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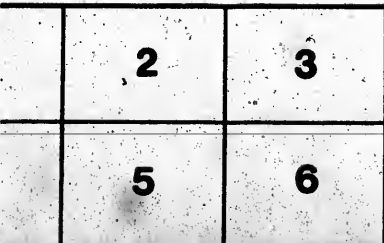
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PASTORAL LETTER

TO THE

PARISHIONERS OF ST. JOHN'S,

LUNENBURG.

Wm. Gossip, Printer, 36 Granville Street,

HALIFAX, N. S.

1850.

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PASTORAL LETTER

TO THE PARISHIONERS OF ST. JOHN'S,
LUNENBURG.

MY DEAR BRETHREN,

At the commencement of a new year, I feel a strong desire to address a few words to you, in such a manner, as that they may be present to your minds, longer than either a verbal communication, or an exhortation from the Pulpit. I do so, therefore, in a printed form, hoping that you may read it more than once, and perhaps take it up after I am gone. It may be in the recollection of some of you, that I adopted a similar plan about twelve years ago; when I addressed a pastoral letter, to the people of my charge.

Many who read *that* letter, can no longer read it. Their eyes are sealed in death. They are now dwelling in that world of spirits, from whence there is no return. And we, beloved friends, are rapidly travelling on to join them there. Soon "our places" on earth, "shall know us no more." This consideration constrains me to use every means in my power of stirring up your minds, while yet I can, to the remembrance of those things which we must attend to now, if we hope for rest and peace *then*. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of Salvation." May we have grace to use our short day aright, that so, our profit may be eternal!

At this season, it is natural to cast our eyes back on the years that are past. For TWENTY-FIVE of those years have I gone in and out among you, a large portion that of any man's life,—certainly the best and most vigorous of mine. What changes have I witnessed among you during that quarter of a

century! What vicissitudes of cloud and sunshine, of joy and sorrow, of prosperity and adversity. How many times have I been called to comfort those that were cast down, "and to weep with those that wept." Few, indeed, are the houses, that have not in that time been "houses of mourning;" to most of them the visits of death have been oft repeated.

How many of those, near and dear to you, have I attended on beds of sickness and pain; and finally committed to the "narrow house appointed for all the living." Over nearly Five Hundred persons have I read that most solemn and touching of all Services, the Burial Office of our Church.

Those graves have included the old and the young—the weak and the strong. What floods of tears have been shed over all these. And many alas! have there been, over whom the ocean wave has closed, amid the whirlwind and the storm; whom their friends have mourned with long continued sighs and tears. Many, likewise, of our young men have breathed their last in far distant lands, and now sleep in "the Isles of the Sea." So great have been the changes among us, that I am now ministering, almost to a new generation, many of whom were unborn, when my voice was first heard in your Church. Whole families indeed have passed away since then! Nor has the Shepherd escaped, while the flock has thus been smitten. That has befallen him, which cometh in turn to all. He has been called to eat the bread and drink the waters of affliction; and you have mingled your tears with his. During his sojourn among you, the Lord has deprived him of both his revered parents, of a highly valued sister, a dear and only brother, and two beloved ones who were "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh." "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

"Not lost," are they, we trust, "but gone before."—I hope we may all have grace to say from our hearts, "not my will but Thine be done." I hope our various afflictions may have been sanctified to our good, loosening our hold upon earth, and causing our affections to mount on high.

To train us for heaven, is assuredly the merciful design of all God's dispensations on earth.

And humbly to second that design, and lead you to Him, who has the keys of that heavenly Kingdom, and present you faultless before God through the blood of Jesus, is the great

end of my ministry. And now, dear Brethren, permit me to ask you how far is that end answered in the case of each of you? Have you come, as poor, miserable sinners, under a deep sense of your unworthiness, to "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," seeking pardon and peace through His blood ALONE? Mindful that "you have no power of yourselves to help yourselves," that your hearts are "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," that in you dwelleth naturally "no good thing," and that we must all be "renewed in the spirit of our minds;" have you sought, and are you daily seeking, the influence of the Holy Spirit? And have you the testimony of that Spirit with yours, that you are the children of God? And are the fruits of that Spirit (Gal. v.) to be seen in your lives and conversations? Are you mindful that "here we have no continuing city," and are you anxiously "seeking one to come." And is it your daily endeavour to "live the life that you now live in the flesh, by faith in the Son of God?" Does your religion mingle with, and leaven your daily business? Can it be seen in your families, in your dealings with each other—in your words, and in your actions? Thus affording practical, living evidence, that ye are Christ's?

And are you diligent and fervent in the exercise of all the duties of your most holy faith? Are you mindful of your Saviour's solemn charge, "Enter into thy closet and shut thy door and pray to thy Father in secret," resorting to private prayer and communion with God, as at once your highest privilege, and the most powerful means of strength and comfort to your souls?

Have you responded to my oft repeated exhortation, to raise the domestic altar in your dwellings, and offer the morning and evening sacrifice of Family Prayer? And are you in the habit regularly and devoutly, of seeking in the Sacrament of the Lord's supper, the "strengthening and refreshing" influence of Divine grace, to animate your faith, and increase your love and quicken your obedience to Him whose dying love is there commemorated? And finally, not to extend these queries further, is the Bible duly prized by you, and DAILY read, as that which is able to make you wise unto Salvation; as that which alone can cheer, direct, and console you in "the house of your pilgrimage?"

If many of you are not able to answer these questions in the broad affirmative, then, Brethren, has my twenty-five year's ministry been indeed unprofitable. Then "have I run in vain, and laboured in vain."

But I fear that there are too many who like Gallio, "care for none of these things." Who are living after the course of this world. Still unawakened to the concerns of their souls. Still far from God. Still without any saving, personal interest in Christ. Still without that "new heart and new spirit," which we all must have or perish! O, Brethren and Sisters, would that my poor words could prevail with you to seek the "more excellent way,"—to "cease to do evil and learn to do well."

Would that I could effectually arouse the ungodly and the careless among you, to seek the Lord while yet He may be found, a God of mercy and loving kindness; to call upon Him while yet He is near to hearken. Would that every man, woman and child among you could now be brought, at once, this very day, "while it is called to day;" to give your hearts and lives to that Saviour who gave himself for you!

Brethren, I can truly say, "my heart's desire and prayer to God for you all, is" that you may be saved. But you well know that without your own efforts this desire cannot be accomplished. "Every one of us must give an account of himself to God."

Therefore each must "work out his own salvation," in God's appointed way. "No man can do this for another." It is your own personal, individual, everlasting concern.

Attend to it then I charge you, as you value the favour of God and the joys that are at His right hand,—without delay, lest that night come suddenly upon you, in which "no man can work." Rest not beloved, in the "form of godliness without its power," in the name of "Churchmen," or "Christians," while your hearts and lives are at variance with the Spirit of Christ. It often weighs down the heart of your Pastor, when he reflects how many, on the one hand, are treading with fearful boldness the paths of open sin, blaspheming that holy Name by which we are called, breaking the Sabbath, "forsaking the house of the Lord," and in other respects taking Satan as their master. And how many on the other hand, seem to rest in the mere outside of religion,

with hearts unchanged, cold and spiritually dead. In either case it may be said as Peter said to Simon Magus, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God."

One of the greatest hindrances to the success of my ministry among you has been the prevalence of **INTemperance**. Against that many-headed monster, you know how long and how loudly I have lifted up my voice. I shall continue to do so, God being my helper, until my dying day. For I look upon that vice as the bane of the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind. I firmly believe that no community can prosper where it prevails. It has broken up many a family, torn with agonising sorrow many a parent's heart, ruined many a promising young man, and prematurely opened many a grave in this place, and in every other, where it is found. My brethren, and friends, O help us to put the monster down! Join with me in the prayer, that the day may soon dawn upon Lunenburg, when the floodgates through which these evils are daily poured forth on this land shall be for ever closed. When the soul destroying poison, a thousand times more blasting than Cholera or Plague, shall no more be licensed to kill and to destroy. Stand not aloof from those Institutions whose object is to stay this desolating plague, and whose good effects are transparently manifest even in our midst.

Finally, Brethren, since you and I are sure to meet at the Bar of our Master and Judge, to give an account of our Stewardship, "let us watch and pray" that we may be able to render that account with joy and not with grief. And I hope you will suffer this closing word of exhortation to each and all of you. Are you Parents? "train up your children in the way they should go." "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," so that you may be able to say at last, "Behold I and the children Thou hast given me." Pray for them—and remember that a **GODLY EXAMPLE** is the best of all teaching. Are you children? "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth." Seek that Lord, *early*, who, late and early, will bless you, and will never forsake you, if you do not forsake Him. Rather be anxious to adorn your souls with the grace of God, than your bodies with the paltry ornaments which so many love. Aim at being like Timothy, who "from a child knew the Holy Scriptures," or

like Samuel who was early called of the Lord, and always blessed. May you that are "sons" grow up as the young plants, and you that are "daughters" be as the polished corners of God's temple. Are ye young men? "Be sober minded." Remember that "blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Read, Eph. v. 1—21; Gal. v. 16, 26, vi. 7, 8; Col. iii. 1, 10, and pray that you may have grace to be guided by that word. Are you young women? Be not lovers of pleasure more than of God." Let "your adorning be that ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which in the sight of God is of great price." Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think of these things." Remember that "favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

Are you in the married state? Dwell together according to knowledge. Help one another in the narrow way that leadeth to life. Pray for each other: Read over frequently those solemn words of the Church, in which your vows were mutually pledged for life. And read, too, in the word of God, Eph. v. 22, 33; Col. iii. 18, 19, which bear upon the duties of your relationship. So, when that rude hand that snaps all earthly ties, shall put you asunder, it may not be without a good hope of meeting again, far above this vale of tears.

But has that hand already done its work? Then remember for your comfort, the "God of the fatherless and the widow."

Are you masters or mistresses? Forget not, that you also have a Master in heaven. Forget not that your servants have souls to save, for which you are so far accountable, as to give them good advice and instruction. Deprive them not of Sabbath privileges, valuable to all, but doubly so to "the man-servant and the maid servant." Impose no work upon them but such as is absolutely and essentially needful; and *such as could not have been done on the previous day.*

Are you servants? Be faithful, honest, laborious, respectful, chaste, humble in thought, word and deed. Not taking that which does not belong to you. Not careless of the interest entrusted to your care. Col. iii. 22, 25. Your

station is honourable, for it is ordained of God. Let it be your care not to dishonour yourselves by wicked and unprincipled actions.

In conclusion, my dear friends of every age and sex and station, be firm and consistent in your attachment to that Church of which we are members. *Let nothing ever induce you to leave it.* You will never find a better. For myself I have been born, and cradled, and nurtured within her fold; and by the grace of God, I will live and die in her bosom. I hope you will do the same. Not that the Church can save us. She nowhere teaches that. But, in her Liturgy, in her ordinances, in her doctrine, we have everything we can desire to help us to come to Him who is her "chief corner stone elect and precious." So that if we cannot find the way to Heaven as members of the Church of England, I am persuaded we cannot find it at all.

Esteem it then at once your duty and your privilege to attend upon all the services of your Church with unfailling regularity. Never let your place in God's house be vacant while you are able to fill it. And forget not that you are bound to uphold all the Institutions of the Church by your influence, your prayers and your contributions. Far from carelessly neglecting to give, or grudgingly withholding that which you can afford, gladly bring the free will offering without being asked, into the Treasury of the Lord, remembering that nothing you have is your own but His. Regard it as a sacred and a binding duty to be exact, conscientious and punctual, in the support of your Church. And if you are duly sensible of the blessings you enjoy, you will not require to be urged, to aid in extending those blessings to your less favoured Brethren, through the means of the Church Society. If not yet enrolled among its members hasten to add your name, and along with it "freely give," of what you have "freely received." It is my desire, it is our venerable Bishop's desire, that every baptized member of our Congregation, should appear on the List of the Diocesan Church Society.

And now Brethren, I heartily wish you all many happy years. May prosperity and happiness attend you and yours. Be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you. "May the Lord bless you and keep you ;

may the Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon you,
and give you peace now and for ever." This is the prayer of

Your affectionate friend and Pastor,

JAS. C. COCHRAN.

St. John's Parsonage, January 1st, 1850.

"Thou God of life with constant care
With blessings crown'st each op'ning year,
My scanty span doth still prolong,
And wakes anew mine annual song.

How many precious souls are fled,
To the vast regions of the dead,
Since to this day the changing sun,
Through his last yearly period run !

We yet survive, but who can say,
"Or through this year, or month, or day,
"I shall retain this vital breath,
"Thus far at least in league with death !"

That breath is Thine, Eternal God ;
'Tis Thine to fix my soul's abode ;
It holds its life from Thee alone,
On earth, or in the world unknown.

To Thee our spirits we resign,
Make them and own them still as Thine ;
So shall they live secure from fear,
Though Death should blast the rising year."

