

## Our Contributors.

### BRANTFORD AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

BY KNOXONIAN.

The General Assembly did well to appoint Brantford as the place of its next meeting. If the Supreme Court has not a pleasant time there the place will not be to blame. Brantford is a beautiful little city, in the very garden of Ontario, and easily accessible by rail from every part of the Dominion. The citizens are progressive, public-spirited, enterprising, hospitable people, who never take a back seat in any company. You never hear a typical Brantford man make an apology because he does not live in Toronto or some other place.

Brantford is the home of the telephone. It is also the home of Dr. Cochrane, the Hon. Arthur Sturgis Hardy, Mr. William Paterson, M. P., and several other distinguished people. It used to be the home of the Hon. E. B. Wood, late Chief Justice of Manitoba, one of the ablest men ever raised in Ontario. Prof. Bryce, of Winnipeg, also started in life from that fertile region. In fact the County of Brant has turned out quite a number of men who have given a good account of themselves in various lines.

Brantford is one of the numerous homes of oratory. It would be hard to find in any community three better speakers than Messrs. Cochrane, Hardy and Paterson. With the late Hon. E. B. Wood added the quartette would be simply invincible. Our friend, Principal Grant, no doubt believes that Nova Scotia is the home of Canadian oratory; and Brother Murray, of the Witness, seems to incline to that view. No doubt Nova Scotia has turned out some great orators; but we doubt very much if any place in Nova Scotia, with less than ten thousand of a population, ever had four more effective speakers than the four Brantford gentlemen just named, and they were all at their best when the population of Brantford was considerably under ten thousand.

One of the characteristics of Brantford oratory is volume. The Hon. E. B. Wood had a great voice. For a man of his avoirdupois, Dr. Cochrane has a great voice, though of late years it has become a little worn by overwork. Mr. Hardy has a splendid voice which he uses in a peculiar way. In winding up a sentence he often strikes the last few words with an explosive force that makes his sentences very effective. During the last session of the Dominion Parliament somebody called the attention of the Minister of Militia to the fact that part of the roof was off the Brantford drill shed. The Minister asked if it was not a fact that his hon. friend, Mr. Paterson, had spoken there lately. So the story goes. We do not vouch for the facts; but we know Mr. Paterson has a great voice, is a magnificent speaker; and his splendid platform work adds one more to the long list of illustrations that first class speakers are born, not made.

If Brantford oratory has volume, so much the better for the oratory, for Brantford and for all Canada. There is a mingling, Miss Nancy style of speaking, fast growing up in this Province that is a nuisance. It is the style of a dude, and is admired only by a dudine. It is the antipodes of everything that is strong and manly in public speech, and should be frowned down by everybody who wants to see male Canadians grow up men.

The Presbyterianism of Brantford is of the best Canadian type—conservative enough to hold firmly to the fundamentals and progressive enough to adopt any new thing that is really good. The hospitality of our people is unbounded; and if any members of Assembly do not enjoy their visit, it will be because they have no capacity for taking good things. We have never known many members who were specially afflicted in that way.

The country around Brantford is the very garden of Ontario. A visit to Bow Park, a drive to Mount Pleasant or Paris, or in fact anywhere around the city, should be on the programme of every commissioner who wants to see the perfection in Ontario farming.

When the members of Assembly go home their friends will no doubt ask them what they thought of Brantford. Knowing something of the dangers of prophesying, we venture to predict that in most cases the reply will be favourable. There is, however, another question which will be asked and answered, and that is,—What did Brantford think of the Assembly? Brantford is not a large city, and the impression made by the Supreme Court will be much more vivid and lasting than the impression made on a city like Montreal. In a large city very few people, except Presbyterians, attend meetings of the Supreme Court. In Brantford the galleries will be crowded every evening by representative people from every denomination in the city. It is a matter of prime importance, therefore, that the Assembly should be seen at its best. Its best is very good; but its middling is only middling; and its poor, very poor. The Presbyterians of Brantford will not feel particularly proud of the Supreme Court of their Church if the members break down in singing, "From Greenland's icy mountains," on Foreign Mission night. If nothing better can be done in the way of popular evening meetings than was done in Montreal last June, the Assembly should do ordinary business, or take a sail on the Grand River or a drive to Paris.

### THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.\*

BY REV. PROF. ROSS, M.A., B.D., MONTREAL.

Every society must have some persons to look after its interests and perform its work, and this necessity the Church shares. I presume the question before us is whether the officers of the Christian Society owe their origin to the natural requirements of the case, or whether they exist by the appointment of the Divine wisdom. It may seem strange to many readers of the New Testament that such a question should be raised, as it seems to them that it was definitely settled long ago. But it is evident to most students of the times, that we are to-day in an altogether different position from that occupied by our fathers; and we are challenged by many curious circumstances, and new currents of thought, to investigate afresh the ground upon which we ask attention to our message as the ministers of God.

The foundations of ministerial authority have been affected, not so much by the appearance of sects that deny the traditional view, although these have produced some influence on the popular mind, as by the changed conditions of religious life and work among ourselves. Many of us remember a time when no one attempted any religious teaching except the minister. No one besides him and one or two of the elders ever led in public prayer. No one not a minister publicly expounded the Scriptures, and if any other person ever affected anything that might be called preaching, people far and near discussed the sacrilege with bated breath. Under these circumstances it was not difficult to believe in the special authority of the ministry to teach men their duty in all departments of life. Their absolute right to do so was written in characters of startling distinctness on the whole social and ecclesiastical fabric of that time.

The Church to-day is breathing a different atmosphere and is working towards a different ideal. Almost all the pulpits of Protestantism are constantly teaching that the stewardship of the Gospel has not been committed solely to the ministers and office-bearers of the Church, but to the whole body of God's believing people. They are reminded every Sabbath that they all share the responsibility and the privilege of being co-workers with the Divine Spirit in making known the will and love of God to men. A vast army of Christian workers of every sex, age and social rank are striving to realize this ideal. Sabbath school teachers, members of the Young Men's Christian Association, of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour, officers of the Salvation Army, and lay

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preachers of many different types of thought and methods of working are storming the citadel of sin on every side. Many of these seem to be more successful than some of the regular ministry, in leading men to Christ. A natural question in view of all this is, What is the difference between the authority of the minister laboriously educated, regularly called and ordained; and the layman, who knows his Bible equally well, and who has the sign of equal or even greater success in his work?

In attempting to answer this question, we shall keep in view—not so much the objections of the brethren and the friends, whose testimony has been borne and whose aggressive influence is at an end, as the notions of many among ourselves who have come to regard the ministry as an expedient institution founded on custom and usefulness, and nothing more.

The theory of development has affected opinion in the region of ecclesiology, as well as elsewhere. Some leaders of Christian thought regard Church organization as a growth from the almost structureless Church of the Apostles to the complex organisms of modern times; and they would no more think of looking to the New Testament for the perfect form of Church government, than they would think of looking to the Saxon Heptarchy for the perfect form of the English Constitution. Some maintain that all the elements of the Christian assembly are to be found in the social conditions of early times, and that the forces which produced all the great Churches of history have no claim to be called supernatural. But, while we willingly grant, that, in the traditional view of the Church, supernaturalism was somewhat overdone, and too little attention given to the modifying power of influences amidst which Christianity grew up, we still believe that it could not have been evolved from the elements of Judaism or heathenism. We regard the Church as the product of a special revelation, and her ministry as existing by the appointment of Christ.

The substance of the truth which we hold concerning the authority of the Christian ministry may be stated thus: The Scriptures declare that Christ instituted an order of men to teach humanity His Gospel and dispense the ordinances of His house, and that these persons appointed others with specified gifts to perpetuate the office of pastor to the end of time. The Holy Spirit has called men to the work in all ages. The Church has homologated this call by ordination, and therefore the men thus called and recognized, have an authority to preach and dispense ordinances not possessed by any other members of the Church, no matter what their knowledge or their gifts may be. We shall examine some of these positions a little more fully.

1. "Christ in founding His Church founded also a ministry in the Church, in the person of His Apostles. These Apostles had a temporary function in their capacity as founders under Christ, and as witnesses of His resurrection; but underlying this temporary function was another—a pastorate of souls and a stewardship of Divine mysteries, which was intended to become perpetual." (Gore: The Church and the Ministry, p. 69.) These first ministers of the Christian Church received their commission in the memorable words, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain they are retained."

That the Apostles occupied an office of ministry in the early Church, cannot be denied by any party. The whole narrative shows that they laid hold of the guidance of the new society, not merely as a matter of expediency or necessity, but in administration of the sacred commission given to them by Jesus Christ. On the day of Pentecost, Peter was the mouthpiece of the band in proclaiming the Gospel to the assembled Jews, and when the consciences of the assembly were alarmed, their appeal was to him and to the rest of the Apostles. All through these early days the Apostles' teaching and fellowship were the bond of union in the

Church. They were the agents of judgment in the case of hypocrites, and the objects of attack on the part of the Jewish rulers. When the exigencies of the Church demanded deacons, the Apostles suggested their election and ordained them when they were elected. When the Samaritans received the Gospel with great rejoicing, Peter and John were sent forth by the Apostolic band to confirm them in the faith, and confer upon them the special gifts of the Spirit. Thus, their position was "one of government, of authority, of supervision, of peril;" but was not incompatible with the voluntary agency of the rest of the membership, or with the permanent official ministry which their appointment in several ways suggests, and for which it prepared the way.

In the commission, "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world": which was given at Christ's interview with the Apostles and the five hundred brethren on the appointed mountain in Galilee, the terms used make it clear, that its duties could not be fully discharged, nor its promise fully enjoyed by those to whom it was first addressed. They would have required the attribute of ubiquity to preach in all the world, and personal immortality to enjoy the continued presence of Christ till the end of the age. But if he speaks for all time, if He speaks through the Apostles whom He had chosen to the ministry of the Church which he had founded, the difficulty disappears. His words are the Divine origin of the official line, the authoritative declaration of its message, and the appointment of the sacrament of initiation.

2. The Apostles had other men of specified gifts elected by the people, and then they ordained them as deacons and presbyters, with power to perpetuate their office until the end of time. It is not natural to suppose that the disciples of Christ would spend their lives in herculean labours for the extension of the Christian Church without making any effort to give permanency to their work. The example of their Lord and the analogy of the Jewish polity would teach them the necessity of some organization. They certainly always speak and act as those who felt themselves commissioned by the Master to perpetuate a ministry in the Church. They speak of pastors, teachers, evangelists, helps and governments, as among God's gifts to the Church. They call these officers by many other names, which separate them from the rank and file of the membership, such as elders, bishops, ministers, deacons, stewards, labourers. They define the duties which these officers are called to perform, the mental and spiritual qualifications which they must possess, and the glorious reward to which they may look forward.

We have the narrative of their institution of the office of deacon and their mode of procedure in filling it. There is no account of the creation of the presbyterate. It is generally believed that this is because it was not a new office, but an adaptation of the synagogue system to the needs of the Christian community. When Luke first mentions the presbyters (Acts 11:30) he introduces them without preface, as if the institution were a matter of course. The twelve were dispersed from Jerusalem by the persecution which broke out when James was put to death; and from that time all official communication with the mother Church was carried on through the presbyters. As Lightfoot says, "To them, Barnabas and Saul bear the aims contributed by the Gentile Churches. They are persistently associated with the Apostles in convening the Congress in the superscription of the decree, and in the general settlement of the dispute between the Jewish and Gentile Christians. By the presbyters Paul is received many years later, on his last visit to Jerusalem, and to them he gives an account of his missionary labours and triumphs."