

THE HOME MISSION SCHEME VS. SUSTENTATION AND SUPPLEMENTAL SCHEMES.

MR. EDITOR,—Permit me, briefly and without entering into detail, to say a few words in reference to the Sustentation and Supplemental Schemes remitted by the General Assembly to Presbyteries. These schemes have been so amply and ably discussed in your columns, and with so great prolixity, by their respective authors or advocates, that it would be almost presumptuous to attempt to say anything new in support of either. After much consideration, I am greatly in favour of continuing our present Home Mission Scheme.

The existing method has been amply tested, and it has upon the whole wrought so well that it should not be set aside except for the strongest reasons. The Sustentation Scheme proposed seems to be suitable to a compact Church, fully occupying a limited area and struggling mainly to perpetuate its existence. But it seems to be not so well suited to a Church spread sparsely over nearly the half of a continent, essentially aggressive and missionary in its character. The leading principle in any Church must be either sustentation or aggression, while the other must be prosecuted in subordination to it. You can't powerfully inflame the zeal of a Church, and call forth its liberality equally in favour of sustentation and aggression. The question is whether existence or extension is to be the leading principle in our Church. Should the aggressive principle maintain the ascendancy which it now has, ample sustentation will come in its train. Aggressive zeal and efforts will develop the liberality of the Church, infuse vitality into it, and procure the blessing of God. In this way congregations will become more willing and more able to support religious ordinances among themselves. I believe that the adoption of the Sustentation Scheme would entirely change the character of the Church and paralyze its energies. There is no doubt that the highest prosperity of the Church will be attained when it seeks with all its heart and with singleness of purpose to fulfil the grand purpose for which it was created, which was to make God's saving name known to all nations. The Church will then be favoured with the greatest prosperity at home without specially seeking it. This principle is not only sound and scriptural, but it has been amply sustained by the history of the Church.

Permit me now to state several reasons of a practical nature why our missionary and our supplemental work should be carried on, as at present, with one Fund and by one Committee.

One reason is, that the two are closely and vitally connected; indeed it is in many cases difficult to draw a line between them. For example, a group of stations may be supplied by a missionary who receives part of his support from the stations and part from the Home Mission Fund. In course of time it may be considered expedient to place a minister over them, and to give him the same amount of supplement as the missionary previously received. This is a matter of mere convenience, and it occurs in the history of almost every new congregation. Now, if the same amount of money is expended, and for the same purpose, and generally for the labours of the same person, I do not see that it is a matter of any importance whether you call it missionary or supplemental money; and I do not see any reason for transferring the stations from the missionary committee to a supplemental committee. If the missionary work of the committee prosper, it must necessarily and constantly merge into supplemental work.

Another reason why the missionary and supplemental work should be combined is, that missionary work is more popular than the other, and more likely to evoke the liberality of the Church. Hence it should be allowed to take the lead. There is nothing disingenuous in this when it is openly avowed, and when an adequate reason is given for it. Although it is expected that the wealthier members of the Church would contribute largely to a Supplemental Fund, yet as there are in general specially intelligent contributors, they might easily be induced to increase largely their contributions to the Common Fund.

Another reason still for continuing the present scheme is that it will prevent the erection of another central committee. There is no doubt that there is already quite enough of machinery in the Church, and that the increase of it would tend more than ever to

centralization. We have an annual General Assembly involving immense expenditure; we have also four Synods, and we have twenty-five Presbyteries. Why should the Assembly, with its numerous standing committees or boards, carry on, or directly interfere with, so much of the work of the Church? These central committees must, as their numbers and powers are increased, interfere more than ever with the work of Presbyteries and Synods. The General Assembly is essentially a court of appeal and review. Hence its unnecessary interfering with the ordinary work of Presbyteries—supposing this to take place—should be resisted. The principle involved is an important one, as may be seen in the conflict between State rights and Federal rights in the neighbouring republic, and between Provincial rights and Dominion rights in our own country. As much as possible of the Church's work should be done by Presbyteries and Synods. These are the constitutional machinery of our Church, and it should not be interfered with more than is absolutely necessary, much less superseded, by central committees.

In this respect the Supplemental and Sustentation Schemes now before the Church seem to be greatly at fault. Should the present Home Mission Committee be continued, and should it continue to have charge of missions and supplement, it would be desirable to popularize it a little. This could easily be done by allowing the Presbyteries to appoint as many members of the committee as the Assembly appoints, and by requiring one-third of the members appointed by the Assembly or by the Presbyteries within the bounds of each Synod to be changed every year, it being understood that no one may be reappointed within less than three years. There is no need for always appointing on this committee the conveners of Presbyterian Mission Committees; other members might have their turn. There is danger at present of the work of this most important committee continuing year after year in the hands of the same persons, and thus tending naturally to produce tyranny and partiality, although these effects may not yet appear or even exist.

After all, what is mainly needed is not a more perfect scheme, but greater loyalty to the principles of the Church, greater enthusiasm in its aggressive work, greater liberality, and, above all, greater zeal for the salvation of mankind and for the glory and satisfaction of the Saviour. JOHN J. A. PROUDFOOT.

London, April 17th, 1882.

THE BIBLE IN THE SCHOOLS.

No one will dispute the statement that the first schools of Upper Canada had the Bible and Testament as class-books. In many settlements, where the people were mainly Scotch, the Shorter Catechism also was taught. These schools up till A.D. 1840 were in a sense private schools, and depended largely on fees paid by pupils for their support. About that year the proposal began to be seriously entertained of establishing common schools to be supported by a school tax, and encouraged by grants of public money. The Presbyterians who had known in Scotland the benefit of parochial schools were everywhere among the most ardent supporters of the proposal. For the sake of having a general system, they were willing to submit to some things which they would not prefer, but on the matter of a religious education they were as decided as united; as is apparent from the following petition sent to Parliament by the Synod in 1841:—

"To the Honourable the Commons House, etc.

"The petition of the ministers and elders of the Synod, etc., humbly sheweth:

"That your petitioners, deeply convinced that the Government of this young and rising country can confer no greater benefit on it than by establishing an efficient system of common school education, have learned with much satisfaction that this very important matter is likely soon to engage the attention of the Legislature.

"But your petitioners can regard with approbation only that system of education which is in all respects fitted for preparing the young for the faithful discharge of the duties which, as accountable creatures, they owe to God and their fellow-men; and this, as your petitioners sincerely believe, can be accomplished only by their being made intimately acquainted with the word of God.

"May it therefore please your Honourable House, in any enactment which your Honourable House may pass on this subject, that provision be made for the use of the Holy Scriptures in all the schools of the Province admitted to a participation of any grant of public money.

"And your petitioners will ever pray.

"In name and by appointment of the Synod.

"JAMES GEORGE, Moderator."

The school system was in due time successfully established, under the late Rev. Dr. E. Ryerson as Superintendent, and received the hearty support of Presbyterians generally, while many of the ministers gave much time and hard labour as local superintendents and members of County Boards with very inadequate remuneration. Still the Bible was a class-book; and as late as 1855, or even after that date, the Shorter Catechism was in some places still taught. No one ever proposed to dispense with the Bible as a class-book.

In 1855 the Roman Catholic agitation for separate schools was commenced, and in the following year the matter was brought before the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, when "the Synod agreed to petition the Legislature against the separate schools, and to recommend to their congregations throughout the bounds to do the same." In 1859 a communication from the Chief Superintendent was read, which the Synod regarded as "partaking of the nature of a private document, and therefore not calling for special consideration." It was a feeler to prepare the way for the sanctioning of the "safety valve" of separate schools. So the Synod "expressed strong views adverse to the continuance of such schools instituted for sectarian ends," appointed a committee "to watch over legislation during the next session of the Legislature in regard to education, seeing that it is based on Scriptural principles."

There can be no doubt then as to the attitude of the Presbyterian Church in the past. It always demanded the teaching of the Bible, never assented to its removal from the schools, and always regarded this attitude as in harmony with both scriptural and Presbyterian principles. It is therefore with surprise as well as pain that we find some of our younger and young ministers telling the world in speeches and letters that the teaching of the Scripture in the public school is inconsistent with Presbyterianism. The agnostic who ignores God's will, and thinks that our children will do as well or even better if they do not know about God's word, is consistent; but we will not say what we think of a Christian and a Presbyterian who will argue for an education in which revealed truth and Christian morality have not a place.

Dundas, April 22nd, 1882.

L.

TWISTED DOCTRINE.

MR. EDITOR,—In your issue of the 31st March, I see that "M. T." has answered a part of my letter, but he has left unnoticed two of the principal points, viz.: that third place where Jesus went, and the meaning of the first verse of the fifth chapter of 2 Cor. Had he taken any notice of these two points, I would not have troubled you again; but seeing he has not, I beg space for a short reply.

"M. T." disappointed me very much in his answer, and I am sure many others also, as several intelligent Christian men, who have been speaking to me about the points in discussion, were waiting anxiously to hear his explanation; and as a gentleman, I again ask him to answer the above two questions if he can. In his first article he made the positive statement that "When Jesus died, His spirit went to the place where are the spirits of the perfected just, and not to heaven." I want to know where this place is. In his second article he changes his ground by asking if believers at death do immediately pass into heaven, what are we to make of these words of the Lord, "No man hath ascended up into heaven," as also the words of Peter, "David is not ascended into the heavens?"—Acts ii. 34. No doubt this is a great concession from the first; still, it is not enough. But let us look at his letter very briefly. In his notice of Heb. xii. 22, 23, he says they are substantiated to God's children by faith. Granted as to their spirits, but not as to their bodies, in this world; but what the spirit enjoys by faith here, after death they will enjoy by fruition in heaven with their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Besides the authorities quoted in my former letter, it will do "M. T." no harm to consult Dr. Watts on the "World to Come," and the Rev. T. Baston's "Four-fold State," on the above passage.

Second passage noticed, John xiv. 2, 3. In speaking of the place that Christ went to prepare for His disciples in His "Father's house," he presumes I meant heaven. And he is perfectly correct. But he asks, may not the "Father's house" be the universe? I say no; it can have no such meaning in this place, for the reason, Christ gives no uncertain sound about where