

Church Independence.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

MY DEAR SIR,—I would probably not have troubled you further on the subject of Church Independence, had I not been led to entertain the design of publishing, in another form, the letters which I have written for your paper. In view of this, I would add another, having especial reference to the unworthy attempt to subject to groundless reproach certain brethren of the Canada Presbyterian Church.

The additional remarks that I now ask your insertion of would not be necessary, were it not that there are so many who lend a ready ear to the misrepresentations of disingenuousness or want of discernment, and so many others who are apt to be perplexed by them. For the sake of the latter, especially, I am willing to be at any pains in exhibiting our sound Presbyterian doctrine in relation to the proper supremacy of the Church and the civil power—a doctrine of the utmost importance both in its assertion of the independence of the Church in opposition to the Erastian claims of the civil power, and in assertion of the supremacy of the civil power in opposition, both to the teachings of Rome, and to the statements of parties who cannot or will not understand the doctrine of their own Church, or see that, like so many important and essential truths, it is the *juste milieu* between two most dangerous extremes.

A Church, holding, as our's is understood to do, the doctrine of its own supremacy, subject only to Christ, in all matters spiritual, is supposed to contemplate a certain decision, which will, in the judgment of a minority, involve a departure from the principles of the Church, in which they may not be able conscientiously to concur. Whether the decision has respect to doctrine relating to the prophetic, the priestly or the kingly office of Christ, does not affect the present argument. In view of this contemplated decision, the majority, in the name of the Church, apply to the legislature asking a modification of the law relating to their property or real estate, and the minority present a counter application. In reference to these applications, it may be held. First, That both imply an acknowledgment of the supremacy of the civil powers in matters spiritual; or, Second, That neither implies such an acknowledgment; or, Third, That the application of the minority does, while that of the majority does not. I have no reason to think that the first position will be maintained by any minister or member of the Canada Presbyterian Church, whatever may be the views of those outside of it. The present discussion is between those who maintain, as I do, that neither application implies anything inconsistent with the fullest persuasion of the Church's proper supremacy; and those who insist, as some of your correspondents do, that it is only the application of the minority that implies an acknowledgment of the right of the civil power in spiritual matters. It is evident that the mere fact of application implies the very same acknowledgment of the supremacy of the civil power by both parties. Both acknowledge the supremacy of the legislative branch of the civil power, in the making and modifying of all laws relating to the tenure of church property; and the supremacy of the judicial branch of it, in the interpretation and application of these laws. And both parties being not "Presbyterian Ultramontanists," but simply intelligent Presbyterians, this supremacy is recognized by them both as being not only an actual but a rightful supremacy. If the mere fact of the application implies anything more than this on the part of the minority, it must do so also on the part of the majority. But your correspondents do not see this. One of them while "standing aghast" at the inconsistency of the minority, ridicules the incompetency of the legislature, not perceiving that the minority only recognize the competency which the majority acknowledge—an official competency,—and that they may believe as firmly as he does, and with a much more pungent sorrow, that the legislature is wanting in the intellectual and moral competency which its members ought to possess to qualify them for the exercise of an acknowledged office-power and right. The same writer speaks of the minority's application as a submitting of certain documents to be judged by the legislature, not perceiving that the application of the majority involves the very same thing, the only difference being that the one party says, "look into the documents and you will see they are the same," and the other says, "look into them and you will see they are different." Unless the legislature is to consider itself the mere tool of the majority, they must require good reasons for legislating, and act according to their own judgment on the reasons assigned.

And here let me say that, if I had any object in view other than the exhibition of the right and the wrong in relation to a subject of growing interest throughout all Christendom, I might be disposed to remind "Presbyterians" that, according to his own admission, the application to the legislature by the majority as an attempt to secure for themselves a legal right to more than they have a moral claim to—an attempt to induce the legislature to give sanction to an immoral claim. But I let that pass.

The same want of discernment appears in the statement that the minority, in presenting their counter-application, are seeking to make the power of the legislature in relation to property to bear upon the majority so as to prevent union. For this application recognizes and seeks the exercise of no power but that which the majority recognize and seek the exercise of. In their application they are seeking to make the power of the legislature in relation to property to bear upon the minority for the furtherance of union. The success of the application of either party may operate as a temptation to keep the other party from following what they may conceive to be the line of duty—in the one case union, in the other separation. But that is a very different matter from the exercise of power claimed and put forth by the civil authorities with the express design of controlling the action of the Church in her administration of the law of her only head. The acknowledgment of no such supremacy is involved in the application of either party.

Again, to speak of the application of the minority as an appeal against an ecclesiastical decision is to utter pure and undiluted nonsense. There is no decision to appeal against. The Church has decided nothing. The minority are simply counter-positions to the majority, in relation to a matter in which the Church's acknowledgment in place is that of subjection to another authority than her own.

If it be said that the application of the minority implies their intention to appeal to the judicial branch of the civil power against an ecclesiastical decision, I answer, it implies no such thing. The minority have no such intention. When the time comes (and I hope we shall all pray and labour incessantly that it may never come) for the minority to appeal against an ecclesiastical decision, their appeal will not be made to the civil power; and when this time comes for them to apply to the civil power, their application will not be an appeal against an ecclesiastical decision. When the Church, by her majority, has pronounced the decision which the minority cannot, with a good conscience, concur in or submit to, then the majority knowing that the Church is responsible only to Christ for the decision it has pronounced, knowing that He has committed to church rulers the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and that they are subject only to Him in their use of them; but knowing, at the same time, that they may err, and greatly err, in their use of the keys, and believing that this particular decision has been pronounced *clavæ errantæ*, and is contrary to the mind of Christ, they will appeal to Him and to Him alone. In other words, they will separate, believing that the majority have, contrary to their solemn engagements, departed from the principles of the Church. I presume it will be admitted that this appeal involves the fullest acknowledgment of the Church's peculiar supremacy,—namely, that it is the strongest expression and proof they can give of their recognition of the supremacy of the Church and the due supremacy of the majority, while they cannot allow the infallibility of either (see confession of Faith, chap. xxxi. 1.) I presume even our *sham* ultramontanists will not require argument on this point.

There are now then two separate and distinct churches, each let us suppose, claiming identity with the Church that has been broken up, and denying the other's identity with it. These two Churches are as distinct as any other two ecclesiastical organizations of the land. The one is not subject to the other and owes it no allegiance. As the majority are responsible only to Christ for the decision to which the minority cannot submit, so the minority are responsible only to Christ for their action in not submitting. The minority may be right, and must not be charged with inconsistency for acting on the presumption that they are. And further, they are equal, perfectly equal, in the eye of the law of the land, which cannot justly discriminate in favour of Churches according to their numerical strength.

But there is property to be disposed of, and the civil power alone can dispose of it. It is allowed that it has the exclusive right to dispose of it, and that the exercise of this right is in full consistency with the proper supremacy of the Church. But it is affirmed that, if the minority shall assert, or sanction the assertion of a legal right to the property or any portion of it, they will be acting inconsistently with their doctrine respecting the supremacy of the Church. That is to say, a Church, possessing all ecclesiastical powers, not subject to any other Church, having, it is admitted, a moral right to a portion of the property in question, and whose very action in separating from the majority implies its persuasion that it has a legal right to the whole, must, on the sole ground that it is numerically weaker than another Church which, it believes, has no legal right to the property, refrain from asserting its right and forbid all its congregations to do so; else it acts inconsistently with the spiritual independence of the Church. If this is not the *ne plus ultra* of absurdity, I do not know what is. The man who maintains it is not to be reasoned with, your correspondents of course do not maintain it; but, like all false accusers of the brethren, they do their best to deceive themselves and mislead others by their fallacious representations of the state of the case. I have challenged them to say, whether, in the case before us, the civil courts, in determining according to their own independent judgment, invade the jurisdiction of the Church, or do anything inconsistent with its spiritual independence. That challenge they decline accepting. They know doubtless that they cannot answer the question otherwise than in the negative. That, it seems, they are unwilling to do because they are unwilling to depart from a charge which is manifestly groundless, if the minority are asking the civil power to do nothing inconsistent with the proper supremacy of the Church. And accordingly they will, with too many others of the same spirit, persevere in their endeavours to include the proscribed and the proscribers. I want their success may be small, I believe that when the minority are represented as appealing to the civil power against an ecclesiastical decision, disingenuous and selfish people will see that

there is no decision to appeal against, and that their application to the civil power has respect to a matter in which the majority have no right, and claim no right to decide, and in relation to which their proper place is that of subjection equally with the minority; and that when their promise of due subjection to ecclesiastical authority is appealed to us by them from the assertion of a moral and legal right, all such readers will see that the minority are not bound to subjection to a church, against whose decision they have appealed to Christ, on the ground that that decision is, in their judgment, to the prejudice and subversion of principles which they solemnly engaged to maintain whatever trouble or persecution might arise.

It is said that the attempt of the minority to sustain a legal right, in the only way in which it can be sustained, implies the right of civil judges to examine ecclesiastical documents and to decide in accordance with their own views of them, which may be contrary to the views of the Church. If there is anything wrong in this, I trust your readers will see that it is not the minority alone that are responsible for it. The majority are equally responsible for having their trusts so framed as to necessitate such examination on the part of the judges. All references to the incompetency of the judges are aside from the question. They alone have the right and the power of deciding in the matter; and not only have they the right, but they are bound to use all available means that are necessary to enable them to form an intelligent and independent judgment. And when they decide accordingly, they no more interfere with the spiritual independence of the Church, in deciding against the majority than they do in deciding against the minority, whose Church possesses the same independence as the other. The decision simply involves the expense and inconvenience to the one party that the opposite decision would do to the other. If it be said, may not the dread of an adverse decision operate as a temptation to keep the majority from doing what they believe to be their duty? the reply is the same thing is true of the minority. But to represent an action of the magistrate acting in his own sphere, which operates incidentally as a temptation, as being identical with the forth-putting of his power to control and oppress Church Courts, is an instance of confusion of thought which, I trust, not many besides your correspondents will be capable of.

"Presbyterian" having begun with ascribing to the civil power a right to invade the jurisdiction of the Church, to control the administration of the law of Christ's kingdom, now insists on civil judges making themselves the tools of the Church or of its majority. They alone can decide in questions of Church property; but they ought to decide as the majority requires them to decide. They are to ignore the law of the land in relation to Church property; they must not look at the first deeds; but when two Churches dispute about property they must give it to the bigger one. It is the American way. It may have been so from the days of Walter Van Twiller, of whom the authentic Knickerbocker records that, having decided according to the number of the leaves and the weight of the books of the parties in a suit, he thereby established his reputation as a magistrate, saved himself a world of trouble, and put an end to litigation all the rest of his days.

However unable "Presbyterian" may be to see the truth that lies between his alternative of the civil power being either the invader of the Church's province or her tool, he may be sure the fault is entirely his own, that it can be seen, and that many others see it. There are many who can conceive of civil judges seeing it clearly, and saying to a majority against whom they decide, "we are satisfied that you have departed materially from the principles referred to in this trust, as of course you have a perfect right to do to any extent. It appears also that you have deposited and excommunicated your brethren, who profess that they cannot consent to the change you have made. This too you have an unquestionable power to do. It belongs to you to make and modify terms of Church office and membership under a responsibility to Christ alone. These are matters with which we have nothing to do. Had your brethren applied to us to exercise our power in any way, with the view of influencing you in the slightest degree in your decisions in these matters, we would have dismissed their application, without investigation, the instant we understood what they wished us to do. But they ask us to decide in a matter that belongs to us, and not to you any more than it does to them. It is true you plead that you have not departed from the principles referred to in the Trust, you are at perfect liberty to think so, but we differ from you; and you must be aware that in a matter in which it belongs to us to decide, we must follow our own judgment and not yours." And we can even conceive they might add, "we are personally of the opinion that your principles are now more in accordance with Scripture than they were before, and we are glad you have resisted the temptation arising from the apprehension of our adverse decision. But unfortunately we differ from you in believing, after careful consideration of the Trust and other documents submitted by you and others, that you have departed from the principles referred to in the Trust, and that the other party in the suit adheres to them, so that we are obliged to decide against you," and if the majority were so foolish as to tell these judges that their decision was an interference with the spiritual independence of the Church, they would simply reply, "it is no more so, than our decision against the minority would be. We recognize the spiritual independence of you both, and of theirs equally with yours; but, at the same time, we shall maintain our own, and not determine our solemn judgments by counting the heads of the parties before us."

I shall, with your leave, analyse the contents of "Presbyterian's" *notebook* in your next issue.

I am, yours truly,

James Middleton,

Edin., March 7, 1874.

Presbyterian on Union.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—As the time approaches when the Assembly of our Church will meet, and the all-engrossing matter of Union must be taken up and disposed of in one way or another, we (I use the term knowing that I speak the minds of a large majority of our people in both sections of the Church) think it desirable that our ministers should better understand the minds of our people in this important matter. With us the Headship of Christ has been the corner stone upon which we have built the whole structure of our faith. That "He is head over all things to his Church" is a well understood and recognized principle, acknowledged and recorded in the Confession of Faith, which is fully received as the standard of faith by both sections of the negotiating Churches, having been taught this glorious truth on our brother's knee, and found it recorded in his own word, we cannot see any well-grounded reason for all this wrangling and disputation about a matter so well understood, acknowledged, and acted on by all parties concerned. We have been waiting, hoping and praying that the church of our Fathers, that has lain so long in a divided state, shorn of her influence and usefulness, should again be united and take her proper place amongst all other denominations of Christian people. Shall we again be disappointed. The little cloud, (at one time no bigger than a man's hand) has now expanded to large dimensions and assumes a black and lowering appearance, we would therefore beseech all parties to put on charity. There is nothing to fear from the basis of union being defective; He will take care of "His own Church" it is His by purchase, and He is not only Head but King. Yes, He is King, and will reign over His own to the exclusion of all the powers on earth or hell. We have not one word to say against those worthy men, who have come out openly and honourably in support of what they sincerely believe; although we cannot agree with their views, we can sympathize with them in (what we believe) is their zeal for truth. But there are other men with whom we have less sympathy, and who are equally to be feared. In how many places do we find two men labouring where there should be only one. In all such circumstances, were a Union to take place, one of those men must be removed, and possibly both, this is not a pleasant thing to contemplate and may tend to swell the number of opponents when the vote is taken. That we may all obtain and diligently exercise the spirit of our Lord and Master whose prayer was while on earth, that all may be one in Him, and that when all our battles are fought and our warfare over, we may all meet in the house of many mansions, resting from our troubles, and rejoicing in the glory of King Jesus, is the earnest prayer of a

TRUE PRESBYTERIAN.

An Ex-Moderator in Scotland.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—It appears to me that there is too great a hurry in urging on this Union. The Church of Scotland party have not yet wakened up to the fact that there is such a body as the Canada Presbyterian Church and how can they unite with a Church whose very existence they ignore. To show that I am not going beyond bounds, I refer to the following extract from the *Edinburgh Courier* of January 1st, 1874. The speaker is Rev. Duncan Morrison, of Owen Sound, late Moderator of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, in connection with the Church of Scotland. The speech was addressed to the Presbytery of Edinburgh, and the purpose for which it was spoken was to raise money to build a church in Owen Sound. I copy from the *Edinburgh Courier* of 1st Jan. 1874:—"The Moderator then welcomed Mr. Morrison and invited him to address the Presbytery. Mr. Morrison stated that he was settled in the midst of a large and growing population, chiefly of our own countrymen, who were destitute of religious ordinances till he went amongst them. The single Presbytery which he represented, that of Saugeen, was as large as Scotland; and they had only six or seven ministers, and seven or eight churches. They might have an idea of the isolated position which he held when he stated that his nearest ministerial neighbors were 86 miles away in one direction and 40 in another. He had gathered in about 300 families, chiefly of their own countrymen. For these they had to build two churches—one being seven or eight miles from the place where he lived, free of debt, and filled with pious worshippers, ready to call a minister, but as they had about twenty vacancies in the Canadian Church, it was with very little hope that he was looking for a minister for the district he spoke of. They had to build another church where he was living in the town of Owen Sound."

Now, Sir, I ask you can the Presbyterian Church unite with a body whose late Moderator seems unconscious of her existence, and bases his application for help upon the fact of her non-existence. I need not point out that there is really a Presbytery of Owen Sound,—that the Church of Scotland with her accustomed dexterity took advantage of a quarrel in a congregation in Owen Sound to enter on the labours of others, and that Mr. Morrison, with his "much fair speech" and promises, secured a call from the minority of that congregation. What I wish to point out is, that when it serves the purposes of the late Moderator of that Synod, he can ignore the existence of that Church with which his own proposes to unite. He may not be alone in this; and may not be and many of his brethren do the same with the doctrine of the Headship of Christ, if it should be as apparently advantageous for them to ignore it? Let us then have a declaration of that doctrine so full that there can be no possibility of quibbling out of it if there must be a Union. As to the necessity for Union one may doubt, notwithstanding Rev. Doctors and Ministers.

Yours respectfully,

Edin.

The Revival in Scotland.

From many parts of Scotland reports reach us that the work of revival continues and spreads, not only in isolated churches, but in entire villages and towns, and that in many cases without any special means or agency being employed beyond that of prayer.

The visit paid by Messrs. Moody and Sankey to Dundee has been blessed in a remarkable way—indeed, little short of what has been enjoyed in Edinburgh. Ministers feel the reviving work in their own souls, and have felt a hitherto unlost power in preaching to their hearers. Many of the churches are open every evening for prayer and exhortation. Mr. Moody has been addressing different classes of the community—now 2000 Christian workers, then 1500 members of the Young Men's Christian Association. As an illustration of the hearty practical mode in which Mr. Moody enters upon what he conceives the Lord's work it may be mentioned that in addressing the Young Men's Christian Association he urged upon them the necessity of raising £5000 to clear off the debt and to improve the Association Rooms, and stated that he had himself made a beginning to help them, having collected in course of an hour or two £2000 towards that end. A correspondent of the *Christian Times* writes of Dundee:—"The tide of blessing has risen rapidly, and is still rising. The spirit of grace and supplication is being poured out on us. Many hearts are melted. Christians are praying, and weeping, and rejoicing. It is given us to look on glad and holy scenes such as we have not witnessed since the great revival fourteen years ago. Even if none were added to the Lord at this time, the fresh baptism of the Holy Ghost which believers are now receiving will prove to be a blessing of incalculable value. Thousands of souls are stirred. The fire that burned low on the altar of God is rising to heaven in a bright and holy flame. Many hearts are breaking, and the perfume of love, sweeter than the fragrance of the alabaster box, is filling our assemblies and our homes. Jesus of Nazareth is indeed passing by."

We are cheered and sustained by the prayers of thousands in every part of Scotland. Doubtless many of our brethren in England also lovingly bear us in mind. From remote towns and glens, from little prayer-meetings in obscure places, from sick chambers where bed-ridden saints have lain for years, come the heart-touching news that Dundee is being laid, in a myriad prayers, at the feet of Jesus. Last Friday night, when our workers were engaged in prayer, preparatory to the solemn and important work of conversing with the inquirers, a telegram was received from Edinburgh telling us that thousands of revived Christians in the metropolis were praying for us. This communication sent a thrill of gladness into every heart. We seemed to be borne on eagles' wings. We thought the Lord was saying to us, Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

At the close of the meeting, and even the usual services in the churches, anxious inquirers are found waiting to converse with the ministers. It is no exaggeration to say that every day there are hundreds of inquirers in all ranks of life seeking consolation and guidance. Everywhere there appears a solemn devotional feeling.

Notwithstanding the elections last week in Berwick, the attendance at meetings has been as great as in any previous weeks since the work began. The interest, we are informed, is extending amongst the villagers in the neighbourhood.

Messrs. Moody and Sankey are at present in Glasgow. They commenced their work on Sabbath last by having a meeting in the City Hall at 9 a.m. for Sabbath-school teachers, at which early hour every seat and every inch of standing room in the building were occupied, while many had to go away for want of accommodation. The service was brief and practically useful. Mr. Moody spoke to the large congregation of Christian workers words of kindness and encouragement, urging them also to extend zeal in the important operations which they had undertaken. He showed that to be successful in their duties they must be sympathetic, for by evincing a true sympathy with their young charges they would win their confidence. In concluding an eloquent oration, he commented on the importance of Sunday-school teaching, and prayed that the 3000 teachers before him might be more successful in the future than they had been in the past. Mr. Sankey, to the accompaniment of a harmonium, sang Gospel hymns, the congregation occasionally joining. The "service of songs" seemed to be much enjoyed by the worshippers. In the evening a public meeting for worship was held in the City Hall; and similar services were conducted in the churches. The hall was uncomfortably crowded an hour before the time fixed for the commencement of the proceedings, and during the interval before the arrival of Messrs. Moody and Sankey, the congregation sang several psalms and hymns. The proceedings were opened with prayer by Dr. Lang, and afterwards Mr. Moody gave a stirring address. The audience in his several churches were also very numerous, and the devotions were conducted by ministers of different denominations. The meetings continue to be held—a noonday prayer-meeting, and many of the churches throughout the city are open every evening, and are generally well filled. Ministers of all the denominations are taking part in the meetings, irrespective of what church they are held in—it is true Union.

The report from other parts of Scotland show that there is a shaking among the dry bones. There are daily prayer-meetings, praying for a share of the blessing, in many places. This is also the case in different towns in England and Ireland, and God's people are feeling everywhere that "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." The result of this feeling of waiting is a greater spirit of devotion and earnestness, seen in larger congregations on the Lord's day, and a larger attendance on the weekly prayer-meetings—many crying as they never cried before—"Why tarry the wheels of Thy chariot?"—Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

The congregation of Knox Church, Edinburgh, have rejected the Basis of Union.