

Correspondence.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH REV. DR. GURLEY.

Soon after the late meeting of the Joint Committee on Reunion, it became evident that the terms of their new doctrinal basis would and might be construed by the rigid minds of the other branch as allowing only the narrow range of interpretation which conformed to their views of the Reformed sense.

In view of this uncertainty, the Editor of this paper addressed a note of inquiry to Dr. Gurley, Chairman of the Committee of the other branch, not with a view to newspaper publicity, but for his own satisfaction and guidance.

REV. DR. GURLEY—DEAR BROTHER—As the true significance of the doctrinal article of the Joint Committee's New Plan has been hotly contested, and in some quarters assumed to be entirely consistent with rigid anti-union principles of construction, I wrote to you a few days ago, for my personal satisfaction, and not with any view to publication, to get your own understanding of the article; particularly that part of it which ramor assigns to yourself.

PHILADELPHIA, April 11, 1868. REV. DR. GURLEY—DEAR BROTHER—As the true significance of the doctrinal article of the Joint Committee's New Plan has been hotly contested, and in some quarters assumed to be entirely consistent with rigid anti-union principles of construction, I wrote to you a few days ago, for my personal satisfaction, and not with any view to publication, to get your own understanding of the article; particularly that part of it which ramor assigns to yourself.

With great respect and Christian regard, JOHN W. MEARS.

This letter had scarcely been dispatched when a reply to my first was received as follows: RICHMOND, VA., April 11, 1868.

REV. DR. MEARS—DEAR BROTHER: Your letter of the 1st inst. was forwarded to me in this city, where, in feeble health, I am spending a few weeks with my daughter. With regard to the subject about which you make inquiry, owing to limited strength and a trembling hand, I must write briefly.

My understanding is, that the Joint Committee, in the terms which they have recently adopted, propose that the two great branches of the Presbyterian Church in this country unite on the doctrinal basis of the Calvinistic system, as that system is presented in the Confession of Faith, and as it has been understood and received by the Reformed Churches.

It did not seem advisable to continue the correspondence in the feeble state of Dr. Gurley's health and at this point the matter was dropped.

[From the Presbyterian.] PRESENT ASPECT OF THE RE-UNION QUESTION. [Understood to be from the pen of Dr. Chas. Hodge.] MESSRS. EDITORS.—The precise point to be adjusted, so far as the doctrinal basis is concerned, is, are the doctrines for which Mr. Barnes, Dr. Lyman Beecher, and Dr. Duffield were arraigned by the Old School, to be regarded in the Church, when united, as consistent with the integrity of the system of doctrine taught in the Westminster Confession?

carefully and with reference to the question of Reunion. It is not, to my mind, a full, clear, and adequate discussion of that subject; it seems to me to fall somewhat short of the plain and exact teachings of inspiration and of our Standards touching the question, "How shall a man be just with God?" there are expressions here and there the correctness of which I could not endorse; and there is an avoidance in the entire discussion of the terms found in the Confession and Catechisms, and usually employed by Calvinistic theologians, in treating of that "artificially stunted and cadent ecclesie," which, to say the least of it, seems quite remarkable, and, in closing the book and calmly reviewing its entire tone and teachings, I can not but feel and believe, that, after all, Mr. Barnes holds substantially the same doctrine touching the method of a sinner's pardon and justification that I hold; that he stands, for anything that appears in this treatise, fairly within the pale of the Calvinistic system; and I see no reason why, if we were in the same United Church, we might not walk together and labor together in harmony and love.

This is the spirit which I expect to carry into the united Church, if the union is consummated as I hope and pray it may be, and this same spirit I firmly believe will be carried there by more, far more, than a majority of my Old School brethren. What we need is confidence in each other, and this is a quality which no terms of union can create. It must come from a higher source—even from Him who said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." Yours truly and fraternally, P. D. GURLEY.

Could we be assured that the noble, comprehensive, elevated spirit of this letter would pervade and control the other branch of the Presbyterian Church, the whole problem would be solved. Still, it was not the personal feelings of Dr. Gurley that the writer was seeking to learn, glad though it was to find them so genial and so catholic. It was as to the measure of the guarantee which the framer understood his amendment to contain, against the mischief which conscientious men of an opposite spirit to his own might wish to perpetrate in the united Church. And so I addressed him a second letter, thanking him for the first, but in a few words pressing the inquiry as to the ultimate authority upon opinions now regarded as orthodox in the separate Churches. Whether the judgment of the separate Churches should stand as final, or whether it was liable to be reopened by the united Church. The reader will notice the limiting clause in the concluding part of the second paragraph of Dr. Gurley's letter: "In all these matters," says the Chairman, "we propose to allow the same liberty that has hitherto been allowed, only requiring that religious teachers in the united Church shall not be permitted so to ignore or deny any doctrine of the Confession as thereby to impair the integrity of the system of doctrine, which that Confession so clearly and ably unfolds." It will be seen from this that my further inquiry was justified.

To my note, of which no copy has been preserved, the following reply was received: 29 Pierrepont-st., Brooklyn, N. Y., April 27th, 1868.

REV. DR. MEARS—DEAR BROTHER: Serious illness has delayed my reply to your last. What I wrote in my former letter comprehends all I have to say touching the meaning of the proposed Doctrinal Basis.

The Basis is Calvinistic, granting all the liberty of interpretation that the great family of Calvinistic Churches has ever desired, and its unanimous adoption by the Joint Committee seems to me to be proof conclusive that, in their estimation, after careful conference and enquiry, no such serious departures from the Calvinistic system have prevailed in either of our Churches, as would be likely to be called in question by the united Church, to the disturbance of its peace—especially if the same spirit of fraternal confidence and love, and the same disposition to make a united assault upon the common enemy should continue which is now prompting and urging the reunion movement. That movement, consummated on the terms proposed, there will be no disposition to search for heresy in the united body, but an earnest desire to join hands and efforts, and go up promptly and unitedly, as one army of the living God, to the help of the Lord, even to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

I dictate this from a bed of sickness, in great physical weakness, but with a heart still devoted to the cause of reunion, which I believe to be the cause of the Redeemer, intimately connected with the advancement of His glory in this and in other lands. Although what I have written in this and my previous letter was intended simply for yourself, I have no objection to your making any use of it, which you think will subserve the cause we have at heart. Yours fraternally, P. D. GURLEY. Per Mrs. P. D. GURLEY.

It did not seem advisable to continue the correspondence in the feeble state of Dr. Gurley's health and at this point the matter was dropped.

[From the Presbyterian.] PRESENT ASPECT OF THE RE-UNION QUESTION.

[Understood to be from the pen of Dr. Chas. Hodge.] MESSRS. EDITORS.—The precise point to be adjusted, so far as the doctrinal basis is concerned, is, are the doctrines for which Mr. Barnes, Dr. Lyman Beecher, and Dr. Duffield were arraigned by the Old School, to be regarded in the Church, when united, as consistent with the integrity of the system of doctrine taught in the Westminster Confession? On this question the Old School are pledged and committed to the negative. This is plain—1. Because they have from the first protested against those doctrines. They strenuously endeavored to have them ecclesiastically condemned. When they failed in that effort, they insisted on the division of the church. In all this they confessed to be acting under a strong conviction of duty. For them now to turn round and say that these doctrines are harmless, and consistent with the system of doctrine contained in our standards, would be to confess themselves insincere. 2. When it was objected against the terms of re-union, presented last year to the Assembly,

that they provided for the adoption of the Confession, as it had been hitherto received by the two churches, and thereby sanctioned the latitude of interpretation claimed by the New School, Dr. Beatty, Chairman of the Joint Committee, earnestly repudiated this interpretation. He insisted that it was not the intention of the framers of that article to sanction any such principle.

3. More than three-fourths of the Presbyteries taking action on the subject, rejected the terms of re-union then proposed. The avowed ground of their opposition was, those terms seemed to bind the United Church to the same latitude in adopting the Confession, which the New School had been accustomed to allow. To this principle our Presbyteries declared themselves conscientiously opposed.

4. At a recent meeting of the Joint Committee, the Old School members of that committee had a separate meeting, and resolved, by an unanimous vote, that they could not consent to any terms of union which should bind the United Church to the latitude of interpreting the Confession which the New School has hitherto allowed. We do not give the resolution verbatim; but such was its intent and meaning. The members, personally, were no doubt opposed to any such latitude of construction, and they knew that, if they might as well throw the whole re-union project into the sea, with a millstone about its neck, as to go before the churches with any such proposition.

This, therefore, is a point to which the Old School stand publicly committed. Our Presbyteries cannot knowingly consent to any such condition; and to cajole them into such assent, under any ambiguity of phrase, is what no man can justify or approve.

On the other hand, it is no less plain that the New School are determined to insist on the liberty which they have always asserted and exercised. They insist that the doctrines of Mr. Barnes, Dr. Beecher, and Dr. Duffield, should be regarded as orthodox, and entitled to full recognition in the United Church, as consistent with the integrity of the Calvinistic system. That this is the ground on which the New School body stands, is plain. Because it is the ground on which it has always stood. New School men defended the gentlemen above named, and shielded their opinions from ecclesiastical censure. They freely admitted, and do now admit, men to the ministry openly professing those doctrines. They have always claimed that the doctrines in question are consistent with the integrity of the Calvinistic system. That was, and is, the precise point of difference between the New and Old School Churches.

2. There is the negative argument, that not a single leading representative man in the New School Church (and, indeed, so far as we know, no man at all, representative or not) has come out and openly said that he and his brethren had come over to the Old School ground, and would consent that the doctrines in question should be excluded from the united Church. At the time of the Philadelphia Convention, many supposed that the New School had conceded that point; and had agreed that the doctrines of the Confession were to be received, without note or comment, in the form in which they are therein presented. But it was soon discovered that this was a mistake, no such concession was intended.

3. All the witnesses are on the other side. Every New School man who has written or spoken on the subject, has avowed, directly or impliedly, that the New School have not changed, and do not mean to change. The latitude of belief—the liberty of thought—the freedom in interpreting the standards, which they have hitherto enjoyed, they insist must be conceded to them in the future. This is their ultimatum. The Rev. Dr. Spear, of Brooklyn, New York, in a communication doing him the highest honor for candor and fairness, admits the diversity in doctrine between the two bodies, and insists that this only possible ground of union is an agreement that both theologians, the Old and the New, should be tolerated as equally consistent with our standards. This is honest and intelligible. This is the only fair; and, indeed, as will be found, the only possible ground of union. The American Presbyterian, of Philadelphia, openly and defiantly takes this ground. It insults Old School men, and defames their doctrines in terms which few skeptics would venture to use. The editor of that paper says that the whole spirit and design of the union movement is to sweep away exclusivism. The Fourth Presbytery of Philadelphia adopted the following minute: Resolved, That this Presbytery regard the plan of Re-union between the two branches of the Presbyterian Church, reported by the Joint Committee of the General Assemblies, as, in the main, judicious and acceptable; but Presbytery deem it indispensable to the organic unity and continued peace of the two branches, that the acceptance of the Confession of Faith, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, be clearly and definitely understood as allowing that diversity of doctrinal interpretation, which, from the first, has obtained in the Reformed Churches, and which is not inconsistent with the integrity of the Calvinistic system.

This resolution covers, and was obviously designed to cover, that diversity of doctrinal interpretation, which has from the first, prevailed in the New School Church. That such diversity is consistent with the integrity of the Calvinistic system, is what they have ever maintained. All they have ever asked before the disruption, or after it, is to be allowed to adopt the system as they understand it. The Presbytery of Bioga specified the doctrines of Mr. Barnes, Drs. Taylor and Park, as those which we Old School men must regard as orthodox. The Rev. Dr. Hatfield, in his letter to the Presbytery, undertakes to prove that the doctrines of Dr. Duffield are consistent with our Confession; Dr. Henry B. Smith, in the January number of the American Presbyterian Review, does the same thing. He ridicules the attempt of a writer in the Princeton Review to show the contrary. Dr. Hatfield, in a later communication to the Presbytery, says that the Princeton Review is mistaken in assuming that the New School had changed its ground; it stands now, he maintains, just where it has always stood, and claims the same latitude, neither more nor less, in interpreting the standards which it has always claimed. A writer in the NORTH-WESTERN PRESBYTERIAN, who signs himself "Candor," known to be one of the most promi-

nent of our New School brethren in that part of the country, asks the editor whether a union "based on the system taught in the Confession of Faith as historically interpreted by the Reformed Churches, would leave the New School men the same liberty in the interpretation of our standards which they now enjoy? This," he adds, "is with many the vital point in all this matter. Thousands will never consent to a union which abridges, in the least, the freedom of interpretation which has ever characterized our branch of the Church." To this plain and honest question, the NORTH-WESTERN PRESBYTERIAN replied in an admirable article, February 22d, 1868, to the effect that this was the precise thing which three-fourths of our Presbyteries, acting on the subject, declared they could not do; and, moreover, that this was the claim which Old School men understood their New School brethren in the Philadelphia Convention explicitly to renounce. To this, (February 29,) "Candor" replies: "New School men have had, I think, very little choice between the basis of the Joint Committee and that of the Philadelphia Convention, for the simple reason that they regard both as affording them the same freedom of interpretation as they now enjoy within their own bounds. Nor is it believed that Drs. Smith or Fisher intended, by their remarks at Philadelphia, to convey any other impression, or that they would be sustained in committing our body to any more exclusive explanation of the Confession of Faith than unquestionably obtains at this day; as it ever has obtained in our body, and as we believe, in the Reformed Church at large. On this point, they do not wish for any compromise. The only result of a union which could not have conceded this liberty to each side would only be a new schism." This is honest and honorable.

Another decisive evidence on this subject is the action of the New School members of the Joint Committee. When that Committee met last in Philadelphia, the Rev. Dr. Patterson of Chicago took the ground—1. That a large part of the New School ministers held the doctrines of which Mr. Barnes might be considered the representative. 2. That those doctrines must be received in the United Church as of unquestioned orthodoxy. His New School brethren on the Committee, while dissatisfied from him as to the extent in which Mr. Barnes was a fair representative of New School theology, did not, in any case (i. e., no one of the New School Committee) dissent from the claim that the doctrines which he was supposed to represent were entitled to recognition as consistent with our system of doctrine. This claim was insisted upon. Here, then, was a dead-lock. The Old School Committee unanimous in declaring that certain forms of doctrine could not be admitted; the New School Committee unanimous in declaring that they must be admitted. Neither party could yield. Neither party did yield. They adopted a formula on which each could put its own sense, and departed.

Now, this requires nothing of the New School. They get all they claimed in 1837. They stand on their very ground of which they have stood from the beginning. The Old School yield every thing. They give up the principle which, for thirty years, they contended for as essential to the purity of the church. It is true both parties agree to receive the Confession of Faith as containing the system of doctrine taught in the sacred Scriptures. This is all the Old School desire, or have the right to demand. But the New School say they mean by "the system of doctrine" taught in the Westminster Confession "something which includes the doctrines in dispute. Nor does it help the matter to say the Confession must be received in its Calvinistic sense; or, that no explanation inconsistent with the integrity of the Calvinistic system is to be allowed. All these formulas mean precisely the same thing. They are all perfectly and equally satisfactory, if understood as the Old School understand them. They are equally worthless, if understood as the New School say they understand them.

The course taken by representative New School men since the Philadelphia Convention, renders it perfectly plain that the two branches of the Church are as much opposed in doctrine, animus, and character now, as they were in 1838; and therefore that re-union, under these circumstances, would be morally wrong, and seriously disastrous. True spiritual unity, such as Christ prayed for, and such as his Spirit produces, would be sacrificed for a mere form; if the two bodies were now to be forced together.

OLD SCHOOL. FROM OUR TRAVELLING CORRESPONDENT IN THE WEST. NEW CASTLE, Pa. DEAR EDITOR:—One of my first letters was from this place; illustrious as the diocese of that champion of unity and charity, Rev. D. C. Junkin, D.D., and now my last epistle is to be from the same place.

Pittsburgh, as I came through it, looked a little murkier in the wintry weather than it did in the early autumn. It was probably on such a wintry day that Parton visited it, and found it possible to read by daylight in a well-lighted room for one half hour each day. But we must not give credit to such fondness as that of the Western editor who asseverates that dishonest candy-dealers catch the smoke in the air here, roll it into sticks and sell it for licorice.

The Third Church looks grand since the scaffolding has been removed and will be unquestionably the finest church edifice in the city. The First (A. S.) Church is its only rival; but that has merely a fine front. I called on the pastor-elect, Mr. Nolle, whom I met while in St. Paul, and found that the great contrast between the ultimate from which and that to which he had come, had not produced any disagreeable effects. I found, too, that the brethren of other denominations are very favorably impressed with him, and all spoke of him with the most cordial kindness. As the people are the main thing in making a pleasant residence; Pittsburgh must be a very pleasant residence in spite of its smoke. But the municipality seem to be a very utilitarian set and to care more for commercial considerations than any higher ones.

In New Castle I find that Mr. Wylie's congregation are as active as ever and seem to be growing in numbers and brotherly cordiality. When I was last here it was still possible to distinguish between ex-Covenanters and New School Presbyterians, but all the edges of collision (or rather of distinction for collision there was none) seem to have worn off both parties. The congregations seemed to be larger than in the Fall, and all the omens for the future brighter. A Young Men's Christian Association had been started with great unanimity and cordiality by the various denominations and is meeting with very great success. The opening meeting was characterized by two features: (1.) Rev. Dr. Junkin gave any crazy fanatical Radicals (like yourself, Mr. Editor,) a chance to exercise the grace of patience by some very irenic remarks in regard to the sins of the North before, during and since "the late unpleasantness;" and on the excellencies of the patriarchal institution. The appropriateness of what he said was actually not seen by some obtuse individuals, but that is their business. As the Doctor had a son in the Northern army such a tribute to "the lost cause" might have been justly expected from him. (2.) Col. Daniel H. Wallace (U. P.) being appointed by the Association on a Committee which was to be of "Church members in good standing," declared himself ineligible, as he was then "under discipline for hymn-singing," an announcement which made no little sensation. As other members made some remarks upon his refusal to serve, a U. P. elder jumped up and hoped that they had been "bumped" upon this subject. I made some reference to Mr. Wallace's case in my letter of September last. His prosecution was begun at the instance of Rev. Robert Audley Browne, D.D., now President of Westminster College; Dr. Browne is himself guilty of the offense charged against Col. Wallace, having on one occasion, called on a political meeting to close its proceedings by singing the Long Metre Doxology (he called it the "Long Metre Benediction") and having at a later date united with Col. Brown's children in singing hymns on Sabbath afternoon; thereby, as Col. Wallace puts it, "violating either the Second or the Fourth Commandment." (i. e., as United Presbyterians understand these.) But, as your correspondent knows by experience, some men may steal a sheep with impunity where another man would be hanged for looking over the fence, so the Rev. Doctor had Col. Wallace suspended from the privileges of the Church until trial for this great offence, and under suspension he has remained ever since. If the mean time, Dr. Brown has resigned the New Castle pastorate. Several attempts have been made to induce the accused to quietly "step out of the back door" and avoid a trial, but these Mr. Wallace will not accede to. It is conceded on all sides, that he has been the most active and zealous member of the U. P. Church here, and prominent in every good work. He is the Superintendent of a Mission Sabbath-school, and its main supporter. In this it was that the offence was perpetrated, though Col. Wallace always opened and closed the school with selections from Rouse's Psalms. Should he be expelled, he will be a valuable accession to any Church that he may unite with. Since the writer was in New Castle, the case came up for trial, as it could, in decency be postponed no longer. Its points may be gathered from the following: Libel preferred against Daniel H. Wallace by order of the Session of the United Presbyterian Church, New Castle, Pa. Whereas vows are to be sacredly kept, and their violation is contrary to the Word of God and the profession of the United Presbyterian Church: And, Yeh, true it is, that you, Daniel H. Wallace, a member of the United Presbyterian Church, have violated your vows as a member thereof, in that you have broken the 18th article of the Testimony of said Church in the Mission Sabbath-school of East New Castle as Superintendent thereof, at various times during the winter of 1866 and 1867, in that you used therein a system of psalmody different from that exclusively allowed by this Church; in this violation, notwithstanding the counsels of your pastor and the brethren of this Session, you have persisted, and publicly defended this your act. And, whereas God has appointed the formal ordinance of Singing His own praise in His stated worship, and has, by His Holy Spirit, provided in the sacred Scriptures, and by His authority has appointed the Psalms for this purpose; and any appointment by men of anything other than these for said purpose is a breach of the Second Commandment, both in its requirements and prohibitions, and an interference with the Divine prerogative to ordain Divine Worship as held by this Church and declared in the aforesaid article: Yet, true it is, that you, Daniel H. Wallace, have violated this principle in the matter and instance above specified. And, whereas, to be a leader of division and defection in the Church, and to encourage others, and especially young Christians, to violate their vows and resist authority appointed by Christ in His Church, and by them acknowledged, is in violation of the Word of God, and the doctrine of this Church: Yet, true it is, that you, Daniel H. Wallace, did thus encourage a member of this congregation to violate the aforesaid article, saying: "Should she sing hymns you would stand by her," or words to this effect. In so far as you, said Daniel H. Wallace, did, at the Mission Sabbath-school in East New Castle, in the spring of 1867, or thereabouts, violate and encourage others to violate the said 18th article of the Testimony of the United Presbyterian Church, being found relevant and proved, against you, you ought to be proceeded against by the nature of your offence and scandal. Done at New Castle, February 1st, A. D. 1868. The second specification was not proven at all, for the person whom Col. Wallace led into the horrible crime of hymn-singing, by reaching her part of the book as she sat beside him, was not then a church member, but the finding is: Whereas the charges and specifications of the libel against Daniel H. Wallace have been found relevant and proven, therefore, Resolved, That he be hereby suspended from the communion of the Church in seating ordinances. By order of the Session. W. N. AIKEN, Clerk. New Castle, Feb. 14th, 1868. Such is the Second Commandment as understood in New Castle. We give you these specifications and this finding verbatim from official documents, being slightly anxious for their appearance in your columns, as the pressure brought to bear upon the local papers by those who feared the rebound of the persecution upon the U. P. cause, was sufficient to prevent the publication of the documents in any local paper. Yours, &c., ON THE WING.