

# THE CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

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All communications for the Editorial, News of Churches, and Correspondence Columns should be addressed to the Managing Editor, Box 2648, P.O. Toronto.

Pastors and church officers are particularly requested to forward items for "News of the Churches" column.

## ORTHODOXY.

IT is the fashion to-day to sneer at orthodoxy. Every juvenile Quixote has his tilt at this windmill which he takes to be a terrible giant that he is bound to conquer; and every man who wants to be popular, and who fails through his lack of ability, begins to make an outcry against orthodoxy, and endeavours, likely enough, to pose as a martyr to its intolerance. Just, as you may be sure, that a man who runs round finding fault with the denomination to which he belongs, professing his preference for another, is a disappointed man, with his pride and ambition unsatisfied, or his selfishness thwarted, so, often, the loudest declaimers against orthodoxy, are those whom it fails to value at their own high estimate.

What is orthodoxy? It is that which the bulk of religious people agree to regard as the truth on certain vital points, that which they believe the Bible teaches, and which should, therefore, be firmly held by them. They may be mistaken, of course; it has happened before that the majority has been wrong and that a minority, perhaps a small one, has been right. Luther, at one time, appeared to stand almost alone; but he was right, nevertheless. Admit all this, to its fullest extent, and we still must allow that *à se* the opinion of a large majority is most likely to be the correct opinion, and ought not to be rejected without the strongest conviction, based upon the clearest proofs, especially when we consider further the character of the men who amongst ourselves hold orthodox views—not ignorant men, but men of education, character, thought, unquestioned sincerity and truthfulness. Surely the opinions of such men should not be lightly rejected and treated as unimportant and worthless. But there comes, it may be, a time when overpowered by convictions we have to cut away from these moorings, leave the quiet harbour of received opinions where we have lain, and sail forth on untried seas of new beliefs, possibly, of no belief at all. How will it be done? By the true man, acting from a strong sense of duty, modestly and sorrowfully, not obtrusively and offensively. It will be done with deep regret; a sense of pain and loss will fill his soul; and as the emigrant watches, with straining eyes and heavy heart, the fast fading shores of fatherland, and carries with him to his new home love and honour for that which he has left, so will it be with the voluntary exile from the beliefs in which were his spiritual birth and early growth—compelled by his convictions to pass away from these beliefs, he will do it with regret, and retain respectful memories of the past.

Of course, there is another side to these thoughts; it is this, that those who are compelled by their convictions to break away from the beliefs held by their brethren should be treated with all courtesy and kindness. There should be accorded to them the credit of sincerity. While to some it is not only an easy but rather a desirable thing to proclaim their dissent from orthodoxy, to others it is like cutting off the right hand or plucking out the right eye, and to such there should be no break in Christian kindness and consideration, certainly no denunciation or imputation of improper motives. Of all forms of odium we dislike the *odium theologicum*, it is at once the most virulent, and considering its connection, the most disgraceful of all kinds of denunciation.

Let then those who can keep to the old landmarks extend Christian charity to those who have to pass away from them, and let those who cannot walk in the old paths feel that those whom they leave behind are as sincere as themselves, as anxious for light and truth and God; then amenity will take the place of asperity in theological discussions, and not victory but truth will be the grand end of controversy.

## OFFENCES.

"IT must needs be that offences come," and certainly there is no lack of offence constantly occurring in our churches, often widespread and sorrowful in its results. There are offences arising from the business dealings of members with each other, in which one party will feel, sometimes rightly no doubt, that he has not been well used, debts contracted which fail to be met, engagements which are not kept, and all the little and great misunderstandings which will occur in mercantile transactions, these are a fruitful source of offence. Then they will arise not unfrequently from ill-guarded tongues, scandal, gossip, the source of so much trouble in all communities, sacred and secular. At times there will be a suspicion of pride, either of station or of purse, and the poor member, who is not seldom the most proud, will be offended. Last, but unhappily far from least, are the offences that arise in the church itself, in its life and workings. It really appears sometimes, as if the adversary, unable to prevent the formation of Christian churches, took this method of weakening and destroying their influence. Differences about pastors, about officers, music, order of service, admission of members, and the thousand and one things that enter into church life, are ever, in some churches, producing trouble after trouble. We could lay our finger on more than one church where a portion of the members are like highly charged electric machines; you have only to touch them and you get a shock, or to bring two of them into contact and—sparks fly out. And while it is bad enough that business differences should be brought into the church, it is, we think, worse, as in a case we lately met, where church differences were carried into the world, and persistent attempts made to injure a brother in his worldly calling because thereof. Now all this is utterly unchristian, it is as opposed to the spirit of the Master as light to darkness, and those who allow themselves to be so moved should remember, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." That spirit is the spirit of 1 Cor. 13, the spirit that "hopeth all things" "believeth all things," (not evil, as we fear some read this, but good), "endureth all things," the charity that never faileth.

The result of such a state of feeling in a church it would not be difficult to predict, even if we had never observed it. A company of believers is for mutual edification, building up, for mutual comfort, sympathy and strength; what of this can there be when bitterness is in the heart? It is for carrying on the work of Christ, but "how can two" work "together unless they be agreed." In fact it is not too much to say that the harbouring of the spirit we have indicated totally destroys all the usefulness of a church, both for itself and for those who are without, in fact, if such a spirit prevails it ceases to be a church; for all practical uses it is dead.

Of course we do not mean to say that such a picture as we have drawn is a representation of churches generally; we are sure that it is otherwise. We rejoice to know of many where there is harmony, right through the membership, where there is hearty co-operation in all church work, and where you will not find a brother or sister who cannot meet any other with the utmost cordiality. It is not, of course, for such as these that we write.

While it will rarely happen that in offences all the fault is on one side, yet there is generally one with whom it originates, or who is the chief offender in the matter. What then is the duty of the one who receives the offence? Of course any pastor will say, just what we say, we do not pretend to offer anything new, we refer to the law of Christ as laid down explicitly by Him in Matthew xviii. 15-17. This is the unchangeable course for the servant of Christ; if he follows any other he disobeys the Master, if he returns offence for offence, coldness for coldness, bitterness for bitterness, he is not only violating in this matter the spirit, but the explicit directions of his Lord. There is absolutely no other way of dealing with offences, in conformity to the will of Christ; and if this were carried out honestly, sincerely and constantly, offences, or at any rate the persistence in them, would soon cease.

A final word. This may meet the eye of one who is estranged from his brother; let him remember another teaching of his Lord, and carry out the lessons of Matt. v. 21-24. This done, if he cannot restore harmony he will at any rate have delivered his own soul.

## ASSOCIATION POWERS.

AT the meeting of the Central Association, as will be seen by the report thereof, an earnest, long and animated discussion arose (marked throughout by the absence of controversial bitterness and the one desire to gain the expedient and the true), on the reading of a paper by Rev. E. D. Silcox of Stouffville, on the "Possibilities and Powers of Associations, which by no means being allowed to make laws, can yet be truly utilized for purposes of co-operation and the gaining of that strength which is to be found in united action."

An outline of the general results of the discussion is given as a supplement to our late remarks on organized independency. The results were not speculative but practical, and may be thus summarized:

Voluntary association has its moral obligations which should be loyally owned and met; hence all associated churches and pastors, whilst jealously guarding their individual rights, should carefully regard and aid in maintaining the rights of those associated with them.

Christian and frequent conference is a means of being made acquainted with the wants and rights of others, and of mutual strength, therefore this association proposes to meet three times in the year, at stated times, and at such places as may from time to time be determined upon.

It is very desirable that no important change, such as the settlement of a pastor or the severance of the pastoral relation, the establishment of a new church or the removal of an old one, should be irrevocably decided without a reference to the entire Association, and should any emergency arise requiring immediate action, an opportunity should be given for the Association specially to meet.

Recognizing the fact that there are properly denominational objects, the churches and pastors associated will endeavour to contribute regularly to all recognized denominational objects, be that contribution ever so small.

The Association will endeavour by fraternal counsel and aid to foster struggling and pastorless churches, and to secure a Christian *esprit de corps* throughout its bounds.

These results, in the form of resolutions, are to be presented before the Association at its next meeting, at which it is to be hoped there will be a full representation of churches and of pastors.

THE Bond street investigation is not yet completed, the examination of the two complaining deacons, Messrs. Thomson and Beckett, occupied the whole of the first week. If we are correctly informed, the investigation will terminate immediately. In the meantime Mr. Handford declines to conduct the services. The Rev. W. F. Clarke preached the two last Sundays.

A PARAGRAPH on our first page a couple of weeks ago has hurt the feelings of some of our loyal readers. It commenced, "Princesses are getting cheap." We can only say that we transferred it from a contemporary whose loyalty is above question, and who would likely be surprised to find a harmless skit on the old-world notions of petty German quasi royalty, supposed to be a covert attack on our own Royalty. The world moves, and a time will come when all distinctions of birth will cease to be recognized, but it is not yet.

APROPOS of some exhibitions of High-Churchliness in Toronto lately, we commend the following extract from the "Miscellany" of the First Congregational church, Kingston. Our good friend Dr. Jackson knows how to go straight to the bull's eye:

"A church dignitary in this city who, by office at least, assumes a sort of churchly pre-eminence, recently asked a