

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### PRESBYTERIAN PIONEERS.

MR. EDITOR.—It must be a matter of interest to our Church at large, and especially to the future historian of Presbyterianism in Canada, to obtain any information available respecting the origin of congregations in various parts of the country.

Several years ago, when conversing on this subject with a very dear friend and devoted minister of our Church—the late Rev. Alex. McLean, of Nairn, in the Presbytery of Hamilton—he informed me that he had in his possession a collection of old family documents, several of them bearing on the state of Presbyterianism at the end of the last and beginning of the present century; and he left them to my care to extract all that bore on the subject, and to preserve those facts which would be of interest to our Church.

The box of papers contains chiefly private letters to Mr. McLean's grandfather, Alexander McLean, and from him and his son Robert to their relatives and other friends, several of them speaking of the destitution of religious ordinances, and of their efforts to obtain supplies. These letters extend from 1783, to 1806, and a few of later date to Rev. Alex. McLean.

I find by these, and especially by a letter from Thomas Crichton, Esq., of Paisley, to Rev. Alex. McLean, in January, 1842, then a student at Edinburgh University, that his grandfather, Alex. McLean, and others, emigrated from Paisley in March, 1774, and settled at Elizabethtown, county of Leeds, or Eastern District, and that they were for many years without a pastor or regular means of grace. This Alexander McLean was evidently one of the leading men of the community, and related to Alexander Morris, the father of the Hon. William Morris, of Brockville. There are three commissions from three different governors in 1808, 1817, and 1839, to John McLean, —father of Rev. A. McLean—as Lieutenant, Captain, and Major in the Leeds Militia, with muster roll, etc. Among the letters there is one from Rev. Thomas Beveridge, dated Argyle, York State, 20th February, 1795, warning the Presbyterians against giving up the testimony of the Secession Church of Scotland, and advising them not to be led away by every wandering preacher that might come their way, about whose soundness in the faith they could have no evidence, saying that he and his friends were considered narrow and bigoted, and complaining that no ministers were willing to come from Scotland to Elizabethtown; also a letter from Rev. David Goodwillie, Barnet, U.S. (31st Oct., 1795), of the Associate Church, recommending the Presbyterians of that settlement to form themselves into societies for worship; speaking also of the difficulty of getting a minister from Scotland; and a letter from Rev. James Marr, of the Associate Reformed Presbytery of Washington, dated Galway, U.S., 24th Dec., 1797, in which he speaks of the correspondence about supply of gospel ordinances, and the great difficulties in the way of sending them such supplies, and complaining of the apostasy of many from the truth. On 17th July, 1797, Robert McLean, son of Alexander, writes to a friend in Paisley—an extract of which letter was published in the "Missionary Magazine," January, 1800—bemoaning the spiritual destitution of the Presbyterian settlers, and that all their attempts to obtain a pastor had been in vain; also noting the number of sects in Canada. He writes again on 13th Sept., 1798, stating that they had been favored with a visit the previous year by Rev. David Goodwillie, of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, to whom they had some years before applied for assistance, but had failed to get any regular supply. He also states that a missionary of the Dutch Reformed Church, of York State, had lately visited them, with whom they were greatly pleased, and that they had the prospect of getting a minister from that Church.

I find a petition dated March, 1796, by Alex. McLean and others, to the Honorable the Representatives of Upper Canada in parliament, complaining that the marriages performed by no Protestant minister but Episcopalians were legal or valid, and praying that this great injustice might be removed from the statute books of the Province, declaring their loyalty to the British Crown, but claiming that there should be no political distinction on account of differences of religion, as that was a personal matter between each individual and his God, and that such distinction tended to alienate the people from the government and from each other.

This shows one of the grievances which the founders of Presbyterianism in Canada had to endure, long since happily removed.

Next comes a subscription paper dated Elizabethtown, 5th Nov., 1799, for the support of ordinances among them, being \$97 for occasional supply.

In March, 1800, John Holms, a nephew of Alex. McLean, writes from Paisley that he will send him Gray's Sermons, Booth's "Reign of Grace," and Guthrie's works. It would appear that they had taken the advice previously given, and met regularly for worship on the Sabbath, the exercises being reading the scriptures, singing and prayer, and probably reading published sermons and other devotional works—at least this was done years after by the elders in East Toronto township when the pastor was absent.

In May, 1800, Alexander Morris writes from Paisley that two missionaries of the London Missionary Society had sailed for Canada in April previous—one to be settled at Quebec, the other at Montreal—and that he had made application to the Edinburgh Society, and hoped to get a minister sent out next spring (1801), and that he was negotiating with Mr. Alex. Morrison to go out; asking the people at the same time whether they would be willing to pay his passage, and what they could give for his support.

On 19th Sept., 1800, Robert McLean writes home that there were but two Presbyterian ministers between Kingston, and Lower Canada, a distance of 130 miles, and that they needed the attention of the Missionary Societies of Scotland more than Quebec or Montreal, as in both of those places there were Episcopalian and Presbyterian ministers. A memorandum by Alex. McLean about 1800 states that the Reformed Presbytery of Scotland contained 15 ministers; Burghers, 115; Anti-Burghers, 117; Relief Synod, 5-Presbyteries and 55 congregations. Synod of Ireland, 38; Secession, 22; Anti-Burghers in Pennsylvania, N. America, 10; do. in Nova Scotia, 2.

I find a petition endorsed by Rev. Alex. McLean as in 1800 from his grandfather, Alex. McLean, and others, to the classis or Presbytery of the Dutch Reformed Church at Albany, York State, for supply of preaching, and declaring their determination to adhere to the Presbyterian Church, addressed to Rev. Dr. Romeyn, the clerk of the Presbytery, and stating that they had been organized about three weeks before by Rev. Robert McDowell and Rev. Wm. Manley, their missionaries, and that if they could obtain the services of the Rev. R. McDowell they would have a numerous congregation; that other denominations, especially the Episcopalians, were endeavoring to draw away their people; and pleading with the Presbytery to send them a missionary. This shows that all their efforts to obtain a minister from Scotland and from the Associate Church in the United States had failed, hence they turn to another faithful and then more flourishing branch of the Presbyterian Church in the States.

There follows a letter from Dr. Romeyn, 22nd July, 1800, stating that he had laid their application for supply of preaching before the Classis at Albany, and as the result recommending to them Rev. Thomas Kirby as a worthy minister. Next, a letter from Rev. Thos. Kirby, dated Staten Island, 2nd Dec., 1800, promising to be with them by next spring. This letter is addressed to the Consistory of the Dutch Reformed Church of Augusta, Yonge, and Elizabethtown, Upper Canada, showing that the congregation embraced at least three stations in as many townships. And in proof that they were using proper means for the support of the expected pastor, we have an old yellow subscription paper, dated 17th Sept., 1800, to assist Thomas Kirby to build a dwelling-house if he should become their minister, containing over £33, worth probably four times as much as now, and another subscription for his support. (A previous subscription is dated 4th Nov., 1799, for the support of a minister should one be appointed for the Dutch Reformed Church, in Elizabethtown, and ranging from £2 to £6, a very liberal subscription in those days.) Soon after, Alex. McLean writes Dr. Romeyn that Rev. Thomas Kirby was laboring acceptably among them. On 9th Jan., 1801, Rev. Robert McDowell writes from Fredericksburgh to Alex. McLean—Mr. McDowell being one of the first Presbyterian ministers settled in Western Canada. The letter is only on private and family matters. Another letter from the same to do. same, 14th July, 1801, and another from do. to do. 9th Aug., 1801, contain reflections on religious topics. Then come the minutes of a meeting of Consistory or Session at Elizabethtown, 12th Sept., 1806; present four elders and four deacons;

Alexander Morris, president, and Robert McLean, clerk. They resolved to meet every Sabbath for public worship at the house of Alex. McLean, to conduct worship by singing psalms or hymns, reading the scriptures, and prayer, and two of their number were appointed at a meeting of Consistory to speak to an erring brother who had for some time neglected to attend Sabbath services; thus performing the functions of a Church. Put up with the same paper, but without date, is a subscription paper by members of the Church of England, to assist in the support of the Rev. R. McDowell, signed by Captain John Jones, Joseph Jessup and others—an interesting document, as showing the harmony existing among the early settlers and their desire to enjoy the means of grace, even though not in connection with their own Church. They say it is to have the gospel of salvation through Christ preached to them.

The latest document of the old records is a subscription paper dated Dec., 1808, for the support of Rev. R. Sheriff as pastor, should he accept their call, the amount being \$286. I find another interesting letter from Thomas Crichton, Esq., Paisley, father of J. Crichton, of Caledon West, who came to Canada about 1819, and an elder of Dr. Burns, dated Paisley, 12 May, 1842, to Alex. McLean, student, congratulating him that he had been appointed to collect books for the library of Queen's College, Kingston, referring also to the opening of that College, February, 1842, and the addresses then given by Rev. Principal Liddel and the Hon. William Morris, Mr. McLean's cousin, and stating that as a mark of his interest in that Institution he had selected forty volumes from his own library as a donation to it, and expressing very great interest in the success of the College; also another letter from Mr. Crichton, dated Paisley, 22nd Oct., 1842, to Rev. Alex. McLean after his return to Canada, and about to get license at Perth. I find also an interesting essay on the rise and history of the McLeans, written by Alex. McLean in 1841, while a student at Edinburgh; and other essays written there, extending from 1837 to 1842.

The Rev. Alex. McLean was one of the most amiable and devoted ministers of our Church, ever seeking to lead sinners to the Saviour and to edify God's people, and he was greatly blessed in his labors. Our interviews, especially at Communion seasons, were most refreshing to my own soul, and those seasons I will never forget till we meet again in our Father's house above.

We have no general history of the rise of Presbyterianism in the Dominion. The only thing as yet available is the excellent report drawn up in 1866 for the Synod of Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland, by James Croil, Esq., which, however, relates only to the origin of certain congregations; and two or three articles in the memoirs of Dr. Burns, letters of Andrew Bell, from Perth, Ont., and a few stray articles in magazines and papers. But no manual on the rise of Presbyterianism in Canada has yet been prepared. I trust that the great want will soon be supplied by some one of the professors undertaking a collection of facts and documents and weaving the whole into a connected history, with original documents, when very valuable, given in an appendix. I understand that Rev. Professor Gregg has undertaken such a history; if so, it will doubtless be well executed. This work has been well done by the Presbyterian and other Churches in the States; and as so few now remain who have even met with the founders of our Church, there is no time to be lost. If these lines supply any facts or hints to the writer of such a history I will be amply rewarded. ROBERT WALLACE.

Toronto, February, 1878.

### THE GREAT COMMISSION.

MATT. XXVIII. 19, 20.

To whom was this commission given? And in what capacity did they to whom it was given receive it? To the first question the answer is found in verse 16. The commission was addressed to the eleven disciples (Mathetai), and in Acts i. 2, 8, and Mark xvi. 14 they are seen to be the eleven apostles.

In what capacity, then, did they receive it? Was it *qua* apostles or *qua* disciples? Our High Church controversialists find here what seems to them an impenetrable argument in favor of Prelacy. The argument may be stated thus:

The commission was given to the eleven *qua* apostles, and the promise of Christ's presence with them