

# British American Presbyterian.

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## Contributors & Correspondents.

### NEW BRUNSWICK.

Praiseworthy Enterprise—Interesting Personal Item—Weekly Collections Recommended—Increased Liberality Desirable.

From Our Own Correspondent.

About a year ago, on the first Sabbath of April, one of the congregations of this city known as the Calvin Church had the misfortune to get their house of worship utterly destroyed by fire. It was the morning of the day on which the communion was to be held, a circumstance which added to the emotion felt by the members who on that occasion were left ecclesiastically homeless. They had had some struggling to raise and complete the building, in the previous two or two and a half years as much as between \$8500 and \$10000 was spent in finishing it outside and in; and yet to their great sorrow it was utterly swept away in a few hours. In as brief a space as possible [the work of rebuilding commenced. A more favorable site was selected and this time more durable material was employed—brick with stone dressings and cornices instead of wood. In eleven months from the time of the calamity the congregation entered on possession of the basement room of the new buildings. This room which is intended for the use of the Sabbath School and prayer meetings has a ceiling twelve feet high and will accommodate over 500 of an audience. It is neatly finished and well heated, hence the pastor and people feel a satisfaction in being at rest again in a new home, a satisfaction that is of a deep and an abiding nature.

This congregation is the newest formed in connexion with the denomination in the city proper. It is almost entirely composed of the working classes therefore it may easily be imagined what difficulties were to be surmounted in a financial point of view in attaining to the position it now occupies. It may be inferred the rebuilding will leave a pressure that will sit heavily for some years to come. But the members are hopeful and that is much. It is to their credit that though neither as numerous nor as wealthy as their neighbors they are not behind them but the contrary in contributing to the schemes of the Church.

It may interest your readers to know that we have in this province some families who claim to be literally descended from John Howe the author of "Scots Worthies". They live in and near to the city of Fredericton. Meeting a week or two ago with Mr. Stuart who ministers to what used to be called the Free Church congregation in that city, he told me that he had, a few days before that attended the funeral of an aged woman who was a direct descendant of the far famed John. I knew that there were families of that name there, but I did not know before the stock of which they had come. Perhaps the modern spelling deceived me. They now spell their name Howie making a dissyllable of it instead of Howe which I have always heard it pronounced as one syllable.

I am glad to see the question of giving to the Lord's cause and the mode in which it is to be done in supporting the ministry and the schemes of the church discussed in your columns. Nothing short of an entire revolution in the mode of church finance is needed in the present day. Several of the congregations of our church here have adopted the weekly mode of giving, and several others are contemplating the adoption of that plan. In some cases the weekly collections go to the pastor's support alone, the schemes of the church and incidental expenses being raised otherwise, in some the weekly collections are intended to meet all demands made on the people. All that have tried this mode are delighted with it, and the success attending it has been beyond all expectations. How the old pew system held its ground so long seems wonderful, or it would be so in anything else but where money is concerned. The time will come when such a mode of giving to the cause of God will seem utterly incredible. It is anything but

creditable to us as a church of Christ that a vestige of pew rent now remains. To suppose that the working man who has a family to support by his toil should be asked to pay as much to the support of his pastor as the rich man who has his thousands or tens of thousands per annum is to absurd to argue about. Nay the working man might have more stipend to pay for the size of his family may need more pew accommodation. And then the complacency with which I have known and do know men who drive their carriage and pair to give their twenty or thirty dollars per annum, putting on such a self satisfied air, as if they had done something that deserved the everlasting praise of the church, at the same time feeling quite offended if asked for anything on behalf of the schemes of the church. Such notions must be forever swept away. There is an education going on that will raise the church very much out of the position in which a conservative closefistedness has long kept her. The effects of that education are being seen on every side, and felt in every department.

H.

St. Johns, 26th March, 1872.

### THOUGHTS ON THE UNION MOVEMENT.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir: That union in itself is desirable all alike admit. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." The prayer of the great master for his church was "That they all may be one as Thou Father, art in me and I in thee, that they may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." When all are one and not till then, will the world believe in Christ!

Why the disunion among those who, in all the essentials of faith and the forms of Church Government are one? For an answer we have to look to the past. About 80 years ago divisions arose in the Mother Church over the broad deep sea. The evils existing in the father land, did not exist in this land, but so deeply did our people in this land sympathize with the movements of the church in the old country that here, too, divisions arose.

The church that should be one is divided. We pass no censure on the earnest man who tore our Canadian Church in twain 28 years ago. Good men and true differed from each other. The most of them have gone to that land where all are one; and those who in the church below earnest in their convictions, opposed one another now sit together at the same Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

The country and the church have changed since 1844. We the ministers of to-day are a new generation, and have little sympathy with the disputes of the past. Are we to perpetuate the disputes introduced by our fathers in the ministry? Union is strength, our foes are many. Are not we as brethren shoulder to shoulder, to stand by one another and strengthen and cheer one another rather than keep up divisions for which now at least there is no necessity?

That union is desirable all admit. That the divisions of the past are not to be perpetuated, is the general feeling of the wisest and best of both churches. What then are the obstacles in the way?

Let us confine our attention to one difficulty, the colleges. In the C. P. Church there seems to be a strong feeling against Queen's and Morrin colleges, being received into the union. Why this should be a difficulty we cannot say, and to this let us confine ourselves.

As to Morrin College, it is the result of money left by a certain individual to the church of which he was a member. The late Dr. Morrin of Quebec, left money for the endowment of a college for the education of young men for the ministry. Some have doubted the wisdom of forming an additional college in Quebec. Our own opinion is that had Dr. Morrin left the sum bequeathed for the formation of Morrin College to Queen's College and thus had rendered it more thoroughly efficient, it would have been better. But this was a matter over which we as a church had no control. As it is, Morrin College has done some good work for the church and has cost the church nothing. The church is not in any way bound to sup-

port Morrin College. All that we as a church have to do is to receive her students for the ministry when they come up to our standards. The church with which Morrin College is connected is not in any way responsible for the maintenance of the Institution, and in the event of the contemplated union being consummated, as little would the united church be responsible for its maintenance. Morrin College can do the united church no harm and should be no hindrance to union.

From Morrin we now turn to Queen's College. This Institution is older than the disruption of 1844. It is in a sense the University of both churches. There are in the C. P. Church worthy ministers, who were educated in it before the disruption. Why then any bitter feelings against this now venerable Institution? At the present time it is endowed in such a way that it costs the church nothing. It gives an education equal to the best to be procured in our land and under influences morally favorable to the sons of Presbyterians. No one if he dislikes the Institution, is under any obligation to send his sons to it. No burden is to be imposed on the United Church by its confining to be under the auspices of the church. Surely it is a safe thing for a church of Christ to have under her control an Institution in which her sons may receive an education for the higher walks of life under influences fitted to foster the religious impressions made in the Christian home. Were the United Church called on to lay away the foundations and endow with the treasures of her sons such an Institution, it might be wise at such a crisis in our history to pause before entering on such an undertaking, but the College on entering the Union asks nothing from the church and furnishes an education which, not a few who have a regard for the spiritual welfare of their sons prize highly. Surely then if these things be so, and we speak that which we know, neither Queen's College nor Morrin College should for one day stand in the way of a union so much to be desired. We have more to say but our space is exhausted.

Yours,  
AN OLD KIRK MINISTER.

### THE PROBATIONERS SCHEME.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir,—In your excellent paper allow me a corper to direct attention to some feature of the scheme for the distribution of the Probationers in the Canada Presbyterian Church. It has many excellencies. It provides for congregations a hearing of those on the list—secures for probationers an impartial opportunity of being heard, and is intended to supply vacancies in due order and prevent a *ministerium vagrum*. So far it is good, but it is far from perfect. Nor shall I be an enemy to it if I point out what should be amended.

(I.) It professes impartiality by putting all on the same list and on the same footing, which would be fair if they were all similar, but many are very unlike others in almost every respect. Mr. A. is a youth just from the Divinity Hall to whom it is very pleasant and profitable to go from end to end of the Dominion and learn by experience and observation. The scheme suits him well. Mr. B. is an ordained minister of fifteen or twenty years experience and has rendered good service in the church. He has a large family requiring his presence at home, but he must go on the same list, and run as fast and as far as his young compeer. The hoary head and the buoyant youth, the father and the son together. Should not the church of Christ pay some respect to age? Is there not come distinction due to those who have laboured long and well in word and doctrine and made full proof of their ministry?

(II.) Mr. C. is a minister of many years good standing in our church. He cannot and will not abandon his family for months together, and therefore will not go on the list of probationers. Presbyteries are strictly forbidden to employ him at all, under penalty of censure. He is virtually suspended from the ministry. He cannot go everywhere according to orders, he is therefore allowed to go nowhere according to an arbitrary rule. Congregations, through their Presbytery ask for him, their application must, according to law, be summarily rejected.

They may call him but cannot hear him. In this three parties are wronged.

1. The minister. The reason that prevents him from giving his name to the list is right in his view and binding on his conscience, otherwise we shall have to condemn a very large number of worthy ministers now in our church. And if it is a sin that he does not fall in with this particular scheme let him have the benefit of a trial like any other criminal, but let us not depose him and cast him out unheard.

2. The congregations are wronged. When there are no probationers to supply them for weeks and months together, are they to be left without the children's bread, while there are at hand ministers in good standing ready to feed them with the word of life? Besides a congregation may wish to call such a minister and should not be refused a hearing of him. I know one instance at least, in which this injustice actually occurred. Some say a session may employ such a minister, i.e., a Session do what is forbidden to the Presbytery. The supply of a vacant pulpit is in the hands of the Presbytery to which it belongs and must in order be supplied through the Presbytery or under its sanction. Therefore,

3. The Presbyteries are wronged. They are in duty bound to provide, as far as possible, the ordinances of grace for all their vacancies. When no probationers can be had vacant congregations must either have silent Sabbath's or the members of Presbytery must leave their own pulpits to supply them. That no minister either with or without charge should be allowed to fill a vacancy when there is a regular probationer available I readily grant, but it seems like the fable of the dog in the manger to compel Presbyteries to keep vacancies without the Gospel lest they should call a minister who is not among the probationers. Where I a probationer I should not covet such a degrading compliment.

It is unfortunate also that according to the present management of the scheme probationers are sent so ostensibly as candidates to preach one or two Sabbath's only, in each congregation. I think this is a great mistake, injurious to vacancies and to many probationers some of whom make the best impressions on the people after they are well known, others before. Some will not give their name to the list because they feel that they are not sent, so much to take charge of the flock and do the duties of the pastor, but more as a candidate for their sufferages. I know that this is not necessary *de jure* but is the case *de facto*.

(III.) In connexion with this scheme another rule has been adopted viz. No minister who resigns more than twice can have his name on the probationer list, except by act of Assembly. It is well intended, to drop out some who have probably mistaken their calling and have not wisdom enough to know it. They get calls and spoil and scatter the flock, resign and go again on the list, and so the error is repeated. Some such may be expected in every large Church. It is desirable to get rid of them. But let us take heed lest in gathering out the tares we root out the wheat with them. There is a certain odium attaches to a resignation. People will ask "What is the matter with him". While it may happen that his very faithfulness and efficiency led to the circumstances that ended in resignation. Two small rival congregations are in the same village. The minister of the larger one, the other being vacant, resigns in order to cause their union. It may be a noble courageous act however oft repeated. Some cannot afford to brave a resignation. They will hold to their pastoral charge and trot thro' all the vacancies in the church, hunting for a call in order to a translation. They dare not let go the rope in the one hand till they have got hold of the other. There are many places where there are two ministers and congregations in distress where one only ought to be. Is it wise to shake a rod in the face of such, to prevent their resignations, while the interests of the Church and their own need that course? I know a congregation which gave, I think, \$50 to the H. M. Fund. A rival congregation right across the street receives the same amount out of the fund. While each of the ministers have to go to other stations. If such charges could be united, we should encourage it, tho' it might involve the resignation of both ministers.

This remark has greater force in view of the union of the Churches when it may be very desirable to have the resignation of not a few, in order to re-

arrange pastoral charges. In any case it is not well to deter a resignation till there be almost no congregation to leave. It is painful for a minister to leave his flock. We are not likely to have resignations without cause, and we had better not impose more penalties to keep a minister in his pastoral charge when his usefulness is seriously barred. Perhaps the Master has work for him else where.

I have no wish to make a wanton attack on the present probationers scheme or the action of last Assembly. I am decidedly of opinion however that some modification of the rule is necessary. It has entailed hardship and wrong upon some, that I know. I do not believe there is any Presbytery that has fully carried it out, and some regularly pass over it. Congregations also rebel against it. They cannot see why they should not have the services of ministers without charge when no probationers can be got. I hope the next Assembly may see fit to modify these rules to secure more liberty and do justice.

Yours truly,  
JUSTICIA.

### MEANS OF REVIVING VITAL RELIGION.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir,—In prosecuting our remarks in reference to the most effectual mode of reviving religion in the Church, a number of topics present themselves, and seem to press for consideration.

The object to be aimed at, the difficulties to be encountered, the power of habit and especially religious habit, the means of attaining the object contemplated, is there such a thing as a normal state of religion beyond which advancement is not attainable? If the Holy Spirit be the sole efficient agent, what place does human instrumentality, lay or clerical, more especially an educated ministry, hold in the economy of grace. These are some of the points which now suggest themselves to our mind in connexion with the important subject proposed.

In our last article, our object was to point out the importance of faithfully combining the exhibition of the fundamental truth that a crucified Saviour is the only grounds of the sinner's hope, with that other vital truth, the necessity of the Spirit's agency, to give saving power to the doctrines preached. We did so under the impression, right or wrong, that the latter doctrine, although possessing a prominent place in our evangelical creed, is not sufficiently recognized by a large portion of the hearers of the gospel, and perhaps in many cases not duly pressed on their attention in the ministrations of the pulpit. We wrote, and still write, under the impression that too much reliance is placed on the preacher and his sermon; as if the spiritual benefit depended solely, or chiefly on the visible instrument, or the truths uttered. If the preacher be an acceptable or eloquent speaker, exhibiting the truth clearly and impressively, then the temptation to rely on visible agency is strengthened, and what might be called a sort of *practical ritualism* union seriously fostered when perhaps least intended. Multitudes become somnambulized and the work of the church paralyzed, through—shall we even insinuate it?—what is called fine preaching. Far be it from us to condemn the latter. On the contrary let the preaching be of the highest order. All that we say is, let the people be earnestly warned against relying on *pro men* and their *fine sermons*. Let them by all means be urged to look to the cross, but also to the Spirit, for spiritual illumination to enable them to perceive the glory of the cross. The conclusion, then, to which these remarks bring us, is simply this; that while the doctrines of the cross are faithfully and clearly exhibited, let there be a not less faithful and persistent exhibition of the nature and necessity of the Spirit's agency. The vast difference between hearing the gospel on the principle of relying on the minister and his sermon, and hearing in a spirit of humble reliance on the Spirit, and prayer for his gracious influence, is too obvious to require to be pointed out. Let me simply add, we have work to do, for we are fellow-labourers with God. Let us then do it in a *workmanlike manner*. He who has called us to work has put implements into our hands, every way suitable, and has moreover promised his Spirit. Are we duly availing ourselves of our high advantages? Are we, ministers, elders, and people, taking God at his word and pleading with renewed and persevering earnestness for his Spirit?