

Correspondence.

RE-UNION. BY REV. HENRY FOWLER.

2. A second cause for the excoision of 1837 was the charge of a corrupted theology, alleged against a portion of the Church. It was fiercely asserted and bitterly insisted that many churches and pastors were latitudinarian in their views, that a lax rule in interpretation of symbols had led to relaxation of all discipline for heresy, that the distinctive features of the Calvinistic system were rejected, and that the grand old scriptural Augustinian theology had become a jest and an offense.

Whether these charges were wholly true or wholly false, or whether they were true as applied to exceptional cases and false as sweepingly made, it does not concern our present position to examine. Our case has to do with the fact that there has been a growing sentiment in the O. S. branch that the original charges, as made against entire Synods and Presbyteries, could not, at any time, have been sustained; and that whatever may have been the fact previous to 1837 concerning those churches, whose General Assembly came to be called "N. S.," their theological condition has since so improved (if, indeed, it were not at all times sound) that they are now truly orthodox, thoroughly Calvinistic, and soundly Presbyterian, both in faith and practice. This improved reputation of the N. S. branch with their O. S. brethren has been a source of satisfaction to all who desire Re-Union. The N. S. Church have felt, for more than a quarter of a century, that time would show the integrity of their condition; that, to deal with the charges of heterodoxy in faith and laxity in discipline, the best way was to live them down. This they have been doing, and they have been successful. The prevailing, as well as the just, sentiment of the Presbyterian Church of America, through all its branches, sustains the excellent reputation of the N. S. churches. They are not only in fact Calvinistic, but among the suspicious they have won the credit of being Calvinistic. It is conceded by the fair-minded and intelligent of the O. S. branch that they are devotedly Presbyterian. There is no reason for continued schism because of alleged unsoundness.

The fact is that the N. S. branch is equally Calvinistic in faith and equally Presbyterian in polity with the O. S. branch. Indeed, in Central and Western New York, if there be any difference it is in favor of the former. If any suspicion is to be excited lest a part of the Presbyterian Church is "Broad Church" that suspicion will stick to the O. S. branch. A clergyman of that branch, pastor of one of its leading churches, on intimate terms of fellowship with the editors of the Princeton Review, and with the professors of the Princeton Theological Seminary, has, within six months from this writing, from his own pulpit, uttered "Broad Church" sentiments which would not be tolerated in any New School pulpit of Central or Western New York. "Do we, therefore, publish a sweeping charge against the Old School body? Because this preacher has not been ecclesiastically dealt with, do we infer that the discipline of the O. S. Church has fallen away, and is lost to view in the laxity of a corrupted theology? Do we say, there is 'an end to all discipline, the purity of the Church is destroyed?' No. We do not reason to such sweeping conclusions from such small premises. We have more faith in the standards of our Church to maintain its purity, and in the Constitution of our Church to preserve its integrity. We have more faith in Christian men, in the teachers of our Theological Seminaries, in the vitality of the Calvinistic Creed, in the power of the Word of God. We think it wise to pass over in silence occasional errors of exceptional men, being confident that love of Christ and sincere interest in the salvation of souls bring a man more and more in harmony with the Augustinian theology, if only he have opportunity to understand clearly himself and it.

It would be an easy thing for us to lift up our voice among the N. S. churches, warning against Re-Union because of "Broad Church" tendencies and lax discipline of the O. S. Church of Central and Western New York. We might make as good a case out of circumstantial evidence as is made in the Princeton Review for July and January last. We might characterize Re-Union with the O. S. Branch as "a surrender of the great principles to which we stand pledged before God," "a violation of the Constitution which it solemnly pledged to support," "the renunciation of a principle to which we are pledged in honor, in conscience, and by solemn vows." We might declare that a union with the O. S. Church would forfeit the moral right to all endowments, whether of churches, or boards, or seminaries, and we might start the suspicion that such a union would forfeit the legal right. And what would Princeton say? "Ridiculous!" "How absurd!" And our Old School brethren would fall back on their calm dignity and Christian self-respect. It is just as ridiculous for Princeton as for Auburn to say such things. It is just as absurd an utterance from an O. S. Review as from a N. S. Review. In either case it might distress the unknowing, excite the suspicious, disturb the peace of the Church, defer the day of Re-Union, in which case its ridiculousness becomes offensive and its absurdity criminal.

3. The third cause for the separation which we mention is slavery. How much this had to do with the disruption we do not care to present in this article. It has certainly ceased to be a cause for continued separation. There can be no doubt that slavery is dead, as the Sandwich Islands says, "very dead."

4. There was a fourth element which aided the separation. This was national repulsion. The Scotch Irish were not averse to be rid of the Yankees. But in the progress of the country, and the increasing intercourse of people, the sharp outlines of race-differences are softened. The New School churches have now a valuable infusion of the Scotch Irish element and like it. The Old School churches have a fair proportion of the New Englanders, and are ready to receive all who desire to enter by the one door. Both branches

are bettered by this fusing of races. The one wins an added conservatism, and the other gains a spirit of improvement.

5. The last cause which we recognize as operative in the separation was the personal ambition or self-interest of a few men. This cause, too, we trust has ceased to be efficient. It may show its existence still by denunciation; but if only the true spirit of forbearance, charity, and patience be exercised denunciation will prove to be "vox et præterea nihil."

It was in view of this evident exhaustion of divisive forces that the subject of Re-Union came to be regarded with general favor, and was put in a practical shape at the meeting of the two General Assemblies at St. Louis. The Old School, proposed to the New School, that committees be appointed by each Assembly, who, during the year, should confer on the subject of Re-Union, in order if possible, to present a plan or basis of union, on which both branches could consistently unite. These committees were appointed, and included the clearest-headed and noblest-hearted men of the denomination; men who do not work superficially, who do not leave matters at loose ends, who cannot be put off with glittering generalities; men who, by their influence, by their identification with the branch of the denomination which selected them, and by their positive individualities were representative men. At the first joint meeting, their intercourse was characterized by a caution which naturally and inevitably follows thirty years of separation, and might properly precede the delicate and difficult work of reconstruction. This caution produced a reserve. The brethren were fraternal but not confidential. They were shy of touching on points of difference, they were reticent in regard to individual ideas of Re-Union. But at the second meeting, this reserve was exchanged for the most frank and cordial interchange of opinion, sentiment and purpose. The Committees were in joint session for seven days, from morning until late in the evening, and during these meetings they became as one man, they fused into unity. They discussed all points of past difference and of future arrangement with delightful freedom. They came to a unanimous conclusion.

The testimony of the Committees on this point is conclusive. Their report says: "All the meetings of the Committees were distinguished by a degree of courtesy and unanimity which was more than common. Composed of men of decided individuality, representing diverse interests and sections, they have discussed every question—many of them of admitted delicacy and difficulty—with the utmost frankness, without one word or expression of any kind ever to be regretted by Christian brethren who felt the grave responsibilities of their position."

We dwell upon this experience of the Committees, because we believe that it photographs the experience of the two branches of the church as they come together. There will be there has been—at first, caution and reserve. There will be at last the most complete and delightful unanimity. The opposers of Re-Union will be shamed into silence or be "left out in the cold."

JOINT COMMITTEES PROPOSED TERMS OF UNION.

The Joint Committee of the two General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church, appointed for the purpose of conferring on the desirableness, and practicability of uniting these two bodies, deeply impressed with the responsibility of the work assigned us, and having earnestly sought divine guidance and patiently devoted ourselves to the investigation of the questions involved, agree in presenting the following for the consideration, and, if they see fit, for the adoption of the two General Assemblies: "Believing that the interests of the Redeemer's Kingdom would be promoted by healing our divisions, that practical union would greatly augment the efficiency of the whole Church for the accomplishment of its divinely appointed work; that the main causes producing division have either wholly passed away or become in a great degree inoperative; and that two bodies, bearing the same name, adopting the same constitution, and claiming the same corporate rights, cannot be justified by any but the most imperative reasons in maintaining separate, and in some respects, rival organizations; and regarding it as both just and proper that a reunion should be effected by the two churches, as independent bodies, and on equal terms, we propose the following terms and recommendations, as suited to meet the demands of the case."

First—The Re-Union shall be effected on the doctrinal and ecclesiastical basis of our common standards, The Confession of Faith shall continue to be sincerely received and adopted, "as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, and as fair, historical sense, as it is accepted by the two bodies in opposition to Antinomianism and Fatalism on the one hand, and Arminianism and Pelagianism on the other shall be regarded as the sense in which it is received and adopted; and the Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States shall continue to be approved as containing the principles and rule of our polity."

Second—All the ministers and churches embraced in the two bodies shall be admitted to the same standing in the united body which they may hold in their respective connections up to the consummation of the union; and all the churches connected with the united body not thoroughly Presbyterian in their organization, shall be advised to perfect their organization as soon as possible by the highest interests to be consulted; no other such churches shall be received; and such persons alone shall be chosen Commissioners to the General Assembly as are eligible according to the Constitution of the Church.

Third—The boundaries of the several Presbyteries and Synods shall be adjusted by the General Assembly of the united church.

Fourth—The official records of the two branches of the Church for the period of separation, shall be preserved and held as making up the one history of the Church; and no rule or precedent which does not stand approved by both the bodies, shall be of any authority until re-established in the united body.

Fifth—The corporate rights now held by the two General Assemblies, and by their Boards and Committees, shall, as far as practicable, be consolidated and applied for their several objects as defined by law.

Sixth—There shall be one set of Committees or Boards for Home and Foreign Missions, and the other religious enterprises of the Church, which the Churches shall be encouraged to sustain, though left free to cast their contributions into other channels if they desire to do so.

Seventh—As soon as practicable after the union shall be effected, the General Assembly shall reconstitute and consolidate the several Permanent Committees and Boards which now belong to the two Assemblies, in such a manner as to represent, as far as possible, with impartiality, the views and wishes of the two bodies constituting the united Church.

out a list from them of such books and tracts as shall be issued by the United Church; and any catalogue thus made out, in order to its adoption, shall be approved by at least five members of each committee.

Ninth—If at any time after the union has been effected, any of the Theological Seminaries, under the care and control of the General Assembly, shall desire to put themselves under Synodical control, they shall be permitted to do so at the request of their Boards of Direction; and those Seminaries which are independent in their organization, shall have the privilege of putting themselves under ecclesiastical control, to the end that, if practicable, a system of ecclesiastical supervision of such institutions may ultimately prevail through the entire United Church.

Tenth—It shall be regarded as the duty of all our judicatories, ministers and people in the United Church to study the things which make for peace, and to guard against all needless and offensive references to the causes that have divided us, and in order to avoid the revival of past issues by the continuance of any usage in either branch of the Church, that has grown out of our former conflicts, it is earnestly recommended to the lower judicatories of the church, that they conform their practice in relation to all such usages, as far as consistent with our convictions of duty, to the general custom of the church prior to the controversies that resulted in the separation.

Eleventh—The terms of the Re-Union shall be binding force if they shall be ratified by three-fourths of the Presbyteries connected with each branch of the church within one year after they shall have been submitted to them for approval.

Twelfth—The terms of the re-union shall be published by direction of the General Assemblies of 1867, for the deliberate examination of both branches of the Church; and the joint committee shall report to the General Assemblies of 1868 any modification of them they may deem advisable, in view of any new light that may have been received during the year.

Thirteenth—It is recommended that the Hon. Daniel Baile, and the Hon. Henry W. Greene, D.D., of New Jersey; Daniel Lord, D.D., and Theodore W. Dwight, D.D., of New York; and Hon. William Strong and Hon. George Sharswood, D.D., of Pennsylvania; be appointed by the General Assemblies a committee to investigate all questions of property and of vested rights, as they may stand related to the matter of re-union, and this committee shall report to the joint committees early in the first of January, 1868.

Fourteenth—It is evident that, in order to adapt our ecclesiastical system to the necessities and circumstances of the United Church as a greatly enlarged and widely extended body, some changes in the constitution will be required. The Joint Committee, therefore, request the two General Assemblies to instruct them in regard to the preparation of an additional article on this subject to be reported to the Assemblies of 1868.

These propositions constitute a document of unsurpassed ability and of admirable charity. No one can peruse it with candor without being impressed with the comprehensiveness of statement, the felicity of expression and the dignity of sentiment, and no one familiar with the points of difference between the two bodies can fail to note how successfully these points are harmonized, beyond the hopes of those who most ardently desire Re-Union. Let us analyze the more important of the propositions:

The first proposition is distinguished for its definiteness. There is no vague compromise, no use of words which can be made to mean different things for differing people; there is nothing ambiguous or indeterminate to become the occasion of future misunderstandings and strife. The proposition is explicit. We all know what Arminianism and Pelagianism mean, as well as what Antinomianism and Fatalism mean. The standards of the Church are to be interpreted in opposition to these four distinctive forms of error. The quadrilateral is complete. Why were these four specifications made? Because of their definiteness and because they were the prominent and decisive forms of error charged upon either one or other of the two branches. One cannot examine the files of the Princeton Review without being impressed with the fact that for thirty-one years, according to the notion of its editors, Arminianism and Pelagianism have been the two besetting heresies of the New School Church into which all minor errors converged. When the members of the Committee representing the N. S. branch voted for this article, they voted down all the heresy, Heterodoxy, Perfectionism, Broad Churchism, Latitudinarianism, New Divinity and Laxity of Construction which have been charged. They accepted the Calvinistic system as the system set forth in the standards of the Church. What is that system? It is just as certain as what Popery or Lutheranism are. The Confession of Faith, according to this first proposition, is to be adopted, not only as the necessary or essential doctrines of religion, but is to be received as embodying the Calvinistic system.

The second proposition consists of three parts. In the nature of the case, all the ministers and churches embraced in the two bodies must be admitted to the same standing in the united body which they held in their respective connections up to the consummation of the union; any insidious distinction would be the destruction of Union.

Presbyteries have the right to be satisfied in regard to the qualifications of their members; this satisfaction may be obtained by an examination before Presbytery of every minister coming from another Presbytery. And yet again satisfaction may be obtained by the recommendation of the Presbytery from which the applicant for admission comes, and by the reputation for orthodoxy, piety, and gifts which constant preaching imparts. There is something ungracious in crowding through a Presbyterial examination a minister who has proved himself worthy by years of actual service. He may be rusty in his Hebrew; he may not have at his tongue's end definitions and proof texts, as when he was first graduated; history may have acquired to him an adumbral surrounding; he does not appear to advantage before a promiscuous audience, and shows off poorly enough by the side of the novus homo just from the Seminary. And yet, he is good and even great, sound and true, consecrated and successful, and those who knew him best testify to his qualifications. Is it seemly to subject a proven minister, entering a new field, to the disparagement of a public examination? If the contingency occur, in which the endorsement of a Presbytery ceases to be of value, or in which the applicant brings with him a damaged reputation, then let examination be applied. But unreliable Presbyteries are not frequent; thanks to our admirable system, and the instances of ministers not Calvinistic in their faith, desiring to be connected with a Presbytery are, in the New School Church, too rare to be counted. The Methodist and Episcopal sects offer attractions which defy our competition.

The tongue and the heart are only a span apart.

LIGHT FROM GRATED WINDOWS.

All who have access to the American Messenger have doubtless noticed, in the January number for the present year, a brief mention of the good work which is being done for the Master, in the Sing Sing Prison. It will bring gladness to all Christian hearts to hear a like response from Auburn. Of the prison itself we need say nothing more than to name the number of its inmates, at present about nine hundred and sixty, and to bear testimony to the excellence of its regime in all respects. Nor is it our purpose to speak of the stated religious exercises of the Sabbath, consisting of chapel services and Sabbath School, which are conducted by the chaplain. These are worthy of more mention than we have time to give.

We bring glad news to all of a special work and specific results. Only a year ago, God put it into the heart of a student in the Theological Seminary located in this city to visit the prisoners at their cells. Two or three of his classmates joined him in this wish, and, after several attempts, they obtained permission from the proper authorities and commenced the work. Finding that so few were unequal to the necessity; others soon became interested; and their number was swelled to ten, who for the few weeks that then remained before the summer vacation, spent about an hour and a half each Sabbath afternoon, visiting from cell to cell, engaging in brief, earnest conversation, and distributing tracts. Immediate results were manifested in their own hearts and they found much encouragement among the prisoners.

The long vacation, lasting from April till September, was only a rest to be followed by renewed zeal. On returning to the Seminary these ten yielded their places to ten of the incoming class, and the work has been prosecuted with constantly increasing interest till now.

Its present aspects are full of encouragement. That there are no discouragements, is not of course supposable. But they are fewer, by far than we ourselves imagined. Making but few exceptions, we are always received cordially, and often find men standing at their grated doors, waiting for us. Said one, "It has been a long time since you were here last." Said another, "I was afraid that you wouldn't come to-day." And another, "I am glad that somebody pities its poor fellows in here." Do you wonder, reader, that we cannot find it in our hearts to deny the bread of life to such men? Nay, rather that we esteem it a blessed privilege to be permitted to tell them of a Saviour who is ready to forgive the chief of sinners?

But, does it do any good, you ask. You tempt me to write more than I fear you would have patience to read." Said one to me a few days since, "I thank God for bringing me into this prison." I asked him, "Do you think you have become a Christian since coming here?" "I hope so, sir."

After putting several other questions, and being fully convinced that he had truly met with a change of heart, I asked, "What first led you to think of your sins?" "I think the starting point was a tract, 'Why do you swear?' which was handed me last year," was his reply. "This man is now released. He called on me before leaving the city, and has now gone to his home, determined to spend the remainder of his life in the service of Christ." Another, lately a prisoner, is now in business in this city, and a church member. Still another, released only three months since, is now a member of the church, teaches a class in Sabbath School, and is also in a mission school.

But I must not multiply illustrations. Many now in the prison give unmistakable evidence that they are born again, and many cells are bright with the presence of Christ, while not a few are deeply concerned for their souls and ask what they must do to be saved. Christian brothers and sisters, will you pray for them? Auburn, N. Y., Jan. 28th, 1868.

KNEEL OR DEPART.

A correspondent of the Daily Chronicle in Washington, representing himself as a stranger in that city, complains of unclean or inhospitable treatment in one of its churches. Desiring to spend a Sunday appropriately, he says very naively, he attended the church in question, and notwithstanding the fact that there were many vacant seats, he was allowed to stand near the door during the entire service, as were a number of ladies and gentlemen. He further complains that during the concluding prayer, while standing in a reverential attitude, he felt a rude clutch at his shoulder and heard the command, "Get down on your knees," which was repeated in a belligerent and ungentlemanly manner; and in response to his suggestion that compliance under the circumstances was inconvenient, he was presented with the alternative of leaving the church.

It is safe to assume that this gentleman was in a Roman Catholic Church, that his reverential attitude was assumed in respect for that part of the mass of vespers in which bread and wine are believed to be converted into the flesh and blood of Christ; or in which a water is exhibited for adoration as the body of Christ. If the gentleman believed in this real presence and the worship thereof, it is wonderful indeed that he could do otherwise than kneel in deepest reverence, however inconvenient it might be, under the circumstances. If he did not so believe, then he must have believed that he was witnessing one of the grossest and most impious manifestations of idolatry ever known to the world.

The sexton of the church, according to his individual conviction and his official requirements, was right. Every true Christian would respectfully rest were he to do less. All the responsibility rests upon the half-hearted Roman Catholic who thinks a wonderful miracle of the visible presence of the Deity, or upon the faithless Christian who, gliding glibly and unscrupulously, can lure into scenes from which the true believer in Christ should flee far from the very spirit of evil. Roman Catholics very properly make no compromise in this matter. The evangelical Christian who chooses to be present at their worship, who delights in the music of their

symphonies in adoration of the mother of God as "the Queen of Heaven," or who voluntarily confides the education of his children in the schools, should accept the consequences of his deeds without a murmur, even though commanded to go down on his knees, or depart from the temple he has so guiltily entered.

FROM OUR TRAVELLING CORRESPONDENT.

St. Paul, Dec. 1st, 1867.

DEAR EDITOR:—Minnesota is a beautiful picture set in a beautiful frame. Every one knows how much our appreciation of scenery depends on the spirits we happen to be in while viewing it; how often we are disappointed because we are less exuberant with us than with those who have gone before us, and upon whose narrative we have relied. I should suppose such disappointment is much more common in regard to comparatively flat countries than among the mountains. The clear, bracing atmosphere constitutes such a glorious frame-work to the picture that our hearts exult not less at the grandeur without, than in the fullness of healthy energy within. Now this is just what one experiences in Minnesota. The country is beautiful in itself, but that is not all. The glorious atmosphere of this elevated region stimulates with a magnetic power. One feels as if a small steam engine had been substituted for the ordinary vital force within us, and must go. However poor our appetite before coming to the country, and reaching it, one can eat "anything that can be spoken." Poor, puny consumptives that cannot here capable only of a "constitutional" walk, are able only to eat the wing of a chicken, take to the woods, cut down trees, eat fat pork and enjoy life generally. The climate has done wonders for this class. I have seen some who were here weighing about one hundred pounds, and look to day as strong and healthy as can be. Others "very much developed" now, as the Frenchman expressed it; who, when they were here, could not find voice to articulate how they stamped; they wanted at the post-office, and had make signs with their fingers. I saw one patient whose full, handsome face indicated that the owner was enjoying life, and who had, I was told, a little bit of one lung left. This is the land of pulmonary miracles; but no one should come without competent medical advice to that effect, without a determination to live here. The hopeless cases here are those, who having been covered, went East again and had a relapse.

The only drawback to a stranger in St. Paul is the immense number of these poor consumptives in the street, all marked by a bluish tint in the cheeks and black rings around the eyes. But when we see how many such have grown well here, it makes one cheerful and hopeful for the worst. It is to be regretted that there are not more pleasant surroundings in one respect for such patients. The boarding-houses are hospitals, with coughing in every room, and impious faces and queries at the breakfast-table, and such state of things diminishes the chance of those who are not of a sanguine temperament.

"But the awful cold." Yes, it is a little cold here in winter, —40 below zero sometimes. But those who have tried both, say that one suffers less from cold in a Minnesota winter than in a Philadelphia one. In the first place we suffer more from the changes than from the absolute cold. The sudden thaws and the still sudden frosts make winters terrible to us. Now in Minnesota there are changes, but always below freezing point. There are no thaws the winter through. The snow that has fallen now will last till the opening of spring, and months of consecutive sleighing are among the pleasures of the season. No wet feet, no rains, no slush, no boards of frozen snow on the sidewalks—what pleasant winter weather "under foot," could one want? And the cold attacks one squarely up here, his out from the shoulder, instead of sneaking in upon one. Ears and noses must be muffled up to avoid frost-bite, but no chilblains creep through the blood. The air is so perfectly dry and free from every taint of damp, that the cold is bracing and exhilarating. Even now the thermometer stands at a point below freezing point, which would be very uncomfortable at home, but my only sensation in regard to it is a wish that it were a little colder; and I am told that when it gets down to 40° below zero they will think it pretty cold, but when it goes up 10° or so, they will throw open the doors and windows and say, "What glorious weather we are having."

Another point yet in this latitude they have no prairie winds to trouble them; and of all winds of cold, a prairie wind is the most fearful. In Chicago it is with the ladies, a valid excuse for not keeping an engagement, that "it was blowing that day," and a taste of such a wind, as it comes over the breadth of three States, get as you, and through through you, explain the apology. Nothing will turn these winter siroccos, but a Mackintosh coat, wool, fur, or avail nothing. Now in this region, the winds are necessarily bred and local, and I have no doubt that people in St. Paul do not suffer from the winter's cold as much as those in Illinois or Iowa. The prevailing breeze to the north, and the continual hills, break the force of their air currents.

The dryness of the atmosphere here is caused partly by the great distance from the sea, and mainly by the great height of the country above the sea-level. Whatever moisture the wind carry off the ocean, is deposited before they reach this high plateau, which ecologists tell us was the first part of America that emerged out of the primitive ocean. One can realize how the country lies, by reflecting that the Mississippi, which runs 2,500 miles from this to find the ocean level, is falling all the way, and often down quite rapidly. Here it is on a level with some parts of the country, and much below others.

One of the chief dryness is the perfect clearness of the atmosphere. One sees things at the distance of miles as clearly as if at hand. The scenery is beautiful, and no more beautiful addition to household treasures could be made than the photographs of Minnesota scenery, published by Martin in Third St. Some of these scenes, upon a plain of the St. Croix River, are the same clearness that one of our photographs would reproduce as many furlongs of the sky. ON THE WIND.