

hood in Him who hung upon it to purchase for us a common redemption.

Accept, then, the salutations of your brethren across the border, and respond, by sending a delegation to our next National Council, which meets the coming autumn.

Be assured that we have no cause for boasting, but rather for humiliation, though we number nearly or quite four thousand churches (3,936 in 1882); for, when we look back upon our past history, we are compelled to say that we neglected our trust, and gave large parts of our heritage unto others. At the independence of the Republic, modelled after our form of church government, we stood foremost in numbers and in influence. But through the earlier connection of Church and State, and its subsequent entangling alliances, which begat distrust of our polity as fitted for the west, we gave away our opportunity, which, like the opportunities of youth, can never come again. We gave our money and men to build up centralized systems, and received in return a natural recompense, pity and contempt. And this our folly has worked to your disadvantage. We have fallen from the foremost rank, to a place somewhat in the rear. That this is not due to any defect in our polity, is proved by the fact that the Baptists have held the second rank all through our history as a nation.

Another mistake our fathers made, which has hindered our growth. They held that the ministry is a pastoral relation, and that an ordained man out of the official pastorate of a church was *ipso facto* out of the ministry, and could get back into the ministry again only by a second ordination, called installation. This our English brethren rejected, and so recognition there and with you took the place of installation with us. But the evil came in the matter of ministerial standing, which, by the theory, was only held in the local church, in the hands of the laity. A church, by removing its pastor, deposed him from the ministry; and it was therefore held responsible for its minister as a minister and as a member. When this theory of the ministry gave way for the true one, no provision was made for accountable ministerial standing; that standing was suffered to lie around loose, and our churches have suffered from bad ministers, as no doubt yours have done. We are labouring to locate ministerial standing where both liberty and purity shall be conserved. This, as we view it, is the great problem of unity and purity under liberty, destined to come into the front, since unity and purity under force have proved impossible.

While our past prosperity has thus been hindered, we are, nevertheless, hopeful for the future. Our polity is now recognized by scholars as that of the primitive churches. This is a mighty vantage ground, which will ultimately prove decisive. Having vindicated that, our churches are exhibiting on the line of their full independence in the management of their own affairs the unity for which Christ prayed. To this church fellowship in stated gatherings, ministerial associations, and our societies for benevolence and missions, have been stepping stones in the States. So that now our churches are gathered into District Associations, in which ministerial standing is largely held; then into State Associations, meeting annually; and in a widening circle into the National Council, meeting

triennially. This corresponds largely to the "Unions" in other countries. One step yet remains, to gather all the Congregational churches of the world into an occasional or decennial Ecumenical Convention. Your most admirable *Year Book* in giving the number of these churches in the most scattered countries, shows the necessity of such a world-wide conference. For if you feel lonely here in the Dominion, and call for the fellowship of your "big brother," what must be said of the few mission and other churches in Africa and Asia and the islands of the sea? Their solitude will become so unbearable, that they will seek the fellowship of others, if we do not show our sympathy for them. For, whatever may be true of environment in moulding plants and animals, the influence of environment upon polity is great. Imperial Rome was the potent matrix in which was conceived and nurtured papal Rome. And the churches planted by the money and toils and prayers of free churches, if neglected, will grow up, encircled by other influences, to contempt the liberty which our fathers purchased at so great a price of blood. We ought, therefore, to environ them with sympathies and fellowship, so that they may feel in their struggles the support of the fraternity of sister churches the world around. To this end all our churches should meet stately, or as occasion may require, not only in the joys of a jubilee celebration, but in the work, counsels, unity of an Ecumenical Convention. This our principles require, in order to reach the completeness of the manifested kingdom of heaven.

Our work is urgent and prosperous. The supply does not keep pace with the demand. The calls of God at home and abroad are cumulative. Our cry is, men and money. Only 2,994 churches reported their benevolent contributions for 1882, amounting to \$1,383,685.90; and only 2,256 churches reported their home or parochial expenditures, which amounted to \$2,984,027.84 additional. However large this sum of \$4,317,713.74 may seem for piety freely to give, it is little, when measured by our ability and our duty. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

In the prosecution of our work, we, like you, are troubled by emigrating ministers and members. They go from country to city, from town to town, from State to State. It is hard keeping the fountains full; yet, the fountains feed the sea. Our country churches feed the cities. It is easier and better to teach the boy than the man; we must not therefore neglect the country churches. It is in them that the timber is largely fashioned which makes the pillars of the city churches. We must train in town and city churches the children in the faith and polity we love, that our churches may stand firm and prosper.

We have an increase in our population from abroad of nearly or quite seven millions every decade. To meet this demand, our energies are taxed to their utmost. But you have also a great North-West, destined to be a mighty empire. Plant it with free and pure churches. Our mark is one, whether on this or on that side of the line.

While this work of redeeming the world is heavy upon our hearts, we shall find room for no new departures in theology. The work is urgent; our tools are the grand old doctrines which have stood the tests of eighteen centuries, and which have ever been proclaimed in periods of religious awakening and con-