

# THE PRESBYTERIAN

MARCH.

## PASTORAL LETTER

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SYNOD  
TO THE MEMBERS AND ADHERENTS  
OF THE

*Presbyterian Church of Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland.*

The attention of the Synod having been called, in the Report of the Committee on Christian Life and Work, to "the low spiritual life of certain Congregations, the neglect of ordinances on the part of many of the people, the large number over the age of eighteen years living unpledged to a Christian life, the prevalence of certain sins in the country, and the very small share of the labour borne by many of the Elders in caring for the souls of the people," it was resolved to "appoint the Moderator in concert with the Committee to issue a Pastoral Letter bearing on the evils referred to." In compliance with this resolution, we address you in the language of brotherly exhortation. We feel sure that they who, by God's grace, are least faulty in such matters will be the most ready to acknowledge the necessity of stirring up anxious thought, and provoking special prayer, to the end that the sins and shortcomings complained of may be removed.

It is assumed that all who belong to the Church, and name the name of Christ, believe in the indispensability of spiritual life, the benefit of ordinances, the efficacy of the Sacraments, the absolute need of holiness, and the value of Christian co-operation. A confession of faith in Christ implies all this, and consistency demands that practice shall accompany profession. According to the testimony of many of those who "watch for your souls as they that must give account" and are "jealous over you with godly jealousy," it has been shown that, in not a few of our Parishes, religious feeling and faithfulness have become degenerated, and that, in all, there is much to be deplored in the tone of their morality and social life. "These

things ought not so to be;" and it behoves us to examine, and "see if there be any wicked way in us," and to cry mightily unto God that He would "lead us in the way everlasting." So long as such "sin lieth at the door," the Church's progress must be grievously hindered.

Not the least of the evils, of which mention is made in the Report of the Committee on Christian Life and Work, is the backwardness manifested by many, who have come to years of discretion, in availing themselves of the privilege of participating in the Holy Communion. There is too good reason to believe that very many of this class of Churchmen have reached a considerable age, and are heads of families or households. The number of those of eighteen years old and upwards who are thus "living unpledged to a Christian life" is described, on the strength of minute and reliable information, as very large. Who can estimate the loss incurred by all such? The Lord's Supper is intended to refresh, and confirm in their faith, those who partake of it, as well as to commemorate the death of Christ. How many of the thousands who deprive themselves of the strength promised by the Saviour to all who "seek Him with the whole heart" at His own love-feast, might, by loyal obedience to Christ's command, have been prevented from yielding to the power of sin! Of what incalculable value has fellowship with Christ, in this nearest approach to Him, been as a protection to the soul amid the temptations and trials by which it is, at all times and in all places, beset. But, a reason which many often plead for not taking Communion is that they are not worthy to engage in that most sacred religious rite. The judgment denounced against partaking unworthily is pointed to as sufficient to warn them from the Sacrament. Better, it is argued by them, not to communicate than to "eat and drink judgment to themselves"—than even to run the risk of undergoing so awful a punishment! Does it not, however, occur to those who urge