

## The Canadian Independent

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TORONTO, MARCH 3, 1881.

### NOTICE

Mr. Wm. Revell has kindly undertaken the business management of the INDEPENDENT. In the future, therefore, all remittances and letters about the subscription, or complaints, should be addressed to him, Box 2648, P. O. Toronto, and all articles for insertion, news of churches, &c., to Managing Editor, same address.

Mr. A. Christie, 2 Wilton Avenue, will continue to attend to the business of the Congregational Publishing Company, including arrears for the INDEPENDENT and the Year Book.

We would call the attention of our readers to their labels. All whose subscriptions expired Jan. 31, or earlier, are now due another year. Will they please remit.

We want as many items of news of the churches as possible, but will our correspondents be kept in our space is limited, and we dislike to cut down.

AN account of the presentation of the Wilkes Jubilee Testimonial Fund will appear in our next.

Even church courts fail to legislate common sense and honesty into hearts agitated by some *adum theologium* as the following item from the Toronto *Globe* makes plain, the trouble referred to having been already settled by the Toronto Presbytery:—

"Most of our readers will remember the trouble in Cooke's Church upon the introduction of an organ into the basement of the building. The climax was reached on Friday night, when upon the Music Circle assembling for their usual weekly practice it was found that some person had during the week entered the church and poured a quantity of glue over the keys. Who the perpetrators of the act were is unknown, but their object, taken in connection with the former trouble about the organ, is quite apparent. The organ is probably altogether ruined, as the glue has not only stuck the keys fast, but has also got into the reeds, thereby rendering them quite useless for producing sound.

We sympathize deeply with those in that church, and we trust there are many to whom the good old way of charity and of peace is dear. When will professing Christian men understand the responsibilities which are upon them, and be no partakers with those who wound the Saviour in the house of his friends? We, too, are suffering, have suffered, as a denomination, untold loss from the persistency with which men seek "their own" rather than the things of Christ which make for peace. We have in mind just now more than one once active man in church work, whose religious faith has been unhinged by church troubles through which he had passed, finding the morality of the speculative business world higher than that exhibited in church circles where the demon of discord had entered. Then we have always some brother troubled with the *cacoethes scribendi* who rushes into print with his grievances, and the evil influence thus spreads, the enemy sneers, and daring infidelity lifts its head on high. We should be none the worse for remembering the lines of one of the hymns of childhood:—

"Let love through all your actions run,  
And all your words be mild."

Perhaps as one whose estate has been on the verge of bankruptcy and

who resolves to commence anew, we had better rigidly take stock, cut down estimates, and learn again "what are the first principles of the doctrine of Christ." God save the churches from their own undoing, and give the grace of at least transparent honesty. Let us know what we are and where we stand. The work to which the church is called is not yet done, where are Gideon's three hundred to whom the battle of the Lord is committed?

### THE BUSINESS VIEW OF CREEDS.

THE Ramsden St Chapel, Huddersfield, England, has recently figured in a suggestive law suit. The church has existed for some fifty years, but the deed of trust dates back only to A.D. 1848, so that it may be viewed as the deliberate voice of the then church. The trust sets forth that the chapel is to be used and occupied as a place of public and religious worship for the service of God by Protestant Dissenters of the Congregational denomination, and a certain doctrinal statement is given to which the pastor for the time being, is required to record a general assent. This statement is a brief but decided setting forth of distinctive Calvinistic theology. The old pastor, advanced in years, retired from the active pastorate, and Mr. Stannard, first assistant pastor, was afterwards by a two-thirds majority, invited to the position from which Mr. Skinner, the aged pastor had retired. As is usual in cases where a decided division of sentiment prevails, some sharp practice appears to have been resorted to for obtaining the majority required for a settlement in terms of the Deed of Trust; the trouble seemed to be that the teaching of the new pastor was "not in harmony with the doctrinal standard required by the trust deed." A majority of the trustees were with the church minority, and an action was brought in Chancery to restrain Mr. Stannard and his majority from the use of the building. It seems very manifest that though apparently Evangelical, Mr. Stannard is not distinctively Calvinistic, and the Vice-Chancellor, without hesitation, gave judgment against him on the ground that the question before the Court was, not whether the position maintained doctrinally by the defendant in the case could be truthfully maintained, or was within the limits allowed by the general consent of the Congregational Union, but that it was not within the requirements of the trust deed, and that was the question for decision. In other words, the spectre of the past stands at the entrance, and the utterance of the past as a "dead man's hand" waves from the threshold.—

"Procul, O procul, este profani!"  
Away, stand off, O ye profane!"

We do not see how the Court could have decided otherwise, but the case offers a few suggestions.

Principal Grant, of Kingston, at the late Presbyterian Council in Philadelphia, commenting upon a paper by Professor Flint on Agnosticism, is reported as repeating with approval the sentiments that the Church which sought to meet questions of scholarship or speculation by the exercise of discipline, instead of by a wider scholarship and a more fearless thought, was the real friend

of Agnosticism. Moreover, if the Church took the ground that their Confession was final and unalterable it erred, for in doing so the creed was placed on the same platform as the Bible, and became an object of idolatry; and the Spirit would desert the Church that took such a position. Hence the living Church must afford liberty for growth and not force secession, save in extreme cases. "No true minister," continues the Principal, "should secede from the Church so long as he is true to the one to whom he made his ordination vows—the Head of the Church. If he preaches what he believes to be true, why charge him with dishonor?" To this our contemporary, the *Canada Presbyterian*, replies in an editorial on the Binding Character of Creeds, "Why is any man licensed and ordained to preach in the Presbyterian Church of Canada? Because he solemnly declares that he holds that system of doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God. On this understanding, and on this alone, (whether it be founded on truth or not does not matter,) he goes forth and is recognized." Illustration is given as between partners in business where, the bond signed, no change is to be made unless by the consent of all parties. The standpoint of our contemporary may be clearly seen by the words of the above quotation in parenthesis; the bond is made, whether right or wrong no matter, these are the terms only to be changed by all parties consenting. As a law court is constituted, no other course was open to the judge on the Ramsden Street Chapel case than the one indicated, and if creeds are to be viewed as a business or legal matter, our contemporary's position is virtually unassailable. We confess, however, to an instinctive shuddering from this cold business view as that which is to be maintained by a Christian Church which is, or should be, a living power; and, believing that life is inseparable from growth, we are inclined with Principal Grant to ask "How can there be growth if the condition of liberty be not allowed?" Dollars have a tangible form, profits a mathematical measure, but

"Sorns the immortal mind this base control."

You cannot fetter thought, nor force faith, nor compel love; the Vice-Chancellor's decision may give a legal propriety to the plaintiff in the Huddersfield case, but cannot aid in building up a church of the Lord Jesus any more than the inhibition of W. Robertson Smith from his chair and classes at Aberdeen can silence the questions he has caused to sound through Scotland and the English-speaking world. A creed is but the embodiment of a living faith; when it ceases to be such, when it expresses not the living conviction of those to whom it is present, it becomes an irritating fetter which provokes either rebellion or callous indifference. We recognize the difficulties in the question thus raised, there must be a common bond of agreement to secure confidence and successful co-operation; a limit must be drawn between what is to be esteemed liberty and viewed as license; but we confess that our eyes are directed in our search for that

line, not to a Vice-Chancellor's decision regarding a trust deed, nor to the clamor of an ecclesiastical tribunal regarding a Confession some centuries old, but to the life of that Spirit which alone can give power to "call Jesus Lord," and whose manifestation "is given to every man to profit withal."

We need, in these unsettled days, a sure ground of confidence; we cannot afford to be at sea, rudderless and chartless, or undecided as to what our Bible teaches, but we need our creed to be the manly expression of our own faith, worked out by the power that worketh in us, not the, to us, meaningless words of an age that is gone. We yield to none in our respect for the men and their work into whose heritage we have entered; we esteem their heritage, not as a prison, but as an estate we can keep ever living, fresh, and green, having, as they had, the Word and Spirit, which are as competent to guide us as them in the way of righteousness and of peace.

### DEDICATION OF THE NEW CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, GRIMBY, P. Q., FEB. 9th.

"What a beautiful church, I like it ever so much. It is one of the finest country churches I have ever seen." So said Rev. Dr. Stevenson to your correspondent as he stepped into our new place of worship at noon last Wednesday to take part in the opening services. And so too would have said Drs. Wilkes and Duff, and our ministerial brethren, Foster, Willett, Sanderson, Sherman, Smith and McIntosh, all of whom were invited to be present, but none of whom came to see for themselves. It is but justice to these brethren, all of whom wrote letters excusing their personal presence, that they had, most of them, good reasons for not being with us. Some of them were prevented by personal affliction and infirmity, others on account of pressing pastoral duties, and still others by the state of the roads, and the difficulty of making convenient connection by railway. Still the disappointment was none the less to our friends here, who were desirous of making a strong denominational demonstration on the occasion. But to return to the beautiful church which so charmed the eyes of our brother Stevenson, some account of which may well precede the record of the dedicatory services. As seen from the outside it is simply a very substantial looking brick church 64 x 48 feet, of the Gothic style of architecture, with a most commodious, light and dry basement running the whole length, and connected with which are convenient rooms for various church purposes. It has a strong massive tower and bell of peculiarly rich, deep tone, but no spire. The interior of the main audience-room of the church, which is reached by a flight of steps, is indeed a most attractive apartment, the entrance to which is through the tower which forms a most convenient vestibule. The pulpit is at the end of the church opposite the doorway. On the left of the pulpit, and on a level with the pulpit platform, but under a most tasteful archway, are the seats for the choir. On the right of the pulpit is the minister's vestry, connected with the basement by a stairway. The church is lighted by eight side windows and two end windows of ground glass, the top panes being of stained glass of divers colors and designs. In the nave of the church there are over 100 pews which are painted and grained in oak, with black walnut ends and facings. They are all cushioned with scarlet marone. The aisles, of which there are three, are tastefully carpeted, as is also the pulpit platform, and singer's pews. The ceiling is