

to apologize for the Bible but to explain and enforce its teaching." Students are told that when they enter the pulpit they should bear in mind that they are to be exegetes and theologians, but not apologists. They are also warned that their statement of error may be much clearer and stronger than their refutation of it; and, therefore, that it is better for themselves and their hearers to confine themselves to the exposition of the written word.

Now, while it may be admitted that the preacher's legitimate work is the exposition of sacred truth, yet, when he knows that the faith of some of his people is being unsettled, he proves recreant to his high trust if he do not do something to strengthen and establish it. Is it not possible for the minister of to-day to present vigorous arguments in support of Christianity without unduly advertising error, and may he not make his reasons for his belief so cogent that no one can feel that it would be better to have left the matter untouched? It will be conceded that many errors are abroad, and that the young people are almost daily imbibing pernicious ideas from articles in secular periodicals. It will likewise be admitted that while apologetic literature is abundant and accessible, it is not largely read by the masses, but that they are looking to the ministry to furnish them with material which will tend to settle their own minds, and enable them to cope successfully with those who are "loaded with the sophistries of scepticism." It is certainly not desirable that preachers should often undertake to act the part of apologists, but there are times when, and there are communities where, it is specially incumbent upon them to state the reasons for the hope that is in them. If a pastor has charge of a Bible class he has a splendid opportunity of fortifying the minds of his young people against the assaults of scepticism—indeed, he will find it a pleasant and profitable exercise to conduct the class through a short course on the evidences. If he is not a teacher he will find it an advantage, both to himself and to his people, to vary the style of his preaching occasionally and give a sound and well-digested lecture on some of the evidences of Christianity. Such a lecture will require deep study and careful research, but if thereby he is enabled to handle his subject skilfully and judiciously, he will feel amply repaid for all his trouble, and, doubtless, his people will be truly grateful for such a discourse.

ELDERS IN CHURCH COURTS.

MR. EDITOR,—May not the fact recently commented upon by you, viz., that our most influential elders, men who are found in the first places in commerce, in municipal affairs, in affairs of State, if found in our Church courts at all, are certain to be "found sitting silently on a back seat," while "inexperienced youth or superannuated age" transacts the business, account, to some extent, for the unsatisfactory condition of the funds.

It is quite probable that the apathy of our membership towards the schemes arises, not so much from want of information concerning them, as from lack of confidence in their management. It must be remembered that our system lacks some of the fundamental elements of popular government, whereby the interest and confidence of the people is best secured. The popular will, which elevated these men to their prominent public positions on account of their special qualifications therefor, is ignored in the Church and other standards of qualifications are applied.

The "representative" (?) may or may not represent the views of his congregation, according to his own sweet will. When in the Church courts he is by the laws of the Church relegated to a "back seat," no matter what his influence or fitness for prominence may be. The Church deliberately accounts the weakest and least experienced minister as better fitted to preside over meetings of its courts than the ablest elder in its communion, than the Premier of the Province, for instance.

Nine hundred and eighty-one members associated in one congregation, as in the case of Knox Church, Toronto, are only entitled to two representatives in Presbytery, their pastor and one elder, while the same number of members distributed over twelve smaller congregations in the same Presbytery are entitled to twenty representatives, and though the former contribute more than fourteen times as much towards the schemes of the Church, the latter have ten times as much to say about their management.

I ask, sir, if it is reasonable to expect the highest capabilities of the Church to be developed under such conditions, and if it is not probable that some of the evils so frequently complained of in your columns may be attributable to their existence?

Are we not in danger of falling behind the times in the matter of Church government?

Democracy has made marvellous progress in almost every other sphere of collective human activity to the great elevation of the people and advancement of their common interest. Their interest in public affairs has been thereby increased, their energies developed, and the grandest achievements of civilization are being wrought under its ægis. And I venture to suggest that a similar increase of interest and development of resource would in all probability follow a greater infusion of democratic principles into the governmental polity of our Church.

Signs are not wanting of a latent discontent and unrest which are circumscribing its energies, neutralizing its influence, and weakening the allegiance of its members.

Pastors are discarded in their advancing years, and allowed to suffer for want of charges, while charges are suffering for want of pastors.

Congregations saddled with inefficient pastorates complain of the tyranny which thwarts their desire for relief, and when vacant hesitate to renew a bond so difficult to break.

The schemes are frustrated and dwarfed for want of funds and charges of apathy and illiberality freely made against a people remarkable for their wealth and enterprise.

The elders are as conspicuously absent from the courts of the Church as they are conspicuously present wherever else legislative, administrative or judicial ability is at a premium.

Now, perfection may not be possible, but progress is, and if ever the Church is to attain to the highest sphere of usefulness it must rise to the occasion, and in the liberal spirit of its principles grapple with the problem of eradicating discord, and enlisting all the grace, wisdom and wealth at her command in the service of the Lord, as only in a united, contented and happy Church is substantial progress possible.

R.

THANKSGIVING DAY—A CHANGE OF DATE SUGGESTED.

MR. EDITOR,—Would it not be well for our Government to make the date of our Thanksgiving synchronize with that observed in the United States? There are several reasons why the change should be made by ourselves rather than by our neighbours to the south. With them the day has been observed with more or less regularity ever since the Pilgrim Fathers settled in New England, and, therefore, it is more historic with them than it is with us. Then, again, as the day set apart by the American Government falls later in the season than the one appointed by our own, it is, on that account, more opportune. As the day with us usually falls on the first Thursday of November, it finds the farmers in the midst of their root harvest, and if the weather is fair, as it generally is, it is not an easy matter to persuade the average man that his time that day should be spent in giving thanks for the mercies of the past year rather than in gathering in his crops. If the appointed day fell a little later in the season the attendance at the thanksgiving service would doubtless be much larger than it is, for, after the middle of November, farm work is practically suspended, and in rural districts the people would have no excuse for absenting themselves from the house of God.

That a change of date is desirable, no one—at least no one who lives in a rural district—will deny; and if our Government make a change, no more suitable time could be selected than the day which is observed by our neighbours to the south.

The reasons are obvious. From homes along our frontier many young men and women have gone to take positions on the American side of the line; and there are many from that land who are occupying positions in Canada. Now, if both the Dominion and the Republic celebrated the same day, it would be possible for those young people to spend Thanksgiving Day with friends and relatives, and if this could be done it would serve to intensify the gratitude of both visitors and visited.

Then, again, if the same day were observed by both peoples, the probability is that it would be better respected, and especially by those living in frontier towns and cities. As matters now stand, people who can do no business at home are tempted to go across the line where everything is in full blast.

Not only so, but when a merchant knows that his customers can be served immediately across the line, there is a strong temptation to him to open his store and cater to the wants of buyers. If, however, the dates were synchronous, the temptation would be withdrawn, and both American and Canadian buyer and seller would be more likely to take advantage of the opportunity to give thanks to Almighty God for the blessings with which the year has been crowned.

It goes without saying that we always have abundant reason to be truly grateful; and it will likewise be admitted that when a day has been appointed for the purpose of giving expression to our gratitude it should be well observed, and, therefore, if anything can be done to induce men to respect it, or to remove the temptations to its non-observance, by all means let the necessary steps be taken.

W. S. MCT.

AT CONVENTIONS.

MR. EDITOR,—It has been my privilege to attend several conventions, held for different purposes. The question has forced itself on my mind: "How can conventions be made more interesting and successful?" With your permission I would offer one or two suggestions: 1. Commit suicide. Not bodily suicide, but egotistical suicide. Kill self. The would-be leaders, the getters-up of conventions may take this suggestion in the most personal sense. I mean the talkers; and those who trip on tip-toe down one isle and up another; who stand with paper in hand and gaze round with an air of importance that says "I am the man." Some people are ponderously egotistical, superbly self-important, magnificently devoted to self. So much so that selfishness is beyond all other graces the most prominent. I stands out in great big black

letters. Every person else is so small in comparison that the whole convention could be easily stamped on a five-cent piece. My voice is sweetest music. My brains produce best thoughts. Their idea seems to be the Lord put all brains of the meeting into one or two heads and that they are the possessors of those heads. "I am Sir Oracle!" To such, and they know themselves, or should at least, I say: kill self. Give other people a chance. Don't make conventions safety valves. If you feel uneasy under the accumulating gas, prick yourself with a pin, let the gas off. It is only gas and nothing more. Or go to the woods and talk it off to the trees, but be careful the force of the outburst does not uproot the forest. Hurricane gusts of I are dangerous to conventions, disturb their pleasure, mar usefulness, and defeat their object. Don't be mere talking machines.

2. Don't lose your individuality. Society moves in circles or "sets"; so do conventions very largely. To be part of the circle, to be one of a set, to have your name on a committee, don't sacrifice your personality. Don't say yes or no simply because some other person does. Don't vote for or against a motion at the beck and nod of certain parties. "Call in the members" may do in Houses of Parliament where so much is sacrificed to partyism, but it will not do in conventions whose aims are to lift up the fallen. Do not lay your individuality a sacrifice on the altar of another's selfishness and benefit mankind. A person who allows his individuality to be lost, his personality to be absorbed, becomes a mere machine, moved as he is moved, and is scarcely fit to be a representative at any convention. Never say bew-rial for burial, simply because some eccentric person does.

3. Be natural. If you are only a star, never try to make out you are the sun. If you are only a farthing taper, don't make believe you are an electric light. Shine with your own light. Be your self. Be natural. You will never succeed by trying to be some other person. The advice of a good old man, now in heaven, has force and application to many speakers in public gatherings to-day. To one who was fond of imitating the late celebrated Punshon, in manner and voice, this good old man said: "Sir, you will never be a Punshon. You can never make a punshon out of a five gallon keg."

4. Never try to do a great thing. Those who do try seldom succeed. Conventions, like Houses of Parliament, may need leaders, but all cannot be leaders. Leaders will naturally come to the front. Water will rise to its level. Brains and tact will take a foremost place, naturally, easily, simply. True greatness is a development, a growth. It is not spasmodic outbreak, nor an unnatural excrescence. True greatness always maintains its place. As it steps upward and onward, every step is on solid ground. Its place is always secure. Great men never try to do great things. They always move simply in line of duty. They are always natural, do the first duty that lies in their way, and fill to the best of their ability the positions assigned to them.

Little men (mentally) may plan and plan to build pyramids of their own greatness. They may hop about conventions, talk till they weary people, stand and gaze with all the affectation and presumption of their little souls, they never will be great. The first principle of true greatness is not theirs, and you know there is a close connection between the germ and the fruit. I have many times noticed in conventions, and other places as well, that the smaller the man, mentally, the greater his efforts to do some big thing. He is only building a pyramid with soft stones laid in mortar of selfishness and with a trowel of brass. Some people so love to be great, but, like the frog that wanted to be an ox, they can't.

5. Regard tenderly the feelings of others. Never say a witty or a sharp thing at the expense of some member of the Assembly. Don't wound other people's feelings. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another."

With best wishes for the success of all our conventions.
December, 1890.

JUNO.

BE CONTENT.

Be content with such things as ye have. Some people have better things, others have worse. You, perhaps, cannot have the better, and you have no desire for the worse; then be content with what you have. You may have had better things in the past; you may have worse things in the future; be thankful for the present, and be content. If your lot is a hard one, you may improve it, but not by murmuring, fretting or repining. Just here, to-day, learn the lesson of contentment, and wait on God for brighter days, for richer fruits, for purer joys. No blessing comes to the murmuring, complaining, discontented heart. When once this evil demon of discontent has entered into the soul, nothing is right. Even the "angel's food" was not good enough for the murmuring Israelites, and "the corn of heaven" could not satisfy those whose souls were filled with the discontent of earth. But when once the heart has found its rest in God, and all its murmurings are hushed in sweet submission to His will, there is peace in believing and joy in the Holy Ghost, and a hallowed confidence in the kind providence of Him who hath done all things well.

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