

Dominion, except in Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, and in the mission fields of Ontario. But it will be remembered that the calling system was but partially in operation in these regions. Missionaries, ordained and unordained, were appointed by the Home Mission Committee, and "Bishops" Robertson and Findlay, who knew the fields and the men best suited for them. The fields were better supplied than if the selection of laborers had been left to the choice of the people. In many cases the people do know something of certain laborers, and they express their choice, and it is respected as far as practicable. That is just the combination of popular selection and ecclesiastical direction and authority which is contended for in this paper. There is no reason why the Methodist or any other church should be more thriving than ours if we only had a more rational method of creating and filling vacancies. The clergy of our church are by far the ablest, the best educated, and the most efficient in Canada; and *ceteris paribus*, they can more than hold their own when laboring in city, town, or country, with the clergy of other denominations. But the disorganization and leakage of strength resulting from long vacancies of one or two years, and the yet more serious leakage at the closing stages of many pastorates, force our church to take second place in relative progress (according to the Dominion census), when we should take first place.

Now, what is the remedy? It must be found in some scheme by which the popular selection shall be modified by, and combined with, the authority of ecclesiastical appointment. It should be a recognized fact that the church courts have authority to appoint a pastor over a parish as well as to appoint a home or foreign missionary to his field of labor. The part of our church's work in which we have the least friction and the least waste of resources and the best results is where the appointing power is moderately exercised. The power should not be arbitrarily exercised, in total disregard of the wishes of the laborer or the people among whom he is to labor. Nor is it. There should be at least as much consideration for the popular wish as is given by the Episcopal and Methodist churches, whose people are not as high in average intelligence as ours. Every minister should understand that he is the servant of the church and not of a congregation, and that he is "subject to the powers that be." Every congregation should understand that it is as truly a ward of the church as a mission station is, and that the church has a right to a voice in the selection of its pastor, as well as to his translation to another field when deemed expedient.

In suggesting a scheme by which the popular voice and ecclesiastical authority might combine in the selection of a pastor, it is not to be forgotten that there is a general aversion in our church to Episcopacy as such, and also to the itinerant system and the fixed time limit to pastorates in the Methodist church. Yet the Presbyterian and Methodist systems of settling and translating pastors might be amalgamated into a better system than either.

Let us suppose in connection with each Synod of our church a committee corresponding in a measure to the Stationing Committee of the Methodist church, and also in a measure to our own Home Mission Committee. This committee would be composed of representatives from all the Presbyteries within the Synodical bounds. Such representatives would be minutely acquainted with the condition and requirements of all the congregations in their respective Presbyteries, and also with the qualifications and success of their co-presbyters. The whole committee would thus be in possession of the names of vacant charges and of the ministers without charge, and would know the requirements of the one and the qualifications of the other. They would also know the settled charges in which a change would be desirable, since every minister and congregation would have access to the committee through their Presbyterial representatives. The annual meeting of the committee would be held, say, at Synod time, when all the translations for the year would be decided on—except such as might become necessary during the year on account of deaths or other unforeseen events. At Synod time any minister would be liable to translation; and yet none would be necessarily translated, as

there would be no fixed time limit to pastorates any more than we have at present. When a minister and congregation worked harmoniously together, and God's work was prospering, and a dissolution of the pastoral tie was not desired by either, the pastorate might continue undisturbed during the minister's lifetime. But when a minister desired a change, and could give valid reasons therefor, his case would be taken into consideration. On the other hand, when a congregation desired a change, and could furnish valid reasons for their desire, the committee would be no less ready to consider their case. Such a committee, composed of picked men from all the Presbyteries, would have the whole working of the church within the synodical bounds under their eye. They would, of course, act conservatively, and would be slow to heed the clamors of ambitious or conceited men who like to stump vacancies with a few flash sermons—"Royal Georges"—in their pockets; and they would be equally slow to heed the complaints of a few malcontents in a congregation who are never at peace but when they are at war. Besides, the decisions of such committee would have to be ratified by the Synod. Facilities for the transference of ministers from one Synod to another could be easily arranged.

No doubt numerous objections will be raised against such a scheme, and indeed, can be raised against any scheme that might be proposed. No scheme is perfect, and no perfect scheme would work jarlessly among imperfect men. It may be said that such a scheme as that suggested would not be workable. It is workable in our home mission field at the present time. Some would say that it would involve more work than any committee could perform. The work of our Home Mission Committee, or of the Stationing Committee of the Methodist Church, is more than this scheme contemplates. Some would offer the objection that it would encroach on the rights of Presbyteries. If so, we are already guilty of such encroachment in our exercising the right of appointment to our home mission fields within the bounds of Presbyteries. Helping the congregation in the selection of a pastor is a duty which Presbyteries do not attempt to perform; and there would be no encroachment on their rights should the Synod, through its committee, give the help so much needed. But the weightiest objection to the scheme would be its seeming interference with the rights of congregations in exercising the franchise. This objection is more seeming than real. Congregational rights would be conserved, and the elective principle would be respected by one of two ways. Either the committee might submit a list of say half a dozen names to a congregation (vacant or about to be vacant), from which the congregation should make a choice. These they might hear, if desired. This is often done by bishops of the English church before making an appointment to a parish. Or the congregation might send a list of ministers' names to the committee, out of which the committee, in its wisdom, would select a pastor as desired. In all cases there would be correspondence between the committee and congregations with a view to an agreement in the selection and appointment to be made.

But if it is well to look at the objections to the change proposed, it is well to look at the advantages which it would secure. It would at once stop the waste of resources consequent on a hundred charges without pastors and a hundred pastors without charges. It would prevent long vacancies. No congregation would be left without a pastor more than a few weeks. "Candidating" and unseemly preaching tournaments, lasting in many vacancies for a year or two, would cease, and "asking for a hearing" would be a thing of the past. Again, it would stop the unchristian "starving out" process to which many congregations resort in order to get rid of their minister. It is a painful fact that there are scores of pastoral relations in our church which should have been dissolved years ago. "The cause is going down there," Presbyters say. Yes, and the Presbytery passively looks on, and allows it to "go down." They have not the heart to sever the pastoral tie, and turn a minister and his family adrift without employment, or means of support. By the scheme suggested, whenever a minister's usefulness should be impair-

ed in one field, he would simply be transferred to another. Again, the system suggested would teach ministers and congregations to have more respect for ecclesiastical authority. A minister could not leave his congregation whenever he pleased by simply securing a majority of votes in some vacancy to which he might aspire. Those more competent to judge his fitness for that particular vacancy would have to be heard from, and the welfare of his present charge would have to be considered. Congregations could not turn their telescopes toward any pulpit star in the land and make a private arrangement with him, expecting, of course, after the little prescribed drudgery of red tapeism connected with a translation, of which they are impatient enough, that Presbyteries will ratify their arrangements, regardless of the injuries inflicted on his present charge. The wail is heard all over our church, "We are drifting into Congregationalism!" Very true; and our calling system is hurrying us thitherward. Another evil which would be materially checked by adopting the system suggested is disrespect for aged ministers, and "the cry for young men." Many congregations shrink from calling men whose heads are gray, however efficient they may be, lest they should be left on their hands when incapacitated by age. The danger apprehended would be lessened by the translation of ministers from time to time to congregations for which they might be adapted. We do not find the Episcopal and Methodist churches committing the mistake of appointing young men fresh from college to large town or city churches. It is not in these churches that we find a premium on youth and inexperience, and disrespect for veterans in the Lord's service. It is in the churches in which the calling system prevails that these evils are most seriously felt. And the cause is not far to seek.

It is to be hoped that in the combined wisdom of the General Assembly some system similar to the one suggested may be matured, or some other means devised for the combination of ecclesiastical direction and authority with the popular choice in securing pastors for congregations. The subject is worthy of most serious consideration, for the evils arising from our present system are beyond question. It is not worthy of our church simply to acknowledge the existence of the evils, and supinely submit to them as inevitable.

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PREACHING: A REPLY TO R. A. DIX.

Mr. Editor: In a letter which appeared in your columns some time ago from R. A. Dix, those two very remarkable propositions are stated: 1st. "Given plain, faithful preaching of the Gospel of Christ by men in whom is manifest something of the Spirit of Christ, and the cry for change will wax fainter and fainter." 2nd. "Given preaching designed to attract but warranted not to offend, etc., and not only will the feverish demand grow, but the very office of pastor will become a hissing and a reproach." I would fain hope that Mr. Dix through a mistake reversed the conclusions shown from his premises. But, sad to say, Mr. Dix is not the only one who gives expression to those sentiments. It is such sentiments spoken and acted upon which are fast making the office of pastor in the Presbyterian Church a hissing and a reproach. That the preaching of Christ and Paul and the other Apostles was faithful and plain, goes without saying. Yet, judged by Mr. Dix's rule, they proved miserable failures. If Christ taught anything more plainly than another, it was that His disciples might expect to make enemies by speaking the truth. It is the same at the present day. It is those ministers who preach most plainly and faithfully that are cast off. I could name many excellent ministers who were cast off because they opposed the drink traffic and advocated prohibition too plainly. The writer of this letter is one who suffered for that cause. It is surprising that in all the correspondence on this subject no one has a word to say about finding employment for unemployed ministers. The motto of General Booth, the head of the Salvation Army, is, stick to the unemployed. That motto has no place in the Canada Presbyterian Church. It is not by abusing this class and declaring that it is their own fault that they are out of employment, that a remedy is to be found, but by forming a simple, easy system of transfer.

D. McNAUGHTON.

Christian Endeavor.

FOR WHAT DOES OUR DENOMINATION STAND? (MEETING LED BY THE PASTOR)

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February 18th.

It is not likely that many pastors read this column. Indeed it is hardly to be expected that they would, because it was not intended for them. All that has ever been attempted here has been to suggest a few thoughts which might help the young people in preparing for the meetings of the society. As the meeting this week is to be led by the pastor it seems scarcely necessary to make any notes upon the topic. Some congregations, however, are vacant and so for the sake of those Endeavorers who belong to such congregations, a few notes will be given as usual.

It is only fair to state at the outset that all evangelical denominations have much in common. As a denomination we have never regarded ourselves as the sole custodians of the truth. We believe certainly, that our doctrine and polity are thoroughly scriptural, but while we know that others differ from us on some points, we also recognize the fact that they agree with us in many others. The Nicene creed would be accepted by us all. So while we state a few things for which our denomination stands, we shall not be understood as saying that others do not stand, measurably at least, for the same.

1. In doctrine, our denomination stands pre-eminently for the sovereignty of God. We regard Him as the supreme, absolute, eternal Sovereign of the universe. This truth may be taken as the basis of all our system. We emphasize the truth that God rules in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; that salvation in its beginning, progress and completion is to be traced to Him, and that for His own glory He hath foreordained whatsoever cometh to pass. If we intelligently grasp these principles we shall be the better able to understand all the other distinctive features of our doctrine.

2. It stands for civil and religious liberty. It was for this that our fathers fought and died. They resisted encroachments upon this liberty whether made by civil or ecclesiastical authority. So now while we concede to others the privilege of worshipping God as they choose, we claim the right to worship Him according to the principles of His word and the dictates of our own consciences.

3. It stands for the widest possible range of scriptural liberality; some wrongly suppose that we are narrow and exclusive, whereas we are anything but that. We invite the members of all evangelical denominations to sit with us at the communion table. If a minister of another denomination makes application to be received into ours, and if that application be accepted, his ordination, no matter how, or by whom performed, is regarded as a valid one. When ministers or ruling elders are ordained they are expected to subscribe to our standards, but no such subscription is required of ordinary members. They are received on the simplest possible terms, viz.:—faith on the Lord Jesus Christ and a credible evidence of that faith in the daily life.

4. It stands for order and for the rights of all the members. The rights of the humblest member are guarded just as sacredly as are those of an elder, minister, or even the moderator of the General Assembly. If a member be wronged by a Session, he can appeal to a higher court, and from the higher to the highest.

5. Our denomination stands for education. Our ministers are required to take a thorough collegiate course. Our whole system of doctrine and polity are so logical, so systematic, that it could hardly be intrusted to an ignorant ministry or an ignorant people.

6. Our denomination stands for the evangelization of the world. We regard it as our duty to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Recognizing as we do the fact that Christ is the only King and Head of the church, we feel that we dare not ignore His last great command.