

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

PRINCIPAL FALCONER AND CHURCH UNION.

Editor Dominion Presbyterian.—The "Presbyterian Record" for October contains a statement of reasons for Church Union from Principal Falconer, also one from Principal Patrick. It is well that a movement so revolutionary in its nature as the Church Union now under negotiation, and one so fraught with consequences good or evil that will tell on future generations, should receive the deepest consideration that the church's best thought can give it. It is no less important and dutiful that the church should thoroughly scrutinize every argument advanced in favor of this proposed step. For if it be a false step—not based on right reason, it were better to repent before reaching a stage from which there is no turning back. With your kind permission I beg to offer some remarks on Principal Falconer's statement.

The reasons he advances are "mainly two." First, the mind of the Lord; second, expediency. Now, I would fancy that if the former of these two reasons can be established, the latter follows, and as an argument is quite superfluous. If it is clear that it was and is the mind of Christ that church should be outwardly and visibly one organic unity, who are we that we should stay to question about probable gain or loss, or about saving time and money and energy. Let us not stand on the manner of obedience but obey at once, implicitly believing that whatever God commands is not only right, but good, and always expedient.

The Principal adduces two sayings of Our Lord. The first is, "A New Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another. . . . By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples," etc. His conclusion is that outward and visible unity and fellowship is thus a duty laid upon the church. Upon which I remark that it is possible for the several Evangelical denominations in which the church exists at present, to cherish toward each other such friendship and oneness of aim, in spite of the various doctrinal views they severally hold with a good conscience, as to bear testimony to the world that they are the followers of Christ. Moreover, as a matter of fact, it has been so for many a day in this country. What sign of strife, or variance has been manifesting itself by the denominations now negotiating during the last two generations? Nay, further, does not the fact that they are distinct organisations make their testimony of love and essential oneness before the world, all the more emphatic? What is the testimony? "We are divided into separate communities because as Protestant Christians we believe in liberty of opinion on matters of faith, and will be in bondage, in that respect, to no central authority other than the Holy Scriptures. We differ as to the interpretation of portions of Scripture it is true, but we agree to differ. In Christian charity each class accords to the other classes the same right of liberty as it claims for itself." And this good feeling or love now existing, and its consequent testimony to the world may be safer in our divided state than in closer association. In illustration, I recall the words of Abraham to Lot: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thee and me, for we are brethren. If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand then I will go to the left." So, to maintain good friendship, they parted company. Lot, like a good Methodist, choosing the better part, and Abraham like a modern Presbyterian, meekly taking what was left. Let it not be forgotten, besides, that within the pale of that great historic church unity, the Panegy, which boasts of her oneness, heated controver-

sies, and bitterest hatred have existed between the different orders and schools of religious thought that will more than match the worst that Protestantism has ever evinced. Pascal's Provincial Letters afford one example of this.

The second saying of Our Lord adduced by the Principal is the one that has been appealed to by the advocates of union from the commencement, John 17: 11, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." Our college principals and professors using this Scripture have assumed that in these words Christ prayed for such a unity as is aimed at by them at the present time. Their application of the Lord's words has been questioned as to its legitimacy. No one has yet made it clear that Our Lord prayed for such outward, organic union as it is sought to accomplish by its authority. If they expect us to believe them, they must do so. It is a serious thing to misapply the sayings of the Master.

Now it is to be noted these words are not an exhortation to the disciples. They are an intercessory prayer addressed to the Father in behalf of his church. Principal Patrick, in his statement says, "The Apostolic and sub-Apostolic church, as far as we know it, was one," which is admitted. And the prayer is not a prayer that a divided church may become one, but that they may be kept that they may be one. Now the prerogative and power for this keeping rest with the Father, not with man happily. But President Forrest declared in the late Assembly that this prayer of the Lord's is not answered yet. Yet not a great many days before the Lord uttered the prayer in question, he said in another prayer (John 11: 41-2) "Father, I thank thee thou hast heard me. And I know that thou hearest me always," etc. Throughout the Christian age has not this doctrine of the all-prevailing efficacy of the intercession of Christ as the church's High Priest, been at once the faith of the church, and the ground of assurance, comfort and hope of the individual believer? But if the application of John 17:11 made by the Principal and others is legitimate, then here is an important instance in which his intercession has failed. He prayed the church might be kept while she yet was one, and she has fallen to pieces. But Principal Falconer seems to attempt to justify this last when he says that our denominationalism has been "no huge mistake. By the conditions into which Christianity came from time to time, protest and witness for certain truths were necessary, and our churches (denominations) arose." Just so. And who knows but we have come to just such a "condition" in the history of the Canadian church when in the interests of the truth and of righteousness such protest and witness are again necessary. But what awful havoc does this admission make of his use of the Lord's prayer for unity. Not only was the intercessory prayer not answered, but it was proper and necessary in the interests of the truth that it should not be answered, and that denominations should arise! With my present light, I must refuse to accept such an application of Our Lord's words as would lead to conclusions not only logically absurd, but so derogatory to the Saviour's honor and destructive of the church's hope. Whatever Jesus prayed for we may be sure was granted. And since the church has not continued in one outward and visible organization, it must be presumed that that was not the kind of union he had in his mind. I do not pretend, nor am I called upon to say what the nature of that union was. But it may interest some to see what Dr. Marcus Dods thinks of it. He "finds it belongs to a very different category (from union

of churches) and to a much higher region. That all churches should be under similar government, should adopt the same creed, should use the same forms of worship, even if possible, is not supremely desirable; but real unity of sentiment towards Christ, and of zeal to promote his will is supremely desirable."

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I SHALL NOT WANT.

The following study of the Twenty-third Psalm, prepared by Mrs. John R. Mott, is reprinted from the Northfield Echoes:—

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

I shall not want rest. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures."

I shall not want drink. "He leadeth me beside the still waters."

I shall not want forgiveness. "He restoreth my soul."

I shall not want guidance. "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

I shall not want companionship. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."

I shall not want comfort. "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

I shall not want food. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

I shall not want joy. "Thou anointest my head with oil."

I shall not want anything. "My cup runneth over."

I shall not want anything in this life. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

I shall not want anything in eternity. "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

That is what David said he would find in the Good Shepherd. One day it occurred to me to see how this Twenty-third Psalm was fulfilled in Christ. This is what I found in Christ's own words:—

"I am the Good Shepherd."

Thou shalt not want rest. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Thou shalt not want drink. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

I shall not want forgiveness. "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

Thou shalt not want guidance. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

Thou shalt not want companionship. "Lo, I am with you all the days."

Thou shalt not want comfort. "The Father . . . shall give you another Comforter."

Thou shalt not want food. "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall not hunger."

Thou shalt not want joy. "That my joy might remain in you and that your joy may be full."

Thou shalt not want anything. "If ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it."

Thou shalt not want anything in this life. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Thou shalt not want anything in eternity. "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am there ye may be also."

If we must walk over thorns ourselves let us try to remove them from the path of those who follow.

He who bears the yoke in his youth shall inherit strength; but he who has only pleasure for his end shall come to folly.