

the Church's business. As at present constituted, it occupies too much time and it is too costly.

Many of the Presbyteries meet six times a year, and each meeting virtually sacrifices a week. Then, to Synod a week is devoted; and to Standing Committees and to the General Assembly four weeks more are devoted by many. If to this be added the lassitude, if not serious indisposition, that follows the meetings of Assembly and of large committees, and which unfits for duty, you can easily see that many devote more than a quarter of their time and energy to Church courts and committees. Now this is too much; it is oppressive to ministers, and it withdraws their energies too much from the ordinary work of the ministry and from necessary study. Not only so, but it fosters the habit of talking too much about what we have done and about what we purpose to do, instead of forming habits of diligent labour and study, with which excessive speech-making is incompatible.

Further our ecclesiastical machinery is too expensive. Supposing that the travelling expenses of the 287 who attended last Assembly were only \$15 each, this would amount to \$4,305. Besides the Assembly now calls for five cents per each church member to meet its expenses, which would amount to \$6,250. Thus the average cost of a meeting of Assembly must be about \$10,555. It is not easy to estimate the expenses connected with meeting of Synods and Presbyteries and of Standing Committees, but they must be very great, probably upwards of \$6,000 per annum. Thus our present machinery costs upwards of \$16,000 per annum. Were such an amount of labour and money devoted to Home Mission work, in addition to what is otherwise carried on, it would change the whole aspect of the Church; it would be like life from the dead.

Now it is easy to see that this costly machinery cannot be reduced without either dispensing with the Synods altogether or making the meetings of Assembly less frequent. If this last were done, as the overture proposes, the Synods would require to be reconstructed and to have their powers increased, especially if the Home Mission machinery is not to be entirely broken up. Now, glancing over the extended surface of the Church, it is evident that it should be divided into three parts: the first embracing the Maritime Provinces, the second Quebec and Ontario, the third Manitoba and the North-West. Its work, to be carried on efficiently and cheaply, must be adapted to these natural, geographical divisions. The manner of adaptation must be regulated by expediency so far as possible without compromising Presbyterianism. The Synod of the Maritime Provinces has long been accustomed to manage its own Home Mission work, and the Synod is small enough to meet conveniently, having only about 190 ministers. The Home Mission work in Ontario and Quebec has hitherto been carried on by one central committee; and this seems to be convenient and also to commend itself to the Church. But as there are about 560 ministers in Ontario and Quebec, this would make too large a Synod; hence one-third of the members, that is 186 ministers, as the overture proposes would constitute the Synod of Ontario and Quebec.

Some may object to this arrangement that it makes one Synod an elective body while the other is not. But this is merely a matter of convenience. There is no departure from Presbyterian principles while the members of Assembly, are, as at present, elected by Presbyteries, not by Synods. Thus the representation in the General Assembly would not in any way be affected. The Presbyterian system is elastic and adapts itself to any form or extent of country. Indeed, the opinion is gaining ground that in a large church like the Presbyterian Church in the United States—and ours is superficially as extensive—several General Assemblies might be erected, and that these might be federally united. In the course of time, the Church in the Maritime Provinces might increase to such an extent as to make it desirable that its Synod also should be elective. The same might happen in the North-west Territory.

Now, surely Synods so large as those of the Maritime Provinces and of Ontario and Quebec might well be entrusted with additional powers to what they now have, especially as the Assembly may authoritatively make regulations in reference to the exercise of these powers. There is no reason to fear that the bonds now uniting the several parts of the Church would be unduly weakened. The General Assembly would still be the Supreme Court of Appeal; it alone would be

competent to make authoritative declarations in reference to doctrine; it alone would be competent to make organic changes in matters external or Church polity. The mission work of the North-west, as it is peculiar and as it belongs to the whole Church, would be carried on by a committee of Assembly. The Foreign Mission work would also be under the direct control of Assembly, and so also would be the management of the Widows' and Infirm Ministers' Funds.

Many may be disposed to complain that it would be inconvenient and unreasonable that parties wishing to appeal from Synods to the Assembly should have to wait sometimes two or nearly three years for their appeal to take effect. But it is to be expected that there would be fewer cases of appeal from large Provincial Synods than from the smaller District Synods. Besides a person who could not, in ordinary cases, be satisfied with an appeal to such a body as the Synod of Ontario and Quebec, would not be deserving of much sympathy. It would be a much larger and more influential court than any of the supreme courts of the four churches which now constitute the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Moreover, if cases of appeal are to be disposed of by one judicial committee alone, as was done at last Assembly, a person might feel safer to refer his cause to a large Synod than to such a committee. For my part, I would as readily appeal to one of our large Presbyteries as to the Assembly, were the method of disposing of appeals at last Assembly continued. Further, it is not desirable to afford too great facilities for appeal, as these tend to foster litigation. In addition to all this, we can't afford to maintain such costly machinery for the gratification of litigious persons. Better far that they should leave the Church, carrying all their troubles with them, if they are not content with such means of relief as we are able to provide for them.

Were the overture adopted, the expense connected with the administration of the Church's business would be reduced to less than one-third of what it now is. The work would be more efficiently done. Cases of appeal would be so much fewer, and great questions affecting the welfare of the Church would be so thoroughly ventilated in the large Synods that the work of the Supreme Court would be greatly facilitated. I believe that the Friendly Assembly would be able to accomplish its whole work in one week, and that its decisions and regulations would be characterized by more mature deliberation than is now attainable.

All I desire is that the overture should be carefully discussed, and that it should be sent down to Presbyteries for consideration. Should the Presbyteries not approve of it, they might at least suggest some better method of relieving the Church from the pressure of a burden which is increasing and which will soon become intolerable.

A MEMBER OF THE PRESBYTERY OF LONDON.

HYMN BOOK.

MR. EDITOR,—In the CANADA PRESBYTERIAN of the 23rd May an article from the pen of "Athanasius" appears, in which are given sundry reasons for the rejection of two well-known stanzas. At first reading, it appeared to us that the writer was perpetrating an elaborate and reined sarcasm upon certain critiques which have appeared in connection with the proposed new Hymn Book, but on reading we are persuaded that "Athanasius" is in earnest. Such a critic cannot object to a little good-natured criticism of a very impersonal character. Even this much we would not attempt were it not that "Athanasius" is a type of not a few hymn critics.

The first stanza to which he objects is

"Return, O Holy Dove return,
Sweet messenger of rest;
I hate the sins that made thee mourn
And drove thee from my breast."

The first objection to this is that "we have no authority in the Word of God for speaking of the Holy Ghost as a dove." He admits that the simile of the dove is used, but rejects the metaphor as being unwarrantable. This is a new canon in rhetoric. We were taught that the simile and the metaphor were not only interchangeable, but that one test of a correct figure was their very possibility and propriety of transposition. The verse in question is not even a poetic license, it is the simplest poetic usage. No liberty is taken when the inspired simile is transposed into the poetic metaphor.

Into "Athanasius'" little dissertation concerning the

comparative merits of Cowper, Milton, David and Dr. Watts, we would rather not enter. We gladly leave him that field all to himself.

His second objection is that "It teaches that the Holy Spirit may depart from the Christian." This verse teaches alienation, not desertion. There is nothing in it antagonistic to our confession, but we have long regarded it as in harmony with the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of that venerable symbol. We see in it the quenched spirit, the grieved spirit, and surely it is the very essence of hypercriticism which makes "Athanasius" thus confuse the expression of subjective experience, with objective reality of dogma.

The second stanza objected to is

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

The first objection to this is "incongruity in the metaphor." The case is summed up and stated thus: "I hold however, if his metaphor is natural and calculated to illustrate the unknown by the known, that a literal fountain such as that of which he speaks should at least be a possibility." He holds that it is neither conceivable nor possible, because the "blood of one man" is deficient in quantity. Has the Church waited for a century, and at last had its eyes opened to the perception of an absurdity by "Athanasius." Take this latest canon in *belles lettres*, and our Lord's metaphor, "I am the door," is to be ruled out because we cannot form any adequate conception of a door of flesh and blood.

The second objection is that it is "an utter misrepresentation of what Zechariah teaches." We do not know that this hymn must stand or fall by the 13th chapter of Zechariah, but even if it had to, and though Lange as quoted by "Athanasius" thinks it contained water—what then? Jansson, Faussett and Brown on this verse comment thus "justification and sanctification are implied in this verse as both flowing from the blood of Christ."

Let any one read Heb. ix. 14, 1 Peter i. 19, and Rev. i. 5, and then judge between Cowper and "Athanasius," and surely the last of these three passages will set the mind of our critic at rest on this question of quantity.

The third objection is the unscriptural teaching as to the mode of applying the blood. "Athanasius" contends that Scripture teaches the application of blood to the person, not the application of the person to the blood. The end is the same. Perhaps there was a little of both methods in Rev. i. 5, but mostly of that sort in which "Athanasius" does not believe, we judge by the fitness of things. Presbyteries as such, as well as individuals have made many valuable suggestions, and inasmuch as the Assembly's Committee on Hymns have had the benefit of these hints, we hope to receive from its hands a book so much of an improvement on that which was submitted to the Presbyteries by it, that it may obtain the approval of the Assembly, but we shall be sorry indeed if the committee cuts out these two stanzas so dear to many Christians. BALASTON.

MINISTERIAL SUBSCRIPTIONS TO H. M. DEFICIT.

Presbytery of Montreal.—Previously reported, \$299; Rev. J. Hally, \$5; in all, \$304.

Presbytery of Lindsay.—Previously reported, \$14; Rev. S. Acheson, \$5; in all, \$19.

Presbytery of Barrie.—Previously reported, \$20; Rev. John Gray, \$10; Rev. J. McConnell, \$5; Rev. R. Moodie, \$5; in all, \$40.

Presbytery of Guelph.—Rev. Thos. Wardrope, \$10; Rev. D. McDermaid, \$5; in all, \$15.

Presbytery of Hamilton.—Previously reported, \$35; Rev. W. P. Walker, \$5; in all, \$40.

Presbytery of Paris.—[The contribution of Rev. T. Lowry was erroneously given as \$4, instead of \$5.] Previously reported, \$123; Rev. W. T. McMullen, \$5; in all, \$128.

THE London "Weekly Review" says: "The Roman Catholic World of London has recently received a shock, the Rev. W. W. Roberts, a nephew of Cardinal Manning, and an Oblate of St. Charles Borromeo, Bayswater, having so far forgotten his vows as to have contracted matrimony—and in a Presbyterian place of worship. The Rev. Dr. Case, formerly a student of the Collegio Pio, at Rome, and until recently priest of the Gloucester Mission and Canon of Clifton, has also left the bosom of the Roman Church and is now living as a private gentleman."