

THE
CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

All communications for the Editorial, News of Churches, and Correspondence Columns should be addressed to the Managing Editor, Box 2648, P.O. Toronto.

Pastors and church officers are particularly requested to forward items for "News of the Churches" column.

TORONTO, THURSDAY, JULY 15th, 1880

THE Rev. John Burton, B.A., will take charge of the INDEPENDENT until the editor returns from England. Communications for the editor to be addressed as indicated above.

A FEW MORE WORDS ON OUR DENOMINATIONAL PAPER.

THERE are such things as denominational duties. The support of a denominational paper is one of those duties. They who look the paper over, compare it with others, shake their heads and say, "It isn't worth it," forget there are values other than those whose standard is the dollar. They who most thoroughly appreciate our work, as part of the great Christian Church, know that the stopping of a denominational paper is a blow too serious to be calmly contemplated. This paper has not the support it deserves, and, therefore, it has been issued continually at a financial loss. *The printer has not been paid.* We admit an Editor's responsibility. It is our duty to lay before you weekly news of the churches, missionary items, and food for Christian thought, to be above clap-trap and slang, and to afford a common ground of communication between our Canadian churches. Let the record of the first five months of the year tell how faithfully and unselfishly this has been aimed at. There are corresponding duties on your part. From Newfoundland to Vancouver's Island you need to be up and doing, dear reader, or this paper must be silent. Our subscription list is not large enough to pay the cost of publishing, and the shareholders, so far from receiving dividends, have paid the capital to keep up running expenses, and still we are behind. We need, and must have, the following or an equivalent: (1) An increased subscription list, with prompt remittance. Will our patrons, each one, from the Lower Provinces as well as from Ontario and Quebec, take this matter seriously in hand. Brethren, if denominationally we are to grow—believe me, I know what I affirm—this is just as necessary as it is that you should have buildings to preach in.

(2) We need a guarantee fund for three years, say fifty individuals, \$10 per annum each. Surely we can obtain this. Let it be done at once or—well I do not like to write the alternative.

Let this be done and we on our part pledge ourselves to spare no pains to raise the paper in your estimation and to render it effective in extending the interests of Christ's kingdom through our denominational agencies.

Since writing the above, the annual meeting of the shareholders has been held, assets and liabilities fairly balanced, doubtful assets counted out. As a result we find our liabilities over and above all assets to be about nine hundred dollars. Our pressing claims are some fifteen hundred dollars. It is absolutely necessary that, at once, assets should be made available and a fund created to meet the deficit. Printer and paper manufacturer must be paid.

An increase of the subscription list is also requisite. Every two subscribers *must* be supplemented by another one or the paper be subsidized.

The meeting adjourned without re-appointing the new directors, as it was determined to place matters upon a sure basis or cease to issue, ere a new directorate should be elected. A Committee was also appointed for the purpose of canvassing the constituency of the paper so as to secure the needed aid and subscriptions. The Committee, which has power to add to its numbers, at present is: Rev. H. D. Powis, S. L. Jackson, M.D., J. Burton, Messrs. J. C. Copp, S. Davison, and D. Higgins.

Now, kind readers all, we do not intend to return

to this unwelcome subject, we would not do you the injustice to believe that where, as in the present case, denominational honesty, as well as *prestige* and prosperity are at stake, an appeal, based on a simple statement of facts, can possibly be made in vain. There must be no evading responsibility, nor faintness of heart when duty calls. Ichabod is not yet written over our portals, but it will be if these appeals are vain.

THE ROBERTSON-SMITH CASE.

IN the present re-issue of the "Encyclopædia Britannica" appeared articles on Angels, Bible and Canticles. The tone of these articles appeared at first sight to be "rationalistic," e.g. "there is no reason to think that a prophet ever received a revelation which was not spoken directly and pointedly to his own time." Again of angels it is stated that the reality of such beings is in the Old Testament "matter of assumption rather than of direct teaching," with certain statements affecting the supposed authorship of the books of the Pentateuch. These articles bore the initials of W. Robertson Smith, Professor in the Free Church Theological College of Aberdeen, and at once drew the attention and challenge of the courts of the Free Church. A libel for heresy and heretical tendencies was served, and for two years, in Presbytery, Synod, and Assembly the case has been discussed with a tediousness common to both legal and ecclesiastical procedure. The first of the above quotations is at once rendered innoxious by the qualification "to their own time *about the future* (e.g. Messianic) time," and the second may be made in accord with strictest orthodoxy by explaining that even the existence of God is taken for granted in the Bible as a first and necessary truth. In the course of the proceedings therefore the most of the charges were found irrelevant, but more serious ones remained, e.g. Deuteronomy is a "prophetic legislative programme which the author puts in dramatic form in the mouth of Moses," and parts, by no means inconsiderable parts, of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, also are of later date than Moses. Indeed, Deuteronomy in its present form belongs, in all probability, to the time of Josiah and it is at least probable that part of Leviticus is of still later date. The question whether these views are in accord with the Westminster Confession of Faith must be settled by those who are holders of the bond; 299 against 292 in the Free Church Assembly declare they are at least within the spirit, if not within the letter thereof, though that can scarcely be held as settling the question, seeing there is a movement towards secession from the Free Church by the more rigidly orthodox, and others hope to reopen the case *de novo*. However, beyond the knowledge of the fact, that aspect of the question need not delay us. But there is a wider question which gives us an interest therein, viz.: Will the old bottles of our reformed theology bear the ferment of the new wine of the "higher criticism?" Can such free handling of the Old Testament and New Testament be, and the Bible still maintain its place as the revealed will of God? Prof. Smith says yea, and from his known integrity, reverence, and scholarship we may at least listen to his reasoning. There is, whether formulated or not, a general consensus among the reformed churches regarding Scripture, that it is inspired of God, and that, irrespective of any theories as to the human agencies by means of which the book assumes its present form, because (1) the revelation of God and of His will as preached through the Spirit by the apostles and prophets, is therein reduced to writing; and (2) because the witness of the Spirit assures us that therein *God still speaks to us*. "The same spirit," writes Calvin, on 2 Tim. iii. 16, "which assured Moses and the prophets of their vocation, now also beareth witness in our hearts that he used their ministry in order to teach us." Following these principles, the argument for the authority of Scripture thus stands: Because God is truth itself, His Word is infallible, and because He is sovereign, it is authoritative.

But Scripture is (*i.e.*, records or conveys) the Word of God. Therefore Scripture is of infallible truth and divine authority. But inseparable from this is the

Spirit's witness by which "to disciples as to teachers God is manifest as the author" of revelation. But over and above this, urges Prof. Smith, the Bible is a *part of human literature* as well as the record of divine revelation, and as such is open to those rules of fair criticism to which all literature is subject, and the adoption of critical conclusions thereon cannot diminish the historical value of the Bible as the record of God's revelation to His people, but rather set that revelation in a clearer and more consistent light. And thus strenuously contending for the infallibility and authority of Scripture, he does freely apply the critical faculty, maintaining that it is, not matter of faith but of fact *when and by whom* the books recording God's revelations were written, how often they were changed, added to, or re-edited, what vicissitudes have affected the integrity of the form in which those records have come down to us. In this position, no doubt, the Reformers stood; Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, men who above all others maintained the integrity and supreme authority of Scripture, expressed themselves with a freedom bordering on rashness, on questions of Biblical criticism. The Aberdeen Professor has evidently fallen into following their example; and this will lead us to our closing sentences. Criticism is keen edged and needs a trained as well as a reverent hand. It is indispensable for the removal of excrescences and the laying bare of hidden truths. It requires patient and earnest preparation, and a recognition of its dangers. In no field of research does the caution stand more needed,

"A little learning is a dangerous thing,
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring."

Prof. Smith has drank deep, but all specialists are in danger of riding their hobby, and his is no exceptional case; should his main arguments be well founded, we can do nothing against the truth—let us not try; if his conclusions are hasty, as some undoubtedly are, time and candour will prove their falseness; in the meantime we, who have little or no time for critical study, can rest securely upon his declaration, which in this particular is level to us all:—

"If I am asked why I receive Scripture as the Word of God, the only perfect rule of faith and life, I answer with all the fathers of the Protestant Church: Because the Bible is the only record of the redeeming love of God; because in the Bible alone I find God drawing near to man in Christ Jesus, and declaring to us, in Him, His will for our salvation. And this record I know to be true by the witness of His Spirit in my heart, whereby I am assured that none other than God Himself is able to speak such words to my soul."

Here we may rest, and rest securely, for in the busy round of life it is only the few that can read the arcana of the higher criticism, nor do we need very much to weep thereover.

EXTENSION.

THE thoughts and facts brought before the Union by Rev. R. W. Wallace's paper on Church Extension demand more than a passing notice. We offer no apology for intruding them upon our readers, especially those who have some interest in our Congregational expansion. Mr. Wallace urges the formation of a church extension society with a building fund at its disposal, and as that matter was before our readers last week a few of Mr. Wallace's reasons and arguments may, with his assent cheerfully given, be presented here. An actual and typical case is given: Friends, effort to establish, and failure, where another denomination entered, virtually without friends, and succeeded! the difference simply being that in the latter case there was denominational backing, in the former, friends were left to struggle on alone. That denominational backing took largely the form of building a neat and commodious church, and as is truly observed, to start a meeting in a dingy town hall, or a dingier temperance hall is to invite "probabilities that are overwhelmingly against success. Now were a society organized purely and simply for denominational interest instead of private speculation, money might then be advanced at a very low rate—even