

# The Presbyterian Review.

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Toronto, April 23, 1896.

## Church Union In Scotland.

A CRISIS has been reached in a series of negotiations between the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland as to a basis of re-union, in which the Presbyterian world has been greatly interested. Two years ago a few of the most distinguished and representative men of the Church of Scotland, Free, and United Presbyterian Church met "to talk unreservedly of the union of the three Churches, . . . on the understanding that all matters on which they differed should be fully discussed." Among established churchmen who entered into it were Professors Flint and Charteris, Drs. Marshall Lang, Cameron Lees, Archibald Scott, Alison, Blair and Pagan; Sir Ralph Anstruther, Bart.; Mr. J. A. Campbell, M.P., and Sheriff Cheyne. The Free Church was represented by Drs. Candlish, Ross Taylor, Norman Walker, Bannerman, Revs. J. M. Sloan, R. Howie, with Sir Thomas Clark, Messrs. Taylor Innes, J. M. M'Candlish, etc., and the United Presbyterian Church by Drs. Calderwood, Mair, MacEwan, Henderson, Kidd, and others. After meetings and discussions the following resolutions were arrived at, showing that the negotiations have not, thus far, been successful.

1. Its warm gratification at the brotherly spirit which has all along characterised its discussions, and at the large amount of agreement which has been revealed in regard to important principles.

2. Its deep regret at finding itself *unable to agree upon a basis* for an incorporating union between the three Churches.

The State connection was found to be the chief, and indeed, almost the only important obstacle in the way of a scheme of union which would be acceptable to all. Each of the three Churches submitted a carefully prepared statement of its position, statements which may prove historically valuable in any future similar negotiation. For the Free Church, Professor Candlish maintained that "in her legislative action the Established Church has no power to refuse Parliamentary control even in spiritual things." On the other hand, Dr. Alison, on behalf of the Established Church holds "that the spiritual independence of the Church has not been violated by the Civil Courts." "That the Church and the State have distinct spheres" is the contention of Dr. Mair, representing the United Presbyterian Church. It is most interesting to follow the argument, the more so that it affords an insight to the positions held by the Churches concerned in the negotiations, with respect to the establishment or Church and State principle. It also shows how small the difference is on essentials between the Free Church and the United Presbyterian. Union between these two great Churches ought not to be impossible. If the Free Church, which historically holds by the establishment principle cannot now accept State connection as an element of a reconstructed

church, she has travelled far in the direction of voluntarism since 1843, and if she has carried the sentiment and convictions of her people with her in this "u-p-ward" journey, it would seem strange should no basis of union between them be devised. The negotiations just closed are likely to draw these two kindred Churches still closer. In substance the Free Church argues thus: "The civil establishment of the Church has always been perilous in Scotland and elsewhere; that when Christians are divided into denominations differing in their views, it is not the duty of the State to decide for the people which is most Scriptural or true, or to give any one of them ascendancy over others on the ground of its possessing the majority; and where it has done this (as in our own country it did openly on intolerant principles), it is its duty now to solve the difficulty it has created by returning to principles of equal treatment." To which the Established Churchmen reply "that Christ is the Head of the State, that the State ought to be Christian, and ought to promote religion and righteousness. They then go on to propose a federation of the Churches. The Establishment principle is not made a term of communion in any of the Churches. Why not cease contending for or against it? Why not stop all contention and agitation, and be silent with respect to it? On that condition, they propose federation and co-operation with a view to ultimate union in a national Church."

It would have been too much to expect that voluntarism and Stateism could join hands in a federation, and as above stated the negotiations failed in their direct object, but it was surely well that the ablest men in the three Churches should come together and confer in the brotherly spirit in which they did, and although for the present the prospects of the union of the three Churches may not have been hastened by the conference, it may be that good seed has been sown which will at some future time bring forth fruit in the desired direction.

## Remembered in Canada.

A minister who is still remembered with kindly feelings in the Canadian Church, and whose brothers are respected members of the ministry here, Rev. Andrew MacDonald Tait, was elected Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of New South Wales at the Annual meeting last month. The following brief sketch from the *Sydney Presbyterian* will be read with interest by many of his old friends:—

The Right Rev. Andrew MacDonald Tait is a native of the county of Caithness, the farthest north county of Scotland, and of the parish of Halkirk. He has sprung from a race which was distinguished for generations for their piety and devout zeal for the glory of God. One of these, Kate Tait, is honorably mentioned in Dr. Kennedy's book "The men of the North." His parents were highly respectable, though not rich (although it was said they ought to have been). Educated at the parish school, he afterwards went to the Edinburgh University, where he attended three sessions. Removing to Glasgow, he attended one session. Afterwards he attended the Divinity Hall of the Free Church in Glasgow for four sessions. Licensed by the Presbytery of Glasgow in 1868, he was sent to Canada in October, 1869, by the Colonial Committee of the Free Church. In March, 1870, he was ordained and inducted by the Presbytery of Ottawa at Bristol, Quebec. Here he remained for nearly three years, working successfully; but finding the climate in the winter season too severe, he was