

could be given why such a proposition should be most emphatically negatived, and it made clear that the Church can manage her own affairs. We have asked the officers of several secular societies whether on paying their annual dues we could be permitted to vote without subscribing to the constitution and by-laws, and once had the reply cynically given "No, our members manage our affairs, but the churches do that, who have to beat around for men and money." No one conversant with the working of the Churches at the present time will attempt to deny that many subscribe to the funds in order to have a vote. But surely if in secular affairs it is thought needful to appeal to the highest tribunals to prevent legislation being controlled by money, there is no less need to guard against money influence being used to control the affairs of the Christian Church. If the Church be a divine institution if the work connected with it be God's work—if the offering brought to the house of the Lord be a sacred offering why give it over to the management of the world? Is the act of prayer or praise more sacred to the man who has been bought by redeeming blood than the dedication of his substance? or is such more secular and to be handed over to the world? So the Church of the present day appears to say. Not so to the Apostolic Church. What says Paul of the offerings from Philippi? They were "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing to God." If the Church is not to be governed by a mere temporizing expediency, if she is to have any respect to her divine Model, if she would not be the laughing-stock of those who, though not Christians themselves, say, if we join any society we would like to see its laws respected; then it is time for her to remember what has ever been the practice of her purest and best days, and make a difference between those who obey the Saviour's commands and follow Him; and those who do not own themselves His. In adopting any book of procedure it would be well for the General Assembly to say whether it means these rules to be observed, and by what sanction enforced; for assuredly there appears to be no uniformity of action at the present day nor anything, so far as the working of congregations is concerned, to distinguish between Presbytery and pure Congregationalism.

We cannot intrude further upon your space at present in giving instances of this laxness, but in many cases such practices are observed. The sacred ordinance of baptism is administered where neither parent is a communicant, and that without the least notice of it being given to the Church, not even to the Session. Hirelings who have no connection with any church are employed in choirs and in conducting the service of song in the house of the Lord. If these things be all right, if every congregation may decide for itself who are to vote on temporalities, etc., why have any book of procedure? It is to be hoped the Assembly will give no uncertain sound. OBSERVER.

A CORRECTION.

MR. EDITOR,—In a late issue of THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN I find the Rev. R. Wallace saying that the late Dr. John Edgar, of Belfast, was the author of "The Variations of Popery." This is a mistake. The author of the book was the Rev. Dr. Edgar, of Armagh. He frequently called himself Samuel Oliver Edgar, to distinguish him from Rev. Dr. Samuel Edgar, of Ballinahinch, the father of Dr. John Edgar, of Belfast. Dr. Edgar, of Armagh, was greatly encouraged in the writing and publication of the book by the late Archbishop and Primate Beresford. Dr. Edgar gave much attention to the collection of old books. When beginning to write "The Variations" the Primate gave him full access to the cathedral library. A few months before I left Ireland I spent the greater part of a day with Dr. Edgar, of Armagh, and had a favourable opportunity of examining his extensive library. On that occasion he read me a letter he had received from a brother minister in the United States, in which the writer stated that he had an opportunity of consulting the works of the early Christian Fathers, and that he collated the quotations in Dr. Edgar's book with the writings of the different authors, and that he was able to state that the quotations were correct and faithful. THOMAS LOWRY.

Stratford, May, 1888.

Pastor and People.

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE.

BY E. H. S.

Let thy life be one long sermon,
Preaching on from day to day;
Let the light which shone on Hermon,
And the words Christ spake alway,
Be the model for thy preaching
E'en to those who go astray.

There are sorrow-bowed and sad ones
Crushed beneath the proud world's scorn,
In their anguish and their darkness
Wishing they had ne'er been born.
Let thy work then be to lead such
Unto Him who wore the thorn.

At it, at it, late and early,
Seek them out where'er they be,
Tell them of the Christ who suffered,
And says "Let all come to Me
Who are weak and heavy-laden,"
And relieved they sure shall be.

Tell them of the God who loves them,
Tell them of the Christ who died,
Tell them of the heaven above them,
Far beyond death's turbid tide.
And how they may gain that heaven,
All through Him who for them died.

Go then, labour thus, my brother,
Wielding well the Spirit's sword;
Thus thy life's work for another
Shall receive thy Lord's regard,
And in heaven when life is over,
Thou shalt reap a rich reward.

STATE OF RELIGION.

The report on the State of Religion, submitted by the Rev. Alexander Henderson, of Hyde Park, to the Synod of Hamilton and London, at London, May, 1888, is published by request.

Your committee in submitting their report desire to be duly impressed with the supreme importance of the subject committed to them, believing that the religious life of the flock committed to our care and the glory of God thereby are the chief end of the Church's existence. If the office of the ministry be designed for the perfecting of the saints, for the building up of the body of Christ, then our work is pre-eminently spiritual, and no matter how prosperous we may be in wealth, in numbers, in social position and the like, if souls are not being brought into saving union with Christ, and the Church advancing to a higher state of spiritual life, then we are making no progress worth the name, and are in imminent danger of being discarded by the Redeemer as a dead thing, unfit to be a dwelling-place for God through the Spirit.

In these days, however, of prevailing tendency to count the heads of converts, your committee do not deem it quite superfluous to acknowledge that it is impossible by any statistical tables, however carefully prepared, or by any disciplinary scrutiny, however severely exercised, to determine in all cases the true from the false. If in apostolic times, when the genuineness of faith was tested in the crucible of persecution, it took time for even an apostle to discover that he had admitted one who was "in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity," and others who could be not only to man but to the Holy Ghost, how are we, with less than apostolic endowments, in days when it is respectable and in a money-loving age, when it often pays to be outwardly identified with Christ, to presume to separate in all cases the tares from the wheat? While our Sessions, therefore, judge the spiritual state of others with the utmost humility and caution, they yet recognize that where real spiritual life is there will also be manifest in some degree "the fruits of the Spirit."

In order as far as may be to determine the state of the religious life of our people, as witnessed by external fruits, the General Assembly's Committee have issued six sets of questions. The first set relates to the eldership, the second to the ordinances of public worship, the third to religious life in the family, the fourth to special services, the fifth to congregational treatment of the young, and the sixth to hindrances.

Reports have been received from all the Presbyteries within the bounds, and although the questions were somewhat late in being issued, it is evident that the respective Conveners have shown considerable diligence in procuring returns from the various Sessions. It is to be regretted that they have only been partially successful. Hamilton complains of great difficulty experienced in getting replies, having received only twenty-four returns from forty-five congregations. In London and Sarnia about three-fourths sent replies. In Bruce twelve report out of twenty-one congregations and fourteen mission stations. Maitland received "prompt and full" replies. In Chatham all report but two; in Huron all but one, whereas in Paris and Stratford all the Sessions report. Your committee are of opinion that Presbyteries should be enjoined to take more vigorous action in the future to secure reports of some sort from all the Sessions; for unless human nature is differently constituted in the Presbyteries of Paris and Stratford from what it is elsewhere, your committee know no good reason why the record of these two Presbyteries in this respect should not be the record of all the rest. If a Session have a conscientious scruple about sending replies to any questions on this subject they should frankly say so; but your committee venture to affirm that no Session can receive any General Assembly schedule on any subject, and either carelessly neglect or deliberately ignore it, without moral damage to themselves; and further, that the Session that is either afraid or ashamed to deal fairly and honestly with the state of religion within their congregation, ought to give themselves to serious searchings of heart. Your committee are not afraid to say that where the eldership is earnest and active they will as a rule, send returns, and further, that the burden of this responsibility rests for the most part on the Moderators.

THE ELDERSHIP.

While some Sessions modestly decline to answer the delicate questions how they perform their duties, almost unanimous testimony is borne to the faithfulness, efficiency and pains with which the duties assigned to the elders are usually discharged.

As a rule the utmost harmony and co-operation seem to prevail on Session Boards. The elders find scope for their diverse gifts in Sabbath school work, in assisting in and conducting prayer meetings, in visitation of the sick and sorrowing. Some systematically visit the members prior to each communion, sometimes in company with the pastor. In these and other kindred ways, very many, and your committee have reason to believe, an ever-increasing number of our elders are doing much profitable work, besides discharging those duties that belong more exclusively to their office, in the administration of the sacraments and attendance on the courts of the Church.

Your committee are of opinion that where the most active eldership is to be found there also will be found the most perfect organization; and they are glad to report that increased attention has apparently been given to this matter during the past year. Many congregations are divided into elders' districts, chief in cities. Stratford thinks it is impracticable in the country. Your committee would like to know why. In nearly all the Presbyteries there are Sessions who meet for prayer sometimes before the Sabbath service, sometimes immediately after. Some have meetings for conference prior to communion, but few seem to meet for this specific purpose at stated times. Evidently a considerable number have no such meetings at all. Perhaps not the least hopeful sign is the feeling of shortcoming humbly acknowledged in most of the reports, with the expressed resolution on the part of some to endeavour to do better.

ORDINANCES.

One of the first signs of the awakening life in a regenerated soul is a growing relish for the means of grace: and your committee rejoice to report that in spite of all that is being said by many, whose hearts perhaps is father to the thought, concerning the fancied "waning power of the pulpit," every Session with but one exception, bears hearty testimony to the regularity of attendance on the preaching of the Word. London says: "The interest in the Word continues unabated." In Paris Presbytery one Session says: "The attendance was never better than during the past year," and the report adds: "This, without having recourse to sensational attractions." York