

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

DR. PATRICK ON CHURCH UNION.

By A. B. Dobson.

Principal Patrick has just concluded in the Presbyterian of Toronto a series of articles on the question of Church Union. The principal is the Nestor of the Unionist party and his utterances may therefore be regarded as the strongest which that party can furnish. His argument is before the church and is therefore a fair subject of discussion. In criticising his articles I do not claim to be in any sense either a special guardian or a mouthpiece of Presbyterianism. I speak for myself as a good many more men ought to speak. My opposition to the Union Committee and their work does not rest primarily or principally on my attachment to Presbyterianism whatever that may be. It rests on no form of doctrine or statement of policy. I take both the movement and the men behind it on the merits of their record, and I find nothing in either which demands confidence.

Principal Patrick indulges in four double column pages of generalities. He was supposed to state the case FOR this particular union with Methodists and Congregationalists here in Canada, not for union in general, nor for union as an ideal. Presumably, therefore, all his statements are intended to bear on this one point.

1.—The Principal tells of his arrival in Canada and of certain things which he immediately started to do. This may be interesting but is hardly a strong argument for church union.

2.—The appointment of the Union Committee next engages Principal Patrick's attention. "No intelligent member of Assembly hostile on principle to the proposed union could have allowed the motion for the appointment of a committee to pass unchallenged." A very easy and entirely appropriate retort to this somewhat ungracious statement is that no "intelligent" member would vote for such a motion without first forgetting that he was "intelligent" and responsible. If Dr. Patrick can show that motion to be intelligent from the standpoint of Presbyterian polity, or from the standpoint of any free institution, he will confer a real favor. But he does not venture to argue that the appointment of the committee was a constitutional act, that it had any respect for the rights of the rank and file of the ministry and laity of the church. He only excuses it by laying the responsibility for a bad situation on the names of the honored dead. I will not argue with him about the dead. Their record is known and need not be repeated. It would be an appropriate act if the living would accept their own share of responsibility. Dr. Patrick knows that all wisdom does not reside in leaders and that in all ages the church has had to suffer through the mistaken advice of trusted men who meant well or who wanted their own way. We don't need to go far back in our own history for an illustration. Not to mention others, what about the "leaders" who a few years ago advised the recall and expulsion of one of the best missionaries the church had in her service? But even if the appointment were constitutional, and our leaders possessed great wisdom, how is such an appointment to be construed into an argument for the union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches any more than the appointment of a committee on Foreign Missions?

2.—Principal Patrick tells us that the relationship between the members of the Joint Committee was very brotherly during the five years, "always in a fair and conciliatory temper." As if he were surprised that the men who

composed it could be gentlemen, and as if the fact that they could be valuable as establishing a "case for Church Union." There is no manner of doubt that if a few Roman Catholic Archbishops had been members of the committee the same spirit would have prevailed, but it would not have been a strong argument for Union with the Roman Catholic church.

3.—"The Joint Committee spent no less than five years on its work and resolved to leave nothing unconsidered which was vital." This committee was asked to give DEFINITE information on such questions as overlapping, the waste of men, and the waste of money. According to Principal Patrick these are very vital, but they have not given one definite word about any of them. And if they had done so how much of an argument is it for this particular union? A number of eminent engineers spent a good deal of time in considering all the "vital" points in the plans and structure of the Quebec bridge, but with very indifferent success.

4.—The Principal says that the Basis of Union is superior to the Westminster Confession. Even if true, (which it is not), it is no argument. For if it be superior and if the church is very anxious to adopt it she can do so without the revolutionary course involved in union.

5.—Among other exceedingly general statements Dr. Patrick refers to the action of Assembly in regard to the various reports which the Union Committee presented to that court. He gives a long statement of what several assemblies did, but he does not venture to argue that the assembly in appointing and continuing the committee was acting within its rightful powers. "If he will convince us of this a good many will regard him and his scheme in a different light. One of the great objections to the whole movement is the fact that its promoters have trampled on constitutional rights as if the rank and file of ministers and laymen had no rights which they were bound to respect. They may call the appointment an act of Assembly. So it was. But it was an act for which a very few men in Assembly were responsible. And if the ministers and laymen of the Presbyterian church are abject enough to submit to such a procedure the church might properly unite with anything no matter what. It is vain to say that the question must ultimately come to us. No thanks to some men that it must. Neither is it any palliation to say, as Principal Patrick does, that no one objected to the appointment of the committee in 1904. It is hard to read such a statement seriously. Perhaps it is a statement of fact, but the use made of it by Dr. Patrick will hardly square with good morality. What right has any man to violate the rights of other people merely because they don't raise an outcry? Dr. Patrick has not justified the existence of his committee.

I regret to have used so much space in dealing with these general statements of Principal Patrick, but coming from the Principal of a College, and the leader of what he thinks a great cause, the readers of the Dominion Presbyterian may possibly consider the space properly used.

FORDWICH, June 2, 1910.

(To be Continued)

The congregation of Chalmers' church, Woodstock, of which Rev. H. M. Paulin is pastor, will erect a new edifice, to cost somewhere in the neighborhood of \$30,000. The building will not be gone on with until two-thirds of the amount necessary is subscribed, but as the money is now almost guaranteed a new church is assured.

ALLEGED "UNSOOUND TEACHING."

By Ulster Pat.

In writing for the press, I have avoided discussing questions upon which "denominations" are divided, and in this letter I do not wish to express any opinion regarding the right or wrong of "believer's baptism," neither would I be regarded as unfriendly to any undenominational agency or association for spreading the knowledge of the word of God. Long since I was taught to trust the Religious Tract Society as one of the greatest of Evangelical agencies, whose publications could safely be circulated even without the preliminary of careful examination. And I had supposed that the Upper Canada Tract Society was equally careful. But this my latter confidence has received some rude shakings. On several occasions I have found in tracts obtained of The Upper Canada Society unsound teaching. I have already discussed one or two of these in the Dominion Presbyterian, but had supposed that they might have been specimen copies received from publishers and inadvertently placed in stock, and so indicated only a temporary lapse in carefulness. Now I fear that the trouble is more deeply seated than I had supposed, for several of the tracts since received from "102 Yonge street" have failed to fulfil the "essential principles" laid down in the tract, "About tracts," that "There should be some account of the way of a sinner's salvation in every tract—so plain that it cannot be misunderstood."

A minor instance is afforded by the Society's "Plea for the Envelope System." Some Christians regard this system as man made, and neither the best nor strictly scriptural. All will agree that it is no part "of the way of a sinner's salvation," so that its advocacy might well be left to the "demonstrations" directly concerned. But a graver lapse is the circulation by the Society of "Seven Reasons for Believer's Baptism." This, too, is not concerned with "the way of a sinner's salvation," for on page 13 I read "Is believer's baptism essential to Salvation? No." It therefore is ultra vires of the avowed mission of the Society, even were it not provocative of doubtful disputations. The tract is written by the Rev. F. B. Meyer, B.A., and manifestly is intended for "Christian people" not members of the "Baptist denomination," for he assures such that they may be baptized and still continue "in Communion with that Christian body with which you have been accustomed to worship." Is this statement such as would commend itself to the Apostle who admonished believers to "Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men?" The "Christian bodies" with which those addressed by Mr. Meyer "have been accustomed to worship" regard the second administration of the rite as not only unnecessary, but wrong, and their ministers would refuse to perform it. They teach that to "have our children christened" is scriptural. Mr. Meyer claims it is not so, and no doubt would refuse fellowship to such as unbaptized. He scouts "a few drops of water," and asserts that "baptism must be by immersion," that Christ so commanded and the Apostles so practised; "if you were baptized as a babe you should be baptized again as a Believer," and that those who failed to do so "never passed through the waters of Baptism," for "There is only one way." If this be true, how can those who know it continue in communion with "that Christian body," which refused to believe or to practise it, content with themselves obeying the command of Christ, and is it honorable to suggest such a thing? Would not it be the bolder duty of one convinced of the truth of the "Seven Reasons"—or even of the first, that "The only sort of baptism mentioned in the Bible" is that for which Mr. Meyer contends, and that "the sprinkling of babes does not fulfil the condition?"