APPEAL OF THE WESLEYAN CONFERENCE

ON THE

Question of Liberal Education in Upper Canada.

From the Christian Guardian, November 30, 1859.

We publish this day, the Memorial prepared by order and in behalf of the Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada to the Legislature, on the questions of the Provincial University, and Colleges for Upper Canada. We commend this document as an exposition of the views and feelings of more than four hundred Christian Ministers ;—a body of men whose self-denying labours stretch back to the earliest period of Canadian history, and extend to the remotest townships of Canadian immigration : a body of men who have been the pioneer champions of equal religious liberty in Canada, as they have been the pioneer missionaries to its new settlements and Indian tribes : a body of men who have repeatedly refused to receive any thing from the State which was not equally available to every other religious community ; who have never asked any thing for themselves or their own community except upon the principles of equal justice and rights to all religious denominations and classes, and who have made the first and most persevering exertions by voluntary efforts to promote academical education in the country.

We recommend this memorial to the attentive perusal of every reader, and especially of those editors and writers who have mistaken and misrepresented the views and objects of the Wesleyan Conference in regard to a Provincial University. We trust that the *Globe*, and *Leader*, and *Montreal Witness*, and other newspapers in which erroneous interpretations of the sentiments and motives of the Wesleyan Conference have been admitted, will insert this exposition of the views and requests of that body upon the whole question of the higher as well as elementary education of the country.

We appeal to statesmen of all parties, to the clergy and members of all religious persuasions, to ponder and compare the liberal, just, and philanthropic views of this appeal of the Wesleyan Conference with the exclusive, selfish, and petty effusions of their assailants. We appeal to every philanthropist, to every thinking man of every party, whether the remonstrances and recommendations of the Wesleyan Conference do not, in an economical, Christian, and national point of view, redound infinitely more to the highest and best educational interests of Upper Canada than the wasteful and contracted proceedings of the Toronto monopolists. The Wesleyan Conference has taken its stand upon the plain intentions of the Legislature, as well as of justice and patriotism, while the proceedings of the Senate of the University have been in plain violation of those intentions.

The only practical argument employed by these champions of extravagance and monopoly, is the senseless bug-bear of "sectarian education," as if it were not better for men to be educated with decided religious principles and feelings than with no religious principles and feelings ; as if the religious principles of a university education at Oxford, Cambridge and Dublin, were an evil to be dreaded, and every graduate of either of those seats of learning was a monster to be avoided until he abandoned the faith of his education ; as if that to which Scotland owes its highest glory, were a calamity to be deprecated, and as if every Scotch Minister in Canada who had graduated at a Scotch University, were a living beacon of warning against the evils of "sectarian education," as if they would have been so much better men had Christianity, and decided denominational Christianity too, never been blended with their university education. There may be degenerate men from Oxford, Cambridge and Dublin, who now profess to deprecate what they gloried in until a college monopoly was usurped by them. There may be Scotch graduates who, because a college monopoly can be turned to their account, will now exclaim against that of which they have ever before justly boasted as Scotchmen, and ministers and scholars; but every sound hearted man among them all, may be appealed to, whether he regards the religious influences of his university education as an evil, and not a benefit, and whether he does not believe it would have been better rather than worse for him had those religious influences been more powerful and more practial than they were. We appeal to the consciousness and conscience of the Presbyterian minister and scholar against the pretensions of the Toronto Monopolists; and we appeal to the same consciousness and conscience of the graduate of Oxford, Cambridge, or Dublin against the same pretensions.

We ask for no Sectarian University; nay we desire a non-denominational, an impartial university to confer degrees in Science, Literature and Art; but we ask for equal aid for a collegiate education which will blend the daily influences of religion with the daily studies of literature and science, which developes the moral as well as the intellectual man, which trains the heart to divine virtue, while it stores the understanding with human learning.

As the embellishment of a private edifice is no proof of the intelligence and virtues of its occupants; as the marble and ornate splendour of the church edifice are no guarantee or indication of the ability and soundness of its pulpit discourses; so the costly magnificence of the collegiate edifice is no proof or security of even mediocrity in its standard, or system, or principles, or methods of instruction. History teaches that just in proportion as Greece and Rome lavished their resources upon stone and marble, upon the material and inanimate, they declined in the intellectual and moral; and we cannot but look upon the diminution of several thousand pounds a year in the available resources for promoting collegiate education in Upper Canada, by the lavishing of one hundred thousand pounds instead of expending one hundred thousand dollars, upon a collegiate edifice in Toronto, as the dictate of vanity and selfishness

rather than of wisdom and patriotism, as portentous of evil rather than of good to our country. Ours is not the country, nor even the age, in which the necessary, the practical, and the useful are to be sacrificed to the "lust of the eye, and the pride of life," in which what has been set apart for other objects, and what should be husbanded and applied as a sacred treasure for the liberal education of the largest number of the rising and future generations of Canada, is wasted by thousands in mosaics and cobbles, in an institution which ought not to be intended for *show* but for *work*, and in a comparatively new and poor country, where every farthing is required to aid the education of youth.

Far be it from us to object to what is convenient and appropriate, and even plainly elegant in an educational structure, whether a school or a college; but when it is considered how simple and plain are the halls and lecture rooms, in which the most learned Professors in Europe have lectured to princes and nobles as well as to plebians, and where the profoundest intellects that ever thought have been trained, we cannot but grieve that such examples are not followed in Upper Canada, and that the most precious and largest of our educational funds should be lavished upon what may make the City of Toronto proud instead of making the youth of Upper Canada learned.

TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF CANADA:

The Memorial prepared by order and in behalf of the Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada.

RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH:—

That the Legislature in passing the Provincial University Act of 1853, clearly proposed and avowed a threefold object: First, the creation of a University for examining candidates, and conferring degrees in the Faculties of Arts, Law, and Medicine. Secondly, the establishment of an elevated curriculum of University education, conformable to that of the London University in England. Thirdly, the association with the Provincial University of the several colleges already established, and which might be established, in Upper Canada, with the Provincial University, the same as various colleges of different denominations in Great Britain and Ireland are affiliated to the London University,—placed as they are upon equal footing, in regard to aid from the State, and on equal footing in regard to the composition of the Senate, and the appointment of examiners.

In the promotion of these objects the Conference and members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church cordially concurred; and at the first meeting after the passing of the University Act, the Senatorial Board of Victoria College adopted the programme of collegiate studies established by the Senate of the London University, and referred to in the Canadian Statute. But it soon appeared that the Senate of the Toronto University, instead of giving effect to the liberal intentions of the Legislature, determined to identify the University with one college in contradistinction, and to the exclusion of all others, to establish a monopoly of senatorial power and public revenue for one college alone; so much so, that a majority of the legal quorum of the Senate now consists of the professors of one college, one of whom is invariably one of the two examiners of their own student. candidates for degrees, honors, and scholarships. The curriculum of the University studies, instead of being elevated and conformed to that of the London University, has been revised and changed three times since 1853, and reduced by options and otherwise below what it was formerly, and below what it is in the British Universities, and below what is in the best colleges in the United States. The effect of this narrow and anti-liberal course, is, to build up one College at the expense of all others, to reduce the standard of a University degree in both Arts and Medicine below what it was before the passing of the University Act in 1853.

Instead of confining the expenditure of funds to what the law prescribed—namely, the "current expenses" and such "permanent improvements or additions to the buildings" as might be necessary for the purposes of the University and University College,—new buildings have been erected at an expenditure of some hundreds of thousands of dollars, and the current expenses of the College have been increased far beyond what they were in former times of complaint and investigations on this subject.

Your Memorialists therefore submit, that in no respect have the liberal and enlightened intentions of the Legislature, in passing the University Act, been fulfilled—a splendid but unjust monopoly for the City and College of Toronto having been created, instead of a liberal and elevated system, equally fair to all the colleges of the country.

A Provincial University should be what its name imports, and what was clearly intended by the Legislature—a body equally unconnected with, and equally impartial to every college in the country; and every college should be placed upon equal footing in regard to the public aid *according to its works*, irrespective of place, sect, or party. It is as unjust to propose, as it is unreasonable to expect, the affiliation of several colleges in one university except on equal terms. There have been ample funds to enable the Senate to submit to the government a comprehensive and patriotic recommendation to give effect to the liberal intentions of the Legislature in the accomplishment of these objects, but the Senate has preferred to become the sole patron of one college to the exclusion of all others, and to absorb and expend the large and increasing funds of the University instead of allowing any surplus to accumulate for the general promotion of accademical education, as contemplated and specifically directed by the Statute. Not only

nas the annual income of the University endowment been reduced some thousands of pounds per annum by vast expenditures for the erection of buildings not contemplated by the Act, but a portion of those expenditures is for the erection of lecture rooms, &c. for Faculties of which the Act expressly forbids the establishment!

But whilst your Memoralists complain that the very intentions of this Act have thus been disregarded and defeated, we avow our desire to be the same now as it was more than ten years ago, in favor of the establishment of a Provincial University, unconnected with any one college or religious persuasion, but sustaining a relation of equal fairness and impartiality to the several religious persuasions and colleges, with power to prescribe the curriculum to examine candidates, and confer degrees, in the Faculties of Arts, Law and Medicine.

We also desire that the University College at Toronto should be efficiently maintained ; and for that purpose we should not object that the minimum of its income from the University Endowment should be even twice that of any other college ; but it is incompatible with the very idea of a national University intended to embrace the several colleges of the nation, to lavish all the endowment and patronage of the state upon one college to the exclusion of all others. At the present time, and for years past, the noble University Endowment is virtually expended by parties directly or indirectly connected with one college, and the scholarships and prizes, the honours and degrees conferred, are virtually the rewards and praises bestowed by Professers upon their own students, and not the doings and decisions of a body wholly unconnected with the College. Degrees and distinctions thus conferred, however much they cost the country, cannot possess any higher literary value, as they are of no more legal value, than those conferred by the *Senatus Academicus* of the other chartered colleges.

It is therefore submitted that if it is desired to have one Provincial University, the corresponding arrangement should be made to place each of the colleges on equal footing according to their works in regard to everything emanating from the State. And if it is refused to place these colleges on equal footing as colleges of one University, it is but just and reasonable that they should be placed upon equal footing in regard to aid from the State according to their works as separate university colleges.

It is well known that it is the natural tendency, as all experience shows, that any College independent of all inspection, control, or competition in wealth,—all its officers securely paid by the State, independent of exertion or success,—will in a short time, as a general rule, degenerate into inactivity, indifference, and extravagance. In collegiate institutions, as well as in the higher and elementary schools, and in other public and private affairs of life, competition is an important element of efficiency and success. The best system of collegiate, as of elementary education, is that in which voluntary effort is developed by means of public aid. It is clearly both the interest and duty of the State to prompt and encourage individual efforts in regard to collegiate, as in regard to elementary education, and not to discourage it by the creation of a monopoly invidious and unjust on the one side, and on the other deadening to all individual effort and enterprise, and expensive to the State.

We submit, therefore, that justice and the best interests of liberal education require the several colleges of the country to he placed upon equal footing according to their works. We ask nothing for Victoria College which we do not ask for every collegiate institution in Upper Canada upon the same terms.

We desire also that it may be distinctly understood that we ask no aid towards the support of any theological school or theological chair in Victoria College. There is no such Chair in Victoria College; and whenever one shall be established, provision will be made for its support independent of any grant from the State. We claim support for Victoria College according to its works as a literary institution—as teaching those branches which are embraced in the curriculum of a liberal education, irrespective of denominational theology.

We also disclaim any sympathy with the motives and objects which have been attributed by the advocates of Toronto College monopoly, in relation to our National School system. The fact that a member of our own body has been permitted by annual approbation of the Conference to devote himself to the establishment and extension of our school system, is ample proof of our approval of that system: in addition to which we have from time to time expressed our cordial support of it by formal resolutions, and by the testimony and example of our more than four hundred ministers throughout the Province. No religious community in Upper Canada has, therefore, given so direct and effective support to the National School system as the Wesleyan community. But we have ever maintained, and we submit, that the same interests of general education for all classes which require the maintenance of the elementary school system, require a reform in our University system, in order to place it upon a foundation equally comprehensive and impartial, and not to be the patron and mouth-piece of one college alone; and the same considerations of fitness, economy, and patriotism which justify the State in co-operating with each school municipality to support a day school, require it to co-operate with each religious persuasion, according to its own educational works, to support a college. The experience of all Protestant countries shows that it is, and has been, as much the province of a religious persuasion to establish a college, as it is for a school municipality to establish a day school; and the same experience shows that, while pastoral and parental care can be exercised for the religious instruction of children residing at home and attending a day school, that care cannot be exercised over youth residing away from home and pursuing their higher education except in a college where the pastoral and parental care can be daily combined. We hold that the highest interests of the country, as of an individual, are its religious and moral interests ; and we believe there can be no heavier blow dealt out against those religious and moral interests than for the youth of a country destined to receive the best literary education, to be placed, during the most eventful years of that educational course, without the

pale of daily parental and pastoral instruction and oversight. The results of such a system must, sooner or later, sap the religious and moral foundations of society. For such is the tendency of our nature, that with all the appliances of religious instruction and ceaseless care by the parent and pastor, they are not always successful in counteracting evil propensities and temptations; and therefore from a system which involves the withdrawal or absence of all such influences for years at a period when youthful passions are strongest and youthful temptations most powerful, we cannot but entertain painful apprehensions. Many a parent would deem it his duty to leave his son without the advantages of a liberal education, rather than thus expose him to the danger of moral shipwreck in its acquirements.

This danger does not so much apply to that very considerable class of persons whose home is in Toronto; or to those grown up young men whose character and principles are formed, and who, for the most part, are pursuing their studies by means acquired by their own industry and economy; or to the students of theological institutions established in Toronto, and to which the University College answers the convenient purpose of a free Grammar School in certain secular branches. But such cases form the exception, and not the general rule. And if one college at Toronto is liberally endowed for certain classes who have themselves contributed or done nothing to promote liberal education, we submit that in all fairness, apart from moral and patriotic considerations, the State ought to aid with corresponding liberality those other classes who for years have contributed largely to erect and sustain collegiate institutions, and who, while they endeavour to confer upon youth as widely as possible the advantages of a sound liberal education, seek to incorporate with it those moral influences, associations, and habits which give to education its highest value, which form the true basis and cement of civil institutions and national civilization, as well as of individual character and happiness.

We therefore pray your Honorable House, to cause an investigation to be instituted as to the manner in which the University Act has been administered, and the funds of the University of Upper Canada College have been expended, the immense advantage and benefits to the country of several competing colleges over the deadening and wasteful monopoly of one college; and cause an act to be passed by which all the colleges now established, or which may be established in Upper Canada may be placed upon equal footing on equal terms in regard to public aid, either as so many co-ordinate university colleges, or (which we think the best system) as so many colleges of one university.

Signed by order and in behalf of the Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, in Canada,

JOSEPH STINSON, D. D. *President.*
EPHRAIM B. HARPER, *Secretary.*

PRINTED PAPER.

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