

## The Record.

Toronto, January, 1860.

PASTORAL ADDRESS BY THE SYNOD OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CANADA;—DRAWN UP AND ISSUED BY THE COMMITTEE APPOINTED AT ITS MEETING IN JUNE, 1859.

*To the congregations under our charge.*

Dearly beloved brethren in the Lord;—Your pastors and representative elders, when last convened in Synod, appointed us in their name to address the various congregations of our church, expressing by letter as it were to all our members and adherents, the affectionate concern of your spiritual overseers for your souls, and those of your families. When meeting from time to time in a Synodical capacity, our attention is necessarily called to a variety of matters pertaining to the external order of the House of God; and although it is our study on such occasions, by frequent prayer mingled with our conferences, and by devoting some of our conferences themselves specially to this object,—to impress on the minds of one another, the primary duty of looking well to the advancement of practical godliness in our own souls, and among all the flock; yet, we feel as if more were called for than this; and that by an occasional direct appeal to you in the present form, we should seek to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, and manifest our longings of heart after your spiritual well-being.

Permit us then, on behalf of the Synod of our church, to salute you all, wishing you grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, from the Lord Jesus Christ, and from the Seven Spirits before the throne.

If a few months have elapsed since our appointment as a committee, the time now found convenient for us, is probably not the least suitable and acceptable to you,—giving us the opportunity of greeting you at the commencement of another year, and the advantage of calling you to solemn recollection at a season always regarded as propitious for the review of the past part of life, and the consideration of our spiritual state. The long-suffering of God has permitted you to see the close of another year, and to enjoy through its successive months the bounties of His indulgent providence, and the means and appliances of His Grace. Sabbath after Sabbath, the sanctuary gates have been opened to you; and many of you, we trust, have rejoiced as it has been said to you, Let us go up to the

house of the Lord. Some of you, with whose present disadvantages we sympathise, may have had to lament silent Sabbaths, while no sanctuary door has been opened to you, or, by the hand of God upon you by affliction, you have been prevented from entering it. You have thought, not without sadness, of the times when you went with the multitude who kept holyday. But all of you have possessed—and how precious is the privilege!—the blessed word of God; and permit us to ask of you, whether it has been put to use as it ought. Happy if you who have enjoyed both the public and private means, have, like the Bereans of the Apostolic time, searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so; diligently comparing what you hear with what you read! What cause of content with them also, who have found in this word of God the chosen companion of their solitude, and have been revived by it in all their straits! Happy, if they can say with one, "Thy words were found and I did eat them;" or with another, "Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage."

Suffer us to remind you of what those of you who are privileged to wait on the ordinances are often reminded of, by your pastors, that earnest prayerful study of the word is indispensable to your spiritual life and growth in grace; and that the Gospel, however abundantly enjoyed, or the word, however frequently read, may fail to profit you, if not mixed with faith in the reading and the hearing. There are few counsels, however, which we would more anxiously offer than that you should peruse frequently the sacred page, as well as attend on the house of God—taking care that time be regularly secured for this, and resisting the temptations to substitute for such scripture-reading, the perusal of publications merely gratifying to a vain curiosity, or, if useful in their place, at best ministering to secular and political ends. We desire to see a population intelligent, and, by all means, well read in whatever kind of literature may form them for their business as men, and for the right use of their liberties and privileges as citizens. But it is needful that we should warn you that your first and greatest business is to labour for the bread which perishes not, and that your highest citizenship is the heavenly. We therefore beseech you to see to it that nothing supplant, and nothing hinder, your diligent communing with the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus. And we beseech you, and specially the younger among you, to guard against having your tastes vitiated, and your hearts alienated from serious and useful application, by familiarity with those who

by speech or by writing, seek to fill your minds with vain and worldly thoughts, or pander to your meanest appetites and passions. "Search the Scriptures," said the Saviour. It is not enough to look at them, or to bear the reading of them by others. Be in earnest to secure the pearl of great price hid in the field of revelation. Invoke the Spirit to open your understanding to understand the Scriptures. They whose minds the Saviour thus opens, will also have occasion to exclaim with the disciples, How did our hearts burn within us? Why, dear brethren, is there so little of that experience on the part of Bible readers, or Gospel hearers? Why is it that so few are ready to say with the Psalmist of Israel, "I rejoiced in Thy word as one that findeth great spoil?" Is it not that the heart has not yet been effectually touched—that the scales have not yet fallen from the moral vision,—that we realise not the value of the boon in our hands,—that we allow inferior interests and objects to absorb our time; and that religion, with too many, has the subordinate, and not the highest place? And why, again, dear brethren, can any of you be content that it should be so? or rather,—for our object is to confirm and comfort, as well as warn,—we will ask those of you who know and love the truth, what is it which makes the word and ordinances so precious to you? We wish you should tell others—we appeal to you who know the grace of the Lord Jesus, if from your experience you cannot declare to those who know not yet the secret, that truly to seek the Lord is not vain, and that His service is perfect liberty. We do not urge religious diligence simply as a duty—a task: we recommend it to old and young as an enjoyment. If to any of you sacred duty is irksome, and religious observances rather what you can bear with, than delight in; we fear it is that your souls are yet in bondage, or in that state which the apostle describes as a being "under the law." It may be that you look on God, as yet, rather in the light of an austere master, than a loving parent; and we know that we may despair of you finding religion an enjoyment, till your state in this respect is changed, and your feelings with it. Believe, we beseech you, the Gospel message. You are called to the fellowship of Christ. The Saviour offers rest to your souls—rest in a reliance on his death, and an acceptance of his righteousness. You are called to the communion of the Holy Ghost. Yielding yourselves to his strivings,—consenting to the gospel call,—you will pass from death to life. Made free by the Son of God, you will be free indeed! Your slavish dread, or distant, unconfiding feeling towards you