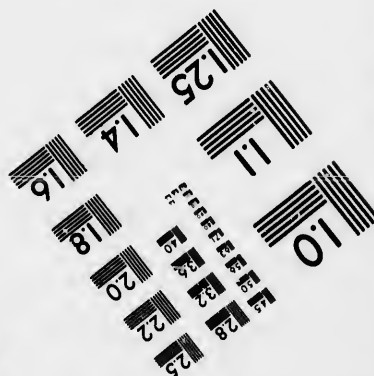
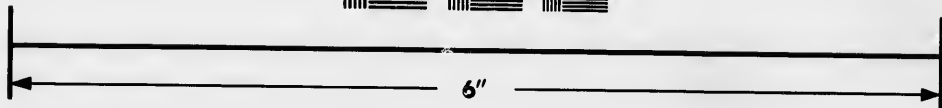
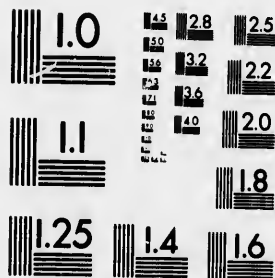


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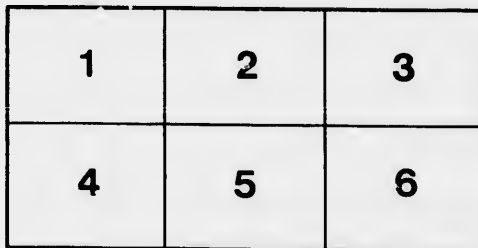
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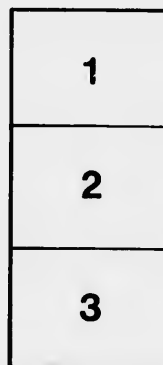
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A PASTORAL LETTER,

ADDRESSED TO THE MEMBERS

OF THE

CANADA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

BY REV. WM. CORMISTON, D.D.

1869

**A PASTORAL LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE
CANADA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.**

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN.—Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Synod of our Church, at its meeting in June last, received, read, and considered several overtures, and a memorial, on the subject of *Temperance*, and unanimously adopted the following finding, viz:—"The Synod "having heard the overtures, agree to receive and adopt them, and to record "their sorrow and anxiety at the great prevalence of the sin of intemperance, "and, recognizing their obligations at once to testify against, and strive to "suppress the evil, do hereby recommend each Minister of the Church to "take up the subject by an earnest address from the pulpit, at least once "in the year, and in every suitable way endeavour to discountenance the "prevalent drinking usages that lead to intemperance; and that the "Moderator, Dr. Thornton, and Mr. Wardrope, be instructed to prepare a pastoral letter on this subject, to be signed by the Moderator, and "sent to each Session of the Church."

In accordance with the terms of this deliverance, we desire earnestly and affectionately to greet you in the Lord, and to commend to your prayerful consideration the entire question to which it refers.

The subject is one of no ordinary importance and interest at the present time. It has occupied the attention of the highest ecclesiastical courts of other Churches as well as our own, and the united testimony of all is that the general use of intoxicating beverages is a great and terrible evil, and presents a powerful obstacle to the progress of pure religion, and the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom.

The vice of intemperance is alarmingly prevalent, and exerts its insidious and malign influence among all classes of society. Its baneful effects are seen not only among the poor, the ignorant, the degraded and immoral, but also among the wealthy, the influential, the respectable, and the professedly religious. Neither age nor sex, rank nor class, station nor profession, is exempt. It ruthlessly drags its hopeless victims from every quarter, and its malignant reign casts its shadow over us all; no man is free from danger, no home secure from invasion. The vast army which, under its fatal spell, marches on through indigence, vice, impurity, profanity, recklessness and ruin to a dishonoured grave and a hopeless future, is being ever recruited from the homes of the happy, the prosperous, and the moral, as well as from the hovels of the wretched, the outcast, and the vile.

It is utterly impossible fully to estimate the extent and magnitude of the evils—financial, social, moral and spiritual—which either accompany or flow from the use of alcoholic beverages, nor need we attempt the task, for many of them are patent to every observer, and few indeed, if any, are not called bitterly to grieve over them, and to suffer directly or indirectly in their persons or homes, their fame or fortune. Who of us has not had to weep over the folly, the fatuity, or the fall of some one, over whom our hearts lovingly yearned?

The effects of the traffic in intoxicating liquors on the national industry, wealth, and prosperity, are most pernicious, in the loss of life, labour, capital, time and skill, which it involves, and in the pauperism, crime, waste and expenditure which it incurs or increases. Long ago one of England's greatest thinkers and most sagacious statesmen declared that "all the crimes on the earth do not destroy so many of the human race nor alienate so much property, as drunkenness," a statement, the truth of which prolonged experience and wider observation only confirm. Indeed, so strikingly obvious are the blighting effects of drunkenness upon the welfare of a people, that few will be found to question the position that poverty, destitution and distress, in any community, will be found to be in proportion to the facilities furnished for the sale and consumption of intoxicating drinks. Nor are the injurious and ruinous effects of the traffic less marked upon the intelligence and morals of a people. The learned and pious Judge Hale remarked in his day, that *four-fifths* of all the murders, manslaughters, burglaries, robberies, riots, tumults, and other enormities perpetrated by the vicious and punished by the law, were caused by excessive drinking, and were the result of tavern and alchouse meetings. The same thing may be truthfully averred to-day. Competent authorities declare, and common observation confirms the declaration, that a very large proportion of the crime, pauperism, and misery, the ignorance, squalor and wretchedness, the juvenile vagrancy, homelessness, and depravity exhibited in our streets, revealed in our police courts, confined in our jails, recorded in the columns of our daily journals, is the necessary and inevitable result of the liquor traffic, which is supported and perpetuated by the drinking usages of society, and sanctioned by the authority of legal enactment.

The unhappy and unhallowed effects of intemperance upon the Christian Church are seen and felt to be no less manifest and mournful, in hindering her progress, and lessening her influence, by relaxing discipline, and lowering the tone and standard of vital piety. Its direct tendency is to prevent the diffusion of gospel truth, and to diminish its power over the hearts and consciences of men, either by estranging them from the house of God and its ordinances, or by unfitting them for profiting by attendance upon them. It is ever the bane of Sabbath observance, church attendance, Sunday school and Bible class instruction. It retards and counteracts the work of evangelization at home, and it impedes and opposes the work of christian missions abroad, by crippling the resources of the Church, weakening her testimony, squandering her means, demoralizing her agencies, fostering opposition, and strengthening the hands of her foes. Can it be a question, in the present state of society, whether the habitual use of intoxicating drinks, as a beverage, by members of any christian congregation, seriously affects the healthful influence of that congregation, or that it tends to support the drinking usages which lead so many astray, and cause many a brother to stumble and fall? Or can it be denied that such habitual use is likely to lead to the neglect of personal or family duty, to irregular or rare attendance at the place of prayer, to general spiritual declension, and possibly to a shameful fall? [Such, alas! has been the sad

experience of many, who "through strong drink are out of the way." Brethren high in office and in honour too, of great usefulness, and highly beloved, overcome by this insidious and pernicious habit, have fallen, and brought disgrace upon themselves and dishonour upon their profession; ministerial character and usefulness have often been sadly impaired, the influence of the gospel counteracted, and the hearts of many grieved and discouraged by the known habits of office-bearers in this respect; and the fact that members and even office-bearers of the Church not only use, but manufacture and sell intoxicating liquors, is often referred to as giving the high sanction of religion to the traffic, and the commendation of good authority for the practice of drinking. A very large number of those who are engaged in this traffic are members of Christian Churches, and contribute for the support of their ordinances and institutions, and hence the solemn responsibility that rests upon all alike, and the urgent necessity for earnest action in the matter. The various schemes of religious and benevolent enterprise languish for want of men and money, while thousands of christian men are employed, and millions of money spent on what is at best a useless, and generally a most injurious indulgence. The claims of missions abroad, and the needs of the Church at home, urge the propriety of using all lawful means, and of making every personal sacrifice, in order to the suppression of the traffic, and the removal of so great a hindrance to the salvation of souls and the conversion of the world.

The fearful effects of intemperance on the hopes and happiness of families, who can depict? What scene more appallingly desolate than a drunkard's home? Whose condition more piteously hopeless than that of its wretched and unhappy inmates?—physical destitution, domestic misery, social degradation, moral pollution, and spiritual darkness and death—and all so rayless and hopeless to the anguished, broken-hearted wife, and despairing mother, and her neglected, abused, demoralized children, because of the constant temptations and fatal facilities everywhere presented by the practices and regulations of so-called Christian society. The drunken parent is doubtless chargeable with heavy guilt, but are we free from blame, and guiltless in this thing? The ruinous results of excessive indulgence on the individual are patent to every eye, and are only too frequently presented to our gaze; religious declension and spiritual darkness,—a dishonoured manhood and a degraded position,—intellectual imbecility and mental madness—physical deformity and bodily disease—wild delirium and fearful horrors, are the sure, even when tardy fruits of drinking and drunkenness; and when the use is not so great as to produce such fatal effects, the baneful influence is felt on the temper, the affections, the disposition and general health of body and mind, as, even in more moderate quantities, alcohol inflames the passions, darkens the judgment, impairs the memory, weakens the will, and indurates alike the feelings and the conscience.

When we inquire into the causes which support and perpetuate an evil of such magnitude, so inimical to all the best interests of society, so hostile to the progress of the Gospel, so fraught with every woe to the household, and so baleful to the individual, we cannot fail to discover, as by far the

most potent, the drinking usages of society, which associate the use of the glass with all that is happy and hopeful in domestic life, with all that is joyous and delightful in social intercourse, with all that is hilarious and attractive on festive and public occasions, and not unfrequently with all that is solemn and affecting in the services of religion. The moderate drinking of the respectable and the respected, the lovely and the loved, is the great prolific source of support and supply of that alarming vice, which clogs the wheels of national prosperity, impedes the progress of Scriptural Christianity, blights the blessedness of many a happy home, and mars and mutilates the glory of manhood. Moderate drinking must cease, or its expenses must be provided for in the future, as they have been defrayed in the past, by those who indulge in it; for while all are involved in some of the expenses incurred, and are called upon to suffer for and by others, still upon those alone who use the liquor will the call for *personal* service and soul-sacrifice be made. The ranks of the drunken are rapidly thinned—for the life of the reveller is usually short, and the dangers he incurs numerous and deadly—and these depleted ranks must be filled; muscle, and mind, manhood and might, sense and soul, character and virtue must be supplied, and these will be largely drawn from the homes where the moderate use alone has hitherto been exemplified or encouraged. Oh, that men were wise, and would consider the end of these things! Another cause of the power and permanency of this widespread evil is to be found in the peculiar facilities everywhere provided, for the supply of the material of intoxication, in the numerous licensed houses for its retail. The number of such houses in most localities is very great, and many of them are mere haunts of vice, scenes of dissipation and allurements to drunkenness. The broad ægis of public enactment is thus spread over the traffic, and the moral sanction of law given to its necessary results. A glance at these causes indicates the nature of the remedy required; public sentiment and common practice must be changed, the laws sanctioning and regulating the traffic altered or annulled, and the traffic itself restricted or suppressed. And surely in regard to such a work, contemplating the highest and best interests of man, the glory of God, and the influence of the Redeemer's Kingdom, all Christians ought to be agreed, and should cordially unite in earnest endeavour to arrest the progress of intemperance, and avert the evils which it brings. The mission and duty of the Church is to seek and save the lost; reformation of life, character, and conduct, is her peculiar function; and though she may hitherto have failed fully to realize the fact, the temperance reform is a part of her legitimate work; a right appreciation of her high position as the light of the world, a reverential regard to the authority, will, example, and glory of her Divine Head, a keen sense of her own danger, and an enlightened view of duty, prompt her to earnestness and activity in this work. Much has our Church, in common with others, suffered from the inroads of this vice; some of her able and eloquent ministers have been silenced, many of them have been grieved and discouraged, her members have been seduced from their steadfastness, her ordinances have been neglected, her children have been decoyed and ensnared, and multitudes have been deterred from her communion, or estranged from her

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services. Is it not then her plain duty to arise, don her armour, and do valiant battle with this, the giant evil of the day?

We affectionately appeal to you, our brethren in the Ministry, and beseech you, by the dignity, sacredness, and authority of your high office, by the love you bear to our living King and Head, and the affection you cherish for the Church which is His body, by the necessity laid upon you to preach the whole counsel of God, the present needed truth; by the dangers which beset many of your brethren, and encompass those placed under your care, be ye faithful, earnest, and fearless in proclaiming from the pulpit the teachings of God's Word on the whole subject of danger and duty in this matter, and by a pure example as well as by Scriptural precept, enforce and illustrate the great law of love and duty of self-denial. Dear brethren, it is yours to awaken, enlighten and vitalize the conscience of the Church on this question; fail not in this duty, and you will not fail in attaining a glorious reward. Dear brethren in the eldership, overseers of the house of God, into whose hands are intrusted the discipline of the Church, and, to a large extent, the spiritual interests of the people, we earnestly exhort you to magnify your office, be "examples to the flock," "be blameless, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach, not given to wine." You can do much by your example, your counsel, your faithful discharge of duty, to elevate the standard of Christian conduct in this matter in your congregations, and to reclaim such as may have fallen.

To you who are teachers in our Sabbath schools we look with anxious hope; the lambs of the fold are intrusted to you; seek lovingly and patiently to instil into their young minds right views, and inculcate right practices; frequently and wisely point out to them the dangers to which they will be exposed as they grow up, warn them against the seductions of evil companions, and the peril which lies in the first glass. If all the youth of the Church could be saved from the pestilential infection, it were a glorious work, a noble victory. Fathers and mothers, we implore you by the love you bear your offspring, and they are dear to you, by the solemn vows under which you lie to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, by all your fond parental hopes for their welfare here and hereafter, by your love for the Church of Christ, her purity and peace, teach your children to shun the ensnaring cup; bring the might of your affections and the weight of your authority alike to bear upon and save them from the alluring fascinations and the fatal consequences of this vice. Your influence is great, your example is powerful, let them ever be on the side of sobriety and safety; you are aware of the dangers to which your loved ones are exposed, prepare them to meet and successfully brave them, by inculcating upon them from their childhood the practice of total abstinence from all that can intoxicate. Should your children follow your counsel, will it ever prove to them or to you a matter of regret? Should they reject it, they may bring your grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, but your conscience will be clear, pure from their blood. But,—bear with us brethren,—if by your example, or your neglect, your child should fall a prey to the spoiler, what a burden of sorrow would press upon your heart; and

when at the close of life you are called upon to part with them, how sad your hopes and their prospects, and in view of meeting them again, how solemn your responsibility!

In conclusion, brethren, our appeal to you is not based upon the question as to the poisonous qualities of the liquor consumed, nor whether drinking is in itself a sin, nor whether there is any positive prohibition contained in God's Word. Let each man settle these cases according to the light he has, in view of his own duty and responsibility. But our appeal is based upon the great fact of your professed subjection to Christ, and your obligation to do all things for His glory, and like *Him*, to live not for yourselves, but for others. Now, on the one hand, here is the admitted prevalence of a most insidious and destructive vice, a widespread and most pernicious practice existing among us. And on the other, there is the example and teaching of Jesus, the entire spirit of the Gospel we receive, inspiring love, enjoining self-denial, and calling upon us to stretch forth the hand and help the weak—help a feeble, tried, tempted, falling brother, one for whom Christ died. Surely it is our duty at once to act upon the principle implied in the noble declaration of the magnanimous tender-hearted apostle, when he says:—"Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." Though our circumstances are very different, the principle is the same, and is susceptible of a ready and easy application. Will you not then, for the sake of many thousands who are already victims of strong drink, for the sake of multitudes who are in great danger of becoming such, for the sake of those who are dear to you, for the sake of the Saviour who died for you, and for the love of souls who are ready to perish, resolve, by the divine blessing, to do all in your power to banish intemperance and its brood of ills from the Church and the world? As patriots who love your country, as philanthropists who are interested in all that concerns the weal of your fellow-men, and above all, as Christian followers of Him who gave himself for us, and who has said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me," we ask you to aid in the suppression of this evil; under which our country, our Church, and our people mourn. While the season of the year suggests the interchange of mutual good wishes, and inculcates the exercise of charity and good will to all, it also reminds us that, on that very account, it is a time of peculiar temptations to many in the enjoyment of the domestic and social entertainments, which are so frequent, and otherwise so precious and so powerful for good. In the exercise of hospitality one towards another, we pray you to be on your guard that you wreath not the bowl of danger to all, and of death to many, with the fragrant and beautiful flowers of home gladness and social festivity.

"And now, Brethren, we commend you to God, and to the Word of His Grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

Your brother and fellow-labourer in the Lord,
W. ORMISTON, D. D., *Moderator of Synod.*

HAMILTON, Dec. 25th, 1869.

