

REPORT

OF A

COMMITTEE

OF THE

PRESBYTERY OF TORONTO,

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

TORONTO:

W. J. COATES, 160 KING STREET.

1836.

TORONTO, August 9th, 1836.

THE Committee of the Presbytery of Toronto, for considering and preparing a plan for the education of Ministers in Canada, met this day, and having been constituted with prayer : sederunt, the REV. WILLIAM RINTOUL, Convener, and the REV. PETER FERGUSON and WILLIAM T. LEACH. There was produced and read a draft of a Report, and the same was approved of and adopted as the Report of the Committee. The Committee resolved to print the Report, on account of the shortness of the time which intervenes between the next ordinary meeting of the Presbytery and that of the Synod, without intending thereby to commit the Presbytery to an approval of all the details of the Report.

(Extracted from the Minutes.)

WM. RINTOUL, CONVENER.

REPORT.

THE Committee report, that soon after their appointment, they applied to the highest quarters for information respecting the likelihood of KING'S COLLEGE going into early operation; and, in the event of this taking place, of provision being made in it for the Theological education of candidates for the Ministry in the Presbyterian Church; but could obtain no information on these subjects. The position of parties in the Provincial Legislature at that time, indeed, utterly forbade the hope that Theological Professorships in connexion with any Church in the Province would be established in King's College; and, though that position is now altered, it remains to be seen, how far any thing like unanimity will prevail in regard to the commencement of the College, and the organization of a Theological Faculty in it. The committee are decided in the conviction, that it would be unbecoming in the Synod to intrust any Professor with the Theological instruction of their students, unless he were to a greater or less extent under the control of the Synod: and that the Synod should look to King's College as their Divinity School, only on condition of their obtaining a Professor of Theology in it who should be a member of the Synod, and subject to their jurisdiction. But the commencement of this royal institution does not appear to be so near, and neither does the obtaining of a Professor on these terms appear to be an event so probable, as to warrant the Synod to delay preparations for the education of Ministers from among the pious and devoted youths of our congregations. And the committee recommend the Presbytery to press upon the Synod, the importance of immediately taking steps, for the foundation of a Theological Seminary, for the training of such youths for the Ministry. The founding of such a Seminary, it may be observed, does not imply the relinquishment of the claims which the Synod may have on the Government, for an endowment in King's College, if that institution shall at any time provide for the Theological education of the students of any of the Christian Denominations in the Province. On the contrary, it will rather strengthen such claims; inasmuch, as that however humble the Seminary may be, it will directly promote the enlargement of the Church; and Government aid of any kind may be expected in proportion to the extent and influence of the Church in the community.

The appointment of this committee implies, on the part of the Presbytery, a recognition of the importance of the establishment of a Theological Seminary: yet, as no common exertions and sacrifices will be demanded towards effecting this object; the committee feel themselves warranted to preface the scheme they are now

about to submit, with a few remarks humbly designed to deepen in the minds of the brethren, a sense of the importance of the speedy foundation in the Province of a school for the education of Ministers.

It is submitted, then, in the first place, that Ministers educated in the Province will have some considerable advantages over those of the same standing, as to general qualifications, who have been educated in Britain. For, recent as the population of the Province is, and possessing as it does many characteristics of that of the Mother Country, it has yet a character of its own, in many important respects, distinct; on account of its mixed origin, and the circumstances which are peculiar to it as a young community. Hence, our preachers on their first arrival in the Province, even when amongst those who have migrated from Scotland at an early period, and still more when amongst the descendants of such, or emigrants from other parts, find themselves to be in some respects amongst a strange people; and they in like manner have something of the character of foreigners to the population. So that there is for a time a want of sympathy in each others views and feelings on many subjects; and the preacher is at once the less comfortable, and the less fitted to put forth the full influence of his office and character on the community. Ministers educated from amongst our own Provincial youths would have no such draw back on their usefulness; and they would have a more palpable advantage in their physical training, which would prepare them for the hardships incident to Missionary and Ministerial service in Canada.

Secondly.—It should be known throughout the Church, that there are now, in some congregations, individuals desirous of entering into the Ministry, and to demand of such an education in a Scottish University, would be a virtual barring of the door to their admission. Such individuals are not, it is true, known to be numerous; but unquestionably more of our pious youths would direct their attention to the Ministry, if means for a suitable education were within their reach. It may be safely affirmed, that the number of persons in a Church, who aspire to the Ministry from right motives, forms a fair test of the success, which God gives to the ministration of the word and ordinances in that Church; and it seems equally plain, that if a Church deny to such persons all opportunity of qualifying themselves for the Ministry, and of actually entering upon it; it is in the very way of counteracting the work of God, and cannot but provoke his displeasure. In this view of the matter, the present condition of our Church in these Provinces, destitute as she is of a school for the Prophets, may well awaken serious alarm. Many direct evils may be seen to be connected with the present system of obtaining Ministers. A certain nationality of character is induced on our Church, which by no means befits the origin of a great proportion of those who compose it: and in this way also, the Church is severed from many generous sympathies of the general population, and commends itself only to the national predilections of those who are of Scottish descent. The Church with a ministry purely Scottish, cannot acquire a Provincial charac-

ter, and neither can it grow with the growth of the community; while in the changes to which a Colonial State is peculiarly liable, it incurs a risk of being altogether overturned. Church history, it is believed, furnishes no example of the establishment of Christianity in a country, by means of the continued use of a foreign Ministry. Indeed, it has become an established maxim in the conducting of Christian Missions; that, the sooner that the converts of a country can be trained for the Ministry, the sooner may its evangelization be expected.

Thirdly,—The commencement of a Seminary in the Colony for the education of Ministers, has become, in some measure, a matter of necessity.

The supply of preachers from Scotland has hitherto been very scanty and has rather tended to shew the extent of the want of Ministers than met than want: and, while for these several years past, the people have been more alive to a sense of their destitution of divine ordinances, the supply of preachers has been actually diminishing. This is attributable partly to the greater demand at home for able preachers—caused by the establishment of town and city missions, and the erection of new churches; and partly, it must be confessed, to the inadequate remuneration made to ministers in this Province. On the latter of these grounds only, is the diminished supply of ministers from Scotland to be lamented. Let us rejoice, that the services of the best of her preachers are given to the culture of her own moral wastes. And how painful soever the consideration is, that ministers of the gospel in this land are very slenderly and inadequately paid; far from us be the thought, that the great work of bringing its people into the kingdom of God's dear Son, must stop, or even be abandoned by us. Let ours be the determined purpose to devote ourselves more entirely to this work; and then, we may without presumption assure ourselves, that the master whom we serve, shall not leave us unrequited even in this life. As the Church gains a hold of the community, we cannot doubt, that its ministers will be provided for.

The Glasgow Colonial Missionary Society may be regarded as the principal provider of preachers for the Scottish Presbyterian Churches of British North America: and yet, it furnished for Upper Canada only one laborer during the past year; while applications had been sent to them, from each Presbytery, for one or two missionaries, with engagements for their support; and they had been pressed by the corresponding Secretary to send a still greater number of missionaries of their own, in order to meet the actual necessities of the Province. The directors of this excellent society, it should be known, deeply lament their inability to meet the demands which our missionary fields and vacant congregations make upon them, and they freely confess, it arises more from the aversion of suitably qualified preachers to come hither, than from the scantiness of their funds. If then, we would not see our mission stations abandoned, and congregations scattered, for the lack of pastors, we must be prepared for the alternative of raising up

preachers amongst ourselves, or seeking them from other schools, than the Divinity Halls of our Scottish Universities

Fourthly.—The importance of commencing early a school for the training of ministers, may be urged from the consideration, that the earlier it is planted, the more readily may it be expected to take root, and grow with the growth of the province. Some seem to be repelled from seriously considering the scheme of a seminary for our church at present, from the fancied hopelessness of the undertaking. They look at the richly endowed universities of Britain, and they think that nothing but a large endowment from the state, can originate an institution, such as the church should acknowledge. But such persons, it is believed, forget that the most flourishing colleges which public or private benevolence has endowed had an infancy, and in general have advanced by a slow growth to the maturity in which we now behold them. Colleges and other similar institutions ordinarily have at first aimed at providing only for the felt wants of the period at which they were founded, and their enlargement has been consequent on the increasing want of educated men, and on the increasing resources of the community. Now, it may be enough for us, to originate an institution that shall supply the present want of ministers. Let us not think of completing at once a great establishment. Let us lay a large and deep foundation—a foundation capable itself of extension, and build on it a superstructure suitable to our present wants and means: and it may be left to another generation to complete it.—The funds that we might now acquire might be so laid out as to increase in value with the increasing capital of the Province.

Once more—as it does not seem out of place to remark—no ecclesiastical body, except our Church, and none of the secular professions in the Province, exact of those admitted into them an education in a British University. All other churches, whether following a rigid or lax ecclesiastical organization, a high or low standard of literary attainments for ministers, open the ministry to those whom they severally deem qualified, without respect to the place where they have been trained. Obvious advantages, as has been already remarked, must result from introducing our Canadian youths to the ministry;—and it is important here to remark that some of the most efficient ecclesiastical bodies in this and the adjacent Province, are making considerable progress in promoting education amongst their candidates for the ministry. The Episcopal Church, which indeed is very accommodating in its terms of admission to the ministry, so long as its ritual requirements are complied with, finds some of its most useful ministers amongst those who have been educated in Canada. And the Methodist body, which has heretofore gloried in an unlearned ministry, has, through its own exertions, in contributing and collecting funds, founded a Seminary in Cobourg, which promises to rival institutions that have for their endowment drawn deeply on the public revenue.

If we turn to the secular professions, we see in one, the Medical Board, ready to receive applicants for their license, from the

American or Transatlantic Schools indifferently ; yet, zealous in exacting from those on whom they bestow it a good education.— And in another, we see, that the Lawyers have already founded in the metropolis a Hall, which at once bespeaks their enterprise, and their determination to uphold the honor of their profession, in so far as this may be done, by affording to all who aspire to it, ample opportunities for preparatory study.—And shall the Church, which calls itself the Presbyterian Church of Canada, continue to declare to its members, that any candidates for the ministry, however well accomplished, if trained in Canada or any where but Scotland shall be rejected ? Shall her ministers and elders in Synod assembled, permit another year to pass over without committing themselves in the Lord's strength, to the founding of an institution in which aspirants for the ministry, may acquire all the necessary qualifications, which human teaching can confer, for that high and holy work ?— We trust not.—The committee conceive that a Theological Seminary might be organized so soon as an endowment for one Professorship and a Tutorship, or assistant Professorship could be raised.

A suitable edifice is of course indispensable to the effectual prosecution of the plan : but the first and most vigorous efforts should be directed towards providing the endowment. Temporary accommodations for classes could easily be obtained, until permanent buildings could be erected. It is conceived, that the sum of five thousand pounds currency, might be regarded as adequate for the first endowment, the interest of this at 6 per cent., being £300 per annum. The assistance of Government in the way of a grant of money or lands, would of course be sought ; but the issue of such application should not be allowed to control our exertions in other quarters. The assistance of friends in Great Britain will doubtless be obtained, for endowments and buildings, scholarships and a library : but our first dependence under God, must be on ourselves and our congregations. We must not seek help from abroad, until by the liberality of our own contributions we can prove to others that we have such a deep interest in the undertaking, as may be an earnest at once of wisdom and energy for the conducting of it. There should be employed in pleading this cause throughout the church, those who feel its magnitude and its urgency ; and our people should be called to shew their concern for perpetuating christian privileges amongst themselves, and extending these to others, by large and willing offerings of their substance.

The committee submit the following draft of an overture to the Synod, that the Presbytery, if they see fit, may adopt and transmit the same :

The Presbytery of Toronto respectfully overture the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, to take into serious consideration the importance of founding a collegiate institution for the education of pious youths, for the work of the holy ministry. And the Presbytery at the same time respectfully submit the following resolutions on this subject, for the adoption of the Synod.

RESOLVED, I.—That the inadequate supply of preachers hitherto obtained from Scotland, and the capability of the Church here to furnish some students for the Ministry, urgently calls on the Synod to adopt vigorous measures for the foundation of a Theological Institution.

RESOLVED, II.—That such Institution, if founded, shall be located within the bounds of the Upper Province.

RESOLVED, III.—That respectful applications shall be made to the Home and Colonial Governments, for an endowment of lands or money, for the founding of such Institution.

RESOLVED, IV.—That the actual commencement of the undertaking shall not be contingent on the success of these applications.

RESOLVED, V.—That a Committee of Synod be appointed for drawing out Memorials and Petitions to the British and Colonial Governments, for assistance towards the foundation of the Theological Seminary, and making collections throughout the bounds of the Church for the same object: for preparing a scheme for the foundation, and for drafting a bill of incorporation for the Trustees and Directors of such Institution. The scheme and draft to be submitted to the commission of Synod, at their meeting in ——— for their approval; and the same Committee to prosecute the passing of a bill of incorporation in the Colonial Legislature, which shall have been approved of by a majority of the commission; and to publish reports from time to time as they may see fit.

