

# The American Presbyterian

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### TENDENCIES TO AND FROM UNION IN PRESBYTERIANISM.

Doubtless there is inherent in Presbyterianism a powerful tendency to organic unity. It loves order. It has a grand system, requiring for its full development the marshaling of an army under its banners. And yet it would be most unjust to regard this tendency as supreme in every sound and normal condition of Presbyterianism, and to judge Presbytery as faithful or unfaithful to its leading principles, according as it existed, at any one period, as a compact whole or in more or less numerous divisions. Presbyterianism, far as it is removed from independence, is not its absolute converse. An unreflective, unconditional impulse to Union, a blind exaltation of denominational unity, is utterly foreign to its true nature. It puts truth and purity and conscience and liberty of opinion, immeasurably above ecclesiastical agreement. When these precious interests are imperilled, the inferior good of Church Order is sacrificed with scarcely a moment's hesitation. In such great seasons of trial, old ties fall asunder like tow at the touch of fire. Hence it is just as necessary to true Presbyterianism, that, at various stages of its history, it should appear in a variety of organizations, as that its habitual tendency should be towards organic unity. One is just as much a characteristic feature of Presbyterianism as the other. And Presbyterians have no more cause to be ashamed of this feature than their enemies have to twit them with it. It is, indeed, putting Presbyterianism on the road at least towards Congregationalism. And why not? For surely it is just in that direction that Presbyterianism looks, rather than to High-Church, semi-Papal, rigid ecclesiasticism.

It is, therefore, of the very nature of our Presbyterianism that we look cautiously at these proposals for Union. It is not our part to rush hastily upon the indorsement of such a measure. Union, in and by itself, is not the greatest of blessings, or the first of duties, in the judgment of a true Presbyterian. On the other hand, there is a narrow individualism, an obstinate self-opinion, in the Presbyterian body, equally, or indeed, far more worthy of rebuke than the unreasonable, head-long zeal for Union which is sometimes seen. A certain logical subtlety is developed by doctrinal studies, under the influence of Calvinism, which is quick to detect and prone to magnify errors, or differences of opinion on minor matters; to which all truth seems to be of equal importance and sacredness; a mental character which is without proportion or perspective in its conceptions; an over-sensitive conscience, quick to take offence at imagined or real slights put upon some branch of truth on which it has been dwelling. Such tendencies as these have produced what may be termed a caricature of Presbyterianism, with a history of divisions and secessions, and with a harsh nomenclature of party names, far more creditable to the critical faculty than to the piety of the actors; revealing, indeed, a wonderful power of conscience, but utterly irreconcilable with the majesty, beauty and strength, which Presbytery is designed to give to the externals of the House of God. Instances are not wanting in which this individualism has been carried so far, as to lead as few as two or three ministers and congregations, to detach themselves from a sound orthodox body, and for the sake of some minor question on which they had nursed a morbid conscientiousness, to organize into a distinct Presbyterian body. Such an occurrence we have had to chronicle in the recent history of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland; where, in 1864, a discussion arose as to the propriety of members uniting with the volunteer Rifle Corps, then forming, through fear of French invasion, all over the island. Three ministers and congregations, who condemned the practice, seceded from the main body, and formed a new Reformed Synod (!) which has since grown to double the number, with a monthly periodical of their own, called the *Reformed Presbyterian Witness*, which comes regularly to our office. Worse still, there are instances not altogether mythical of individual ministers, for conscience sake, absolute-

ly isolating themselves from all ecclesiastical society, and forming, so to speak, each a denomination, or "branch," by himself; which may be described as Presbyterianism gone to seed; which, again, is neither more nor less than independence.

It is not, therefore, mere personal creeds, nor the prejudices of a clique, nor yet scruples, however sincere, upon some minor point of doctrine, or order, that should or that can, have weight against Presbyterian Union. It is not such a question as that of an inspired or uninspired Psalmody, or that of the precise relation of the Christian subject to the worldly government, that will avail to hinder our branch of the Presbyterian Church from Union with any other, or with all.

Nor do we think any mere pride of consistency, nor any fond memories of associations, with struggles, and triumphs of the past, nor any mere attachment for man or men, regarded as standard-bearers of our distinctive principles, whose removal by death, seems almost anxiously waited for by some over-zealous advocates for Union, it is not, we are sure, any question of the disposal of the material forms, and pecuniary interests, and important outlying dependencies, chiefly educational, of the New School body, which will, or which ought, seriously to hinder a union with the other branch.

At least, none of these considerations have any weight with ourselves, looking, as we do, just now, at the question, rather in the abstract. Our concern and our hesitancy is, lest in Union, the true spirit and basis of Union itself be lost; lest the title regard be paid to Presbyterian liberty, lest some distinction again will be necessary to guard and perpetuate that; lest we form a Union but in name; to the indefinite postponement of true Presbyterian Unity; lest by impositions Union we adjourn, the possibility of a permanent, peaceful, beautiful Union for generations. In a word, it is not Union, but uniformity in the guise of Union, against which we feel it necessary to be on our guard. Others may have their, infinitesimal doctrinal or philosophical points to guard, or may be jealous of the irruption of such novel practices as the singing of hymns in worship; they may have cherished modes of action from which they are unwilling to deviate a hair; they may be concerned for the preservation of the minutest details of their ideal of Presbyterianism; we have not the slightest sympathy with such obstructive scrupulosity. Our concern is for the very element in which alone a reunited Presbyterianism can live and breathe. We are concerned that the very essence of American Presbyterianism should not be ignored in the union of American Presbyterians. We do not regard the question of organic union at any specific time, half so important as the preservation of the very spirit and basis of true Union for all time. And we are free to pronounce that union a calamity to the Church and the world, which is accomplished in any such way as to damage those dearly purchased principles which may be called the American Liberties of Presbyterianism.

If, then, brethren of our branch of the Church are found weighing somewhat coolly the whole matter of Union, and showing an absence of zeal for the matter, that must not be imputed as evidence of a want of the evangelical sentiment of Union on their part. It is most likely to be quite the reverse. It is their very love of that sentiment that keeps them where they are. Their "New Schoolism" is the very embodiment of their Unionism. They are of our branch because it is so wide-reaching in its affinities, because its very existence is a protest against the intolerance that once, so desperately strove to arrogate to itself the entire Presbyterianism of the New World.

**FACILIS DESCENSUS AVERN!**—The *Methodist Home Journal* of this city, says of the Reformed Church of Holland: "Near the beginning of the seventeenth century her Calvinism (sic) was fiercely assailed and torn by Arminius. In the next century the infidelity of France was introduced extensively into Holland, through the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau. Now the infidelity of Germany is taught in her theological schools, and of course is preached from her pulpits."

We observe that our Methodist contemporaries join the other Protestant newspapers in condemning ritualism. This is very right but is it not turning their backs upon an old friend? The ritualists of the 17th century first secured a foothold for Arminianism in England.

**WHAT THE PRESBYTERIAN MEANS BY UNION.**—The notice in the *Genesee Evangelist* of this city, declared union with our Branch as a corollary, something of the nature of a necessary conclusion—from the failure of the efforts to reunite the northern and southern wings of their own branch, at the conclusion of the war. And ever since it announced that mathematical discovery, it has been hisping and murmuring, more or less intelligibly, of union with ourselves.

Does any one remember that the *Presbyterian*, like our friend the *Evangelist*, last *Christian Herald*, to have something definite on the subject, we proposed to the *Presbyterian* a fortnight ago, two questions, the second of which is as follows: "Does the *Presbyterian* favor a union, which shall recognize this New School Theology on the extent of the atonement, moral ability, and original sin, as entitled to equal rights in the Church, with that now taught in Princeton?"

To which our contemporaries of last week made the following candid reply: "The answer to the second question depends somewhat upon a clear definition of what the 'New School Theology' is. But we are very willing to say that if it be the Theology of Albert Barnes and Dr. Beman, then we reply in the negative. We will not give error equal rights in the Church with what we believe to be the truth."

Such language leaves us no reasonable room for doubt. The *Presbyterian*, if it wishes union at all, wishes it upon the basis of an "Old School" interpretation of the standards. It seeks uniformity and not union. It desires union as a means for the suppression of the diversity which has prevailed in American Presbyterianism. Union in its own eyes according to its wishes will be a grand device for branding Mr. Barnes and Dr. Beman by the United Presbyterian Church of America as heretics—an achievement which all the seven years' agitation preceding the division could not bring to pass.

Will the remaining organs of the other branch, especially the *Banner of Bristburg* and the *Presbyterian of Cincinnati* give an equally candid answer to the *Presbyterian* to our question? We ask these papers, which is the special representative of the union movement in the other branch, whether the union they favor is one in which what is commonly understood as the New School Theology—on the extent of the atonement, Moral Ability, and Original Sin—will be recognized as having equal rights in the Church with that taught in Princeton, Allegheny, Danville or Chicago?

**THE NORTH-WESTERN PRESBYTERIAN.**—In the latter city is understood to be with the *Presbyterian*, fairly and squarely in the negative; now let us hear from the only other organs of the body, and we shall have "something definite."

**MEETING FOR HOME MISSIONS.**—The laymen of our congregations are invited to meet each other and the pastors, in the lecture room of Calvary church, on Monday evening next, at 7 o'clock, to hear statements from the General Secretary, Dr. Kendall, of New York, on Home Missions. Every friend of the Master's cause, will find matter of the deepest interest in the statements of the Secretary. And while no collection is to be taken up, we hope such an impression for Home Missions will be made upon the churches, as will be shown in a large increase in their benefactions and their prayers for this cause.

We earnestly ask of our laity to give Dr. Kendall, for his own worthy sake, as well as for the great cause he represents, the welcome of a full house.

**PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.**—An excellent example of this Christian grace has just been given, as regards, the grace of liberality, by the 3d Presbyterian Church in Pittsburg, Rev. Herrick Johnson Pastor. Several years past this congregation has made large and constantly increasing contributions to the General Assembly's Education Fund. A year since, it took the head of the list, by a contribution of \$1225. The present year, its contribution has just been forwarded, amounting to \$1750.28. Its elegant and capacious church is not permitted to linger on its way to completion, but advances at an equal pace with its liberality to our great denominational causes. Should the effect of building a house of worship for its own use, be to thus enlarge its generosity, there will be some who will deem it undesirable, that their house should be finished. We hope no future success they may achieve.

will cause them to cease to abound in this grace, with the perseverance becoming their creed. Let no church neglect to make its expected contribution, according to the recommendation of the General Assembly, on account of the greatness of this beneficent. We have no reason to expect another contribution as large, from any other church to the Education Cause. Our wants are so pressing, that even this but partially contributes to our needs. All the churches that can give us \$100 or \$150 each, will do so. The cause will soon be relieved from its embarrassments. They are our principal debtors. We have no doubt that the General Assembly recommends a contribution from every church.

**HOMELESS YOUNG GIRLS.**—One Sunday morning a few weeks ago, a drunken mother turned her little daughter of five years old out into the street and said her to go and take care of herself. The child took refuge with a neighbor, and the next day walked back to her wretched home; but her miserable mother refused her admittance, and with violent words and gestures, forbade her to come there again. The pitying neighbor tried to find her a home in a family of her acquaintance, but did not succeed. She went to an Alderman, but he knew of no place but the Almshouse, for a girl who had committed no offence, but was simply homeless. Then she heard of a home intended for just such poor waifs, where the desolate child could be cared for, taught, clothed, and trained for useful life—where the only entrance fee requisite was need for a good home. The girl's mother was the blessing of God upon the efforts there made to train the child for usefulness and virtue.

Whether the child was taken, there she was received and legally committed by the proper authority, and all the efforts of her degraded mother, to take her away, when she had traced her to the Home, were unsuccessful—the child refusing to go with her, and only pleading lest her mother might be able to remove her by force.

This story is told for the purpose of bringing out the fact that the *Industrial Home for Girls*, the Institution above alluded to, is intended to care for young girls who have no protection of a good home. Girls whose parents are too poor to take proper care of their children—those who are neglected or deserted by those who should protect them—and those whose mothers are out at work, and are thus obliged to leave them from these classes come the inmates of this Home. Those of the better class are often taken for a small weekly board.

The girls are taught daily in the common English branches, and the plan is to have each girl instructed in some special department of household work—such as sewing, ironing, cooking, &c., or if desirable, to have a trade taught them—in order that when they are of a suitable age, they may be well fitted to support themselves.

For nine years this Institution has struggled on in rented houses, suffering at times very serious embarrassment, and liable at short notice to be compelled to change its location. The Trustees now feel that the time has come when this Home should be placed upon a more permanent basis, and they look with confidence to the benevolent citizens of Philadelphia to help them in the effort to accomplish this. They wish to build a house suitable for the Institution—where its work can be carried on with increased facilities and greater success. They feel sure that all who will for a moment think what it is to take these young girls from the evil and the exposure of a neglected life, and train them for usefulness, will give to the undertaking not only a hearty God-speed, but also, whatever they can of the means wherewith God has blessed them.

Contributions to the building fund, or for the support of the Institution, may be sent to James T. Shinn—Treasurer, No. 1400 Spruce St.

**BLESSING BACKWARDS.**—The *Universe* is very devout in its expressions of fidelity to the priests of Rome, to whom it says, we are under a moral obligation to listen; an obligation involving the salvation or loss of the soul, contrasting their moral authority with that of Presbyterian ministers, and especially of "Dr. Mears of the *American Presbyterian*." Here is what one Romish priest, the Bishop of Kerry, says of the Penians, of whom (and of President Johnson) the *Universe* is the Philadelphia organ: "God's heaviest curse—His withering, blasting, blighting curse is on them. I preached to you last Sunday on the eternity of hell's torments. Human reason was inclined to say, 'It is a hard word, and who can bear it?' But when we look down into the fathomless depth of this infamy of the heads of the Penian conspiracy; we must acknowledge that sternity is not long enough, nor had hot enough to punish such miscreants."

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**OUR WASHINGTON LETTER.**—The New York Custom House has furnished as much entertainment for M. C.'s as anything else during the past week. To the indignation of the "revelations" made by the committee of investigation into the management of that vast fortune mine, seem improbable or even startling. The nominal salary of the Collector of New York, is \$6,500 per annum, then there are fees and emoluments and percentages that swell his income indefinitely. The seizures made in that district during the past year of illegally imported goods, amounted to more than three millions of dollars. One half of this, by law, goes to the United States, one quarter to the informer, and the rest is divided between the Collector, the Naval Officer and the Surveyor. "It requires the use of but one rule in arithmetic to show, that each one of these officers realized the comfortable little sum of a quarter of a million, and this is all 'honest gain,' as politicians count honesty. Then there is the "General Order Business," and the perquisites for appointments, about which there is so much difference of opinion. Taking Collector Smythe's word that he realized nothing from these, still he could well afford to "treat the President's daughter to forty cents worth of candy," to secure his appointment. It is the most lucrative office in the gift of the President. Large sums of money are spent to obtain it when it is vacant, and continual plotting to change its occupant when it is filled. Fernando Wood, who has some friend looking for the office or whose sense of honesty (?) and integrity is injured by the rapidity with which fortunes are being made there, declares that he will "almost favor the impeachment of the President," unless he removes Collector Smythe." This announcement startled his Democratic brethren, for they consider it an unpardonable sin against the party, to admit of impeachment under any conceivable circumstances. But they will find that the future will reveal "high crimes and misdemeanors" more worthy of impeachment, than the retention in office of the collector of New York.

Congress is in an anomalous state. It is attempting to transact business without the use of the usual forms and appliances. The usual committees are not appointed, because certain states are yet unrepresented, and will claim places on these committees. The three new members from New Hampshire have just taken their seats. Their parliamentary experience is limited to their own state legislature, but they look like able, self-reliant men, who are not afraid to stand up for the right.

The discussion on the resolution appropriating a million dollars for the relief of the needy in the South, has awakened a great deal of interest. The unpopularity of labor, and the unreasonable spite of many slaveholders in the South, led many to stand idle, and refuse to provide for future necessities, although they saw hunger coming apace. No entreaty could move them to help themselves, or allow those whom they had oppressed to cultivate land enough to supply their own personal wants. They prefer death to labor, and government charity to either. Many rightly conceived that the divine injunction, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him," does not apply to those who persistently and tenaciously refuse to help themselves when opportunity offers, but prefer rather to become a burden on an over-taxed government. The desire to exclude such from the benefits of the appropriation, led to the strong opposition the measure received. It is hoped, however, that those who have been brought to such indigent circumstances by no efforts of their own, may have relief, even at the risk of these sharks obtaining a few months' lease.

**A PUZZLE FOR GROWN FOLKS.**—The *American Lutheran* offers its readers the following puzzle which editors are able to make out with the greatest ease: I F Y O U O W E F O R Y O U R P A P E R P A Y U P

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