, and his bones burnt and the ashes scattered in the river Swift, which, as one of the old writers says, bore them to the Avon, and the Avon into the Severn, the Severn into the narrow seas, and they into the main ocean, and thus the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblem of the doctrine which now is dispersed all the world over.

The "Messenger and Visitor."

A further statement of our plans is due to the many who are awaiting the issue of the *Messenger and Visitor* with such deep interest. To publish a pretentious prospectus would be useless. The consolidated paper can win its way only as it bears its recommendation upon its face, as it goes to its readers. We may, however, state some facts and declare our aims.

We propose to make the new paper larger than the old, to reduce the advertisements, and to pack some of the type. This will add to the reading matter about four columns above what the VISITOR has contained up to the last week or two.

Our pastors are generally deeply interested in the success of our paper. We can hope to have the best thought of our best men gathered into its columns. This should make it strong. As it is to represent all our people in the Maritime Provinces, it will bear to all its readers a broader range of news.

We shall aim to make the *Messenger and Visitor*, a denominational paper.

The precious principles of our people, and the great objects which engage our attention as a body, shall ever receive sturdy and earnest support. We wish to make our people staunch in the truth, and help our pastors, our churches, and our various Boards in their several and united work, as much as lies in our power.

We shall strive, also, to keep our people informed of the great Baptist brotherhood of three millions of church members, of which they form a part, and thus broaden their sympathies, and increase, perhaps, their self-respect. To this end, we hope to secure correspondence from the chief centres of Baptist influence, in America and Great Britain.

We hope to make the *Messenger and Visitor* a high toned general religious periodical. To furnish general religious intelligence, to afford nourishment for the growth of the broadest and highest religious manhood and womanhood, to meet the needs of the soul life in all the struggles and temptations and dangers of the existence on earth, to incite to more earnest service and more liberal giving—in short, to do what we can to save and sanctify men, and get others to help on in this great work, shall be our aim.

No, we shall not dabble in party politics, but on all moral and immoral questions hope to take a firm stand.

We desire to make the *Messenger and Visitor* a bright, interesting family newspaper. We shall not forget there are all classes in all stages of growth from youth to old age, among our readers. The read-