THE

# PASTORAL ADDRESS

## OF THE CONFERENCE

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH OF EASTERN BRITISH AMERICA.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN:

From our annual assembly, as your pastors in the Church of God, and as "fellow workers" in "the kingdom of His dear Son," we greet you, who have "obtained like precious faith with us," in the name of our common Lord; and we devoutly implore our Heavenly Father to supply your every need, out of that fulness from which already we have all received, even "according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

At such seasons as the present, we feel peculiarly impressed with the solemnity of the charge we have received, to "feed the flock of God which he hath purchased with His own blood," and "to watch for your souls, as they that must give account." But we can appeal to Him who "hath counted us faithful, putting us into the ministry," as our witness, that it is our highest ambition to "save ourselves and them that hear us," "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Under responsibilities so overwhelming, and in the performance of duties so arduous, nothing less than the abiding presence, and the seasonable and sufficient blessing of the "Chief Shepherd," could sustain us. Yet, "thanks be to God," during another year, and amidst more than usual effort and care for the introduction of our new ecclesiastical arrangements, we have been "kept by His power through faith unto salvation," and have had additional cause to "triumph in Christ, who maketh manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place."

The time which has elapsed since our last Conference has been filled up with events of thrilling interest. Just then the dark cloud of Divine wrath seemed to impend over Christendom. Amidst "wars and commotions, distress of nations and perplexity," in not a few instances "men's hearts were failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which were coming on the earth." Our own national sin, long-continued and tremendously aggravated, had evidently provoked national punishment, so that no human sagacity could foresee the end. Nevertheless, GOD was our "refuge and strength," and as of old we found Him to be "a very present help in trouble." "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth," and in tender compassion He hath "ordained peace for us." Even in this matter He hath caused the wrath of man to praise Him, for our chastisements and the judgments which He hath executed on other nations, have opened up channels of salvation for the fallen churches of Europe, and for the infidel tribes of Asia. "Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord from the fountain of Israel. Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord."

Though remote from the scene of hostilities, the surge of affliction has rolled over our shores, and all classes of the community have suffered more or less on its account. We are well aware that the long-continued depression of commerce on the one hand, and the high rate which has obtained for the necessaries of life on the other, have brought some of you into circumstances of poverty, and have involved many more in unwonted straits and anxieties. As "being ourselves in the body," we have deeply sympathized with you. The trials and griefs which you experience, we willingly share, "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, for his body's sake, which is the Church." Yet we hope that a happier era has already dawned upon us, and that the time is not far distant when there shall be "no complaining in our streets."

Meantime, our wisdom is to concern ourselves more about the sanctification of our trials, than their removal. "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." Be assured, dear brethren, that no worse calamity can befall any people than the being hardened under the outstretched arm of the Almighty. The sure mark and the worst reproach of a reprobate nation is, "The people turneth not to Him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts."

"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." And as you have been accustomed to bear us explain and enforce the Divine testimony in our personal ministry, so now we believe that in our collective capacity you will suffer from us "the word of exhortation."

We affectionately press upon your consideration, first of all, the importance of personal religion. Negligence in regard to this is always inexcusable; nor is it possible to substitute anything else as acceptable devotion. "Look well, therefore, to yourselves;" and, whether enticed by the pleasures and honors of the world, or surrounded with its difficulties, "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness;" "give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." On every side, iniquity abounds, scorning with defiance that law which is "holy, and just, and good;" while, under the name of Christianity, a dead formalism and a variety of heretical speculations, threaten the very existence of "pure religion and undefiled." "Perilous times" have "come;" "many false prophets have gone out into the world:" but these are the characteristic marks of the last times and seeing we live under the most glorious dispensation of grace, it is no wonder that the enemy of souls should rage with extreme violence. Nothing can so completely neutralize the power of error and of vice, as the firm maintenance and practical exemplification of the principles of the gospel. It is now and ever shall be, what it always has been, "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." To hold it fast in its integrity is at once to "prepare the way of the Lord," and to "lift up a standard for the people." These views enforce with singular propriety the counsel of the inspired Apostle: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

"Have faith in God." Regard Him not only as the wise and supreme Disposer of all things, but as sustaining towards you the tender relation of Father. Unhesitatingly commit the keeping of your souls and bodies, and of all your affairs, into the hands of this "faithful Creator." And if, instead of conforming to the world, or yielding to the dictates of unsanctified reason, you "acknowledge the Lord in all your ways He will direct your paths;" if you endure "as seeing Him who is invisible," you will find that "verily there is a reward for the righteous." But let your faith extend farther than this. A state of acceptance with God is only realized by continued reliance upon, and appropriation of, the merits of the Redeemer's death. For security, either in the present world, or in that which is to come, for genuine peace, or for heartfelt joy, "other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, Jesus Christ." The "faithful saying" is still "worthy of all acceptation," and as Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, so should the life which we live in the flesh be "by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us."

We desire also that you may "*abound in hope*, through the power of the Holy Ghost." However grievous may be the disappointments of those who set their affections upon earthly things the hope of a true believer "maketh not ashamed." Whether connecting itself with the enjoyment of perfect love in the present life or with "the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," it will alike be conducive to our full recovery of the image of God, and productive of "strong consolation" in the time of distress. "Every man that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself even as he is pure."

But above all, "This we pray, that your *love* may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment." This is the distinguishing element of the new creation—the first fruit of the Spirit—and "the bond of perfectness." "Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God; He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love." Stir up this gift which has been shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost. "Let brotherly love continue," "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." "By this shall all men know that ye are his disciples," for your conduct shall throw every other species of virtue into the shade, and set forth the divinity of its origin in the most attractive as well as the most incontrovertible manner. And let the love of Christ constrain you to a ceaseless course of the purest philanthropy. "The whole world lieth in wickedness." Cheerfully, then, exercise the strictest self-denial, and follow Christ in the regeneration, bearing his cross and reproach. Such is just the devotion which the world wants, in order to command its attention and admiration, to elevate its standard of morality, and to "make the people obedient in word and deed."

Love to the Lord Jesus should also excite *our zeal for his ordinances*, while the enjoyment of these will react upon and strengthen this principle. It will not, therefore, appear unnecessary to warn you against the "forsaking the assembly of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." "Amiable," indeed, are "the tabernacles of God;" for "in all places where his name is recorded," he will "come unto" His "people, and will bless them." As in the temple scene of old, the shining forth of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ shall arrest the sinner, and exhort the cry, "Woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips." Here also shall the contrite penitent receive the word of reconciliation, while the still small voice of mercy proclaims, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." And when the righteous stand in slippery places, when they are tempted to repine by contrasting their chastisements with the prosperity of the wicked, by going into the sanctuary of the Lord, they shall obtain repeated assurances of his undiminished interest in them; that he will "guide them with his counsel, and afterward receive them into glory." Thus did God in the former times to our fathers, and "as we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts." And we have no doubt, but if our faith were kept in livelier exercise, and in the breadth of its attachment were more commensurate with the wants of our race, and the promises of God, we should see the kingdom of Christ extending around us with unexampled rapidity. Are we not in danger of "limiting the Holy One of Israel," by looking for the exercise of his saving power only at set periods, and under the influence of strong excitement? While, with devout gratitude, we have to record that, during the past year, revivals of religion have been experienced in many of our churches, yet we have to mourn that these have not been more numerous and more enduring. Among a people "walking in the fear of God, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost," and under a pointed evangelical ministry, saving results should be of daily occurrence. What we all require, in order to universal success, is an increase of Divine influence. Beloved brethern, we have renewed our pledges to Heaven that we will more unreservedly, and with greater confidence in the Spirit's power, "give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." "For Zion's sake will we not hold our peace, and for Jerusalem's sake we will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."—But we earnestly solicit your co-operation.—"Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

We hope that throughout our churches due respect is paid to the Sacraments of Christianity. Far be it from us to attach the idea of merit to their reception, or to conceive of them as necessarily securing acceptance with God. Nevertheless, they are means of grace, appointed by infinite wisdom for our help,—seals of the new covenant, whose provisions give life and salvation to the world. The most powerful of all obligations binds us to "show forth the Lord's death till he come." It is the expressed will, the command of our dying Saviour. The very essence of "faith in his blood" is the submission of ourselves to him, and the drawing back from this ordinance is to disavow our allegiance to Him. So full of meaning is this act of worship, that, when devoutly attended to, it cannot but give us enlarged views of Divine things, and promote our growth in grace. Christ is evidently set forth as crucified for us; and the doctrines of repentance, of reliance upon his atonement, of the Spirit's sanctifying energy, and of a future judgment, radiate from his cross. Here then, let the weary and heavy laden, come and refresh themselves; let them learn of him who is "meek and lowly in heart, and they shall find rest to their souls."

The other Sacrament in its significance and obligation, as well as in the blessing connected with its observance, stands upon precisely the same footing. The promise of the Holy Spirit is "to our children," as surely as it is "to us," and "to all that are afar off," so that there can be no impropriety in presenting them to receive the seal of that covenant in which they are included, and the symbol of that blessing to which they are entitled. But when we recollect that the "Head of the Church," in the days of his flesh, blessed infants, and declared that "of such is the kingdom of God," that he was much displeased with those who prevented their approach, and said, "Suffer them to come to me, and forbid them not," we must conclude that it would be at once an act of injustice to them, and of interference with his prerogative, to deny them this gospel privilege. By dedicating them to the Redeemer in his own appointed way, we may be brought to feel more deeply interested in their spiritual welfare, and be led the more industriously to train them up in the way they should go. With stronger confidence also shall we apply for those spiritual influences which are promised to our "offspring," as "water upon the thirsty, and "floods upon the dry ground."

We indulge the hope that you will be characterized by the same nobility of mind, which in early times distinguished the disciples at Berea. While "with all readiness of mind" you receive the practical word, we would not have you acquire religious knowledge at second hand, but "search the Scriptures daily," whether those things are so. No discoveries can ever invalidate or supersede the word of God. Compared with the "doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness" which the inspirired volume contains, the deepest researches of human knowledge are, "less than nothing and vanity." The pompous schemes of human amelioration and progress which now solicit popular favour, require to be tested by the principles of revealed truth; and just in so far as they are based upon "the testimony of Jesus," ought they to share our regard. "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

Nor should we only make the law and testament our final appeal but by reading therein, with meditation and private prayer, we should daily derive from it spiritual sustenance. The river of life diffuses here its gladdening streams, and here may the heavenly manna be gathered, for "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The injunction given to the Israelites when they had but a small portion of the scriptures, applies with greater force to us. "Therefore shall ye lay up these words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou riest up."

Permit us also, beloved brethren, affectionately to remind you of the importance of family worship—a duty essential alike to order and regularity in the domestic circle, and to the implantation of religious sentiments in the hearts of the the young. Without strict attention to this service, the professedly Christian parent counteracts all his other exertions for the promotion of peity in his household. Due time, therefore, should be allotted for reading and prayer, each morning and evening, and no worldly concern should be permitted to set it aside. If God be thus honored, even at the occasional expense of convenience, more will be in reality gained, than is apparently lost.

The institution of the *holy Sabbath* claims our most serious consideration and cordial support. It is one of the worst signs of our times that the sanctity of this day is so often violated by pleasure takers, and its rest broken by unnecessary labors. We beseech you to "abhor all appearance of" this "evil," and "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Many are the inducements to do so. As it respects our body and our temporal circumstances, it is peculiarly beneficial. But its obligation as a day of rest and of worship—commemorative of God's ending His works, both of creation and redemption, and anticipative of the period when we shall rest from ours—is perpetual, and cannot by any means be set aside. "This is the day the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." "Enter," therefore, "into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankfull unto Him; and bless His name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations."

We are happy to perceive that the objects contemplated by our recent organization into a distinct conference, have met with your cordial approval. This has been evinced by the practical adoption of our new system, and in many instances, by liberal contributions to our connexional funds. Having now advanced into a somewhat matured condition, it is our duty to cultivate the principle of self-reliance; and the first care of every circuit should therefore be, to meet as soon as possible, its own expenditure. In many of our older stations, and in other places where, though our ministry has been more recently introduced, the population has rapidly increased, we think this might be accomplished by a determined effort. And even where it could not at present be done, the resolution to approach as nearly as possible to it, and to attain it whenever practicable, would be of essential service.

At the same time, we desire specially to call your attention to the fact that we are all united by the connexional principle. By means of this and our itinerancy, the weakest and most isolated circuits partake to a very considerable extent of the same pastoral care and oversight as the larger and wealthier. By the proper operation of our financial econoy, not only do the strouger assist the weaker, but the Gospel finds its way into destitute localities; and these "having nourishment ministered," and being "knit together, make increase of the Church with the increase of God." This system we endeavor to carry out, not only because of its adaptation to the wants of the world at large, but because it is the scriptural plan. "Not boasting of things without our measure, that is of other men's labors; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hands."

On this ground we again commend to your notice and support our Contignent or Home Mission Fund. For aid in behalf of the poorer circuits, we cannot always be dependent on the Missionary Committee; and if "the laborer," who, according to Divine testimony, is "worthy of his hire," be deprived of it, he is either tempted to abandon the ministry, or must continue to exercise its functions with a weight of worldly troubles upon his heart. To relieve such cases—alas, too numerous—and to multiply our staff of efficient evangelists, this fund has been established. In some circuits a good beginning has been made, but in others we regret to say it has been nearly overlooked. Help us, dear brethren, according to the ability which God hath given you. If placed in such a position as to render its aid unnecessary, then offer to God through this medium a tribute of gratitude for superior advantages; and if you are among the recipients of this bounty, show that you are nevertheless actuated by the sentiment of the Lord Jesus, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

We feel persuaded that nothing more is required to secure your support of the "Worn-out Ministers' and Ministers' Widows' Fund," than that its claims should be fully set before you. This has already been done, and a generous response has in not a few cases been made. Perhaps, however, it may not be irrelevant to say, that as our ministry is limited to a very few years in each place, and is necessarily of an exhausting character, each part of our wide extent of labor, and each individial in it, is deeply interested in the prosperity of this fund. "Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of God, whose faith follow." And as they, in the time of health and strength freely imparted to you the riches of the gospel, so is it becoming that in age and sickness you should administer to their temporal wants.

On the same ground, we might simply notice the Educational Fund. So nearly are all the wants of each minister estimated, and so nicely are his claims adjusted, that the amount which he receives is neither designed for, nor adequate to, the education of his children. The fund above named is intended to meet his wants in this respect, and afford him what he cannot possibly receive from other connexional sources.

Deeply impressed with the importance of widely diffusing a sound and scriptural literature among the people of our charge, we have established a Book-Room in Halifax, having a branch in the city of St. John, N. B., and which we have placed under the superintendence of one of our most efficient ministers, the Rev. C Churchill,—thus bringing within your reach valuable facilities for the mental and religious training of your families, not hitherto in the same degree available to you. We earnestly entreat you largely to patronize this important agency of our Church, that, amid the deluding and polluting influence of a large portion of the current literature of the age, the principles and morals of our youth may be guarded and strengthened.

It affords us unfeigned delight to be able to inform you that our educational institutions at Mount Allison are in a high state of efficiency, and are enjoying great popularity. During the recently closed term they were favored with a very blessed revival of religion, in which many students of both branches were made partakers of the saving grace of God. Institutions so honorable to our connexion, so smiled upon by "Our Father in Heaven," deserve and demand our most liberal support; and we bespeak it in their behalf, assured that among the most valuable boons you can confer upon your sons and daughters, is the blessing of a thorough and scripturally conducted education.

It has been cause of deep gratitude to us, as it will be to you, that the receipts of the Wesleyan Missionary Society for the past year, have exceeded those of any preceding year. This is the more remarkable, on account of the pressure upon our resources, made by the late war; yet it is but another proof of God's favor for Zion, and that "upon all her glory" there is "defence." While we rejoice that the Church generally is becoming more awake to her duty in evangelizing nations, it is no less gratifying to know, that upon all the mission field the Spirit is being poured out from on high. The dry bones of the valley of vision in Europe, are quivering with life. The Turk is no longer inaccessible to the gospel, nor would his abandonment of Mohammedanism for Christianity expose him to a criminal's death. The stupendous fabric of Hindoo idolatry is shaken to its centre, and its "captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail." Even China, long impregnable to the gospel, is receiving the word of life, and among those who are falling down, making supplication, and saying, "Surely God is in thee; and there is none else," are "these from the land of Sinim!" Africa is awaking from her lethargy, asserting her right to the privileges of men and brethren, abolishing her demon worship, and by righteousness and true holiness, causing "the wilderness and solitary place to be glad," and the desert to "blossom as the rose." The islands of the sea have not in vain waited for the law of the Lord. Thousands have "cast their idols to the moles and to the bats," and have exchanged "the habitations of cruelty" for the temples of God; and the bloodthirsty cry of violence for the songs of Zion. "Sing, O ye heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted." "And now what wait we for?" but that yet more copious effusion of the Spirit's power whereby that "blindness" which "in part is happened unto Israel" shall be removed, and "the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in." Such a glorious consummation is worthy of our labors, our prayers, and our efforts. And, inasmuch as we are still so far connected with the British Conference as to operate upon the heathen world through their agents, let us cheerfully sustain the missionary cause. "Therefore as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also."

Were further considerations necessary to impress these great duties upon you, we could derive many of them from that afflicting event which has recently bereft us of our official head, and the Church of Christ of one of its distinguished ornaments and faithful ministers, the Reverend John Beecham, D. D.

Twelve months ago he was present with us, for the express purpose of arranging those plans, by which, as a connexion, we are now guided. Having for many years sustained the office of Missionary Secretary, and made himself thoroughly acquainted with the history and wants of the mission field, he was able to bring a vast amount of experience to bear upon any subject connected with that department of our work. To a mind naturally sagacious and far seeing, and a judgment sound and discriminating, he added rich stores of knowledge, acquired by patient industry; while deep personal piety crowned his character, and threw an irresistible charm around it. He was evidently the individual who was best qualified to give our connexion in these Provinces its proper form and system of management; and at that time we said, "That in the designation of Dr. Beecham, to inaugurate the Eastern British American Conference, we clearly perceived the discrimination of man, and thankfully marked the disposal of God." In these views we are more than ever confirmed, but our pleasure in adverting to them is mingled with grief when we remember that this may be said to have been his last great effort, and that its performance, which has been of incalculable advantage to us, exhausted his energies, and perhaps hastened his dissolution. The militant church can no longer reckon upon the valuable services of this standard-bearer; but "our loss is his infinite gain."

"His spirit, numbered with the blest,
Rejoices where the weary rest."

As he lived, so he died; "steadfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in love." He has joined the society of kindred spirits—of Wesley, and Fletcher, and Coke, and Clarke, and Watson, and Newton—and is doubtless now recognised and loved by many who, through his indefatigable exertions were turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. But his memory is, and ever will be, precious to us. Even yet we seem to hear his voice, and mark, both in his pulpit ministrations and in his legislative counsels, the tender solicitude which he cherished for Zion's weal. We are admonished that "the time is short;" and that the only duty which, if he were present, he would inculcate, and which, though absent, is none the less interesting to him, is, that we "work the works of Him that sent us while it is day; seeing that the night cometh, when no man can work."

To this work we solemnly dedicate ourselves, as in the sight of God; "and we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end." Let us daily fulfil our obligations to God, to one another, and to the world, and anticipating the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," patiently endure the afflictions of this present life. "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing."

"Now the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Signed on behalf, and by order, of the Conference,

MATTHEW RICHEY, President,
WILLIAM TEMPLE, Secretary.

## Correspondence.

MR. EDITOR:—The following noble resolution has passed the Maine Conference. I strongly recommend it to the kind consideration of all Christian people. By giving it an insertion in your paper, you will greatly oblige an inveterate enemy to Tobacco. WILLIAM SMITHSON.

*Mill Town, August* 18.

"USE OF TOBACCO.—Whereas the use of tobacco prevails to a prodigious extent in our country, as indicated in the reports of our national treasury, and other authentic documents, from which it appears that over 100 million pounds are annually consumed in the United States, at a cost to the consumers of over $20,000,000; and whereas we have reason to believe that its use is rapidly increasing, and that even ministers of the gospel are becoming, to a great extent, guilty of this debasing indulgence:—

Therefore, *Resolved*—1. That we view these facts as a matter of profound alarm, and such an evil as to demand the serious attention of the church.

2.—That we regard the use of tobacco as an expensive and needless indulgence, unfavorable to cleanliness and good manners, unbecoming of Christians, and especially in Christian ministers; and like the use of alcohol, a violation of the laws of physical, intellectual and moral life.

3.—That we will dicountenance the use of this injurious narcotic (except as a medicine prescribed by a physician,) by precept and example, and by all other proper means."

Provincial Wesleyan

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11.

☞ See SPECIAL NOTICES *in another column.*

## The American Bible Union and the Rev. Dr. Maclay.

Those of our readers unacquainted with the Society designated at the head of this article, and respecting whose proceedings recent sudden developments have astounded its own supporters and amazed the religious world, will not unnaturally presume that we are about to discuss the doings of an association based on so comprehensive and catholic a foundation as to vindicate its claim to the national title it assumes. It is our duty to undeceive them at the outset.

The *American Bible Union* is the offspring of ultraism of the most exceptionable kind in a single denomination of Christians, and took its rise about six years ago in the determination of certain Baptists, Campbellites, and Seventh Day Baptists, to have a new English version of the Bible accordant with their peculiar views. Let us mark the steps by which a stand so decisive and defiant was reached.

From 1816 there has existed in the United States an *American Bible Society* which, composed of various religious denominations, has prosecuted with vigor, fidelity, and marked success, its sacred work of translating, printing, and distributing the Scriptures. Up to this date, we think we may ssfely affirm, though the statistics are not at hand, that it has been instrumental in dispensing, in perhaps thirty different languages, not less than ten million copies of the Word of God. Twenty years ago, it declined to advance from its funds for a translation of the New Testament by a Baptist Missionary in Calcutta, in which the words rendered in the common English version *baptise* and *baptism* were translated to signify *immerse* and *immersion*. The Baptists, dissatisfied with this refusal, withdrew and organised an association, which they modestly denominated the *American and Foreign Bible Society*, for the translation of the Bible into foreign languages, meanwhile employing the common version at home.—At length the inconsistency of diffusing a sectarian version abroad and continuing the common version among themselves, moved many of the Baptists to the agitation of a scheme for the revision of the English Bible. Hence sprung the *American Bible Union*, constituted by such ultra members of the American and Foreign Bible Society as feared not to embark in this rash enterprise, led on by Dr. Cone and Dr. Maclay. This is, in brief, the story of its origin; the history of its achievements is recorded in the controversy between its late President and its present officers. Dr. Maclay shall speak for himself.—In his pamphlet, explaining the motives of his resignation, he says:

"On being elected President of the Union, in October, 1855, I found myself in possession of more direct and unqualified responsibility; and under these circumstances I felt the importance of becoming more particularly acquainted with the operations of the body. I then for the first time ascertained who the revisers were; and found, to my astonishment, that instead of there having been about forty individuals actually engaged in translating the New Testament, as I had understood from the secretary, and had often stated, there had not been more than twenty-three or twenty-four. Instead of all these being competent scholars, as I had supposed, and as the plan of the Union required, and as is often said in the official documents of the Union, some of them unquestionably lacked the essential qualifications of a translator."

Does the reader ask for the proofs of their incompetency? They are readily supplied. Take the following quotations from the already stereotyped translation of St. John's Gospel:

"In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and God was the word."—John i: 1.

"He it is that immerses in a holy spirit."—John i: 33.

"If any one be not born of water and spirit."—John iii: 5.

"The Son can do nothing of himself, if he see not the Father doing anything."—John v: 12.

"But this he said of the spirit which those believing on him were about to receive; for there was not yet a holy spirit."—John vii: 39.

"And I give to them eternal life, and they shall not perish, forever."—John x: 28.

"Jesus, therefore when he saw her weeping, and the Jews, who came with her, weeping, he groaned in the spirit, and troubled himself."—John xi: 33.

"Who were begotten—not of blood, nor of a will of man—but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, (and we saw his glory, a glory as of one only begotten of a father,) full of grace and truth."—John i: 12-4.

And the doctor adds, "These are by no means the most objectionable renderings.—In this and other books are some which I would not disclose to the public eye."

A graver charge succeeds,

"On a closer examination in the department of revision, I found that, in addition to the shocking translations already referred to, the misguided hand of the reviser had been rashly laid upon the original text, as it seemed to me, without any authority of the Board. It will be recollected that, in the famous Amity street letter, Dr. Williams charged the Bible Union with improper secrecy, in withholding from the churches a knowledge of the Greek text, to be used as the standard of revision; and that in the reply, written by Dr. Judd, and adopted by the Board, it was said:

"'This subject received our early and prayerful attention, and after obtaining the most satisfactory information respecting it, with the counsel of competent advisers, and our own mature deliberation, we determined to use the received text as critically edited by the best scholars of the age, and published by Bagster & Sons, London, octavo edition, 1851.

"'Previous to this rule the Board had established certain General Rules for the Direction of Translators and Revisers,' of which the third reads thus:

"'Translations or revisions of the New Testament shall be made from the received Greek text, critically edited, with known errors corrected.'"

Also, certain "Special instructions to the Revisers of the English New Testament," of which the first reads as follows:

"The common English version must be the basis of revision; the Greek text, Bagster & Sons' octavo edition of 1851.'

'These are all the rules of the Union respecting the Greek text; neither of them has ever been abrogated or altered; and, as they stand, they admit of no departure from the 'received texts' as critically edited, (not by revisers of the Bible Union, but by distinguished scholars in times past,) and subsequently published by Bagster & Sons, in 1851. Yet it appeared on examination, that some revisers had undertaken what seemed to me more presumptuous than the selection of some other text, such as Griesbach's Sholz's or Tichendorf's, and more unsafe than the preparation of a new, independent recension by competent hands from original sources; viz: a revision of the 'received Greek text,' by weighing all the different manuscripts, to ascertain the relative value of their various reading, as given by second-hand authorities, verifying or modifying these readings by ancient versions and patristic writings, collating and comparing the opinions of different editors; then selecting or rejecting any particular reading, according as it was found to be, *in the reviser's judgment*, genuine or spurious: his English version being conformed to this eclectic edition of the Greek text. In one book which came under my observation, after it had been stereotyped, a cursory examination showed that the reviser had deviated from the 'received Greek text' in two places, by substituting something for it; in twenty-two places, by rejecting something of it. And one of the portions rejected as *spurious*, embraced *twelve consecutive verses!* In another the following passage is cast out of the Bible:

"'For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water; whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had."

"Where the common version reads,

"'That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life,'

the received Greek text has been so critically edited that, in the revised English version, the same passage reads thus: 'That every one that believes on him may have eternal life." And the rejection of 'Jesus,' 'John,' 'Christ,' and 'Amen,' are specimens of the smaller changes which have resulted from this revision of the Greek text.

"But the record of wrong-doing in this department is not complete. One rule laid down in the published plan of the Bible Union required an examination of the reviser's work by all his fellow-revisers. In practice, this rule is disregarded. One book the Dr. discovered has been stereotyped in six different forms, just as it came from the hands of the reviser, without any examination by other scholars. It was provided also in the published plan that 'whenever an alteration from the common version is made on any authority additional to that of the reviser, such authority must be cited in the manuscript, either on the same page or in an appendix.' But Mr. Maclay says that instead of a simple collection of authorities, he found extensive notes of a doctrinal and practical nature, which were alike foreign to the work of translation, and inconsistent with the unsectarian character of the Union; and the preparation of which, beyond what was required by the rule, must have occupied more time than the translation itself."

The Dr. closes his impeachment with the following language:—

"It only remains for me to take care that I be not a party to wrongs which I have, in vain sought to remedy. And being fully satisfied, from personal examination, that the funds which I have done so much to collect, and which I know have been most sacredly devoted, by the rich and the poor, to one of the holiest purposes of Christian charity, *are being squandered;* that a vast amount is expended for operations, *remote from the one great object of the Institution;* that men are employed to translate the Word of God who are *not qualified for the work;* that unwarrantable translations have been made, which, if published, must bring into discredit the most precious doctrines of my faith, sap the fundamental truths of Christianity, as indubitably revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and shake the confidence of the people in the canon of the sacred writings; that such revisions are likely to be published for indiscriminate circulation, without the previous precautionary examination, provided for, and *required* by, the plan and rules of revision, as originally adopted by the Board; that the controlling power of the Institution has become completely *centralized in one man*; and that the exercise of that power is not only such as to forbid the hope of reform, but also to blast the name and influence of every one who advocates reform—feeling perfectly assured of all this, I am compelled by a stern sense of duty, to abandon the enterprise, and to free myself, as far if possible, from all further responsibility. . . . . .

"At no period of my life could I have silently lent my name to a course which I consider unjust to my brethren and dishonoring to the God of the Bible. And having now, after half a century spent in the ministry of the gospel, devoted all my strength and influence, for the last six years, to inspire the public mind with confidence in what seemed to me the greatest enterprise of the age,—having induced thousands throughout the United States in the British Provinces, and in Europe to become self-sacrificing supporters of the American Bible Union—and being myself at a loss to conceive, by the hopeless mismanagement of that Institution, which is barely outlined in this letter, to abandon the enterprise, I felt bound, as an honest man, and a Christian, to answer the inquiries which are coming to me from every quarter, by frankly stating, once for all, the reasons of my action."

The reply of the officers of the Bible Union may be summarily disposed of. They start by impugning the authenticity of the pamphlet, and attribute to another than Dr. Maclay its charges, arguments, and order. The reference is plainly to Dr. Judd, who denies that he has ever penned anything for Dr. Maclay of which that gentleman was not the author; and Dr. Maclay himself asserts, "I know of no letter or pamphlet over my signature which is not my own." The renderings of the sacred text quoted by Dr. Maclay the officers deny to have been approved in any way by the Union, or ever published as specimens of revision. "His extracts," they say, "are made from proofs taken sixteen months ago, upon which the reviser has been making improvements ever since." Are the improvements in the direction of the variance from the original translation? Would the roughest renderings of a competent translator be such as these, to which Dr. Judd has introduced us?

1 Cor. 10:16. "Is it not a partnership of the blood of the Anointed?"

2 Cor. 13:14: "The partnership of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

Eph. 3:9; "To me, who am less than the least of all the consecrated, was this very kindness granted—to publish among the nations the incomprehensible wealth of the Anointed."

Acts 3:19; "Repent therefore, and return, in order to the obliterating of your sins."

2 Tim. 4:12; "Announce the word; be on hand conveniently (and) inconveniently."

Phil. 2:6—8; "Who, being in God's form, did not esteem the being like God a robbery; yet he divested himself!—he assumed a bondman's form—he existed in a similitude of men; and, being found in appearance as a man, he let himself down—was submissive till death—death, indeed, by a cross."

Col. 3:10; "You have put on the young man."

Gal. 6:8; "He who sows into the flesh, shall out of the flesh reap corruption."

1 Tim. 3:16; "And, without controversy, the secret of piety is great."

Matt. 20:27; "Whoever will be chief among you, let him be your bondman."

1 Cor. 2:10; "For the Spirit searches all things; yea, the depths of God."

Eph. 4:11—13; "Himself gave indeed the apostles, and the prophets, and the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers, for the adjusting of the consecrated, for a work of ministry, for building the body of the Anointed, until we, the whole, come into the oneness of the faith, and the thorough knowledge of the Son of God—into a full grown man—into a measure of a stature of the full measure of the Anointed."

In parting, for the present at least, from this painful topic,—profoundly painful, because of the profanity, of even those whose conscientious regard for the Truth should outweigh every other consideration, to be unscrupulous in the means of establishing a favorite, though doubtful, theory, which the facts before us so clearly demonstrate, we have but very few remarks by way of conclusion to offer. It is however by no means an inopportune moment for us to reiterate our reverence for the Holy Scriptures, and our respect for the authorized version.—Without committing ourselves so far as to pronounce it a perfect work, or venturing to affirm a judicious and beneficial revision to be impossible, we do unhesitatingly avow our conviction that much more is to be feared than is to be hoped from attempts at emendation under even the most favorable auspices. At all events we can accept no alterations of the venerable version around which our best affections are entwined, that has not the sanction of the common consent of the learned of all Evangelical denominations. Against every such gross libel on the symmetry and symphonies of the English tongue, against all such unhappy caricatures of Sacred writ, as are contained in the translations quoted above, and which are specimens afforded us by those who were themselves prime movers or persevering promoters of the revision excitement, we here, in the name of all Christendom, not blinded by love for immersion, enter our solemn protest. And, if our Baptist brethren will suffer us thus far, we would affectionately warn them to beware lest they sanction by their rashness those who would take the Bible altogether from the people, or those who would undermine all Christianity. If Baptists may assume to be true a translation which all the rest of the world reject, will they denounce the Church of Rome for asserting a right to interpret the Scriptures? or how shall they confront Socinianism when it seeks only the same license that they claim in order to erect its cold and Christless system upon the ruins of vital religion?

For two centuries and a half has the English Bible stood the test of criticism; and after the lapse of this long period it still challenges in its unimpaired integrity the admiration of scholars and the love of Christians. No change has been attempted that has not marred its beauty. It is a monument of such learning, such talent, such taste, such truthfulness, as the world may never see again in such happy combination. Let us cherish it more cordially, and more closely hug it to our breasts.

"Our translators," a learned Commentator remarks "have not only made a standard translation; but they have made their translation the standard of our language. The English tongue in their day was not equal to such a work. But God enabled them to stand as upon Mount Sinai, and *crane up* their country's language to the dignity of the originals; so that after the lapse of two hundred years, the English Bible, with very few exceptions, is the standard of the purity of the English tongue." Our Baptist philologists declaim against what they are pleased to term the *popish artifice of transfer* but the language of Addison is applicable to other importations besides those from the Hebrew. He says, "There is a certain coldness in the phrases of European languages, compared with the oriental forms of speech. The English tongue has received innumerable improvements from an infusion of Hebraisms, derived out of the practical passages in holy writ. They warm and animate our language, give it force and energy, and convey our thoughts in ardent and intense phrases. There is something in this kind of diction, that often sets the mind in a flame and makes our heart burn within us." One passage on revision from the Rev. Dr. Cumming and we have done:

"If," says that eloquent divine, "if all the defects in our version were remedied, the great truths embodied in the articles, creeds, and confessions of the reformed church would stand out in brighter and more prominent relief, but the danger of beginning to alter in the present state and temper of parties does seem so real, that, as long as there can be secured a learned and honest ministry it is better to leave slight mistran