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Contributors and Correspondents

Union with the Church of Scotland.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—I trust you will give me room in your paper for a statement of views on the subject of Union, which I entertain, in common with many of the office-bearers and members of the Canada Presbyterian Church. Many of my brethren are in great perplexity in reference to Union with the Church of Scotland in Canada—a union which, judging from the present aspect of things, they fear may shortly be formed, without any due regard to principle on the part of our own Church.

A great deal is said in favour of the proposed Union that has no bearing upon the great question that should occupy the mind of the Church in reference to it. It is not a question with any of us whether Union among Christians is a desirable thing. However much may be said about the desirableness and advantages of Union, and the evils of dissension and separation, it need not be said for nobody is disposed to dispute it. Neither is it a question with any of us, whether Union with the Church of Scotland in Canada would not be a desirable and happy thing, if circumstances were such as to justify the persuasion that it can be effected without any sacrifice of principle and without any detriment to the interests of religion. But I must frankly say that looking at things as they are, taking into consideration the past history and procedure, and the present state of the Church of Scotland, in Canada, I do not think a union with that Church is desirable at the present time. There are various things that weigh heavily on my mind in view of such a Union, and that make me dread and dislike it, because, in view of them, I am persuaded that it would be productive of no real good, but that, on the contrary, it would be injurious to the interests of religion. I am fully convinced that it will be unspeakably better for the moral and religious interests of the country that we remain, in the meantime, as we are, leaving the Presbyterian Church of Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland to whatever course it may judge proper. My conviction is strengthened by the fact that it is shared by a large proportion of the religious people that I am in the way of associating with. I have no doubt that the experience of others may be different; and I know that many persons of the most decided piety are strongly in favour of Union. But such is my experience. So far as my own personal religious associations are concerned, I find that aversion to the proposed Union is most decided on the part of those whose piety is most unquestionable. Those who know me will not readily entertain the suspicion that such an experience is the result of any direct attempt on my part to influence the minds of others on the subject. I believe the experience of many others is similar to my own, and I would ask those who seem to have a commanding influence in favour of Union, whether they have given or are giving anything like due consideration to the fact that no contemptible number of serious-minded people are averse to the proposed Union, and in great perplexity of mind as to their duty in the event of the accomplishment of a Union, on such terms as are at present before the Church. Is there not a disposition, to say the least, to presume on their unwillingness to separate from the majority? But even supposing that few or more should carry their opposition to such a length, it is surely no light thing that a course should be pursued that makes many pious people—ministers and members—consider whether separation (may not be their duty, and that is likely to issue in a Union which they can only regard as a calamity.

Much as the considerations above referred to weigh with me, as they are of such a nature that one cannot well introduce them into discussion on the subject of Union, I shall only further say respecting them that, while in view of them, I would feel constrained to oppose the contemplated Union, I would probably not think of carrying my opposition beyond voting against it, were it not that I am persuaded that, setting aside all these considerations, the Church is on the road to Union at the expense of the sacrifice of a principle of vital importance. I hope I shall not be regarded as disrespectful to esteemed and honourable brethren from whom I differ on this subject, when I say that all along the negotiations seem to me to have been conducted on the principle that Union being a most desirable thing, it ought to be effected speedily and that with this view we must refrain from doing, saying, or asking anything that might stand in the way of it. It is, in my judgment, much to be regretted that the idea of drafting and submitting to the Church a basis of Union, before a careful and trustworthy statement was prepared clearly exhibiting the points of difference and agreements betwixt the two Churches, was not rejected, whoever suggested it. Such a statement ought to have been presented to the Church, and the question having been put, Do you consider that the difference of sentiment betwixt the two Churches is such that a Union may be formed without any sacrifice of principle? and that question being answered in the affirmative with some good degree of unanimity by our Presbyteries, Sessions and congregations, then, but not till then, should an attempt have been

made to draft a basis of Union. But as matters stand, however a long we may be to hope the best, we have no certainty of mind as to the sentiments of the other Church in relation to a principle of vital importance, and instead of anything being done to relieve our minds, a course is persistently followed which we cannot but regard as fitted to confirm our suspicion that the great principle referred to is to be sacrificed for a Union which we can only contemplate as fraught with evil in relation to the interests of religion. Do we not sacrifice that great principle if it ceases to be a fundamental principle of the Church, which it is now—and not only fundamental, but a principle the assertion of which is the *raison d'être* of the Presbyterian Church of Canada? Let me not be told that I am speaking as a Free Churchman my answer to that is that on entering into the Union of 1861, we did so, distinctly declaring the Canada Presbyterian Church to be identical with the Presbyterian Church of Canada.

What we wish, and what we consider indispensable to Union, is that it shall not be consummated unless provision be made for a full express and authoritative exhibition of this great principle as a fundamental principle of the United Church if not in the basis of Union, then in some other way equally satisfactory. In other words, let it be distinctly declared,—not assumed—but distinctly and expressly declared that the United Church holds, as a fundamental principle that Christ has appointed in His Church a government distinct from and not subordinate to that of the Civil Magistrate, and that the civil magistrate does not possess jurisdiction or authoritative control over the regulation of the affairs of the Church,—let this be done, and speaking for myself, though I have no expectation of good from Union, I shall submit to it, and do my best for the interests of the United Church. I do not wish to go back upon the past more than is necessary or unavoidable, and I am willing that nothing be said on what we conceive to be inconsistencies, if we can obtain anything like reasonable satisfaction as to the sentiments of those with whom it is proposed to unite. Knowing that we may greatly wrong brethren by charging them with holding an erroneous principle, because they hold what, in our judgment, involves it; or with not holding an important principle, because of their holding or doing what in our judgment, is inconsistent with it, I am willing that the past should be forgotten, *as much as possible*. I say as much as possible, for surely the past teaches lessons which it were folly to ignore, and great principles must be viewed in the light of the controversies that have arisen in connection with them. But I can conceive of brethren holding the great principle which is to me everything in these discussions on Union, while they may have been chargeable with what was, in my judgment, even grossly inconsistent with it.

Can nothing be done to relieve the minds of the many who are in the same perplexity as I am? Some of my brethren say, "Your suspicions are groundless; the brethren of the Church of Scotland in Canada are perfectly sound—just as sound as you are—in reference to the principle of which you speak; your dread of Erastianism has no better warrant than a child's fear of a ghost." I have little personal acquaintance with ministers of the Established Church of Scotland, so that I judge of their sentiments chiefly by the position which they occupy. But others, who have the means of knowing, assure me that I judge rightly in believing that they are not sound, and that, at least, many of them hold that in all cases the civil courts must be the courts of last resort against the possible wrongdoing of church courts. Well, whom am I to believe—my brethren who make a joke of my suspicions, and rally me perhaps on my Highland proclivities, or those who tell me that my suspicions are too well founded? And who are the parties to end my perplexity? Of course the brethren of the Church of Scotland. Let them speak out frankly and explicitly. Let them (still believing that the proceedings of the civil courts in connection with the non-intrusion controversy did not warrant the course they took at the disruption) assure us by a distinct and authoritative utterance, not only that they believe the church courts have an exclusive jurisdiction in all purely spiritual cases, and that the civil courts have no right of review in things purely spiritual; but that they believe the civil courts have no right, under the plea of civil interests involved in the Church's procedure, to interfere in the way of interdicting, suspending, or annulling the Church's acts, or of enjoining them, any more than they have a right to interfere with a man's government of his family or his disposition of his property, if, for instance, he should turn his son out of doors because he believed he was corrupting the morals of the family, or should cut him off with a shilling. I am not blaming the brethren of the other Church for not giving a distinct and authoritative exhibition of their sentiments upon this point. I blame my own Church. It seems we must not ask this, because our doing so will endanger the Union. We are told we should be content with subscription to the Confession of Faith, and with the assurance given us by our committee that the brethren of the other Church hold as firmly as we do the doctrine of Christ's Headship. But do we not know what the value of subscribing articles of faith has come to be in another Church? of faith has come to be in another Church? And do we not see a tendency in other churches to move in the same direction? Do we not ignore one of the most important ends of a church organization, if we content ourselves with seeing that our articles are signed, and are not careful to know what sense those who sign our Confession attach to its statements? These are not days in which we can be satisfied with the general profession of the admission of great truths, when men everywhere, in all the

Churches, are veiling their infidelity and their errors under the language of faith and orthodoxy. It is not conceivable that any man calling himself a Christian should deny the Headship of Christ over the Church. Even the dignitary who recently paraded his Erastianism with applause before a Scottish audience of high intelligence, admits it. But what is the advantage worth, when it is made, as in his case, in connection with a complete oversight, if not total ignorance, of the fundamental idea of a church?

But it is said, you may know what the brethren of the Church of Scotland in Canada believe to be involved in the doctrine of Christ's Headship over the Church, by reading their own Declaration of Independence. I cannot but feel that brethren have committed a great mistake in referring to that Declaration, omitted, we believe, soon after the disruption in 1844. It is referred to for the purpose of showing that the Presbyterian Church of Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland holds, and has always held, views identical with our own. But we cannot view it except in the light of the time and the circumstances in which it was issued. And reviewed in this light, my thoughts about it are such as I am most unwilling to express, because, as I said, I am willing to forget the past, and to submit to the wishes of the majority of my brethren, if I can get satisfaction in relation to my great difficulty. Let this declaration be forgotten, and let it now be not only assumed, but distinctly declared on both sides in the consummation of Union, that it is a fundamental principle of the United Church that the civil magistrate does not possess authoritative control, under any plea, or pretext whatever, over the regulation of the affairs of the Church, and then I, for one, shall perhaps not even dissent from a consummation which so many seem to have set their hearts on.

But why, it is said, insist on this, when the Synod is willing to terminate its connection with the Church of Scotland? and thus void the very points on which the Canadian disruption turned? I answer, this amounts to no more than simply not asking us to unite with the Church of Scotland. But more must be said. In the first place, though the disruption hinged on that particular point, have we not been accustomed to look upon the disruption as having brought about a separation desirable in other respects? Were there not in the Church of Scotland, previous to the disruption, two parties whose views and feelings were so different that their separation was, as we believe, in the interest of true religion, although it actually hinged on one particular point? And were we not thankful for the separation on this account? Have these differences disappeared? Are they less than they were? And if less, is the assimilation owing to the one party being educated up or to the other party being educated down? Such insinuations, it will be said, may apply to some extent to Scotland, but not to Canada. I wish I could think so. But let it be so. There is something more to be said on the matter now before us. Had the majority in 1844 consented to the proposal to cast off connection with the Scottish Establishment, which, as we believe, was then become hopelessly recreant in relation to great principles for which she had contended for generations, they would have been joined with their brethren in the privilege and honour of maintaining the Church's testimony unbroken. But instead of this, they resolved to adhere to the Church that had fallen from her testimony, and for thirty years they have constantly declared their preference for her, and their approbation of her principles as at present constituted, and are now as loud in their praises of her as ever? Does all this make no difference between 1844 and 1873? Does it not at least justify our being very careful in the business of this Union, and warrant our insisting upon something very definite in regard to the great principle which we regard as being of such vital importance? We wish no confession of wrongdoing. Let the brethren of the Church of Scotland live and die in the belief that they did right in adhering to the Scottish Establishment in 1844, and that they do right in separating from her thirty years after; but if there is to be a Union, let them not only tell us by word of mouth in committee that their taking the position they did in 1844 does not imply in their judgment as it does in ours, any disregard of the great practical principle that we have ever been so ready to charge them with the disregard of; but, let them show their readiness to dispel the suspicions which we think we have good reason to entertain, by saying that they are willing that that great principle shall be declared in the most express and unmistakable terms to be a fundamental principle of the United Church. I cannot see any ground for the charge of discourtesy in asking this. I feel quite sure that if we had given them any ground in their judgment to suspect our soundness upon any point, we would have been not only willing, but desirous to give them any satisfaction they could possibly require. It has been said, indeed, they might as well insist on our giving them explicit assurance that we believe schism to be a sin, inasmuch as they considered that our action in 1844 was schismatic, and we are asked what we would think and how we would act if the brethren of the Synod of the Church of Scotland were to make such a demand upon us. My answer is that whatever I may think of them, I believe them to be incapable either of the *miserable sophistry* or the *gross impertinence* involved in such a demand. Is the guilt of schism determined by arithmetic? Is it only a minority that can be guilty of it? Who does not know that we charged on them, the sin of schism, as strongly as they charged it on us, and, as we think, with far more reason? It were a waste of words to prove that there is and can be no parallelism between the two cases.

I began to fear that I may be regarded as a transgressor in respect of the space required for this communication; but let me acknowledge before concluding to refer to another fallacy that has done service in the discussions on Union. It has been said, why should you make so much ado about Christ a kingly office, when the great controversies of our time have relation not so much to His kingly office as to His prophetic and priestly offices. To cut the matter short, let us suppose that a controversy had arisen affecting the prophetic office of Christ. Suppose some of the ministers of the Church had expressed themselves in such a way as to warrant the suspicion that they held the belief that the Scriptures are not God's revelations of His self—of His character, His will and His purposes;—but only the expression of the thoughts of pious men respecting Him. Suppose a controversy to have arisen upon the subject ending in a disruption, the one party charging the other with denying the inspiration of Scripture as of course they well might, and the other party repudiating the charge, as they would no doubt do. And suppose further that after the lapse of a number of years, the proposal of a reunion of the two parties should be made in connection with the idea, that, possibly as some might think probably as others might think, and certainly as perhaps others might think the erring brethren had only expressed themselves rashly in exhibiting the individuality of the sacred writers. Who in such a case would not see the necessity of having the doctrine of the inspiration of the scriptures expressed in the most definite terms? Would not the notion of being content with the terms of the confession, and the proposal to ignore the whole controversy justly awaken the suspicion that there was really something wrong after all? And would not our suspicions be confirmed by our being reminded that our brethren had emitted a declaration in the strongest terms expressive of their belief in the inspiration of Scriptures, and told that we would insult them if we insisted on anything different from the terms of the confessions?

I might carry the parallel further, but I forbear, and will conclude with imploring those who seem to be set upon this Union to give to their own brethren some of that consideration which hitherto they have been giving so exclusively to the brethren of the other Church. So far as I can see the feelings of the brethren of the Church of Scotland are everything with them, while our views and feelings are nothing. It is unworthy of them to treat us as a helpless minority. Their doing so may be found the reverse of conducive to the realization of the great idea of one Presbyterian Church in the Dominion of Canada. I shrink from the very thought of disruption. I cannot look at it, till all means to obtain reasonable satisfaction have been tried in vain. I would, in the meantime, rather appeal to the better feeling of my brethren; and while we refrain from everything that looks like a threatening of separation, I would have them not to govern themselves by the notion, so often proved a mistaken one, that the spirit of the fathers is not inherited by the children.

JAMES MIDDLEMISS.

Sunshine for Ministers.

BY THE REV. R. C. MOFFAT.

We read the other day a very dark side to even the "shady side" of a minister's life. A minister and his family in a New England state, struggling with poverty, a small clique bound to get rid of him, after years of faithful service, saying the harshest things in the coarsest way.

All this brooded over by one of the minister's sons, until it became a mania, the poor boy burning the church in revenge, caught and sent to an asylum, the father dying broken-hearted, the son escaping and in the fury of his madness burning barn after barn of his dead father's unfeeling foes, until again seized and sent back to agonize over the memory of a ruined home.

It was a text not easily forgotten. Let the readers of the PRESBYTERIAN be our audience to-day, while we plead for sunshine for ministers and their work.

But, does not the minister get as much sunshine as other people? Yes, it is sent, but you may be the cloud preventing it from reaching him. In what way? If he is a true minister, you often pour out to him your cares, and fears and anxieties about yourself, your family and your business. Many in the congregation may be doing the very same; unless he has a cast-iron heart, all these things cost him many an anxious thought.

Again, you pour out to him your griefs, it may be the old story of a wayward child. Others have like dark, sad sorrows, he surely must hear them also; his soul yearns after the erring ones, and can that be done without many a sleepless hour.

There will also ever be sick beds, and death beds, and if one death of some much loved one will shadow your life for months to come, what must not the many such do to his life.

These are some of the clouds which hinder the sunshine and sadden the heart and wrinkle the brow, and if this is the only side of life you give to your minister, God pity him and his work.

We saw lately a book entitled, "Every Man his own Physician," let me add to it a prescription for your minister. And if he take it, as take it he will, there will be new light in his eye, a firmer ring in his voice, a warmer tone in his words, and people will ask in wonder, what has come over the minister. A fortnight up Lake Superior, a month down the St. Lawrence, a trip to the Mother Land may be to him idle day dreams, but your medicine given warm from your own heart will certainly strengthen his hand in God.

First Tell him of your spiritual blessings. Don't absorb them all, share them with others, and especially with him. You'll be he is weary sitting in his study, almost doubting God's blessing upon his sermons. If these have done good to your soul, in any way cheered, warmed, strengthened, or comforted, let him know it somehow. Earnest ministers want no flattery, but to know that they are doing good to heart or life may be a godsend to their weary soul.

We had a letter from one of the Southern States the other day, in which the writer mentioned that his father years ago had received special benefit from a sermon by a now sainted minister in Scotland. He at once called at the manse and frankly thanked the minister for that word in season; he was the first man who had ever done so; at once these two men were drawn together, and a friendship was begun never to end.

And 'tis not the first time we have known of a minister's whole nature being roused and refreshed by letters from young men, who had gone from their congregations without apparently receiving any good, gratefully stating how their earnest words had turned the tide against the world, its sins, and its infidelity.

Away then with all the clouds, and thus let in the sunshine and the breeze to the very soul of your toil-worn minister.

Second.—Have thorough sympathy with him in all his work. His aim will never be to steal from another sect or congregation, but to reach the careless and the godless. If he goes down the pit, hold up the ropes and help with hand and heart. The work of a live-church is to gather live sinners to a living Christ.

Is the Bible Class filling this generation with biblical knowledge; if it is not, at once join the class yourself, and take with you every young man and woman you can reach, and it very soon will.

Is the Sabbath School lacking one teacher, go you next Sabbath and do your best; God will bless.

Does it sorely need first-class maps or a stock of healthy books, if you won't get them yourself, don't hinder the children from getting them, but see that they are there, whatever the way.

Is the Prayer Meeting only half alive, go round your friends and talk work, and next week let there be a genuine surprise prayer meeting. Men can talk politics by the mile, and yet their voice may never be heard in a prayer meeting.

Let your motto be "All at it, and always at it." Make it your hobby, talk for it, pray for it, work for it until you and your church are all aglow with vigorous Divine life.

Thus give your minister your whole-hearted sympathy in all his great work; stand by him foot to foot, and shoulder to shoulder.

"Hearten him up," again we say, hearten him up; his soul will feel the inspiration and his pulpit will become a throne of undreamed power.

Third.—Keep very short accounts with your minister. Short accounts make long friends. "Don't owe him one cent. No, don't be in his debt for even one sermon, and then if he has wants for brain, or body, or health, he can get either or all supplied like a man.

And if thus surprised by the story of any good he has done your soul, by your generous sympathy, and by such kindly promptitude, he will with streaming eye confess his lack of faith, and with broken voice, yet grander purpose, thank God and take courage.

"For you must share, if you would keep That good thing from above, Ceasing to give, you cease to have, Such is the law of love."

We have seen a story of the Iron Duke somewhat like this; when asked in his old age if he had ever made a military blunder. Oh yes, he frankly answered, I often got into sad scrapes, but my soldiers always carried me safely through. Clasp your minister to your heart and carry him into the very midst of the sunshine of the Sun of Righteousness; and then every Sabbath from the grandest treasury in the universe, he will feed your souls with ever increasing spiritual nectars.