

## Our Contributors.

### THE CHURCH IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

BY REV. W. L. CLAY, B.A.

Presbyterianism came to British Columbia with the traders and officers of the Hudson Bay Company, in the early decades of the century. The Presbyterian Church, with accustomed deliberateness followed, Peter-like, "afar off." The inevitable happened; and many, born within her pale, of Scottish and Irish parentage, feeling themselves bereft of parental attention, sought as their foster mother the Church of England, in whose fold their children have found a natural and permanent home.

In the Canadian Church that indomitable missionary, pastor, professor and author, Dr. Burns, was persistent in advocating that a man be sent to minister to the scattered Presbyterians of the Pacific Province. Accordingly, in 1859, the Rev. D.H. MacVicar, now the honored Principal of Montreal College, who had been graduated from Knox College the previous year, was asked to undertake the mission. Other calls being before him at the same time this was declined; and the honor of laying the foundations of organized Presbyterianism on this coast passed to the Irish Church. For before another appointment could be made in Canada, the Rev. John Hall from the "Emerald Isle" began a short but fruitful ministry in Victoria.

A year after Mr. Hall's arrival the Canadian Church began work on the mainland the Rev. Robert Jamieson being her first missionary. At New Westminster Mr. Jamieson continued to labor, except for a period spent in organizing a congregation at Nanaimo, with signal success until 1884, when failing health compelled his retirement. In the twenty-two years of his ministry he did much to extend and guide the missionary operations of the Church throughout the Province, and to counsel the younger men who from time to time came to take part in this arduous ministry with him.

The Church of Scotland, also, did much for her sons and daughters among the mountains and forests of British Columbia—sending both able men and liberal sums of money to maintain ordinances among the settlers. The first missionary from the mother Church was the Rev. Mr. Nimmo, who was afterwards followed by Messrs. Somerville, MacGregor, Clyde, McElmon, Dunn, Murray, Stephen and others, of whom some remain until this present but some are fallen asleep.

The year 1882 marked a new epoch in the work of the Canadian Church in this Province. The indefatigable convener of the Home Mission Committee having, by appointment of the General Assembly, visited the Province and become acquainted with its needs and possibilities, was enabled to inaugurate a more aggressive policy of missionary enterprise.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men (and churches), which, taken at its flood leads on to fortune."

In the history of the Church in British Columbia there have been two such tides. The first, when the vast wealth of forest and mine began to attract the people, she failed to take advantage of to her irreparable loss. The second, not quite so full perhaps, was when the C.P.R. began to thrust its civilizing hand across prairies, over mountains and through forests. This the Church was sufficiently wise to embrace, with the result that the evils of former neglect have to some extent been counteracted.

One result of the vigorous prosecution of the work in the developing period that followed the construction of the railway, was the erection, by act of the General Assembly of 1887, of the Presbytery of Columbia comprising 8 ministers with their congregations. In 1888 the Presbytery submitted its first statistical report in which the number of ministers is set down as 9 with 45 churches and mission stations and 245 communicants, raising for all purposes \$11,024.

To follow the Presbytery of Columbia through its brief but bright career, might be interesting but the good nature of my readers must not be imposed upon at too great a length.

The catterpillar dies only to find a more perfect life in the beautiful butterfly—so the Presbytery of Columbia simply attained a more perfect and useful existence when in 1892 its extensive field of operations was divided into three Presbyteries, which, with that of Calgary beyond the mountains, an offshoot from the Presbytery of Regina, were erected into the Synod of British Columbia. The first Moderator of the new Synod was the Rev. Donald MacRae, of St. Paul's Church, Victoria, to whose exhaustive review of "Mission Work in the Far West," contained in his retiring sermon published with the minutes of Synod, I am indebted for the historical facts of this paper.

The first year of its existence (1893) the Synod reported 131 churches and stations, 3,324 communicants and a total revenue of \$83,023, while this year the figures under the foregoing head stand respectively 164, 3,351 and \$85,331. This increase indicates a progress not sensational, but, in view of the general commercial depression, not discouraging. Since the organization of the Presbytery of Columbia a very large portion of the revenue of the Church has been spent in this Western Synod. Some may think an undue share has come to us, and ask what has been done with their contributions. The enquiry is just, and the answer—satisfactory, I trust—is that, in addition to paying the salaries of the missionaries employed, no fewer than 36 churches and 13 manses have been erected or purchased through the assistance of the Church and Manse Building Fund.

It should here be noted with pleasure that the various congregations, organized and supported throughout the Province by the churches of Scotland and Ireland, have, with the hearty concurrence of the parent churches, one by one, entered the Presbyterian Church in Canada bringing with them their very valuable property in churches and manses, and enriching her ministry with men of varied gifts and graces.

In addition to the work carried on among the white population, the Church has two Foreign Mission Agencies within the bounds of this Synod. In July 1891 the Rev. J. A. McDonald, B.A., who had been appointed by the Foreign Mission Committee to undertake mission work among the Indians of British Columbia, having carefully explored the whole field finally settled upon Alberni on the West coast of Vancouver Island as the centre of his operations. Assisted by his sister as teacher in a day school, and Miss Elizabeth Lister as Matron, Mr. McDonald entered zealously upon his work and soon won considerable influence over the Indians of the neighborhood. But severe trials were in store for the young mission. Miss Lister was soon obliged by ill health to withdraw and has since died. Then Miss McDonald was called home, and last year Mr. McDonald was compelled to withdraw from the field. Notwithstanding these losses the educational, industrial, and evangelistic work of the mission has gone forward with some encouragement. The missionary now in charge is Mr. M. Swartout, with whom are associated Miss Bella Johnston as matron, and Miss M. Minnes as teacher.

Our other mission is among the Chinese of whom there are about 8,000 in the Province. The greater number of these reside in the city of Victoria, where, in a quiet way, Christian work was begun in 1891 by members of St. Andrew's Church. In December of that year the Assembly's Foreign Mission Committee, after much seeking, invited the Rev. A. B. Winchester, of Berlin, Ont., to undertake the entire control of the work among the Chinese. Having accepted this call he arrived in Victoria early the following spring, where, while seeking for a suitable building for his work, he met Mr. C. A. Colman who had had some experience in evangelistic work among the Chinese of San

Francisco, and who could speak Cantonese fluently. Him would Mr. Winchester have to go forth with him, and together they opened an evening school on the borders of Chinatown in June, 1892. This school, in which the missionaries are assisted by volunteer teachers, is still in active operation and was never so prosperous as at present. Similar schools are being carried on at Vancouver, Westminster, Kaslo, Nelson, Union and Wellington without expense to the Foreign Mission Committee. In July of last year Mr. Colman visited the canneries of the Lower Fraser where a great many Chinamen find employment during the summer months. With the approval of the Committee Mr. Winchester is at present in China where he will spend some eight months with a view of acquiring greater fluency in the Cantonese dialect. Although our missionaries are as yet unable to point to their school, and to say with certainty of anyone, "This man was born there," evidences of the Divine blessing upon their self-denying labors are not wanting. Two of their pupils have professed their acceptance of the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, but none have yet been received into communion by any of our churches.

May this imperfect but too lengthy review of our Church's operations on the Pacific coast be to all who may be led to read it, a sort of Appii Forum message enabling them to thank God and take courage.

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### THE CATECHIST AND THE SACRAMENTS.

BY REV. JAMES FRASER.

Some months ago you published a paper which I sent you on the Catechist and the Sacraments. The present contribution is given in the form in which it was presented to the Presbytery of Montreal, as introducing a draft overture on the subject of the paper.

This overture contemplates the exercise by Presbyteries of the power to authorize catechists to administer the sacraments, subject to such conditions of place, time, and manner, as the Presbyteries may deem to be needed, in the interests of the gospel, in their Home Mission fields.

The main issue, shortly defined, is this: May the Church, through its organized governmental institutions, employ catechists to minister the sacraments, without ordination to the ministry?

Consider first the subject of ordination in relation to this question.

In the record of an ordination that of deacons (Acts vi: 3, 6) in the church in Jerusalem the apostles set the matter before the disciples in this manner. "Look ye out therefore from among you, seven men of good report, full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." The appointment itself is thus described: "And when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them." Again, there are certain qualifications enumerated as needed by the elder. The fact of the laying of hands on those chosen for the office is stated, and the practice of ordaining elders in the Church is declared in such terms as these: "And when they had appointed for them elders in every church" (Acts xiv: 23). Bearing also on the present question is the unique ordination of Barnabas and Paul, at Antioch, to a special work. To certain prophets and teachers "as they ministered to the Lord and fasted the Holy Ghost said, 'Separate me Barnabas and Paul for the work whereunto I have called them.' Then when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them they sent them away" (Acts xiii: 1-3). The return from their fulfilled mission is connected with the outgoing in these words: "And thence they sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled" (Acts xiv: 26). These examples clearly show that the meaning of ordination, in general, is appointment of men, approved

as qualified, to office or special work in the Church, for an undefined time or for a more definite season.

Now in this sense ordination, whatever the form of service be, is necessary to the performance of what may be called church or public acts. The worker must be chosen, and in some way recognized, as an authorized and duly appointed church worker. By this the individual is removed out of the category of an independent worker, and is appointed a regular agent under the Church organization. In this sense, the catechist who now preaches the gospel without ordination to the ministry has been ordained, whatever the form of service conducted by the presbytery at his appointment was. In this sense the appointment of the catechist hereafter (should this overture be adopted) to minister the sacraments in a certain place and for a certain time will be ordained. But neither for the exercise of his present power, nor for what may in the future be given him is the ordination or appointment of the catechist, ordination to the office of minister or pastor.

Consider now, in its relation to this question, the comparative importance of the Word and the Sacraments, in the economy of the gospel.

A kind of vague idea prevails that the Sacraments hold a higher place than the Word, because of their grave solemnity and also perhaps because they not only represent, but "seal and exhibit" the grace of the truths they represent. On these grounds it is held by some that they should not be administered except by one duly ordained to the ministry, not even by duly ordained elders, unless a minister be present to conduct the service. Without laying too much stress upon the fact, let it be observed that Paul was baptised (and most probably ordained in the sense of being appointed to his life work) by one who is called simply "a certain disciple" (Acts ix: 10). But surely the declaration of the apostle Paul beginning, "I thank God I baptised none of you save Crispus and Gaius" (1 Cor. i: 14, 17) will be accepted as decisive. It is true that the apostle's thankfulness to God, for not having baptised many of them, is conditioned on the very important statement, "lest any man should say that ye were baptised into my name." Notwithstanding this, it may be affirmed, as a conclusion within safe bounds, from this judgment of the apostle, that the word of the gospel, occupying the realm of bringing men into personal fellowship with God, stands supreme, and this in Christian as well as heathen lands, in our ordinary congregations as well as mission stations. But what is true of the Word, in regard to men coming into communion with God, is true of the Word also, as the means whereby Christians abide in God's love of complacency in them, for it is through the Word that they are made like God, the condition of such abiding. "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love" (John xv: 10). "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth" (John xvii: 17).

In all this there has been neither desire nor attempt to disparage the Sacraments. Their great importance, and our great need of them, are vindicated by their institution. Simply there is pointed out, and that very shortly, their place in the economy of the gospel as compared with the Word; and the conclusion is drawn that the same relation must exist between the ministrations, as subsists between the Sacrament and the Word themselves. To accept therefore the present practice of our Church, of employing catechists to minister the Word under the charge and control of the Church, is to fall in simpliciter with this overture. On the other hand to deny this supreme place to the Word, demands proof of the ground on which the denial rests. And even supposing it could be shown that the sacraments held the higher place, it would still have to be proved that the appointment of catechists to