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THE POINT OF UNION--HAS IT BEEN FOUND?

In forming a union between any number of denominations, the alternative which presents itself is: shall we renounce our peculiarities in order to union, or shall we agree to tolerate them? In other words: Shall we aim at uniformity, or at the union merely of elements more or less diverse?

No intelligent Presbyterian believes that the various bodies bearing that name, or that any two of them can be brought together on the basis of uniformity. Or, if he believes it practicable to secure uniformity in modes of benevolent action, management of Theological Seminaries, &c., he cannot persuade himself, for a moment, that uniformity of doctrinal belief will ever be attained or conceded as the basis of such union. The great schools of opinion which have ever been embraced under the general term "Calvinism," and comprehended under the Presbyterian polity will never be effaced, and will never cease to claim the name of Calvin and to organize under more or less Presbyterian forms. Presbyterianism has steadily resisted all attempts at doctrinal uniformity, not only by dividing into various organizations, each with its own type of doctrine; but by tolerating within the limits of the same organization, more or less diversity of views. The history of the Church shows that there has been union with such diversity. It shows that disunion has begun just where the attempt to secure uniformity has been made. And there is no need to look far for proof that those who insist on uniformity now, mean neither more nor less than to defeat the scheme of union if they can. While it is equally manifest, that the true friends of union are those who insist on a generous comprehension of all the shades of doctrinal belief, included within the limits of a genuine Calvinism.

These remarks hold good especially of Presbyterianism and Calvinism in this country. In Europe they have either assumed stereotyped forms, or have lapsed into downright and open heresy. Some exceptions, indeed, there are to be noticed. But the Scottish type of theology, as a rule, has been as rigid as if it had come from an iron-foundry, with the chilling process superadded to the cooling. Discussions and divisions there, have generally concerned ecclesiastical subjects; the "Marrow Controversy," as it was called, in 1720, is the only notable instance of a theological struggle in Scotland for nearly two hundred years. (See Dr. Smith's Hagenbach, Vol. II., § 285 c.) The vivid interest in doctrinal themes which glowed in the minds of the American representatives of the Calvinism of the Old World, was without example or parallel in the mother Churches. Jonathan Edwards, and Samuel Hopkins, and Nathaniel Emmons, and the great movement they represented, cannot be matched in the history of Scotch Presbytery. And while error has been taught, yet the movement, as a whole, has been sound, healthy, and eminently useful. It has shown the falsehood of the prejudice entertained against Calvinism as essentially bigoted, narrow, and intolerant; as unfavorable to the free play and expansion of the intellect, as unfit for educating a great Church or a great people.

The free discussions and the splendid intellectual achievements of Calvinistic leaders in this country, have won for America the honor of illustrating, in the history of dogmatic theology, the elastic and liberal character and wide comprehensiveness of true Calvinism. It was reserved to Presbyterians of this country, after Geneva, Holland, England, and Scotland had each constructed its Church upon pretty much the same type of doctrinal uniformity, in 1729 to lay the foundation of the last great Presbyterian structure, in the New World, upon the basis of the Adopting Act, which constructs the standards of the Church as being, "IN ALL THE ESSENTIAL AND NECESSARY ARTICLES good forms of sound words and SYSTEMS of Christian doctrine," and which left it to the Synods and Presbyteries, in each case, to decide whether doctrinal scruples, or even mistakes, of candidates for the ministry were "about articles not essential and necessary in doctrine, worship, and govern-

ment." Memorable concessions to the spirit of a sound Scriptural, Evangelical liberality are these! Alas for the Presbyterian Church in this country, that it soon proved unfaithful to the generous ideal of its founders. Its history would never have been so marred with divisions if it had not been for the efforts of intolerant reactionaries, in the last century and in this, to force upon the Church in America the rigid yoke of doctrinal uniformity, to which the comparatively inanimate and sluggish Churches of the Old World submitted. It was putting new wine into old bottles, sewing a piece of new cloth on an old garment; and all the sad consequences of such an unwise proceeding, against which our Saviour gave warning in the parable, have occurred. Only it has happened, in the Providence of God, that new bottles have been found for the new wine, so that not all of it has perished. When it came to pass, that the intolerant elements, gaining the upper-hand, cast out the liberal, then the liberal element proved the legitimacy of the movement, by not falling into helpless fragments or merging into non-Presbyterian bodies, or plunging into the slough of all heresies—Pelagian, Socinian, and Universalist, as it was loudly predicted they would; but by reorganizing, amid many tears, disadvantages, cares, and prayers, the shattered and repudiated form of American Presbyterianism; standing by it, nursing it, suffering for it, until it has emerged at last, a flourishing, vigorous, well-established Church; recognized among the "live" religious institutions of the land; performing, for liberty, law, and government, by its pulpits and the acts of its courts, before and during the recent struggle, such hearty and efficient service as genuine Presbyterianism is indeed fitted to render; and presenting to the world an example which it had never before witnessed, of a well-organized Church, upon a sound Calvinistic creed, avowedly tolerating differences of opinion upon the minor points of that creed;—the example, so greatly needed, of a genuine but tolerant Orthodoxy in the Church; of ample safeguards against serious error, associated with the breadth and liberality of view demanded, not more by the culture of our age, than by the spirit of the Gospel itself. All that was valuable in the original idea of the Broad Church,—and there was much in it that was very valuable,—is to-day exemplified in the so-called New School Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

This, then, is our position: toleration within the limits of a sound Calvinistic creed; and a thorough Presbyterian polity as the guardian of Orthodoxy and of order. And what is to be said of it in view of the discussion on Union? Plainly this: If union means uniformity, subjection to a single construction of the meaning of our Standards, or the commencement of a new set of measures for the suppression of a wholesome diversity of opinion, then our branch of the Church can have nothing to do with it, unless it disavows and discredits its own principles, its men, its works, its sufferings and achievements for liberty of speculation and construction, within the plain limits of a sound theology. But if by Union is meant a reorganization of Presbyterianism on the basis of a comprehension and toleration of the well-known differences between various Calvinistic schools, that is just where we are, AND HAVE BEEN ALL THE TIME. That is the principle we have suffered and contended for, and which, when expelled from the then Presbyterian Church, by the revolutionary act of an accidental majority, with the expectation of divorcing it forever from the Presbyterian name, we rescued and restored to the position in the Presbyterian Church, which the Adopting Act gave it, 140 years ago. In this view, ours is the true Union position. It is an anticipation of all movements for union among Presbyterians. Unless uniformity is the true object sought under the name of union, we are at the point where the Union must be consummated, and we should be careful not to be dislodged from our position.

Since the above was in type, we notice an unintentional confirmation of the general spirit of our remarks, in the *Church Union*, a paper devoted to the interests of union among Evangelical Churches generally. In the leading editorial of March 9, after explaining why the advocates of Church Union have a controversy with Episcopalians, and with Baptists, the writer continues:

"With the Presbyterian branch we have little to do. The great majority of Presbyterian ministers, to their honor be it spoken, preach Christ, and him alone. There is less of cant, or ranting, or sentimental preaching in that branch of the Church than elsewhere. The 'evil of Presbyterianism' is accidental rather than organic. Their schools are their oracles, and Princeton is their pope—a good pope, by the way, if it were best to have any one. But it matters little from what point we approach Presbyterianism, it is solid granite, whether we regard its doctrine, its discipline, or its worship. The best minds in the Church have framed its creed, the wisest men have learned civil government from its polity, and in these days of ritualistic abominations there is one church where we can go and worship God in simplicity and in truth. There is much narrowness, more pride, and not a little ambition to be the ruling power in the Church—accidental to Presbyterianism—but its glory is its stability and good sense."

What have we here, but an indirect, though very strong commendation of the position of our branch of the Presbyterian Church, as adapted for union, not only of the different branches of the Presbyterian family, but of the entire Evangelical Church?

THE BRITISH DELEGATIONS TO THE AMERICAN CHURCHES.

In our last week's issue, we announced that the Rev. Dr. Guthrie, the most eloquent and popular of Scottish clergymen, whose name is a household word in all our churches, had been appointed to represent the Free Church of Scotland at the meeting of our American supreme courts of judicature in May next. Dr. Guthrie's great name is enough to secure him an enthusiastic reception in this country, which his official position, as the ambassador of the Church of Chalmers and Cunningham is hardly needed to do.

Since our last, we have learned, on good authority, that the Irish Assembly's Committee on Foreign Correspondence have selected as the representatives on the same occasion the Revs. Dr. Derham of Londonderry, and Dr. John Hall of Dublin. The former of these divines won his spurs in the part authorship of the *Plea for Presbytery*, which is one of the liveliest and ablest contributions to that controversy that has ever appeared, and has done much to build up a denominational esprit du corps among Irish Presbyterians and so conducted very largely to the more efficient support of every denominational enterprise.

Dr. Hall has still larger claims upon our welcome. As the leader of the rising anti-Regium Donum party in the Irish church, and as the faithful and unwavering friend of America during our great conflict both on the floor of the Assembly and in the editorial chair of the *Dublin Evangelical Witness*, he forms a fitting representative of Irish Presbyterianism in its best and worthiest aspect, and well deserves the doctorate conferred upon him two years ago by Washington and Jefferson Colleges. As a preacher Dr. Hall has few equals in the British Islands; highly favored the churches esteem themselves that can secure his services, and in many a quiet country town, the priest hurries through mass, and the rector leaves his curate in the pulpit to hear the great metropolitan preacher. His own church in Dublin (Mary's Abbey) is one of the finest Gothic structures in Ireland, as well as one of the best filled.

It may be remembered that at the beginning of our late war, Dr. Hall proposed to the British Presbyterian Churches, that they should undertake the support of the Foreign Missionary operations of their sister churches of America during the continuance of the struggle. We rejoice that God strengthened the back to the burden that He had laid upon us, and that our churches sustained their own messengers in the Gospel; but we think that the present is a fitting occasion to recall that proposal to our remembrance, when its author is soon about to visit our shores.

A CASE THAT MAY HAVE A PARALLEL.—A resolution adopted by a Connecticut association, in regard to a union of the two Tract Societies, has excited the fact that a Conference looking to that end has actually been held, without at all bringing the two Societies nearer. The New York Society insisted that that of Boston should assume a subordinate or branch relation, with perhaps, some enlarged privilege as to the purchase of books, and that New York should have the sole editorship of the publications,

the sole appointment and control of the hundreds of colporteurs laboring over the whole country (including New England,) as also of district Secretaries and accredited agents laboring among the churches; and that "all money received or collected should go directly into the New York Treasury. The New York Society claimed that the causes which led to the separation eight years before, grew out of the constitution of that Society, and that that constitution had never been changed, and no hint of any possibility of change was given. The Boston Society (the older of the two) refused to give up its independence for any connection which would bind them to any action, either in publishing or general administration, in which it had not a co-ordinate voice. "However needless," they say "the expense of two separate organizations, the responsibility of it, we submit, does not rest with this Society."

OUR WASHINGTON LETTER.

The third meeting of the Congressional Temperance Society, was held in the Hall of the House of Representatives on Sunday evening. It was largely attended, as all of them have been. The influence of this society is being felt far and near. The cause of temperance here has received an impetus, such as it never had before. Societies and orders for the promotion of the cause are receiving large accessions, and the rum interests, which have hitherto controlled everything, have received their first staggering blow. Many congressmen now refuse to offer wines to their guests, and the appearance and conduct of some, on the last days of the late session, was a great improvement on their previous behaviour. The closing scenes of the last Congress were marked by less drunkenness than any, for the last quarter of a century. Several senators, notorious for their indulgence in strong drinks, have recently signed the pledge, and, although two or three have been unable to keep it, yet they have refrained from excessive indulgence, so that their improved personal appearance has been often remarked by their constituents. The movement did not begin any too soon, and it should receive encouragement from all good men. But the Capitol is not the only place where the reform is needed; the White House, the Departments, and even the Supreme Court will be benefitted by joining in it.

Senator Wilson, President of the Congressional Temperance Society, and for many years an earnest advocate of the cause, introduced a bill into the Senate for the abolition of the sale and use of ardent spirits in the Capitol, but it failed by a vote of 22 to 21, and was buried in a committee. Senator Johnson was opposed to the sale of liquors, but he thought senators ought to be allowed the privilege of carrying their pocket-flasks with them. It is strange, that when the air about him has been made nauseous so often, and his own desk foul by the drunken expectorations of certain of his political friends, he should plead that they might still be allowed to "put an enemy into their mouths to steal away their brains."

There is much speculation relative to the length of the present session of Congress. The House would like to adjourn at an early date, and fixed to-day, Monday, for the time, but the Senate are unwilling to vacate their seats until the twenty days allowed the President, by the Office Tenure Bill, for sending in nominations for confirmation, have elapsed. The appointment clerks are busy at work making out commissions, and some of them are appointments eminently fit to be made. The President's policy in this respect is hardly understood. He has lately appointed a number of radicals to important offices, at the suggestion of still greater radicals. His Democratic supporters are taken back by it, and go so far as to intimate that he is endeavoring to conciliate some one in view of impending impeachment.

This subject has been before the House, fair and square, with no dress on but its own. The Democrats opened their heaviest batteries upon it, supposing it would "down" at their bidding, but they found it something more than "a ghost," as they have all along pronounced it. They found no comfort in the report of the Judiciary Committee upon this subject. When they reported that the facts already elicited, justified the

charge made by Mr. Ashley, and required further investigation, they knew, from the character of the Committee, that that was the mildest statement of the case that could be made. This Committee will doubtless be authorized to prosecute its labors during the recess, and report on the assembling of Congress, whenever that may be. Generals Butler and Logan, who have looked into the faces of more of the loyal people of the country during the last six months, than any other two public men, and who have touched upon the subject on all occasions, report that the people demand the impeachment of the President. The vote which constituted the majority at the Fall elections imposed a moral direction upon Congress, and should be considered a popular impeachment of him. All that is left for their Representatives to do, is to carry out the details. Some who believe in the justness of the measure, are deterred from giving it a hearty endorsement now, on account of financial interests. They fear a financial storm, which some predict in any event, but which, they think, might be hastened by this measure. But there are others who advocate doing right, though the heavens fall. So, the question is reduced to this; shall the Executive be removed now, or shall we continue to fight him behind his entrenchments of position and patronage?

A WORTHY REPRESENTATIVE.

The lower house at Harrisburg, by a majority of eight votes, passed the bill giving the question of the Sunday cars to the vote of our citizens. To this result, which we are told, was greeted with applause, every member of the house from Philadelphia, contributed, but one. We know our readers will be glad to see the name of this faithful and true man, and they will blush for some professors of religion, when they are told that this defender of the sanctity of the Lord's day is not a member of any Church, though his family are connected with our branch. All honor to representative ADAM WALLACE of Manayunk, for his independent stand; who, as a manufacturer has not only more substantial interests at stake in the maintenance of public order than the political adventurers, who comprise the bulk of his colleagues, but who can also better estimate the value of an undisturbed day of rest to the working classes. Evidently Mr. Wallace is a fit man to represent a city whose interests are so largely manufacturing. And, without reference to the profession of religion, we may hesitatingly trust the moral concerns of the city to men truly representing its trade, its business, its work; and may feel sure, on the other hand, when men whose names and pursuits cannot be found in a city directory, are chosen to represent us, that they will be made the mere tools of dexterous politicians, or will take the course most likely, in their eyes, to lead to their own immediate profit or advancement.

If our good citizens were in earnest and chose to act without reference to party, we believe they could elect a majority of such Assemblymen as Mr. Wallace; now, it is only by chance that such a man is sent to either house at Harrisburg from this city, and it is upon the country members we must rely to protect us from the evil consequences of our neglect. They did us good service in the House on this question; we hope yet to have our Philadelphia Sabbath saved by the interposition of our friends from the rural districts in the Upper House.

COLENSO.—The Hildebrand of South Africa, Bishop Gray of Capetown, has hurt a good cause by bad means in procuring the election of a new Bishop of Natal. The clergy of the Diocese of Natal are 18 in number. Of these 16 came to the meeting, which had been called for the purpose: 2 were excluded because they had continued to acknowledge Dr. Colenso to be the Bishop of Natal. Of the remaining 14, 7 voted for the election of a new Bishop, and of these 7, 3 had been introduced into the Diocese by the Bishop of Capetown since the commencement of this quarrel with the Bishop of Natal, and the casting vote was given by the Dean of Maritzburg. Rev. William Butler, a High Church ritualist was chosen, and has referred the question of his acceptance to his bishop (Wilberforce) and two others. The Archbishop of Canterbury declared in convocation:

"I could never vote for a resolution which could be construed as being a recommendation to the Church in South Africa to consecrate a new Bishop."