

Messenger and Visitor

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S. MCC. BLACK Editor

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BAPTISTS AND THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

The propriety of Baptists observing the festivals of the Christian Year was lately the subject of a paper and a sequent discussion in the Baptist Ministers' Conference of St. John. The author of the paper took quite decided ground in the negative of this proposition. Among the arguments advanced in support of his contention were—that Scriptural authority for the keeping of the festivals is entirely wanting; that their observance implies deference to ecclesiastical authorities which Baptists cannot consistently recognize; that the influence of the observance of such "holy seasons" is to inspire and foster the sentiment that one season is more holy than another and the observance is thus in line with ritualism and sacerdotalism, and that in the keeping of these festivals celebrating events in the life of our Lord, His birth and death and resurrection—the effect is to call the attention of the worshipper to the event itself rather than to its results. The writer held that help and inspiration would come in fullest measure to the believer, not by dwelling in certain recurring seasons year by year upon the birth, the sufferings and death and the resurrection of our Lord, but by recognizing as the assured truth of the gospel that the Son of God has come into the world, that He has given Himself as a sacrifice once for all that He might put away sin, and that, being risen from the dead He dieth no more, but ever liveth to make the life of believers effective and victorious.

The discussion which followed the reading of the paper was interesting and somewhat animated, and while there was no failure to appreciate its purpose and general character, there was on the part of some a disposition to challenge the force or validity of the arguments advanced.

It was questioned, for instance, whether the fact, plain as it is, that the observance of the festivals of the Christian Year has had a tendency to cause some persons to regard these seasons as particularly sacred and to infer that they were under less obligation to live righteously, soberly and godly at other times, is a valid argument against the observance of such anniversaries as Christmas and Easter, since such an argument might perhaps with equal force be advanced against observance of the Lord's Day. Exception was also taken to the allegation that in the observance of these anniversaries by Baptists there was, necessarily or actually, any deference to the authority of the Roman or the Anglican Churches, since we are free in such a matter, whatever others may or may not have done, to exercise the right of Christian judgment. Most of the pastors present we believe, had been accustomed at the Christmas season and at Easter, to call attention to the Advent and the Resurrection in services of a more or less special character. It was urged in support of this practice that these events in the history of the revelation of Divine grace to men were of so transcendent importance that their annual observance by special services was appropriate and salutary, and that the fact that at certain seasons of the year the minds of the people were very generally being directed to these subjects constituted for the pastor an opportunity to deepen a good impression, by an appropriate service and discourse, an opportunity which it was not wise to neglect. It will be seen, accordingly, that it was found possible to say something for, as well as against, the festivals of the Christian Year, and that the Conference was not all of one opinion in its view of the subject. Probably, too, it would not be unfair to regard the St. John Conference as representative of the different views at present held on this subject by the ministers of our denomination in these Provinces.

For ourselves we are inclined to think that the question is one to be decided on practical rather than ecclesiastical or Scriptural grounds. If the observance of such festivals as Christmas and Easter gives manifestly good results, if it promotes the spiritual life of the churches and exerts a salutary influence on the believing and unbelieving in the congregation, let us observe these festivals with a good conscience. The fact that they are prescribed in the rituals of the Roman, the Anglican and other Churches

does not vitiate them and need not in the least disturb us. Nor need we be disturbed if it is not possible to find Scriptural authority for the observance of these Christian anniversaries. In connection with our Christian life and work we quite rightly observe and do many things for which it would be impossible for us to find scriptural authority or example. The questions of chief importance in connection with this subject, as it seems to us, are whether the spirit which inspires the keeping of the festivals of the Christian year is in the fullest degree the Christian Spirit, and whether the results are in the highest degree salutary. In reference to the first of these questions the writer of the paper which we have mentioned presented some thoughts, noted above, which are certainly worthy of close attention. And in reference to the second question—the character of the results sought and secured—it also we think will bear careful consideration. The Easter service in a Baptist church is often very attractive, with its special music, its display of flowers, not to mention the display of millinery, (a discourse on the resurrection should of course be appropriate in a Christian church on any Lord's Day) but may it not be doubted whether the influence of it all in Baptist churches is spiritually uplifting? Probably a good many Baptists will be disposed to defend the observance of Easter on the (not very high) ground of a necessary concession to popular sentiment. There is a demand for Easter flowers and music, and if the people cannot find these in their own church they will go elsewhere for them. The fact may be admitted, but is the present day celebration of Easter, in motive and result, in line with what is highest in Christian ideal and attainment?

EDUCATION FOR OUR GIRLS.

The *London Academy* says: "The present moment is one at which it is more important than ever that a standard of taste should be created, and, as experience shows, there is no better way of influencing its women. It is not only a question of men of letters, who have been proved over and over again to owe a great deal to the influence of their mothers, but of the whole position of literature as an invaluable influence for good on the national character and development."

Writing on the same subject Professor Butcher says: "The humanistic training of women is an affair of national concern. From the nature of the case woman's influence in laying the early foundations of literary education has always been great. And the signs in the teaching profession all now point to women having an increasing share in forming the literary taste of the young. While the older literary tradition, resting chiefly on the classical languages, is being impaired or modified, the study of literature and language is taking a variety of new forms. As yet, ideas are fluid and methods experimental. A standard of taste has still to be created. People are casting about and beginning to take fresh bearings. And so it becomes of cardinal importance that literature, for which women have often so marked an aptitude, should be made a sound and solid discipline; that the feeling for it should be developed into a reasoned appreciation; that it should not be looked on merely as a showy accomplishment, and that fluency should not be mistaken for mastery. In making the literary education of women more thorough we shall do much towards transmitting a true tradition and standard of humane letters."

These views of Old World writers touch upon one part of the education of women. This side the Atlantic, we believe, the ideal is broader and more adequate. The literary taste is considered only one of the many good results of college training for women. The increased breadth of vision and interest, the greater power for different kinds of service and the elevation of character are some of the aims in view. But what the Academy says of the power of taste in a country, and of the relation of women thereto, is perfectly correct. We are glad to note that the numbers of young women who seek advanced culture in the colleges is increasing. In our growing West there will be a demand for teachers and for leaders in the family and social life that can be met only by well disciplined women whose intensity of devotion is wisely directed to the highest interests of society.

At the Teacher's Institute at Hantsport, recently held, attention was called to the place of English, language and literature in education. We are convinced that comparatively few of our people have any adequate appreciation of the heritage they possess in their mother tongue and in the literature written therein. So much of the national life and history are preserved in books available to all that it is easily possible for the standard of taste and of ethics to be elevated and made influential by a study of the masters of English prose and poetry.

—Rev. H. F. Laflamme and Mrs. Laflamme, missionaries of the Ontario Board, have returned from India after a period of service extending over nine years. They are at present in Wolfville, where Mr. Laflamme delivered a stimulating address on Sunday evening.

Editorial Notes.

—Among those present at the memorial service for Dr. Higgins were three men who were his pupils when he was Principal of Horton Academy, and who themselves subsequently filled that position, viz., Professors J. F. Tufts, I. B. Oakes and E. W. Sawyer.

—Attention is called to the announcements respecting Anniversary week, which President Trotter makes in another column. Anniversary proceedings at Acadia are always full of interest and those who attend an Anniversary for the first time are apt to meet with delightful surprises. Those who intend going will do well to engage lodgings in advance.

—The *Watchman* alludes to President Harper being recently in Boston on business connected with the erection of a new building for the University. He has stated that he has gained twelve pounds in weight, and the cancerous area is reported to be greatly reduced. He is being treated by the internal administration of a medicine which becomes radioactive when X-rays are applied externally. Dr. Harper, it is said, has received hundreds of letters from persons afflicted with cancer, imploring him to tell them how he has been helped. It speaks volumes for Dr. Harper's sympathy as well as for his indomitable courage and industry that, in his impaired health and with the burden of care that is resting upon him, he has taken time and strength to answer with his own hand the most urgent of these appeals.

—Dr. Robert Stuart MacArthur has just completed thirty five years as minister of the Calvary Baptist church, New York. He was called to the church directly from Rochester Theological Seminary, and began his ministry the Sunday after his graduation. Only two ministers in New York, it is said, have had longer continuous pastorates than Dr. MacArthur. His pastorate has been fruitful as well as long. During his ministry more than 5,000 persons have been added to the membership of the church, which now numbers 2,000. The church has sent out two colonies to form new churches, established two missions, has given more than \$2,000,000 for benevolent and missionary purposes and has secured more than \$100,000 toward a partial endowment. Dr. MacArthur is of Canadian birth. He was born in Daleville, Quebec Province, in 1841.

—We are pleased to learn from a member of the committee having the matter in charge that the work in connection with the proposed testimonial to Dr. Sawyer proceeds satisfactorily. The idea of presenting in connection with the purse an album containing the autographs of the donors, accompanied by some brief expression of kindly sentiment toward the ex-President, has proved a happy one. Many have responded to the suggestion of the committee, and the good doctor will not have to wait until a better world is reached to know what kindly things his friends have thought and said about him. If there are any of our readers who have not yet availed themselves of the opportunity of making contributions to the purse and to the album we would remind them that the time is growing short. It is the intention to have the presentation made on the occasion of the College Convocation on Wednesday, June 7, and doubtless it will form one of the most interesting features of Anniversary week.

—The requisite number of Presbyteries in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church have voted for union with the American Presbyterian church north. But the union, if shall take place, will apparently be effected in the face of considerable opposition. The anti-unionists among the Cumberland Presbyterians claim to have a popular majority and the large Presbyteries on their side. In reference to the subject *The Inferior* says: "The fight against union in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church has been a sorrier exhibition of bigotry than we had believed that the twentieth century would ever be condemned to witness. Every selfish and headstrong instinct which has ever sundered the sense of brotherhood among Christians and slain the use for mutual understanding has been invoked by these reckless champions. We are incapable of thinking that men with any vision of Christ's church as his army of conquest in the world could employ such weapons to prevent the junction of two divisions of his troops. Our own denomination has suffered gross misrepresentation."

—The First Moncton church held a Roll Call on May 11th. The church was organized June 8, 1828. Rev. Joseph Crandall was the first pastor. The church was received into the New Brunswick Baptist Association in July 1829. During Mr. Crandall's pastorate 150 persons were added. In 1859 Rev. David Crandall became pastor and during that year 130 members were received. The erection of a larger house of worship than the one first used took place in 1857, probably through the "energetic efforts" of the late Oliver Jones. Rev. R. H. Emerson became pastor in 1856 and held that office at his death, Sept. 11, 1857. One of Mr. Emerson's sons, Judge F. W. Emerson, is a deacon of the church; and another son, Hon. H. R. Emerson, is Minister of Railways and Canals. Among the pastors