

## Our Contributors.

### TERM-SERVICE IN THE PASTORATE.

BY KNOXIAN.

From a most unexpected quarter comes a proposal to adopt the term-service method in the pastorate of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. It is contended that the term-service system would not only be a good thing in itself but that it follows as a necessary logical consequence from term-service in the eldership. Dr. Harper, of Alleghany, is quoted as authority on this point. Dr. Harper may be good authority, but his own Church does not adopt his view. The American Presbyterian Church have adopted the term-service system in regard to the eldership; but instead of thinking this a reason why the same system should be adopted in the pastoral relations, the best minds in that church condemn short pastorates as one of the greatest evils against which the Church has to contend. The system of "stated supply," which is one form of term-service, is tolerated; but tolerated as an evil that the Church cannot rid itself of without introducing other and perhaps greater evils.

The writer to whom we allude gives no details in regard to the system he would recommend instead of the present method of forming and dissolving the pastoral tie. The "revision of pastoral relations every five or six years," is so vague an expression that it is utterly impossible to say what it may mean. It is as indefinite as Imperial Federation. The details may come later on and when they do come may be discussed; but in the meantime intelligent discussion on this branch of the case is an impossibility. On all such questions the main difficulties are in working out the details. It is easy to say "Consolidate the Colleges"; but nobody has yet appeared with a suitable plan for consolidation. It is equally easy to say: "Revise pastoral relations every five years"; but who is ready with a workable plan for revision even if the principle were admitted—which it is not by a long way.

On one point, however, the writer in question is full and clear. He asserts that there is a great deal of "uneasiness and unrest in the relations between pastor and people," and contends that the term-service system would greatly lessen, if not entirely remove, this uneasiness and unrest. This uneasiness and unrest, it is alleged, often exist between people that "are apparently teachable, candid and generous" and ministers that are "earnest and faithful." We shall not here question the fact that such uneasiness and unrest exist, nor ask the writer why he uses the word "apparently" in describing these excellent people. We join issue on one point and one point only. We deny that term-service in the pastorate would be a remedy for the unrest. We assert that term-service would increase and intensify the unrest. And we further assert that in many instances, if the Church tried to remedy the unrest by changing the pastor, the Church would do that which is morally wrong.

In order that there may be no doubt about the point we wish to maintain, let it be again stated: "Term-service in the pastorate is no remedy for uneasiness and unrest in a vast majority of the cases in which such uneasiness and unrest exist." Assuming the existence of the unrest and that it would be a good thing to remove it, term-service in the pastorate is not the remedy.

Let us first discuss the cases described—those in which an "apparently teachable, candid and generous people" are uneasy under an "earnest and faithful" minister. Such cases we believe are few but they are confessedly difficult. How was the pastoral tie formed in such cases? Quite likely these people heard fifty candidates before they gave a call to one. They rejected forty-nine out of the fifty and perhaps spoke very contemptuously about many of them. Perhaps they sent to a foreign country for the right man. Possibly they went over the sea for him. When they called him they promised him all due assistance and encouragement. Was that call a sham? Was it a fraud—a pious fraud, but a fraud all the same? Perhaps they took him from a congregation in which there was no uneasiness or unrest until their call caused it. When he accepted, quite likely many of them boasted that there was no such man in the Church. When he came they said they had got a pastor from the Lord. The members of Presbytery that inducted him said so too, and thanked the Lord

for sending him. Should a tie so formed be dissolved simply because the people, or some of them, become restless—restless probably for no reason? Should eight men out of ten who are living happily with their wives, be divorced simply because the other two don't know a good woman when they see her? If a bishop or conference sent this "earnest and faithful" pastor without consulting the congregation the case would be different, but the people called that man, urged him to come, promised to help and support him, and it is just a little too much to remove him because they, or some of them feel uneasy.

There is a radical objection to a change of pastor on the simple ground of unrest. Unrest in many cases is a mere symptom. The cause or causes which produce it may and often do lie below the surface. We see the symptoms but do not always see the cause. Removing the pastor is in many cases but treating symptoms. The real cause is not touched. No skilful medical man treats symptoms merely. He strikes at the causes that produced the symptoms and when the causes disappear the symptoms disappear along with them. The Church should not be less sensible in dealing with the souls of men than doctors are in dealing with their bodies.

Nor is this all. The unrest is in itself often sinful. A state of uneasiness and unrest is not the normal condition of a man or congregation growing in grace. If then the condition be, as in many cases it is, sinful, should the Church of God frame its procedure to suit conditions in themselves sinful?

In many cases the causes of unrest are not far to seek. Everybody in the neighbourhood knows them. Let a few of the best known be specified.

The faithfulness with which a minister preaches often causes unrest. If he faithfully warns sinners and rebukes sin in church members he cannot fail to cause more or less unrest. To produce unrest is the proper thing for him to do. Elijah produced considerable unrest in his time. So did Paul. So does every man who preaches faithfully and manfully? Is the Presbyterian Church ready to say to every man who arouses slumbering sinners and unmasks hypocrites: "Oh, you have made these people uneasy; we must send you to some other congregation." If so, the first duty of the Church is to die. Heaven send us more men who can make proud sinners and selfish professors uneasy. The principal trouble with the Church just now is that ministers and people are too much at ease.

Faithfulness in matters of discipline often causes uneasiness and unrest. A session that dares to do its duty quite often makes certain kinds of men uneasy. The more uneasiness they feel the better for themselves. But should the Church remove a minister because he and his elders deal with men, some of whom may be living in open sin? And yet many men thus dealt with, some of whom should never have been in the Church and some of whom should have been expelled many years ago, are at the bottom of much of the uneasiness that prevails in many congregations. In such cases the uneasiness is caused by sin, and removing the pastor is simply giving the devil a triumph.

As a plain unvarnished fact, unrest in a great majority of cases is caused by the worst elements in a congregation and giving way to those who cause it is simply allowing the wrong to trample down the right. The number of cases in which earnest, working, praying Christians cause unrest is very small.

Cranks often cause unrest. Somebody has said that one healthy hornet can break up a camp meeting. One vile, healthy, long-tongued crank can keep any congregation in a state of unrest. Would it be well to change the pastor on account of the unrest caused by cranks? Is the Church of John Knox ready for crank rule? Heaven forbid.

There are too many people in the Church—one would be one too many—who have been known all their lives as troublemakers in Israel. Their capacity for doing mischief is infinite. The moment they connect themselves with a congregation trouble begins. They produce unrest as naturally as they breathe. Their very faces are a breach of the peace. Wrangling and bitterness follow them as naturally as slime follows a serpent. When these men cause unrest is it the proper thing for the authorities to step in and dissolve the pastoral tie? What is the use in such a procedure? The same parties will cause unrest under the next pastor. They may make a great fuss over him at first but that makes the matter worse.

The unrest will come in less than a year perhaps. What has been gained by the change?

There are burning questions that in their very nature cause unrest, such as the hymn question, the organ question, the question of posture in worship and others that might be named. No matter who the pastor may be, or how frequently he may be changed, these questions cause trouble. The Angel Gabriel could not keep down the unrest were he pastor when these questions come up in certain kinds of congregations.

Special services in a neighbouring congregation, or conducted by irresponsible parties outside, are a fruitful source of unrest. Would it be just or reasonable to remove pastors because unrest may be caused in this way? Anyway removal might be no remedy, for the causes that produced the unrest would remain.

Though no details are given in regard to the proposed scheme for revising pastoral relations it comes out accidentally that the "call" of the old system is to be retained. The writer in question asserts that under the proposed plan ministers would get calls who cannot get them under the present system. Pastors are then to be called under the new state of things. That is to say seven hundred calls are to be made every five years. And that is a remedy for unrest. One call often produces a good deal of unrest in two congregations—in the one giving it and in the one whose pastor is called. What a delightful calm we shall have when the seven hundred congregations are calling at once.

An illustration or two from other religious bodies might be put in here to show that change is no remedy for unrest but rather increases it. The Methodists change every three years. Their congregations are not any more restless than ours. The stated supply of the American Church (hired man system) is a failure as a rest-producer. Our own mission stations have changes every few months. Many of them are very restless. In fact changes in their very nature are likely to cause unrest. It is not denied that in some instances a change every five years might be a good thing for both pastor and people but introducing a revolution for the purpose of meeting isolated cases would be like beheading a man to remove a wart from his nose.

### CHURCH AND STATE.

(Continued.)

MR. EDITOR,—We are too apt to give all the credit to the clergy as the "fathers" of the Church. The Presbyterian Church has always had among its laity men of high character and ability: Such men as Argyle, Moncreiff, and Dunlop in the Mother Land, and the Hon. George Brown, in this country. Let me quote a passage from a speech delivered by Mr. Brown at an Anti-Clergy Reserve meeting in Toronto, 26th July, 1851: "There is one argument which is perfectly insuperable in my mind, and that is, that if there never had been any connection between Church and State, there never could have been persecution for conscience' sake. . . . There is no safety out of the principle that religion is a matter between man and his God, and that the whole duty of the magistrate is to secure every one in the peaceful observance of it; anything else leads to oppression and injustice, but this can never lead to either. . . . Perhaps more infidels are produced by the exhibition of Christian pastors scrambling for the loaves and fishes, while they are preaching their worthlessness, than from any other cause." Where Dr. MacVicar finds his "ecclesiastical ancestry" among Presbyterians who supported coercion and urged the interference of State in matters of conscience is beyond my knowledge.

Presbyterians must abide by the Bible and Westminster Confession. Expediency, justice, truth or love, as understood by them, individually or collectively, cannot be urged beyond the plain teaching of the Word of God. Those who assert that the teaching and example of Christ and the Apostles was wrong with regard to meat and drink, neither believe the Bible nor the Westminster Confession. Those who assert that they did not drink fermented wine must explain why He was taunted with being a wine-bibber. The accusation would have no force unless the wine was intoxicating. Dr. MacVicar, who says the Church should take up this great political question because it has a moral aspect, seems to forget that no political question is without a moral aspect and no moral question with a political aspect. It is true the moral