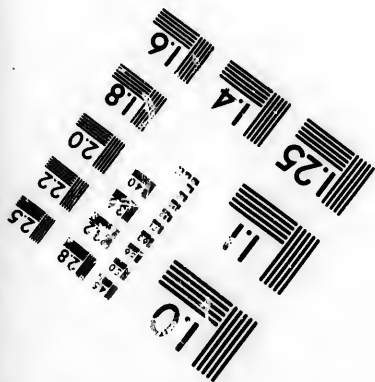
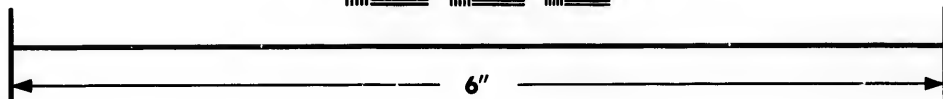
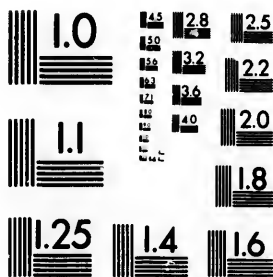


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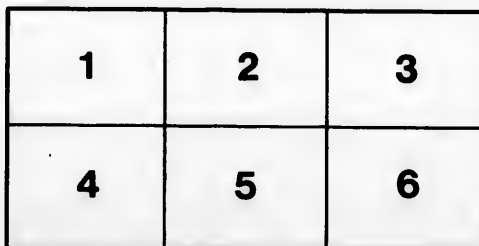
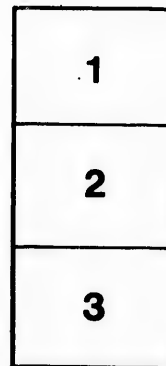
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REPORT

ON THE PART OF THE CONVENER OF THE SYNOD'S COMMITTEE TO NEGOCIATE ON THE SUBJECT OF REUNION WITH THE SECEDING BRETHREN.

(Addressed privately to the Members of the Synod.)

At our late meeting in Montreal, we were actuated with one sentiment of deep sorrow and disappointment that so many of our brethren had broken off from our ecclesiastical communion, and had formed themselves into a Synod distinct from us, and had thus put themselves in a train to perpetuate the disunion. We were all of one judgment that nothing had occurred to warrant this separation. Holding the same standards of doctrine, worship, and discipline, conducting our ecclesiastical proceedings in the same spirit and order that we had always done, and were still resolved to do, we were moved with profound regret, that the convulsion which had rent in twain the parent church, should disturb our harmony on this distant continent, and divide us into opposing parties. The sole points at issue between us were the judgments formed respecting the proceedings in the Church of Scotland and the actual position of that establishment, and the nature of that intercourse which duty and principle required us to maintain with her. On these subjects, indeed, there was the widest diversity of opinion. A few contended that the Established Church was utterly corrupt and erastianized; that she had forfeited all title to respect and confidence; that it was incumbent on us to renounce her name and fellowship, and if any correspondence were held with her, it should be conducted in the style suited to a corrupt and apostate Church. On the other extreme there were some who maintained that the Church of Scotland had done nothing to forfeit our esteem and reverence; that the evils which afflicted her originated from the Veto-Law,—an act illegal and at variance with her civil constitution; that the severe proceedings of the civil Courts were consequent upon this, and were necessary to repel the Church from the secular domain on which she had intruded; that the statutory constitution of the Church had suffered no change unless it were that made by a recent Act of Parliament which extended the popular right, and clearly went in the direction of the non-intrusion principle; that she maintained her doctrinal formulas with all her wonted integrity: and that, consequently, she was still entitled to undiminished regard. These extremes were not held, perhaps, by any two individuals in the same form—and in the wide interval between them, ranged a multitude of opinions, admitting of no classification from their variety, but inclining, in various degrees, to the censure, or the commendation of the Church of Scotland. The Synod in former years had omitted declarations of principle, and of sympathy with the Church of Scotland in her afflictions and contendings, and though, in regard to these some diversity of opinion existed at the time of their declaration, yet no disposition appeared in any party to recede from

them ; and had any distinct proposal been made for a renewal of a testimony for principle, it would, we believe, have been carried in a fuller and more perfect form than any adopted in former years. But the debate passed from *principles* to *parties*. It was not a testimony for the former which was demanded, but a virtual judgment on the latter. Under this new phase of the question, the point at issue became, whether the Church of Scotland had maintained her principles or abandoned them ; and on the negative, that we should hold no fellowship with her as a Church of Christ, on the affirmative, that our constitutional fellowship with her should be maintained as before. The communications of the Free Church to the Synod favored the negative ; those of the establishment, the affirmative ; and to both, as might be expected, very different degrees of importance were attached by members of the Synod. In the absence of fuller evidence, and in the hopelessness of persuading members to view the evidence that was before us in the same light, it would have been a happy circumstance had the question been entirely dismissed, in so far as parties were concerned, and had the Synod agreed to a renewed declaration of principle in which all could have agreed. Individuals might still have held their own opinions of parties in Scotland, and yet have dwelt together in unity here as members of an Independent Church, embracing the same standards of doctrine and discipline, and not to be injuriously affected by the Scottish controversies. These unavoidable diversities of opinion in regard to the proceedings of the Parent Church ought not to have interrupted our ecclesiastical unity. The disregard of this obvious dictate of charity and prudence, is the sole cause of the disorders that have afflicted us.

The writer, in so far as he has had any hand in originating these negotiations for reunion, founded his hopes of success in being able to bring back the seceding brethren to this ground. We were agreed in principle. We could never be brought to agree in our judgment of parties—and far less likely were we to agree in a synodical judicial deliverance on the conduct of the Church of Scotland in regard to proceedings, than which none more perplexing were ever brought before an ecclesiastical judicature. In these circumstances our wisest and safest course was to do as we had formerly done, declare anew for principle, if it were requisite, but let parties alone. We had no right to summon them to our tribunal ; we had no authority to call for their statements and defences, and it was plainly incumbent on us, in these circumstances, both for their sakes and our own, to abstain from any thing that might appear like a synodical judgment upon parties. Our hope was that the seceding brethren would meet us on this ground ; and that we might be able to heal the breach, not by any compromise of principle, or surrender of private opinion, but by an open and avowed declaration of principles in which we were all agreed, and a charitable toleration for diversity of opinions which could not materially affect our ecclesiastical procedure in this land. It was not, therefore, reunion on the basis of concession on either side which was contemplated. The writer was not aware that the Synod of Canada, in connexion with the Church of Scotland, had any thing to concede. He imagined that candid, mutual

explanations would have removed every difficulty: that as we were as FREE and INDEPENDENT as our seceding brethren could possibly be, we had only to consult upon the way of declaring this in some form that might be more agreeable to them, and that, perhaps, might be more consonant to our true position as an Independent Church.

Entertaining these views, as soon as he had received notice that the seceding Synod had appointed a committee, he entered into an official correspondence with the Rev. Alexander Gale, its Convener. As these letters explain the course of proceeding, and the views of the writer, we give them entire:—

Manse of Niagara, }
Nov. 7, 1844. }

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

Had the resolution of your Synod appointing a Committee to meet with a Committee of ours to negotiate on the subject of a reunion been communicated directly to myself through you, instead of through our Clerk, you would have heard from me earlier. Whatever may be the result, therefore, of the deliberations of our joint Committees the delay in the arrangements for their meeting is not attributable to me.

In the private note which I addressed to you on my return from the Meeting of our Synod in Montreal, which contained our resolution, I expressed a wish, that should your Synod meet us in a conciliatory spirit, and appoint a Committee in terms similar to our own, the meeting of the two Committees might take place at Brockville, immediately after the close of your Synod. I concluded that this arrangement would be convenient for any of your members from the Lower Province returning home. I thought it very desirable also that we should meet previous to the close of the navigation, to diminish as far as possible, the evils threatening us in the present condition of our affairs. I cannot but regret it as a misfortune to the Presbyterianism of Canada that this proposal did not meet with your concurrence.

I do not feel that in this official communication to you as Convener, I have any right to make a single remark on the form and style of the resolution of your Synod. It is enough that it contains nothing manifestly at variance with the measure proposed. As I understand it, it is free from this objection. I am therefore at liberty to enter into correspondence with you in reference to an early meeting of the Committees, that this matter, if God shall so prosper us, may be brought to a successful termination.

In the conduct of this negotiation, I trust that both parties will be actuated by an unfeigned spirit of brotherly kindness and charity, and an earnest desire to restore the peace and unity of the Church without compromising in any degree soundness of principle, or purity of discipline.

I am, Rev. and dear Sir,

Yours with Christian regard,

ROBERT MCGILL, *Convener.*

REV. ALEXANDER GALE,
Convener, &c.

Manse of Niagara, }
Nov. 13, 1844. }

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I received yours of the 11th this day. For reasons that appeared to myself very satisfactory, I was anxious that the joint Committees should meet previous to the close of the navigation, and by a somewhat unbusiness-like anticipation, which we often practiced in more friendly times, when we could

certainly reckon on the concurrence of others in any good and reasonable proposal, I did actually intimate to the members of our Committee the great likelihood that they would be summoned to appear at Brockville on very short notice, immediately after the dissolution of your Synod, and to hold themselves in readiness as if that were a fixed arrangement. The ignorance in which I remained until lately of your proceedings frustrated that measure. I fear it is not now practicable to procure a meeting of the joint Committees. On account of the official duties of some of the members whose presence I would deem indispensable, it could be held only at Montreal. At least two weeks must elapse before the members in the Lower Province could be notified, and that would throw the time of the meeting well on to the end of November, when even if we could reach the Metropolis by water, we would have no chance of returning, except over broken up roads, and in a season the most unfavorable for travelling. In these circumstances necessity shuts us up to some other expedient. I can think of no other more feasible than that we (the Convener) assume the responsibility, in the hope that it will be acquiesced in by all, of dividing our Committees into two Sub-Committees, one for Eastern, and the other for Western Canada, to proceed by full correspondence the one with the other. Our Committee for Canada West will then be Dr. Liddell, Mr. George, *vice* Mr. Urquhart, Judge McLean, Hon. John Hamilton, and myself, as Convener. I will summon them to meet your Sub Committee at Toronto, on any day you may appoint, and the earlier the better, that we may, if indeed it be within our power, diminish in the mean time some of the evils by which many of our congregations are afflicted.

In entering on this official correspondence with you, I ought to have stated, that I do not understand the *proviso* in our resolution in the sense in which your Synod have chosen to take it. Our Synod never contemplated that you should cease your "hostility to error," nor did we ever dream of proposing such a thing as an indispensable condition to negotiation. Whatever credit you may give to my statement, I may declare that we ourselves are strongly actuated with this hostility, and, therefore, cannot condemn it in you. Had you left it to your Committee to ascertain the nature of the hostility, that we thought it right to have taken out of the way, I am sure we should not have encountered any obstacle from the refusal of, at least, *your* concurrence. If I imagined that our views of *truth* and *error* "in matters fundamental" had indeed become discordant, I would not have taken the pains I have done to set on foot this negotiation. But because I believe we are still at one on these points, and may be in all others, I am encouraged to promote these measures of reconciliation, and to hope that they may not be in vain.

I am, Rev. and dear Sir,

Yours with Christian regard,

ROBERT MCGILL, *Convener*.

REV. ALEXANDER GALE,
Convener, &c.

Manse of Niagara, }
Nov. 18, 1844. }

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

Yours of the 15th instant is before me, and agreeably to your suggestion. I have summoned the members of our sub-Committee, to meet yours at Toronto, on the evening of Tuesday, the 26th instant, in the North American Hotel. It would have been satisfactory had you furnished me with the names of your Sub-committee, that I might have been able to inform ours whom they had to meet under our new arrangement. To

avoid longer delay, however, I have not requested you to supply this omission. * * * * *

In the negotiations, on which, Deo Volente, we shall shortly enter, and which will, of course, be reviewed by our respective Synods, I dread more the obstacles created by party animosity than any connected with principles; and even should we succeed in healing the breach in our ecclesiastical organization, it is mortifying to think at how great a distance we shall still be from the peace and harmony which these recent movements have broken; and with the prospect still before us, that the late subversion of Presbyterian government will pave the way for other disruptions on every trivial cause—as the aguish subject will continue to have fits when the east wind blows.

With sincere good wishes for your ministerial usefulness,

I am, Rev. and dear Sir,

Yours with Christian regard,

ROBERT MCGILL, *Convener.*

REV. ALEXANDER GALE,
Convener, &c.

The sub-committees for C. W. met accordingly in Toronto on Wednesday evening the 26th September. On our part there were present only Mr. McGill, the Convener, and Mr. Justice McLean. On the part of our seceding brethren there were Mr. Gale, the Convener, Mr. Stark, Mr. Rintoul, and Mr. Westland, and for some part of the time, Mr. Esson. Our conversation was directed to the main points which we conceived were at issue between us, and which, in the judgment of the writer, were capable of adjustment. First it was asserted by us, that our Synod was possessed of an entire and perfect independence in all spiritual and temporal matters; that in this respect we were in a position equally favorable with the New Synod, for carrying out all the principles and operations of a Christian Church. This declaration was admitted by the other party with the following exception for which, in order to reunion, a remedy would be required:—

That we have no right to exclude probationers coming from the Church of Scotland, in the mere exercise of our independence, provided they come properly certified from Presbyteries in Scotland, and that, in this respect, our independence is not complete, and our intercourse with that Church peculiar.* The constitutional peculiarity was admitted

* That ministerial communion which constitutes our only bond of connection with the Church of Scotland can mean nothing more than an obligation on our part to receive her properly accredited probationers, and consent on her part to hold valid our ordination of them, that is, to regard them while under our care as if they were under her own. It is an inducement held out to her licentiates to spend a part of their probation in the service of the Colonial Churches, under the assurance that by so doing they shall forfeit no privilege in their native land. The advantage, therefore, of this arrangement is all on our side. In regard to all other ministers or probationers, admitted into our synod, their connexion with us does not involve, in an ecclesiastical sense, any connexion with the Church of Scotland. We cannot admit them into ministerial communion with it; this right is peculiar to her own licentiates alone. It comprehends nothing more than *eligibility* to a pastoral charge within the national Church.—They can renounce it if they please without renouncing their connexion with us; and were the Church of Scotland, in the

on our part, but it was denied that this is any defect in our perfect independence. Yet for the purpose of removing the objection, we made the proposal, in the full belief that our Synod could, and would, confirm it by a Synodical Act, that in the admission of probationers, a general rule should be established, that all, from whatever Church they come, should be subjected to examination, and admitted only on satisfaction being given to the Presbytery before which they appeared, with the customary right of appeal to the higher judicature. We conceived that in this way the objection founded on the speciality might be removed. And to this, as we understood, our brethren on the other side assented.

2nd. It was held to be necessary in order to the removal of certain misapprehensions entertained by many, that the clause of our designation "in connection with the Church of Scotland" implies a defect in our ecclesiastical independence, that this clause should be changed, yet that this should be done by the authority of the Legislature, so as not to affect our legal identity as a Church, nor any temporal advantages held by us under our former title. Different views were expressed on the other side as to the importance of this stipulation, one contending that the mere change of name was a matter of little moment, another that it should be held to be indispensable. It was conceded on our part, that this clause in our title should not be held as a barrier to reunion, on the conditions assented to, namely, that its removal should be effected by competent authority, and so as not to affect our identity as a body, or create disputes in our congregations about property. Our brethren appeared to acquiesce in this proposal.

3rd. The next point that came up was the testimonies of the Synod, and it was required by the other party, that those already given by the Synod should be renewed, sustained and acted out. On our part we had no difficulty in assenting that this should be fully done, inasmuch as we had never receded from these testimonies. The consideration of the *manner* in which they were to be *acted out* was delayed until the question should arise respecting the regulation of our intercourse with the Church of Scotland. It was thought that it would simplify matters to bring this up under a distinct head.

4th. The subject next proposed for consideration, were the points of mutual forbearance and relief between such as form widely different views of the recent proceedings of the Church of Scotland. How far we could dwell together in unity, and in the harmony of ministerial action, without relinquishing our respective opinions. On the proposal of this question, which was at a late hour, and after the conversation had been carried on for several hours, the discussion became irregular and unsatisfactory, and the point in hand was lost sight of in the cloud of vague generalities by

exercise of her peculiar jurisdiction over them, to deprive them of that right it would not in the slightest degree affect their standing in our Colonial Church. This illustrates at once the peculiarity of our relation to the parent Church, and our perfect ecclesiastical independence.

which our affairs have unhappily been obscured. In the midst of this, however, it seemed to be unanimously declared by our brethren on the other side, that any sort of intercourse with the Church of Scotland, which implied friendship and approval, would be **SIN**. On our part it was stated that our ecclesiastical intercourse with that Church did not necessarily imply any more friendship than one Church of Christ should bear to another; that it did not imply any approval of any part of her proceedings that we thought wrong; that if any thing was defective in the constitution of the Church of Scotland, or wrong in her proceedings, we might condemn them individually, and synodically, if we should so resolve; that the tone of our correspondence with that Church, if indeed we should hold any regular formal correspondence with her, a thing we had never yet done, must necessarily be regulated by the prevailing sense of the majority, and that those who were not satisfied with it had full liberty to record their dissent. The feelings of the other side, however, now became more and more apparent that they held the **SINS** of the Church of Scotland to be so heinous, that any sort of correspondence with her would be dangerous; that probationers coming from her were to be suspected; that a stigma was to be affixed to her, marking her out as a peculiarly corrupt branch of the great Presbyterian family, that must be cast without the pale of christian fraternity and intercourse. Notwithstanding some qualifying explanations, these sentiments were so unequivocally expressed by our seceding brethren, that we concluded to hold them as a bar to all negotiations *in limine*, and thus our conference terminated.

The writer has thus endeavoured, impartially, to represent the course and issue of this meeting, respecting which his sincere prayer was that it might be attended by a different result. Nor can he now discover any ground for renewing these negotiations, nor any hope that our divisions shall be healed, until our seceding brethren are themselves really **FREE**,—independent of all foreign influence, and dictation, and disposed to acknowledge and act on the principle, that differences of opinion as to the conduct and merits of the Church of Scotland, or any other Church, cannot warrant any breach of ecclesiastical unity among ourselves, so long as we faithfully adhere to our own standards and possess “free, full and independent jurisdiction” as a Church of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

ROBERT MCGILL.

Niagara, Dec. 5, 1844.

The following is a copy of the Resolution for the appointment of a committee which was passed by the Synod in connexion with the Church of Scotland :—

“ The Synod, taking into consideration the lamentable evils of the recent disruption,—continuing to regard with sincere affection their Protesting brethren,—and earnestly desiring the restoration of union, declare their willingness to enter into correspondence with them on this subject, and appoint the following as a committee to confer with any committee to be appointed by their Protesting brethren, should they deem it expedient to make such appointment viz:—

“ Rev. Dr. Cook, Rev. Robert McGill, Hon. Judge McLean, Rev. Principal Liddell, Hon. John Hamilton, Rev. Hugh Urquhart, Hon. William Morris, Rev. Dr. Mathieson, Hon. Peter McGill.

“ To meet on the call of the Rev. Robert McGill;—and instruct said committee to intimate to any committee that may be appointed by the Protesting Body, that during the negotiations that may be carried on with a view to reconciliation, there must be a suspension of operations which cannot be regarded in other light than that of hostility,—and, in the event of no such pledge being given on behalf of the Protesting Body, by their committee, that all negotiation must necessarily terminate.”

The following is a copy of the Resolution for the same purpose, which was passed by the Seceding Synod :—

“ That while the Synod hold fast by the testimony they have been privileged to give for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the sole and Supreme Head of the Church, and for the liberties and rights of his blood-bought people, and while they feel confident that the step taken by the brethren of this Synod, in the recent separation, was warranted and demanded alike by a regard to christian principle and their own frequent, open, and well known avowals: and while firmly resolved, through grace, to avoid the responsibilities of a connection with the Established Church of Scotland, as at present constituted, yet being anxious to promote the peace and unity of the Church of Christ, they declare their readiness to meet with any of the brethren of the Synod still in connection with the Scottish Establishment, who may be willing to act out practically their own resolutions, and arrange with them such terms of union as may be honourable to principle, and conducive to the glory of the Redeemer. And the Synod, earnestly desirous of being actuated by no hostility but a hostility to error, declare, that they cannot, in the meantime, desist from any ministerial services whatever, which they may deem necessary to the maintaining of the truth for which they are called to witness, or to the well-being and purity of the Presbyterian Church, which they are solemnly engaged to uphold. That Mr. Alexander Gale, (convener,) Mr. Henry Esson, Mr. William Rintoul, Mr. Mark Y. Stark, Mr. John Payne, Ministers; and Mr. James Webster, Mr. J. F. Westland, Mr. James Gibb, and Mr. James Leslie, Elders, constitute a committee to conduct any negotiations toward a re-union with the brethren of the Synod in connexion with the Church of Scotland:—it being understood that the negotiations on their part must be in harmony with this resolution.”

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