

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF THE
YOUNG AT GUELPH.

To the Editor of the Record.

DEAR SIR,—Permit me to request a small portion of the columns of your coming number, to notice a movement in this quarter, of a character favourable to the religious education of the young. Upon my settlement in Guelph, I found this very important cause much depressed, among the professed adherents of our Presbyterian Congregations. For some years there had been no Sabbath School in the town, attended by the children of the Presbyterian inhabitants; they were found in schools of the Episcopalians, the Independents, or the Wesleyans; and many did not attend any school. During the summer of 1847, the Rev. Mr. Torrance, of the United Presbyterian Church, opened a school in connection with his congregation; and on the first Sabbath of May last, I opened a similar establishment in connection with Knox's Church. We are, however, subject to this inconvenience—that the great bulk of the numbers of both congregations reside at such a distance that their children cannot give attendance on the schools formed in their respective Churches, but frequent those which are found occasionally in their own neighbourhoods.

This led me frequently, and with much prayerful anxiety, to consider whether any plan could be devised and carried into effect to give an impulse to the cause of religious education among our people. The plan which appeared upon mature deliberation the best to adopt, was to endeavour to assemble as many of the children of the congregation as possible, from the town and neighbourhood, that they might see each other, and be stimulated by addresses, or otherwise, to attend more decidedly to their religious and moral improvement. For several reasons I fixed on the first day of the present year for the meeting; and on mentioning the subject to the Rev. Mr. Torrance and C. J. Meikle, Esq., of the Independent Church, I found they cordially approved of the plan, and agreed to concur in carrying it into effect. There assembled in the church, accordingly, on the day named, more than one hundred children, with a number of their parents and relatives—a very cheering and animating spectacle. After devotional exercises, and a short address from myself, on the objects of the meeting, the children were examined on the seventh chapter of the Acts, regarding their knowledge of Scriptural history and doctrine, and on a portion of the Shorter Catechism with profusion. Several of them afterwards recited with great precision some hymns and paraphrases. The children and auditors were then addressed in an appropriate and impressive manner, by the Rev. Messrs. Torrance and C. J. Meikle, Esq. At the close they partook of a refection of cakes and fruit, provided for them by the ladies of Knox's Church congregation; and were dismissed evidently pleased with the exercises in which they had been engaged, and with one another.

May we not hope that God will follow with a blessing this begun attempt to revive and strengthen so great and good a cause, and that, should we be spared to labour another year, we shall be privileged on another anniversary, to witness the fruits of our labours, in an awakened zeal, and an increased attendance of the young, on the instructions of heavenly wisdom.

I remain yours, &c.,

J. G. MACARTHUR.

Guelph, 17th January, 1849.

ADDRESS

To the Members of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, on the subject of the Office-bearers of the Church, by authority of Synod.

DEAR BRETHREN.—In these days, not only of inquiry and sifting of principles, but of agitation and incoherence, of looseness of opinion, and of equal wisdom; at a time when the claims of one

branch of the Christian church, acknowledging a lengthened gradation of officers from the Pinnate to Curate, are being pushed to an extravagant extent, by an assertion of its own pure and sole apostolical descent, and a denial of the validity of ordinances dispensed by any without its pale; and when the principles of another branch which throws its government into the hands of the members at large, and vests independent and irresponsible power in individual congregations without appeal to a higher authority, and which thus virtually annuls the distinction between the rulers and the ruled, begin to be very extensively diffused; and at a juncture when attempts are being made to bring into disrepute that ancient Presbyterian system, which is founded on the Word of God, which has been handed down to us from our fathers, and which is well fitted to answer all the ends of ecclesiastical polity; when it is attempted on one hand to divest it of its spirit, and on another to deform, dismember, and dissipate, as when the self-organized and unauthorised views of innovators on the system, will not tolerate it in all its entirety,—it is our desire to furnish you with correct and scriptural ideas of the constitution of that church with which you are connected, more especially with regard to its office-bearers, and above all, in reference to such offices as have sometimes been held in abeyance, at other times impaired, perverted, or reduced to a mere name,—either discarded as useless, or rejected as inconsistent with men's notions of propriety and liberty.

Certain of the officers which are mentioned in the Word of God, as in 1 Cor. xii. 28, and Ephes. iv. 11, as existing in the primitive church, were extraordinary, and no successors were appointed to those who held them; whereas others were ordinary or intended to be permanent in the church in all ages and circumstances. Among the latter, there seem to be only two orders or ranks, that of *Presbyter* or *Elder*, and that of *Deacon*—Phil. i. 1.—It being now on all hands acknowledged, that the terms *Elder* and *Bishop*, are in the scriptures used interchangeably, and with reference to the same office,—compare Acts x. 17, 22. And while there are several classes of duties pertaining to the *Elder*ship, which call for the service of different persons, and these variously qualified, as teaching, preaching, and ruling; and hence in our older authors, we read of the *Teaching Elder*, as *Doctor*; the *Parochial Elder*, as *Pastor*; the *Ruling Elder*, as *Governor*; still, all who hold the office of *Elder* are regarded as possessing an equality of rank in the Presbyterian Church.

The distinction between one ecclesiastical office and another has often been confounded, not only by bodies of Christians who have departed from the true apostolical model in the constitution of their churches, but even by Presbyterians themselves. And hence, the duties belonging to one office may have often been discharged by persons holding another, as two offices may have been sometimes conjoined in the same individual,—the *Pastor* may have acted as *Doctor*, and the *Elder* in the capacity of *Deacon*. But that does not prevent what is peculiar to each office being kept separate, nor does it effect the propriety of still maintaining their distinctness. "If it be said," remarks Paine, "the *Elder* is a *Deacon*. I answer, albeit the *Pastor* includes the office of *Doctor*, *Elder*, and *Deacon*, yet seeing these are of divine institution, reverence is in so far due unto it, as to set up these distinct offices. As nothing should be added to the Divine institution, upon pretence of imagined decency or order in the institution, so nothing ought to be diminished therefrom upon pretence that some things in the institution are needless or superfluous."

Our ecclesiastical constitution and economy have suffered much from confounding the respective offices of *Ruling Elder* and *Deacon*; whereas keeping them distinct, would conduce to the more efficient discharge of the duties of each. And as much misconception seem to exist with regard to the Divine authority of the *Deacon's* office, its nature, its sacred and permanent character, and the

propriety of maintaining it in the church; and as our Presbyterian economy divested of it would be incomplete and unscriptural, and therefore less likely to meet with the Divine countenance and blessing, it is desirable to give to the *Deacon's* office, at present, particular consideration. At the same time we trust that you will bear with us, while, for the sake of completing a view of the offices of the church, we advert briefly in the first place to the *Elder*ship, to the qualifications required for the mode of appointment to, and the duties arising from that office.

1. The *Elder*ship.

1. "The office of the teaching *Elder* or *Deacon*," in the language of a former generation, "is to open up the mind of the Spirit of God as expressed in the word, simply without such applications as the ministers use, and to teach in schools, colleges, or universities." As *Doctors* they are not necessarily ruling *Elders*, and therefore simply as such, cannot claim to be members of church judicatories for government and discipline. But Professors of Theology being also ministers as ruling *Elders*, may assist in the government of the church.

The office of *Doctor* in Divinity, as Professor, is very important; inasmuch as the right and efficient instruction of those who are to become the instructors of others, must be of more consequence than the mere communication of knowledge in ordinary circumstances, or even of ministering to any congregation. It requires rarer natural parts, as well as higher gifts of the Spirit, greater power of mind, more energy, more experience, more extensive and varied learning, more weight of character, and if possible, more exemplary piety and devotedness. And hence, you will perceive, that it demands more unbroken leisure, and more resources for amassing knowledge. Not to speak then of the encouragement, proper to call forth merit to such a work, or of the reward due to industry, we ask you, the members of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, in reference to this department of your church's glory, and to her prospect of fulfilling the commission with which she seems to be charged towards this province, if it be not desirable to afford more generally to her ministers, the means of devoting themselves to study than they enjoy, that there may not be wanting within her pale a sufficiency of well furnished theologians, from among whom the ablest may at any time be selected for the all-important office of training many for the work of the ministry? It is equally necessary that the ordinary wants of such be supplied as well as the ministry sustained, that those who are called to so honorable and responsible a position, may be at liberty to give to its duties their whole time and energy, unencumbered either by cares or temporal concerns. This object lies within reach of the members of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, and it would be their high privilege, as it is their sacred and imperative obligation, to strive for its attainment.

2. The distinctive function of the *Preaching Elder*, as *Pastor*, is to minister the Word, dispense the Sacraments, &c. As, however, the combination of this, with that of ruling in the church, is indispensable to the full discharge of the pastoral office—the power of government and exercising discipline also belongs to the *Preaching Elder*.—Matt. xvi. 19.

Bearing as this office does so immediately upon the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom, and the salvation of man, it is one for which a full and accurate knowledge of the Scriptures, and undoubted experience of divine things by regeneration, and a life of faith, are indispensable. In addition to this, it is highly desirable, that those who are to undertake the work of the ministry, be men of more than ordinary intelligence, acute and mental vigour, practical discrimination, judgement, prudence and firmness; of superior attainments in literature and science, and taste for study, also that they be possessed of kind and amiable dispositions, and if possible, of cultivated and en-