

British American Presbyterian.

OL. 3. — No. 17.]

TORONTO, CANADA, FRIDAY JUNE 5, 1874

[Whole No. 121

HOME MISSION WORK.

NUMBER II.

DEAR SIR,—You will notice that the financial statement already published, gives an incomplete view of the case in several respects. It was limited for the sake of simplicity, to a period of five years, and gives no account of the amounts paid before '67 or since '71. It deals only with those stations reported as receiving aid from 1867 to 1871 inclusive. Those not reported in 1871 are omitted although they may appear in the reports of 1870 1869 or 1868. In one respect especially it is defective. All the Stations reported in 1867 but not in 1871 are presumed to have become self-sustaining; reference to the Reports of succeeding years will show that many of them have only ceased to be dependent mission stations by becoming more heavily dependant congregations. This however is a decided step in the right direction, the unsatisfactory feature of the case being that their weakness is constitutional and likely to be indefinitely prolonged, a heritage from the past, the crippled dyspeptic manhood of an abused and neglected infancy. But this is not all. In some instances the name dropped from the Mission Report does not appear among the names of congregations, supplemented or otherwise, but passes entirely from view after having represented the disbursement of hundreds of dollars of Home Mission funds. In short the disappearance of the name from the pension Roll is caused by the death not the promotion of the pensioner. But, leaving the facts and turning to the cause we find ourselves in the presence of a somewhat complex question. Many influences, of course, combine to produce such results. Some of them entirely beyond our control. Among those that might be avoided or prevented we find, for example, the injudicious choice of a station where there could not be room for a congregation under the most favourable circumstances, or where other stations could not be found to unite with it. The removal of a large number of the people from a neighbourhood or the blighting of a rising town. In such circumstances it is a question whether the desire to supply the few should weigh heavily against the strong claims of new fields where the same expenditure would, by God's blessing, produce results very much greater and be the means of establishing a strong cause.

The cases, however, in which such a chief might be necessary would be reduced to a small number if the great cause of weakness in our mission work were removed. It is in the way in which we deal with our Mission Stations when they are first opened that the error lies, and that is based upon a false estimate of the work to be done.

We have, apparently, transplanted Presbyterianism, not only in its principle but in its non-essential details. Not only have we brought the tree, so well calculated to grow and bear fruit in every climate but we insist on having the leaves and bark of the same tint and texture, and so, we cultivate, as if we were among trim out-beds, close shorn lawns and high projecting walls, while, in reality, we are in the rough woodland.

Only let the tree adapt itself to the circumstances and the very exposure and ruggedness, in the rich new soil, will produce splendid results. It is the same tree that was watered by the blood of the martyrs. It has the same old life in trunk and branches, it will produce the same fruit, only it is in a different country and it needs different cultivation.

Whenever we open a station the first question is "are there many Presbyterians there?" "Who ever heard a Methodist ask "are there many Methodists there?" He only wants to know if there are many people there who may be made Methodists. We want to have ready made congregations, Presbyterian congregations ready to hand, a little out of repair it may be, somewhat cold, yet prepared to receive a pastor. Anxious to have preaching and willing to pay for it. This seems scarcely to realize the conception of a Mission Church. It is well to have a foundation, a Presbyterian foundation, solid and secure, but to demand more in Canada is to fail.

The prevailing ideal is easily explained. It is the ideal of the home of Presbyterianism, where the parishes, the ecclesiastical consociations, take the place of our municipal divisions, where the authority of the Church and her importance are outwardly and nominally, and even reverentially realized by all. Where the minister comes to his Church, his congregation, his parish, expecting, as he is sure to receive, if deserving, the respectful recognition, and conventional allegiance considered to be due to him. His position, his work, his claims are all recognized, and his duties, however arduous, are regular and clearly defined. The congregation, including almost the entire population, existed before he came, and will exist after he is gone; it does not depend for its being on his presence and will not collapse or sink into ruin in his absence. How different is the case in this country! people of all nationalities, of every creed, of the green, known together in a neighbourhood in grand heterogeneity, conscious with every conceivable variety of disposition, natural and acquired,

Here and there among them a few families of earnest men and women, having in their hearts the seed of truth sown, perhaps in the mother land, feeling the want of Church privileges, unite in an anxious yet hopeful petition for supply. It is granted. They gladly have the advent of the missionary, however young and inexperienced he may be; but they are only nucleus, a mere crystallising centre in the mass, a seed in the ground. The great majority of the people know little, care little, except with a mere curious or friendly interest, whether the attempt to form a congregation succeed or fail. They go to hear the new preacher with no parsonial allegiance in their hearts. They accept not one thought of being in any way responsible for the success of the cause, they may even be inclined to look upon it as an unwelcome denominational intrusion. Meanwhile, the few work bravely, and the missionary, to use Paul's words, enduring hardness fights the battle of the cause of truth, by his preaching and his continuous and friendly intercourse with the people, until in a few months, he is known and respected in the whole neighbourhood.

The school-house where service is held becomes too small for the growing congregation and adventurous spirits actually begin to entertain the idea of building a church. The proposal meets with unexpected favour, and steps are about to be taken that will bind the people into one and give them an acknowledged existence as a congregation, when lo! the three months are at an end the missionary must leave, and he is removed, perhaps against the earnest request of the people and contrary to his own judgment and clearly expressed desire.

It is almost unnecessary to trace the circumstances farther. The new missionary, ignorant alike of the congregation and the work, has to meet a disappointed and discouraged people, and before he has reached the same position as his predecessor he also is ordered to another field, and perhaps to crown all, now follows a winter literally as well as figuratively so chilling that strong beams will be needed in the spring to thaw the frozen hearts into life again.

And, so, year after year passes, the committee sending supply and granting aid, the congregation growing more careless and discouraged other denominations overshadowing the weak sickly starveling with their luxurious leaves until sometimes the cause is considered beyond hope, and abandoned leaving in the hearts of those who have so successfully struggled, bitter regrets, and a feeling unfavourable to Presbyterianism in the much of the community.

And, now, what remedy can be proposed for this state of things? The answer is brief.

Whatever can be done to render our exertions concentrated and continuous in the direction of the establishment of the Stations as self-sustaining congregations.

Parallels from commercial life make our procedure as a church, in this respect, appear so irrational that I almost hesitate to use them. Of course there is an element in the work of the church, the element, the power, in fact, which is entirely wanting in business life. But the external relations of the church to the world are regulated by the principles of ordinary business, and where these are violated, inevitable results follow. In so far as money is a power, and a necessary agent of the church, so far will the objectance of other ordinary rules of financial and commercial life lead to success or their neglect involve embarrassment and failure. If banks, for example, were to send new managers and cashiers to their branches every three months, who were entirely unacquainted with the people, with the business of the place, and even with the financial relations of that branch to the people, the result could readily be predicted.

If a merchant were to attempt to carry on business in different places in the country by employing a number of clerks and causing them continually to exchange situations among these places of business without giving them any information regarding the condition of his affairs and the standing of the people, we would not wonder to hear of his "serious embarrassment."

But, I have already written at greater length than I intended, permit me then to merely suggest some of the ways in which I believe improvement may be made. As far as possible, let Students be stationed the whole six months of vacation in one place. When they are appointed to a new, give them the almost entire control so that they may feel a greater interest in the work and an individual responsibility for the results.

Let reports be prepared by the missionaries, not mere statistics, for publication, but statistics for the next missionary, in order that he may at once enter intelligently on his work.

In the case of licentiates we have already the class of ordained missionaries; some things, however, seem to be necessary in order to the complete success of this department of the service. First, That licentiates be permitted or invited to choose fields, with the circumstances of which they are already acquainted, and let the engagement not be so much for a certain year, as for the performance of a certain voluntarily assumed work. And let the salaries paid to missionaries be raised to \$600 or \$700. No man can work with energy on starving rations.

The question of probationers is one which I am almost afraid to touch. The conflict between the authority of the "distributing" power and the interests of the "distributed" probationers is such that it is unwise to interfere.

The churches wish to hear the probation

ers, the probationers wish to be heard in the churches, while the distributing Committee are in some perplexity between them. The result is that we have men travelling from one end of the country to the other, preaching as candidates "in all the largest parishes, while other men feel aggrieved because they have been sent to outlying congregations, and, all the time, in large and rapidly widening mission fields, men and women are really being left to perish for lack of knowledge.

I propose that the "probationer" list be merged in that of ordained missionaries already referred to, that the probationer be made to consist, not in a few months perambulatory preaching, but in a test of general pastoral efficiency in the formation and organization of a congregation in the Mission field, and that a salary sufficient for comfortable maintenance be guaranteed by the church. By this means the preacher will gain an invaluable experience, while he does useful and permanent work for the Church, instead of having his mind dissipated by an itinerancy which gives to the cause very intangible and ephemeral results.

The ideas I have attempted to explain are not entirely theoretical; they are virtually the principles according to which the Student's Missionary Society has been conducted for the past five years, and the success of the Society during those years, both in its work and, what is even of greater importance, in its influence on the students themselves, is a striking illustration of the results which might be expected.

The suggestions I have made are the result of experience, actual contact with the difficulties which led to an attempt to discover their cause, as well as the means by which they might be removed or prevented.

I hope some of those more experienced will give the matter their careful consideration.

Yours truly,
G. B. C.

The Doctrinal Importance of Christ's Headship and the Necessity of having it in the Union Basis.

MR. EDITOR.—Mr. Campbell and some others think that the doctrine of Christ's Headship is not so especially to be insisted upon—that it is comparatively not of so much importance—either theoretically or practically—as to claim such a place in the Basis. Now we differ from Mr. Campbell and all who appropriate a statement of the commendable merits of the doctrine of Christ's Headship. We place this doctrine in the forefront of our creed, as it is in the forefront of the Bible, and think that both "theoretically and practically" it is to be classified with the fundamental doctrines of our belief, and is intimately and inseparably connected with the existence of God, the personality of the Trinity, and the recognition of Redemption. And this is another reason why we feel in duty bound to insist upon its insertion in the Basis, not as a secondary truth but as an essential, primary, and representative truth, like deity itself. Mr. Campbell and some others say, no. We say, yes. But more dogmatic statements, and declarations which are easily made should suffice. We might ask Mr. Campbell to prove and explain the matter as he puts it. But that he or any other may be the better able to do that, we in all honesty and good faith, give our reason for our view. The comparative merit or importance of the doctrine of Christ's Headship may be seen, as appears to us from two points of view.—(1.) As a representative doctrine in Redemption, and (2.) as a doctrine representing the polity of the Church of God, "an uncontrolled power of jurisdiction, discipline and government, in regard to all matters ecclesiastical and spiritual."

In regard to the (1.) the merit of the doctrine of Christ's Headship as compared with any other doctrine in Redemption, we say, there is none like it, there is none that can be compared with it. First, as in the body, no member, foot, hand, eye or ear, is to be compared with the head, so in regard to Redemption no doctrine, even the atonement, so often mentioned in this connection, is to be compared to the Headship of our Redeemer. Christ's Headship is the index of his finished work, rewards, offices, powers, and grace. Any other doctrine is but a particular, even the atonement, and a part cannot be equal to the whole. Take away the head, and what have you if all the members remain? Take away the members and much remains so long as you have the living Head. When, in scripture, Christ is represented as the spiritual Head of the spiritual body of the Church, and believers the members of his body, does this imply that he is of no greater importance than any, or all of them? No sound Presbyterian can venture to say so. The Headship of Christ is then beyond comparison in its importance among the doctrines of Redemption.

But (2.) it is so also as a doctrine representing the polity of the Church of God. If any other can compete with it, which is it? It alone sets forth as declared in the "Act of Independence, an authoritative document of the Canadian Presbyterian Church, in connection with the Church of Scotland, that the Church has uncontrolled power of jurisdiction, discipline and Government, in regard to all matters, ecclesiastical and spiritual." Neither the doctrine of the atonement, nor any other pertaining, either to redemption or theology does this, but Christ's Headship, nor is it true that any other doctrine is so exposed, in our day, as the doctrine of Christ's Headship. We want this point sharply noticed. The opposite has been repeatedly asserted, and Mr. Campbell affirms it.

It is true that the doctrine of the atonement is a most important doctrine and that the "ungodly crew of atheists, materialists, neologists, &c., assail it vehemently. But they are not allowed by law to come inside the Church and authoritatively assail it. All that they can do is to exert their influence outside. Either they can come, but no further. The state also which once presented the doctrine of the church has relinquished this claim, now gives liberty of conscience in such matters, and so far protest, the doctrine of the atonement, and such like doctrines, in addition to this, the doctrine of the atonement is protected by a multiplicity of labor and literature. There are hundreds of special works written on the atonement, which have received the sanction of the church, and the approbation of the people of God as standard works. Is it so with the doctrine of Christ's Headship? The literature bearing upon it is scanty, and this is also true of the doctrine of essential deity. But besides, the state which protects the doctrines of redemption from any legal interference, and pledges herself not to interfere, has never promised that she will not interfere with the government and discipline of the church. On the other hand the state has claimed,—the law of Great Britain and her Colonies has claimed, and now claims, the right of listening to all the complaints of her subjects, whether they be members of the church or not, or whether their complaints be against the church or not. It is true indeed that the state just now, does not appear anxious to exercise this power, but she holds the rights of doing so, and of coming inside the church and reviewing, and if need be reversing its decisions. Which then are most exposed, other doctrines such as that of the atonement, or the doctrine of Christ's Headship? And which now claim most urgently a special recognition in the Basis? The enemies which assail the atonement and such doctrines, are like chained and barking dogs, which can only corrupt by the breath of their influence, and the noise of their barking from without. But, on the other hand, the doctrine of Christ's Headship is exposed to a foe, which, whether active or inactive claims the legal right of interfering. This foe may be sleeping now but which is most to be feared and guarded against, a loose and sleeping Lion which may awaken any moment, or a chained and barking dog? And which doctrine is most exposed, the one which the chained dog may assail by the influence of his bark and breath, or the other, which the unchained and awakened Lion may attack, rending it in pieces, there being nothing, either to protect or decline, but merely his possible sleep or capricious good pleasure?

Such then seems to us to be a true representation of the comparative importance, exposure, and claims of these doctrines; and the urgency and necessity of having the doctrine of Christ's Headship clearly, and intelligently stated in the Basis, not for the sake of one party or another, but for the sake of religion and the safety of the future United Presbyterian Church,—not as a "casus belli" which is a mean low, savage motive, but as a securing cause of unity, peace, and prosperity in our prospective Zion. But Mr. Campbell tells that "other important doctrines of the standards are both theoretically and practically more called in question at this time than it is." We beg leave to tell Mr. Campbell that he could say all this, and even with more truth and force of the doctrine of the Trinity, and why not propose to have it out of the Basis as well as that of Christ's Headship? At no time in the history of Infidelity has it been conceded so unreservedly as just now that there is a God. But who would propose on that account to leave out of the Basis that doctrine? Hold fast that which thou hast. This is the safe way of building up Empires and Churches.

But Mr. Campbell tells us further, "That from the very outset of the negotiations it was understood that there was to be forbearance on that point." What point? The point of Christ's Headship? Indeed! If that was so it should have been known, and the Union Basis ought to have been submitted to both churches on that ground. But who made such a promise? Our Union Committee? One thing is now plain and that is, that no Union can take place till it be fully ascertained, whether or not, the effort has been to catch each other with guile by our present Union Basis. The statements which have now been so publicly made, leaving so strongly in that way, claim forcibly, some declaration from those who have been negotiating Union, that the Basis is free from points fraud before it can be trusted at all. And if the two churches have not so much in common, of essential truth and doctrine, as to acknowledge without forbearance, Christ's Headship, the time for Union, much as we may desire it, has not yet come, nor is the present Basis one on which it should be consummated. How can the two churches walk together in Union except they agree as to the Great Head?

JOHN MACMILLAN,
Mount Forest, 24th May, 1874.

The Rev. Prof. Gregg of Toronto, in canvassing the C. P. Church of Woodville, for the Building Fund of Knox College, in three days raised the handsome sum of \$1400.00.

Some days ago two ladies belonging to St. Gabriel St. Church, Montreal, waited on Mrs. Campbell, the wife of their pastor, and in a few kind and informal words presented her with a purse containing \$385, in the name of the ladies of the congregation and of some of the young gentlemen, as a token of their esteem and good will.

Vacant Congregations and the Probationers Scheme.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—It is encouraging to see attention drawn, through communications in your columns, to the urgent need of reform legislation, in regard to the workings of our vacant congregations and mission fields. There are often evils unconsciously practiced by the most upright men, which require only to be pointed out in clear language, in order that their true deformity may appear, and the good men who fell into the practice of them will at once abandon them. Let every one point out what falls under his eye, as requiring to be put right with a view to rectification by the General Assembly. With that view I feel it my duty to call attention to the following circumstances, elicited by expressions of feeling at the last meeting of Ontario Presbytery, on how the Presbytery faced sometimes of late in the matter of the distribution of laborers for the mission field, at the General Assembly's Home Mission Committee meetings. It was explained that the cities of Montreal, Toronto, and Hamilton have their wants given the first preference; that next, in order of preference, the Presbyteries presenting demands for the largest number of laborers got their pick of the men; that this, the Presbytery of Ontario, for instance, asking for only three students, has to wait far back in her opportunity for naming one whom she would choose, and ultimately accept what more favoured claimants choose to leave for her.

I hope it will be sufficient to merely call attention to the peculiarity of the justice in the procedure. I wish it to be understood that it is solely on this system I animadvert. The laborers at this moment in our fields are, by their works, sending abroad good reports of themselves. The Divine favour to us, in this case, does not justify an unjust system.

I earnestly hope that the approaching General Assembly will not ignore all that has been said, and much with great practical wisdom, in your papers, regarding the strong desirability of very considerable modification of our Probationer distribution system, and the working of vacant congregations. The present system of probationer distribution is not for the edification of the congregations. It is a great mass of noble preaching force wasted. Even the finding speedily of settlements for ministers, which seems the main end and justification of the present system, is not well served by it; though making that the primary aim, is surely inverting the true order. The edification of the body of Christ should supremely regulate the wise disposition of all the forces and agencies to be disposed of. But, even leaving that out of view at present, it is the case, that probationers often are kept preaching for many weeks, where the possibility of calls is previously excluded. Sometimes some other probationer is already decided on. Sometimes it is a minister without the knowledge of Gaelic, preaching to congregations requiring Gaelic. Sometimes other causes for which the probationer is not responsible, but which make the case quite inconsistent with the idea of preaching with a view to a call. And yet preaching any other way is out of the range of probability. A stranger appears among a strange people, preaches a Sabbath or two Sabbaths, and is off again. Anything in the line coming under the description of "working the congregation," is impracticable. The congregation languishes. The preacher does not come with the consciousness of an ambassador with a message in Christ's name. The people do not understand it to be their duty to regard him in that light. He is a candidate, they are his judges. When a settlement does take place, the results often show the unavailability of a permanent pastoral connection, formed on such an imperfect and superficial mutual acquaintance. Men of God and the Church of Christ reap the unhappy points of a bad system.

JAMES THORN,
Port Perry May 26th, 1874.

Obituary Notice.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

MR DEAR SIR,—In a recent issue of your paper there was a striking statement regarding a very highly honoured servant of Christ who requested that no memoir of him should be written, giving as his reason that it was enough for him to know that God would not forget him. We believe that it is true of those whom He will not forget, that they so live in the world among their fellow men that they cannot readily be forgotten. Such was the life of the late lamented James Robertson, Esq., of the Township of Oro. Being a man of good sense, great intelligence and business talent, combined with deep, fervent and unostentatious piety, he was ever ready to engage in every good work. In him the township lost a wise councillor—the congregation of Guthrie Church a faithful elder, the cause of God a true friend, and the Sabbath School an indefatigable worker—in short, he has left a blank not easily filled up. The many tears shed, and the marked solemnity of the crowd which followed his remains to the house ordered for his living, indicate that the event was no ordinary one. The tone of the simple but cheering religious exercises in which the Rev. Messrs. Fraser, Gilray and Ferguson took part on the occasion—were in keeping with the consistent life, and the triumphant departure of this true servant of God. His last words were, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Mr. Robertson, after a short illness, fell asleep in Jesus at 10 a.m. of last Sabbath, and was buried on Wednesday following. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord."

J. F.
The Mauds, Novis, May 14th, 1874.