

## Our Contributors.

### SOME SHORT COMMENTS ON SIMEON'S FIVE RULES.

BY KNOXIAN.

The Rev. Charles Simeon, M.A., was a clergyman who thought more about keeping his unruly member in order than he thought of getting a Ph.D. It would have grieved him more to find himself saying anything bitter against his brother than to find his name left off a standing committee. All ministers are not so weak in this respect as Simeon was. Simeon did not think it was clever to sneer at everything he could not do himself, and say dirty things about men because he could not imitate their success. That was not Simeon's style. To help to keep himself right in his relations to his fellow-men he framed five rules. Like Daniel Webster's speeches, every word in them weighs a ton. If these rules were universally adopted and kept, they would do much more for the country than a Scott Act convention. Here is the first one:

**TO HEAR AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE OF WHATEVER IS TO THE PREJUDICE OF OTHERS.**

The operation of this rule would make a revolution in society. Too many people try to hear as much as possible that is injurious to others. They seem to think that the ear was made to scoop in all the gossip and scandal and slander in the neighbourhood. They turn themselves into a kind of perambulating sewer, and are always ready to receive the local supply of verbal filth. These people are morally as bad as the worst scandal-monger on the ground that the receiver is as bad as the thief. If no one listened to scandal, the scandal-monger's vile vocation would be gone. The no demand, no supply, law works here as well as anywhere else.

**RULE 2: TO BELIEVE NOTHING OF THE KIND UNTIL ABSOLUTELY FORCED TO IT.**

This is exactly the opposite of what many people do. They believe the very worst story the moment it is heard. There may be absolutely no evidence; the evidence may be of the flimsiest character imaginable—it might utterly break down under five minutes' cross-examination by a good lawyer; the story may be intrinsically improbable or even contradictory, and yet there are people who gulp it all down without a moment's hesitation. They won't even suspend judgment. They pass sentence on the first hearing of one side. What fine conceptions of British fair play such people have. Does a man who believes a vile story without evidence not draw a little on his own moral inwardness, and conclude unconsciously that because *he* himself would have done the same thing under the same circumstances the other man must be guilty? This point is worth thinking about

**RULE 3: TO DRINK IN THE SPIRIT OF NO ONE WHO CIRCULATES AN ILL REPORT.**

Any number of people drink in this vile spirit who would make a great fuss if they saw anybody drink a thimbleful of cider or home-made wine. The spirit of the slanderer who stabs in the dark is just as devilish and deadly as the spirit called Alcohol. Some people, who profess to be very anxious to exterminate the spirit called Alcohol, have no special dread of the spirit which makes and circulates evil reports. Observance of this rule would keep young men from standing in crowds on street corners listening to town gossip. It would also keep some men not quite young from lounging in corner groceries listening to what they are pleased to call the news. It is impossible to listen for any length of time to people who circulate ill reports without drinking in more or less of their spirit. Keep away from them. There are always people to associate with who can talk without retailing ill reports. If there is a community in which nobody can converse without circulating such reports, perhaps the best treatment for it would be to place a ton of dynamite in its centre, and send it through to the other side.

**RULE 4: TO MODERATE THE UNKINDNESS EXPRESSED TOWARD OTHERS.**

This is a good rule, but putting it into operation is a very risky kind of business. The risk arises in this way. A first-class traducer charges some absent man with a serious offence. You feel that a cowardly attack is being made on one not there to defend himself, and you put in a word for the absent man.

In a moment the traducer turns on you, and tries to make it appear that you sympathize with the alleged wrong-doing. A skilful, practised old slanderer can make it very unpleasant for you in that way. If the absent man for whom you put in a good word was charged with dishonesty, the traducer insinuates that you are not any too honest yourself, or you would not say anything about the absentee. If the charge was intemperance, he never fails to say, "You drink yourself." Still it is generally best to take the risks, and stand up for an absent man, if you know him to be a good man. Those vile creatures who attack people behind their backs are nearly all cowards, and you need never be afraid to take any reasonable risk against a coward.

**RULE 5: TO BELIEVE ALWAYS THAT IF THE OTHER SIDE WERE HEARD A DIFFERENT ACCOUNT OF THE MATTER WOULD BE GIVEN.**

This is a golden rule. Its adoption would be a great thing for Presbytery meetings. A member rises and says something about apparent mismanagement by the Home Mission Committee. He states a case. It looks a little like mismanagement when you hear one side of it. Does anybody suppose that if Dr. Cochrane or Mr. Warden were there, they could not put a new face on the matter by giving *all* the facts of the case? Of course they would. The Augmentation Fund has suffered in just this way. Somebody not friendly to the fund finds a case that at first blush seems like a violation of the rules. He tells the Presbytery all he knows about it, which is simply what anybody can learn from the mere figures in the returns. There is, perhaps, nobody there who knows *all* the facts. Were Mr. Macdonnell present, he could straighten the thing out in two minutes. Such cases always hurt the fund in the estimation of that unfortunately too large class of people who never reflect that if the other side were given, and *all* the facts known, the matter would seem entirely different.

Moral: Always wait until you hear the other side. If you have nothing to do with the matter, and it is not edifying, there is a better rule still:

**DON'T HEAR ANY SIDE.**

### CHARLES STREET CHURCH, TORONTO.

THE REV. JOHN NEIL, B.A.

In the neat, commodious and comfortable church on Charles Street, Toronto, on a recent Sabbath, the pastor, Rev. John Neil, B.A., preached a comprehensive and impressive discourse, founded on Psalm cxxx. 1, of which the following is an outline:

This psalm is a ladder, one end of which reaches down to man as he lies in the depths of spiritual distress, and the other rests on the very summit of spiritual power and joy. It begins with the feeble cry of the man who feels that God is afar off, and it ends with an expression of confidence in Him, and an invitation for others to trust Him. The subject for this morning is entwined in the words, "Lord, from the depths to Thee I cry." The context shows us that the writer means the depths of sin, that he has been convicted of sin, that he has obtained such a view of God's holiness as enables him to see his own pollution. He is in deep spiritual distress, and all he can do is to cry to God for help.

The thought I wish to develop and illustrate in connection with this text is the necessity of being in the depths; that is, of having a deep sense of our own sinfulness. The cause of a great deal of the shallow and rank religious life which we have at the present day, and which we have had in all ages of the world, is owing to the fact that men don't realize what sin is in the sight of God, and how thoroughly sin has corrupted their own nature. We judge sin from the effects it is producing in the world, and certainly these are sufficiently disastrous to cause us to hate and shun it. But we don't view it in the light of the cross of Christ, and in the light of the holiness of God, for sin is in its essence a denial of the holiness of God. It strikes a blow at every attribute God possesses; and until we see it in that light we cannot form any correct conception of its true character.

And, in the second place, we don't bring sin home to ourselves. We can see sin in others, but we are slow to realize that we are sunk in sin ourselves. "All men think all men sinners but themselves." Now, deep conviction of sin consists in forming some conception of its true character, and also the hold which it has upon our own natures. It is necessary that we should have such a conviction of sin.

In order that we may appreciate the blessings of salvation, it is only when I know that I am vile, that I will consent to be washed in the fountain that is open for all uncleanness. It is only when I know I am ill that I will call in the aid of the Physician. Blessed are the poor in spirit, is placed first amongst the beatitudes, because it is only the poor in spirit who will come to Christ, and the more sensible we are of our own weakness and poverty, the more we will appreciate the strength and riches which Christ can give.

A deep conviction of sin helps us in our Christian life. It gives us a hatred and dread of sin, and we shun it as we

would a serpent, by which we have once been bitten. It gives us a knowledge of our own weakness, and of the power of the devil; and we guard against entering the conflict unarmed and unguarded. If we realize that we have been snatched from the very gates of hell, we will not camp down on the very borders of Sodom, but we will at once flee to the mountains.

A deep conviction of sin makes more efficient workers for Christ. Because the deeper our sense of our own unworthiness, the greater our gratitude to Him who has rescued us; and the more anxious we will be to serve Him, for love and gratitude constitute the motive power of all true service.

It enables us to feel more deeply for others, and in that way sympathize with them when we see them in the depths. We have been there ourselves. That is one reason why men, not angels, were chosen to preach the Gospel. The angels, in some respects, have more knowledge, and could speak with more eloquence, but they have never been in the depths man has.

It enables us to speak with confidence of the power of Christ to save. He saved me, and He can save you. This was the argument Paul used when speaking to those who were in despair: This is the faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. He saved me, a bloody persecutor—He can surely save you.

It is only the man who has been in the depths, and knows his utter unworthiness, who is in a position to be filled with the Spirit, who is absolutely necessary in order that we may serve God. The cry of the man who has been in the depths always is: Give me of Thine own wherewith to serve Thee. It was when Isaiah obtained such a view of God's holiness, and his own unworthiness, that he cried out: Woe is me; I am undone; I am a man of unclean lips, that he was prepared for service. It was when Peter cried out: Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, that Christ said to him: I will make thee a fisher of men. It is when we realize our own nothingness that God uses us.

These are some of the advantages which are gained by being in the depths; but let us remember we are not compelled to remain there. All we have to do is to cry to God, it is all we can do, and He will come to us and place our feet on the Rock, and establish our goings, for with Him there is forgiveness, that He may be feared.

The congregation, stately worshipping in Charles Street Church, is growing in numbers, influence and usefulness. It possesses a flourishing Sabbath school and various other organizations, intended to develop and sustain Christian life and beneficent activity.

Like many other prosperous congregations, it had a humble origin. That most indefatigable of all Canadian Home Missionaries, Dr. Burns, deserves the credit of founding Charles Street congregation. Its origin may be traced to occasional services held by him, while he was pastor of Knox Church. These occasional services were held in a house at the corner of Bloor and Yonge Streets, although it was several years after that a regular service was established. In 1857 Sabbath school instruction was begun in a house near the head of Jarvis Street, occupied at that time by Rev. Dr. Gregg, and also by Mr. James Brown in his house on Gloucester Street. Afterward both were amalgamated, and the united school continued to meet in the Town Hall, Yorkville, where for some time prior to 1867 regular services were held. In that year, under the sanction of Toronto Presbytery, a congregation was organized, with twenty-three members. The first communion was dispensed by Rev. John MacTavish, now of Inverness, Scotland.

The church, a plain, but neat and tasteful, example of English Gothic, was built the following year, and the Rev. John Campbell, M.A., was ordained the first pastor of Charles Street Church, on 3rd November, 1868. In 1873 Mr. Campbell was appointed professor in the Presbyterian College Montreal; and in the early part of 1875, the Rev. R. D. Fraser, now of St. Paul's, Bowmanville, was inducted to the pastoral charge. Owing to ill health in his family, Mr. Fraser resigned. He was succeeded in the pastorate of Charles Street Church by the Rev. John Hogg, who was inducted July 4, 1879. About five years afterward, Mr. Hogg's health being much impaired, he retired from his charge, and was succeeded by the present pastor, the Rev. John Neil, B.A.

Mr. Neil is a native Canadian, having been born in what is now the county of Dufferin. He received his preliminary training in the Collegiate Institute, Toronto, whence he proceeded to the University, and subsequently to Knox College for the study of theology. After two sessions in Knox, he went to Edinburgh, where, as is customary with Canadian students going abroad, he took a somewhat eclectic course. Returning to Canada, Mr. Neil was licensed in 1882, and in December of the same year was ordained to the ministry, and inducted to the pastoral charge of Nassagaweya, in the Presbytery of Guelph. Having received a cordial and unanimous call to Charles Street, Toronto, he was inducted on the 18th December, 1884.