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Contributors and Correspondents

For the Presbyterian.
DR. GEORGE PATTERSON'S HISTORY OF PICTOU.

BY THE REV. JAMES CAMERON.

We are right glad to welcome Dr. Patterson once more to the field of authorship. People have read with great interest his memoir of James McGregor, D.D., and his memoirs of Messrs. Johnston and Matheson. He now aspires higher. From the humbler field of biography, where he undoubtedly obtained a large measure of success, he ascends to the higher and more ambitious walk of historical research. Dr. Patterson here gives us a history of one of the counties of Nova Scotia, viz.: the county of Pictou, with the special object in view of fully delineating the early period of British colonization, of depicting, from the early descriptions to be got from a generation that is fast passing away, as well as from written records, the life and manners of the early settlers in Pictou,—the very form and pressure of their age.

The author assures us, and from a perusal of his work we believe that he does not exaggerate, that he has spared no effort to gain information in regard to the subject of his history. "He has ransacked," he tells us, "the County and Provincial records, and teased officials with his enquiries. He has plodded his weary way through newspaper files and works of Colonial History. He has interrogated Miamaos, and as the Scotch would say, 'expiscated' every old man and woman he has met with in the county for years. He has also conducted a large correspondence, and visited various sections of the country in search of facts. To arrive at the exact truth he has laboured as conscientiously as if he were writing the history of Europe."

It is true, that very much of this book is only of local interest, but there are, on the other hand, many portions that are of wide and general use to every intelligent reader. Every Canadian, we almost wrote Englishman, will read with attention and sympathy the account given (in the fourth chapter) of the first English settlement of Pictou. Is not the voyage of the brig *Hope* in 1767 from Philadelphia to Pictou in New Scotland, with six families of adventurous settlers, almost another version, lacking the religious motive, of the voyage of the *Mayflower* from Old to New England? Their experience, at least, in landing, was very similar.

The prospect that met them as they gazed on their new home from the deck of the *Hope* was as dreary as the prospect that first met the gaze of the passengers of the *Mayflower*.

"One unbroken forest covered the whole surface of the country to the water's edge. All around stood the mighty monarchs of the wood in all their primeval grandeur, the evergreens spreading a sombre hue over the plains and up the hills, relieved by the lighter shade of the deciduous trees, with here and there some tall spruce, rising like a black minaret or spire above its fellows. But chiefly conspicuous to the eye of the observer were the tasselled heads of the white pines, for which Pictou was afterwards so long distinguished—their straight stems towering to the height of 150 or 200 feet, like masts of some huge admiral." The scene was one on which the eye of the lover of nature might have gazed with delight, but it is needless to say that these settlers looked on the matter with more practical eyes. The interminable forest only presented itself to them as an insuperable obstacle to their labor, and their hearts sank as they contemplated the idea of wresting a subsistence from the soil so encumbered. So discouraged indeed were the whole band with the state of matters that the most of them were determined to return in the vessel which brought them; but the captain, after landing his passengers and supplies, slipped out of the harbor in the night and left them to their fate."

Though the honor of cutting the first trees, erecting the first huts, running the first lines, and planting the first seeds belong to the passengers of the *Hope*, yet the burden of the work of colonizing the northern coast of Nova Scotia fell to the passengers of the ship *Hector*, which sailed from Loch Broom on the 10th of July, 1773, with thirty-three families and twenty-five unmarried men, in all about 200 souls. The importance of this arrival, not only to Pictou, but to Nova Scotia, is well put by Dr. Patterson in these words:

"With the passengers of the *Hector* may be said to have commenced the really effective settlement of Pictou. But this was not all. The *Hector* was the first emigrant vessel from Scotland to Pictou or even to these Lower Provinces. That

stream of Scottish immigration which, in after years, flowed not only over the county of Pictou, but over much of the eastern part of the Province (of Nova Scotia), Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island, portions of New Brunswick, and even the Upper Provinces, began with this voyage, and even in a large measure originated with it, for it was by the representations of those on board to their friends, that others followed, and so the stream deepened and widened in succeeding years. We venture to say that there is no one element in the population of these Lower Provinces upon which their social, moral, and religious condition has depended, more than upon its Scottish immigrants, and of these, that band in the *Hector* were the pioneers and vanguard."

In connection with the moral and spiritual interests of this important colony too great importance cannot be attached to the labours of three men whose names are prominent in the history of Pictou, and will be held in everlasting remembrance down by the Sea. "The first three" of Nova Scotia's Presbyterian worthies, Dr. Jas. McGregor, Dr. Thos. McCulloch, and the Rev. Duncan Ross, were very remarkable men indeed, each in his way. In simple, persuasive eloquence, pains-taking pastoral care, tender sweetness of disposition, fearless defence of truth, and a noble self-sacrificing spirit, Dr. James McGregor holds a very high position. We question if in all the annals of all the colonial churches there appears anything more unselfish and Christ-like than the following act. To redeem a slave held in bondage in the colony, Mr. McGregor agreed to pay fifty pounds to Matthew Harris, his master and owner. When the first payment of Mr. McGregor's stipend fell due he should have received £40 in cash and as much more in produce, but he actually received only £27 of money and £80 in the shape of produce; and of this £27 he paid out £20 as the first instalment for the redemption of Dio, leaving only £7 for himself as the result of his year's toil.

Mr. Ross was a man of very clear and logical mind, and sound practical judgment, but destitute of the popular gifts of Dr. McGregor. He was the first in the Province to found and support a temperance society. Of his quiet humour, Dr. Patterson gives us one or two good specimens. Hearing a man described as "hard and honest," he remarked "that generally meant hardly honest." He was accustomed to say, "that he had tried three ways of living. The first was to buy just what he wanted, but he found that would not answer; he then tried only buying what he could not do without, but he did not find that to answer either. He then tried only buying what he could pay for, and that he found to answer well."

Dr. McCulloch was a man of multifarious learning, so that he was in his element at the head of the humble college set up by the Presbyterians in the face of vexatious opposition, for training their young ministers. The college, where was begun the first attempt at giving a liberal education in these Provinces, was just a single room fitted up with pine desks so shaky that a Highland student intent on taking notes, bothered by his mates, was obliged to seek the protection of the Principal by shouting "Please master, they're skaking the desk on me." But, never mind, the building is but the guinea stamp, the teaching is the gold "for a' that," and out of the college with the shaky pine "desks" came to the work of the ministry such men as John McLean, J. L. Murdoch, R. S. Patterson, John Campbell, Drs. Ross, McCulloch, McGregor, and Geddie, and we suppose Dr. G. Patterson, the accomplished editor of this volume, though he is too modest to mention his own name. To law and politics it gave Sir T. D. Archibald, baron of the English Court of Exchequer; Judge Ritchie now of the Supreme Court of Canada, A. G. Archibald Governor of Nova Scotia, Judge Young, Judge Blanchard. Among its students who followed the healing art may be mentioned Dr. Grant of Pennsylvania Medical College, and among scientific men Dr. J. W. Dawson, Principal of McGill College, Montreal.

From the slight and imperfect sketch we have given of this book our readers can see that it covers an important section of our Dominion, and an important period in Colonial History. We regard this contribution to the history of the Dominion of Canada as extremely valuable, and would wish to see similar contributions coming from other sections of the land, and from other pens, before the time for these contributions shall have forever passed away. We venture also the suggestion that a copy of the "History of Pictou" should find a place in every Presbyterian congregational and ministerial library in the Dominion. It would not only diffuse information of an interesting and important kind; but it would help to increase that corporate spirit, *esprit de corps*, which is apt to be wanting in a church, such as the Presbyterian Church in Canada, composed of distinct branches recently united, and congregations widely separated by wood and flood.

SHOULD THERE BE A REVISION OF THE WESTMINSTER CONFSSION?

This is a question at present causing a good deal of agitation among Presbyterians, particularly in Scotland, with which it has long been venerably connected, and the question has to some extent been brought up by circumstances in Canada. The discussion has been laid hold of by the public press, chiefly in the newspapers, always ready to catch at something new, however crude it may be, being such papers as would fain advocate that there should be no formal systems of religious belief, but that liberty should be allowed to all and sundry opinions, with regard even to Christianity and the scriptures. This would be tantamount to the broadest latitudinarianism in belief, however loose.

In the May magazine of the United Presbyterians in Scotland, there is an article on "Creed Revision," a few extracts from which are well worthy of being transferred just now to the BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN to assist its readers in coming to a judgment on the question which has been proposed. Now for the extracts.

"It is asserted that dissatisfaction with the Confession of Faith is very general, and that the demand for its revision is very extensive; but what proof have we that such assertions are correct? We have nothing bearing the least resemblance to the agitation by which reform in political or ecclesiastical matters has in past times been preceded. The number of persons who have spoken out on the subject is still very small; and few can deny that the opinion of the majority of this small number on any theological question is of no weight whatever. This small party, by resorting to strong language and confident assertion, have succeeded in raising a considerable amount of noise on their side of the question, while quietness reigns on the other side; but this amounts to very little. Mere silence proves nothing. It may be traced to some other cause than sympathy, and mean something very different from acquiescence. Another point of inquiry, and one of still greater importance, is the extent to which revision is demanded; but here we are quite at sea. Reformers are generally able to tell what they want, and the creed reformers of the present day may be able to do so also, but certainly they have not yet made their wishes definitely known. If we are on the eve of a great reformation, it is a little strange that there should still be so much that is vague and indefinite in the demand for reform. We question if any two of our reformers are agreed about even the leading points of the Magna Charta by which the liberties of enslaved and oppressed churches are henceforth to be secured.

"It is admitted on all sides that the Church may revise her creed, and it will be generally conceded that some changes might be made in the Confession of Faith with perfect safety; but no reformer has ventured to tell us what these changes ought to be. We believe the state of the case to be this: The Confession of Faith contains a series of doctrines relating to the deep things of God. These doctrines are plainly taught in scripture, and involved in the very nature of God, but are liable to be perverted and abused, and require to be handled with prudence. Side by side with the truth about God, there are other doctrines relating to the duty and responsibility of man, and therefore in their nature more directly practical. The former class of doctrines may be firmly believed, though not often dwelt upon, while prominence may be given to the practical aspect of Christian truth. There is nothing in the doctrines of the Confession, as a whole, to prevent the preacher who subscribes it, from telling any sinner of the human race, that if he believes he shall be saved.

"In dealing with the extent to which revision is demanded, there is not only the entire absence of definite statement, but nothing can be more vague than the standard to which some of our reformers appeal. The great favorite with them is 'modern thought.' The Confession must be brought into harmony with modern thought. Well, what is modern thought? There can be no doubt that the one great modern thought of those who believe themselves to be the only thinkers worth mentioning, is the renunciation of all authority in sacred things. God has implanted in the human mind the power of believing, but modern thought finds no place for its exercise. Each man must just believe what he knows to be true from his own observation or experience, which is not belief at all. The tendency of what is called modern thought is unquestionably in the direction of pantheism in theology and positivism in philosophy. Spinoza and Comte are the objects of modern thought worship.

There is really nothing less worthy of being called thinking than the great mass of what goes by the name of modern thought. It is in many cases mere assertion, with no other foundation than the purest fancy. No standard of revision can be more worthless than modern thought; and no task more hopeless than the attempt to bring the creed of any Christian Church into harmony with that which lays claim to this high-sounding appellation. Those who believe themselves to be the great thinkers of modern times, are as much opposed to the Bible as they are to the Confession of Faith; and their antipathy to the Bible is chiefly founded on the fact that the theology of the Confession is plainly taught in it. If the creed of the Church is to be made broad enough for modern thought, the Bible as well as the Confession must be got rid of. The results of Biblical criticism leave the peculiar doctrines of the Calvinistic system untouched. If the Bible is still to be regarded as the supreme and infallible standard of Faith, all that can be said against Calvinism from the Scripture standpoint, has been said long ago, by men who, in point of intellect and learning, were at least equal to any of its modern assailants. And as to reckless, irrelevant, and scurrilous misrepresentation, modern thought has little to be proud of.

"If the Confession is to be revised, it must be done by an appeal to the Word of God, with a due perception of the difficulties in the way, a solemn sense of responsibility, a deep reverence for divine things, and earnest prayer for a special fulfilment of the promise, 'When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.' It is hoped that this condensed substance of an able and reasonable discussion will be duly appreciated by the readers of the B. A. PRESBYTERIAN. A. K.

THE MARITIME PROVINCES.

In both the eastern and western papers I see a great many wise suggestions made to the General Assembly as to how the business is to be conducted at the approaching meeting. It is said that a mania of that kind usually makes its appearance at this season of the year. The epidemic is now on. In the multitude of counsellors there is safety. It is just possible however that the General Assembly may do very much this year as it has done heretofore, and as the several Synods did, that is follow the course that seems to suggest itself at the time, just as if a host of sages had not given such varied and abundant advice.

The matter of appointing Committees or Boards is commented on as much as any other. A brother in the west, who has no name, is outraged that on the Board of Home Missions there are five of the Presbytery of Toronto, and four of the Presbytery of Hamilton. To us in the east that seems not worth mentioning. We can hardly comprehend how a grievance can be scared out of that paltry thing. Why, a brother in the east who has a name and is not ashamed to tell it either, tells us that of the twenty-one members on the same Board in the eastern section, no less than twelve of them, four-sevenths of the whole, are of the Presbytery of Halifax. And another Board is about as bad. Then the Foreign Mission Board consists practically of the Presbytery of Pictou. Now is it asking too much of the western nameless brother to let Toronto and Hamilton Presbyteries alone until we have taken away somewhat the monopolies which Halifax and Pictou Presbyteries have, and perhaps mean to hold. Possession is nine points in the law. It is perhaps as well however to say that the late Synod of the Lower Provinces localized its Boards or Committees; that was the principle it acted on. Halifax had Home Missions and the College, Pictou had Foreign Missions and the Business (there was a standing committee on this department), Prince Edward Island had Sabbath Observance and Temperance, St. John had French Evangelization, and so on. For good or for evil this was the plan, a plan which is not I presume to be followed any longer. The theory that every minister is as good as every other for a Committee is the other extreme, and cannot be adopted by any church body. It is plain that some men are better adapted for certain kinds of work than others. Some ministers are utterly at sea as to directing the work of a Committee. Those that are fitted by nature and by education for doing certain kinds of work are the men to be appointed to that work. The evil perhaps is found in the nominating committee having too little time for the selection, the members of it having too much to do in other committees that are sitting at meal hours during the meeting of the Assembly. Some months ago I observed in your pa-

per, Mr. Editor, a report of a convention on Sustentation, and a committee was appointed to make inquiry and report. I have heard inquiries as to when the report is to be published. The impression is that the committee should have spoken ere now. Why is it so long silent? LEUMAS.

INFANT SALVATION.

Mr. Torron.—In a former article, I said if there were a morsel of comfort in the sermon referred to, I would be very sorry to deprive any person of it, who may have suffered the loss of their little ones by death. I say so again. Nor do I think that I said a single word that would lead any one to believe that I did not believe in infant salvation, Mr. McKay excepted. I will give him in due time what I do believe on this subject, in a more positive form, and my reasons too, for thus believing, if I have any. I am sorry to see unmistakable evidences of sneering and sarcasm in my reply to my first communication, for I think they are easily out of place. Perhaps I could measure swords with him in this respect, but I forbear.

The main point, then, to which I objected in my last notice of his sermon was this: "Children dying in infancy are free from the ground of condemnation." If I knew just exactly the position of the author, I could perhaps deal with it more readily, and I am sorry if he knows it himself, that he did not take the trouble of stating it. I will try to do it for him.

There are only three positions that present themselves to my mind at present, and they are these: First, Mr. McKay must hold that Christ died to take away the guilt of the original sin of the whole world, and not the guilt of actual transgressions. Second, he must hold that Christ died to take away the guilt, both of original sin and actual transgression, of all God's elect people, and all who die in infancy. Or third, he does not know his position, at least not accurately. This last, I would be sorry to lay to his charge, and in the meantime pass it by. If he accepts the first, then I will drive him into a very miserable corner.

But I will give him the benefit of the second, and then let us see how he stands. If this be his position, then I ask, has he proved it? This I emphatically deny. Mr. McKay has assumed a position, and that assumed position is the very one I now call upon him to prove. Until he does this, I will hold to my position, nor will I allow myself to be dragged from it. I can assure him, if he does prove and establish this assumed position, it will not only afford me satisfaction, but to many in the Church as well, and if the matter be clear to his own mind, he certainly ought to impart the much needed instruction, and try to dispel the doubts that may trouble the less gifted. His reply to my first letter, if it contains an argument at all, is to fortify the assumption that I have referred to, but as stated already, I would like him to prove his position. He calls my reference to Rom. v. 12-21, "exceedingly unfortunate;" and I believe it is so for him. I referred to that passage to show that the argument of the Apostle was just what Mr. McKay denies. Paul there declares that original sin is the ground of condemnation, that infants are not free from it, for it was "by the offence of one man that judgment came on all men to condemnation." If Mr. McKay can make a compromise with Paul on this point, let him try it, for I cannot.

And now, Mr. Editor, it was not to guard what is orthodox that caused me to notice this matter, nor yet to sound an alarm to your readers. But when an author assumes a position, without having proved it, he cannot expect to go unchallenged.

JOHN R. BARRISBY.

Newmarket, May 26th.

Wants Information.

MR. EDITOR.—I am a member of a Presbyterian congregation where it is the custom at funerals to take the body of the departed to church, preach a short sermon, and expose the body to the gaze of any who from curiosity or any other motive wants to take a look at it. I have a decided objection to the custom, but it may be owing to educational prejudices; therefore I should like to hear from a few of our leading ministers on the subject. Yours, etc., SCOTCHMAN.

THE New York Central Railroad managers have ordered that no intoxicating liquors be sold at any of their stations.

THE New Testament has been recently translated into Hebrew by Prof. Delitzsch, of Leipzig, for the benefit of the Jews of Germany, Russia, and Poland.

MISS EMMA A. SMITH, of Peoria, has been appointed assistant entomologist for Northern Illinois. She has made a special study of insects injurious to vegetation.