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## NEW BRUNSWICK.

### UNION COMMITTEE.—MEMBERS PRESENT.—NATURE OF DELIBERATIONS.—PERSONAL SKETCHES.

The Union Committee has just concluded its sittings, which were held this time in St. John. The two former meetings were held in Montreal in the fall of 1870 and 1871, respectively. Your readers are aware that had all the members of the joint committee been present, they number 48, six ministers and six elders from each of the four Churches. Not many more than the half were present in St. John. From the Canada Presbyterian Church all the members were present but one, viz. Dr. Taylor, who here. Only two elders, however came, Hon. John McMurrich, of Toronto, and Thomas McCrae of Guelph. From the Presbyterian Church of Canada, in connection with the Church of Scotland there was one minister less than from the Canada Presbyterian Church, and the same number of Elders. Dr. Cook of Quebec was absent, and as he was the Chairman of the previous meetings his absence was all the more noticed. The Elders were James Croil of Montreal, and James Craig of Cornwall. The Presbyterian Church of the Lower Province had the largest number of representatives present, viz. five ministers and four elders. Rev. Robert Sedgwick the remaining ministerial member sailed away for the Old Land last week, and of the elders Charles Robson is in delicate health, and Hon. David Laird belongs to P. E. Island, from which travel at this particular season is hardly possible.

From the Presbyterian Church of the Maritime Provinces in connection with the Church of Scotland there were four ministers and one elder, the smallest representation, and that while the place of meeting was within the bounds of the Synod. One reason for this may have been the fact that several members of the Committee are residents of Prince Edward's Island, from which as I said before it is not easy to get to the mainland, at this season. Thus in all there were 27 members present, 18 ministers and 9 elders. The meeting was called to order on Friday at 11 o'clock, by the appointment of Dr. Bayne, as Chairman, and Dr. Topp, as Secretary, and the sittings continued until half-past six on Monday evening. I enclose a copy of the resolutions come to, and will just now refer in a general way to the points taken up.

The doctrinal basis remains the same as it was fixed at the meeting of 1871, and therefore I may pass that by. An attempt was made to change the title of the United Church, that proposed in the basis before the Presbyterian Church of British North America. It is alleged now that the necessity for using the term British North America instead of Canada has passed away, or will soon pass away, as P. E. Island is about to come into the Dominion. The alteration was not accepted. Then came the terms of Union. There was considerable discussion about the Headship of Christ over the Church, about which some members of the Canada Presbyterian Church are anxious to have a declaration. The Presbyterian Church of Canada laid on the table an Act on Spiritual Independence passed in 1834, to which assent is required by all intents to the ministry, and the formula used at the closing of their Superior Court. This was deemed amply satisfactory on the part of the other Committee. The Act is a remarkable document. It is most extreme in the mode in which all interference on the part of the civil power is disavowed and repudiated. It in substance prohibits, any man who signs it from seeking redress even in civil rights and privileges. The resolution on modes of worship was left as it was before. That on church work was revised somewhat. In a practical point of view this was regarded as of the utmost importance. As is natural many of those living down here dread very much that if the direction of Home and Foreign Missionary work centre about Montreal or Toronto, ignorance of local wants and feelings may operate injuriously. The most hearty assurance was given that no such centralization as is dreaded is contemplated, that the direction of local work must be vested in local authority, under the supervision of Synods. As usual the College question occupied much time. The resolution came to speaks for itself. The proposal of the Kirk Synod respecting the Temporalities Fund, was accepted by the joint Committee. The work was completely done, every sentence and clause, yea every word, was criticised with the utmost keenness to the looker with the utmost tediousness. Practically none but Scotchmen could appreciate such minuteness.

The social aspect of the visit to St. John of such men and the personal peculiarities

of the several representatives ought not to be over-looked, perhaps many of the people will think of those more than of the discussions. It was however, during the progress of the discussions that some of the more marked peculiarities came out. The regret was very general that the visit was so hurried. They came for work and as soon as it was done they were off again, the most of them by the night train on Monday night, some of them having hardly time to swallow their tea from the time they left the meeting. A few days would not have been lost in cultivating acquaintance with the citizens. Enough was seen however, of the delegates to awaken strong desires to know more and see more of them. For exquisite cultivation of mind, sensitiveness of feeling Professor Caven stands unrivalled. I say this deliberately even at the risk of making invidious comparisons. It is not likely that any member of the committee will dispute that. Their bearing towards him was evidence of the correctness of what has been said. Dr. Topp's suavity of manner was never once ruffled, to all appearances it is incapable of being ruffled. Professor MacVicar presents the idea of strength both bodily and mental. A Baptist minister who was in the Church one day whispered to me that he was "a strong man." That is a favorite mode of expression with that denomination. It is but natural that the friends of our Church in Montreal should resent the attempt of the Americans to commit a "grand larceny," in taking him away. May they be as successful in the future as they have been in the past. Principal Snodgrass besides the other qualities that he possesses has a perseverance, one would almost be inclined to say a bull-dog tenacity, in holding on to the object which he takes hold of that cannot be mistaken. He is not to be driven from his point. Dr. Jenkins is sharp and incisive, perhaps a little too sarcastic at times to be pleasing. The pulpit services of all those as well as the other brethren were much appreciated. Every stranger was called upon for one service and several of them for two. Such a day's preaching has not been enjoyed in St. John for many a day. The elders too did good service in addressing the Sabbath Schools. Messrs. McMurrich, Croil, Craig, and McCrae, made themselves useful at two Separate Schools I know, and their addresses will long be remembered. Altogether such an impression was created that regret was felt at the shortness of their stay, and a desire that they might soon return.

St. John, April 17th, 1873.

### PATRONAGE VERSUS POPULAR ELECTION.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir,—Aware that the sentiments of editors do not always accord with those of correspondents, and *vice versa*, I would submit some thoughts, with the understanding that we are not to be held responsible for our respective opinions. Therefore, that you may not be chargeable with what may be peculiar, or out of the beaten track, I subscribe my name—and not from any fondness to appear prominent in print. At the same time, allow me to say that the communications of others, sustained with their real signature, are read with additional interest, while it relieves the editor of a certain amount of responsibility that attaches to anonymous letters.

The thought has often occurred to me, that the vexed questions, purposed for discussions in this article, demand more serious and calmer consideration from intelligent Presbyterians than has yet been bestowed on them. At the same time it may readily be believed, that to advance on this or any other subject—what is in direct opposition to their fondly cherished views, will doubtless incur sharp criticism. To run counter to the current sentiment in either patronage or popular election, must be at the risk of some popular indignation. To oppose or condemn popular election in Church or State at the present time, requires some boldness, and indifference to human applause. While the mere mention of patronage produces an unsavoury sound to many ears, yet who does not delight in patronage when it is of the kind and from the source that commends itself to the recipient? And who is the society, civil or ecclesiastical, in which it is not exercised?

It is not my intention to vindicate patronage, in any form that it has ever existed among fallen humanity, as an unmixed good; nor to condemn popular election as an unmixed evil. Society must be greatly purged and elevated before either can be used for good only. What is greatly required is to direct and control each within their proper and respective spheres. Indeed the millennial period must

arrive before one or the other can be conducted with universal satisfaction: and it is questionable whether either can even then prove entirely satisfactory. Our discussion must now be confined to the ecclesiastical bearings of these seemingly antagonistic methods of procedure.

Let us first look more especially at "Popular Election." On the British Isles, as well as abroad, all Presbyterian churches seem to raise the all but universal cry against patronage, and to pant for or applaud popular election. Not infrequently the latter has been held up to the attracting gaze, as if it were to be found a panacea for all the troubles that have occurred or can arise in the Presbyterian families. It has been put forward as a distinctive characteristic of Presbyterianism, and, moreover, as if it had been a well ascertained and established fact that the *vox populi* had always been the *vox Dei*. But in our estimation such sentiments run to a very dangerous extreme, and unless there be a retrograde movement, the results must prove more injurious to the welfare and stability of our common Presbyterianism than patronage has ever done in the worst form it has ever obtained sway among us. We are constrained to think that popular election is now urged beyond the dictates of Scripture, the spirit of Christianity; and carried onward in its progressive course, must conduce to insubordination and general restlessness.

Let us first enquire what countenance, if any, is given from Scripture to popular election, in its current broad acceptance. And here let it be clearly understood that we refer to the office of the ministry of the Word—the first and highest office in the Church of Christ. It is readily conceded that the people have the right to elect to the subordinate office. The preacher of the gospel brings with him the power of an ambassador from God, and has authority to proclaim in His name the terms of an everlasting peace between God and man; an ambassador for Christ, as though God did beseech; he is accountable to God, and his message has the savour of life or death to every hearer. How exalted then is his office. Higher can scarcely be conceived. Neither minister nor people can form too high an estimate of this office. The message is to be delivered, not as to judges, but as to docile hearers. We have never seen but three Scripture passages adduced to prove that congregations have a right to elect to this office. The first to which we shall refer is in Acts xiv. 23. The most strenuous advocate for this passage, as sustaining popular election, is Professor Witherow, who says, "that the authorized version represents the two Apostles, Barnabas and Paul, as ordaining elders in every church, whereas the true meaning of the word in the original is to elect by a show of hands," and that we are not to allow a faulty translation to rob us of the testimony of Scripture to an important fact—namely, "that the elders of the New Testament Church were appointed to office by a popular vote." But we have no less authority than Oldshausen, in his criticism on the Greek word, that it "does not permit us to suppose there was a free choice on the part of the Church, but it rather seems as if the Apostles themselves sought out the parties qualified for office." And surely any fair criticism of the terms with the contexts should lead to the conclusion that the same persons who are said in the previous verses to have preached and confirmed are in this said to have ordained. To take the liberty of supposing any other party might lead to the utter perversion of Scripture. Nothing but a strong desire to maintain a favorite theory could lead to such straining of the passage. And we must conclude that the learned professor had exhausted Scripture to uphold popular election, or he would not quote this one.

The sixth chapter of Acts is another that is often quoted to support the idea of popular election. It is here as plainly stated as can be conveyed in language that the office-bearers were chosen by popular suffrage. There is no room for doubt or criticism. But it is equally clear that they were not chosen to the ministry of the word, but to attend to temporal concerns.

The third passage is found in Acts i. 13-25, and is usually urged as the great pillar of popular election. To our mind this affords even less support, if possible, to popular election in its ordinary acceptance. And the more we examine it, in all its bearings, we are the more confirmed in this belief: It should be observed, in the outset, that Luke simply records what actually took place after our Lord's ascension; and secondly, that the Great Master gave no recorded instruction to elect an apostle; that his command rather confined them (as recorded in Luke xxiv. 40,

and Acts i. 4.) to waiting for the promise of the Father. It must moreover appear that this proposal on the part of Peter to appoint an apostle corresponds with his wonted rash spirit, and indicated that he required to receive the baptism of the holy spirit ere he was qualified to become a teacher or pillar in the Christian Church. Indeed true Christian modesty should have prevented him from being the first to revert to the conduct of Judas. The appropriate work of this early Church would appear to be to continue instant in prayer until the out-pouring of the holy spirit—he had been promised. Besides, the passages from the Psalms, that Peter quotes, do not seem to indicate that it was the duty of those assembled disciples to elect a successor to Judas. Before the outpouring of the holy spirit he was as liable to devious courses and to misunderstand Scripture as on previous occasions. And we are no where told that our Lord delegated the power of appointing to the apostleship to any man or any body of men. And we cannot see why successors should not be continued in the apostleship if they had the right to assume the right in this instance. They do not seem to have any more power to do so than to give the qualification of working miracles. It is, however, evident that the apostles held appointments immediately from their Master. "They were called," says Witherow, "to the work of the apostleship by His voice, and they received their commission from His hands." And this is the belief of all evangelical Christendom. And that this only should be considered a valid appointment to the apostleship appears the more convincing from the fact that the Divine Master came again to our world to appoint the Apostle Paul, and thus complete the number of the apostles. In every conceivable view, this election differs widely from all subsequent popular elections in after ages. Here there were apostles engaged in this election of an apostle. And this inspired record concludes this business with stating merely that "Matthias was numbered with the eleven apostles." It does not say that he was ordained or constituted an apostle. Furthermore, if this election record was designed for the guidance of popular elections at the present time and onwards, why is the example not fairly and fully adopted? Why, when the congregation is convened for electing a pastor, do they not choose two, and then use lots, and leave the final decision with the Lord? A step in advance of Peter's purpose is taken. This would not appear sufficiently popular. The choice is taken entirely into their own hands. Is it not thus most manifest that good Christians assume liberties in this matter from which they would shrink in other plain Scriptural lessons. From these self-evident conclusions it is a matter of no small surprise to us that intelligent men should attempt to sustain the existing method of popular election from these passages of the Word of God.

Nor can we find any support for popular election in the pastoral epistles. The Presbyters were entrusted with the appointment of the elders for the work of the ministry. There is no trace of an election by the church. This power was vested in the teachers. And it is passing strange that such should be the case if popular election was to be the divine method of securing the services of preachers of the word in all subsequent ages.

And we find no countenance of this principle of popular election when the Lord Jesus tabernacled among men. When he sent forth the seventy to preach the word, those to whom they came rejected them at their peril. These teachers were to cast off the dust from their feet as a testimony against those who rejected them.

Nor does this popular method of choosing ministers accord with the generous and disinterested spirit inculcated in the gospel. It leads ministers and people to look rather to their own things than to the interests of others, and the churches having most means and professedly most intelligence, to search the churches on a purely selfish errand. It leaves ministers open to strong temptations. It has a tendency to secularize their minds. It seduces the most popular away from the most needy and benighted districts, (and this specially so where churches are not endowed.) This, therefore, becomes the weakest point in the Presbyterian system. Episcopalian and Methodist Episcopacy may have their men of note and power taking regular tours through their most needy districts, but this forms no part of the existing form of Presbyterian order. If a congregation happens to be afflicted with a cold minister, he may, if he will, exclude all who might produce an awakening among the dry bones. It too often, of necessity, causes the efficient and willing preacher to confine his efforts

within narrow limits, instead of allowing him to enlarge his plans and efforts for the general good. And what originates in a felt restriction becomes eventually a settled habit. And how seldom then do we find men of known ability retiring from prominent positions to minister to the most destitute of our people. It rather leads to a "look out" for personal aggrandizement. And this tendency appears to be on the increase. Recently, for one vacancy in a city church in Scotland there were one hundred and fifty applicants; and the emoluments were but small. A large portion of these applicants were settled pastors. And should this spirit of change progress in the same ratio as during recent years, the result will be as in the American churches, where the popular will has long obtained sway, and where it appears about one half of the ministry has no pastoral connection. And usually the minister must consider the popular fancies and prejudices, otherwise he must not expect six months' endurance. And who does not know that this training of the people to expect the man of their choice leads too often to bitter wranglings, and sometimes to the severing of congregations, or to disaffection on the part of the minority toward the majority and toward the newly elected minister. And what is still worse, who may not see that this method of bringing ministers before a congregation to be judged and criticised is fast bringing indignity on the ministry and on ministers, and at the same time creating censorious and profitless hearers. And the more this practice of leading the hearers of the gospel message to esteem themselves competent judges of their future teachers, the more disastrous shall it prove to the stability and welfare of the churches. If patronage in its workings has been productive of evil, we strongly fear it will become too manifest that rushing to the opposite extreme must become much more hurtful to our churches unless a legitimate remedy be provided to restrain it within its proper sphere.

In a future article we may represent patronage in its darker and brighter sides, and endeavor to indicate the source whence it should come.

Yours truly,  
ALEXANDER MCKAY.

The Manse, Eldon, 10th April, 1873.

[We are always happy to publish articles like the above, written in a moderate, becoming manner, though we may not sympathize in the opinions enunciated, and may not recognize the cogency of the arguments adduced. We hope to hear from Mr. McKay again.—Ed. B. A. P.]

### THE DUTY OF SYNODS.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir,—By your ever-welcome paper, I see that there are some who think that the Synod of Toronto, at its last meeting, made a mistake. When that Presbytery which ever one it is, showed what seems to us an over-anxious desire to be respectful to the Synod, it is our opinion that said Synod should have, at once, transmitted its overture, as it appears that it was in due form, respectful in tone, and had reference to a matter affecting the well-being of the whole Church. It is well known that the transmission of the overture of an inferior court by a superior in no way approves of such overture, and in refusing to transmit, unless for some informality or disrespectful language, the court concerned merely denies to its inferior the right which every subordinate court has, viz. which every member of the Church has, viz. the right of being heard by the supreme court on any subject which has a direct bearing on the good of the Church in general. The Synod in this case can give no reason for its action. The fact that some definite scheme for the removal of the evil was not foreshadowed, could not in any sense take from the Presbytery its inherent right to draw the attention of the Assembly to that evil, and to respectfully ask that venerable body to devise some means for its removal.

But the action of the Synod, I have no doubt, will do good, as it will serve to call the attention of Presbyteries to the fact, that as the Assembly deals directly with them, in matters of general interest, without the intervention of the Synods, even so have they the right of direct access to the Assembly in such matters, and hence have no need at all to send their overtures to the Synods. We are informed in *The Practice of the Free Church of Scotland*, compiled by the Rev. Sir I.L. Wellwood Moncrief, that "It is competent for any Presbytery to transmit what is called an overture, either to the Provincial Synod, or to the General Assembly, with the view of inducing the Superior Court to adopt any measure within its legislative or executive functions."

But while the action of the Synod may do good, it cannot do any harm, as the Presbytery interested can send its overture to the Clerk of the Assembly at least eight days before the meeting of the Assembly; (see P. of F. C. of S. p. 63, and Forms of Procedure, p. 16) and if it be properly authenticated the Committee on Bills and Overtures will understand its duty to well to refuse to bring it before the Assembly.

Yours faithfully,  
Quzard