

Wesleyana.

Conference Address.

[CONCLUDED.]

To the CONNEXIONALISM which binds us together, and especially by means of a common ministry, we owe more than we can readily express. Yet nothing is more obvious than that, for the great advantages thus secured, we must forego some liberty of individual action. Our churches must be, not in word only, but in deed, UNITED in doctrine and in discipline. Hence the necessity of ecclesiastical arrangements which independent congregations cannot need.

It is an unspeakable calamity that many have allowed their care and attention to be withdrawn, by passing controversy, from life's great business. The influence of the church on the world has been impaired.—Christ's enemies have been encouraged to blaspheme. And all this, while sinners are dying around us, while Antichrist revives his impious claims, and the world heaves with tumults that portend stupendous issues. Let it be inquired, as in the searching light of God's countenance, how the trifles which now assume such importance will be reviewed in a calmer day? How, seven years hence? How, when we stand on the banks of Jordan, in the near prospect of unchangeable realities?

We reflect, with gratitude to God, that for more than a century our course toward other churches of Christ has been friendly and pacific. If seceders from our own community, dissenting from some Wesleyan views, yet retaining in the main the catholic faith, went away in peace, our kindly wishes and prayers would attend them.—And it is our fondly-cherished hope that our Societies will not even now be provoked into hostility, either by the acrimony of faction or by the intermeddling of parties who have shown themselves too ready to intrude into our denominational conflicts. Many of the wisest and best among other Christians see that our contest has been for the very existence of a pastoral ministry. In regard to others, whose conduct has not required our candour and friendly feeling toward them,—let us cherish no revenge. "If it be possible," dear brethren,—yea, "as much as lieth in you,"—let the blessed cause of Christian union be uninjured. We treat you, our beloved people, still to adorn your profession with "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report." Let your charity, unconfined by prejudice or passion, show the world where the Christians live.

It is our very painful duty to report a considerable loss of members. The vast majority of the separatists are to be thought of with deep and affectionate solicitude. That they should have yielded to the arts of a few misleaders, and that a system of wicked agitation, unparalleled in the history of the modern church, should have been regarded with a moment's tolerance by any who have enjoyed the privileges of our church-union, may well be regarded as no less humbling than painful. Yet, in prospect of the day when we shall all meet the Judge of the quick and the dead, let us ponder our duties towards the erring and the fallen. Certain agitators have abused the measure of confidence they had been allowed to wield: their plans have been altogether alien from the temper of our holy Christianity. They have transgressed New Testament law, and involved themselves in the dishonour—hitherto unexampled among us—of attempting to force us into compliances which they know that our conscience condemns. These men have excluded themselves from our confidence, but not from our pitying charity and prayers. We beg you, dear brethren, to join us in interceding that God may give them repentance, and that the fearful sin of destroying precious souls may not be laid to their charge in the great day. Whatever plans may yet be framed to oppose or irritate you, let your love be invincible. "Pray," says our benign and adorable Master, "for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." As to the masses of

the misled, let us also use every legitimate method of recovering them. "Ye which are spiritual, restore" the deluded and the wandering, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Let the charity which pursues them be discriminating. "Of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." Think of the inestimable worth of immortal souls; and let every one of us pray and strive, if by any means he may gain some.

Yet communities, like individuals, are called to profit by the discipline of calamity. Whatever may be the permitted agency of second causes, all is wisdom, sweetness, and mercy in the Great First Cause. Before him we desire to bow with submission, and with deepest humility. For ourselves, we desire to improve the present occasion, and to cultivate an increasing familiarity with heavenly things, "that our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found." We give ourselves anew to our proper work; anxious only to "feed the flock of God which is among" us, "taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." Let us most affectionately beg you, the members of our associated churches, to maintain high views of Christian privilege. Seek to exercise, every moment, the faith which is of the operation of God: Let none rest without the assurance, wrought by the Holy Spirit, of an interest in Christ's precious blood. Let all aspire after the present heaven of loving God with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. The times call for fresh attention to those inspired texts which delineate practical religion. In their steady light let us daily examine ourselves. "Herein is" the adorable "Father glorified, that" the disciples of Jesus "bear much fruit;"—not merely the leaves of profession, and the bloom of promise, but the "fruit" of holy, lovely, useful living. In the full-meaning expression of Scripture, we are to be "filled with the fruits of righteousness." Whatever may be the fluctuating opinions of men, we know what authority has decided that "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." "Be ye doers of the word," says the same venerable Apostle, "and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." And again: "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." And again: "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." That which "never faileth," is the "charity" which "suffereth long, and is kind;" which "envieth not;" which "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up;" which "doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

All true spiritual enjoyment consists with deepening humility, as well as with the love of God's law, and a jealous regard for His glory. It leads to the throne of grace, endears a vital and searching ministry, stimulates to the daily reading of the Scriptures, and brings the humbled believer to the feet of Jesus. "Thy word is very pure," says the renewed soul: "therefore Thy servant loveth it." It deserves special note, also, that the sacred Book gives prominence to the habit of reverential and godly fear.—Some who speak of high spiritual attainments, need to remember that "happy is the man that feareth always." "If the righteous scarcely be saved," it behoves us to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." The crown of life is not yet awarded: it may be lost; and, even if mercy be extended to the unfaithful disciple, it may be tarnished. That prize has been

bought for us at an inestimable cost: "Forasmuch as we know that we were not redeemed with corruptible things,.....but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;" let us "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear."

Cherish, dear brethren, the great objects of our spiritual union. These are always entitled to the first regard, inasmuch as they belong to "a kingdom which cannot be moved." "Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour." The lights of eternity must guide our course through the present tumultuous and agitated scene. When everything is done to the glory of God, the common duties of life rise into a part of our religion. No longer hinderances of our spirituality, they become even its aliment. In regard to more public events,—to those especially which bear on the interests of Protestant Christendom,—the intelligent and serious cannot but be awake. Your voices have been heard, we rejoice to know, in the loud protest of this land against the assumptions of its ancient Papal enemy. Nor may you yet lay down the weapons of this warfare. Persevere in your course, but always under the sway of religious motives. Let everything bend to the sovereign claims of Jesus Christ; who is not only "the Faithful Witness, and the First-begotten of the dead," but also "the Prince of the Kings of the earth." Be wakeful, and put on the complete "armour of light;" guard against passing and contingent dangers; but fear not as to the issue of these collisions. "With violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." Happy, if we be kept undefiled while the strife of sin and error rages, and then be numbered with the glorious company of those who celebrate the victory, "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white," and "called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

The holiness of a community is but the holiness of its individual members. If we desire the beauty, vigour, and glory of the church, it is both monitory and animating to reflect that every one of us may contribute to these results. Let each examine himself, whether he be now—this very moment—"in the faith." "Who of us," asked our fathers in 1770, "is now accepted of God?" And wisely they answered, "He that now believeth in Christ, with a loving and obedient heart." The question is not, At what moment the Sun arose on us with healing in His wings?—but, Do we now rejoice in His light and heat?—Are we yielding the fruit of the Spirit, in its plentiful variety?—governing our thoughts and tempers, taking heed to our ways that we sin not with our tongue? Are we impressed alike with the sacredness and the vanity of life? Who among us, reviewing the last twelve months, can now set up the stone of help, a year's journey nearer to heaven? Does our hope of that everlasting blessedness exert its due and sanctifying influence?

It would be ungrateful to forget that past struggles in the church of Christ, and in our own branch of it in particular, have been followed by abounding peace and prosperity. The lovers of Zion have been tried, and their fidelity has been graciously rewarded. They have not wept and prayed in vain.—The Master has come suddenly, and at His pacific presence confusion and strife have been rebuked. He has made "Jerusalem a quiet habitation." "There the glorious Lord" has been "a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein" went "no galley with oars, neither" was "gallant ship" permitted to "pass thereby." And, as to the future of this cause, we are full of hope and confidence. Jesus is "the Head over all things to the Church." By that faith which brings distant things nigh, and sees things invisible; let us vividly realize His intercession and gracious reign. The exhaustless power and grace of the Holy Ghost are dispensed by the royal Mediator. Calamitous experience will yield priceless benefits, if we learn to magnify and invoke the blessed Spirit's influences. We need a thousand blessings; but, if He come in plentiful baptisms, all will be secured. This is what we want, and what Jesus waits to give. Then "the light of the moon shall

be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound."

But, whatever comfort and triumph the church may see, if we do not regard her cause with tender love, and earnestly strive to promote it, the brightness of the coming day will not be shed on us. They who have not carried the burden of Zion, may not hope to share "the good of" her Lord's "chosen," or to "rejoice in the gladness of" His "nation," or to "glory with" His "inheritance." The point is, What can I do to glorify my Saviour? Dear to Him, can this cause be otherwise than dear to His true disciples? "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." It is lamentable that wealth, fame, and worldly connexions have alienated some from the fellowship of saints; and that, on the other hand, adversity, unsanctified, has sometimes overwhelmed the spirit, induced complainings, and thus defeated the benign intention. Many have forsaken God through change of residence, or loss of Christian guides and friends. Others have fainted in the day of persecution. Because iniquity abounds, the love of many has waxed cold.—The desolations of the holy city have repelled those who are attracted by external prosperity. Yet, through the grace of God, there are among us myriads of saints whose zeal none of these things can chill; who resolve to live for Jerusalem, and would rather die than survive her ruin. Still pray for her peace. The feeblest hand can move the skies.—The infant in grace, and the hoary saint, can unite in this exercise. It is no conditional request that we have to urge; it is one which may be sent up with confidence to heaven. We are asking according to our Father's will; we are repeating the prayer of Jesus Himself, whose merit imparts prevalence to our intercessions. "O daughter of Babylon," said the ancient church in exile, "who art to be destroyed.".....Babylon was then flourishing; but where are the powers that once wasted the church of God? or even those that were employed as a scourge to punish her unfaithfulness and sin? With expectation as calm as that of the exiled psalmist we may say, "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered: let them also that hate Him flee before Him." Opposers may seem to triumph; but it will be for a brief season only. The means of their defeat will be found in the matter of their boasting. Another Euphrates shall be exhausted, and one greater than Cyrus will turn back our captivity.

During the past year many of our beloved fathers and brethren have been removed from us, to be for ever with the Lord. We are indeed admonished to do with our might whatsoever our hand findeth to do. Many of us have come to the margin of the grave: all are hastening thither. Help us, dear brethren, in the effort to consecrate all our remaining days to Christ. The heavenly "treasure" we bring to you "in earthen vessels," "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." "Sorrowful" are we, "yet always rejoicing;" "poor, yet making many rich;" "having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Enough is it for us to feel that "the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." "We have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us, the noble works which" He wrought "in their days, and in the old time before them." But his arm is not shortened. Jesus is as mighty to save, as in the primitive days. "Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers, keep not silence." in wondrous condescension He bids you—"give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion." "THY GOD REIGNETH;" and He is coming to give joy to His people, and to revive His work. "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Signed on behalf and by order of the Conference,

JOHN HANNAH, D.D., President.
JOHN FARRAR, Secretary.
Newcastle-upon-Tyne, August 15th, 1851.

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