

British American Presbyterian.

Vol. 3.—No. 14.]

TORONTO, CANADA, FRIDAY MAY 15, 1874

[Whole No. 118.]

Contributors and Correspondents

FOURTH ARTICLE OF THE BASIS.

BY REV. JOHN LAING, M.A., DUNDAS.

My former paper was little more than a collection of documents, a statement of facts and one inference. That these are suggestive I admit, and I propose to make no remarks suggested to my mind in a second paper. Finding, however, that Mr. Campbell had something to say I have delayed writing until I should see what light minister so intimately acquainted with the subject as he is, could throw upon the object. I have read his letter with interest and care, and thank him for the courteous manner in which he has written. In the following remarks I hope to notice everything pertinent to the discussion which Mr. Laing has set forth, and if I make no further personal reference to him or individuals it is from no want of respect, but because I wish to deal with facts and reasonings and not with the men who record the facts or set forth the arguments. I may also promise that for sake of brevity and clearness I shall use the word *Kirk* to designate our Mother Church in this colony.

I am blamed for going back to the disruption controversy and reviving the bitter feelings of that period. But I am not to blame for this turn in our discussions. It was accepted as a preliminary to union negotiations that there was "to be forbearance on that point and that by-gones were to be by-gones." Why was this compact violated? Who is responsible for the violation? Surely not I, but those who first introduced the subject. I say nothing of the Kirk or its Committee; but I fearlessly say that the whole blame lies on our own Union Committee, who (whether in ignorance or unwittingly, I know not) deliberately inserted the 3rd Resolution which provides the disruption in the Basis and sent up to the Assembly an act formed on the 4th Resolution, which was purposely framed to meet Disruption exigencies and vindicate the residuary party as against the seceders. The Assembly also is responsible who sent down to Presbyteries, Sessions, and Congregations these offensive documents which could not fail to produce the evil effects now deplored, no one can be blamed if in discussing these documents their historical origin and bearing are considered by him. This is all that I have done. Faithfulness will not allow him to be done. We cannot cut ourselves loose from our Disruption Fathers even if we wish to do so; and I cannot be a party to condemning their conduct in 1844, rendering null their protest, and declaring them guilty of schism. I heartily approve and am nowise ashamed of the Disruption, and as I ask no concession in reference to that controversy. By all means let by-gones be by-gones.

I object to the IV Article solely because it prevents union. It is in the way and no union can be accomplished till it is removed. I am not opposed to union, and have no sympathy with the demands of some about the Headship, and think union can be accomplished on the Westminster standards pure and simple, as a Basis.

I ask then why is the IV Article in the Basis? Some say it means nothing but was inserted to satisfy the Kirk. Other say it can be made harmless after union, and, indeed, null and void, by imposing conditions of reception as regulations. Now I regard it as an insult to put a meaningless Article in a document so important and solemn; and no compliment to the Kirk to say that they are satisfied with a meaningless document. I regard it as flagrantly dishonest to assent to an article in order to secure Union with the secret intention of violating the Union compact after the Union has been consummated by imposing conditions incompatible with the compact. Let this then pass.

I believe it means something. "Its object is to declare our brotherhood with the whole Presbyterian family as more intimate than with the other religious denominations and to provide for receiving ministers and members from other Presbyterian churches, upon Presbyterian and personal certificates, without subjecting them to examination to ascertain their qualifications, when we are satisfied with them otherwise. Some of the ministers of the respective Churches were ordained in the parent Churches and for their sakes, as they might still desire to be eligible to charges in the old country, I would wish that a relation to the parent Churches more definite and intimate than what is embraced in the Fourth Article could be secured." So says Mr. Campbell, and I think he is right. Let the readers note the italics. In view of that statement the question of

relations comes up, and in particular the relation of the Kirk to the Church of Scotland. The Act of Independence says the connexion is "merely of opinion, identity of standards, and ministerial and church communion."

Now when we are told that the rights covered by this relation is merely filial, I must be excused for saying that however clear this may be to other minds I cannot receive it. Facts are against it, such as,—

1. The Clergy Reserves were "secured by law to the recognized Branch of the Church of Scotland here." That is more than filial and moral.

2. The Kirk in 1844 declared itself not called upon to give forth a statement as to the "connection which subsists between the Church of Scotland and this Synod" and declined to discuss it.

3. The reason for the above action was chiefly want of harmony of sentiment, as an influential party tatted their protest against any action of the Synod, holding that or was discussive of a motion "aiming at the alteration of the name title, designation or constitution of the Synod or Church, or the relations thereof to the Church of Scotland" were in their nature objectionable, unconstitutional, incompetent, ultra vires compromising, and affecting injuriously the status, rights, and privileges of certain parties in matters civil and ecclesiastical.

4. In the draft answer to the protest which was adopted in 1844, it is said, "It is the opinion of many persons and some of them men to whose opinion on a matter of this sort it is hardly possible to pay too much deference, that for the Synod in its own mere motion to alter its style or designation in law—would be at once to alienate a vast amount of property of the Church. Indeed in this there can scarcely be a shadow of a doubt." And again, "no man of sound principle and understanding will say that had the Resolutions of the Protesters been carried, the Synod could, either in honour or law have retained its property, that is to say, after altering its designation and changing the conditions on which that property had been granted and was held." Is that only filial and moral? certain property in Canada, the deed of which conveyed it to Presbyterians in communion with the Church of Scotland, but makes no mention of the Kirk in Canada, was by decision of the Court of Chancery given over to the latter body.

5. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland received a report which proposed, to prevent the property and endowments and interest in the clergy Reserve consisting of the ministers in Canada, and Fund from being vested in a corporate body to use "every means in its power to have it disallowed by the Government at Home." Are these only moral means?

In face of these facts I cannot believe that the relation is merely filial and moral. If I am wrong, I have been led into my error by the acts of the Kirk and General Assembly. I do not imagine that the Kirk is "an integral part of the Church of Scotland" and I understand why it cannot be; but I am of opinion that there exists a relation involving legal rights which cannot be dissolved without legal sanction as well as consent of the Churches.

It is also evident that by virtue of this relation certain rights and privileges belong to ministers ordained by the Established Church which its dissolution would affect.

In 1844, the resolution which is in substance the Fourth Article was adopted to protect those rights and privileges. It opened the door for ministers from other churches, particularly the Free Church, but secured the maintenance of the then existing relation to the Establishment, and that was the sole reason for the Resolution. Now if adopted in 1874 it will have the same effect. It will provide for receiving ministers of the Establishment without examination, this is the main thing; and in order to do this will extend the privileges to all other Presbyterian Churches. And here it is to be observed that in 1845 the Kirk made the Act of Independence a standing law of the Church avowedly to exclude men holding Erastian sentiments; but now it is proposed to receive all—Erastian or not—without examination, and so to bind the Church that an act similar to the Act of Independence could not afterwards be passed without violating the Union compact.

I do not object to the United Church receiving ministers from the Established or any other church. We have received even a Priest of Rome when the Presbytery was established. If the Church adopt after Union each an act for reception of ministers as the Fourth Article is, I might dissent, but would never think of doing more. What I object to is putting such an article in the

Basis; binding the United Church before hand as to her relations with other churches; binding her in such a way that she cannot exercise her right of examining candidates for her ministry without violating a solemn compact. I object to be bound to receive ministers from any church, or not to receive them; I insist on full liberty and unfettered freedom of action in this matter of receiving ministers; and that the United Church be left quite free to act in all time to come as circumstances and a sense of duty may direct, receiving ministers on whatever conditions may from time to time be determined.

Now as the practical conclusion; if thirty years have so changed our circumstances, that without change of principle on the part of either Church that can be done which our fathers in 1844 found it impossible to do though they sought it diligently and earnestly. If what was formerly done "in Westminster" by the Imperial Parliament can now be done in Ottawa by the Dominion Parliament; if the Kirk can unanimously take the necessary steps to change her designation and sever the connection with the Established Church; if there is now no remnant party to endanger the property, or reclaim against their ministerial status being injuriously effected; if the Synod is now in a position to say that, to do these things is not objectionable but desirable, not unconstitutional, incompetent or ultra vires. If all this can now be done, I am satisfied. Let it be done, and as the doing of this in 1844 would have prevented disruption, so in 1874 it will bring about Union. This however must be decided not by the Church to which I belong, but by our sister Church, and may God make clear the way for the happy consummation.

REVIVAL.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

The readers of your paper owe a debt of gratitude to your correspondent in Hamilton for the interesting account he has given of the progress of the work of God in Mitchell. Such interesting accounts of progressive Christianity are as refreshing to the Christian Pilgrim as the green oasis is to the weary traveller in the parched desert. How pleasing to learn that persons, by hundreds, are submitting themselves to the power of the Gospel; that "drunkards and infidels, high and low, rich and poor, are among its trophies;" and that fidelity and trustworthiness are marked characteristics of those who have made a profession of faith. How strikingly verified is that Scripture: "And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;" and what an incentive to Christian hope, to Christian effort, and to a firmer reliance and trust in the promises of Him of whom Prophets have written and Poets have sung: "His every word of grace is strong as that which built the skies. The voice that rolled the stars along, speaks all the promises." Your correspondent thinks that a visit to Mitchell would convince any one that all that is required to bring an outpouring of the Spirit in any place, is faith on the part of the people. This idea is fully substantiated in God's word: How "great and precious are the promises." God has confirmed them by an oath, "by two immutable things in which it was impossible for Him to lie, that we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us."

Such circumstances as are reported by your correspondent, while very encouraging, are a mild and merciful rebuke to our want of faith in the author of every good work. To the Church in these days will apply that truth uttered by the Saviour, "O ye of little faith." It is undoubtedly a want of faith on our part, in the promises of God's Word, that renders us so weak and powerless as co-workers with God in our own salvation and in the salvation of our fellow men. It is true God is a sovereign, and He doth whatsoever he will, both in heaven and upon earth, and yet who does not know that in connection with properly regulated Christian effort, and in answer to never ceasing fervent prayer, mixed with on the part of the people, that the wrath of men has been made to praise God and the remainder of their wrath has been restrained, that the peace of God which passeth understanding, has possessed their souls to such a degree that strangers to God and to the power of God have said of such places and of such scenes, Lo, God was in all this work, and we knew it not. Such circumstances are powerful incentives to every lover of Zion to earnest prayer for the operation of that Spirit which, "like mighty winds and torrents fierce, does the opposers all o'ercome;" and every law of sin reverse, till

faith and hope shall make all one." Your correspondent says there must be many in Canada who are wondering if this work will not spread, and he also says that, in answer to prayer it will spread; and what, Mr. Editor, is to prevent this? The Lord's arm is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is his ear heavy that it cannot hear. Let the Church ask, and ask in faith, and God will answer. It may not be at the time or in the manner that we may select. God's ways are not as our ways, neither are his thoughts as our thoughts, and yet He has promised to answer prayer. We have heard with our ears, and our father's have told us what wonderful works God did in their days, and as faith lends its realizing light, God is seen in the operations of his Spirit working in the hearts of men. I have reason to believe that even in this cold northern county of ours there are signs of good, small perhaps, little it may be as a human hand, and yet who shall say that a shower of blessings shall not descend upon us? We are blessed with a faithful minister. In his pulpit and pastoral performances, there is much to commend and little to find fault with. He lives in the hearts of his own people, and his genial warm-hearted benevolence is winning for him the good will of the community, for whose good he labours. God, in his providence, has been moving. There is marked attention to the word preached by his servant. Anxious prayer is offered in private for the aid of that Spirit without which we can do nothing. A necessity for depending on God alone, is more deeply felt, and with these tokens it is too much to say that we expect God to bless us. Are not these operations of grace something like the promise of a shower that drops already from above? For some months past the sermons we have listened to have been well adapted to arouse men to think about their own salvation, and the salvation of the souls of others. The sermon on last Sabbath from that text where the "ends of the earth are invited to look unto God and be saved," in its stirring, pointed, and pungent elucidation could not fail, with God's blessing, to make a deep and lasting impression. The Church was invited to attend a weekly prayer meeting, and we know, for God has told us, "mercy visits every house that pay their night and morning vows, and that "He makes a more delightful stay where churches meet to sing and pray."

We are encouraged to hope that good may be done, that precious souls may be brought to Christ, to Him who merits all their love, and that by looking to Him the Church in this place may grow more and more into his image and likeness till they are fitted and prepared for those realms of bliss, "where happy souls in endless concert sing, where hope in full fruition dies, and all is lost in love."

BRADFORD.

May 5th, 1874.

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

In view of the approaching meeting of the Assembly it may not be amiss to draw the attention of members elect of that court, in particular, and of those of the Church, in general, to the importance of a cheap reprint of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Almost the only copies of that document to be seen in Canada have been imported either from Scotland or the United States. My duties have led me to spend a few days at a time in Presbyterian families and, when there, I have been surprised at the very frequent absence of the Confession from their houses. This is far from what ought to be.

Of the nature, uses, and necessity of Confessions of Faith nothing need be said at present. That subject is clearly discussed in the second volume of the "Canada Presbyterian Church Pulpit," even in such a style as accommodates itself to the intellectual capacities of ordinary informed minds. The hue and cry which is periodically raised against all Confessions of Faith, is prompted by ignorance both within and without the Church. Every Church must have a Confession of her faith; if not written it is oral. To that confession her members give their assent; which assent entitles to membership, and is the line of demarcation between them and the members of other churches. As every church ought to have a written Confession of Faith, so it is the duty of the superior courts of that Church to see that there is always an ample supply of copies to be had. One copy, at least, of our Confession ought to be in every Presbyterian family. The family requires it both for the instruction of the young, and a defence of the principles and doctrines of Scripture as held by the Presbyterian Church. The apostolic injunction, "Hold fast the form of sound words," not merely sound words, but the very form of sound

words—is as applicable to the doctrines of Scripture as arranged in the Church's Confession, as are those passages of Scripture from which they are taken, and by which their truthfulness is proved. The latter is the truth; but the former is the "banner to be displayed because of the truth." The latter is "the glory in the midst of Zion;" but the former are the walls, bulwarks, and towers around her. More especially is the Church bound to please those enlisted under the "banner to be displayed because of the truth" in a position to "tell the towers" of Zion, to "mark well her bulwarks," to "consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following," seeing that others, Methodists especially, impute to Presbyterians the maintenance of doctrines absurd, ridiculous, and such as even devils do not believe. When Presbyterians are thus maligning it is but just to their Church and themselves, to have a copy of the Confession to hand to their defamers and ask them to read what we believe. There is no need of being ashamed of it.

It is unreasonable and painful to see members, either at their formal admission to the Church or at the front, acknowledging the Westminster Confession to be the confession of their faith, when they have never read it. In this case it is a dead letter. It is more, it is a reproach to the Church for not judiciously making arrangements that all her congregations should be amply supplied with her standards. The publication of these should not be left to speculation, but undertaken by the Church and superintended by a committee appointed for that purpose.

The present volume labelled "The Confession of Faith," is rather formidable looking. To brace one's self up to resolve to take the volume in hand requires, here, no little fortitude, especially if it is not a task which must be accomplished. That volume contains the subordinate standards of the Church, of which the Confession of Faith is only a part. The Shorter, and also the Larger Catechism is published separately although it is one of these standards. It is highly expedient that the Confession of Faith should also be published separately. In good readable type it would not extend to a volume larger than the Forms of Procedure. The price could be reduced to ten cents. As it is the chief subordinate standard of the Church, she ought in faithfulness to her Head, in justice to herself, and in the intellectual interests of her members, the young especially, to provide an abundant supply of that most important document. Besides the members will be in a better position, than at present, to tell what their Church believes; and be better qualified to appeal to Scripture to defend Scriptural doctrine, and refute the calumnies of those who bespatter Calvinism and Presbyterianism.

J. B. S.

An Omission.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—In the Historical Statement read at the laying of the Foundation Stone of Knox College, and published in the BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN, the name of the Rev. John Campbell, M.A., of Charles St. Church, Toronto, (now the Rev. Prof. Campbell, of Montreal) does not occur in the enumeration of those to whom the College is indebted for having discharged the duties of Lecturers. It is not necessary to say that this omission is unintentional. The college cannot be ungrateful to one so honourably connected with it, and who, at very great personal inconvenience, rendered it most valuable service during more than one Session.

Yours very truly,

WM. CAVEN.

Presbytery of Paris.

A meeting of this Presbytery was held in Guelph during the Synod, to dispose of the call from Chalmers' Church, Quebec, to Mr. Wright, of Ingersoll. Mr. Wright stated that, on public grounds, he thought it his duty to accept the call. Mr. McTavish moved, seconded by Mr. Chisholm, Elder, "That notwithstanding that Mr. Wright has intimated that, on public grounds, he felt he should accept the call to Chalmers' Church, Quebec, and notwithstanding that the Presbytery are fully satisfied as to Mr. Wright's suitability for that field, yet considering the peculiar circumstances of the congregation of Erskine Church, Ingersoll, the Presbytery refuse the translation. It was moved in amendment by Mr. Cochran, seconded by Mr. Sutherland, Elder, "That in view of Mr. Wright's expressed statement, that he thought it his duty, on public grounds, to accept the call, the Presbytery agree to this translation, while, at the same time, sympathizing with the congregation of Erskine Church, Ingersoll, in their peculiar circumstances." The motion was carried by a majority over the amendment, and Mr. Wright retained in his present charge.