

CHAPEL PROPERTY.

We are quite aware, that our article, on this subject, in the February number, required further explanation. The obscurity of it arose from an error, discovered when it was too late to rectify it sufficiently.

We intended to show the position in which the members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church were placed, relative to their chapel property, and asserted, that with the absolute ownership of that property by the Conference, there was no security for the integrity, purity, and permanency of Methodism in Canada, under the management of the leaders of the Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church; we added, that should Dr. Ryerson return with fresh impressions, with his power in the Conference, he might do anything. We also stated, that more than the exclusive use of the chapels is insisted on by the leaders of the Conference.

The error we committed, was in referring this subject specially to the deed of settlement for the chapel property, which has but a remote connection with the deed of settlement.

We have only to suppose, that on the occasion of the dissolution of the Union in 1840 the contract of union then subsisting had been broken by the Wesleyan Methodist Church, instead of the British Missionary Committee, what would have been the effect on the chapel property?

Every portion of it would have become the property of the British Conference!

Our readers will recollect, that it afforded Dr. Ryerson and the Conference, at that time, strong grounds of congratulation to the members of the Church, that all the chapel property was secured to the Conference, because the British Conference were the party who broke up the union. We need only refer to the litigation in the cases of the Belleville and Waterloo Chapels, for another illustration and proof of this fact. It was because that the identity of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada with the Wesleyan Methodist Church was not proved, or not admitted by the court (we do not know which), that those two chapels were awarded to the latter. With reference to them, worthy and pious men had subscribed, collected subscriptions, and built chapels, fondly imagining that they had secured a spiritual asylum for themselves and their children, during their earthly pilgrimage.

But what was the consequence? how did they lose that property? certainly, in equity, more theirs than the property of any one else; they lost it because of a change in the designation, government, and discipline of the body to which they belonged, made without their consent, and without consulting them, and which occasioned their separation.

We ask the members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church if they think it safe to remain exposed to a similar event?

They are now exposed to it; and, in 1840, were within an hair's breadth of losing the whole of their chapel property!

It is true the Conference advocates, if they have any, may say, the property would not

have been alienated in such a case, it would have remained the property of the Conference still. Here is the difficulty, the vital question we have to deal with in relation to this property.

When a religious community raise funds, by great exertions and sacrifices, and build a house of prayer, for themselves, and their families, and their neighbours, and in intention, for generations to come, whose do they suppose is the property, theirs or that of the Conference?

When a deed is executed, vesting the said property in trustees, for the exclusive use of the Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church; do they consider that the Conference are to be deemed the absolute owners of it? No! The Conference do not go so far as this, in theory at least. Is there not, in the trust deed, a virtual contract, that the Conference shall have the use of the property on condition? Are not some of these conditions, that the Conference shall abide by the discipline, and all the institutions of Methodism, and that the Conference shall continue the same body? But if the Conference alter their designation, and their relation to other branches of the general Methodist body, and become, as decided by courts of justice, divested of property, or possessors of property in consequence of that change, either in their discipline or in their relation to other bodies of Methodists, or become another body, are not these conditions violated? Under these circumstances a community do not know who they are building a chapel for, ultimately.

This was the situation of the Belleville and Waterloo people, and this would have been the situation of all the property now held by the Wesleyan Methodist Church, if the Conference had violated the articles of union, instead of the British Missionary Committee.

Our readers, therefore, will, no doubt, admit, that we are correct in not wishing the ordinary deed of trust to be altered, in reference to the Conference having the exclusive use of the chapel property; and, that we are correct in desiring an alteration to the effect, that the Conference shall not be allowed to alter the designation it had when the particular property was invested for their use, nor alter their relation to other branches of the Methodist body, or become any other body, nor depart from the institutions and discipline of the Conference, in effect, at the time of such investment, nor make any change affecting the ownership of the chapel property, without consulting the members of the Church. This alteration of the deed is imperative and immediately called for, as in the event of any contemplated union, the chapel property will go with the body created by that union, and be lost to all that may separate in consequence of that union, as well as to all the rest on its dissolution.

Such an alteration of the deed, however, will only affect chapels to be hereafter built, and we strongly recommend that, in all such cases, no steps should be taken towards the settlement of newly built chapels, till the parties, for whom they are erected, are secured from the danger we have pointed out

and made safe and sure that they are not subscribing and building chapels for other parties as in the cases of Belleville and Waterloo.

But there is no security that the present chapel property shall abide under its present ownership, to be enjoyed in accordance with the intentions and expectations implied in contracts existing when they were erected, but that which may be afforded by the interference of the people themselves. We think that Lay-representation is the only preventative of this danger; and we are certain, that if the system of Lay-representation comes into operation, the chapel property will not be in danger of being alienated, by means of an union hereafter to be made or dissolved.

THE CAUSE OF AND REMEDY FOR DIVISION.

We have been induced to call the attention of our readers to this subject, from the circumstance, that one of our late numbers was returned to us, having the following words written on the margin:—

"Mark them who cause divisions among you and avoid them.—P. PETERSON."

This quotation seems to be designed to convey to us a reproof, although it might have been, with equal propriety, employed to encourage and stimulate us in the painful but necessary service upon which we have entered.

As a reproof we receive it; and, in the spirit of wisdom and charity, would we refer to it. If we have, in any particular, erred from the straight path of duty, either by entering upon the onerous task of endeavouring to bring about an ecclesiastical reformation, or by the manner in which our labours have been conducted, and if our friend (for such we presume he is) design, by a reference to divine authority, to convince us of our error, and to bring us back to the right way, he deserves not only our unfeigned gratitude but our sincere thanks. We freely admit the value of reproof, when given with such wisdom and clearness as that it may correct by convincing the judgement, but our friend will allow, that it may be given unwisely—out of season, and, therefore, be unprofitable and vain.

The language of the reproof is taken from Paul's Epistle to the Romans; but, being disjointed from its connection, fails to convey the Apostle's meaning, and may be wrested to produce an impression directly at variance with his design.

The divisions condemned by the Scripture, are clearly defined; but, in the quotation, are not specified. The language of the Epistle is, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."

The words in italics are essential to our apprehending the design of the Apostle, yet they are entirely overlooked, or put aside by Mr. Peterson in his quotation, which condemns all division indiscriminately, while the words of the Apostle condemn such only as are contrary to sound doctrine. We desire fully, and at all times, to yield ourselves to the council here given; and if our friend will meet us in calm scriptural argumentation, upon the ground we have taken, in defence of the Christian hierarchies of our people, as a Church, we will, with much pleasure, publish his communications. There are none who more sincerely desire unity, and love peace, than we do, yet we will never consent to purchase the one or the other, at the expense of principle. We are not ignorant of the importance of the faithful with respect to this; and are prepared, as good soldiers, to endure the reproach of the Cross. The ambassadors of Christ were not only charged with creating division, but with "turning the world up side down!" They invaded, by their preaching, the peace of families, of societies, and of nations. Mark the scenes of riot, confusion, and uproar which often attended their labours; and, as a consequence, the sufferings to which they were exposed, by the desertion of friends, the fury of the populace, and the severity of the civil magistrates, yet they laboured still, and only ceased this work of division when their eyes were sealed in death.