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## Contributors and Correspondents

### Union.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir,—In reading the numerous articles on Union which recently appeared in the PRESBYTERIAN, a person feels as if the Canada Presbyterian Church were approaching a very serious crisis. This impression deepens by an examination of those articles which show that brethren on both sides of the controversy seem to be somewhat sanguine that their own side will eventually triumph; and that no progress is made in the discussion toward oneness of mind respecting the basis of union, but that the progress is rather in the opposite direction. The minority seem to be pretty confident that the next Assembly will yield to their pressure, and put forth another effort to secure a basis more in harmony with their views. On the other hand, some of the majority cry out for Union on the present basis, and hope that though the minority may not heartily enter the Union, yet that, after recording their dissent and protest, they may follow their brethren; or, if not, that their number will be so small, and influence so weak, that no denomination of Christians will recognize them, and that as a natural consequence, they will soon die out.

In my humble judgment, the minority have some grounds to hope that the next Assembly will not proceed to consummate the Union on the present basis. It is true, the last Assembly declared itself in its favor, but it is equally true that the Assembly of '73 did the opposite. On that occasion the Assembly gave out no uncertain sound. It said, by a large majority, after a long discussion, that some deliverance recognizing the doctrine of Christ's Headship should be inserted into the basis. Of course, this act of the Assembly was not pleasing to some of the members of the Union Committee, and hence their resignation and dissent, with reasons, were soon tabled, an act which to many was a clear token that no such deliverance as requested would be secured by those brethren. Yet, strange to say, the Assembly re-appointed them as members of the Union Committee, and entrusted them with the securing of a deliverance which they (the brethren) declared in their reasons of dissent was unnecessary; nay, more, that such a deliverance would imply a want of confidence in the sincerity of the representatives of the negotiating Churches. The brethren accepted the Assembly's appointment. They undertook to endeavor to secure a deliverance to be inserted in the basis of the future Church, which, according to their own declaration, was not required, and which would imply a want of confidence in the sincerity of the representatives of other Churches. Here, in my humble judgment, the Assembly erred. In deference to the feelings of those esteemed brethren whose influence in the Church, and labors connected with the Union question, are most highly appreciated, the Assembly re-appointed them, I presume, very much against the desires of those brethren. Nor do I feel that the brethren themselves acted wisely in allowing the Assembly to place them in such an awkward position. Their views respecting the basis, openly and candidly expressed, deprived them of a very important qualification to secure a deliverance so essential to harmonious Union.

And what, Mr. Editor, was the result of the appointment alluded to? Just what every discerning mind might anticipate, a re-declaration of entire unanimity of the negotiating bodies regarding the doctrine of the Headship of Christ; but no deliverance to relieve the minds of the minority, and form a part of the basis of a future Church. This deliverance our Committee felt was a delicate point. Unquestionably it might appear to be so, but to propose it and secure it was the very object of their appointment, and to return to the Assembly with such a deliverance would be to carry the Canada Presbyterian Church into the Union without a dissenting voice.

But, though a deliverance was not secured by our Union Committee, yet something was done which I venture to say few expected. Ecclesiastical documents, the history of which was well known to the fathers of the late Presbyterian Church of Canada, being framed amid the excitement of the disruption controversy, were laid on the table. Than this act of the Committee I cannot very well see another course which they could pursue more adapted to wound the feelings of the highly-esteemed fathers who bore "the burden and heat" of that day of conflict; and yet we have it on record, that the last Assembly received their report with thanks for their valuable service!

I must say, Mr. Editor, that whatever the Great Head of Zion may have in store for the Canada Presbyterian Church, those things have a very ugly appearance, and are no good omen of her future peace. Were the brethren, so urgent for Union on the present basis really convinced of the danger that is ahead, they would pause before taking another step. Let a man feel the pulse of a vast number of the members and adherents of the Canada Presbyterian Church at the present moment, and he will soon be convinced that recent acts of the Assembly are, saying the least of them, very unpopular. In fact, the present basis no one praises. It is not a favorite of any, unless of a few who helped to frame it. It has other objections besides the want of a special recognition of the doctrine of Christ's Headship. Besides, it is an indisputable fact, that a large portion of the Canada Presbyterian Church is very dissatisfied with the recognition lately given by the Assembly to the introduction of instrumental music in the worship of God, and regard that itself as of sufficient importance to cause a disruption. To press upon a people in such a state of mind, then, a very unpopular

basis upon the heel of an unpopular act, shows a want of wisdom. From the people expected to form "The Presbyterian Church of British North America" a Church to be built upon the present unpopular basis, and agreeing to recognize instrumental music in the public worship of God, it would not, I submit, be very difficult to gather a people nearly as numerous as one of the bodies now negotiating for Union.

But, Mr. Editor, is it really so, that the Union Committees are unable to frame a basis on which bodies of Christians, in profession, in teachings, and in authoritative documents, are declared to be one? Is it so, that to meet conscientious views, clearly and ably stated by men of high standing and of long experience, those Committees are unable to secure a sentence or two regarding a doctrine which all Presbyterians profess to believe? Is it so that all means are now exhausted, that no further effort is to be made, and that no remedy now remains, but for the Church to accept no Union or a disruption? I am not one who believes so. True, we are no nearer a hearty Union now than we were at the Assembly of '72, but I hope no farther from it. A deliverance is sought which may seem to imply a want of confidence in the sincerity of one of the negotiating Churches, but I submit that it does not necessarily imply anything of the kind, for the Canada Presbyterian Church is driven to ask it, so as to meet the views of a large number of her members. Nor can I get myself to believe, but that the other negotiating Church would, in the circumstance, agree to grant it, seeing that they hold the very doctrine, the recognition of which is sought into the basis. To my mind there would be no more delicacy in asking for such a deliverance than it was to carry to the Canada Presbyterian Church the documents, the laying of which on the table must have reached the quick of thousands of her people. And if such a deliverance were refused—which I believe, and hope, would not—then would not the Church have an evidence that the Great Master's time for Union is not yet come? and that to wait for His time would be her wisdom?

Yours truly,

J. ANDERSON.

Tiverton, 17th Dec., 1873.

### Union, and the Act of Independence.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—I desire to take this earliest opportunity of implementing my promise of commenting on the "Act of Independence," and the position of the Church of Scotland.

At the outset allow me to refer to recent correspondents.

"Observer" has not made good use of his perceptive powers when he classes me with such as would introduce the sore questions of past years. He might have seen that I deplored the very thing, and that my fond hope, when Union was initiated, was, that "by-gones should be bye-gones." My grand object, in all my letters published in your paper, during the last twenty months, was to obviate difficulties, allay asperities, and pare off the rough edges of the past. I was anxious to avoid writing one word calculated to give offence. If any thing of this kind had appeared from me, it was written in defence. I would not be classed with those who are disposed to incriminate in our Church any of the Presbyterian families with old issues. I would rather hold up to view the brighter side of the respective Churches. I believe neither of us have been faultless or infallible, that we and all have something to learn and unlearn. And in nothing does it appear to us, do we require to learn more than in charity towards one another. It is by no means our discuss disagreeables, it is by constraint, not willingly. They are forced upon us. I have no fondness, but the utmost aversion to such discussions. To me, and, I suppose, to many more, these disputations have been the source of unutterable vexation and sadness since '43. I should rejoice exceedingly had no occasion been given to discuss them again. But when questions that have grown hoary with the years of more than half a century are revived and presented; when old accusations are reiterated week after week in double and triple force, with wonted keenness and acumen; when we are represented with having discarded sound conscience, judgment, and principles, as if we had deliberately and practically disowned our adorable Redeemer as our Sovereign Lord—to allow all this to pass unnoticed, would surely plead guilty, and would not be creditable to ourselves, nor to those who are disposed to enter into Union with us. It is the glory of the British Constitution, that every subject has the right of defence and the privilege of securing the best counsel to plead his cause. Surely this ought to be the acknowledged right of every one bearing the Presbyterian name. Those friends of Union in the C. P. Church have certainly vindicated their readiness to unite with us, prudently and well. Should we not claim the privilege of saying something for ourselves? As, however, I am only a late importation to the Synod in this part of the Dominion, I frankly confess it would be more seemly for another, and especially for a member of the Union Committee, to vindicate our position in the present and past. This, as far as I can see, is not being done. I desire, therefore, regard less of the opinion of those who desire to see us condemned with no vindication, to offer some considerations in defence. I wish to do so as modestly as possible. With two or three exceptions, I admire the spirit of your correspondent. In such cases, Greek must face Greek.

Another mild and moderate writer, in last paper (we have a fondness for "moderation," and not less so in ecclesiastical), concludes that, while we are careful not to

"humble" ourselves, we have not such a tender regard for their honor. We would assure our friend that we have no wish to humble any of the Presbyterian brethren. We should rather see every Presbyterian within the Dominion, and many more, exalted, in due time, beyond the skies. We can perceive no humiliation in asking subscription, pure and simple, to an old and well-tried standard. We regard the basis as very little more or less than this. To take the standard precisely as transmitted for many ages, it appears to me, would meet with less opposition and greater unanimity from both Churches. To do this would promote the honor of the framers of our standards—to adopt their wisdom, perhaps, continuing the provisions regarding the Civil Magistrate. We would thus follow in the train of all the Presbyterians outside of Scotland. We would help to ennoble Presbyterianism down to the present time. We would ennoble ourselves. Would it not give evidence of high stature of Christian manhood to blot out the record of all past offences, and leave nothing, visible or invisible, to prove an eye-sore or heart-sore to any—to accept of what the great fathers of British Presbyterians, English, Irish and Scotch, have done for us, as sufficient basis of Scripture truth, for us and ours, in all time coming.

But now with regard to the famous "Act of Independence." This name sounds very attractive. Who does not crave for independence? But it so happens in this fallen world that it is difficult for the individual and for the collective body to assert complete independence. To attempt this may only serve to enclose ourselves within uncomfortable restrictions. To press our independence too far may involve in legal bondage. We suspect it is so with this act; therefore we had no favor for it since we discovered its existence. We know that its enactment was objectionable to many adherents of our old Church. But, of course, majorities will carry, and majorities are fallible—less certainly than minorities. But we shall see how far those who framed this Act should be impugned with dishonourable motives. It may be seen in the Records of the Synod of '43, that those who remained loyal to the best skill to prevent the disruption of the Synod. And having failed in this, why should they not pass this Act, so harmless in itself, if it could be supposed to have the remotest tendency to maintain and promote their strength. It were well for the Church of Christ, if more dishonest means had never been adopted to advance His cause. Had this been so, less wounds would have been inflicted, and divisions could be more easily healed. It is insinuated that those who framed this Act regarded the Church of Scotland in bondage to the State, and that this Act was to release themselves and entrap others. This is surely arrogating too much in judgment. Is it not setting aside all charity? Is it not assuming the prerogative of Him who alone knoweth the heart, and is the rightful Lord of the conscience? At the same time, we do think that if any passed this Act under the impression that the Church of Scotland was in the alleged bondage, their proper course should have been to have gone with those who sympathized and united with the Free Church. It has been wisely said by an apologetic writer some weeks ago, that this Act should be viewed in the light of the stormy times in which it was passed. And most certainly this Act, and much more of the literature of those days, must be treated with forbearance, or be no more called into remembrance, otherwise Union can neither prove comfortable nor useful; and the Presbyterians must bear much reproach for our petty strifes and divisions.

But the Act may have been framed to satisfy those who were not Scotchmen, and did not feel much interest in and had no desire to consider the merits or demerits of the questions in dispute before the Scottish Church. This very plausible view has been taken by the proposed Union, in which the writer indicates that this Union is designed to meet the wants and wishes of Americans, Canadians, English and Irish, as well as Scotch Presbyterians.

Our objections to this Act are not those so vehemently pressed on our attention. We dislike the Act, because it excludes an appeal to any Court whatever beyond our own, as if we possessed all the wisdom in the world on matters spiritual and secular. And, first, because it has an appeal to the Church of Scotland. We have not so much confidence in all the decisions of the inferior Church Courts as to suppose that reference to the highest Church Courts may not be desirable. And to have the freedom of reference to the Supreme Court of the Scottish Church, might at least lead to the exercise of greater caution in coming to a decision in the inferior Courts. We could specify a case that was before the Synod in the Maritime Provinces, where no such Act is in existence, and where the alleged purpose of such reference had the desired effect of reversing the decision of the lower Court.

But we object to the Act because it excludes appeal to another Court. We strongly suspect that it bars an appeal or application, in any case, to the Civil Court, as regards ecclesiastical property, or on any plea whatever. We are sorry if we differ from another considerate correspondent, who assumes that both Churches are sound on the Headship of Christ, and seeing that both Churches have now a declaration of the spiritual independence such as we ask," he asks, "why should not the United Church have a similar act?" We are as anxious as many that the Church should be prepared, as far as possible, to "defend herself against State intrusion in spiritual rights and privileges." But here arises the grand difficulty: to enact practicable laws to restrain each within their respective and legitimate Provinces. We suggested, in your paper, after the Committee on Union sat first, that the special subject for their consideration was not so much to decide that forbearance should be allowed as to the manner of receiving the articles in the Standards respect-

ing the Civil Magistrate, as to define or lay down principles indicating the respective provinces of Ecclesiastical and Civil Courts. Children might have suggested the former, whereas the latter required the highest and most judicious exercise of Christian casuistry. For ourselves, we are not of opinion that there should in no case be an appeal from the Church to the civil tribunal. We know that worthy brethren in the Canada Presbyterian Church are of the same mind. To attempt to prevent such appeal, in any case, would, we are persuaded, be inconsistent with the principles of equity and the counsels of God's Word. No Church can possibly prevent such appeal, and no State can safely sanction such an Act, with due regard to the protection of her subjects. We regard this Act as requiring too much. Had those in the C. P. Church, who propose to apply to the Ottawa Government, subscribed this Act, it is our opinion, that when it would come up before the Civil Court to be discussed on the merits of the application, their subscription to the Act would exclude their case being heard. And seriously, according to our views, if their Church property is in danger of being diverted from its legitimate object, they have a right to seek redress wherever they may hope to get justice. Some years ago, when an excellent minister in Boston, who is in the voluntary school, and a worthy descendant of the Erskines, applied to the Civil Court to reclaim Presbyterian property that had fallen into the hands of Unitarians, I cheerfully raised subscriptions to aid him in the prosecution. If the vested Church property of these reverend brethren opposed to Union were in danger of being transferred to any other object than the dissemination of sound Presbyterian doctrines—as we are sure it was designed and is now used—we should cheerfully render our aid to prevent any such misappropriation. But permit us to present this Act entire. It may be a novelty to many of your readers. Where it is shown its full face, it may not appear such a terrific barrier to Union, as some would represent it.

Whereas this Synod has always from its first establishment, possessed a free and supreme jurisdiction over all the congregations and ministers in connection therewith, and although the independence and freedom of this Synod, in regard to all things spiritual, cannot be called in question, but has been repeatedly, and in most explicit terms affirmed, not only by itself, but by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, yet as in our present circumstances it is expedient that this independence be asserted and declared by a special act;

It is therefore hereby declared, "That this Synod has always claimed and possessed, does now possess, and ought always, in all time coming, to have and exercise a perfectly free, full, final, supreme, and uncontrolled power of jurisdiction, discipline and government, in regard to all matters, ecclesiastical and spiritual, over all the ministers, elders, Church members, and congregations under its care, without the right of review, appeal, complaint, or reference by or to any other Court or Courts whatever, in any form or under any pretence; and that in all cases that may come before it for judgment, the decisions and deliverances of this Synod shall be final. And this Synod further declares, that if any encroachments on this supreme power and authority shall be attempted or threatened, by any person or persons, Court or Courts whatever, then this Synod, and each and every member thereof, shall, to the utmost of their power resist and oppose the same. And whereas the words in the designation of the Synod, 'in connection with the Church of Scotland,' have been misunderstood or misrepresented by many persons, it is hereby declared that the said words imply no right of jurisdiction or control, in any form whatever, by the Church of Scotland over this Synod, but denote merely the connection of origin, identity of standards, and ministerial and Church communion."

Surely the honest judgment of every critic must be, that too much noise has been made about this act. However distasteful it may be to those who believe in the righteousness of appealing to the civil tribunal, we should think that the most tasteful in their exclusiveness could not desire a more explicit act of spiritual independence. Besides it appears that the act in substance, if not entirely had "been repeatedly and in most explicit terms affirmed" anterior to the disruption of the Canada Synod. Indeed we think the Act might be gathered from propositions that had passed almost unanimously in the Synod of 1844, before the rupture in that Synod—save the part that allows ministerial communion with the Church of Scotland. The Act would appear thus to have been prepared in the one united school.

So far as we know, the Canada Presbyterian Church has no Act that goes so far in excluding an appeal to the civil court, and to every court under the sun. Indeed it goes farther, it appears, as a bar to seeking redress in the civil court, than some of those who make such a clamour against it, would do in practice. They would place a yoke on others, while they assert liberty for themselves. To make so much of this Act appears dishonourable. It is very illiberal. It is making a mountain of a very small matter. It is straining at a gnat.

But the chief ground of offence against this Act, appears to be that while it asserts that our Canada Church exists quite independent of, and in no way under the control of the Church of Scotland, it does not expressly testify against said church. What seems to be desired is, a declaration clearly implying, if not expressly asserting, that the Church of Scotland was in grievous error in 1843, and that those who continued connection with her were involved in her guilt. Should the athenians of the old

church accede to this, there would be an end to discussion. Now we are ready to admit that the majority in the Church of Scotland were chargeable more than ones with wrong judgments. We cannot give our unqualified assent to all the decisions of the old Church or Free Church either. The majority in the Church of Scotland, doubtless, passed an unrighteous judgment on the Erskines and their worthy co-peers. But the Church of Scotland confessed her error in the most practical way. They recalled their judgment, although too late to secure their return and their reinstalment in the Scottish Church. The supreme government only requires a practical repentance of churches as of individuals.

We would not encroach further on your space. We shall defer to a future number the further consideration of this matter.

I am, sincerely yours,

ALEXANDER MCKAY.

The Manss, Eldon, 11th Dec. 1873.

### Union on the Australian Basis.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

MY DEAR SIR,—I desire to apologize to Messrs. Campbell, of Montreal, for the blunder committed in my last, and to thank you for the timely correction. The error arose entirely from the fact of my not being sufficiently familiar with Christian names. The value, however, of the communication itself, be that much or little, is in no way affected by the mistake on my part.

In reply to the question, "How has the union on such a basis stood the test?" we must, of course, again quote from published testimony. In a letter of the Rev. Alex. Campbell (I hope I am right this time), dated Geelong, Sept. 16th, addressed to the convener of the P. C. Colonial Committee, and published in the Record of January, 1860, we find the following paragraph:—

"So far as the Union has gone, it has been most satisfactory. We have now not two hostile Churches—a Free Church and an Established Church party—but we have one Church, holding openly and undeniably Free Church principles. The Dissenters, of course, deny that we hold these principles; but they never succeeded in getting any other proof than the fact that we have joined the Union."

Exactly two months later we find a notice of the meeting of the General Assembly of the Victoria Church from the same writer, published in the February number of the Record.

"Although you will probably receive full intelligence regarding our First General Assembly from other quarters, you must allow me to tell you my impressions of it. Like many others, I felt some apprehension that the diverse elements of which it was composed might still retain their diversity, and that an attempt to bring them into close working contact would have led to an explosion. Such fears were groundless. Our Assembly was characterized by a spirit of unpretending but genuine brotherly kindness. There was not one note of discord—not one harsh or unseemly word. There were two or three votes, but on matters of no moment, and two or three dissents were entered on our records. But the brethren who tendered them felt that, in doing that, they had done all that good men needed to do, in order to exonerate their own consciences. For example, when certain applications for State aid were made, our United Presbyterian brethren maintained their consistency by entering their dissent, and manifested their good sense by doing nothing more. And thus this notable difficulty was disposed of without wounding either the time or the temper of the house. There was not the smallest indication of sides or parties in the house. There was nothing that would have told a stranger that these sixty clergymen had ever belonged to different or antagonistic Churches. I should not, however, say that there were no parties. There were two—those who were tintured with enthusiasm, and those who were inclined to be slow. But these are precisely the parties that we need—the quick and the cautious, the ardent disciples of progress, whose motto is "Advance," and the cool-headed men, who add to it "circumspectly."

In reference to the second meeting of the Assembly, the Melbourne Daily Age says:— "The meetings were felt to be most refreshing, the interest continued unabated to their close, and uninterrupted harmony characterized all the proceedings."

I am, yours truly,

WM. BRUNNITT.

Springville, Dec. 17th, 1873.

### A Reminder.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—I am afraid that some of your correspondents on Union entirely overlook the fact that the Canada Presbyterian Church is not that Church which before '61 was known as the "Free Church," and that it has not served itself here to all the controversies, and all the traditions of the latter Church. I am an old U. P., and have always been, and am still, an advanced voluntary, and while I cordially accepted, and accept still the basis of 1861, I never thought, and do not now think that in so accepting it I became a "Free Churchman" in the conventional sense of the term, though I claim something better, for I was "free born." It is 30 years since 1843, and that makes a considerable difference both in individuals and churches.

AN OLD U. P.