

Messenger and Visitor

Published in the interests of the Baptists denomination of the Maritime Provinces by

The Maritime Baptist Publishing Co., Ltd.

TERMS: \$1.50 per annum in advance.

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Editor

Address all communications and make all payments to the MESSENGER AND VISITOR.

If labels are not changed within reasonable time after remittances are made advise "Business Manager," Box 330 St. John, N. B.

Printed by Paterson & Co., 107 Germain Street, St. John, N. B.

STAYING AWAY FROM THE SUPPER.

That Christian must be in a sad spiritual state, or know little of the real meaning of his covenant vows, who can deliberately turn his back on the table of the Lord, when the feast is spread and the invitation given. Yet many church members "in good standing" do this constantly, heedless alike of the admonition of the Lord, "this do in remembrance of me," and of their covenant obligations.

The reasons assigned for this neglect of the Lord's Supper are various, but not one of them among them all is adequate to excuse so flagrant a breach of Christian duty. Personal disagreement with one or more members of the church, dislike of the pastor, some fancied wrong or slight, a sense of personal unworthiness, real or fancied—these and similar weak excuses are given.

But back of all these reasons there will generally be found either a wrong conception of the meaning and purpose of the ordinance, or a low state of piety in the offending member. Many misled by the term "communion" regard the ordinance solely as an expression of Christian fellowship. Thus we often hear it said, "I cannot go to communion as long as so-and-so is a member of the church." The gathering together of God's people at the table is indeed an expression of Christian fellowship, but it is only in that sense, the outward sign of the church fellowship already existing, so that, to escape the reality of the fellowship, one must withdraw from the church altogether. But the promotion of Christian fellowship is not the chief purpose of the Lord's Supper. "This do" said Jesus, "in remembrance of me," and his words suggest the deeper meaning of the ordinance. To partake at this feast is a sacred privilege and a precious means of grace. The believer who stays away from the table because he is at variance with his brother, not only deprives himself of a great blessing and a means of grace, but insults the Lord whose broken body and shed blood are set forth in the emblematic bread and wine. No doubt, he ought first, if possible, to be reconciled to his brother; but having done his best to secure reconciliation, he ought not to abstain from the communion in case the other refuses to be reconciled.

But others, it may be remain away because they feel unworthy to participate in so sacred an observance. In this they make a sad mistake. If they are really unworthy to come to the communion they are unworthy to be members of the church. But genuine humility is the best possible state of heart for receiving the full benefit of the Supper; and no service of the church is so well adapted to quicken the spiritual motions, and lift up the soul toward God, as that which recalls with such vivid beauty and impressiveness the sufferings and death of our Lord.

If, however, a member absents himself from the communion, through sheer indifference, is not this case one that calls for admonition and if need be, for discipline? His attendance or non-attendance ought not to be a matter of indifference to the church. A member should not be forced to the Lord's table against his will—if such a thing were possible; but neither should he be allowed to turn his back upon the table with impunity.

The number of church members who make it a habit to stay away from the Lord's table is very large, as pastors in many of our churches can testify. As such neglect of the ordinance is one of the decisive tests of fidelity to covenant obligations, it would seem that those who are guilty of it should be looked after with tender solicitude and dealt with as brethren 'walking disorderly.'

FOOT BALL.

Harper's Weekly in a recent issue says: "There are a great many people not constitutionally unsympathetic with the strenuous life, who think that the present game of foot ball as played by the college teams, is a bad game to be in, a stupid game to watch, and a demoralizing spectacle. They insist that it is cruel, brutal and dishonest, and ought to be reformed or perished. For our part, we should hate to pass judgment on so turbulent a subject; or even to declare whether we thought that the Eastern war correspondents or the football reporters furnish harder and more painful reading to the American public. Both war and football are sad and bloody subjects, and both the war stories and the

football stories make laborious reading for everyone but experts. But we heartily wish that football might be fixed up so as to be more amusing and give more general satisfaction. There are a good many people in these provinces who sympathize with Harper's Weekly in the desire to see this game 'so fixed up,' that it might be attended with less danger to life and limb. The writer has it from a member of a football team from one of our Christian Colleges that he drank his first glass of liquor after playing a match game with a team from another College. Of course this is not a necessary adjunct to the game, we do not say abolish, but we do think some modification would be in the interest of all concerned.

OUR PAPER.

In planning for your reading next year do not forget the MESSENGER AND VISITOR. If you are an office-bearer in the church, deacon, clerk or treasurer you want the denominational paper. As you read its pages from week to week you become acquainted with the work of other churches and of what the denomination is striving to accomplish in the effort to extend the Redeemer's Kingdom. No man can be an efficient officer in the church who is not acquainted with the work of the body of which the church forms a part. The pastor if he be up to date, will seek to have his helpers, —the men upon whom he leans, regular subscribers and readers of the denominational paper. He will find the weekly religious paper, his most efficient and effective assistant. Every Baptist home should have the paper, not only for what it stands, but for its influence upon family life. As churches we are strong only in proportion to the intelligence of the members of those churches.

We shall fail in our mission if we do not seek by all means in our power to raise the standard of the religious life of the people. Our aim is to assist the pastor in every possible way in his efforts to benefit and bless those to whom he ministers. From a somewhat extended experience we are sure, that the church which has the largest list of subscribers to the denominational paper takes rank in intelligent devotion to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the earth, and where the opposite is true, then, very little is accomplished. We appeal to all our pastors and to all interested in the welfare and progress of our beloved Zion to assist us in getting the paper into all our homes.

HARMLESS OR HARMFUL—WHICH?

Dr. A. Blackburn, in a recent issue of the Pacific Baptist refers to the late annual meeting of 'The Baptist Congress' in Louisville, Kentucky in the following terms, 'In our large denomination we have many men of many minds' and these minds think and their thoughts must find public expression or something would happen. Never was an engine made but some of the steam must escape. Hence the need of safety valves and exhausts. To this blessed function the congress is called. This year there seemed to be an accumulation of Baptist liberty, and no better place could be found to open the valves than staid old Louisville. Men had their say as to the Scriptures, and theology and church membership, and (of course) open communion. For a time, and in a limited space, the air was full of vapor. Some of this got into the whistle, and there was noise, but the vapor has passed into thin air and the old denomination will go right in winning souls and building up the Kingdom of God. And these blessed men, having spoken, will return to preach the unsearchable riches, of Christ probably some to forget their vagaries in the serious work of the Gospel ministry.' We have no such thing as a Baptist Congress in these provinces. The nearest approach to anything of the sort is the Ministers' Institute which has met at the time and place of our Maritime Convention. There was no such meeting this year. It may be that the surplus steam had been let off earlier in the season, in another way. We believe however that no one was hurt, though there was some noise. Our pastors are very busy men and those who are actively engaged in the work of soul-winning are kept in closest touch with the heart of Christ and so have neither time nor inclination to indulge in vain speculations, which so often lead to bickerings and heart-burnings.

BAPTISTS STAND FOR SOMETHING.

They have a mission and because they have a mission they have a place in history. This mission is not an evolution of their own thinking, it is God-ordained, Christ-given if this is the better expression. They stand for eternal principles. For these their fathers suffered the lash, the dungeon, the stake, fines and banishment. We are the spiritual children of these godly fathers. We ought to cherish their memories, be true our lineage. When Baptists cease to stand for their distinctive tenets, when they fail to send forth their world-message, they die, and they deserve to die, because they have nothing to live for that calls for a separate existence. The time has passed for boneless organizations or individuals.

Fidelity to principles does not make a man narrow or illiberal. The most fraternal spirit is not out of harmony with strong convictions. A good Baptist does not cease to love his brother because he loves Christ and his Word

better. Narrow sectarianism is Phariseism in both essence and substance, and it was our Lord's bitterest foe. It is ours to avoid the two extremes, narrow sectarianism on the one side, and inflated liberalism, or neither, one thing or the other on the other. It is our highest duty and privilege to remember and perform our mission, which in part is:

(1) To proclaim unflinching fidelity to the word of God as altogether sufficient for faith and practice, without any appealing to creeds, councils and individuals for support of any doctrine.

(2) To proclaim salvation as the free gift of God, separate and apart from good works or baptism, as a procuring cause.

(3) To proclaim the dependency of the individual church and member that no one shall lord it over God's heritage, but the Lord himself. Baptists recognize no archbishops, pope, prince or potentate as having authority in the church of God.

(4) To proclaim and practice the ordinances, without addition or emendation as Christ delivered them to us.

(5) To proclaim the separation of the church from the world, which involves a regenerated church membership.

As long as we firmly, persistently, loving, and persuasively proclaim our message, we live. When we cease to do this we die, and when that takes place, the dead will bury its dead.—Baptists will have ceased to be.

THE CENTURION'S FAITH.

The Lord Jesus tells us, this faith was unequalled in Israel. To this day it stands forth among the highest exhibitions of faith the world has ever seen.

Ideas rule the world, build empires, overthrow dynasties, and direct the march of progress.

One idea made Rome, this was obedience, absolute obedience to authority. Its founder must have been a man of iron. From the very start, the all conquering spirit of this empire was that of absolute authority. When this spirit spoke to hesitate was to cease to be a Roman. In its presence life was less than a shadow, not worth a passing thought.

To this centurion the possibility of failing to carry out the commands of his superior was not a possibility. In Christ he saw and recognized the superior of disease Christ was a royal Master. For him to speak, it was not possible for the forces involved in disease, to disobey his mandate. "Only speak the word and my servant shall be healed."

Such faith made all things possible. The Lord Christ marvelled. He saw the Jewish walls which guarded the heavenly entrance, fall down, and through the coming ages he saw armies of men, "from the east and from the west" coming into the kingdom "to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob." Placed along side of the Centurion's faith, ours seems to be dim and shadowy indeed. To read, only occasionally, the 11th chapter of Hebrews, would be a most excellent tonic to the timid and unbelieving souls in too many of our churches to-day—"Why are ye fearful O ye of little faith?"

Editorial Notes.

—Just a word to the pastors and those who prepare obituary notices of our departed dead. We desire to be as helpful as possible in this regard. In order to do this, we ask the friends to be brief. A few sentences will contain all that is necessary for the general public to know. Please do not make them biographical sketches. Minute details are not necessary, nor is it important that the names of all the brothers and sisters, or sons and daughters of the deceased shall be given. Our space for these notices is limited. We hope pastors will be considerate in this matter. It means much more to us than our friends think.

—To win, 'at least one soul for Christ every year,' is worth a great deal more to him who does it, than doing nothing at all, for others. A society has been organized with this as its aim. At the first glance it would seem, as if an earnest disciple would be almost ashamed to put his lowest mark of good effort at this low point. But in many places, we fear in most places, even this would show progress. When men are doing nothing, almost any upward movement is a sign of progress. There is a fine opportunity for many of our readers to 'lend a hand.' Their help is greatly needed by overworked pastors.

—It is easy to pull down, but often impossible to build up. It is an easy thing to sweep aside the Bible but an impossible thing to find something else that will fill its place. It is getting to be quite fashionable to sneer at Christian men and women who accept the Bible as their 'rule of faith and practice'—to call them narrow and bigoted, 'fetish worshippers,' and other euphonious names. But when these people are asked to give something to take the place of Bible Christianity, they are at a loss to find a substitute. It is all very well to be liberal in thought, in speech, in action. But after all, what can take the place of the great eternal verities that crowd the pages of this Book of books.