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American Presbyterian.

THURSDAY, MAY 20, 1869.

—The General Assembly meets to-day in New York City, in the church of the Covenant, Rev. G. L. Prentiss, D. D., pastor, and will be opened with a sermon by Rev. Jona. F. Stearns, D. D., the Moderator of the previous Assembly.

—The Presbytery of South Carolina was organized by our missionaries in that State at Columbia, May 11th.

—Mr. Barnes' reputation as a Commentator is nowhere higher than among the excellent Christian people of Wales. They are celebrated for their large Sunday-schools, which are attended alike by old and young, and when Mr. Barnes' Commentaries appeared, they received them with enthusiasm, translated them into Welsh and circulated them extensively. The name of the commentator is widely known and deeply revered among the people. A few days ago, two strange clergymen came to the First Church on Washington Square, and asked the sexton if that was the church of Albert Barnes? Being answered in the affirmative, they begged to be admitted into the building; when inside, they asked if they might be allowed to sit in the pulpit? The request was granted, and with tokens of unusual gratification they ascended the steps, stood where Mr. Barnes had stood, and sitting down they sang a hymn in a foreign tongue. Seeing their great interest, the sexton invited them into the study, and great was their delight to be in the place where those commentaries were written, from which they declared they had drawn such profit and edification. They did not leave their names, but simply said they were Welshmen.

—We have, on another occasion, shown that more than one-quarter of the Protestant world may be reckoned Presbyterian in affinities and outward organization. A Pam-Presbyterian Assembly would, indeed, as was declared at the time of the Pan-Anglican Assembly, quite throw this latter into the shade. Only the Lutherans of Protestant bodies, can compare with the Presbyterians in numbers; and even their form of government shows decided Presbyterian affinities; but both of these bodies are so broken by lines of nationality or denomination, that they cannot be reckoned as one, in the same sense as the Anglican or Roman Churches. The inroads of Rationalism into the ranks of Lutheranism and Presbyterianism on the continent of Europe have also been very great and lamentable, but the darkness has long since begun to give way, while the Anglican church, it is to be feared, is only entering the cloud.

Of Methodists, there are of all sorts, including African Churches in our country, Wesleyans in England, and the so-called United Brethren about three and a half millions. Allowing three persons to each member, the Methodist population of the world would be ten and a half millions. It must be remembered that Methodism is but a century old, and it may be truly said of it, that it has taught the Protestant Church the great principle of aggressiveness in working for Christ, and has revived faith in the possibility of a recurrence of Pentecostal seasons. Born in revival, it has been the forerunner of the modern revival era of the Church.

The Baptists all over the world, including Campbellites and Mennonites, count about two and a quarter millions, with about seven millions of population.

The main strength and the largest separate organizations of these two latter Churches are in this country. Here the Methodists count two millions three hundred and fifty thousand, representing seven millions of the people, their largest organization numbering 1,255,115. The Baptists in this country, of all branches count nearly two millions, with six millions of population.

The Congregationalists in all the world, number about half a million, three-fifths of that number being in this country. In government, the Baptists are congregational, so that as far as mere polity goes; there are about two and a quarter million Congregationalists in the world, with a following of over eight millions of people. No denomination of Christendom has exerted an influence, proportioned to its numbers, at all equal to that of the three hundred thousand orthodox Congregationalists and their predecessors in this country.

The other denominations, including Friends, Unitarians, Universalists, and every sort of singular or erroneous persuasion, reckoning itself Christian, would not altogether make a respectable show, compared with any one of the above great divisions of the Protestant Church.

PROPOSALS FOR HASTY REUNION EXAMINED.

[From an Occasional Correspondent.]

I rejoice to see that several of the papers that are supposed to reflect the sentiments of the two Schools of Presbyterians whose re-union is now under consideration, begin to exhibit signs of discretion and caution on this subject. I have just read Dr. Monfort's article in the April number of the *Presbyterian Quarterly*, on the re-union movement, and I must say that I have been surprised by the coolness with which he assumes, without a particle of evidence, and against notorious facts, that the two parties now fully understand each other at all points, and are fully prepared for union without any terms at all, beyond the acceptance of "the standards." The fact that the Old School Presbyteries have very generally rejected the basis proposed by the Assemblies, and that the New School Presbyteries have, with only a few exceptions, approved the same basis, do not seem to disturb Dr. Monfort's confidence that the two bodies are fully ready for union. But perhaps he takes it for granted that both bodies are willing to unite on the basis of "the standards" alone, if other plans fail. This, however, has not been shown by the action of a majority of the Presbyteries on either side, as far as I have seen. Certainly a majority of the New School Presbyteries have not signified their willingness to "trust" the Old School majority for the adjustment of all questions after the union, when they have manifested so strong an indisposition to be bound beforehand by the most reasonable terms that could be defined.

After all, Dr. M. and other zealous friends of union like him, appear to doubt the readiness of the two branches for re-union. For they seem to be afraid to wait for the settlement of the question by regular overture from the Assemblies, and by the deliberate and explicit action of the Presbyteries. Hence, Dr. M. gives us a fallacious argument to prove that the Assemblies have the right to consummate the union without the consent of the Presbyteries, on the presumption that all parties are agreed on the subject. For this purpose he appeals to the absorption of several Presbyteries by the original Synod of the Church, and of the Presbytery of Charleston in 1811, and the Associate Reformed Synod in 1822, by the General Assembly, when there was no objection, and where union "on equal terms" was out of the question. He also tries to strengthen his position by the erroneous assertion that both parties held, in 1837, that the Assembly had "the right to agree upon a division," without submitting the question to the Presbyteries. The New School men denied this right in 1837, and therefore, Dr. Monfort's premise is a mistake.

Plainly the Assemblies, in such a case, have no right to do, without unanimous consent, what they have not the right to undo. And the Assembly would have no right to divide the Church when once united. The two bodies are now organically separate, and to unite them would involve an organic change, which is, in effect, a constitutional change, and can, therefore, be accomplished only by the specific action of the Presbyteries. Dr. M. contends for the same kind of "extra-constitutional" power on the part of the Assemblies, by which Dr. R. J. Breckenridge attempted to justify the excising acts of 1837. Are we, then, to rush into union by a *coup d'etat* like that which rent us asunder, and by the assumption of "extra-constitutional" power on the part of the Assemblies in the consummating act?

Why cannot Dr. M. trust the Presbyteries with the final decision of this question? Is he not afraid that they will not sanction any plan which the Assemblies may recommend? And is not this the explanation of his anxiety for final action by the Assemblies? Has it, then, come to this that we are to be forced into union, not by the action of three-fourths, or even of a majority of the Presbyteries, but by a majority of the Commissioners in the Assemblies, without a shadow of constitutional authority? We can tell those who are plotting this piece of strategy, that no such method of effecting re-union will be acknowledged as valid, by nearly all the Presbyteries.

Dr. Monfort maintains that both parties are agreed in regard to the right of examination, because a majority of the New School Presbyteries have consented to waive their own convictions on this point, rather than defeat the plan of union submitted by the assemblies. This is logic for you. In the Presbytery of Chicago only one minister voted for the Tenth Article on its own merits, and yet thirteen members of the body voted to approve the basis as a whole. Dr. M. easily believes what it suits his purpose to believe. I have met with but very few of our ministers who admit that the

right of examination is either expressed or implied in our constitution; but I have met with a large number who were willing to concede this alleged right for the sake of union. But Dr. M. wishes to hold us to this concession, after the plan which we have reluctantly agreed to accept, notwithstanding this offensive feature in it, has been rejected by his branch of the Church.

It is manifest that he and other like friends of re-union on his side, expect that the Old School majority in the united church will be able to carry out their views at all points, and that the union will, after all, be like that of Jonah and the whale. What means the clamor for union on "the standards pure and simple," after the rejection of all other terms? It means just this; that the Old School majority shall arrange everything to suit themselves; when we have surrendered our institutions, our property, our churches and ourselves to be disposed of at their discretion.

It is said that there are enough liberal men on the Old School side, to give the liberal party the majority, when the two bodies shall come together. But I am persuaded that we have as many men that will yield to the pertinacious Old School party for the sake of peace, as there are in their connection who will stand up for the liberty we desire to secure.

We are exhorted to "trust our brethren." But how can we trust them, so long as they refuse to make any promises, or to give us any assurance, whatever, that they will allow us the liberty which we now enjoy? and when many of them tell us, in words, that they will not vote to ordain, or receive to their Presbyteries, any man who holds the very same views that are now held by many of our ablest and most honored ministers? Never before have I been so profoundly convinced that we ought not to have union until our Old School brethren are willing to say, in unequivocal language, that they will meet us on a basis broad enough to be occupied by men of Old and New School views as equals. Such an explicit understanding is, in the judgment of an increasing number among us, a *sine qua non* to a safe re-union. If our brethren are determined to oppose the reception into the ministry of the Church of all men holding the views of Beman, Duffield or Barnes, we are equally determined to insist upon the free admission of such men.

Are we then to rush into a "conflict of ages"? or shall we wait till we can agree to allow existing differences, before we consummate an external union, which will be a curse or a blessing according as it is, or is not, an expression of a corresponding internal unity? Let us at least wait until a large majority of the Presbyteries shall agree upon a basis of union, about the meaning of which there can be no reasonable doubt. If the spirit of union is not pervading enough to live another year, without the final settlement of the question by a desperate exercise of doubtful and disputed powers by the Assemblies, there is no sufficient preparation for re-union. The two parties are beginning to look the real difficulties in the face. Let the whole case be understood as it is, and if we can then unite on a basis broad enough to admit both Schools on a practical equality, we shall say, Amen; but if we cannot unite thus, then let us continue to do the Lord's work as distinct tribes of Israel, in our different ways.

BOLDNESS OF THE GOSPEL.

The message of the Gospel is no mere piece of friendly advice or warning to men. Its tones indeed, are gentle and winning, and its spirit unfathomably tender; but its true nature, its claims, its purposes and avowals are the boldest, broadest, and most uncompromising ever presented to men. It comes from the only true God as the only infallible rule of life, and ground of hope for man. Among numerous forms of religion, it does not simply ask a co-ordinate, or even a very high, but a supreme place. It is not the traditional belief of a race or a nation, to take its chance with others, but it is the one embodiment of the revealed will of God to the whole human family, the symbol of God's reconciliation with the fallen race, fitted alike for the wants of all and destined with the divine might of truth to prevail over all.

The Gospel does not dally or trifle with the corrupt tastes and tendencies of men. Springing from the eternal throne, the river of the water of life rises higher in its course through humanity, than the feeble and polluted waters of earthly origin. It is no mere expression in literature or in art of the passions, the faculties, the aspirations and imaginations of the creature. It is not complaisant or accommodating. It goes right athwart the strongest prejudices and native propensities of men. It boldly pronounces them a fallen and totally corrupt race. It summons them to the bar of divine justice, and pronounces all the world guilty before God. Finding men to-

tally immersed in things of time and sense, it refuses to follow and blend with, and thus dignify their carnal impulses, but, espouses and raises up the neglected and despised spiritual part of man, and insists on making the world, and time, and mere intellect, and honor, and wealth, and pleasure, and everything that unredeemed man is most strongly inclined to seek, secondary to that. It does not hesitate to describe man as a lost, helpless, rebellious creature, deserving of hell forever. Meeting him in his pride, it tells him his first duty is to humble himself before God, and repent, and take salvation as a gift without money and without price. Meeting him in his selfishness, it tells him to take up his cross and deny himself and make himself a living sacrifice. Meeting him in his secularism, and his worldly enterprise, it asks him: What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Meeting him in his self-satisfied formalism, it demands truth, in the inward parts; it lays duty, home, with tremendous sanctions, to his inmost conscience, until it shuts him up, under a broken law, to Christ.

How bold towards God, is the Gospel scheme of salvation! Origen exclaimed: O Paul, glad I am that it was thou and not I, that said, "the foolishness of God." It would have been the extreme of hardness in man to conceive of God in the attitude of amazing condescension presented in the Gospel. How the spirit labors in gaining any worthy and adequate view of the wondrous plan of Redemption! A God incarnate among fallen creatures, upon this mere speck in His universe, sorrowing, suffering persecution, ignominiously dying, and rising again, founding His Church, and communicating His Spirit to men, following them with His divine love, and drawing them with infinite tenderness from their rebellion, and making them mystically and eternally one with Himself; all this is too bold a scheme for man's daring to invent. It is the boldness of the Gospel.

Boldness springing from intense moral earnestness, and from ardent holy love,—this is the peculiar quality which should appear in every Christian character as the aggressive spirit of the Gospel. This was the secret of Paul's peculiar energy, and the meaning of his favorite word, "parrhesia"—boldness. Those who dally and dawdle with the message, who speak smooth things to the hearers, who do not grasp the great facts of man's moral condition, and of its fearful or joyful possibilities, who are only bold and strong in the utterance of views belittling the dimensions of Gospel truth, or in presenting the temporal and less important bearings of Christianity; those who timidly shrink from an open and daily witnessing for Christ in the various relations of life; all such need yet to learn the spirit of the Gospel they profess to embrace and to teach.

THE CONTROL OF THE MUSIC OF THE CHURCH.

A legal decision has just been given by Judge Pierce of this city in the matter of amendments to the charter of the Walnut St. Church, proposing to give the control of the church music to the Trustees, to which objections were filed by other parties in the church.

The part of the amendment to which exceptions were filed is as follows:—

"The said trustees shall have power to appoint an organist (subject to the approval of the session), a sexton, and any other persons they may think necessary for the interest or convenience of the corporation, and to pay their salaries."

The exceptions filed are as follows:—
"First. The music of the church being a part of the religious services or worship in the sanctuary, should be subject to the control of the session of the church, and the trustees, whose duties relate exclusively to the temporal affairs of the corporation, ought to have no voice in the election of any one appointed to conduct the worship of the house of God. This, exceptant believes to be in accordance with the fundamental law and usage of the Presbyterian Church."

"Second. The language of the proposed amendment is objected to for indefiniteness. It proposes to confer on the trustees an unlimited power of appointment."

Judge Pierce, in his decision, quotes the Digests of both Assemblies, as showing first, that Trustees have charge of "the public money of the congregation," New Digest, page 48; (2.) That changes in the Psalms must be decided by vote of the whole congregation (*Dig.* p. 108.) (3.) That the Assembly itself took charge of the revision of the Psalms (*Dig.* p. 582.) (4.) That the whole internal arrangement of a church, as to worship and order, is committed to the minister and session (O. S. Digest, p. 197.) He also referred to the Form of Government 9: 6; and the Directory for Worship, as showing that the spiritual government, including public worship, is committed to the minister and church session. Walnut St. church, being a Presbyterian church, must conform to the general laws of that body. His language is:

"It is a Presbyterian church, and is to be governed in its worship by the usages and forms of that Church.

The duty of directing that is committed, by the law of the Church, to the minister and church session. A majority of the congregation, however numerous, cannot direct otherwise, or give to the trustees a power to control or affect the public worship in any manner whatever. This is according to the forms and usages of the Presbyterian Church, and is declared by the highest judiciary in one branch of the Church to be the fundamental law of the Church."

Whether the Trustees are bound to provide the expenses of an arrangement for public worship, made by the minister and session, without consulting the corporation, the Judge does not decide. He says:

"But if such expenses be incurred in the necessary maintenance of the public worship, and there be funds of the Church adequate for their payment, it would seem to be the duty of the trustees to so apply them; and such duty could, perhaps, be enforced by proceedings in equity if the trustees should so refuse. But of this we express no opinion."

That Trustees are not the proper officers to control the worship of the church, appears from the fact that

"As trustees, they are not in any sense a part of the Church, and are not amenable to discipline, and may be through negligence or want of knowledge in selecting them, men of immoral lives. To hold that such persons should govern and control the worship of the Church would be to introduce an element into the Church that might prove its disintegration and destruction. Such a view is repugnant to common sense, and repellant to every proper idea of the worship of the Supreme Being."

After quoting various legal decisions to show that the minority of a congregation, adhering and submitting to the regular order of the church, is the true congregation, and that the majority cannot control inconsistently with the laws of the organism, Judge Pierce pronounces the decision of the court as follows:

"Applying the fundamental law of the Presbyterian Church, which gives the direction of the public worship to the minister and church session, and the rules of law which define the rights of ministers in church organizations, to the question submitted to us in this case, we think that the exceptions to the proposed fourth amendment to the charter are well taken, and must be sustained. The amendment proposes to give power to the trustees to appoint an organist (subject to the approval of the session.) The duties of an organist are connected with the public worship. This is solely under the control of the minister and church session. It is a violation of the fundamental law of the Church to place this power in the hands of the trustees, even though it be qualified by requiring the approval of the session. If provision be made by the congregation or the trustees for the employment of an organist, the exclusive power of appointment, direction and removal of him belongs to the church session, otherwise they have not that direction of the public worship which, by the law of the Presbyterian Church, is committed to them."

"The same objections apply to that other portion of the proposed amendment which empowers the trustees to appoint any other persons they may think necessary for the interest or convenience of the corporation, and to fix their salaries; if it be intended, as is alleged, to provide thereby for the employment of a choir to assist in the church music."

"The language is further objectionable as being too general, and conferring powers on the trustees not sufficiently ascertained and limited as to prevent confusion and possible conflict of authority in a church organization, when two separate bodies, within their respective spheres, direct and control the associate body."

"The exceptions to the parts of the proposed fourth amendment, above specified, are sustained. The other proposed amendments are approved."

Judge Allison being a member of the corporation petitioning for these amendments, takes no part in this decision.

We have not made ourselves acquainted with the circumstances under which this case has come into the courts, but we deem the decision matter of congratulation among those interested for the maintenance of the spirituality of the most delightful part of public worship. The liability of introducing immoral men into our boards of Trustees, is we believe, happily but slight, and is only mentioned because the law must take cognizance of bare possibilities in deciding upon general principles; our boards of Trustees are, for the most part, men of high character, and unselfishly giving their time and means to the temporal welfare of the Church. But it undoubtedly makes a very wrong and injurious impression of the nature of church music, when it falls into the hands of officers appointed for the secular business of the church. The decision of Judge Pierce is valuable, because it will emphatically remind ministers, elders, trustees, people, and the public generally, that the music of the church is not a secular but a spiritual matter; and we hope it will not only stimulate sessions to exercise a proper control over it, but will aid the reaction now going forward, tending to re-establish it among the truly devotional parts of the church service.

—The Baptist churches of Oregon number near two thousand members, but not one of them is self-supporting. Many are quite wealthy, but the first preachers kept up such tirades against "college-learned and hireling ministry," that they educated the people into not giving to education and the decent support of the ministry. A preacher farms six days and preaches on the seventh to four or six churches alternately, and must speak without premeditation even to be acceptable. He is offered sometimes some compensation if his getting around his circuit involves expense. One church pay their preacher the wages of a farm-hand to take his place during the days or half days of his absence from his farm.