

# The Presbyterian Review.

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Toronto, March 7, 1895.

## Presbyterial Control.

THE debate in the Toronto Presbytery on the application of a section of the congregation at Parkdale for power to form a new congregation has brought up the question of Presbyterial jurisdiction and authority over congregations. The genius of the Presbyterian system is its gradual devolution of authority from the General Assembly through the stated courts and that fact colors and gives character to the system. The church is built on a democratic, popular basis, but authority is safeguarded in a manner which has approved itself to the sense of justice and propriety of the most liberal-minded, and independent nation of modern times. It must not be supposed that the authority of the courts over congregations is merely nominal. If it were so, it would be unreal and worse than useless. Those who stand up for proper exercise of that authority are undoubtedly true defenders of Church principle, and are rendering service more likely to be enduring in its good results than if they were to yield to the pressure of the hour and abandon their just contention. But when this is said, it must not be inferred that those who favored the request of the Parkdale people are held as having given up the rights of the Presbytery to popular clamor. Both sides to the debate acted within their proper rights; but what we wish to emphasize is that the Presbytery has a duty to discharge in the premises and that that duty devolves upon them, as parties to the case and not as if they were a mere advisory board. The minority and the majority at Parkdale must reckon with the Presbytery as with a party having a real interest in the disposal of the case. It is the Presbytery, not the congregation, which must decide, all loyal Presbyterians will acknowledge the status of the court.

This power imposed upon the Presbytery a grave responsibility. As a rule the needs of a community are best known to the residents of that community, and when men of good repute, of approved faithfulness to the church, and of high Christian character urge a

certain course, the Presbytery which rejects the course so recommended can only justify such action by considerations of the very highest import. There are few more onerous duties than to decide between two opposing elements in an application such as has been made by the Parkdale brethren, and they seem happily now to recognize that fact, for, while there were strong feelings ventilated during the protracted proceedings at the Presbytery, a better understanding seems to prevail now, and a disposition to accept cheerfully whatever may ultimately be decided by the mature judgment of the Church courts.

## Foreign Missions Collection.

The collection for Foreign Missions has been called for the third Sabbath in March. It seems to be scarcely necessary to draw special attention to the fact, for never before has there been more real interest in the work of the Foreign Mission Board evinced than during the past year. This is reason for much rejoicing. The visit of Rev. Dr. G. L. MacKay, the marvelous veteran of Formosa; and of other missionaries fresh from their fields of arduous labor, and the active policy of the Board, conducted by energetic, able and sympathetic officers, all have tended to arouse ministers and people to a most gratifying pitch of interest. Let the result be seen when the collection plate goes around on the 17th inst. Gifts laid on the altar, accompanied with prayer and faith will prove to be good seed sown in the hearts of the givers, and in those of the Christless heathen.

## Reading Sermons.

In the *Young Man*, Dr. Parker is writing a series of letters to young preachers. In the March number he warns them against "the unnatural and evil practice" of reading their sermons in the ordinary course of their ministry. "You will say that this is strong language," he continues. "So it is, but it is the language of strong conviction. Having tried both methods, the method of free speech and the method of reading, I can give an opinion founded upon experience, and I now give it as entirely favorable to free speech. The pulpit will never take its proper place until the habit of reading sermons on ordinary occasions is entirely abandoned; it is official, pedantic, and heartless, and ought to be put down. Let me try to win you to the side of free speech; in other words, to the side of earnestness, reality and power." Dr. Parker suggests that young preachers should write their sermons with the greatest possible care and industry, and then put them away before preaching. When the sermon is written he advises the preacher to "strike out all the long words and all the superfine expressions; let them go, without murmuring! Particularly strike out all such words as 'methinks I see,' 'cherubim and seraphim,' 'the glinting stars,' 'the steller heavens,' 'the circumambient air,' 'the rustling wings,' 'the pearly gates,' 'the glistening dew,' 'the meandering rills,' and 'the crystal battlements of heaven.' I know how pretty they look to the young eye, and how sweetly they sound in the young ear; but let them go without a sigh. If you have spoken of God as the Deity, put your pen through the word 'Deity,' and write 'God' in its stead; if you are tempted to tell your hearers that Jonah spent a portion of his life under the care of a submarine custodian, don't hesitate to say plainly that it was only