

THE

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## Pastoral Letter.

BY THE MODERATOR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

TO THE SESSIONS AND CONGREGATIONS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA:

*Beloved Brethren :*

The last General Assembly laid upon its Moderator the duty of issuing to the members of the Church, during the Ecclesiastical year, a Pastoral Letter in regard to certain evils, the existence of which had been disclosed in the Report of the Assembly's Committee on the State of Religion within the bounds.

To the fulfilment of this duty, I now address myself; seeking, first of all, guidance from the All-wise God; and praying that the counsels which He shall enable me to supply, may, by the teaching and grace of the Holy Spirit, tend to the correction and removal of the evils complained of: for "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

I venture to call your attention, in the outset, to the supreme importance of cultivating Religion in the family. In the social economy Providence has given the first place to the family. The family takes rank even before the Church. The Church is simply an aggregation of Christian families. A chief design of the institution of the family is the propagation and maintenance of religion; the perpetuation in society of religious knowledge, of Christian truth, of virtue, of charity, and of good-will. One of the Hebrew Psalmists recognized this design in words familiar to us all: "He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in

Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children." Society could not be Christianized, in other words, permeated, with purity and goodness and love, but through the example and influence of the families of which it is made up.

I have, therefore, the strongest conviction that the efficient maintenance and extension of our Church in this country, will largely and chiefly depend on the Christian faithfulness of our Heads of families. If the fathers and mothers in our congregations fail to honour God in their households; if Bible reading is neglected, if the Sabbath is not remembered and kept holy, if family worship is not observed, if the instruction of our children in Christian truth and duty is not practised, the result will be that in a few years our Church, largely composed of those who are now its children and young people, will be ignorant and superficial, and that there will be no sufficient foundation upon which to build up congregations true to Christ and to His truth, true to the noble traditions of the Church, and to its great mission in the land. What can be hoped for the children of parents whose households are unblessed by a single religious observance, but that they will grow up in godlessness, dishonouring their baptism and disgracing the Church?

Reports, seemingly well-founded, were made to the last General Assembly to the effect that in some of the families of our church, Christian worship and religious instruction are wholly neglected; while in other families, these duties,