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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1867.

### PREPARING THE WAY OF THE LORD.

Will the Lord visit his churches with special blessings during the season of labor which has just commenced? Many hearts are weighing this question to-day; to many more it should come home as the greatest of all questions. We crave present prosperity for the Church. For the Church as a whole, there should be no season which is not a time of harvest and of ingathering. This winter, too, should witness gracious manifestations of Divine power.

We should look for them. The Lord has encouraged us by himself preparing the way in some most important respects. He has roused the expectation and increased the faith of the church, by the frequency and power of his recent visitations. He has so speak put the churches in the mood to receive his favors. They have caught a hint of something like continuous revival. Perhaps since the time of 1858, there is a more general recognition over the whole Christian world, than ever before, of the legitimacy and necessity of such methods of divine and human activity as are termed "revivals." There is less stiffness of the joints, less awkwardness in getting to work under revival conditions, and less reaction afterwards than formerly. The minister and people of God in the midst of abundant labors, seem to renew their strength; they run and are not weary, they walk and faint not. The multiplication of seasons of special religious interest, with a diminution of the intervals between them, suggests the approximation of that period of continuous revival which has become the hope of many spiritually-minded Christians.

Moreover, the way of the Lord is prepared by the constant increase and better organization of effort for reaching the masses outside of regular church ordinances—the heathen at home. In foreign missions, too, signs of this preparation are seen, in the exact knowledge which is now being reached of the nature and limitations of the work to be done by the churches at home. To evangelize the accessible portions of the world we need but one foreign missionary for every one hundred thousand of the population; an authority in Turkey says one for every one hundred and sixty thousand, in a large part of that field. We know what we ought to attempt to-day for China. In the chief centres of heathenism the preliminary work of evangelizing has been done. "The skirmish line," said Secretary Clark at Buffalo, "has done its work; it is time for the grand army to advance and take possession in the name of the great Leader." Said Newman Hall at the same place: "We have passed through the wilderness, and stand at length before the Richmond of unbelief. The lines are all drawn, the mines laid, and who can tell when the order for the great assault shall be given? It is no time to falter."

In our own country, according to Prof. H. B. Smith's report to the Evangelical Alliance, at least three-fourths of the entire population are under the dominant influence of the chief Protestant churches. In 1800 there was one communicant to about fifteen of the population, in 1832 it was one to ten, in 1860 one to six. Is there not a great preparation for the coming of the Lord indicated in these figures?

Moreover, just at this time, there is a stagnation in business and an uncertainty about the future in this and other countries, which will be found favorable to serious thoughts. Men are not going to be carried away with speculative excitement; many probably will be made to feel by actual experiment the vanity of the worldly good on which they have relied. Oil fevers, gold fevers, railroad fevers are not going to sweep over the country, which looks with distrust even on legitimate enterprises.

But let not these broader generalizations carry us away from our own wants and duties and from the specific work of the season. Each minister and each congregation, and every individual Christian needs to ask what they can do, in their own sphere, for preparing the way of the Lord. The minister should form his plans; should lay out beforehand his pulpit work; should choose his points and methods of attack, consider his difficulties and arm himself, calling

upon God for the precise aid which he needs in the precise work he is to do.

The individual church has also its work of preparation—its humiliation and prayers; its clearer separation from the world—its completer organization for work within its borders, as well as for its share of the unclaimed material without. And finally, every individual Christian should now be considering what he or she can do in preparing the way of the Lord: what obstacles to the Lord's work in his own character, habits or example, he can remove; from what worldly associations he can and should break away; what souls he is responsible for, more than any other person. And every one, however humble, may join with others to do his part. Thousands of workmen are needed to build the great railroad now constructing across the continent. The work of each may be insignificant, but all together they will complete the grandest and most important link in the trade and travel of the world. Christian workman! do your duty in preparing the grander and more important highway of the Lord.

### THE BANNER PRESBYTERY.

BROTHER MEARS:—In your notice of the Presbyterian Reports, made to the last Synodical meeting, you apply the above term to the Presbytery of Harrisburg, with reference to its proportionate contributions to the evangelical enterprises of the Church. It was well earned, and was justly bestowed. In this, and in other respects, that Presbytery has long been the pride of our Synod, and its praise has not been withheld. It has, however, occurred to me, that, in respect of comparative liberality, these commendations may be pushed to the point of injustice toward other Presbyteries, which, under all the circumstances of the case are not so far behind as the figures would seem to show. It will be remembered that the basis of comparison is the average per communicant, and that, under this mode of calculation, all the chance is on the side of the Presbytery, which has the least proportion of feeble churches, or of members belonging to each church. The Presbytery of Harrisburg has nine churches. Four of these are what are generally called first class churches. They embrace many wealthy families, and their aggregate membership is one thousand and ninety. The total membership of the remaining five, is only two hundred and seventy-five, and out of the nine, only three properly come under the denomination of feeble churches.

Compare it in these respects with the Presbytery of Wilmington. The latter has seventeen churches. Of these perhaps three, with an aggregate membership of one thousand and eighteen, may be ranked as first class. Four or five of the others are barely self-supporting, while nine or ten are presumed to belong to the class "feeble." Numerically we have, outside of the really strong churches, a membership of eight hundred and sixty-six to offset against the one thousand and eighteen of the latter, instead of the two hundred and seventy-five against the one thousand and ninety in the Harrisburg Presbytery. The bearing of this upon an average per capita contribution, will be perceived.

The Presbytery of the District, and the two Philadelphia Presbyteries, ought to be judged upon a similar basis of calculation. They all have mission churches, some of them quite numerous, but made up of the poor; and they have besides a large proportion of those which are either dependent upon missionary aid, or barely self-sustaining. There is not one of these bodies which, in the proportion of the strong to the weak, approaches the Harrisburg Presbytery. Take for example Philadelphia Third, which reports twenty-four churches, and a membership of four thousand six hundred and forty-eight. Eight of the twenty-four churches may rank in the higher class, as regards pecuniary strength; not more than six, however, would stand side by side with the leading ones in the Harrisburg Presbytery. The eight referred to have a total membership of two thousand five hundred and ninety-two, leaving two thousand and fifty-six belonging to churches, which, as a whole, would grade for strength with the Harrisburg five, which number only two hundred and seventy-five. To exhibit the disadvantage here supposed under the per capita estimate, it will be sufficient to cite

Olivet, with its membership of almost three hundred, and Tabor, which reports more than four hundred, both missions but yesterday, and while vigorous, promising, and in all respects rising, still as regards their comparative weight in the scale of our contributions, churches of the future more than of the present.

These remarks are not apologetic for any Presbytery. The figures of each are inexorably small. Those of whatever Presbytery stands lowest, should have been as high as those of the highest; and those of the highest should have been as much higher than they are, as its average ability would justify. I have not gone far enough into the calculation to say whether, even under the fairest estimates, Harrisburg would still bear the banner, but I presume such would be the fact. My simple desire is, that Presbyteries should not seem to fall behind further than they really do. Give each its fair proportion of credit, and then, if Harrisburg, notwithstanding her reduced proportions, still keep the fore front, we will, with most fraternal congratulations say to her, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."

### PHILADELPHIA.

### PRESBYTERY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

LETTER FROM DR. SUNDERLAND.

WASHINGTON, Oct 21st, 1867.

REV. DR. MEARS:—DEAR BRO.—The following paragraph appears in the Old School Paper of your city, "The Presbyterian," in its issue of the 21st ult.

### ADOPTING THE CONFESSION OF FAITH.

Turning from the troubles of the State to those of the Church, it may be interesting to note a statement that was made upon the floor of our Presbytery of Potomac during the late discussion upon the terms of re-union. A great deal is made of Dr. Hatfield's letter in certain quarters, and there is a considerable amount of dodging around the stump as to the question of the senses in which those entering the ministry of the New-School branch adopt the Confession of Faith. Dr. Hatfield's modest statement would make people believe that he knows all about the habits of his branch of the church, whilst Dr. Hodge has very inadequate information. It may possibly turn out that Dr. Hodge has some little knowledge of the facts of the case after all. At least here is a case in point.

It was stated on the floor of Presbytery by an elder in one of our churches, who was present at the time, and heard the examination, that some time since a minister from the Methodist Church, applying for admission into the Presbytery of the District of Columbia (New-School) in this city, was examined as to his adoption of the Confession of Faith. His reply was substantially to the effect that he could adopt it, with the exception of the doctrines of predestination and the atonement; and after a few words of explanation he was received. He has since been installed pastor of one of the New-School churches of this city, where he still ministers. And it is likely, from what we have heard, that it is not the only case of the kind that has occurred just here! So much for "substance of doctrine." But it is a queer Calvinism that does not endorse these two distinctive doctrines. The New-School press have spoken much about the licensing of candidates; but the painful silence is on the question of the reception of ministers from other denominations. What have they required of that large number constantly flowing into their branch from the Congregationalists for instance? Light on this point would be pleasing, no doubt, to Dr. Hodge and other Old-School men.

This is truly a piece of intelligence to us, who had no idea that the Presbytery of the District of Columbia was so unsound. Mr. Tschiffely, an elder in Dr. Gurley's church, in order to show the laxity of new-school men, makes a statement in his Presbytery, and the Rev. Mr. Taylor, minister of the Old School church of Georgetown, communicates it for publication. The Rev. T. B. McFalls is the pastor who is represented to have given the reply which so shocked the theological nerves of those worthy gentlemen! When it became known what they were saying about us, it was deemed advisable to see them in person and ascertain the motives of such misrepresentations. The Rev. Mr. Taylor threw the responsibility on Mr. Tschiffely, and the Rev. Mr. McFalls and myself visited Mr. Tschiffely, when he reiterated what he had said in the meeting of the Presbytery of the Potomac; and added that what satisfied him, that he had not misunderstood Mr. McFalls on the occasion referred to, was that he had a day or two afterward mentioned it with some surprise to Mr. Wells, an elder in Mr. McFalls' church, and that Mr. Wells responded that it was of no importance; that Mr. McFalls received the Confession of Faith as a whole!

Now the facts of the case are simply these. The Rev. Mr. McFalls was born in Pennsylvania of Scotch Presbyterian parentage, and has not a single relative on the side of his father's family, that does not belong to or was not reared in the Presbyterian Church. His connection with the Methodist church and ministry resulted from the fact of his conversion in early life under the as-

sociations and influences of that Church, while attending school. After some experience and a more mature reflection, he was convinced, and while entertaining a kind regard for his Methodist brethren, his true and proper place was in the Presbyterian Church and ministry. It happened that he was stationed at Washington, where a number of causes combined to consummate this change of his ecclesiastical relations. He was on examination, received by our Presbytery and installed over the Assembly's church.

It was not however on his examination for reception into the Presbytery, but on the occasion of his installation over the church, some weeks later that Mr. Tschiffely says he was present, and witnessed the scene which he had in mind, when making his statement in the Old School Presbytery, to show how we did things as members of a New-School Presbytery. This gentleman's recollection seems to be very vivid, although he is contradicted not only by Mr. McFalls himself, but by every member of our Presbytery present at the time, and able to recall the scene which thus transpired. His account of the matter varies somewhat from the story as given by Mr. Taylor. He says, that when the constitutional question was propounded to Mr. McFalls, "Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?" The reply of the candidate was, that he did receive it with the exception of the doctrines of predestination and atonement, — that then some one put to Mr. McFalls a side question, which he, Mr. Tschiffely did not hear and cannot tell what it was; but that the reply appeared to be satisfactory and the installation proceeded.

On hearing the above statement, we deemed it best to examine this gentleman's ideas of the case a little farther, whereupon the following conversation transpired.

Ques.—Did you infer from what Mr. McFalls said on that occasion, that he did not hold the doctrines of predestination and atonement in any sense?

Ans.—I certainly inferred that he did not hold them as they are taught in our Confession of Faith.

Ques.—What do you consider the Confession of Faith teaches as to the doctrine of predestination?

Ans.—That which accords with the generally received opinion of the Old School Church—that God predestinated some men to be saved and passed by others who will be lost, and that God did this without any consideration of foreseen works in the saved or in the lost. This is the literal teaching of the Confession of Faith as I understand it.

Ques.—What do you understand to be the teaching of the Confession of Faith on the subject of the atonement?

Ans.—The generally received opinion. I believe in a limited atonement, by which, I mean, that the atonement is sufficient for all, but not efficient for all as a matter of fact.

Ques.—Did you infer that Mr. McFalls did not receive these doctrines in the literal words of the "Confession," but in some other sense?

Ans.—I understood that he did not receive these doctrines as I have now stated them.

Other conversation was held, but the substance of the above was written down at the time, and assented to as comprising the principal subject-matter of our interview. Mr. McFalls then and there controverted the statement of Mr. Tschiffely, by positively denying that on the occasion referred to, any thing was said about, or any allusion made to, the doctrine of predestination, and by as positively affirming that what he did say with regard to the doctrine of atonement was in substance as follows: "I adopt the Confession of Faith—but do not think it limits the atonement as some believe." Thus we see that Mr. McFalls held then, as he holds now, to these doctrines of predestination and atonement as held in the Holy Scriptures—and while he thinks the Confession of Faith does not warrant the metaphysical idiosyncrasies of Mr. Tschiffely, Mr. Taylor, Dr. Hodge or any other man; great or small, he does consider that it contains the system of doctrines taught in the Holy Scriptures, and for this very reason he adopts it.

But there is something more to be said about the position which Messrs. Taylor and Tschiffely assume, when they seek, as they plainly do, to produce evidence of the unsoundness of our Presbytery. What will be thought of their present course; when it is known that subsequent to the occurrence which occasioned Mr. Tschiffely such surprise, and within two years past the Presbytery of the Potomac received the Rev. Wm. B. Evans, a member of the Presbytery of the District of Columbia, without any examination whatever? This same Rev. Mr. Taylor being then moderator of

the Presbytery assumed on that occasion that Mr. Evans was all right, and by virtue of his office as moderator, suppressed the attempt to subject him to such an examination! His ideas of the reception of members seems lately to have undergone a change! It appears to depend somewhat on whose Presbytery is receiving members.

But in his comments on the subject he appears if possible still more ridiculous. "It is a queer Calvinism," he observes "that does not endorse these two distinctive doctrines," meaning predestination and atonement; now, for my part I never knew before that these two doctrines were distinctive of Calvinism. What a flood of light is rising upon us. And Mr. Tschiffely, not to be behindhand, now tells us that the generally received opinion of the Old School is, that the Confession of Faith teaches literally that God predestinated some to be saved and passed by others, who will be lost, and this "without any consideration of foreseen works in the saved or the lost." What then becomes of Chapter III. Section 7 of the Confession of Faith—"The rest of mankind God was pleased, &c. to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sins?" If he thus assumes to speak for the Old School body, and to fasten on it this palpable contradiction, perhaps we ought not to complain when he tells us, that although a question was put to Mr. McFalls which he did not hear; and, although the reply appeared to be satisfactory to the Presbytery, yet it by no means diminished his surprise nor changed his suspicion of our unsoundness, in the faith.

Yet in sobriety and candor, we are not disposed to hold all the members of the Presbytery of the Potomac responsible for this ill timed and gratuitous assault upon our orthodoxy. We believe on the other hand, it is regretted by the wiser and more far-seeing members of that Presbytery, by the men who have labored in good faith to bring about reunion—such men as Dr. Tustin and Gurley, Mr. Evans, Mr. Dechart and others, but whose efforts for the time being have apparently been checked in their own Presbytery, by the zeal of the eldership and the sagacity of a "hawk-eye."

B. SUNDERLAND.

### NEW PREMIUM.

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THE FENIANS—A CHANCE FOR SOMETHING PRACTICAL.—If it be not impertinent, we would suggest to the Fenian leaders, and to Romanists of this country in general, that if they really wish to "smell powder," or if they have money in their pockets which aches for foreign service, they have just now a chance to show that something more is meant than the keeping alive of a stupendous imposition. These occasional forays, which could never promise any thing more for Ireland than enough of annoyance to the imperial government to react in suffering upon the Irish, cost but a trifle of the immense sums poured in, and a few lives, and those only of deluded victims. The unprincipled agitators probably secure the lion's share of the fiscal provision, and certainly make it a point to keep themselves out of reach of peril. Ireland does not need any of their fighting force, either men or other "sinews of war," but the "Poor Old Pope," their "Holy Father," does need them in the present extremity of his throne. There is a chance for them to do something—a chance, if there be any honesty in them, to give, to fly to the rescue, to impure life, and, if need be, to die. There are enough of them to double the whole Papal army, probably to quadruple it at a stroke; they are, or ought to be, if there is any thing in their boasts of thorough organization, in condition for an instantaneous start: why do they not go? They might go in regiments, brigades and whole divisions, and we could manage to get along while they are absent from us; and even if, by reason of the vicissitudes of war, very considerable numbers should never revisit our shores, our country would survive the loss.

When the ways of man please God, the winds and the weather are often made the agents that assist him.