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John A. Weir

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PHILADELPHIA, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1869.

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—The Synod of the Pacific (O. S.) and the Synod of Alta California, (N. S.) held an enthusiastic joint meeting during their sessions in San Francisco.

—The gifts of the Irish Church continue to pour in. The late Earl of Derby gave £2,000. Lord Powerscourt, who sustained Gladstone in his policy of disestablishment, gives about £19,000, by purchasing the title rent-charge on his Irish estates from the Church Commissioners, and presenting it to the Church.

—As we supposed, our Irish Presbyterian visitors who come to beg, and pay the expenses of their trip out of their receipts, are to pull up on the Pacific Coast, hereafter. A San Francisco paper announces the arrival in that city of the Reverend brother who, while with us, prefaced his appeals for money with the candid concession that his people were not in want of any—not poor.

—A telegram from Havana, received on last Tuesday, conveys the following gratifying intelligence: A decree of the Constituent Cortes establishing unrestricted liberty of religion in Cuba and Porto Rico, was promulgated, Oct. 26th, in this island, and has gone into effect as a law of the land. The document is exceedingly liberal in its terms. It declares that Spain cannot remain removed from the general movement in Europe and the world, and adds that this consideration is more powerful for the Antilles because they lie near a continent where liberty of religion is recognized by law.

The clause provides that no person shall be prevented from holding office under the government by reason of his religious belief. The decree is received with general satisfaction by the populace. As there is now no obstacle, it is probable the Protestant Church will soon be established in this city.

—The would-be assassins of Revenue Officer Brooks, have been convicted of attempt to murder, and thus far the course of justice has been steadily onward, in spite of the intrigues of the whiskey-ring. Such precautions against a rescue were taken, that the convicted prisoners have again been lodged safely in their cells. No doubt their friends will be on hand, in force, to seize any opportunity of rescue which may offer, when they are brought out for sentence. That danger once over, and their doom is certain. They have no hope of executive clemency. In that direction, the power of the whiskey-ring, once so great, is utterly ineffectual. Every upright and orderly citizen breathes more freely at the discomfort—complete so far—which this desperate combination has suffered, in its latest and bloodiest struggle for impunity, in persistent and monstrous fraud. But the whiskey traffic is incurably wicked, and can only rightly be reformed by legal suppression. Let us prepare ourselves for that next.

## COMING TO CHRIST.

Men are often embarrassed to get at the meaning of these very simple words. We puzzle inquirers, sometimes, when we press upon them their duty in this language. It is not a place, like the so-called and mis-called "altar" of some Evangelical Churches,—it is not an inquiry room or particular seat, which must be visited in order to find Christ. It is not climbing heights, or descending into depths, which is meant. But it is a change in the mind's attitude towards Christ. Hitherto it has been turned away from Him, in disregard and disobedience. The movement of the corrupt and worldly nature is more and more away from Him. There is little or no sense of need of His salvation; there is no sympathy with the spiritual kingdom He is setting up; there is no knowledge of the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the surpassing love of Christ. When the long-estranged mind begins to crave this knowledge, feels a need of Redemption, ceases to regard the world as a satisfying portion, and admits and cherishes the thought of Christ, then it is returning to Him, it is coming to Christ.

It is a necessary part of the meaning of the term, coming to Christ, that there should be a full recognition of his supreme authority over the soul. The repenting rebel comes to the authority which he has resisted. The sinner is urged to come to Christ by confessing His claims, and by yielding to His authority. Above all, it is coming to Christ to trust in Him alone for salvation. That inward act so vast in its meaning, so deep and so intimate in its confidence, can scarcely be better described than by the simple words "coming to Jesus." Perhaps the specific act of faith is more analytically described by other local phrases. The Confession of Faith and the Shorter Catechism use the words: "rest upon Him," which seems more exactly to describe the trusting attitude of

the mind in belief. "Coming to Christ," embracing both this and every other inward movement, in conversion from the world to Christ.

But why use these local phrases, when there is no visible Christ, or visible representative of Him to which we can literally go? Are we dealing in mere figures of speech; borrowing from the outward world, as we so often must, for means of expressing purely mental facts? Not altogether, we think. The language points to a great fact of Christian truth and Christian life, the personal presence of the living Christ. It is no mere figure of speech that we can come to Him. It is no mere mental change, under the power of abstract truth, that we undergo in submitting to and trusting in Him. He is here, with us, about us. He indeed has come to us; not merely in figures, He knocks at the door of our hearts: with a certain living personal urgency He presses His claims upon us. We do not see Him. We know not Christ after the flesh. It is no realistic oneness, either, that we are speaking of. But there are two real persons in the work of conversion—the soul and the Spirit of Christ. And, the soul comes to Christ by a spiritual movement, which is better described by that language than by any other.

Sinner, we invite you to come to Christ; to a real divine-human person, who died for you, and rose again, and by His Spirit is close to you—closer than if He were in the body,—waiting for you to turn from sin, and to love, trust, and obey Him. The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is the word of faith which we preach. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

## THE SYNOD AT YORK, PA.

In the history of the Presbyterian Church, York is classic ground. Here, in 1835, occurred the celebrated trial, condemnation, and suspension of Albert Barnes, for heretical teaching; here, too, occurred another trial before the civil court, for the possession of the church property of the York congregation; which, following the adverse decision of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania upon the general principles at issue between the two Assemblies, was somewhat unexpectedly decided by the same court, in favor of the majority of the congregation at York, adhering to the New School Assembly. Such majorities, everywhere, drew much-needed encouragement from this decision, which gave them a legal precedent, and virtually insured them possession of their places of worship. Whatever may have been the effect of the trial of Mr. Barnes, the news of the decision of the court in "the York Case," visibly shortened and lightened the faces of New School men in every part of the Church.

Among the singular coincidences accompanying the Re-union, we note that as York witnessed the gathering of the last Synod before the virtual disruption of the Church, so it witnesses the last before the Reunion; and as Pittsburgh succeeded to York in 1836, so now we look from York to Pittsburgh in 1869. But here the parallel ends. The contrasts are now striking and significant. Then, the Synod was an object of dread to the people from its contentions; now it is welcomed as a social and spiritual gift to the congregation. Then, it was the scene of unappeasable discord. Now, every vote is unanimous, and mutual love and confidence are reciprocated from member to member, of a thoroughly homogeneous body. Then, the members came from scenes of dissension, and beheld with sadness, the Lord's heritage under their care, laid waste and desolate. Now, unwonted degrees of material and spiritual prosperity in almost every part of the field call for thanksgiving, and swell the hearts of the brethren with joy; the church at York itself worships in one of the most beautiful buildings out of our great cities; has just completed a chapel almost unrivalled in complete fitness for every department of church work; and hears signals, scarcely to be misinterpreted, of the early and gracious visitation of the Holy Spirit. Then judicial business was the absorbing topic, and the forbidding formalities of a court swallowed up all other characteristics; now, the skeleton of forms is scarcely visible, the judicial committee was discharged, as it almost invariably is, for want of occupation, the elastic and delightful spirit of Christian brotherhood prevailed in the management of every item of business, and every weight of mere ecclesiasticism laid aside, there was almost nothing to be done but to counsel and stimulate one another in the great work of advancing the interests of Christ's kingdom through the various channels of effort and liberality adopted by the church.

If the meeting of 1869 be the last of the distinctively "New School" Synod of Pennsylv-

ania, its record could not close more happily or honorably than now; and now, if the Holy Spirit will add yet another to the auspicious omens of the times; if the York Church in 1869 becomes the scene of His gracious and powerful visitations, we shall take it as an intimation of His blessing upon the whole Reunion movement. The dove of peace could scarcely have brooded over the York of 1835; if He comes now in signal measure, as indeed seems probable, it will be like the bow of promise cast upon the vanishing clouds of the storm. The prayers of the members of Synod, and of all Christ's people may well continue to ascend in behalf of that people and their pastor.

## FATHER HYACINTHE.

This marked personage will soon acquire an equal reputation for his silence as he has for his speech. If there are times when speech is silver and silence golden, he seems to know just which they are. His unostentatious behaviour is admirably suited to his position. Last Sabbath he went first to Román's Catholic Church, and afterwards to Henry Ward Beecher's, where, it would appear, he was recognized only by his resemblance to the portraits. After service, he was cordially welcomed by the congregation pressing round him, and by Mr. Beecher, who, after warmly greeting him, explained that all this demonstration was not pure curiosity in the people, but the expression of their very genuine sympathy for him in the stand which he has taken in behalf of many Christian liberty. The Reverend Father responded by expressions of gratitude and of sympathy. He presented two letters of introduction, one from Mrs. Merriman (formerly of Plymouth church, and now a Catholic), and one from Mr. Persanec, a celebrated French divine. He came to church in his coach, accompanied by Mr. Darling, the French Consul, and by Mr. Tuck, from the office of Monroe & Co., bankers, who acted as interpreter.

Late telegrams say that Father Hyacinthe, not having returned to his convent, ordered by his superiors, has been dispossessed of all his charges.

## FUSION OF NEWSPAPERS.

We have already chronicled the disappearance of the *North Western Presbyterian*, the exponent of the McCormick, or southern type of Presbyterianism in the other branch of the church. This event was significant and encouraging to every friend of a wholesome doctrinal liberty in the re-united body. It was at least one token of the weakness of the exclusive and high church sentiment in the other branch. The *Presbyterian* of this city, which purchased the list of the *North Western*, has certainly not accepted its peculiar spirit, but conforms itself to what its conductors must see to be the more popular sentiment of fraternal comprehensiveness towards the New School branch.

Another event of hopeful meaning, is the fusion, or consolidation of the two Cincinnati papers, *The Herald* of our Church and *The Presbyterian* of the Old School. *The Herald* was purchased by Rev. C. Babb, its editor, from the Ohio and Indiana Synods who owned it, and Mr. Babb and Dr. Monfort of *The Presbyterian*, are now joint owners and editors of the united paper, which is happily called *The Herald and Presbyterian*. The united paper is considerably larger than was either of its elementary parts. A decided improvement is perceptible in its matter and form, and an array of talent is presented in its correspondence department, which any newspaper might covet. As the two papers when separate pursued a conciliatory course, and never aimed in any clear and positive manner to represent or to promote the distinctive principles of their denominations, no root of bitterness had sprang up between them, such as seems inevitable where such principles are esteemed as important and are vigorously maintained on both sides. There was, therefore, nothing to lose and much to gain by this consolidation. Both branches are better off in having *The Herald and Presbyterian*, than in possessing either of them alone. We suppose such little infelicities as calling our own churches and ecclesiastical bodies New School, or using the initials (N. S.), when only the term "Presbyterian" is employed of the other branch, are accidents, or flow from the pens of correspondents only. They should be corrected.

But what of newspapers, in either branch, which have felt themselves called to the position of, and have been universally regarded as, representative papers? It is the fashion of some to cast reproach upon such papers; to stigmatize them as enemies of the peace of the Church, and to calculate how much better it would be if they were out of the way. Other and clearer heads, while aware of the dangers connected

with such decided expressions of opinion, know well that the existence of independent organs is a sign of vigor and vitality in a denomination. Free thought within reasonable bounds, in their view, is to be encouraged. The merging of differences of opinion into a uniform level of thought is a calamity. Peace purchased at such a price is too dear. Peace maintained amid reasonable differences of opinion is the heritage of true, living men; the other will do for mere machines.

The Church is entering upon an era of peace. But a peace of what sort is the question. Is it to be mechanical and narrow, or broad and generous? The peace of men who have no marked opinions, or of men who have recognized and accepted the substantial orthodoxy of those who differ from them on minor points? Must our popular literature be eviscerated of its positive elements; must our different and legitimate types of opinion surrender their organs; must the life and spirit imparted to these organs by high and earnest argument on great themes be quenched, and must the quest for truth be hindered by a series of newspaper compromises which imply a certain want of confidence in one another, if not in the truth itself? Not a few persons are asking these questions at this time.

For ourselves, we wish to believe that the era of reunion is to differ from the past, not so much in the cessation of discussion, as in the improved spirit in which it will be carried on; not so much in the suppression of our types of thought and of our organs of opinion as in their raised tone. Our ambition is to maintain the banner of free discussion; to keep open columns for the widest range of thought within the recognized landmarks of orthodoxy, and to let all whom it may concern be aware that the reunited Presbyterian Church of America has not been formed upon the narrow basis of sect, is no mere expression of a single school of opinion, but is the home of evangelical liberty, where more light is expected to break forth from God's word. And this, doubtless, is the wish of the Synod of Pennsylvania, in regard to the future of the *AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN*, as expressed in their action taken in the recent session at York. Though not suggested nor urged by the proprietor of the paper, he will be most happy to see the object of the resolution accomplished. It is as follows:

Resolved, that the committee on the *AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN* be authorized to aid the Editor by their counsel and their influence to promote and to perpetuate the distinctive character of the paper, in any way that shall commend itself to their best judgment.

## "THE VICTORY OF HONESTY."

Thus truthfully are the recent elections, especially that in Ohio, characterized by "Veteran Observer" (Hon. E. D. Mansfield) in the *N. Y. Times* of Saturday. A leading issue before the people voting on the 12th of October, was whether the great burden of national debt should be honestly shouldered in its whole length and breadth, or whether, in one way or another, it should be dishonorably evaded. The policy of repudiation was offered to the people with a certain disguise of greenbacks, and so many honest men allowed themselves to be persuaded that no real wrong was designed. But the sugar-coating did not make the pill go down. By far the most famous and popular advocate of the scheme was defeated in his aspirations for office. Repudiation was repudiated. The people mean to be frankly honest with their creditors. The political creed which embodies even the round about intimation of a fraud, though, alas, it commands a formidable array of voters, and enjoys the advocacy of some of the ablest minds of the country, cannot establish itself as the accepted belief of the nation. The doctrine is dead. Both parties in New York State declare for an honest payment of the Public Debt. The recent decisions of Ohio and Pennsylvania, joined to the fact that the debt is in rapid liquidation, must be conclusive of the national policy. The proposal of repudiation drops out of party politics. Leaders who regarded it as a shrewd device; as a powerful bid to the covetousness and the mean jealousies of the masses through which they might be swept into office, must retire. They have failed utterly in their slanderous calculations. The people are bad enough: Their consciences are sufficiently sluggish and corrupt. But they are too much under the influence of Christian teaching to be made the tools and dupes of bad men, for the perpetration of a great and palpable national wrong.

And we have every reason to regard the result in our own State as a verdict for the fearless execution of the law; for the policy of inflexible justice towards incorrigible offenders; for the overawing and suppression of that element of

rascality and violence that aspires to rule in all our great cities. So far as the executive and the judiciary of our State are concerned, every honest citizen may feel secure in life and property. The needed reforms in municipal and legislative politics, the purifying and right working of the machinery of the primary elections, are, it is true, still deferred; but now that the great questions growing out of the war are virtually settled, good men of all parties will soon be in a condition to give their unbiased attention, and their very best thought, to the cleansing of the fountains of political power, and to the emancipation of parties from the control of the miserable cliques who have brought free government into disgrace before the whole world. We have yet to settle the question whether whisky rings and corruption rings shall control our municipal elections; and temperance men, and virtuous Christian men will have a word to say when the square struggle comes.

—The Church of England has had quite a variety of heretics in the past quarter century, but the last—Rev. Chas. Voyce,—is the worst of them all. He rejects the doctrine of the Incarnation and the Atonement, teaching that "sincere sorrow for sin is, or ought to be, enough to make a man at peace with God," and "that the common notion of the coming of God into the world once, and His expected return to judge the world, takes its rise in unbelief."

—Some time ago we noticed a heresy trial in the Free Church of Coupar Angus, Scotland, in which two persons, neither of them elders, were charged with holding unsound views on the nature of the Atonement, the extent of Inspiration, &c. In their appeals from the Coupar Angus session to the higher courts they raised two points: (1.) that a private member of the Church was not required to give assent to her doctrinal standards; and (2.) that accused persons must not be required to criminate themselves. The first point was overruled, so far, at least, as they were concerned, but the second was decided to be well taken. As there is no evidence of the truth of the charges, except the merest gossip, the trial has fallen through, and its promoter—the pastor of the congregation—has received a good share of public censure.

—If we may judge from a recent speech by Archbishop Tait, the Church of England is awakening to the question of the power and position of dissenting Christians. He said that the clergy had been very much in the habit of ignoring the existence of any but avowed Episcopalians; and to some extent the whole Legislature had done this. But now the existence of others was very distinctly recognised by the Legislature in a thousand ways. He would be extremely sorry if the idea was to get abroad, that they were to take their position like other sects in the country, and were to receive only those who distinctly declared that, after weighing the matter, they preferred the Church of England above any other body. No doubt these were the persons who were their real strength; but he should be sorry to exclude persons who hang loose to the church, and who might, by any action of the clergy be sent off into any other body. It would be well to cast their lines as broadly as possible and take in all they possibly could.

—A Methodist paper, reviewing Lange on Romans, says:

"We can detect some traces of Calvinistic bearings which we could wish were modified, but do not feel inclined to indulge in criticism."

Had the words, "He hath mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardeneth," occurred in Lange's comment, and not in Paul's text, our Methodist brethren would have thought there was more than a trace of Calvinism there.

Rev. Geo. H. Smyth was recently installed pastor of the West church, Wilmington. Rev. J. E. Beale preached the sermon; Rev. C. D. Shaw delivered the charge to the pastor, and Rev. Dr. Wiswell the charge to the people. Rev. E. Webb, of Glasgow, Del., presided, and Messrs. Marks and Snyder took part in the exercises which were held in Monroe St. Chapel. The interest of the occasion was much enhanced by the tasteful floral decorations of the interior.

—The Philadelphia Baptist Association was in session last week. The Churches, which lie in or south of the city, have 19,457 members, with 16,698 scholars in their Sabbath Schools, and during the past year had 376 baptisms. Resolutions reaffirming close communion and immersion and attempting retort on those who reject them, were unanimously adopted.