

Correspondence.

SHALL WE BE A CHRISTIAN NATION?

The papers have recently contained the proceedings of a meeting of "The National Association for the Amendment of the Constitution of the United States." The amendment proposed is a recognition of Christianity in the preamble, in terms substantially as follows: "Humbly acknowledging Almighty God as the source of all authority and power in civil government; the Lord Jesus Christ as the governor among the nations; and his Revealed Will as of supreme authority." &c.

This movement comes none too soon. Those are blind to the course of events who fail to see that our nation must bind itself fast to the throne of Heaven, or it must share the fate of all those past which forgot the Rock whence they were hewn. This is true, let present disturbances turn out as they will. The crushing of the rebellion, with the subjugation of the revolting States, will leave upon our hands new and untried questions in government, which will give to political corruption and party madness such scope as it never had before. It will be but the "beginning of the end," either for bad or good.

Any of the other conceivable alternatives—the return of the revolted States to their allegiance, compromise with or without separation, or forced separation without compromise—will leave to us the same legacy of conflict and peril. The conflict of arms we hope will soon be over. But then comes the great political conflict which is almost inevitable when the American people come face to face with that one word, so easily spoken, but so fearful in the grapple—Reconstruction.

We have fully reached the point where only God can save us. The man who does not believe this, is more than an unbeliever in a Divine Providence over nations: he is the enemy of the peace and the existence of this nation. Let the bearing of the religious sentiment of the people upon the no distant destiny of this republic be taken into the account, and there will be found no blacker traitor than the man who, in this hour of turbulence and peril, would leave us loose from God.

Are we now a Christian nation? We are fast settling this question now. The records, incidents and acts which in the aggregate will determine it, do not come along slow, quiet and with little observation, as they used to do. They follow each other like peals of thunder from the cloud; they roll down upon us like mountain avalanches. On the one hand are congressional recommendations of public humiliation before Heaven, and solemn supplications for the help of God, presidential proclamations for national thanksgivings or fasts, as the case may require, and also the fact that the nation never before manifested such a sense of the services of its Christian people, ministers and churches, and never before turned so distinctly to them for help. On the other hand, our highest legislature sets its foot on the Sabbath, and our capital reeks with immorality. Like our great martial struggle, this strife has its tides, and the result is in abeyance.

To become merely a God-confessing nation will not meet the requisitions of the hour. We expect God to accept no homage, not even a whole nation's homage, in which all recognition of his Son Jesus, the Divine Redeemer for a lost world, is studiously left out. We shall be answered only in wrath, if the same service which prays to God purposely ignores Christ, our only approach to the throne of Heaven. There was a painful omission in those late congressional resolutions which requested the President to appoint a day of national humiliation. In all other respects they met the case. They were a model—all which the Christian heart could desire—except that there was no Christ in them. They forget that God can never be ours, except as Christ is ours.

It will be just as gross a blunder to pass over the Holy Scriptures as God's only written rule for human conduct, the only divine guide of Rulers in the helm of state, as well as people in their common conduct.

It is an interesting fact, and one deeply significant for our wisdom now, that Christianity—not alone divine worship, but Christianity as revealed in the Bible, and with the Bible in company—has been the life of all civilization and every improvement in national government, from the days of Christ down. It has attached itself to the most brilliant races of mankind, has gone with them to their conquests, and breathed its spirit into every empire which they have founded. Atheism scorning God, Deism and Judaism casting off Christ, infidelity trampling on the Bible—are without a national record in the whole

Christian era. There is not one step of human liberty up which they have lifted the world; not one nation which they have brought into life, and not an impending peril to civilization, to political rights, or to national existence, which they have averted. In all these achievements the services of Christianity have been alert, continuous and distinguished.

It is another interesting fact that this continent, on the instant of its discovery, was solemnly given to Christ. We have not the history at this moment before us, but if we are not mistaken it will be found that Columbus, when his foot first touched the shore of this new world, took possession of it in the name of the sovereigns of Spain, and for the spread of the Christian religion. Certain it is, the Cross was planted side by side with the standard of sovereignty. The leading settlements in what is now our republic were eminently Christian in their origin.

Why Christianity has been so long left out from our national instruments and symbols, has been the problem of the civilized world, friends and enemies alike. Its omission from the Constitution in the beginning has sometimes been attributed to oversight. We know not how far this apology should be modified by the transient popularity of French infidelity among portions of our people, one or more eminent statesmen included, just at that moment.

The difficulties which will meet us in our attempt to give it place in our organic law at this late day, are easily apprehended. They will not consist in the want of conviction on the part of the majority of our people, that it ought to be there. We believe the great heart of the nation is sound, if it can be brought into action. We are persuaded that the bulk of our population would, at this moment, be horrified by a direct proposal to eliminate Christianity from our government. Why then should they be slow to let it in, and to give it the formal distinct recognition which it has not here, but which it enjoys in every other enlightened government under Heaven?

The whole trouble will be with a small, turbulent, clamorous and God-hating minority, who will frighten politicians by talking of the balance of power, and carry points, as they have long been accustomed to do, by playing upon the necessities of political parties. While legislators are plied with the fallacy that a national confession of Christ will infringe the rights of the Israelites, or that a public recognition of the Holy Scriptures as the law for rulers, will be a mortal offence to infidels, or that any recognition of religion by the nation will be an entering wedge for a "Church and State" project, there is much to fear so long as our present habits respecting the choice of rulers prevails.

We have heard this senseless clamor about "Church and State" before. It is an old stager—a foggy of the foggiest kind. We remember when the nation gave up her Sabbath, in awe of its terrors. Men wanted principle—not so much principle of mind as of conduct. Good men wanted nerve: that was all. If they have it now, we can become a Christian nation, and God will be with us in all our troubles present and to come. If, in this crisis hour, we fail here, we must expect—God spare us the thought of what! B. B. H.

THOMAS CHALMERS.

THE APOSTLE OF CITY MISSIONS—IV.

A NEW PARISH IN GLASGOW.

After four years of effort in the Tron Church, a new field was opened to the great reformer in the same city of Glasgow. Many prejudices and inveterate customs hindered the freedom of his movements for the evangelization of the people in the old parish. A new church was erected and a new parish constituted by the magistrates and council of Glasgow; the edifice was larger and the population in a far more degraded condition than in the parish of Tron Church, but these were only additional attractions to one with the aims and the energy of Chalmers, when it was understood that the ordering of all the instrumentalities for the elevation of the people from the beginning would be committed exclusively to himself. He especially wished the customary official methods of relieving the poor, which were calculated to perpetuate their dependence and destroy their manliness, to be abolished, and the whole work of dealing with the pauperism of the parish to be put upon an evangelical basis and left to the church without interference from the civil authorities.

While these negotiations were in progress, he was urged to allow his name to be used as a candidate for the chair of natural philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, made vacant by

the death of the distinguished Professor Playfair. This invitation must have appealed to the literary ambition of Dr. Chalmers in its most susceptible spot. He had been an enthusiastic student of the higher mathematics. At the same time, the dream of his youthful ambition was one day to occupy the very position now offered him in his mature years. It was for these objects that he slighted so lamentably his parochial duties during the first part of his pastorate at Kilmany; for this he gave to the work of the ministry but two days of the week, reserving the rest for the studies and aims that occupied his mind.

In a speech on the floor of the General Assembly in 1825, he thus referred to a pamphlet which he had issued in defence of his course, but which now he repented of as a serious crime:

As far back as twenty years ago, I was ambitious enough to aspire to be successor to Professor Playfair, in the mathematical chair of the University of Edinburgh. During the discussions that then took place, it was stated that no person could be found competent to discharge the duties of the mathematical chair, among the clergymen of the church of Scotland. I was at that time, sir, more devoted to mathematics than to the literature of my profession, and, feeling grieved and indignant at what I conceived an undue reflection on the abilities and education of our clergy, I came forward with that pamphlet to rescue them from what I deemed an unmerited reproach; by maintaining that a devoted and exclusive attention to the study of the mathematics was not dissonant to the proper habits of a clergyman.

But how marvellous the change! The opportunity for scientific and worldly distinction and for gratifying his intense scientific tastes, which had been the day dream of his youth, arrived; Professor Playfair's chair was in his reach. But it was no longer the reluctant, unawakened pastor of Kilmany that was approached; it was a Christian man whose soul had been directed to two magnitudes, which, as he said in the same speech, he had hitherto forgotten—the littleness of time; the greatness of eternity. It was a soul enkindled by a nobler ambition than that of scientific distinction; inspired with great schemes for the elevation of the degraded and lost; grasping with strong and clear conviction the divine and admirable fitness of the gospel as a reformatory power for the masses, and confident of the broadest and best results in the energetic use of the great evangelical instrumentality. Like his divine Master, beholding the multitude, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.

Thus, the difficulties in the way of his plans of reformation having been disposed, this candidate for the high honors of Professor Playfair's chair accepted the charge of the Free Parish of St. John's—the very poorest parish of Glasgow. Weavers, laborers, factory workers, and other operatives made up the bulk of the ten thousand souls comprising the population. Into this dense mass of ignorance, vice and degradation, this fine scholar and unrivalled pulpit orator plunged, confidently bearing the sole provision of the gospel for its renovation and redemption. This was in the year 1819. Not to dwell upon his large and wise educational measures, which were eminently necessary and successful, we turn to his elaborate scheme for reaching all the families of the parish with religious instruction. It will be seen that Dr. Chalmers' active nature communicated itself to others. He had a most happy faculty of setting others to work in execution of his plans. Says Dr. Wayland in his memoirs:

The entire parish was divided into twenty-five districts, called proportions, each embracing from sixty to one hundred families. Reviving the ancient order of deacons, which, in the Scottish Presbyterian practice, had long fallen into disuse, Dr. Chalmers appointed over each of these districts an elder and a deacon; the spiritual interests of his proportion being committed to the elder, and its temporal interests to the deacon. In each district one or more Sabbath schools were established, male and female teachers to the number of between forty and fifty being engaged in this work, while a few classes were opened for the adult population. There were the ordinary meetings of the Kirk session, the monthly meetings of the deacons and of the Sabbath school teachers, monthly meetings in the church for missionary purposes, and frequent meetings of the Educational Association, all of which Dr. Chalmers regularly and punctually attended. He was himself the soul and spirit of almost every movement, but there was no desire on his part to dictate and no assumption of superiority. "Our meetings," says one of his elders, looking back over thirty years, "were very delightful. I never saw any set of men who were so animated by one spirit, and whose zeal was so uniformly sustained. The Doctor was the very life of the whole, and every one felt himself led on by him, committed to use his whole strength in the cause of that God who had in his

mercy sent us such a leader." He was continually receiving reports from every quarter, and answering by notes tending to quicken and animate the soul of every laborer. But this was not enough. Every Monday morning at his house there was an agency breakfast, to which a general invitation was issued, at which from six to eight of his elders, deacons, or Sabbath school teachers were present. He gave also special invitations to tea; so that most of his agents visited at his house once in six weeks.

Dr. C. completed his round of visitation among the families of the parish in two years. His manner of visiting was the same as before. After a short visit to the family, his companion invited them all to attend preaching in some school house or private house or other convenient room in the vicinity. Much greater pains, however, were now taken, by himself and his parochial agents, to secure a large attendance at the evening addresses, by which these forenoon visitations were followed up. The success justified the effort. Multitudes who otherwise would never have had the offer of divine mercy addressed to them, were brought within the sound of the preacher's voice. These local, weekday, undress congregations, assembled in a cotton mill or the workshop of a mechanic, or the kitchen of some kind and accommodating neighbor, with their picturesque exhibition of greasy jackets and unwashed countenances and hands all soiled and fresh from labor, turning up the pages of unused Bibles, had a special charm for Dr. Chalmers, and, all amidst the peculiar interest and urgency of such opportunities, he stirred up every gift that was in him, while he urged upon the consciences of his hearers the high claims of the Christian salvation. Many ministers, if they were willing at all to address such audiences, would satisfy themselves with giving them an unpremeditated exhortation, which they too properly would speak of as merely a talk. Dr. Chalmers did not so look upon the matter. He knew that these were immortal souls for whom Christ died. His chosen and beloved friend, Mr. Collins, who often accompanied him to these evening meetings, gave his reiterated and emphatic testimony, that no bursts of that oratory which rolled over admiring thousands in the Tron Church or St. John's, ever equalled, in all the highest qualities of eloquence, many of these premeditated and unwritten addresses, in which, free from all restraint, and intent upon the one object of winning souls to the Saviour, that heart, which glowed with such intense desires for the present and eternal welfare of the working classes, unobscured in the midst of them all the fullness of its Christian sympathies.

It was in this manner that he labored to preach the gospel in the parish of St. John's. It did not satisfy him that thousands attended his church on the Sabbath-day, listening in rapt admiration to eloquence such as nowhere else was heard in Christendom. These were but a small portion of the parish of St. John's. By far the greater part were ignorant of the gospel, and had never heard of the way of salvation. He turned to these with his whole heart, he entered all their dwellings, he gathered them in school houses, factories, kitchens, wherever he could find an audience room, he engaged Christians to aid him in his work, many of whom were his own children in the faith, and he was not satisfied until the darkest places in St. John's parish were illuminated with the knowledge of salvation.

REV. SAMUEL WHITE.

Rev. Samuel White was born October 12th, 1791, at Randolph, Mass. He entered college (Dartmouth, N. H.) at the age of 17, and graduated at 21. His mind at first inclined to the study of medicine, for the practice of which he at once commenced to prepare himself, but after pursuing the requisite studies for the space of two years, his attention was turned by the hand of Divine Providence in the direction of the gospel ministry. In his preparation for this he enjoyed the advantages of the Theological Seminary at Andover, Mass., being favored with the personal instructions of Professor Stuart, Dr. Wood, and others associated with them. After finishing a regular course at this institution, he spent several years in the exercise of his ministry in the immediate neighborhood of his birth-place, and in other parts of the New-England States, thence removing to Central New York, where he engaged in academical instructions for a term of years, spending his Sabbaths in supplying feeble and vacant churches in the immediate vicinity. In the summer of 1824 he removed to the town of Starkey, Yates county, where he engaged in supplying the feeble churches of that and the adjoining towns, and in 1826 was married to Henrietta Taylor, of Starkey.

His experience, in respect to support in the discharge of his ministerial duties, was that of many others who are the pioneers of our country; he was obliged to eke out a drizzling and precarious income by cultivating a farm. His labors at Pultney, to which place he removed in 1831, were signally owned by the Great Head of the church, in a most precious revival, a work which added to the church more than seventy souls in a short period. He afterwards labored successively in the church of Havana and in that of Tyrone; after which he removed to Ovid, taking charge of the flourishing academy in that place for the space of two years, returning to

Pultney, where he had previously been so highly favored, and where he labored nine years. His health now failing him, he returned to his farm, and served for a few years a feeble church at Rock Stream, in the neighborhood of his residence. At the age of 63 his increasing infirmities forbade his attempting the further discharge of those duties to which he had devoted so large a portion of his life, and he accordingly left the pulpit to return not thither again. The disease with which he had struggled for years was of a chronic as well as organic nature, and it continued to increase as he advanced in years, till on the 9th of June, 1864, he passed from earth and friends below to heaven and friends above.

His self-denying and arduous labors among those feeble churches, together with the necessity he found for the practice of the most rigid economy in matters of living, cultivated his otherwise natural endowments in this direction, till, in the language of a surviving friend, "he seemed to understand almost everything that pertained to the science of living." He made it an invariable rule of life never to dispute, never to contend. The writer was conversing with him, a few days previous to his death, on the subject of his religious exercises, in view of his approaching end. While he exhibited the clearest evidence of his conscious unworthiness, and seemed penetrated with a sense of his unprofitableness in the vineyard of our common Lord and Master, he made no attempt to represent either, in that extravagant manner which we often hear. He spoke of his family with great calmness, as if satisfied they would be taken care of by Him who had said, "Leave thy fatherless children with me." "The world," he said, "years ago had ceased to engage his attention." He was anxious to look once more upon a beloved son, a missionary in India, "but, if God designed that he should not, he could acquiesce."

He was eminently social in his habits, kind in his feelings, both in his family and toward all mankind. Though he had spent much of his life in labors and watchings with men who were little accustomed to the discussions of subjects which lie remote from the centres of common experience, yet he always succeeded in directing conversation into a most profitable channel, made it easy for all, and seldom failed to benefit those with whom he conversed. He expressed, on one or two occasions, a strong desire to remain till this fearful national struggle should be terminated, since, in his estimation, it was to be a most important event in the line of this world's progress and true prosperity—a kind of earnest of the universal triumph of civil and religious liberty everywhere.

THE RELIGIOUS PRESS ON THE NEW LEVY.

The public have come to regard the religious sentiment of the country as generally so true and sustaining to the government in its time of trial, and the religious influence as such an element of strength, that it becomes a matter of interest to watch the spirit of the religious press on the recent call for half a million additional troops. Our readers will be pleased to see a few extracts in point. The Evangelist says:

The call for half a million additional volunteers does not take the country by surprise, for it has been evident for some time that our armies already in the field were about matched by the rebels in point of numbers, and it was generally felt that our forces must be greatly augmented to prosecute further an aggressive warfare, such as we are obliged to wage in order to recover our territory. Much remains to be done notwithstanding the good progress already made, and the people now more than ever feel that the work ought to be made "short and sharp," in a word, war in earnest, such as will necessarily tax the resources of the entire loyal portion of the republic in men and means. Short of this great price we are not again to enter into the possession of our glorious country, with peace smiling throughout all our borders. The test of our worthiness to hold and transmit such a boon to our children, is upon us. The Christian Intelligencer meets the demand in the same spirit. It says:

The President of the United States has issued a proclamation, calling for 500,000 more men. This call has been expected and ought to be answered promptly and patriotically. All the men needed for the suppression of the rebellion should be, and must be, furnished. Let every effort be used to promote volunteering in town and country, and the ultimate draft will be light. The New York Observer of the 21st does not, like others of the same date, contain the announcement of the Proclamation. But in evident anticipation of it, the following out-spoken terms are used:

We speak with earnest love for the country and the cause, and in the strongest hope that we may be able to say a word that shall help in saving the country in the hour of its peril. And that word is this: we have never

yet risen up to the greatnees of the war which was forced upon us by the rebellion. From the first call for 75,000 men and the promise that the rebellion would be put down in ninety days, up to the present moment, we have underestimated the ability, resources, endurance and spirit of the rebellion, and equally overrated our own. In consequence of these fatal misconceptions, we have been constantly flattering ourselves that this campaign would close the war, that this measure or that measure would be a death-blow to the rebellion, and that the country would soon be restored to union and peace. We have miscalculated the difficulties to be overcome, and now it is the diotates of patriotism and humanity to summon the Government to rise up to the greatness of the occasion and act as becomes a people, mighty in its resources and engaged in a struggle on which depends the question of free government in all the earth. Before us there are two and only two roads; one leads to victory and the other to national disruption and ruin. If the road to victory is still open, then by all means let it be taken speedily for the longer it is delayed the nearer we come to the abyss into which the other will plunge us. Our firm persuasion is that it is in the power of the American people to bring this war to a close before next winter on terms that will secure union, and honor, and prosperity. But the first step to that restoration is the overthrow of the military power of the rebellion. To do the work we would instantly call into service every officer now idle, every soldier now absent from his post, we would fill up the depleted regiments and form new ones by draft, and by sending a new army of a hundred thousand men under a tried and trusted general to the relief of Grant, we would scatter the forces of Lee, and then through Eastern Tennessee, we would operate upon the Southern States still holding out in rebellion. We must conquer or perish. But we shall not conquer unless we come up to the magnitude of the work before us, and meet, as men, the emergency of the hour.

The Independent, while loading the government with reproaches for suffering the last invasion, publishes the call without a word of approbation, or comment of any kind.

The N. Y. Christian Times, (Episcopal) has the following:

And now this week brings us the music of another act, "done at Washington," whereby 500,000 men are summoned to arms, within fifty days. Here we have something earnest. Had the figure five been a two or even a three it would not have been so real a "call to arms." The last struggles of the wounded panther, they say, requires the greatest care and strength of the hunter; and the Southern panther, growing and struggling so furiously, require special care and extra strength from us. And the people mean that might shall not be wanting. Will you think for one moment, what even one hundred thousand additional men could do for Grant and Sherman? And if not one but five hundred thousand men could march forth to Grant, Sherman, Mobile, Charleston, where would the "armies of the Confederacy" find themselves?

The President comes in at a turning point in this war, and makes a call which is terribly in earnest, and if you respond in like earnestness, the rebel will soon find us too earnest for them and the war is over. I am happy to record that, so far as personal observation goes, our streets and the beat of the drum bespeak attention to the proclamation, and we, as a city, are daily visibly diminishing our quota.

A NEW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN WESTMINSTER.

The friends of Presbyterianism in England will be glad to learn that arrangements are in progress for the erection in Westminster of a Presbyterian Church. We may state briefly that an admirable freehold site has been secured for this purpose in Victoria street, about five minutes' walk from the Abbey and embracing within the radius of a mile Piccadilly, Charing Cross, and Westminster proper, besides considerable portions of Belgrave and Cambreth. It will impart additional interest to this announcement to state that it is the purpose of the promoters to make this church a memorial of the Westminster Assembly of Divines—a worthy monument of the Westminster standards of doctrine and Church order, which, under God, have so largely contributed to the stability, soundness, and extension of the Presbyterian system. A friend of the English Presbyterian Church in Westminster has subscribed £1,000 to the building fund.—Weekly Review.

GROWTH OF PRESBYTERIANISM ABROAD.

Never before did Presbyterianism exercise so wide-spread an influence or manifest so much life as at the present moment. In Canada, in Australia, in New Zealand, in all the British Colonies the Presbyterian Churches are energetically at work, consolidating, uniting, extending. In the United States the same fact is observable. A reunion of the Old and New Schools is projected and will probably be accomplished. Congregations and mission stations now extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Just seventy-five years ago the Presbyterian General Assembly met in Philadelphia. The Church then numbered 188 ministers and 419 churches. The ministers now number 4500 and the churches 5000. Equally hopeful is the progress of Presbyterianism in the British Isles.

We cannot estimate danger by external circumstances, but by the character of those from whom it is threatened.