

# British American Presbyterian.

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## Contributors and Correspondents.

UNION.—No. 6.

UNION IS PRACTICABLE.

The union of the various sections of the Presbyterian Church of the Dominion is not only right and reasonable, but also practicable. If it is our duty to unite as holding the same doctrines and polity, as we have endeavored to show, then let us see how the Union may be brought about.

1. We argue that the proposed union is practicable from the fact that a similar union has already been effected in Australia. There the three Synods representing the three chief branches of the Presbyterianism of Scotland have been united in one ecclesiastical body. This union was also approved by each of the parent churches. The General Assembly of the Established Church of Scotland passed a resolution declaring their approval of this measure, and that the ministers who were formerly in connection with the Established Church would still be recognized as such if they returned home to Scotland; and would be admissible to parish churches just as if they had never been separated, or their union with others in the colonies had never taken place. The same principle applies to all the colonies. This removes one of the chief barriers to union in the estimation of many. This should settle the question of status also, about which some are so much concerned. The status of those now in connection with the Established Church of Scotland will remain the same after the union.

The Free Church General Assembly showed no countenance to one of their own ministers, Mr. Miller, of Australia, who opposed the union, and claimed to be the proper representative of the Free Church in that Colony. The Free Church General Assembly virtually advised him to go home and join the Union without delay. The same spirit prevails the United Presbyterian Church. Thus there is no opposition to the union sought on the part of the mother Churches at home. It may be replied, "If they are so favorable to union why do not they unite themselves?" There are peculiar difficulties in the way of union in Scotland that are not felt with all the same force in the colonies. There they have an actual Establishment, interwoven with the civil and social institutions of the country, and hereditary jealousies handed down for generations, and other difficulties of which many in this land can form little conception. Yet, with all their hindrances, I doubt not that union will soon be effected between the Free and the United Presbyterian Churches in Scotland; and I hope and believe, eventually between them and the Established Church also. The spirit as well as the felt requirements of the age—both in Church and State—point in this direction. And though some minds never make progress, never move out of the grooves in which they have been wont to move, never overcome the prejudices of youth and riper years, yet Providence is stronger than the prejudices of men, and can work wonders in the future as in the past. He who has caused His servants in Australia to surmount their prejudices and unite together in one common cause, can, in His own time, overcome the prejudices and remove the difficulties which hinder and delay, but cannot finally prevent such union both in Britain and her colonies. Let us then follow the noble example of our younger sister in Australia, and some of us may live to see the Union not only of the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church, but also of the Establishment with them. Providence is moving on the wheels of the Church rapidly in our day. We are fast approaching the Millennial period, when Ephraim shall no longer vex Judah, nor Judah Ephraim, but they shall become one in the hands of the Lord; and when the Church shall appear in her glory as the bride, the Lamb's wife. He that is effecting such mighty changes among the nations—overthrowing slavery, despotism, and Popish power, and thus preparing the kingdoms of the world to become the Kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ—can as easily remove difficulties out of the way of the union of His people, and cause them to see their duty in this matter: yea, He can put it into their hearts to merge all differences, in their earnest desire to advance that Kingdom that can never be destroyed.

2. In order to attain this desirable union let us waive all discussion of past differences and unite on the basis of our common standards as Presbyterians. The vexed question of the powers and place of the civil magistrate has, for all practical purposes, been sufficiently discussed. The basis of the union already effected in Canada,

besides asserting the spiritual independence and liberty of conscience, recognizes the duty of the magistrate, in the discharge of his official duties, to obey God's revealed will. But as to the points wherein one section of the Canada Presbyterian Church differs from another, and from the Synod of Canada, it forms a part of the basis of union that the question should be a matter of forbearance. The Committees of the several Churches have arrived at a very satisfactory finding on this matter, which I trust will remove all difficulty in the way of union arising out of this question.

The basis of union between the Free and United Presbyterian Churches of Nova Scotia states that "while recognizing the responsibility of the civil magistrate to God, and praying for the time when 'kings shall be nursing fathers, and their queens nursing mothers' to the Church, the Synod finds that the question as to the mode in which the civil magistrate may discharge his responsibility is one upon which, in their circumstances, they are not 'called upon to come to any deliverance.'" Some such declaration as this might be sufficient unless the basis of the Canada Presbyterian Church be adopted, with such modifications as the case may require.

3. Again, in order to union let there be generous concession as to endowments. Let the present occupants draw their public emoluments, and let some arrangement be made as to the way in which the balance that remains shall be disposed of afterwards—either in the way of increasing the endowments of our colleges, or aiding the mission work of our churches—or perhaps in forming the nucleus of a Sustentation Fund. As there is a conscientious difference of opinion on the subject of endowments, can we not agree upon some measure that will be to a certain extent a substitute. National endowments, in the proper sense of the term, we cannot now enjoy if we would, since the Clergy Reserves have been secularized, and there is no prospect of anything of the kind ever again being granted in this country. Some, indeed, argue in favor of an endowment from the people. Whether this be desirable or not, it is evident that the spirit of the age is opposed to it, and that there is no hope of obtaining it to any extent. The only thing that is likely to succeed in our circumstances is a Sustentation Fund.

The scheme devised by the great and good Dr. Chalmers has been of vast service to the Free Church of Scotland. It has been one of the chief sources of her success, affording all the ministers a competence, and preventing any of them from suffering, giving them an average income of about \$1,200 a year, besides an excellent manse; whereas the average income of the Canada Presbyterian Church is under \$700 a year, and in the great majority of cases without manse. The present average in Canada is considerably above what it was a few years ago,—in 1859 it was about \$440, and in 1866 about \$560. Yet the rise in the cost of living has advanced much more than even the rise of salaries, as it has about doubled during the last twenty years. The Sustentation Fund of the Free Church has been called her "financial sheet anchor." The principle adopted is that all congregations send in what they can to a Central Fund—the wealthier, of course, contributing much larger sums than the poorer. Then each congregation receives an equal amount, say £150 sterling, which, in the case of those able to do so, is supplemented to any amount they think necessary: so that while none, even the poorest districts of the Highlands, receive less than the equal distribution, many ministers receive twice or three times as much. But besides the lowest allowance of about \$700, all the pre-disruption ministers receive \$870, and the *quid sacra* ministers \$750 and the supplements from their congregations besides.

Another plan proposed by Dr. Bayne, of Galt, Ont., and which would probably be more acceptable in Canada, was what we may call a Proportional Sustentation Fund. It proposed to return to each congregation in proportion to their contribution to it. Say a congregation contributing \$2,000 might receive \$1,000, another contributing \$1,200 might receive \$1,000, so that, if possible, none might receive less than \$600, which, in certain country districts, with the cheaper living, and the many articles usually presented for a minister's table, would be equal to \$800 in a village, or \$1,000 in a town, and \$1,200 in a city. Of course a minimum must be fixed to entitle any congregation to be taken into connection with the Fund. No congregation need receive aid from the Fund unless they raise at least \$400 or \$500, and then the salary paid to the minister may be determined according to some regular scale, in proportion

to the amount received from his congregation. That would depend on the proportion of aid giving to aid receiving congregations. So in like manner a maximum should be fixed beyond which no congregation should receive aid from the Fund.

Some such scheme might be devised which would meet the wants of our country, and secure to every man who devotes himself to the work of the ministry an adequate support, which not a fourth of the Presbyterian ministers in Canada receive. While the large and wealthy congregations would be expected to contribute largely to the Fund, they might supplement their own minister's salary, so as to bring it up to the amount thought adequate respectably to meet the demands of their position. The principle of mutual help is plainly enjoined in the New Testament. There we are told that the strong ought to help the weak; and the command is given, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ," that is, the law of love to the brethren. Now this Sustentation Fund scheme combines this Scriptural principle with another equally Scriptural, "Every man shall bear his own burden." Some look wholly at the one side, and some only at the other. They are two parallel principles which should ever be combined. While the strong should ever be willing to help the weak, the weaker congregations and their pastors cannot reasonably expect to enjoy all the privileges of the strong. It has often taken a long period and very great exertions to arrive at their prosperous state. An equal distribution would be unjust, and contrary to the whole analogy of the divine procedure. I would object even to an equal dividend from a common fund, as the poorer or less liberal congregations would in that case lean too much on their wealthier or more generous neighbors, and thus receive injury to themselves while they inflicted injustice upon others.

UNION.

## CHURCH BUILDING.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN

Sir,—Having been not long ago solicited for a subscription towards the erection of a church building in Manitoba my thoughts were directed towards the subject of a church extension, not as a particular instance, but in its generic character. I had often been visited for subscriptions to similar objects in and out of Canada without giving much attention to the wide-spread necessity that exists for these appeals. But this Manitoba one, like the falling apple to Newton, was the sudden inspiration of a great idea, which I shall presently mention. First, however, let us consider from what cause does the necessity for these recurring appeals arise. Evidently from the vast sudden influx of population in this "large and wide domain" and the consequent poverty of new settlements at first sparsely occupied. However willing, it is impossible that the few settlers in a newly opened district can undertake the work of putting up a comfortable building in which "they that fear the Lord may meet often together," to hear and to tell over again and again "the old, old story of Jesus and his love." Even in large cities, the centres of wealth, as their suburbs extend, it has been found hard enough to provide adequate Church accommodation for church-going people; and how much harder must it be where a few farmers have broken in upon the wilderness to how out for themselves a future home. Nor is it always for themselves that these hardy pioneers toil through the heat and burden of the day in the expectation of surrounding themselves with comfort and independence. Too often do they pass away before this is accomplished, doing nothing more than to put matters in train for the benefit of a succeeding generation. Generally speaking, these forerunners are from places where the ordinances of religion was their blessed privilege and they turn a wistful and longing gaze on the "good old times of yore." The cares and anxieties of their new occupation wear down their energies and the apparent neglect of the church makes them feel like Israel of old in the land of tears where the harps hung upon the willows and their broken hearts could sing no more the songs of Zion. Having scarcely any of the comforts of life these hardy self-expatriated ones have little to give even if they should sacrifice their all; and supposing for a moment they did so, what could they unaided accomplish? Will the church of Christ allow them to die hungering and thirsting for the proclamation of glad tidings of great joy, and trust to a succeeding untrained generation to raise aloft the banner of the Captain of Salvation. Will it not rather try to strengthen their hands and cheer their hearts; and securing the fathers so also secure the children. How shall this most of factually be accomplished? That is the question. From personal connection with the erection of two new churches in Montreal I have shared in the arduous labours involved in collecting subscriptions and borrowing money, to carry out the erection of church buildings and to set the new congregations afloat, in circumstances as easy and comfortable as possible; but the difficulties that have beset every step of the efforts have been exceedingly disheartening. It would appear that even in the matter of the advancement of the cause of Christ the spirit of the world will obstruct officiously and painfully, and when we approach wealthy members of the church for assistance, say, in the shape of a loan, we find them just as

desirous of making it a matter of business, and squeezing the largest amount of commission and interest out of a poor congregation as they would out of some needy commercial applicant.

I find no fault with them at this stage of the argument; it is purely a matter of conscience with the lender but it is too often a matter of necessity with the borrower to accept the assistance on any terms. What I wish to draw attention to is the additional burden in this way thrown upon a weak body re-acting through its difficulties, on the church at large. It seems also to me that it is impossible in this country to erect a church building free of debt. If the congregation is large and flourishing and from any one of a thousand circumstances is driven to a new erection it feels compelled to put up such a large and handsome structure as to be brought into exactly the same position as a small struggling body with its plain impretentious barn-like house. Both go beyond their present available means and carry forward somewhat of a debt.

The drift of my argument, however, is in favor of neglected and poor localities, and I now venture to state my grand idea, throwing it out for the benefit of some of our leading men in the approaching Assembly to take it up and work it into shape, and earn the thanks of the church.

I propose to form as one of the schemes of the Church a "Church Building and Extension Scheme" or fund. That the amount of this fund be raised by subscription, ultimately to the sum of Five Hundred Thousand Dollars. This will take a series of years but a commencement can be made with one fourth part which there will be no difficulty of obtaining if entered on heartily. Suppose the money raised, more or less, I propose to apply it in this manner. Towards the erection of a new building, church or manse, on production of a subscription list of not less than one half of the amount required, I would, out of the said fund, grant an appropriation of the balance, taking a mortgage providing for repayment in instalments extending over, say, from 4 to 5 years, as may be deemed advisable, with interest at the rate of five per cent per annum. Suppose the amount advanced to be ten thousand dollars there would be a direct saving to the congregation of at least three per cent or Three Hundred Dollars per annum, apart from a commission which is generally paid to the procurer of the loan. Is not this itself a great benefit—a second benefit being in the case of procuring the loan itself.

I propose further as a corollary of my scheme that the interest should form no asset of the Fund and should not be added to the principal sum to increase it by accumulation, but I would propose that the interest should belong entirely and wholly to the Home Mission Fund. By this means a weak congregation, or one being in course of formation, could have supply from the Home Mission Committee, the salary of the incumbent being paid by the interest of the money loaned to assist in the erection of the building. I think it will be soon at a glance that in this manner the Church will provide for a building and preacher in a very easy way. But above and beyond all, what a magnificent revenue for our Home Missions is at once put into the hands of the Church. The figures would be, \$500,000 at five per cent—\$25,000 per annum or \$10,000 more than the receipts of the Church, according to the minutes of the Assembly of 1872.

I do not think this is a visionary scheme. Various influential laymen before whose notice it has been brought have decided on its practicability and it is so favourably received that one of our leading Elders promised, if such a thing was adopted, to give a liberal contribution.

In these days, when the church finds Collogos so desirable for producing men, is it not equally desirable to produce the means of erecting buildings in which these men may hold forth the word of truth, and also the means of paying them.

As I have already stated, I throw out this idea hoping some of our prominent men in the approaching Assembly may take it up. I do hope, if not prepared to act on such a scheme at the present time when extraordinary efforts on the behalf of the Colleges are being made, that the Assembly will at least appoint a Committee to consider the subject and report next year, so as to keep it before them.

I am, Sir,

Yours truly,

R.

## THE KEEPING OF EASTER.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN

Sir,—It is surely a new thing to find Presbyterians advocating this, and surely an indefensible thing to symbolize with error. "In vain do ye worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Easter is exalted to a place of divine authority, and those who accept it as entitled to this place sell their liberty of conscience, come in danger of vain worship, and, like a Papist, of putting their necks under a galling yoke, their spirits into fetters. Those who accept it as expedient, symbolize with and aid those who accept it as divine. For this reason alone I would rather observe some other day for religious services; and Presbyterians are mostly called upon, at least once a quarter, to think of Christ crucified and show forth His dying love. "To observe days and months and times and years; I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."

Ro.

May 14, 1873.

## RETIRED MINISTERS.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—I quite agree with your correspondent, "T. B. P.," on the status of ministers without charges, especially as to the very great injustice of dropping from the roll, not only of the Presbytery, but of the whole Church, the names of retired ministers, who have devoted their lives to the service of the Church. Shall a minister, after he has spent his life in most laborious toil, often enduring privation, and weighed down by the heaviest responsibilities on earth, be cast aside and dishonored in his old age, or when disabled by the very excess of his labors? The thing is abhorrent to every right-thinking man's sense of justice and propriety; and I only wonder how any reasonable body of men, much less ministers themselves, could entertain such a proposition for a moment. It is contrary to the practice of both Presbyterian and other churches that allow the names of retired ministers to appear on their list of ministers under that designation.

There is nothing a minister of right feeling cherishes with more tenacity than his right to be considered a minister of the Church, even after he is able to discharge all the heavy duties of the pastorate. In a land like this, where the labors are so heavy, and so little assistance or relief to be had, ministers are likely to be disabled sooner than in Britain, where they have less pressing toil, and far more aid than needed. Is this, then, the kind of encouragement given to hard-working ministers, that ere long they are to be cast aside from the list of Presbyterian ministers, just as though they had been guilty of some crime, and been deposed for it? How can the public know whether this has not been the case when they see a man going about disowned, and thus dishonored, because he is worn out in the service of the Church? Will may we ask, is this the way in which the Canada Presbyterian Church delights to honor those who from childhood have toiled early and late to promote her interests and advance her cause? If the Church should so far forget the first principles of justice and right feeling, she is taking the best method she can to stunt her own growth, and to prevent many high-minded men from placing themselves under such a short-sighted system of miserable retaliation.

But here I am told retired ministers may apply to their Presbytery, and if found worthy, may have their names retained on the roll as an act of grace. This is only adding insult to injury. Shall ministers who have spent their whole lives toiling for the Church have to come on bonded knees before a Presbytery, and ask as a favor that which they are entitled to as a right? Most high-minded men would scorn to stoop to such humiliation. To be judged worthy or contrary by men, many of whom have neither toiled nor sacrificed for the Church a quarter as much as themselves.

To require such a thing I feel would be a grievous humiliation, and it will be so felt by many of the most devoted ministers of the Church.

But I am told that the principle of representation requires each minister on the roll to represent either a congregation, a college, or some public interest. To this I reply representation implies a vote; but we neither ask nor desire anything of the kind for retired ministers. All we ask is to have our names retained on the roll of the Church, and have the privilege of sitting in the Presbytery, not as strangers, by invitation, but as retired ministers without a vote. No difficulty is experienced in this matter by the Churches that do allow the names of retired ministers to remain on their roll. Besides, the way in which the roll from the General Assembly is pushed through several Presbyteries shows all the more the necessity of caution on the part of the General Assembly before adopting such an injurious principle into a regular act. In several cases the roll is brought up when not more than a third or fourth of the ministers are present—when all are wearied with other work; and before they are aware it is pushed through and aside. I trust the General Assembly will pause before enacting a principle as a law of our Church that would inflict grievous wrong upon men who deserve well of the Church, and who have given their hearts and lives to promote the growth of Presbyterianism in the land. If such an act be passed a sense of injustice inflicted on them will be carried to their graves by many who will feel that their earnest and severe toil has been ill-requited. I, in the name of many brethren who think with me, beseech the General Assembly to do justice to all the ministers of our Church in this matter, and not to be carried away by absurd rules to trample on the most sacred and dearly cherished rights and privileges of the ministry.

The Synod of Canada with whom we are negotiating for Union retain the names of retired ministers on their roll, and they are marked as retired in published lists. Let us not adopt a regulation which would have to be rescinded on Union being effected.

JUSTICE.