

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

THE BIBLE AND IMMORTALITY.

By Rev. R. G. MacBeth, M.A.

Men have an intuitive and natural shrinking from the materialistic doctrine which makes death end all. They prefer the thought which Longfellow has enshrined in the lines:

"There is no death! What seems so is transition.

This life of mortal breath Is but a suburb of the life Elysian, Whose portal we call death."

This thought leads men in their best moments to cry out for an assurance of deathlessness. The Psalmist uttered not only a religious aspiration but a purely human longing when he said, "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." A dead God could not answer the needs of a living man. A throbbing heart will not pillow itself against a freezing stone. Besides that, a dead God holds out no hope of endless life. Hence we refuse materialism with all the force of rebounding heartstrings. The God in whom we believe must be not the God of the dead but of the living. He is the God of our fathers as well as our God. But our fathers are not dead. They have only gone before.

Even apart from the Bible men have declined to believe in a doctrine of annihilation. They saw in their own lives and in the very processes of nature, foretokens of immortality. Greek sages, like Socrates, climbed to mountain summits of aspiring thought and caught foregleams of the coming dawn. Indians on Western plains confute the erudite folly of materialists by cherishing the hope of an after-life in the happy hunting grounds of the Great Spirit. Thus do men without a written revelation assert their belief in the power of an endless being.

But this is only the starlight. In the Bible the sunlight bursts upon us. There are some who cannot find hopes of immortality in the Old Testament. These are the people who read with the eyes of their understanding closed. They apparently never found such passages as the triumphant expression of Job, who knew his living Vindicator, or David's passionate declaration that he would follow his lost child. But it remained for Christ to bring life and immortality to the whitest light. It was He who for us shattered the iron gates of death, and became the first-fruits of them that sleep. He was the Fore-runner of men, and went before us every step of the way. The resurrection of Christ is a fact in the light of such evidence as a court of law would admit. Better still it is a fact in the domain of the soul's experience. It is this fact that redeems human life from insignificance and makes it sublime. A man cannot die like a mere animal if he tried. The marvel is that he sometimes tries to live like one and succeeds in that if in nothing else. The flashlight at the moment of death reveals that man is a fool. Let us learn wisdom in time.

Paris, Ont.

FREE AND FULL DISCUSSION ALWAYS.

Editor Dominion Presbyterian—I was pleased to note in your issue of October 27th that your valuable paper has been, and still is, open to afford full scope "for the discussion of the Union question in its various aspects." This is only fair to any subject that is worth discussing at all, and was eminently characteristic of the old "Canada Presbyterian"; and it stands out in favorable contrast with the paper that affects to be accepted as the 'unofficial organ of the Presby-

terian Church in Canada," that has more than once declared its policy to be non-partizan, while, on this question at least, it has given us an outstanding illustration of the evil of a press monopoly. Whenever correspondence began to pour into its columns showing up the fallacy of some of the Unionist arguments and giving potent argument on the other side, especially when a General Assembly was drawing near and a vote would be taken, then all discussion was choked off. It was said there had been enough debate, and everything said that could be said. But yet the editorial columns could from time to time find something more to say in advocacy.

In the issue of the 18th ult. it is announced that "Principal Mackay, of Westminster Hall, who is well known as one of those opposed to Church Union has been asked to state the case in opposition. Later on, the arguments in favor of union will be submitted, and our readers will be the better able to form a judgment on the merits of the question."

This is characteristic. Contrary to all ordinary rules and practice in debate, the opposition is to be invited to open the discussion by proving the negative, if he can! In a former issue we were told that Principal Patrick would present the arguments in favor of Union. Why are these arguments not forthcoming first, and soon? Is this a tactical trick to give him the last word and declare the discussion closed? Is there to be no opportunity to sift his arguments, and put them to logical tests by those who may have the ability and desire to do so? It is a poor cause that needs to resort to such tactics.

Personally, I have no complaint to make on my own account, for no communication of mine has ever been rejected; but I like fair play. Audite alteram partem.

A. HENDERSON.

BORDERING ON THE PROFANE.

Editor Dominion Presbyterian:—This morning I took up for reading, Dr. Gordon's "Life of James Robertson." Perhaps I ought to have read it long since; but that has hitherto been to me only an anticipated pleasure. I had, however, not reached page 39 when I came upon an expression that pained me, and as I believe it is of those evils flowing from "want of thought," I am emboldened to make public my view. A fellow student at Toronto University is quoted thus: "For the ridicule of the boys, Jeemsie cared not a tinker's curse." First, I am surprised that a Canadian old enough to have been a fellow student of Robertson, does not know that a tinker's curse does not necessarily differ from the imprecations of men of other callings. When tinkers traveled from house to house in the sparsely settled parts to mend tinware they were wont to use for a dam to retain the melted solder a piece of bread. One cannot imagine anything of less value or more contemptible than such a ——— after it had been used. Hence the saying, to express utter worthlessness: "It is not worth a tinker's dam;" or indifference, "I do not care a tinker's dam." And it will be seen that the change to a "tinker's curse" renders the expression meaningless.

But there is another and higher reason for eschewing such expressions. The Lord hath said: "Let your speech be Yes, yea; Nay, nay; and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one." For the ridicule of the boys, Jeemsie cared not," and stopped, don't you think every reader would have understood?

ULSTER PAT.

CHURCH AND STATE AND THE CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIANS.

To the Editor of the Dominion Presbyterian:

Sir,—I suppose I am safe in saying that the belief has been universal in the United States that there is no connection whatever between church and state in that nation. This belief has received a surprising shock by the judgment of the Supreme Court of Tennessee, by which anti-union minorities of the Cumberland Presbyterians get the church property through out the state and ten thousand who went with the union are left without church homes. The Presbyterian church, U.S.A., and the Cumberland Presbyterian church entered into union forming the American Presbyterian church, never dreaming that a tragedy such as that in which the "Wee Frees" figured victoriously in Scotland, was possible in the United States. The ground on which the judgment of the Supreme Court is based is that by the Act of Incorporation each congregation was constituted a corporation capable of holding real estate for religious purposes, and that as a corporation it was created by civil statute. A church court of competent jurisdiction might extinguish a congregation for the purpose of uniting two congregations into one; but the Supreme Court of Tennessee held at the same time that no decision of any church court whatever could extinguish a congregation as a corporation. The members of the congregation are not the corporation any more than the citizens of a city are the city corporation. Nor are the session and board the corporation any more than the city council and other officials are the city corporation. The corporation act through all these in the one case and in the other, but they are not the corporation. The state, which, by legislative act, created the corporation, thereby constituting each local church a kind of fictitious personality, is the only authority that can extinguish the corporate existence of a congregation. Hence the votes of majorities for union in congregations, Presbyteries, and General Assemblies, never touched the existence of the corporations that held the property, such corporations being created by the state. It thus comes about that instead of there being no church and state connection whatever in the United States there is a very close connection, and that every local church has a two-fold existence, viz., ecclesiastical and civil even as every member of the church is also a citizen of the nation, and what he holds as a citizen no church court can take from him. Such in brief outline is the judgment of the Supreme Court of Tennessee. And it has been an astounding surprise not only to the churches concerned, but to very many outside of those churches. When, however, the whole judgment is calmly looked into, the marvel is that it should give any surprise whatever. The principles on which it is founded are fundamental principles of justice. "A free church in a free state" does not mean that the church is not in the state; neither does it mean that she can change her name as a corporation, without a civil statute, and hold her property. There were also other reasons for the judgment given. The Supreme Court of Tennessee found that the name by which the united church was to be known had not been sent down in terms of the Barrier Act, and in that omission the Cumberland church had failed to comply with her own constitution. But the main cause of disaster, both in Scotland and in the United States, was the supposition that legislation might be dispensed with or was not necessary to carry the property into the union.

W. T. McMULLEN.