

Original Communications.

SOME OBJECTIONS TO PRESBYTERIAN UNION CONSIDERED.

[A COVENANTER'S VIEW.]

MR. EDITOR:—In the last meeting of the Committees of the Old and New School and United Presbyterian Churches in your city, the platform they agreed to recommend to their respective Assemblies, was the platform of the Philadelphia General Convention, with slight modifications. We think this basis admirable, and rejoice at the prospect of Union which still seems to be opening before these Churches. We earnestly hope that the Reformed Presbyterian Church, will not, after so honorable a part in originating this measure, fall behind in prosecuting it to its glorious end.

We are reminded, however, of objections against this blessed movement, by reading the protest against it lately written and published by Dr. Breckenridge. Dr. Breckenridge will always be held in deserved admiration. But his praise will not, in the judgment of posterity depend upon his agency in the excisions of 1837, nor on this frantic opposition to reunion at the present time.

There are some who dislike Presbyterian union because its name gives it an unduly restricted character. "But we do not think that the effort for union is to stop when the Presbyterian bodies are all united. The Presbyterian union will only be a step towards a larger fulfilment of our Lord's prayer that they all may be one. We always regret that in the British isles the efforts of such kings as William, and such divines as Tillotson and Leighton to unite the Established and the dissenting Churches failed of success. If their power had equalled their disposition, unity would have been restored to our Protestant forces; in which case we have reason to think the results of their contest with Popery would have been different and less humiliating. Absorbed in dissensions about bands and gowns they allowed Rome with all the power that ever springs from unity and organization to recover her lost dominions, and extend her conquests in every part of the world.

We have more reason to be humbled, than enraged, now, when men upbraid us with the "failure of Protestantism." Our defeats might yet help us to victory if they would teach us this one lesson:—that the success of the Church will always be in the ratio of her unity, her freedom from internal schism, her concentration of her forces against the enemy without. The Church of Rome through her unity has withstood and prevailed, although Scripture and reason are against her, while the divisions of Protestants although Scripture and reason are in their favor, have prevented any considerable advances.

This lesson is forcing itself upon the conviction of earnest Christians. And before a divine purpose to extend the Gospel of Christ Jesus throughout the world, the petty differences that keep apart Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Congregational Christians, will vanish, and they "all will be one—that the world may believe" in the divine mission of Messiah. It is not, therefore, in any exclusive spirit that we advocate PRESBYTERIAN union, but on the principle of accepting what is attainable, rather than lose all by demanding what may be yet premature and remote.

But the objections to Presbyterian union come mainly from the opposite direction. While the basis is considered too restricted by some, it is denounced as too liberal by many. And if it were narrowed down a thousand fold more than the Bible warrants, there would still be GOOD MEN to charge it with latitudinarianism.

The most of the objections are mere unworthy appeals to prejudice and denominational pride.

That our stricter churches have better preachers, and that they educate a more solid and practical piety than the other bodies which are to participate in this union; that it will not be a union, but an absorption of the less by the greater, in which the "venerable name" of our church will be lost, the record of long contentings for the crown rights of the King of nations be blotted out, and the chain of our identity with our martyred forefathers and Reformed Presbyterians the world over be sundered,—these and similar rhetorical utterances are rather appeals to passion than words of truth and soberness.

Let these objectors inform themselves whether this supposed superiority of our preachers, and of our type of religious character is a fact, or not rather an instance of that spiritual pride which is always born of bigotry and exclusiveness. In Job's day there were those who said, "We are the people." And our Saviour rebuked in the Pharisees this sentiment, "Stand by, I am holier than thou."

Let them remember too that our church, in all her true excellencies, will not be sunk, but be perpetuated by this union.

The truth, so far as it is embodied in her standards, in the lives of her members, and in the history of her contentings for Jesus she will take with her, as a blessed, leaven into her new connexion, and it will be increasingly operative in proportion to the enlarged field of its operation. And the larger bodies are prepared to welcome this new element, and say it is just what they

need. Not only for the sake of union, but from convictions of advantage, they are ready to accept from us all the higher attainments we may have made as to pastoral duty, family religion, the purity of the church and a Scriptural psalmody.

All that we are required to give up for the sake of this union, is what we ought to give up if no such motive were present: a spirit of intolerance, a want of charity towards the minor or non-essential differences of our Christian brethren. Those who accept and profess the Westminster symbols of faith are substantially agreed. There is no difference on doctrinal or practical points of sufficient importance to justify continued separation. The only real difference is "Testimony bearing," and the extent to which toleration should be exercised towards brethren in the same connexion with ourselves. We confess we think the General Assembly Presbyterians are nearer the truth in this respect than we. And we are persuaded that the framers of the Philadelphia basis, and the Union Committees who recently met in the same place, have reached results, on this subject, very much in advance of any previous attainment of the church.

The kingdom of Christ and the interests of true religion are advancing. Instead of opposing let us take part in the glorious movement. "Blessed are the peace makers; for they shall be called the children of God."

"Yes, but," says the objector, "if we go into this union we must sing hymns." We ask your pardon. By the proposed plan of union, you will be secured in your right to keep and use the psalms.

"Yes," it is replied, "but we will have to bear with our brethren singing hymns." That is true, to a degree. But we have to do that now. We cannot, or do not session our members for singing hymns now. Even ministers who lent their influence to establish the precedent and the law of our Synod in favor of disciplining for this offence have since quieted their people with assurances of impunity from the operation of these measures.

Is it not better to be honest, and profess the principle of toleration on this subject, than to keep up false appearances?

We are prepared to show that the toleration on the psalm question we are recommending is:

1. In harmony with the teachings of Christ and His apostles in the Bible, and the history of the institution of the Christian church.

2. In harmony with a correct interpretation of the standards and the history of the Reformed Presbyterian church. We are not accountable for the glosses, and wrestings, and traditional meanings which men have given to these symbols of our faith. Until the decisions of Synod in 1838, our Testimony on the psalmody of the church had never been narrowed down to the 150. That decision is null and void, for it was reached without first overturning the Presbyteries in regard to the change.

So far then from neglecting the proposed basis of Presbyterian union for its recognition of the principle of toleration, this very feature should commend it to our favor. And we are persuaded that, the more this subject is studied in the light of Scripture and reason, the more will we discover in it the working of the Spirit of God. T. J.

LIMITS OF PRESBYTERIAN UNION.

It seems to be a common impression among those, who favor the Union of the two Assemblies, that the Reunion of all the various branches of the Presbyterian Church of the North into one body would be a desirable and by no means an impracticable thing. Most of those who take this ground concede that it is not likely to be accomplished at once. They think, however, that in the course of a few years the process of liberalization which has been going on in all the smaller bodies, and which will be greatly accelerated by the Reunion of the Assemblies, will end in bringing them all upon a common platform, and in presenting to the world a great united Reformed Church of North America.

That the smaller branches will be greatly influenced by the measure consummated at Pittsburgh next November, is very certain. More than one of the ministry in the most rigid and exclusive of these confess the fact, with rejoicing or with trepidation according to their sympathies. That smaller or greater local minorities in all of them will be drawn into the United Church, and that many of the younger of their ministry will find in it a congenial home, is equally certain.

It is to be presumed that all the pastors and congregations of the three Presbyteries who were virtually excised by the R. P. General Synod at its last meeting, (as well as the congregations and pastors in other parts of that Church who adhere to them), will seek ecclesiastical connections elsewhere, as soon as the suits proposed by Synod's party have been decided by our Supreme Court in banc. It is also to be presumed that the ministerial current which has for years been setting always from the United Presbyterian Church towards the two Presbyterian Churches will not be diminished or retarded by the union of the Assemblies.

Yet, I cannot see that it is either desirable or probable that the present Psalm singing Churches should speedily go out of existence, or be merged in the great central body. They are very useful as temporary arrangements, and their place could not be supplied by any united Church.

They are, so to speak, the nurseries of American Presbyterianism, perpetuating on our soil for the convenience and spiritual comfort of our Presbyterian immigrants, the ecclesiastical systems of the old world, and keeping these brethren Presbyterian until they become American. In this connection we must take into account the stringently conservative character of these brethren and their rigid attachment to the usages and forms which prevail abroad. Whatever they have been used to, is in their eyes, a law of the universe. Grim logic, grimmer wit, grimmest objugation awaits the man who tries to bring absurd changes in the established order of things. In one of our Covenant churches, the pastor—a grave and orthodox Doctor enough—proposed that on the occasion of a communion, the people, to avoid confusion, should come forward to the tables by one aisle and withdraw by the other, instead of approaching by both. But when the first company were complying with his request, an old schoolmaster, whom some of our city fathers remember to their sorrow, sprang from his seat and stopped them, driving them back, like a flock of chickens, with the exclamation, "Gang awa back! Gang awa back! We'll hae nae o' your new ways here!" He spoke for his race, the Scotch Irish of Ulster, as truly as that old elder prayed for them when he besought the Lord that he might be always right, "for you ken I'm unco hard to turn."

That immigration from Ulster is not likely to cease at an early date is well known. In view of all that her people have done for the nation in the past, it would seem to be the nation's loss if it did. The introduction of agricultural improvements has within a few years greatly reduced the number of small farms, and the number of laborers needed for farming in the province. The steam plow, the reaping machine, the horse-rake have left many hands idle, and while there is some growth of her manufactures, it will never be such as to absorb the surplus of labor so long as free trade with England exists. In this state of things whole multitudes of her people must find a home in the Colonies or in "the States." In the Colonies they find Churches modified by no new and independent national life, but rather closely modelled after the Church at home. The modes of organization and work, the style and manner of preaching, the forms of worship, the matter of praise, all conform to what they have been used to. And besides all these the personal associations are the same. With us, all these are, if not different, yet modified. Our traditions are not theirs; our likes and dislikes are not theirs; our Mrs. Grundy is quite another person. Inensibly our standards of propriety, of expediency and, in a less degree, of doctrinal truth, are all our own.

In this state of things the minor and more rigidly old-world branches of the Presbyterian family have their own uses. That there need be so many varieties of them we do not assert. Look at the list—Reformed Presbyterians of three kinds (Presbytery, Synod and General Synod); Associate Reformed Presbyterians; North and South; Associate Presbyterians; and United Presbyterians. I trust the day is not far distant when the United Presbyterian Church will absorb all of them that are not ripe for union to, and membership in, the Presbyterian Church.

That word "ripe" just expresses how matters stand now. If you go into an orchard in August you find the different species of apples in very different stages of ripeness. Some are already mellow; some are just flushed with the first tinges of the coming gold and purple; but the winter-greenings in the corner will never ripen till they are gathered. But the promise of the summer's work is upon all of them, and the summer will neither hasten nor delay her work to suit any one. As surely as the fruit grows will it come to maturity.

And as surely as the narrow views, rigid interpretations, and stubborn traditions of these brethren are not part and parcel of the dispensation of the kingdom of God granted to this nation, and are not in conformity to that which is best and worthiest in the life that God has given to this people, so surely will the beams of the Sun of Righteousness and His kindly, and enriching, and nourishing influences, sweeten and mellow the fruit of every tree that He has planted, until the sourness and the bitterness of the past are but of the past.

But for a time these little churches must abide as great ecclesiastical tunnels (as I have heard one of their pastors call his congregation) with emigrants going in at one end and Americans going out at the other, or (as Coleridge observed of the constitution of a cloud) such that while every particle is continually shifting its position, and some passing away to make room for others—yet the whole retains its shape.

Such a state of things does not, and cannot, contribute to the denominational peace and quiet of these bodies. Disagreements as to their internal policy and their relations to each other and to other Churches must arise in the nature of things. The children will not agree with the fathers about instrumental music, read sermons, psalm-singing, forms of and barriers to communion, &c. And when the dissension does not speedily take the form of peaceable division, it is likely to end less peaceably and more noisily than could be desired. But on the whole it is perhaps as well that reforming and liberalizing measures do not succeed, or at least, not to a greater extent than in the older Churches abroad. They who largely desire such reforms will find their true

place in the course of things in the one Presbyterian Church, which will need no other adjective to define it. In saying "I do not mean to pronounce specially against any of the measures adopted by them, nor yet to join with those who claim that they must go out stripped and speechless, silent under every lawless indignity and bare of the property bequeathed to them by their fathers. They have a moral right to what they have rightfully inherited or freely contributed. They have a moral right also to a fair hearing, and their excision is none the more just because it was in the nature of things to be expected.

ULTONIENSIS.

WHAT IS CULTURE?

The methods of education are of necessity endless subjects of debate. They concern every one, and are of such a fundamental character that every view we entertain of life, man or God, modifies our view of how education should be carried on. The Jew has one theory, and drills his pupils in the Rabbis and the Talmud. The Romanist has another, and grinds his pupils in Catechisms. The Materialist has quite another, and cares for nothing but the exact and the physical sciences. The great mass of men between the two last—who neither accept Rome nor reject all spiritual truth—seem able to unite on no one theory. Some say knowledge is the great end, so let us have the sciences and the modern languages as these alone are practically useful. Mr. Froude scouts science itself in the interests of the same theory; and demands a strictly technical training for every profession. He would have the doctor begin his studies when he leaves his primer; the lawyer take up the Statutes at Large as soon as out of petticoats, &c., and learn nothing else. Others say mental discipline is the end, so let us have the classics and the pure Mathematics. Others blandly interpose with "You are both right and both wrong, gentlemen. Combine your methods and the result is perfect."

The advocates of the old-fashioned methods of liberal education upon which our older American colleges were founded, and which came in with the Reformation, are not certainly losing heart in this great tussle. They have fought hard to keep Chas. W. Eliot, (with his "New Education") out of Harvard. They have more and more of the public ear in our times, although opponents like Froude, Eliot, Farrar and others speak loudly and confidently in opposition. It has been their misfortune to have been too much associated in the public mind with ultraism, chartered abuses and old fogyism of all kinds. Pert Reformers have no time to draw distinctions, and so useless pedantry and priggishness has been ceaselessly laid to the charge of the system which, above all others has, proved itself strong to develop the sympathy of man for his fellows, and which rests on what may be called (in the better sense of the word) a humanitarian basis.

The liberal education of our fathers, proceeds upon the supposition that man has within himself a double nature—is allied both to lower and higher existences. It recognizes the right of the higher or spiritual nature to rule over and to use (not to torment and destroy) the lower. It contemplates that higher nature itself in a two-fold aspect, as dealing both with things above, which are absolute and eternal, and things below and around, which are temporal, relative and phenomenal. It seeks to develop that nature for dealing with both classes of objects,—as reason for dealing with the first, as understanding for dealing with the second.

To this end it adopts a two-fold discipline of the faculties. It finds in the pure Mathematics the great discipline of the human reason. In this branch of knowledge alone, nothing is variable, nothing uncertain, nothing rests on probabilities. From things intuitively known to be necessary truths we here proceed by demonstration to necessary conclusions.

In this way the human reason is disciplined to its true power and activity. For there is a connection between the higher facts of spiritual philosophy and the Mathematics. *Μηδεις ἀγνοει μαθηματικα*, "Let no one unskilled in Mathematics enter," was written over the portals of Plato's school. The truths of Mathematics are only approximately true of the world of our experience. No true and real circle, for instance, has the outward eye of man ever seen. Only the inward eye of the reason is cognizant of it. It is a truth of the intellectual and unseen world, of which our outer world is but the mantle or the shadow. The Platonists reason from the necessary truth of Mathematical propositions to the existence of the objects in that spiritual world of which these propositions are true, seeing that in the outward world they are not so.

But there is an outer and shifting world of phenomena, with which the spirit of man must have dealings also. This is the world where the ideas which we have of morality and truth are never realized, but always tending to realization, just as no true and perfect circle exists there; but only attempts at such. And we need training and discipline for our dealings with this world also,—the world of becoming (*werden*) the Germans justly call it, while the other is the world of being (*wesen*)—the world of which "the fashion passeth away." This is the world of probabilities, as was the other of certainties,—of probable truth as was the other of necessary truth. These probabilities vary in degree—as from the probability (sometimes regarded as a

certainty) that the sun will rise to-morrow, down to the probability that any reader has waded thus far through these metaphysics. And the man whose dealings are exclusively with certain and necessary truth, is not best fitted for dealing with this world. The professional mathematician for instance who "lives in a world of ascertained premises" (*Younans*), has trouble in dealing with a world of uncertain premises. Every Sophomore knows that he can palm off excuses on the professor of mathematics, which would not "go down" in the Greek room.

Now, the old method of training made provision for this need also. Finding language as the great bond which unites man, and binds interests together in this shifting world, it fixed on it as the means of discipline,—as a training for the understanding and the judgment. And as the most effectual method of bringing that discipline to bear, our fathers chose the practice of translation, by which we are compelled to put ourselves in the place of another man by intellectual sympathy, and use our judgment as to which of the manifold synonymous words of our own tongue will best convey his meaning. It is impossible to render a single page of the Greek or Latin authors into English, without at every step weighing probabilities and exercising the judgment.

But why choose Greek and Latin rather than French and German? For many good reasons. These are the two most perfect types of human speech. The one is the most perfect example of the living force of words, the other of the grammatical structure of language. They two embody the world's thought in the period of youth and opening manhood, and therefore come into closest sympathy with the youth of our schools and colleges. They have passed out of active use, and are therefore best fitted for teaching by methods which combine the two great intellectual processes of analysis and synthesis, while living languages must be learnt by the latter alone, for vivisection is as impossible in language, as it is brutal in anatomy. The apparatus for their mastery is the most perfect in the world, having employed the intellect of generations of scholars in its construction. That they are of the past is an advantage, in that they help to develop in us that historical consciousness which raises us above slavery to the spirit of the age, and forms the crown of true scholarship. The older of the two embodies in itself not only the first and fundamental treatises on morals, philosophy, science, medicine and criticism, but the great record of redeeming love. The second is the base of half our own language. The men who spoke it founded our legal system, and transmitted to us the legal conceptions which modify so profoundly our social life.

It is not all unreason then that leads men to cling to our old methods in education. Our fathers, perhaps, builded wiser than they knew in these things, and our Reformers may tear down what they can never replace.

ON THE WING.

Zion's Herald makes the following claims, for the three Theological Schools of the Methodists. They may not be altogether just, but they are far from empty boastings:

There are, in connection with the Church, three theological schools of the highest grade. Each is centrally and favorably located; each is ably manned; each is handsomely endowed; each ranks with the best single school of any other denomination, and is superior to all other schools of those churches except the chief representative. That is, there is only one Baptist school as well officered, and endowed, and fitted for the work of instruction as any one of the three Methodist schools. There is only one Congregational, Episcopal, New School, or Old School Presbyterian, that is equal in rank to either of our three; and not one of any of them that is superior. And over does not today offer better advantages than Boston, nor New York or Princeton than Drew, while all others of their order are far inferior. In fact, it may be more than doubted if one can get as good a theological culture, using that term in its broadest sense, at Andover as at Boston.

—Mr. Lewis A. Jackson, of the City Mission, sums up the receipts of the national religious societies of this country as \$6,243,969.56; while the receipts of a portion of the local societies of this city are given as \$1,076,885.74. The *Observer* believes that another million should be added as the income of local societies not reported. In this [N. Y.] city the Children's Aid Society, the New York Juvenile Asylum, and the Roman Catholic Protector for Destitute Children each report over \$125,000. The largest income of all is the Methodist Missionary Society, which includes the home and foreign field, and which reports \$600,887; and next comes the American Board, which received \$535,839. Of the grand total, \$1,162,162 are the receipts of those societies which are supported by the two great branches of Presbyterianism, though from this amount should be deducted probably nearly \$150,000, which was received for sales by their publishing societies; and about \$200,000 should be added for the contributions of New School Presbyterians to the American Board.

The above is from the *Independent*. Very glad should we be to believe this about the \$200,000. According to the statistical reports of our churches, one-half that amount would be nearer the truth.

—The *Evangelist* of week before last quotes an article from the *Universe* which was in our columns sometime last year, and speaks of the paper as the organ of the Romish Church. It has been dead, as a Romish organ, for months, and we believe has altogether disappeared from the newspaper world.