

The Presbyterian

A MISSIONARY AND RELIGIOUS RECORD

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CANADA IN CONNECTION WITH THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

CONDUCTED BY A COMMITTEE OF THE LAY ASSOCIATION OF MONTREAL.

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THE CHURCH IN CANADA.

The efficiency of a Church as an instrument in the hands of God, for dispensing to His children the "bread of life", will in a great measure depend on the character and attainments of her Ministers. An ignorant and negligent Ministry will inevitably expose themselves to ridicule and contempt, and bring the Church into disgrace whose servants they profess to be. But a still greater evil will result from their unfaithfulness. They will not only fail to commend the Gospel to the hearts and the consciences of those committed to their spiritual care, but they will excite a positive disgust to its heavenly and transforming precepts and doctrines. Contempt for the Ministers of religion is easily transferred to religion itself, and thus—however unreasonable it may be—in the conceptions of many the pure and heavenly is invested with the gross attributes and imperfections of the earthly. These exterior influences commingling with the internal tendencies of corrupted humanity, in their action on each other, each will increase the virulence and malignity of each, and in combination will be developed in the most monstrous forms of wickedness. Sufficient evidence of this is found in the history of every nation. "Like priest like people", as a proverb, is found in almost all languages. When the sources of divine knowledge are corrupted, the effects in all classes are nearly the same; and they are dreadful. Universal profligacy ensues. They, who should have been the means of preventing such evil, are justly execrated. The Church, to which they belong, must fall beneath the blasting influence of their ig-

norance; and the foundations of the social fabric itself will be sapped and destroyed.

It is of the highest importance both in a civil and religious point of view, more especially in an age of boasted enlightenment such as the present, that the Ministers of Christ be not only thoroughly penetrated with the Spirit of the Gospel, but that they also possess a liberal and scientific education; that they be qualified to instruct the minds of the best informed, and interest the affections of the most refined, in their Congregations; and that they be able to repel the attacks of the infidel, and silence the scoffings of the scorners, by arguments and illustrations drawn from every department of knowledge. Unless the Man of God is thus "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works", we assert that he has no right to enter into the office of the Holy Ministry; and the Church, that receives him, incurs deep guilt—guilt that in retribution will be visited on herself, and made visible unto all, in her impaired usefulness and diminished purity. The natural talents of every man are not of the same high order, nor are the gifts of the Spirit communicated in the same rich abundance unto all. But, whatsoever may be the character or measure of our natural endowments, they must be all carefully cultivated and improved to the utmost. Until we do this, we have no good reason to expect the ordinary communications of the Holy Spirit, and much less reason have we to look for a miraculous display of Divine power. Extraordinary gifts were given to the Church so long as demonstration was necessary to the world—or to the Disciples themselves, that their crucified and risen "Lord" was with them indeed. According to His promise He was present with them, but He was not

manifest to their senses. That they might apprehend His Spiritual presence, it was requisite that the very Spirit of wisdom which He displayed, and the wonderful works which He wrought, should be also manifested in them. It behoved "that the mind, which was in Him, be also found in them", and the works, which He did, it was necessary that they (as instruments) should do also. By the wonderful works which they were enabled to perform—works confessedly above human power to accomplish, it was made apparent unto all that Christ was with them of a truth, and wrought in them—and by them. But miracles are not essential to the "perfecting of the body of Christ." They are only necessary to the visible establishment of the Church in the world, not to its subsequent edification. They are the mere scaffolding, requisite for the erection of the Exterior Temple. When the structure is completed, it is befitting that they should be removed that the fine proportions of the several parts of the edifice may appear. Miraculous gifts have disappeared from the Church. The great purposes, which they were intended to serve, have been accomplished. The Christian religion has been established. The facts, on which it is founded, have been all clearly attested by the most unexceptionable evidence, so that for the conviction of the candid mind there is no more need of further proof than it already possesses. The Divine truths, communicated to the Apostles by extraordinary revelation, have been put on record, collected into one volume, and given to the Church for the instruction of every individual in the "whole counsel of God." These inspired records contain all that is necessary to be known of the will of God for salvation, so that they supersede the ne-