

## Communications, &amp;c.

## THE CALL OF REV. W. McLAREN TO BOSTON.

To the Editor of the Record.

DEAR SIR,—

I notice in the last number of the *Record* a letter from the Rev. John Laing, strongly advocating the claims of the Boston Congregation to the services of our esteemed Pastor. Permit me, as an interested party, to make a few observations on some parts of it. In the first place, he says, "he is not going to debate the question, whether the United States should be regarded as a proper field for the Canadian Church; or whether Mr. McLaren should except the call, and be settled in Boston." Now one would suppose from these statements that Mr. Laing was going to weigh the matter *pro and con* in a fair and impartial manner; but for all I can see, he settles the case entirely in favor of the Boston people. The many arguments he makes use of are, in my opinion, of no value. The strongest of them, and I dare say, if the truth were told, the only one, is their "early prejudices which they cannot rise above,"—a very poor excuse indeed. Surely there are Presbyterian Churches in the United States, free from the taint of slavery, that they could unite with: at least, we know that in New York there are as true friends of the Free Church as anywhere, who, as far as known to me, have never applied for a Free Church minister. I would suppose a minister like Mr. McLaren who, I know, has very strong British feelings, would find himself on some occasions very awkwardly situated. Suppose a day of humiliation was ordered, as was the case during the dark days of the Russian War. It would perhaps be right enough to call on the people to humble themselves, but it would not be very appropriate to call on the people of Boston to humble themselves on account of the *sins of Great Britain*. On the other hand it might be a day of thanksgiving for peace, &c., which would be just as bad. This idea of importing American Presbyterians into Canada, and exporting Scotch Presbyterians into the States is altogether wrong. The root of the whole is just "prejudice." Lord Elgin says, (*vide* his Speech at the Installation of the Lord Rector of Glasgow University,) "that in Scotland there are in excess religious distinctions, without a difference;" the same remarks might well be applied to Canada.

A few words about Amherstburg. Mr. Laing asks why Mr. McLaren is continued in such an unimportant position, confining his labours to from 70 to 80 hearers. Now, I would inform Mr. Laing, and all concerned, that his labours are not expended on those 70 or 80. A considerable portion of his time is given to the Presbytery. I am sure, that in place of his influence being small, the reverse is the case. Do the Presbytery wish to raise subscriptions for College buildings?—Mr. McLaren is the man to undertake it. Or do they wish to stir up a lukewarm portion of the Presbytery to the Missionary cause?—He is sent there.

I agree that the congregation at Amherstburg is small, perhaps 70 or 80;—and I would further confess that they are not what they ought to be, neither have they done what they should have done, but I would assert, without fear of contradiction, that they have done as much, if not more, than any other congregation in the province of like numbers and wealth. We are in the midst of a semi-infidel and popish population; and on that ground we require a minister of talent.

The Presbytery of London have treated us with great kindness and consideration, all through the arduous struggle we have been engaged in; and we hope they will not be found

wanting at this juncture. But, Mr. Editor, we need not be very much afraid,—we are in the hands of a faithful Father, who will make all things work together for good to them who love Him.

I remain, dear sir,  
Yours truly,  
J. B.

(At the earnest request of a true friend and member of the Church in Amherstburgh, we publish the above. The final disposal of this call may be safely left, by all parties, in the hands of the Church Courts, and committed to the direction of Him who is "Head over all things to the Church."—*Ennon.*)

## THE POSITION OF BAPTIZED CHILDREN.

To the Editor of the Record.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,—

How is it that so many children of believing parents, when they come to years of discretion, are careless about the means of grace, and wander from the visible fold of Christ? How is it that when they come to this period of life, instead of making a profession of faith and enjoying the privileges of God's people, so many neglect them? These are most important questions bearing materially upon the progress of Christ's kingdom, and well deserve the careful consideration of parents and office-bearers of the Church. Many a parent mourns over and deeply regrets the indifference of his children towards the ordinances of religion, and many a faithful pastor's pleasure at communion seasons is diminished when he sees so many of the young of his flock, who, in the days of their infancy, had applied to them, perhaps by his own hand, the seal of the covenant of grace, keeping back from the table of the Lord and thus refusing to accompany the sheep into the richest pasture. They have been in an interesting manner given up to God in their baptism; their parents have vowed in the most solemn manner to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and they have been recognised in their infancy as members of the visible church. Why then is it, that more do not, when they come to years of discretion, personally and publicly acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, take upon themselves his yoke, and follow the Lamb? The answer to this interrogation I am persuaded will, to a great extent, be found in the overlooking, by parents, office-bearers, and congregations, of their position in the visible church, and neglecting to treat them in accordance with this their privilege. I am no ritualist, and do not believe that any treatment or ordinances of themselves can make them christians. But I do believe God usually blesses the means and that "the promises are to you and your children."

What then is the real position in the visible church of the children of believing parents?—On this point two opposite and extreme views are extensively held. With those who hold them, there appears to be no difficulty in determining the ecclesiastical position of all children; and it is to be feared their opinions and practices influence to a greater degree than many are aware, the views and practices of those who profess to hold a third, and what, on this question, is to be regarded as the evangelical doctrine. The one class denies to all children, be they those of believing parents, or be they not, any place whatever in the church of Christ, until they obtain it by a personal profession. According to this view, those who are the children of believing parents are on the same footing with those who are not—the children of the church are in the same position as those who are without and are to be,

treated in no way different. "Like all worldling, heathens, and pagans, until they experience a conscious, inward, regenerating change of which they can give a credible account, and make a credible profession, they are to account themselves and to be accounted, and proceeded with, as 'aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise.'"

On the other hand, it is held, and too extensively held, unscriptural and absurd as it is, that every child, be it parents what they may, believers or unbelievers, moral or immoral, has a right, on its own account, irrespective of its parents, to the privileges of the Church, and hence not to baptize it, and so own it as a member of the visible Church, when presented for this ordinance by its parents, or it may be by their neighbors, is to deny it its rights and inflict upon it a serious injury. There are few pastors in the Synod, perhaps, who have not had applications for this ordinance by parents who made no profession of religion, and it may be by parents who, instead of making any profession, are leading an immoral life. When refused their request, they have gone away disappointed and dissatisfied that their children, on account of themselves, should be denied this ordinance, regarding, as they do, their own as having an equal right to the privilege with the children of believers, and looking upon the conduct of those who refuse it as harsh and unchristian. Between those two extremes there are various opinions which more or less agree with them and tend to place children in either one or other of these relations to the visible Church. For example, there are those whose procedure, with respect to baptized children, evinces that they discern no more in this ordinance than parental desire that their children may be the Lord's. Others, without any definite views on the subject, regard baptism merely as a beautiful and edifying rite, or as a pledge of religious instruction being imparted to children. And there are even some who look upon it merely as a convenient and appropriate way of giving them a name.

The Catholic doctrine on this question, as set forth in the standards of the Church, is very different from these vague and unscriptural views, and should, in its place, be fully set forth from the pulpit, and christian parents and congregations urged on all occasions to treat the lambs of Christ's flock in accordance with their true position. I will not attempt more at present than a brief statement of this doctrine, reserving for a future time the treatment which the children of the Church should receive.

In the Confession of Faith it is stated that the "visible Church \* \* \* \* consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children." Again, "Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and his benefits, and to confirm our interest in him; as also to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the Church and the rest of the world, and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ according to his word." In question 62 of the Larger Catechism, it is said, "The visible Church is a society made up of such as in all ages and places of the world do profess the true religion and their children." Again, in question 166, "Infants descending from parents, either both or but one of them professing faith in Christ and obedience to him, are, in that respect, within the covenant and are to be baptized." In similar terms the same doctrine is stated in the Form of Church Government. These standards plainly teach that the children of credible believers, and of those only, are members of the visible Church; that they are not made members by baptism, but are to be baptized because of this their relation to the