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Contributors and Correspondents.

SCOTLAND.

SERMON BY REV. A. B. BRUCE.

Last Sabbath evening it was my privilege to hear in the Renfield Church (Dr. Marcus Dodd) a noble exposition and defence of Christian faith and hope against modern unbelief, from Rev. Alex. Balmain Bruce, one of the ablest thinkers and scholars to be found, not only in the Free Church, but in Scotland. As I listened to the stream of truth, manly thought, presented in a clear voice, and easy, natural, yet earnest and powerful manner, I could understand the enthusiasm shown by his friends last year in seeking his election to the chair vacated by the late Dr. Gibson, and their still cherished conviction that if spared he will yet prove a worthy successor of such men as Bannerman and Cunningham. Your vigorous correspondent "Index" is right in saying the men in our college chairs should be young, and so is "Vindex" in requiring maturity of character and scholarship. Both these points have been illustrated in the recent appointments to chairs in the Free College here. But of this it is perhaps not desirable to say more at present. Mr. Bruce is a man of forty, with body and mind invigorated with fifteen years of pastoral and pulpit work, and many more of ardent study. With peculiar capacities for professional work, he is known not to be indisposed to it, and rarely fortunate will be the college which secures his services.

I send you a sketch of the sermon, hoping it may prove interesting to your thoughtful readers, notwithstanding the defects inevitable even with the aid of shorthand. The text was, 2 Tim. i. 10—"He hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light."

It is truth as well as poetry which compares the advent of the Saviour to the sunrise banishing darkness, for till then death as a dark cloud enveloped humanity in gloom. To the believer Christ is the Day-spring from on high. True, the Christian still dies, as is appointed unto all men once to die, but death is to him the door of hope and no longer the snuffing out of the brief candle of life. Ours is somewhat like the day of Arctic regions, so full and prolonged that men grow weary of the light and forget its value. Atheists are busy with their work of destruction while we stand by unmoved, as if agreeing with them that men would live as well without that good hope as with it. May it not be that yet there should be a return of pagan night to teach us the true value of the light? In the text we are taught that Christ brought both life and immortality to light, and these in important relation the one to the other.

1. Let us consider the value of the Christian's hope as a source of comfort, and more especially as a motive to holiness. As the former it is frequently presented by the apostle; elsewhere and farther on in this epistle he avows its preciousness to himself in prospect of martyrdom. Does he exaggerate the value of the hope of immortality? So says the secularist of our day. They would even prefer the virtue which is not sustained by it; such as may be found, they say, among the Buddhists abroad, or the Atheists at home. Now, conceding the matter of fact that there are happy and virtuous Atheists and unbelievers in the life hereafter, the question as to the value of the Christian hope is not thereby settled. Three things must be well weighed before we pronounce a final verdict. (1) What is the secret spring of Atheistic virtue? In finding an answer, it must be remembered that there is always a certain moral power about any system of thought, whatever the items of its creed, which is a reaction against another system of opinion, which, however lofty its doctrines, has become corrupt and ineffective in the hands of degenerate professors. Sincerity, with the holdest creed, has more vitality and virtue in it than insincerity with the holiest and most inspiring creed possible. Mahomedanism, for example, at its rise was really a better thing than the corrupt Christianity which it swept away—a Christianity which had degenerated into metaphysical quibbles about the mysteries of the divine nature, and paltry disputes about the worship of images, associated too often with a frivolous and licentious life. In like manner, it is conceivable that even an Atheism which denies the life to come may have more moral worth than a Christianity which affirms that life, but does not live under its power. A virtuous, high-souled Atheism indeed, priding itself on sincerity and love of righteousness, may be looked for when such a Christianity becomes prevalent. The most high-spirited

men are most liable to disgust at insincerity and hypocrisy, and in their disgust to go to the opposite extreme from the system which awakens it; and seeing all around them worldly-minded men professing to believe in a life beyond death, and to regard it as their chief good, while they manifestly do nothing of the kind; they on the contrary make it their business to be distinguished by the love of virtue while ostentatiously proclaiming their unbelief, or at least their indifference with regard to that life beyond, which occupies so prominent a place in the Christian creed. In this way the existence of a moral-minded unbelief in a time of prevalent religious hypocrisy is easily to be accounted for. When faith is sincere, sincerity is very apt to be infidel. In the light of such a comparison the secularist devotee of virtue appears to peculiar advantage. But

(2) How is it when side by side with such a Christian as the Apostle Paul—the type of a true follower of Christ—to whose transcendental virtues he does not for a moment lay claim. He regards them as the fanaticism of a man righteous over much. From considerations of reason and experience he denounces and shuns dishonesty and excess, but what knows he of the Apostle's heroic self-denial and enthusiastic devotion to the good of others, qualities none the less noble because he had regard to the everlasting reward. This is not selfishness, but faith in things unseen and eternal. Just as the patriot fights for his country, trusting in its future freedom and glory, yet it is not selfish because he has an interest in the result.

(3) Then consider next the ultimate tendency of disbelief in the life to come. How secular principles will wear is worthy of earnest inquiry. Will they last any better than does the gleam light after the sun is withdrawn? Their inevitable course seems to be a gradual degeneracy into short-sighted selfishness. The Atheist lacks what one has called that "infinite calculus" by which to solve the problems of life and regulate its conclusions. Only the prospect of future life can give true impetus, as it gives boundless significance, to each moral action. Christ gave to man a life worthy of being immortal. The peculiar force of the passage seems to say, given that life, immortality of faith in it will follow. The religious Jew believed in a future life, but his view of it was dim and unspiritual. Christ knew this and taught them the true life. "To as many as believed, he gave power to become the sons of God." "He that doeth the will of the Father (i. e., the true Son,) abideth forever."

The great truth here for us is that if the Church abound in that life there will be strong faith in its immortality, and we will not need to labor to prove it. Wanting it we shall find it hard to convince ourselves, not to speak of others. No man can believe in the life to come whose life now is altogether after the fashion of this world, for all his habits of thought and feeling are every moment giving the lie to his professed creed. Only Godly men find faith in the life beyond easy. Only men accustomed to cross-bearing as Christ's disciples realize the future life as if it were present, even as it is only by night that men see the stars. The prevalence of these doubts of immortality, arises partly from low views of humanity, such as Darwinism begets, and of human destiny, like those expressed by the preacher when he saw but one doom for man and beast. Hence the revival of the Euthanasian proposal to dispense with the lingering years of hopeless suffering. Let us not only repudiate such low views, but labor to propagate high and true conceptions of existence. Let us first use all diligence to have the life of Christ within us, and then let us be zealous in the work of communicating that life to others, even the lowest, so that secularism may have no possible excuse or support for its low ideas of Christianity. Let us have more of Paul's enthusiasm, and less love for our comforts, more courage in contending for the faith, and more grace to embody it in our lives, and the night of unbelief may yet be arrested. For the Gospel itself is as well fitted as ever to be the light and joy of human life, enabling those who believe in it to rejoice in hope, to be patient under tribulation, and to keep themselves unspotted from the world. May God send his drowsy Church a revival of Christian faith, and a new infusion of that life which contains in itself the witness of that faith and the triumphant refutation of infidelity.

To any of your readers desirous to know more of Mr. Bruce's powers as a thinker and writer, I would heartily commend his first and only book as yet, "The Training of the Twelve, which has been so well received, and was recently so highly eulogized by Dr. Dodd's in the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*. Its study will well repay the cost and trouble.

CANADIAN ABROAD.
Glasgow, April 10th, 1873.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—I have been disappointed after a careful perusal of T. T. T.'s article on Church Membership in answer to mine of March 7th. Is this the best defence that can be made for the Church's present practice? Instead of meeting and answering my questions with proof direct, or deducible by fair inference from the Scriptures, he gives us broad assertions, together with his own impressions as to how the baptized children ought to be treated. He will not allow that baptism admits children into the Church, and dare not say that they are still left out in the world, and has therefore been forced to invent an intermediate state which he calls "the porch and vestibule," a sort of physical, intellectual, moral, and ceremonial purgatory, where they are kept to undergo a process fitting them for entering the Church. This may be a very ingenious mode of getting out of the difficulty. Unfortunately there is no Scriptural authority to sustain it. Our standards, sustained by Scripture, say that "Baptism admits the party baptised" not into the porch and vestibule but "into the Church;" if so, then baptized children are members, and thereby entitled to the privileges of membership.

I shall briefly review T. T. T.'s article. He commences by following the course usually adopted by those having unscriptural theories to maintain, viz., finding fault with the translation. He says that the original of Ex. xii. 24-27 does not mean infancy and childhood, but young men and maidens. And a few sentences further on he quotes the same passage and says that it means "enquiring boys and girls." These renderings cannot both be correct, the latter is substantially the same as given in our authorized translation. Don't boys and girls begin to make enquiries as soon as they are able to speak? That passage was not quoted by me to prove that children partook of the passover; I did not think that any one denied that. Let T. T. T. turn to Ex. xii. 3-4-47; that I presume will be sufficient proof. The next sentence proves that he is as unfortunate in his expositions as in his translations. He says that "it does not necessarily follow that all who were circumcised did eat the passover." Well if they did not they transgressed God's command and were to be "cut off from his people." (Num. ix. 13.) He next lays down four qualifications as necessary for a right participation of the passover and supper. But he has failed to quote Scriptural truth to sustain them; they are therefore unworthy of consideration. Some of them are contrary to Scripture. Take the first for example. "Bodily strength" was not required. The only physical qualification required was ability to eat. The whole household were to eat. The child was not required to eat as much as the adult; the command was "every one according to his eating."

I am next censured for speaking too plainly about the Church's neglect of her young members. He says "They are included as members in tutelage," &c., implying that the Church holds them in the same relation as the State does her minors. Let us see if the analogy will hold good. The State in taking the census counts the infant as well as the adult. The Church counts the adults only. The State holds the minors amenable to her laws, as our jails and reformatories will testify. Every law of the Church may be violated by those she has admitted within her pale, yet she does not visit them with her censures. Let those who deny this produce an instance where she has exercised authority. The State by her laws makes provision for the secular education of her youth. The spiritual instructions of the young are not secured to them by any law of the Church. She may call them members in tutelage or any other fine name, but it will not alter the fact that practically she treats them in the same manner as those who never were within her pale.

He says that "the principle that keeps back children is as old as the Church is ancient." Now he admits that the supper came in the room of the passover, and I presume he will not deny that a class entitled by Divine authority to partake of an ordinance, will retain that right till it is withdrawn by the same authority in as express terms. (We recognize and argue upon this principle in maintaining the rights of children to baptism.) I have shown the rights of children to baptism; when was it withdrawn?

It appears to me that Infant Baptism and Infant Communion should stand on a par together. The evidence for the latter is of the same nature, and is as strong and abundant as can be produced for the former. If the want of ability to "examine and"

discern" is sufficient to exclude children from the table of which Jesus commanded all his people to partake, then, by parity of reasoning, their inability to "repent" and "believe" should exclude them from baptism.

The above writer assumes that the personal voluntary assent of the creature is necessary before God will enter into covenant with them. The fallacy of this will be seen by referring to Deut. x. 2-3, and xxx. 10-12, Joel. i. 15-16. We act in accordance with these passages when we dedicate our infants to God by baptism. Why then should we, disciple like, forbid them coming to receive His blessing at His table?

The pious parent teaches the lisping infant to hold communion with God by prayer, although it cannot understand the meaning of the words it uses, or have any comprehension of the greatness of the Being it addresses. Is approaching His table a more solemn act than the above, or requiring a higher mental qualification. It would not be difficult to show many evils resulting to the youth of the Church from their having been cut off from that ordinance.

D. J.
King, April 2, 1873.

UNION.—No. 3.

THE ADVANTAGES OF UNION.

The duty of unity among Christians is thus set before us by the command and prayer of Jesus, the teachings of the Apostles, and the example of the Primitive Church.

St. Augustine's rule is a golden one as regards the relation of Christians to each other:—"In doubtful questions liberty; in essential, unity; in all things, charity." When Christians hold the same essential truths respecting the relation to God, the origin and nature of sin, and the way of salvation through the atonement of Jesus as a Divine Saviour, and the application of his redemption by the Holy spirit, and also respecting the government of the Christian Church, they would unite in maintaining the great principles about which they are agreed. In Col. ii. 19, and Eph. iv. 15, 16, Paul represents mutual love and unity as essential to the health and growth of the spiritual body of Christ. Yea, love is spoken of in "the royal law" of Christianity, and as the "end of the commandment." Hence while Paul admits that Christians have been called unto greater liberty under the Gospel he enjoins "Only love, not liberty, for an occasion to the flesh," viz.: to selfishly cause or perpetuate divisions, but "by love serve one another." Now as the different sections of the Presbyterian Church in Canada do thus hold the same great fundamental truths of revelation, and as they have the same Church polity, is it not clearly their duty to unite in an actual and visible organization, and thus manifest their unity, to the glory of God and their own greater growth and usefulness?

Candid and earnest Presbyterians who witnessed the stirring events of 1843 and 1844 in Scotland and the British Colonies, whether they approve of the particular shape taken by them, must at least admit that fresh energy was infused into the Presbyterian Church, and that she was led to put forth greater efforts to meet the wants of her adherents at home and abroad, and to fulfil her high commission by preaching the Gospel to the ends of the earth. A more earnest spirit has for several years pervaded the several sections of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and many of her more thoughtful sons now feel that the grand purpose designed by Providence in permitting the disruption in this country has been achieved, and that now there is another work to which both the conservative and progressive element of Presbyterianism are called, namely, to reunite the now thoroughly aroused and active branches of our Church both in Canada and elsewhere. The points of difference between the several sections of the Presbyterian Church are few and of minor importance compared to the points in which they are agreed. Why then do they not merge their minor differences and join together as one Church? If this can happily be accomplished—and we believe the spirit of love to Christ, and zeal for His glory, will ere long bring it about—then what a glorious future awaits the Presbyterian Church in Canada. If we believe, as we profess to do, that the spread of earnest Presbyterianism is eminently conducive to the advancement of pure and Scriptural Christianity, the salvation of souls, and the glory of an adored God, then should we not in the first place favor everything that hinders the consummation of that general union among us—for which all true-hearted Presbyterians should earnestly labor

and fervently pray? Should not the Presbyterians of Canada ponder these things? Should not the same mind be in them which was also in Christ Jesus about the matter of union? Should not all seek to be united first to Christ by a living faith and holy life, and then to be united with all Christians who hold the same standards, doctrines and polity—in the closest bonds of church-fellowship, and in the pursuit of the same object—the divine glory, and the conversion of the world to Christ? Yea, should they not exhibit their living, loving, and practical unity in such a way as to lead men to see and hear and turn unto the Lord?

Such union would bring with it many and great advantages. 1. It would insure greater unity and strength, vigor and harmony in their operations. Division tends in various ways to diminish the vigor and success of the efforts of the Christian Church, for the propagation of the common faith, and the advancement of the Saviour's cause. Disunion diminishes the Church's strength. "Union is strength," is an adage true as well as trite. A divided church is weakened and cannot accomplish as much either for Her Master's glory or for her own progress. Oftentimes much of the strength of the Church when divided is employed simply to keep her ground through the rivalry of different sections of the Christian Church, and even of different branches of the Presbyterian family, instead of putting forth all her efforts for her own extension and the conversion of the world to Christ.

Yea, too often division leads to unseemly controversies—the ways of Zion languish, and enemies rejoice. Sometimes the efforts that should only be employed in seeking the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints, are put forth to counteract each others' influence and usefulness. Now by the proposed union these unseemly jealousies and rivalries would be avoided. I do not say that controversy is always an evil. At certain times and under certain circumstances of the Church I believe it does good. Like the hurricane it sometimes clears the air of death-bearing vapors, and promotes the general health of the Church. Better, I admit, the occasional storm on the surface of the waters than that they should stagnate and endanger life. Such truly were the benefits conferred by the controversion of the Reformation period. But controversy is not the ordinary nor the proper work of the Church when in a healthy state.

(2.) If this union were effected one minister would often be able to attend to the want of the Presbyterian community, where two are now required. The United Church would thus be able to supply more laborers in the Home Mission work in Canada, and also to send forth more Missionaries to the destitute regions abroad. This is a very important consideration at any time, but especially at the present time when the scarcity of laborers is so painfully felt. A measure that would enable the Presbyterian Church in Canada to have at her disposal a greater number of ministers for different departments of her work, should not be lightly put away.

By this union we will be able to prevent our people from falling away to other denominations. Other sects gain, and have gained much by our apathy, inability, and neglect to supply our people with the means of grace. Thousands have thus been lost to us in Canada and the other colonies. It is now difficult to provide such an educated minister as the Presbyterian Church requires; others who are not so strict in this matter have taken such people as offered, and sent them forth to preach the Gospel, and I believe in this way they are right, adapting their course to the want and circumstance of a new country. Ere educated ministers can be sustained, save by a missionary fund—earnest laborers have gone from hamlet to hamlet, gathering the people together, and reminding them that while eagerly seeking the bread that perisheth, they should not neglect to seek the bread that endureth to eternal life.

These men have gone into the new settlements, sustained partly by an allowance from a mission fund, and partly by such contributions as they could obtain in the locality where they labored, but without requiring to ask how much the people would give before they began their labour. In the very nature of things it was to be expected that their presence and efforts for the spiritual welfare of the people would draw forth the sympathy and support of all Christians who had no pastor or missionaries of their own. And as this was too often the case with Presbyterians, they first attended and supported these missionaries of other Churches, and then, when neglected for a considerable time by their own church, at length joined in communion with them. There are sections in Canada where large portions of the early settlers were Presbyterians, where now their descendants are nearly all to be found in the bosom of other churches. This does not say much for the way in which the interests of Presbyterians were looked after formerly in Canada. This occurred on a large scale over thirty years ago, but instances of it are occurring still in the newer settlements.

One of the remedies for this evil would be the closer union of Presbyterians. They would then have more men and money under the direction of one body, and could economize both, and thus reach a greater extent of territory, and overtake sooner the newer settlements so as to prevent our people being lost to the church of their fathers.

UNION.