

Messenger and Visitor

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Editor

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The MESSENGER AND VISITOR will have a representative at the approaching Convention at Truro and we trust those wishing to subscribe for the paper or pay subscriptions, either overdue or in advance, will avail themselves of the opportunity of doing so.

UNION WITH FREE BAPTISTS.

Elsewhere in this issue we publish the doctrinal statement adopted by our Convention at Charlottetown in 1887, and also the amendments made therein by the Free Baptist Conference of New Brunswick at its meeting in October, 1903, when the subject of Union was considered by that body. Our reason for publishing this Basis is that the subject will no doubt be brought before the Convention at Truro on report of a committee appointed last year, composed of: Rev. Dr. Gates, Rev. W. E. McIntyre, Rev. H. F. Adams. See Year Book for 1903, Pages 27, 31.

The subject is not new to our readers. At the Convention in Moncton, in 1884, if we remember correctly, a committee was appointed to confer with the Free Baptists on the subject of union in Foreign mission work. The committee reported that the Free Baptists did not see the way clear to unite in Foreign missions alone, but would consider the question of an entire union of the two bodies. At the meeting of Convention in Brussels street in 1886, a delegation of Free Baptist brethren spoke on the subject with much effect. During the year 1886-87 committees from the two bodies, the Free Baptist Conference of New Brunswick and the Baptist Convention, held joint meetings and agreed on a Basis of Union. Our Convention in 1887, as we have said, adopted this Basis. But the Free Baptist Conference voted to postpone the matter. Once more, however, the subject is before the two bodies, and it will be one of the most important subjects to be considered at Truro.

About twenty years have passed since the matter was introduced, and perhaps every one is ready to vote.

In view, however, of the fundamental character of the proposed action and of the practical difficulties of effecting a union of two bodies having Congregational polity it will be wise not to be hasty in action lest we create embarrassments for the future. Patient study and a spirit of willingness to advance or to wait, as may seem to be the Master's desire, will be the attitude of mind most likely to issue in the action not to be regretted. We believe in the unqualified sincerity of both bodies; and that the dominating motive is the desire to advance the Kingdom of Christ.

Brethren will ask themselves and others many questions. We cannot even suggest all the enquiries.

1. What gains would accrue from the Union? It may be said that the union would stop the loss now incurred by separation. If there are not sufficient reasons for separation the fact of separation is itself a loss of energy, of spirit, of power with the public. In many districts there are Free Baptist churches and Baptist churches, the ability of either body being unequal to the adequate support of the ministry and the equipment of the local church for its best service. Union it is claimed would make a strong, compact field, lessen the labors of the minister in travel and increase his preaching power. Local differences being removed the spirit of consecration and confidence would increase. The spiritual life would become stronger. Perhaps these results would not immediately follow the union in every case; but the conditions would be favorable to such results if the union were sincere and cordial.

2. Some will ask if there would not be disappointment at the results of union. Perhaps so. Some of us would have a fear that the Free Baptists would be disappointed with the Baptists. We are often disappointed with ourselves. We make mistakes. We are none of us infallible, not even the youngest of us; at least not always. Then also we might be disappointed in the Free Baptists. We might find them better than ourselves and still not enough better to make us entirely good simply by associating with them. We should still probably have to look above for help to fight the devil and all his lies; we should still have to continue the unending conflict with the undying foe.

Probably some of the Free Baptists would have similar

feelings. We are, doubtless, very much alike. But there are many things to unite us. We believe in the great verities of the gospel, which are the great verities of the universe. We greet one another in the new life and spirit that are from heaven. We try to uphold the authority of Jesus Christ in requirements of faith and in obedience to His commands. Our past has been much the same in both bodies. Our fathers toiled hard with much sacrifice to establish our churches. Our ministers still give the best of their life to preaching the word. Neither body is specially in favor with the world, nor with much of the spirit of some other religious bodies. Our common struggles for truths at least closely related would give us a fellow feeling.

3. Is there agreement as to doctrinal teaching? This is of course, an important matter and will be carefully, patiently considered. Any misunderstanding here would work evil in days to come. It will be seen that the Free Baptists adopted the Basis with the exception of two articles which were amended. Probably the article on the Lord's Supper will be most carefully examined. For ourselves we do not see that the change made by the Conference affects the meaning of the article. As we understand the section the view of the body is there given as to those who should observe the Lord's Supper and taken in connection with the articles on Baptism and church membership the Basis teaches that faith precedes baptism; that baptism is necessary for church membership; that immersion only is baptism; and that church membership is to precede partaking of the Lord's Supper. We do not see how there can be any ambiguity about the articles on the ordinances and church membership. If any uncertainty exists in any mind it should be removed by the discussion in Truro.

4. As we understand the situation the adoption of the Basis by our Convention would not effect the union of the two bodies. It would merely affirm the agreement of the Conference and the Convention on the Doctrinal statement. The way would then be open, however, to proceed with the union in such ways as might be deemed wise by the two bodies concerned.

5. It will be noted that the negotiations for union have been conducted only with the Free Baptists of New Brunswick. The Free Baptists of Nova Scotia have not joined the Free Baptists of New Brunswick in these communications with our convention. We do not know their views on the subject of union. We know however, that their relations to our people in localities where churches of both bodies exist are cordial, and we would hope that if the Free Baptists of New Brunswick and the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces become one body the Free Baptists of Nova Scotia would join the united body and together we should endeavor to bear our part in the work entrusted to us all of giving the gospel to our fellow men. "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE AT ACADIA.

As was stated in a previous issue the sixth department of study at Acadia is "English Bible and Christian Evidences." From the founding of the college the Bible has been revered by the authorities and has been studied by teachers and students. But in recent years, in harmony with the wide recognition of the literary worth of the scriptures, it has been made a part of the college courses. "The Freshman class follow the Old Testament History to the time of the Divided Monarchy; and the Sophomore Class, from the Divided Monarchy to the end of the History. Along with the Bible, use is made of Blaikie's "Manual of Bible History." "The Juniors take up the study of Christ's Life, as presented in the Four Gospels, with the aid of Burton and Mathews' "Constructive Studies in the Life of Christ." (Stevens) and Burton's "Harmony of the Gospels" is recommended therewith. "The Seniors are led through a study of the Founding of the Christian Church: The Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of the New Testament, furnishing the basis of the study. Along with the Bible, there will be used: the Professor's own printed syllabus, the volume on the Acts in the Cambridge Bible series, and Stalker's Life of Paul."

It will be seen from these statements from the Calendar that the earnest student will receive a knowledge of the contents of the Bible of the greatest possible value to him as a man, as a Christian, and as a scholar. Under competent Professors who have made the subject a life study he will gain skill in reading and interpreting that will enable him to add to his knowledge in subsequent years. The relation of this subject to growth in Christian life is obvious. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." These great words of our Lord show that the study of his thoughts, his word, will give freedom, sanctification and power with him. For the devout student, therefore, to study the word thoroughly is to come into the highest possible life.

But the Christian must be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is in him. To enable college men to do this there is established the course in Christian evidences. In this course historical facts are presented to furnish an argu-

ment for the authenticity of the New Testament. Among the topics treated are: "The Arguments for the Being of God; the principal Anti-Theistic Theories; the Adaptedness of Christianity to the Needs of Human Nature; a Comparison of Christianity with other Religions; the Congruity of the Natural and Physical Sciences with the Christian Faith." Thus most of the forms of unbelief in which the Christian's faith is assaulted pass under review and the students learn that he who believes need not be alarmed at bold words of ignorant sceptics.

The calendar gives in succession to the departments just considered the subjects of Mathematics, Astronomy, Physics, Chemistry and Geology and Pedagogy. These great departments of science are pursued in a thorough manner without the least infringement of the right of research or the liberty of teaching. The Higher Mathematics confers a power of sustained thinking that nothing else can give. Chemistry "is designed to give the student a general understanding of the composition, action and interaction, of the various substances which make up the material world around him." In Geology they study "the rock-forming minerals, the composition, structure, and origin of rock masses, the chronological order of the stratified rocks, and history of life upon the earth, the Geology of Canada, the earth as a member of the universe." In Physics they examine "the properties of solid and fluid bodies, sound and heat, light, electricity, magnetism." With the provision made for special work already set forth in these columns the reader will see that Acadia offers work enough in Science to attract to her halls the numbers who wish to understand the world in which they live on its material, intellectual and religious sides. Our young people at Acadia are offered a banquet of knowledge where the cups "run over."

STATUE TO MR. SPURGEON.

The Autumn Assembly of the English Baptist Union is to be held at Bristol when the following Resolution will be submitted:—

That in view of the proposed statue of Charles Haddon Spurgeon to be erected at the Baptist Church House by the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, and to be unveiled at a Baptist Union session next year, the ministers and delegates of this assembly desire to place on record their gratitude to God for Mr. Spurgeon's extraordinary gifts, consuming zeal and abundant labors; for his words of tongue and pen that went out to the ends of the world, and were words of eternal life to great multitudes at home and abroad. They also desire to express their unabated and ever-increasing love and reverence for the memory of his wide philanthropy, his genial brotherliness, his personal charm, and his quickening and widespread influence. This representative Assembly welcomes this memorial of the great preacher of our time, and trusts that its presence at the centre of the denomination will be blessed by God to foster unity and stimulate in all hearts a richer devotion to the Gospel of Christ.

BAPTIST INSTITUTE.

The Rev. D. H. Simpson, of Billtown, N. S., Secretary of the Baptist Institute asks us to announce that efforts to secure a programme for the Institute this year have failed. He also asks us to give notice that the Institute will meet on Friday, Aug. 19th at 10 o'clock a. m., at the First Baptist church, Truro.

The Convention in 1883 appointed a committee to hold an Institute at the meeting in Fredericton in 1889. That meeting was a success and, if we remember correctly, the custom has been observed ever since. In 1895 many of the delegates were unavoidably detained at Digby and a part of the programme was carried out in the Baptist vestry of that town. Among the papers read was a careful sketch of our denominational journalism prepared by Professor A. E. Caldwell, M. A., in which the work of Stephen Selden, M. A., Rev. I. E. Bill, D. D., Rev. J. E. Hopper, D. D. and Rev. George Armstrong, D. D., was duly described. Some of the meetings have been rather lively perhaps; but they have all been profitable, and we trust the Institute will go on in its good work for many years.

Editorial Notes.

—The Rev. Dr. Donald, rector of Trinity church, Boston, died last week. Dr. Donald was the successor to the late Phillips Brooks.

—It is reported that the Rev. Dr. Cody, of Toronto, who recently declined the office of Bishop of Nova Scotia, to which he was elected by the synod of that province, may reconsider his decision and that he may be appointed Bishop at the meeting of the synod in Halifax on Aug. 31st.

—Rev. W. C. Kierstead, Ph. D., Pastor of the First Baptist church, of Rockford, Ill. and formerly of New Brunswick will preach the institute sermon in Prince St. church, Truro, on Friday evening.

—The Rev. J. H. McDonald of Fredericton called at the MESSENGER AND VISITOR office on Monday. He is in the best of health and rejoicing in his work. The church at Fredericton recently installed an organ built by Breckles