

# ➤ QUEEN'S • COLLEGE • JOURNAL. ➤

VOL. XIX.

APRIL 2ND, 1892.

No. 20.

## ➤ Queen's College Journal ➤

Published weekly by the Alma Mater Society of Queen's University during the academic year.

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The annual subscription is \$1.00, payable before the end of January.

All literary contributions should be addressed to the Editor, Drawer 1104, Kingston, Ont.

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SOME of the city clergymen and others have recently been engaged in a newspaper controversy over the origin and history of the different denominations. It is very desirable that all should have the fullest possible knowledge of church history, and also that the adherents of each denomination should know the history of the origin and growth of the branch to which they belong and the principles upon which it is founded. But we do not think it likely that much knowledge or edification will be derived from a newspaper discussion. It is almost impossible that this should not degenerate into a contest as to who can best manipulate the facts of history to make them prove his theory. A discussion of both sides of a question is always good; but we can scarcely conceive of circumstances, in which a man is less likely to discover the truth or appreciate it when it is presented, than when he is studying to answer a newspaper letter with which he does not agree. In such circumstances there is a very strong tendency, which we are afraid is not always sufficiently resisted, to refute all our opponent's arguments, whether false or true, if we can find plausible counter-arguments.

We have much more confidence in the value of lectures upon the history of the church and kindred subjects, provided their aim is a true

statement of history and not simply a statement of one side of a debateable question and a few sneers and offensive epithets applied to those who hold the opposite view. But we think that the points, which should be given prominence in such lectures, are not those upon which the churches differ but the vastly more important ones upon which they are agreed.

Again we do not think that the right of a church or a denomination to exist should be held to depend entirely or chiefly upon its history. A much better criterion than that given by the question, "How old is it?" is to ask "To what extent is it fulfilling the functions of a church now?" If a church is not spending all its energies upon the uplifting and salvation of mankind, then, however ancient or venerable, it has no right to call itself a Christian church. On the other hand, if this is its object, and if it is earnestly striving to attain it, its claim to be a church rests upon far higher authority than that of history. It is a very objectionable feature of such a controversy as the present that it is liable to leave the impression in the minds of many that the historical points discussed are really vital, and thus cast into the shade principles of much greater importance.

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The pass course in University College and the comparative merits of general and special courses are still being discussed and receive attention in almost every issue of the *Week*. It seems to be assumed by one correspondent that a special course must be thorough and a general course superficial. We do not think that this is at all necessary. While we attach the highest value to a thorough study of one subject, and while we have the highest opinion of the thoroughness of the honour courses of Toronto University as well as of Queen's; yet it is conceivable, in fact we believe it frequently happens, that an honour graduate should have the most superficial knowledge of other subjects than that of his special course, and no