

Our Contributors.

A CONFERENCE THAT MIGHT DO SOME GOOD.

BY KNOWNIAN.

WE may suppose that the conveners, committee men, secretaries, clerks, agents, professors, religious editors and other men of light and leading in the Presbyterian Church in Canada held a conference to take into consideration the financial condition of the church. Dr John Knox was engaged to address the conference and we may easily imagine that he spoke as follow—

DEAR BRETHREN,—You will find my subject on page 16 of the statistical and Financial Report for last year. I wish to direct your attention very specially to the last two columns of that report. Run your eyes down these columns and you will find that the Presbyteries in the matter of giving vary to a degree that seems mysterious. One near the top gives at the rate of \$6.09 per family and \$6.36 per member, and another farther down the column gives \$43.70 per family and \$23.37 per member. The difference between \$6 and \$43 is considerable. Just why a family in Winnipeg Presbytery should pay seven times as much as a family in Inverness Presbytery is not quite clear to even an interested observer. There may of course be a sufficient reason but certainly it is not on the surface.

Beginning at the East, brethren, the direction from which the wise men came, you observe that the Presbyterians of Newfoundland pay \$34 per family and \$19 per member—I omit cents all through this address—and that the other Presbyteries of that Synod pay all the way down to \$6 per member and one reaches \$6 per family. We have all understood that there was a commercial crisis in Newfoundland not long ago—that there was a run on the banks and general commercial disturbance. Yet the Presbytery of that Island heads the list for its Synod and come very near the head of the whole list. The other Presbyteries down by the sea run thus—one \$14 per member, one \$13, one \$12, one \$9, four \$8, one \$7 and one \$6. Variety is pleasing but there may be a little too much variety in the matter of contributions. Perhaps Brother Murray will explain why there is so much variety in the Synod.

MR. MURRAY.—I don't like to speak on such a delicate question extemporaneously. Give me time and I'll explain in *The Witness*.

Thanks, Mr. Murray. Now let us come west to Ontario and there we find the most wonderful inequalities. Orangeville pays \$6 per member and Hamilton \$13. Saugeen and Bruce give \$7 per member, London \$15 and Toronto \$14. Hamilton gives \$13 while Guelph to the north of it gives \$9 and Paris to the west the same amount. I see Dr. Torrance and Dr. Cochrane here. Perhaps they can give a word of explanation.

DR. TORRANCE.—I merely compiled the report from the figures sent to me. It is not my duty to explain anything.

DR. COCHRANE.—I don't run the Paris Presbytery now. The Home Mission Committee is my specialty.

Your explanations, brethren, don't explain anything. I know one common explanation of these inequalities is that the cities bring up the average in some Presbyteries. That is no explanation either. Why should city and town congregations pay more? The average of wealth in many rural communities is far higher than the average in many city and town congregations. Besides the inequalities are not confined to Presbyteries that have cities and large towns within their bounds as compared with Presbyteries that have none. Brockville has no large city but Brockville pays \$13 per member while Bruce pays \$7. Lanark and Renfrew has no city but this Presbytery gives \$11 while Orangeville gives \$6.

The climax of inequality is reached, brethren, when we compare the West with the East. The new Presbytery of Superior pays \$22 per member. Winnipeg \$23. Regina \$23. Westminster \$20. Victoria \$24. Kamloops \$33. These new Presbyteries pay three or four times as much as some of the older ones in Ontario. In the column for families Winnipeg stands easily first at the splendid figure of \$43 per family. Brethren let me say by way of parenthesis you need not worry over that school question in Manitoba. The men who pay \$43 per family for church purposes are quite able to take care of themselves. Had you not better give a little time and attention to the fact that a Presbytery like Kamloops pays more than five times as much for the maintenance of the gospel as is paid by some of the people right under your nose who are shouting about Manitoba. Surely there are some other duties that are as important to us as attending to the separate schools of one Province. And yet, brethren, when you met in London last June you spent hours and hours debating the Manitoba school question and adopted Dr. Torrance's report—a report which perhaps more than any other gives a real glimpse at the life and work of the Church,—you receive and adopted it—well, with the usual vote of thanks to the committee, "especially to the convener."

Brethren of one thing you may rest assured. Democracy in the state and in the Church is on trial. Its success is by no means assured. The trend in Great Britain is distinctly in the opposite direction. People are beginning to realize that an established and endowed church is not all bad and that voluntarism is a long way from being all good. Church affairs must be carefully handled in this country if thoughtful people are to be convinced that self-government is the right system.

ON SENDING TO THE FOREIGN FIELD ALL APPROVED CANDIDATES TRUSTING FOR FUNDS.

BY REV. R. P. MACKAY, B.A.

ONE would like to speak on this question with great caution, for we are here, I am persuaded, at a critical point in our history as a Church. May we not be situated somewhat as the Israelites were when they came to the door of the promised land, and refused to enter because of the difficulties in their way? They saw and appreciated the difficulties but did not appreciate the Omnipotent power behind them and in whose strength Caleb and Joshua urged them to advance. They refused and returned to wander and to die in the wilderness.

I do not venture to say that that is our position—nor do I say that it is not. I am an enquirer—we are all that—trying to feel our way and find out God's will in this matter.

1. *The Need.*—There is no time to speak of the need, and yet I imagine that here the root of our hesitation and indifference lies. If we saw the need as it is, we would be prepared to take risks, to become what the world might call rash in order if possible to save some. The Macedonian cry, "Come over and help us," is the Divine formula of the condition of the heathen world in all ages. They are in the need of help. That cry sometimes finds expression to-day in the field. The heathen themselves ask that missionaries be sent. Sometimes they remonstrate with them for being so tardy in bringing the gospel.

But whether that *longing*, that cry becomes vocal or not, ever finds expression or not, it is the attitude of any people without Christ. They need help, for they are unhappy and they have no hope in the future.

Future State.—The edge is taken off this sense of urgency by the pretty common feeling that after all the heathen are not lost, that in some way provision is made for them.

Now how are we to know? We have on the one hand human speculations as to what is called the "Historic Christ," whose influence reaches these people and becomes their salvation although they have never heard of Him. And our own sympathies go in that direction. On the other hand we have the direct, explicit, and manifold statements of God's word that they are lost. The apostles met the same kind of heathenism we have to-day. It has not changed and they the inspired apostles say they are lost. They say that they are alienated from God and the enemies of God (Col. i. 21); that they are without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world (Eph. ii. 11-12); that their lives are the lives of the lost, that they are dead in trespasses and sins, that they walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, that they have their conversation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind, and are by nature the children of wrath, even as others (Eph. ii. 1, 2, 3); that their understandings are darkened, that they are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the hardness of their hearts, they are past feeling having given themselves over to work all uncleanness with greediness (Eph. iv. 18, 19); that they worship devils (Gal. iv. 8); that their prayers are vain repetitions (Matt. vi. 7); that they will be condemned by a law that is within themselves (Rom. i. 18-23); that they who are saved are saved by a preached gospel. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" (Rom. x. 13-15)

Now, in the face of such plain, unmistakable statements as these, how is it possible that men who believe in an inspired Word can comfort themselves with the thought that after all in some way it will come all right. Christ's influence will reach them?

Surely it is not answer enough to that to raise the question as to unconscious children, or to raise the question as to the future of Socrates or a Plato or a Zoroaster, or a Buddha! It is enough to say in the first place, that the Bible makes no distinction as to men that are out of Christ, that the Bible knows no Saviour but Christ, and in the second place that amongst the heathen such men are now rarely if ever found. The testimony of missionaries so far as I have read is that the heathen are properly described in the first chapter of Romans. "They are so corrupt that they have lost the idea of holiness."

Heathenism has a thousand tongues in its self denials, self-crucifixions, self-tortures, every one of which is an appeal for help and remonstrance against the half-heartedness and indifference of the Church as to their perishing condition. If these things are so ought we not to give due consideration to a question like this? Surely we should know that there is ground to justify our action before refusing to send out men who are approved and pressing their services upon the Church. Yet we must not allow impulse to carry us away, and expose ourselves to the charge of fanaticism. There are three sources of light and guidance, which if we follow we shall not err. We all believe that there is a leading of the Spirit, a still small voice that prompts us. But sometimes men are misled, thinking they are moved by the Holy Spirit when they are not. Satan's whispers may be taken for the whispers of the Spirit. We need some test.

In addition we need to know the mind of God as revealed in His word to the law and the testimony. Any tendency that agrees not with that should be rejected. Sometimes, however, men go astray even there. They take a verse of Scripture and

misapply it, and do foolish things. The Word is right, but their application of it is wrong. We need to interpret Scripture in the light of history and providence and environment. If these three are only complied with we will not wander far from the path of duty. If we follow the first without the second we shall be visionaries. If the second without the third we shall be impractical. But all three will guide us safely. Now let us answer a few questions.

First Question.—Does the proposal agree with the first test, the leading of the Spirit? I think with one accord we shall say "yes," all will respond if the coast is clear, if it is prudent if it will not lead to complications we would rejoice to send out all approved men and women who may apply.

Second Question.—Does it agree with the second and third tests, with the Word of God, and with history? Or, to put the question in another form, Do we find in the Word of God and history that men have been called and sent of God without guarantee of salary in advance? That is the real question. Not whether it is desirable that men be sent out. But whether we should send them out not knowing where the salary is to come from.

Is it not in line with the teaching of Christ and of the apostles? Is it not in line with the practice of the apostles and of post-apostolic times? Look at the record of St. Patrick and Columba and Ulilas and Columbanus and Boniface and Ansgar amongst the Norsemen, and the Nestorians in India. And in more modern times the work of the Moravians, and of Louis Harms in Hungary, and Gossner, the founder of the faith missions as they are called. Surely if anything is certified by the Word of God and by providence it is this, that the call does not include the guarantee of salary in advance. The call simply meant in these cases that men were moved by the Holy Ghost to feel for their perishing fellowmen and they went forth to tell the gospel story believing that He who called them would supply every need. Their guarantee was the promise of God which is after all a better guarantee than that of any human treasury.

Third Question.—Has God called these men? They think so themselves. They have had their thoughts led in that direction, they have studied with that in view, they have the physical and intellectual qualifications so far as men can judge. I have no doubt that when the Committee meets they will think so. There is no fault to find, they are approved men, chosen called of God for this purpose.

Fourth Question.—Does God want these men to go? If He called them He wants them to go. There will be no difference of opinion upon that point.

Fifth Question.—If He calls and they go in obedience to that call, or the Church sends in obedience to that call, will God disappoint and fail to honor that faith? Nobody will venture to say that He will. We believe faith will be honored according to promise, and that their needs will be met. There is no lack of testimony from individuals and institutions upon that point to-day, in missionary and many other kinds of Christian enterprise. It is too late to argue that question.

Sixth Question.—If that principle were adopted should we not have to adopt the indefinite salary, and say to the missionaries you must be prepared to accept whatever comes. Now that does not necessarily follow. There is, I think, altogether too much made of the question of fixed salaries. Both are right and Scriptural. The penny a day was a fixed wage, approved by the Master Himself. In fact commercial laws are divine, as are all natural and spiritual laws. We are as much in line with divine teaching when we say a definite salary is to be attached to a definite service as we are when we leave it an indefinite thing, always, of course, with the understanding that in all human arrangements, there is an element of indefiniteness. Nobody has a certainty of his promised salary. Events may occur that will make it impossible to pay, but there is certainty that we shall be provided for sufficiently if we have faith in God. Whatever else fails, His promise never will.

Seventh Question.—Does it not imply a reduction in salaries? Do the societies that act upon this principle not give very low salaries? To that I have two answers to give.

(1) So far as it is a question of how much a missionary needs and ought to get, it is to be settled simply by experience. They who live in these foreign countries are the best judges. It is by the gathering of such information that nearly all the great societies of Christendom have come to adopt pretty nearly the same average salary. Some a little higher and some a little lower, but ranking about the same figure. Can we trust our missionaries to tell us the truth in this matter? Are they honest men fit to be sent out as the representatives of Christ? If so can we not rely upon their testimony as to what they need in order to do their work effectively? If anybody thinks not then that person should move to have them recalled.

(2) In the second place I ask whether it is in accordance with God's ordinary method to keep men down to the absolute necessities? Is He not generous? Does He not even lavishly bestow His good things upon men? And if so, are we to believe that it is pleasing to Him that His servants, His most devoted and obedient servants, His servants that are most like Himself in service—is it His pleasure that such workers should be paired down to their bare necessities? I do not think so. To think so is not honoring to Him. If the Church should take this step, it should be taken with the confident expectation that a reasonable competency will be provided.

Now gather these points together:—That the need is very great and very urgent. That it is in line with the inward impulse of the Christian heart, with the teaching of God's Word and of history. That it is not a fact that in God's call an advance guarantee of stipend is included. That these candidates believe