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Contributors and Correspondents

Proposed Basis of Union.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR—It is very noticeable that the brethren opposed to union on the proposed basis do by far the greater proportion of the writing on the subject, both in your columns and in those of the *Globe*. No sensible person will blame you or your conferees for giving them "room and verge enough" to express their convictions and feelings; but not a few readers desiderate condensation in their communications, and would feel a relief were they a less frequent. It is possible they may suppose that their views prevail in the church, because few comparatively have taken the trouble to reply to their statements. But such an inference from the semi-silence of the friends of Union would, it is believed, be a great mistake. The writer has had opportunities of learning the opinions of not a few ministers and intelligent members of the Church in regard to the arguments put forth, and the stand taken by the anti-unionists, and he finds that anything approaching to sympathy with them is rare indeed. The prevalent feeling seems to be regret, spiced in most cases with not a little blame.

It may be of service, though perchance thanklessly received by some, to indicate the sentiments, freely expressed in private circles, among the sayings and doings of the zealous opponents of Union. That theirs is a zeal not according to knowledge, "and tallies ill with the spirit they are of," is a common persuasion. Their piety is gratefully admitted by all who know them; but it is thought that, in respect to the proposed union, they afford another illustration of the melancholy fact, viz: that eminent Christians sometimes greatly err in judgment and conduct. It is felt that their contention is about a matter which no one denies or doubts in either Church. Christ's headship is an essential article in the creed of both churches. Were it otherwise the idea of union would not be entertained for a single moment. All parties frankly profess their belief in this doctrine: hence it is pertinently asked, why insist that this doctrine occupy a place in the basis, while as regards other doctrines equally essential it is deemed sufficient that they simply have a place in the Confession? No answer to this question has been given or can be given, at all satisfactory, except to the victims of sectarian and party prejudice. It is deemed most uncharitable and even cruel to suspect the sincerity of our brethren of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, yet this is virtually done by doggedly insisting that the doctrine in question have a place in the basis. Is it the interpretation of the doctrines of Christ's headship for which they contend? If so, they have as yet failed to make their interpretation intelligible to many of their intelligent and reflecting readers. And they must know that in their own church there is great variety of opinion as to what does and what does not interfere with Christ's headship. Some of their brethren once held, and perhaps may still hold, that neither State-patrons, nor State-pay, nor the Queen's commissioner presiding in the assemblies of the Church is incompatible with Christ's headship; while other of their brethren always held that each of these is a daring interference with the rights of Zion's King, and with those of His subjects as well. Happily neither State-patrons, nor State-pay, nor State-control obtains in Canada; hence these are harmless theories; hence people are utterly at a loss to find scriptural or even rational ground for the frantic and bitter outcry raised by the anti-unionists. Were they outrageous and intolerant voluntaries who would not admit to their communion fellow-Christians who hold the principle, (without the practice) of an establishment, even in its most modified form, then people could understand them, however much they pitied them. But they get the credit, rightly or wrongly, of being no voluntaries, but the representatives of those excellent men who were wont to wield that ludicrous and laughable logic that attempted to reconcile the *Twenty-third Chapter of the Confession of Faith*, with the headship of Christ and with liberty of conscience, and who were quite willing to continue in the receipt of State-pay, and would not have demurred to the representative of royalty presiding in their assemblies, provided they were allowed to preach and practice as they chose. Secession and disruption were nobly done in vindication of the headship of Christ. But who does not know that both these honored parties had very limited views of that great and wide-branched doctrine compared to those held by the majority of either party now. The scales have been falling from their eyes the while. With present light, other things besides the mere power of interdict, would prompt secession and disruption had these important acts been postponed until to-day. But that which warranted separation and forbids re-union in Scotland, is utterly wanting here. Our anti-union brethren go thirty years back and travel ten degrees north to the latitude of old Scotia for their cause of quarrel and their weapons of warfare, and fight with a shadow, thus trying to retard the coalescence of two sister Churches righteously sighing for union. They are much blamed for raking up the ashes of the past, and attempting to revive those embittered feelings engendered in disruption days; and the conviction is felt that, unlike their brethren in both Churches, they have made no progress in liberality of sentiment and Christian charity during the intervening years. A heavy responsibility rests on those who strive to prevent the unification of the several households of faith, where the causes of severance and the obstacles of re-union no longer exist. The foes of union appear to court martyrdom, having "nailed their colors to the mast," and published thus early what many believe to be a blind and bragging word of bravery. Should they carry out

their threat, it is remarked that they cannot expect their future as a body to differ widely from the experience of those sects that have separated themselves for mere shades of sentiment, or at least for the mere parings of principle. Witness the non-progress and anon the warning of the Old Light's, Dr McCrie's party, the Protesters, &c. It requires a distinct and vital principle to secure progression or even prolonged existence to a religious sect. Should our brethren really immolate themselves it will be for a feeling rather than for a principle, as they will carry with them no scriptural principle that their discarded brethren will not hold with them in common. The Christian people of Canada, or of any where else, will never be able to discover more than a "distinction without a difference," in regard to the doctrine of Christ's headship as held by the separatists and by the united Church.

Much prayer should be presented by all concerned, that the union, which duty imperatively demands, may be a whole and cordial work. Let everything be done that can be done, without sacrificing principle or humiliating either party, so that the churches may not have to mourn a breach amid the joy of union. Might we not unite on the basis of the Confession, as did the American Churches? Or would it satisfy our opposing brethren were the Act of Independence incorporated in the basis? May the Lord give wisdom, and impart to all a spirit of forbearance and love.

AUDITOR ET TESTATOR.

Ontario, 13th Dec., 1873.

A Plea for Evangelistic Services.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—Allow me a brief space very earnestly to invite the attention of brethren in the ministry and out of it to this important subject.

The nature and object of these services is now so well understood as hardly to require explanation. They are simply a series of continuous preachings of the Gospel, very prayerfully and pointedly, from night to night, followed by an after-meeting for prayer and personal dealing with inquirers.

I. They supply a want, felt both by ministers and people. They afford to the former what all earnest soul-seekers must desire, the opportunity of prolonging the attack upon the strongholds of the enemy, and getting into close quarters with him. Who has not wished, after preaching a rousing sermon, to have a few moments' conversation and prayer with some of his hearers, that he might, perchance, roll away the stone from their prison-tomb or strip off their grave clothes and set them free.

(2.) The people in many places and cases greatly need such stirring up to banish formalism and coldness, and desire it, too, for spiritual refreshment and the removal of doubts and fears and difficulties.

II. All other Evangelical Churches are adopting them, including the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland, England, Ireland and the United States. Their value as an aid to the ordinary ministrations of the Church is becoming fully recognized abroad. Why not among us?

III. If we do not this work, others will. This has already been found, to our no small shame and loss in some parts of the country, and there is every reason to believe it will be still worse in the future. As a Presbyterian, I wish the prosperity of our beloved Zion, and would rather see the work done "decently and in order," within our own Church system, than by Plymouthists or Evangelists, who own no Church allegiance, however earnest and evangelical such men may be, to the detriment of peace and harmony among our congregations. We would do well to ponder the words of Arnot, of Edinburgh, in regard to this great movement of the day. Quoted from memory they are much as follows: "If a minister be a dry stick in the mud, the rising tide will soon cover him up, but if he be a true boat (a vessel meet for the Master's use), he will float and rise with the rising waters."

IV. Now is a good time to begin. We do not need to wait the action of Synod and Assembly, though that is most desirable for the direction of such work where it does not spontaneously originate. But, as the season of evening meetings is advancing, at once bring the matter before the session and arrange for the meetings in connection with the next communion season, or most appropriately to follow the Week of Prayer.

V. May not this be the very thing needed to save our young people from the evils complained of by a recent correspondent, and bring them to Christ and the Church?

VI. Can any one tell us what has become of the Assembly's Committee on Evangelization appointed so long ago?

VII. A few suggestive notes of counsel and encouragement from those who have had experience of these meetings would be acceptable, I think, to many of your readers, and certainly to

A LOVER OF THE WORK.

Dec. 15, 1873.

A Suggestion.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—I beg to enclose my subscription for your paper for 1874. I hope you are meeting with that success which your enterprise so well deserves. It is of great importance to our Church to have an opportunity of knowing the sentiment of our ministers and elders upon the religious questions of the day, and particularly on the contemplated Union. The objections of Mr. McTavish and other worthy men, who have so plainly and honestly stated their difficulties in accepting the basis in its present condition, cannot be lightly set aside.

I can sympathize with them in their opinion that the "Act of Independence" may possibly be construed so as to appear to stultify their position at the Disruption of 1844; but knowing something of the History of the Church of Scotland, and believing that that history reveals an almost uninterrupted struggle for the liberties of the people and for the Headship of Christ, I cannot for a moment doubt that our friends in this country in connection with that Church hold that great principle as strongly as we do, and even at the great Disruption in 1844, the wrong application of the principle of the Headship could alone be imputed to that Church, although followed by such serious but justifiable consequences. Now, allowing that the Church of Scotland did not at that time cling with sufficient tenacity to the great doctrine of the Headship, and the voice of a large majority of the people of Scotland most unmistakably proclaimed that fact, still, not only thirty years' experience of the working of the Presbyterian system in Canada, must lead to the conclusion that in the present day, by universal consent, Christ is the only Head of His own Church, and circumstances are not likely ever to arise here to create a doubt about that principle. In the meantime, if I could venture a suggestion, I would respectfully say to the Joint Committees, Withdraw from the basis the "Act of Independence," and substitute the "Confession of Faith," which is acknowledged to be in harmony with the "Law and the Testimony," and which has done such good service to the cause of Presbyterianism in times past.

I am, sir, yours truly,

A FRIEND OF UNION.

Whitby, Dec. 16th, 1873.

A Correction.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—Will you allow me to correct a notable blunder that was made in transferring the remarks I sent you lately on the Union Question, to the PRESBYTERIAN. I have noticed other errors, but as they are trivial and easily accounted for, I pass them by. I refer specially to the sentence under the second particular, that reads thus: "I have often wondered if those who are satisfied with this have ever read the *Seven Notes*." I wish whoever put in the two last words had told us where these Notes are to be found, that we might all read them and be edified by them. But as I certainly did not intend to write them, and hope I did not write them, I don't hold myself responsible for the mystery that hangs about them. I think the sentence in my manuscript will be found to read thus: "I have often wondered if those who are satisfied with this have ever read our protest, &c. I was led to make this allusion to the protest of 1844, by finding the following sentence under the fifth of the reasons on which it was founded, and by which it was justified; a sentence which some aspects of the case even now make worthy of particular attention and consideration. It reads as follows:

"That they have rendered the relation in which they stand towards the Established Church of Scotland, so doubtful and equivocal that even their declaration of spiritual independence is necessarily deprived of all significance and weight."

D. McMILLAN.

Dec 11th, 1873.

Increased Liberality Desirable.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—Much has been said and written about the Basis of Union and the relation of the Chief Magistrate to the Church; and the arguments have been spun out so fine that many untutored minds like mine have been unable to follow them. Some have been obliged to give up, content to believe that the Presbyterian form of worship approaches nearer the Scriptural and primitive mode than any other. One thing, however, in the practice of some of our rural and village congregations needs reformation, namely, the Sabbath collections. Is it right to see men in the prime of life, able to earn from six to twelve dollars a week, cast a cent or two into the treasury as a Sabbath offering?

But the example is too often set by prominent members and even elders of the Church, and men who have broad acres and well-filled barns. Surely in such cases the cent is but a mock offering! It is time that the coppers were left for the children, and those who cannot earn to give; and congregational managers will be enabled to meet their increasing liabilities at the year's end.

Truly yours,

A CONSTANT READER.

The Inexpediency of Insisting so much on the Headship of Christ in Connection with Union.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—It is not my wish to enter into the controversy which has been going on for some time in your valuable paper. Indeed I have not had leisure to read all the articles which have appeared on the subject of Union; and I do not wish to write a reply to any of them. Permit me just to say a few words on the inexpediency of insisting so much on the Headship of Christ in this connexion:—

1st. It is not called for at this particular juncture. We must either believe or not believe the sentiments of the brethren of the sister Church, as set forth in the Act of Independence. If we do not believe them, it is not easy to see how expressing them in different words or inserting them in the basis would make them more credible. If we do believe them, then they are substantially the same as our own. We may thus feel confident that if the question were to assume a practical aspect in this country, we would be able to unite in formulating such a declaration as might be required in the circumstances. So that at present we may be content with the statements on this point in the Confession of Faith.

The doctrine of the Headship of Christ was one which had to be contended for at the time of the Disruption; but it is not forced into the same prominence now. The truths which have mainly to be contended for now, are the existence of a Personal God, the Inspiration of Scripture, and the Divinity of our Blessed Lord. It is at these particular points the citadel of truth is attacked, and not the other.

There is no probability that there ever will be any serious attempt to introduce Erastianism into the Presbyterian Church in this country. The whole tone of public sentiment is against it. Indeed, this is rather an age of dis-establishing churches than encroaching on their liberties. And if churches are dis-established, the civil magistrate will not seek to encroach on their spiritual independence; and Christian people will not tolerate such encroachment, or anything approaching to it. It is greatly to be feared that some theory of the desirableness of connexion between Church and State, and some apprehension of the dangers naturally arising out of such connexion to the Church's independence, lie at the root of the anxiety in reference to Erastianism. But if such connexion be one of the legitimate consequences flowing from the doctrine of the Headship as held by some of the brethren in our Church, then it is plain that the enforcing of their view would effect a disruption in the Canada Presbyterian Church, and resolve it into its original elements.

2nd. It is not kind to the brethren of the sister Church to insist with such emphasis on the Headship, especially as we profess to be satisfied with the soundness of their views. It conveys to their minds the idea that we do not trust them, and consequently that there is a want of that Christian confidence and affection which are needed to make Union desirable, and also a source of strength and comfort. It is unkind, too, to seek to revive the bitter feeling which characterized the disruption controversy; especially as there is no apology for it at present. Many things have been said on both sides in the heat of controversy which should now be forgotten. Besides, the brethren of the Sister Church are more entitled to have their feelings respected in this matter by us than we are to have our feelings respected by them. They were one of the conflicting parties at the time of the disruption; but the Canada Presbyterian Church never was; it had then no existence. They have thus, as a body, a historical connexion with that controversy, which we have not.

3rd. The brethren who are opposing the Union at present are doing injury to themselves. They are pursuing a course which will inevitably lead to their secession from the Canada Presbyterian Church. This is most unwise, even so far as they are personally concerned. Were they to remain in the Church, they could record their dissent from what they disapprove of. They would also have much legitimate influence in guiding the church in what they consider the right direction. But if they leave the Church they will destroy their influence for good, not only in the Church but also in the country. They cannot revive the disruption controversy. If they had the State for their antagonist as their fathers had, they could do a great deal. But as they will have nothing practical to contend against, they will not be able to carry on war. Their action, if they split the Church, never will commend itself to the Canadian people. They will not be able to make Canadians understand their neo-speculative distinctions. Their secession will be a practical failure. The course they are pursuing is purely judicial. It is simply preposterous to think that they will make martyrs of themselves. No stretch of imagination could make them such.

4th. The conduct of these brethren is doing injury to religion. They are generating ill feeling which will take a long time to subside. They are gratifying those who are opposed to Presbyterianism. They are preventing the consolidation and extension of the Presbyterian Church, and impairing its influence for good. They are gratifying those who are hostile to the precious and living truths, which are the basis of our fellowship, and which are equally dear to us all. They are also doing injury to their own minds. It is sad to think of most excellent men husbanding their strength and nursing their wrath to fight with their own dear brethren, and needlessly to rend the Church. Tell it not in Gath!

Yours, &c.,

"SOMEBODY."

Causes of Vacancies.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—I am glad to notice the improved tone and friendly disposition indicated by the Country Elder in his letter of the 7th ult. He acknowledges with commendable candour, if I mistake not, that I was not far wrong in what I said, and had he stopped there, I certainly would have concluded that he changed his crooked gun for a straight one. This, however, he did not do. His improved tone and temper he would fain represent as forbearance on his part towards misapprehensions or omissions on my side. He thinks I make far too little of "wily proselytizers" in considering the "causes of vacancies." To quote his own language, he says that proselytizing "has disgraced the Presbyterian Church," &c. This is certainly strong language, and a serious charge. One also for which, I confess, I was not prepared; for little did I expect to hear, that either, offensively or defensively, proselytizing was the "disgrace of the Presbyterian Church." I did not know which mode he meant. However, as the subject of debate is, "the causes of vacancies," I conclude it is the latter. And as he referred me to the Report of the last Assembly on the State of Religion for confirmation of his statements, I hastened to peruse that document. But the perusal seems to convince me that the "Country Elder" has mistaken again a crooked gun for a straight one. For in the report I find (1) that there is no reference, whatever, to "the causes of vacancies;" (2) that, speaking of the hindrances to vital religion, only one or two causes are mentioned as injurious; and (3) that a session reports in that immediate connection, as if referring to these very cases, and says, "that so far as the number of proselytes made, (by such means) was concerned, their success was very small." Can I then say politely to the "Country Elder," that that report, which he referred to me, does not convince me that proselytizing is the disgrace of the Presbyterian Church, or any essential element in the "causes of vacancies." But the "Country Elder" further says, "if I am not satisfied with the proof afforded by the Report, that I can get his name from you, Mr. Elder, and that he will furnish me with convincing evidence." Thanks to the "country elder" for his offer. But "in vain is the snare laid in the sight of any bird." It is not his name I want but his facts. On no account will I agree to reduce this correspondence to a private character. The "Country Elder" gave publicity to the world what might be well regarded, from his point of view, as an index to the "causes of vacancies." Without imputing motives, or giving any abuse, I have joined issue with him in one point. And in the same way I am ready to join issue with him on every point stated in his letter. Such a correspondence is needed and may do much good. The Bible says much about such matters. Money has more to do with the peace and prosperity of the Church than I fear the "Country Elder" took into account. Congregations are the paymasters of God, and ministers are their servants. As it is true, indeed, that the stipend is a sacred "hire" and a sacrifice on God's altar, and as it is to be given not as unto men, but as unto God. But, nevertheless, we with sorrow maintain that negligence on this point is one of the most frequent "causes of vacancies." I have already asked the "Country Elder," to give us a "Bill of Larceny" such as he considers adequate for a minister in charge of a congregation; and I trust it will soon appear in your paper. I have further to call his attention to the excellent state of matters existing in the congregation of Walkerton, as reported in your paper of Oct. 17th, where it is said that the "congregation have increased the stipend five different times," or every other year "beginning with \$266, and advancing it last winter to \$800 per year." This is another example of what "monetary consideration" can do. There has been no vacancy in this congregation for sixteen years. Will the "Country Elder" tell us how many of the vacant congregations, whose state he deprecates, have acted like the congregation of Walkerton, not only paying the nominal salary, but also, as promised in the call, or bargain with the minister, "adding to it," from year to year "as the Lord prospered them." This is the kind of proof I want from the "Country Elder."

ANOTHER ELDER.

Presbyterian Missions.

The annual Missionary Meeting of the Presbyterian congregation was held in the church, on Monday evening last, the 8th inst. The night turned out very dark and rainy, yet there was a good gathering, and no lack of interest and enthusiasm. Mayor Allan occupied the chair, and opened the proceedings with some very appropriate remarks. Excellent addresses were delivered by the Rev's Messrs Boyd, Demoreville; Clement, Piston; and Burton, of Belleville, as well as by Mr. Walter Macenzie, Superintendent of the Presbyterian Sabbath School. The choir rendered several beautiful hymns and anthems at intervals, which were greatly appreciated. After a collection and subscription had been taken, amounting to \$92.00, the successful meeting was brought to a close at 10 o'clock, the Rev. Mr. Clement pronouncing the benediction.—*Piston Gazette*.

Nine hundred and ninety-three missionaries were employed last year by the American Presbyterian Home Mission Board, at average salaries of \$275. This was supplemented by people on the home field, but it shows that the missionaries are working largely by faith, and not by sight.