

THE WESLEYAN. SATURDAY, AUGUST 10, 1878.

THE CHURCH'S DOCTRINAL PURITY.

The Christian Church is a second incarnation. It is a human embodiment of divine truth and virtue. But unlike the former incarnation—the fleshly body of Christ—the church corporate, which is His spiritual body, retains more or less of the imperfections of its human origin.

but we shall 'grow up into him in all things, which is the head even Christ.' And does it not stimulate our hope to know, that 'Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.'

Now, to reach the height of this Alpine privilege, it is necessary to be jealous for the Church's doctrinal purity.

It is not difficult to account for doctrinal imperfections in the church. 'The Bible,' says Dr. Philip Schaff, 'is God's word to man; the Creed is man's answer to God.' Now, there is no error in the divine voice that speaks to us; error arises from man's response to that voice, just as an echo will sometimes distort the voice by modifying the sound.

Moreover, the clear, pure light of truth is somewhat modified by the medium of the mind through which it passes. Every sunbeam, for instance, is alike pure, and white, and beautiful; but see what a change it undergoes as soon as it gets down to the earth. How it transforms itself in the various objects upon which it falls!

But how important it is that upon all essential points, at least, the church should be as doctrinally pure as it is possible for it to be! And upon these vital points its ministry should give no uncertain sound. Nor should there be any faltering in its testimony, but like the four cardinal points of the weathercock, its vital doctrines should be fixed. Is it not the truth that saves? is it not the truth that sanctifies? The prayer of Jesus is still appropriate:—"Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." A pure doctrine is the seed-germ of a sanctified character. May the Methodist ministry continue a powerful exponee of saving truth.

THE MINUTES OF THE CONFERENCES.

The summary of a year's work, where nearly fifteen hundred ministers, with many local preachers, with a vast retinue of associates in Sabbath School and other enterprises, are engaged, ought to be an eloquent record. We are in possession of the minutes of the six Annual Conferences, from London to Newfoundland, and are in a position to give a few interesting details. Our article will be chiefly statistical, though in the way of inference and suggestion we may find much to tempt us away from bald figures, those very significant texts in all instances.

To simplify our subject, we may divide the statistics under their legitimate headings. We begin with

THE MINISTERIAL.

From the London Conference, three ministers withdrew, one was suspended and one deposed. The Montreal and Nova Scotia Conferences also deposed one each. There were twelve transfers this year, eight of these were to the Western Conferences, London and Toronto. Nine ministers died during the year, London, Montreal and Nova Scotia losing two each, and the others one each. London Conference ordained seven, Toronto sixteen, Montreal seven, Nova Scotia four, N. B. and P. E. Island six, and Newfoundland ten—making in all fifty ordinations. It is somewhat remarkable that London and Toronto each received on probation a number similar to the number ordained, the former seven, the latter—Toronto—sixteen, several of whom were Japanese, while Montreal received nine, Nova Scotia six, N. B. and P. E. Island one, and Newfoundland two. The total number of candidates for the ministry is thus seen to be forty-one. There remain one hundred and ninety-eight preachers on trial; London has of these fifty-nine, Toronto sixty-one, Montreal thirty-two, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island seventeen each, and Newfoundland twelve. The class named superannuated—scarcely understood as to relation by us in the East—numbers within one of a hundred, located chiefly within the limits of London and Toronto Conferences. There are sixty-eight supernumeraries, almost equally distributed, excepting in Newfoundland, which returns but three. This, if we include that the total number of ministers in the six Conferences is 1150, completes this part of our record.

The temptation to question and moralize sets in upon one very strongly with such a reading; and a slight indulgence may not be amiss. London Conference seems to be the centre of no little activity, if may judge by the fact that it has lost by discipline—and by retirement, which may have been meant to avoid discipline—five of its ministers within a year. Its neighbor, Toronto, with more than equal numerical strength, and with much territory of a missionary kind, leaving its young men exposed on outlying districts, has not lost one by disloyalty or immorality. Montreal is almost equally fortunate, notwithstanding its agencies are mingling with the poorest and most ignorant of our population—the French Canadians. This indication of special vitality it is, perhaps, that makes London our El Dorado Conference, toward which most of our transfer-seeking brethren turn in quest of ministerial gold.

There are special features of the numerical facts just given, too, which show the amazing strength of the two Western Conferences. London and Toronto possess one hundred and twenty of our one hundred and ninety-eight preachers on trial. They have also, if we class their supernumeraries with our supernumeraries for convenience, one hundred and forty of the whole number, which is one hundred and sixty-seven.

In other respects it will be seen as we pass on that two-thirds of our Methodist resources lie West of Montreal. This latter Conference, however, has no mean aggregate of figures in every department of denominational returns.

We come now to a yet more interesting department of the Minutes, showing the church's

MEMBERSHIP AND SABBATH-SCHOOLS.

These will be best seen in schedule form:—

Table with 5 columns: Conference, Membership, Increase, Scholars, Increase. Rows include London, Toronto, Montreal, Nova Scotia, N. B. & P. E. Island, Newfoundland, and Totals.

The absurdity of accepting the reported increase of membership as the actual result of our year's work, cannot better be seen than by supplying information of another kind. Unfortunately there is not a single record in any Minutes, excepting the Nova Scotia, to account for the serious loss of members to the church. In Nova Scotia there were lost by removal 289, by death 146, ceased to be members (we suppose dropped out of class attendance) 813. These, with 976 on trial, make a total of 1724. So that the souls brought into our church in the Nova Scotia Conference during the year, instead of being 50, as returned in the increase of membership, was nearly 1800. By the simple rule of proportion we make the actual blank in the six Conferences, from the same causes, to have been nearly 10,000. Add to these 9452 reported as on trial in the six Conferences, also the increase of membership, 2337, and the year's actual results are apparent. If a few columns were given in all the Minutes, showing the actual number of conversions or additions during the year, and the loss to the church from various causes, our position would be more plainly presented to the world. A column headed "Added to the Church"—a Scriptural one, too—would have contained this year returns making an aggregate of more than 20,000.

Outside of our own church, the elements which meet evangelical agencies are much the same in the Montreal and Newfoundland Conferences. In both we have to confront a powerful and compact Romanism, and an offensively pretentious Ritualism. It is specially gratifying to find that the principal gains in membership are counted in precisely these discouraging fields of labour. We are inclined to think that the formidable character of our antagonisms only duly impress the minds of men labouring among such a population; but at the same time this consciousness of difficulty and opposition would seem to beget a faith and purpose which bring home the husbandmen with sheaves and songs of rejoicing. The Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Conferences ought to find subject for serious and humiliating thought in the returns as they appear above.

The membership of the three Eastern Conferences is but a fraction more than that of Montreal, while the total of these four together is but a little more than one-third the entire membership of the Dominion. The preponderating weight, therefore, of voting, working power in our church is, and from the nature of things must continue to be, in the two Western Conferences. They are strong—it has been discovered ere this that they are too just and generous to use their strength to our disadvantage.

Our Sunday scholars are more numerous than our church-members. The increase in the Western Conferences is here again far beyond that of the East. There would seem to have been special gain in the London Conference, for which some reason may exist hidden from us at this distance. Altogether, an increase of 20,000 members and nearly 7000 scholars in one year, shows a mighty arm at work somewhere—shows that Methodism under God is fulfilling its high mission among the population of this rising Dominion.

One other schedule will include all the information in our possession;

CONGREGATIONAL ASPECTS.

Table with 5 columns: Conference, Hearers, Value Churches, Raised for Missions, and Not given. Rows include London, Toronto, Montreal, Nova Scotia, N. B. & P. E. Island, Newfoundland, and Totals.

The returns for Missions are necessarily imperfect, as not till late in the summer can some of the Western territories complete its reports. The estimates given, therefore, from London and Toronto Conferences are defective

by thousands of dollars, probably. It is a pity that the nominal value of property, so easily furnished from District schedules, could not be stated in all the Minutes. Without including Montreal, N. B. and P. E. Island, or Newfoundland, the property held is put down at \$4,000,000. The hearers in the same bounds number about 300,000—showing about \$130 per hearer. This, taken as an average, would give the actual property value of the Methodist Church of Canada at about \$6,000,000.

Comparing the receipts of the three Conferences East, whose Missionary returns are probably complete, we may anticipate a serious deficiency in Montreal, N. B. and P. E. Island, as also in Newfoundland. Nova Scotia has a handsome increase.

There is a gratifying proportion of hearers returned as members of the church, though our energies and prayers will not be moderated by the consideration that nearly three of every four hearers in our congregations have no intimate relation to us, and, in the majority of instances make no profession of religion. An unconverted multitude of more than 300,000 is something serious to have pending on a church's conscience! Out of these 300,000, moreover, we ought to reap a better harvest than two or three thousand a year, even allowing for the numbers who are required to fill up blanks caused by deaths and other causes.

Mr. Cornish is compiling tables, covering the record of four years in all the Conferences (the second of which we will publish next week), so that we need not enter upon any quadrennial review.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

One of our compositors made a minister vouch for Pain Killer as a remedy for consumption, in our columns last week. It should have been Hypophosphites. The error was made in setting up the notice

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL WALL MAP.—We have before us a very excellent Wall Map of Palestine at the time of Christ. The general get up is very creditable; being 60 by 40 inches in size, and containing tables of distances, height of mountains, and length of rivers, and is intended to illustrate the International series of S. S. Lessons. The publisher is M. A. Coudy, St. Louis, Missouri

Dr. Rigg has been elected President of the English Conference by the largest vote ever recorded there.

REQUISITES FOR THE TIME.—Delegates to the General Conference cannot well do without a copy of the Journal of the previous session at Toronto. The Journal of the first General Conference is for sale at the Book Room—price 25 cents.

The WESLEYAN will contain full reports of General Conference proceedings. It will be sent, as an inducement to new subscribers, during the remainder of this year, for fifty cents. We shall be glad to add many new names to our lists.

The Minutes of the Nova Scotia Conference and the N. B. and P. E. Island Conference are out. The Newfoundland Minutes will be out next week. These will be forwarded to any address at twenty cents each—fifteen cents each by the dozen. Bound copies of the six Conferences can be sent immediately if orders are sent during next week.

Superintendents will oblige us by prompt attention to the lists of subscribers sent out this week. We have allowed two clear weeks before revising the lists. We are compelled to follow the instructions furnished by circular in every instance where subscribers are delinquent. Our ministers can help us to retain any who are behind. A word and a courteous hint just now will be very advisable. Where subscribers in arrears are not called upon, they can easily get a Post Office Order for two cents. But let it be remembered that where any subscriber is stopped the fault will not be with the office. We follow instructions only.

Rev. J. Lathern has kindly sent us a letter upon the work of the Hymn Book Committee. It will appear next week, and taken with the article from Mr. McMurray's pen in this issue, will furnish a very comprehensive view of the Committee's aims, as well as indicate pretty clearly the prospects for a new Hymn Book. The work of this committee is likely to become historic.

It will be seen by our condensed news that two Sackville students have distinguished themselves at the University examination, Halifax. We congratulate both them, their parents and tutors. Mr. Allison holds its way well.

ILLNESS OF REV. G. M. BARRETT.

We are sorry to learn that this esteemed brother, Supernumerary, at Carleton, N. B., is ill. A correspondent says:—

"Mr. Barrett has been confined to the house ever since he returned from Conference, from the effects of a fall he had at Sackville. It happened in this way: While returning to his lodgings from one of the night sessions of Conference, he struck his foot against the planks that cross the sidewalk to the entrance to the Episcopal Church, and fell his full length on the ground.

At first the injury was felt in the head and left side of the neck; then it settled in his chest and left arm, the lower part of the arm becoming very much swollen. Then the right side of the neck became affected, and latterly he is having great pain in the small of the back. There are other painful symptoms also.

His health is very much impaired, the appetite gone and the nervous system so shattered that he spends sleepless nights. His chances of visiting England, his birth-place, are not in the near future."

MEETING OF HYMN BOOK COMMITTEE.

The readers of the WESLEYAN have been informed, that the question of a new hymn book for the Methodist Church of Canada, has been under consideration. The inquiry is readily suggested, What necessity is there for a new Hymn Book? In reply to this question, it is necessary to say that, since the consummation of the union between the Wesleyan and New Connexion Methodist Churches of Canada, two hymn books have been in use in the united church, and it is certainly desirable to secure uniformity of worship in all our churches. For our own hymn book were indebted to the British Wesleyan Church; but the copy right of their hymn book having expired, a new book has been issued in its stead differing materially from the one we have in use.

At our General Conference in 1874, two propositions were submitted relating to our hymnology; one recommending the issue of a cheap supplement for use until the next General Conference, the other in favor of revision, and the issue of a book to meet the growing necessity of Christian worship, the profits to be available for the benefit of the Connexion. These propositions were referred to a committee, and received due consideration; but there was not opportunity afforded during the session to mature arrangements for carrying out the recommendations suggested; and, as a substitute for the report of committee, it was resolved to continue the committee on the subject, who should report at the opening of the next General Conference. It will thus be seen, from the several aspects of the question, that the present time is opportune for the Methodist Church of Canada to have a hymn book of its own.

The hymn book committee, in its fulfilment of the duty assigned to it, and by the call of the President of the General Conference, met on the morning of the 17th ultimo, in the city of Quebec. This was as central a position, for the convenience of the brethren West and East, as could be selected. There were present the Revs. Dr. Ryerson, of Toronto, Dr. Douglas, of Montreal, Dr. Burwash, of Coburg, Dr. Stewart, of Sackville, Alex. Sutherland and E. H. Dewar, of Toronto, J. McMurray, of Windsor, J. Lathern, of Charlottetown, Wm. Williams, of Hamilton, J. Caswell, of London, and also the pastor of the church in which the committee was convened, the Rev. LeRoy Hooker, who was by a unanimous vote invited to be present, and take part in the deliberations.

At the opening of the business, the President read letters from several brethren, lay and clerical, whose opinions are entitled to deference, suggesting the desirableness of allowing the hymn book now in use, to remain, either in whole or in part, unchanged. But a reference to the Journal of the General Conference satisfied the committee that this matter was not optional, as the resolution under which the committee was appointed clearly defines our duty to be to revise and to prepare materials for a new hymn book. No other course was open therefore, but in the first place, to enter upon the revision of the Wesleyan hymn book now in use among us. To this onerous and responsible undertaking the committee applied themselves with painstaking assiduity, each day, with but brief intermissions for dinner and tea, from 9 a. m. till 10 p. m., during the several days we were in session.

For their work in committee the brethren were not unprepared. They all had the advantage of a life-long acquaintance with the hymn book, and they cherished for it a great veneration on various grounds. There were its many sacred associations, its glorious traditional history reaching from the dawn of Methodism to the present day; the truly spiritual and evangelical sentiment of its hymns; their rare exhibitions of Christian privilege and blessing; the assistance they have given in leading sinners to the Saviour; their incentives to fidelity in the Christian life, and the abundant consolations, they are so well fitted to afford, to tempted and suffering disciples of Christ. Nor is it to be forgotten that our hymns are not limited in their precious associations to members of our own communion. Many of them have been appropriated by all the churches, and will thus be hallowed in the memories of vast multitudes of the redeemed for ever. It was interesting, as our work was in progress, to hear of inquiries from some of the members of our church in Quebec, as to whether we would exclude such old hymns as "Jesus, lover of my soul," and others held in like esteem

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