

# The American Presbyterian.

John A. Weir 15 July 69

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### GOD'S REMEMBRANCE.

The sorest times of trial to faith are those in which God seems to forget. And they are not infrequent times, nor are they always brief. From the days of Cain to the days of Noah, while man utterly corrupted his way on earth, while more than a thousand years of lust and violence rolled by, the just God seemed to forget. A hundred years passed on, unchanged, after definite warning of his purpose to punish. And when at last the deluge rolled over a guilty world and a solitary ark floated upon the boundless waters, it must have seemed to the desolate inmates, after their five months' experience of the elemental commotion, during which they probably had no sensible manifestation of Deity, as if they too were forgotten. How great a suspense was that, when the existence of the race, the history of the Church and of Redemption, and the Covenant faithfulness of God hung upon the fate of that ark; swayed to and fro with its tossings on those restless tides! How full of meaning is the sacred declaration: And God remembered Noah! How memorable that act of deliverance of which the bow in the cloud is the appropriate sign!

Truly did God seem to forget his promise to Abraham and his seed, of possession of the land of Canaan, while the great progenitor and three generations of his children were only pilgrims and strangers in the land, and while their descendants groaned, for centuries, under the taskmasters' whip of the Pharaohs, until all vestige of hope and of nationality seemed obliterated from their crushed natures. So God seemed to have forgotten his servant David, while the heir of the throne of Israel wandered a fugitive in the limestone caves of the wilderness of Engedi, in danger of falling every day into the hands of Saul. "Why standest thou afar off, O God," he cries, in almost hopeless agony of spirit.

But what were all these instances of seeming forgetfulness compared with that when he seemed to have forsaken his only-begotten Son; when he suffered him, amid convulsions of nature, and outcries of anguish and amazement, to sink in the embrace of death, to be sealed up in a tomb? What gloom was that which for three days wrapped our world! No wonder the Apostles were confounded and demoralized. A world with a DEAD CHRIST—is not that a forsaken world? Might not God with reason, be supposed to have forgotten it? Carrying such a burden on its bosom, it might well be supposed to have sunk altogether out of the line of God's beneficent purposes, and even out of his providential regard. But as we well know, there was no forgetting, as there never is, on the part of God. In due season, the proof of remembrance came. The Dead Christ was raised. Hope returned to the hearts of the Apostles. The Church was filled with life, with miraculous energy, with the Holy Spirit. The world is a redeemed, not a forgotten world.

God has remembered his true Church, when nearly crushed by persecutors. He brought it out of the Catacombs, where it seemed to be forgotten, and placed it on the throne of the Caesars. He brought it from the cloisters and hidden places of the middle ages to the open day of the Reformation and the leadership of modern civilization; from its refuges in "Alpine Mountains Cold," to be the teacher and Evangelizer of the descendants of her bitterest and bloodiest persecutors, the Reformer of the territories of the Pope himself.

With our own eyes, in our own land, we have seen one of the most signal instances of God's remembrance in human history. In our day, the centuries of his range seeming forgetfulness of the enslaved African race in our country came to a sudden, surprising end. When he seemed most completely to have forgotten; when the oppressor seemed about to widen vastly the arena, and to lengthen and strengthen the lease, of his power; when morality, Christianity and free government itself seemed about to combine, perversely and corruptly to vindicate and sustain the outrage, then God remembered. And all the delayed judgment of centuries was summed up in that quadrennium of remembrance.

Have faith in God though he seems to forget. Let the story of the past throw light upon the present and the future. History, both sacred and profane, is written to show us that God remembers. Let us bear up hopefully, under untoward appearances. We and our whole generation may die, while God seems still to be forgetting. Thousands of soldiers of the good cause fall while the issue of the conflict is uncertain. We may be shut up in a dark and tempest-tossed ark; the

storm may rage without abatement; the waters may swell and rise, until every vestige of our past hopes and dependences is swept away. Let us believe in the God who remembered Noah at last. When our hearts fail us, let us turn to the bow of promise, set in the cloud, upon the skirts of the retreating storm, token of God's covenant of mercy with man and the earth for perpetual generations. "As it lights up the dark ground that just before was discharging itself in flashes of lightning, it gives us an idea of the victory of God's love over the black and fiery wrath, originating as it does, from the effects of the sun upon the sable vault, it represents to the senses the readiness of the heavenly light to penetrate the earthly obscurity; spanned between heaven and earth, it announces peace between God and man; arching the horizon, it proclaims the all-embracing universality of the covenant of grace."

### THE POPE'S LAST DELIVERANCE.

The problem of the Roman Church in its relation to American institutions is considerably complicated by its relations to the institutions of the Old World. The problem of becoming "all things to all men" is not so simple to the Pope as it was to the Apostle, mainly because the two policies are not founded in a like clearness of sincerity, and honesty of purpose.

Father Hecker of New York, has been informing our Western people that Romanism is the only religion consistent with our free institutions, that our system of government presupposes a natural goodness and wisdom in men, which the Protestant doctrine of Total Depravity denies. Pius IX., poor man, is too much involved with the political concerns of Europe, to pay due heed to the necessities of the work in America, and so mercilessly contradicts Father Hecker. The Eldest Son of the Church—the Austrian Hapsburgh—has found that he cannot continue to be both a foremost European monarch and an obedient Son of the Church. He has given his imperial assent to a series of laws which approximate Austrian institutions in some degree to those of America. Liberty is there, as with us, granted to hold and teach any religious opinion, and to establish colleges and schools and periodicals for its propagation. Civil marriage is to be valid; the national cemeteries are to be open to heretics as well as Catholics; the children of mixed marriages are to be brought up—the girls in the faith of their mother and the boys in that of their father; the control of public education is to be taken out of the hands of the priests and conducted under the supervision of the State.

These Americanizing laws, the Pope has the candor to tell us, in a recent allocution are "odious" and "abominable,"—"in flagrant contradiction of the doctrines of the Catholic religion" and "of natural right itself." Had his Holiness stopped here it might have been thought a mere matter of difference of religious opinion, with which the political world had nothing to do. But no;—this petty civil ruler,—who since the Battle of Mentana has been the pupil and the vassal of Napoleon III.,—proceeds to "declare those decrees null and powerless in their effect, both as regards the present and the future" and exhorts their authors "not to forget the censures and spiritual punishments" which may fall on them if contumacious. To which Baron von Beust, the Protestant Premier of Austria, responds that his Holiness is an officious meddler and a busy body in other men's matters.

If we needed any evidence that Rome had not changed in her fundamental principles, and that the liberalizing talk of American Romanists like Hecker is utter falsehood, this document furnishes that evidence. Our national laws differ from those of Austria simply in that they are more "odious" and "abominable;" our marriages are in the view of his Holiness mere concubines; our school system an offence to God and man; our toleration of all opinions a wicked disregard of, and indifference to the truth. It is true that Rome has not had the candor to make the application to ourselves; but place and distance can make no difference as to truth and principle. Rome has told us what we are to expect, if the Roman Catholic Church should ever obtain such a preponderance as to control the legislation of America.

The revolt of Austria completes the work of the German Reformation as such, and divides Europe into three great religious territories, corresponding to the three great waves of immigration by which that continent was settled millenniums ago. The Church of Rome is the Church of the Latin race, which has inherited the language, the centralizing policy, and the ecclesiastical-traditionalism of the Roman Empire. The Protestant Church is the Church of the Teutonic race, of the champions of individual liberty,

the family life, and Bible truth. The Greek Church is that of the half-civilized Slavonic race, whose achievements and influence in the world's history are among the possibilities of the future. No one of these, it is manifest, can claim to be geographically the Catholic Church, which is received *semper, ubique et ab omnibus*.

### THE MINORITY AT HARRISBURG.

#### LETTER FROM AMBROSE.

DEAR PRESBYTERIAN: I observe that in your criticisms upon the late Assembly, some of us get now and then a decided thump, right and left; especially some who are counted as "the minority;" the substance of the allegation being, that their side was not managed with much skill or spirit. Will you allow me to say a word in regard to that minority; or at least that part of it of which I have some knowledge?

There was in fact no organized minority in the Assembly. It consisted mostly of fragments here and there; of such as by their circumstances had been led to doubt, but with little acquaintance, or even knowledge of, each other. Had there been the knowledge at the beginning which existed at the close of the Assembly, the opposition would have been somewhat differently managed.

The more active opposition came from the West. None of the Western members perhaps had made the union question a very special subject of study, with the exception of Dr. Patterson; though some of them had given it a fair amount of attention. Those had studied it most, who were in closest contact with O. S. ministers, and to whom it was a matter of more immediate concern. Dr. Patterson, from his position, his history, and his tastes, had perhaps given it more thought; and was better posted in regard to the attitude of the question in both branches of the Church, than any man in our body; or perhaps in either. But the North-western ministers have been readers of the *North-western Presbyterian*; and some of them had been alarmed by the tone of the paper; asking with some anxiety the question—If we are to be taken into union with this sort of thing, how are we to fare when it is accomplished? Now a considerable number of our Western men, and they not inferior men either, are distinctively *New School* men; and some of the Western delegates went to the Assembly charged, that if union could come with our freedom secured, it were welcome; otherwise not.

#### FACILITIES OF INFORMATION.

But the delegates—some of them—lacked light, as to two questions. First, as to the proposed Basis. It had not been published; and in fact our newspapers had refused, under advice I suppose, to discuss, for the most part, the question of union; lest it should get us into a snarl, and hazard or defeat it. This was and is regretted by some of us, as an unwise policy in our view. How were we to get any light, as to the advisability of union? How could we settle it, whether the *North-western Presbyterian* represented any considerable part of the O. S. body? or whether, as some alleged, its utterances represented only the views of a little circle, or even of one man? We must think that to assume in the beginning that union was desirable, and to publish only what favored it, was not the best way to get at it. I am not unaware that there was a slight opening of columns—of yours at least,—just before the Assembly. But it had been understood from the start that union could not be fully discussed, and it was not.

New light was wanted on the whole great question, as to whether there was that feeling in the two bodies—especially in the O. S.—which would make union safe and peaceful. The Basis, though not published, had been reported more or less; and was generally unsatisfactory to us. Still with some, if the bodies of the Churches were in accord, the Basis was not of so much account, and might be taken even though objectionable. In this attitude of things the Assembly met; and the delegates spoken of, went on with the hope, that the Basis might be presented; and a free investigation of the desirability of union upon it, by questions asked and answered, secured.

#### HOW WE FARED.

As soon as the Assembly came together, it was evident that no such thing was proposed. Union was not a question at all. It was already decided; and the only question was how to bring it about. This form of it began and went along, in the devotional meetings, in the prayers; scripture readings, hymns, and exhortations. How many, from the moderator down, quoted that prayer of our Lord, "That they all may be one, etc.;" as if its only possible reference were to an organic union. Then in the body itself union began its course, and was propelled as a chariot

that was to ride down opposition. The report of Dr. Adams, applauded as it was at every period, and without waiting for periods; with its arguments in advance of the Basis, and stuffed like a joint of veal all around with a stump speech for union; and the majority having it their own way for some six days, with only Dr. Patterson's dissent from the Committee's Report, to break the force of the current—all this you may perceive was not very encouraging to people who had doubts to solve, or questions to ask. Then one of the minority, on whom reliance was placed for aid, surrendered at the first fire. Then too, Dr. Patterson's reception, in his endeavor to present his dissent, was not very assuring. These things did not strike the majority as they did us; but they came near at times with some, to stirring a little indignation.

#### THE PHILOSOPHY OF IT.

Now, do not think that in mentioning these things, I am doling the complaints of a dissatisfied party. It is no such thing. I am free to say that to some it seemed, at the time, that the thing had been "cut and dried"—that all these things argued a plan which was being put through; and as the New York men were, by their position and experiences, in the interest of union, it was referred to them as the operators. I am satisfied that all this was unfounded; and that your own explanation is the real one, viz.: that the warp and woof of the body—the eldership and the ministers who did not talk, were interwoven with the spirit of union; and that it bubbled up on all occasions. But you may guess how formidable all that string of D. D.'s, from the metropolis and its adjuncts, seemed as they were shaken together. Their rattling scares me yet.

#### THE PROGRESS.

There were two specially pinching occasions to the minority, yet where they must speak, or fail utterly. One was at the close of Dr. Adams' Report; when Dr. Patterson presented his dissent. If required a courage equal to that which faces a battery to present it. None of the minority will forget that, I reckon. The other occasion was on the sixth day; after the surrender of one of the leaders—after Chancellor Green's gushing appeal for union—after the majority had sung, and prayed, and preached union for six days—after Drs. Skinner and Rankin had advised us to give a "unanimous vote"—and no word, except Dr. Patterson's dissent, had been uttered in question of the one view which ruled the body. I do not know what was in the mind or intentions of all the members, but it was the supposition of some, at this point, that opposition to the purpose of the majority was in danger of utter collapse. And I must still believe that no further dissent would have been uttered, had it not been for the consideration that a constituency at home would be reasonably dissatisfied, were the case to go by default, as it seemed about to do. If you will consult the true order of debate on Wednesday, (your columns do not show the order) you will find who set the ball rolling in another direction. Then came the utterance of others; Dr. Patterson's complete argument included. Now what occasion further was there for "minnie bullets," or musketry, or revolvers, or outlass slashing, to hurt or to sting? So far as the Basis, the object of the minority was gained. Dissent had got itself well ventilated; and no rebashing of Dr. Patterson's argument by others would have done anything but weaken it. Perhaps the Assembly owes something to some of its members; that they had the self-restraint to keep so far still.

As to the other matter, viz.: the question of readiness in the respective bodies to be placed in union, that was slowly getting itself answered in various ways. So that all the objects of the minority were substantially gained. The matter was kept before the body long enough to secure it a fair ventilation; which was all that was expected so far as this correspondent knows.

It will be remembered perhaps, that one of the minority proposed an amendment that all the doctrinal and ecclesiastical part of the Basis be stricken out; and that the Confession of Faith be the Basis. It was not seconded. Yet before the adjournment, a committee of the O. S. came over with that very proposal. It would have been offered, and pressed to a vote, as an amendment, at the time the vote was taken; and would then have secured some votes at least, but for one reason. There was such a tendency to excitement and disorder, and such was the difficulty of getting the floor, that for the sake of a mere test, it did not promise to pay, and was not worth the struggle.

Now, when the Basis is accepted by both Assemblies, and sent down to the Presbyteries, this project is in part, revived by a section of the body, *cut and dried*. If any of us go for it, it will not be with that tenth article retained! But if

we shall hope to see all uses as adopted out of the way. But at present we can only vote on the Basis in your columns. The purpose of "proceeding" is correctly represented off the shaky meeting, with the purpose who will be in no hurry to clear of the Basis. None of us, one Presbyterian suffering for discipline, on acceptance We, New School men per se, ourselves, writer does not reckon himself in the sense one—have got along very well, number of years. But if union comes and itself peaceful, very well. No one will more than the doubters. It is shown that a considerable number of the O. S. minority, and who might, if they chose, make trouble in a united Church, live along in the border States. In case of union, might not such slough away to the Southern Church? And if so, might not that fact conduce to harmony in the Northern body? But if union fails, it will not be probably on the N. S. side. If it comes and proves to be troublesome, stormy, etc. etc., then—  
Yours,  
AMBROSE.  
BAY CITY, July 27, 1868.

### NATIONAL TEMPERANCE CONVENTION.

This body began its annual session in the First Presbyterian Church of Cleveland, Ohio, on the morning of July 27th. Dr. Wolcott welcomed the Convention to the city. The attendance was large; the spirit enthusiastic. The leading advocates of the cause were present from every part of the North. Neither Massachusetts nor any Southern or border State except Maryland and Kentucky, answered when asked to report the state of the cause. Maine, New Hampshire, Michigan and Iowa, reported the existence of prohibitory laws, and most of the other States announced their desire for them. On the second day the proceedings were not so harmonious, the main difficulty being the determination of some persons and societies to thrust themselves into prominence. The attempt to secure a hearing from the delegates of the religious bodies—associations, conferences, Synods, Presbyteries, &c.—was choked off after much confusion. The resolutions reported by the proper Committee were warmly discussed, and some of them amended after much opposition. The ladies took part—some of them very sensibly, some in a way to convince the audience that Paul was not such "a crabbed old bachelor" after all. A finally adopted, these resolutions, embody the best wisdom of the body, and are important as being the platform of the coming temperance campaign. They are from the pen of Prof. Seelye, of Amherst College, and will be found on our fourth page.

We have received of Lippincott & Co., the first volume of Mr. Barnes' "Notes Critical and Explanatory on the Psalms." We hope to notice it more at length in our next, but we presume that many of our readers will not wait to hear our opinion of it, before possessing themselves of a copy of the work. It is printed well, and bound very tastefully.

We have received the first number of the *Delaware Blatter*, a monthly illustrated family newspaper. The letter-press is German, but the illustrations seem to be English—at least they are perfectly intelligible. The contents we judge to be quite unobjectionable, and if the paper will contribute to the promotion of healthy literary tastes among our German population, we bid it good speed. Office 28 South Fourth St.

THE AMERICAN BOARD.—We are gratified to learn that the receipts of the Board for July were nearly \$60,000,—more than \$28,000 higher than in July, 1867. Still to meet the expenses of its financial year, a very large sum must be received in August, the closing month. Indeed the recent sudden advance in the price of gold, adding largely to the Board's expenses, and the fitting off of several families about to sail, will make that sum somewhat greater than was expected. The Treasurer informs us that not less than \$140,000 will be needed to prevent a debt. May the liberal still devise liberal things. For August of last year the receipts were \$33,610. Can this sum be as nearly doubled as were the receipts for July?

Subscribers who choose to settle for a year in advance, besides the amount for which they are charged, can do so at a reduction of 50 cents from the regular rates. Two years strictly in advance \$5. City \$6.