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## Contributors and Correspondents.

### THE BASIS OF UNION.

ALTO BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN

DEAR SIR,—It seems far easier to vote on the proposed Basis and Resolutions than to justify them before the public; and Presbyteries are, by larger or smaller majorities, declaring their satisfaction with them, and authorising the coming Assembly to ratify the Union, in the face of dissatisfaction and opposition that exists. Notwithstanding, of no endeavour still to open the eyes of the members of the church to the position into which they desire for Union and a blind confidence in our leaders is hurrying us, and begin by sketching the history of this movement.

Several years ago the C. P. Church made overtures for Union to "the Church in connection with the Church of Scotland," which, on both occasions, were contemptuously treated. More recently (as it is reported) some leading ministers of that Church appointed Dr. Ormiston, requesting him to inaugurate a similar movement, which he did without any authority, though with the connivance of some who are now on our Union Committee. Dr. Ormiston's conduct gave offence, but a committee was appointed, as he suggested, who also took upon them to go beyond their commission, and draw up a "Basis and Resolutions," which they, without much regard to the conscientious convictions of brethren, have laboured to keep the church from modifying or changing, even to the extent of leaving out Resolution 4th, though one of their number now admits it to be useless. I know some changes have been made, but rather than agree to try to get any such modification as might meet the views of those with whom I act, the Committee resigned in a body. The Assembly of 1872, instead of (as it ought to have done) appointing a new Committee, being, to some extent at least, under the impression that the old one wished to be reinstated, restored them. Having got into office again, they, instead of asking for some new document, such as the Assembly of 1872 evidently sought, resolved to seek, amid the records of the past, and returned in 1873, bringing back the old Basis and Resolutions, unchanged in language, but rendered doubly offensive by the reference in Resolution 3rd to the Act of Independence (for it was one of the documents read).

This Act, which our Committee presented with such a flourish of trumpets, as "a clear and decided statement of the practical bearing of the doctrine of the Headship of the Lord over His Church," and what should remove all our objections to the Basis, was passed in 1844, after the disruption took place in this country, and has done duty against our church and principles from that day to this. As soon as it appeared, it drew upon it the reprobation of those who adhered to the Free Church, as false from its commencement to its close, and with cause. The statement that "the freedom and independence of this Synod has been repeatedly, and in the most explicit terms, affirmed, not only by itself, but by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland," the explanation of the "connection" therewith given at the close of the Act, and therefore the whole document is mendacious, and yet it has to be "assented to by ministers at their ordination." The alleged acts of the "General Assembly," or of "this Synod," cannot be produced; and not only is there no such evidence of the boasted "independence," but it was as a part of the Church of Scotland, that the Presbyterian Church in Canada got its share of the clergy reserves, and all the property which it possessed before 1843. All that, in fact, belongs to the Church of Scotland now, in so far that it cannot be alienated without an act of the Imperial Parliament; and further, it is said that the Principal of Queen's College is appointed by its General Assembly. And yet, this false "Act," an Act, moreover, which mentions neither *Cæsar* nor the *Lord Jesus Christ*, and which does not profess to exclude the one more than the other, but rather gives the *Lord's* place to *Cæsar*, by the phrase, "in connection with the Church of Scotland," and is relieved from the charge of Atheism, when it claims for the Church that passed it, "final, supreme, uncontrolled jurisdiction," only when it is viewed in the light of its preamble, and as designed to declare the relation of the churches here and in Scotland, if not give to our Committee to mislead them, they were allowed to carry away, under an entire misapprehension as to its meaning and object, and have been allowed to use to mislead our Church. (I question not the honesty of our own Committee, but how can I admit that those who took a part in drawing up and passing it, and have used it for 30 years, did not know its meaning). And our last General Assembly, under the same leadership which it followed in 1872, when it directed the Committee to try to get "some deliverance" to meet the wishes of the dissatisfied among us, thanked the Committee "for their important services," the chief of which, for the previous year, was, in reality, the overriding of the instructions given by the previous Assembly, and the exclamation, and pre-

sentation, and glorification of this miserable and false document, and a number of Presbyteries have sustained this action of the supreme court.

If so far, then, as this sketch goes, we appear tired of playing secession and disruption, and as knocking time after time at the door for admittance into the other Church, willing to accept of almost any terms which they may be pleased to offer us. And when we examine the proposed Basis and Resolutions, we find that they complete our humiliation. If we accept them we agree—

I. To drop those articles regarding the Headship of the Lord Jesus, which we have in the present Basis, without getting any equivalent.

II. To be bound, in "Church relations," to all churches that profess to be Presbyterian, and thus not merely in the matter of the reception of ministers, but in all that is akin thereto. The 4th Article is designed to place the United Church "in such Church relations to churches holding the same doctrine, discipline and government with itself, as that ministers and probationers from these" shall be received into it. That means that we are to be substantially one with all these Churches—every thing is included short of incorporation, and it is plainly implied that there is nothing except locality which could justify our maintaining a distinct organization. Now, with such an article in our Basis, we shall no longer be independent of these other churches, as long as their professed doctrine, government and discipline remain unchanged we are bound to them, however they may deviate in their application of their principles. The Presbyterian Church of Canada at one time refused to have a intercourse with "the old School Church," on account of its complicity with slavery, and to receive a "new School Church" deputy. Once this 4th Article is adopted, no more such pranks can be played. We cannot even claim to question, on any point, ministers who may come to us from those churches described in the Article, any more than we may one of our own when passing from one sphere of labour to another. I know the Article says we are to receive ministers from these bodies "subject to such regulations as may from time to time be adopted." But, inasmuch as we are to be in a close Church relations as possible with these Churches without being formally incorporated, all that is to be or can be left for the United Church to regulate, is the mode of reception of ministers, that is, whether that shall be done by Presbytery, Synod, or Assembly. I am not sure that a term of mission work even can be prescribed to them before they are eligible to be called. The article itself draws the distinction between fraternal and church relations. I suppose it is meant that we may take ministers from all denominations, and especially from those with whom we are to have fraternal relations, if, on examination, we find them suitable, but the Article means, that those who come to us from Presbyterian Churches are to have an easier access, and what is that, or what is the meaning of fraternal as distinguished from Church relations, or what influence is the latter to have on the reception of ministers, if, after all, we may examine them as if they came to us from other quarters? The "regulations which may be adopted" must not conflict with "Church relations," and these demand that we admit applicants without asking them any questions. The extent of the relations proposed in this Article does not differ materially from what is admitted in "the Act of Independence," and I can no more accept of the one than of the other.

The putting all churches on a footing of the sugar coating of the pill, but I object to the whole plan. The United Church should be left free to regulate its alliances as it may see cause, and not be, in its Basis, bound to Churches whose action it cannot in any way control. I am not opposed to our taking ministers from any church. I object to our being bound in our Basis to accept without examination those who may come to us from certain churches. But what objecting to be bound to any church, there is at present a special reason for refusing to be so to the Church of Scotland. That Church is in such a condition, that, while nominally "holding the same doctrine, government, and discipline" as we have, "if the government would order it to deny the divinity of Jesus Christ, or adopt the worship of the Virgin Mary, it is legally and morally bound to obey;" and, moreover, pronounced Broad Churchmen teach in three out of its four divinity halls. Dr. Tulloch, who has long condemned Calvinism, and desires a less definite theology; Dr. Wallace, who is accused of saying that we must suspend our judgment of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, till scientific men have determined its possibility, and who has by a lame explanation barely escaped removal from office; and Dr. Caird, who is alleged to teach substantially that it matters not whether we believe in Jesus, or are infidels, if we are only honest, and which welcomes Mr. Knight, of Dundee, who has practically acknowledged that he cannot accept the doctrines of our confession as held by the Free, and has joined the Established Church of Scotland. If this 4th Article is adopted, these men or their students must, if they offer, be received by us without question, because we shall then be in Church relations with their Church relations formed, ostensibly to make their admission among us easy. It seems that our ministers and elders, are, to a large extent, prepared to adopt this article, and our people prepared to bind themselves in the very Basis of their church and when there is no call for doing so, to an article fraught with such consequences, and to churches, not one of whom ever thinks of reciprocating our action; and, especially, are they prepared to bind themselves to the established Church of Scotland, and this through a course of procedure, which as already shown, can leave

no other impression, than that we have abandoned our position and principles, and approve of an ecclesiastical edition of the Washington capitulation, and that a variety worse than its predecessors. Again this 4th article will give us a new term of communion. At present, all entrants on office, must accept of our Confession of Faith in terms of the basis of the past union; but when the new Basis is adopted, they must accept it in terms, at least of the Basis, and I think I can show that there were cause for so doing in terms of the resolutions also, and thus be bound to confess that the established church of Scotland, is at least as sound on the doctrine of the Headship as any of the other churches, that the early secessions, and the disruption were crimes, and that all that is in these scraps of history is commendable. These form in reality, though not in name, part of the Basis. They are all as much doctrinal as the 4th article, and some of them are designed to determine the future action of the United Church. If we adopt these, we agree—

III. That instrumental music and anything else which exists in connection with worship, in any congregation of the negotiating churches, is proper in the public worship of God. It is not enough that these things be allowed, but the allowing of them is made a term of communion.

IV. We agree to commend the Act of Independence. That is one of the documents referred to in resolution 3rd, and the most notable, owing to the position and duty assigned to it by our own laws, and the last Assembly, and a large number of Presbyteries, as if it was the very thing sought by the Assembly of 1872, or at least such as should satisfy those of us who were before dissatisfied with the Basis and its solutions. If we accept of this resolution, that, coupled with the fact of our seeking union so often, and being willing to give up our present articles on the Headship, and to enter on church relations with the church of Scotland, may in all things be quoted to show, that the parties to the union, were, not only satisfied with the attitude of that church, regarding that doctrine, but, if anything gave it a preference, to that assumed by the other churches, though it rests, not on the Confession of Faith and the scripture, but on the Scottish Benefices Act, known as Lord Aberdeen's bill, and has sacrificed the doctrine of the Headship of the Lord over His Church, on every conceivable point of Church action, and bound itself, as already asserted, to do whatever the state requires of it.

V. We shall (if I am not misinformed) agree to have the principal of Queen's College nominated by the General Assembly of the established Church of Scotland.

VI. We shall declare our satisfaction with the disposals of funds, of which about one fourth part was said to have been obtained dishonestly.

And, lastly, we shall adopt that Dr. Somebody moved, and Mr. Somebody seconded, and the committee agreed to some finding. Had the committee agreed to recommend to their respective churches, somewhat as follows:—1st. That diversity of sentiment regarding state grants, to educational establishments under denominational control, need not prove a barrier to union. 2nd. That it is not expedient, at present, to adopt any resolution regarding the appointment of theological professors, &c. No one could say that they were not presented in a business like manner.

I earnestly desire that my brethren may yet pause, (it is not too late,) and ask themselves, is it fair, or honourable, to force us, at the expense of a solemn compact, entered into at the last union, and renewed at each induction of office-bearers, to give up our own terms of communion, when no one can say these are wrong, and accept of now, when we repent. We do not insist that no change be made, though we do not wish any. We ask to have in the new, nothing but what accords with our principles and was recognized in the seven Presbyterian unions formed since 1855. We believe that the doctrine of the Headship was in the confession before these others were formed, yet it has a place in every Basis, and our own last union would not have been consummated without our present articles. Such are now spoken of disparagingly, and I am asked would you cause a disruption for the "expression of a principle." My reply is, would you cause a disruption, by taking such from us, when you cannot say they are wrong, and forcing on us articles which we repudiate. These return cannot feel themselves bound in conscience, to insist on the Basis no other. Our own Committee tells us that no conscience in all the negotiating churches, would be aggrieved, if all we ask were done; and can Christian men violate a compact which they cannot say is wrong, and force another on retracting consciences, or drive us away. Do I threaten when I say I will not, I cannot before God accept the terms proposed, more than the Committee when they say that the other Church will not grant what we ask? And yet I believe they never asked them. I am no enemy to union, I wish to see the prayer of our blessed Lord in John xv. 21, answered, as he himself taught it, by the bestowal of his glory John vi. 22, and though the proposed Union is distasteful to me, I would not work as I am now doing, did I not dislike the Basis and resolutions. I do not wish the union to take place unless there is a revival of religion in the other Church, but if our own Church is ready to have a Union, I wish to have the Basis such, that I need not separate. If the proposed Basis is passed there is but one course left for me. A dissent might perhaps save my conscience, if the United Church were to participate all the wrong proposed in the Basis, but to keep by the United Church while disavowing from the Basis, seems to me much like Pilate's act in washing his hands, an acknowledgment that he knew his duty, but lacked the courage to discharge

it. And now, let me in closing, warn those who are opposed to the Basis, that the first meeting of Assembly may commit the Church irrevocably, and I am far from confident that it will not do so, and urge that such ministers and elders as can do so, will meet in Toronto, in the basement of Cooke's church, on the evening of Monday, and throughout Tuesday before the close of College, for prayers and conference, if they are, on any grounds, unwilling to have the Union passed on the proposed terms. Our leaders, at last Assembly, insisted on sending down the remit under the barrat act, in order that they might have the legal power to pass the union. Both Supreme Courts met in Ottawa for this purpose. The opinion has been promulgated that Presbyteries must confine themselves to give their judgment on the remit without regard to circumstances. The Assembly is getting the power our leaders sought, and yet they say "it is folly to speak of a disruption at present," and cry peace, peace. The Assembly can take all matters into consideration and it is to be hoped they will have wisdom to deal with them. I pray God it may be so, but when I consider this indifference to our views and feelings in the past, how all has been planned for this juncture, and the means used to reach the foretold result, I cannot say I have very sanguine hopes, and I wish to be prepared, lest the result we dread come on us, and our protest even not ready. For myself I deplore the prospect, am anxious to avoid a separation, and if it is to come, to leave no room (if possible, for bitterness of feeling and rancour, when probably ending this correspondence, I ask no commiseration, I appeal to no one's pity, I claim only justice, and the exercise of brotherly love; and that the majority will not press forward in the exercise of conscious power, and the hope that we may grumble and submit. No Christian can now ask, or expect some of us to do so, and thus close our lives amid dishonour, and leave our names for a reproach which they are remembered.

I trust in God we shall be ready for whatever alternative may be presented to us, and praying that God may enlighten and guide us all.

I remain, yours truly,

JOHN MAC TAVISH.

### Keeping Track of Church Members.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—Allow me to call the attention of Sessions to a question of great importance and one which is almost, if not wholly overlooked; namely, *What becomes of the members who leave our churches duly certified?*

When a member in good standing moves from our congregations, and goes to a distant part of the country, we are seldom able to ascertain whether he has entered into fellowship with the Church in the locality to which he has gone. It may be that through neglect they abstain from Communion for some months, and possibly when they present themselves for membership, they offer a certificate more than a year old. We all agree that this is wrong, that it implies a lack of interest in, and appreciation of, the privileges of communion, and has such a tendency to foster the spirit of indifference that, it is feared, not a few who had been for years professing Christians allow themselves to fall out of Church fellowship. To remedy, in part at least, this wrong, I would suggest that wherever a member is received from another Church, the Clerk of the Session that receives him should communicate the fact of reception to the session from whose bounds he has come. A form of certificate such as the following which we are about using in our Session might be employed:—

Hamilton, Ont. .... 187 . . . . .  
This is to certify that on the ..... day of ..... 187, Mr. A. B., was received as a member of the "Central Presbyterian Church" at this city, on certificate from ..... church, .....

..... Session Clerk

Thus if the member united with the church in the locality of his new residence, the Session by whom he is certified will be at once made acquainted with the fact, which fact can be noted opposite the name of the member on the Communion Roll.

I am convinced that if this plan were generally adopted, it would not only prove a source of satisfaction to our Kirk-sessions, but if members were made aware of this anxiety on the part of the Church to trace their history, it would induce greater promptness in the presentation of certificates, and consequently lead to a deeper interest in their spiritual welfare.

The plan is certainly worth trying.  
Yours truly,  
JOHN McCOLL.  
Hamilton, 3rd March, 1874.

Hitherto the Waldensian missionary churches throughout Italy have been dependent upon the Synod at La Tour. Now they are to be recognized as a Presbyterian basis and will practically form the Presbyterian Church of Italy. There are 88 of these churches in Italy and Sicily, supported at an annual cost of \$20,000, which is mostly supplied from England. The so-called Free Church of Italy is nearly a large as the Waldensian.

### THAT ONE RUSTY SCREW.

The *Observer*, an English newspaper makes the following remarks on the loss of the steamship *Ville du Havre*—

"That she was a magnificent vessel there can be no doubt. She was only built in 1865, and from first to last over \$270,000 were expended in her construction. She was massive in build, and of undoubted strength and buoyancy. She had the most perfect pumping apparatus that can be imagined. The iron on her sides had been carefully tested and there was no stint in the use of it. She had eleven water-tight bulkheads, and, lastly, she was well officered and manned.

The one weak point was a *rusty door handle*. Among the eleven bulkheads there were three which were pierced with doors. Each of these bulkheads had two doors, and they were so made as to be capable of being closed water-tight like the bulkheads themselves. The blow from the "Loch Earn" struck the engine room. One of the bulkheads in the engine room, and only one, had doors, and if these had been closed the water could not have got further than the engine room, and the ship would have floated. The arrangements for closing the doors were on the upper deck, and consisted of powerful screw levers, the handles of which were fixed to them so that by no chance could they be missing at the critical moment. It is in evidence that when the crash took place one of the engines rushed to the screw lever and attempted to close the door. Had he succeeded in doing this the vessel would have been saved. He failed, and why? Simply because somebody, whose duty it was daily to see that the gearing was in working order, had failed to do it, and the screw had become corroded, and would not turn. The failure to turn the screw could not, says the *Engineer*, have resulted from any pressure of the water, but only from the cause just stated. Our English contemporary very properly says:—"It is sad to reflect that if this single bulkhead had been properly secured the whole vessel might have been saved, and certainly sufficient time would have been allowed for saving those who were not killed by the falling masts. It may be right to ask whether any other ocean-going steamers are subjected to a similar neglect. It is vain to build vessels in compartments with water-tight doors in the bulkheads, and every contrivance for getting rid of the water, if the doors are to be left open and the apparatus allowed to get out of order."

Here, then, we see what one rusty screw did. It caused the loss of a very costly steamship, the loss of her cargo, and a loss compared with which the others were as nothing, the loss of over two hundred human lives, together with the suffering and sorrow of surviving friends flowing therefrom; or, at least, but for it that steamship could have been kept afloat long enough to have allowed all who were drowned to be saved. That one rusty screw was, therefore, anything but an insignificant matter. Everything else was complete, but that availed nothing, when this screw would not do its duty in the hour of greatest need.

Now, there are many who, though they do not make a mock at all sins, believe that certain ones are only *trifles*. It is true that "some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others." But it is as true that "every sin deserves God's wrath and curse both in this life and in that which is to come." Suppose, then, that a person should commit only one sin, and that one of the least heinous, if it remained unforgiven, it would most certainly ruin his soul for ever. Or, suppose that God were to forgive all his sins save one, and that one of the least heinous, the same would be true. How foolish, then, it is to call that a trifle from which such awful consequences flow!

Reader, dost thou look on any of thy sins as trifling? Then, it is unforgiven, for thou dost not repent of it; but without repentance there is no forgiveness. "Except ye repent ye shall perish." Sad, therefore, is thy condition. Think of the one rusty screw in the *Ville du Havre*. Betake thyself, without delay, to Him "in whom we have redemption through His blood the forgiveness of sins," and, whose blood cleanseth from all sin."

T. F.

Metis, Quebec.

### Champagne Bribery in High Places.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—Is it compatible with the dignity and honour of our Local Legislature to be "treated to a champagne *quadeamus* in the Parliamentary buildings, and that by the promoter of a Railway Bill to come very shortly before those very persons in their legislative capacity? To me the proceeding seems to have been of a very discreditable character. What difference was it from "treating the crowd" at a tavern bar?

I am,

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.