

METHODISM AS A BOND OF UNION AMONG THE NATIONS.

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE ECUMENICAL CONFERENCE BY DAVID ALLISON, LL. D.

I shall not subject to rigorous analysis and definition the terms of the fine rhetorical phrase which has been assigned to me as a theme. There is assumed the classification of the human race into distinct national communities and organizations. Considered geographically, these political divisions of mankind may claim a divine purpose and approval of Providence, even if their principle is not taught as a part of minor truth in St. Paul's sublime assurance that the invisible Creator "hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon the face of the earth." Of course, all modifications or disruptions of what may, perhaps, be termed natural lines and principles of division, under the play of the almost infinite variety of human motives, must be judged, each by itself, in the light of its own historical circumstances.

National divisions of mankind, being then assumed, the importance of international brotherliness of sentiment and conduct is recognized, and I am asked to say a few words on Methodism as a means of promoting it. If the tendency of Methodism can be shown to be, in any conspicuous degree, towards uniting, as friends and brothers, the people of separated communities, a new and attractive phase of its mission will be revealed. For nobler, far, than the poetic dream of "The Parliament of Men, the Federation of the World," is the conception of the nations as each occupying its allotted sphere, each with its distinctive type of institution, its peculiar current of national life, yet each animated in respect to all the others by the spirit of fraternal sympathy and love—a spirit growing directly out of a common recognition of a common relationship to that triumphant and ascended Lord, who holds in His pierced hand the sceptre of universal dominion, and who is "Prince of the kings of the earth."

With some uncertainty as to the exact mind of those who framed my subject, I give it a political or national rather than an ethnic interpretation. I suppose that the word nations is used in a strict sense—political persons endowed with language, reason, conscience, volition. Between these Methodism is to be conceived of as an agency of conciliation and fraternity. It would be a fallacy to construct my argument, if argument it can be called, on an assumed identity of Methodism and Christianity. It would be easy to show that the Divine light and spiritual power of the Christian religion are the most effective promoters of international concord, but this would prove no more for Methodism than for any other denomination conceded to hold and teach essential Christian truth. I am clearly called on to prove, or at least affirm, something of Methodism as actively.

Let us then briefly consider what probabilities may be fairly raised in view of its fundamental principles, its primary law of life, its essential spirit.

1. As it does not present the spectacle of an imposing ecumenical ritual and of a grand world-embracing ecclesiastical organization, so it lacks whatever power there is in such a spectacle—and human nature would be quite different from what it is if that power were not considerable.—both to fascinate the imagination and to stir the heart. Our coming together here is the "outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual" unity. It testifies that, whatever be held in common or apart of either doctrine or discipline, we do not presume to identify the outer framework, the human scaffolding of our little systems, with the foundations of that glorious and indestructible Church which the Lord bought with His own blood and founded on the rock of His own truth. Still, the fact remains that in an outward, visible, governmental sense, we are not one but many. The causes of this external diversity, providential, national, personal, various, are not to be inquired into; but the question cannot be avoided. Is this variety, this multifariousness, so to say, of Methodism, capable of being harmonized with that idea of Methodism here presented? I think it is, notwithstanding the concession made a moment ago. Indeed, some pages of human history would undoubtedly throw doubt on the validity of that concession, and lead us to question if the aggregation into one great body, under one system of Church government, not merely of all Methodists, but of all "who profess and call themselves Christians," would of itself do much to promote the brotherhood of the nations. If identity of ecclesiastical polity and ritual is a guarantee of friendly purpose and fraternal feeling among nations, how happened it that when the visible unity of Western Christendom was all unbroken, most Christian kings waged against others wars, fiercer than any which ever deluded the earth with blood? I allude to this, not to underestimate the salutary influence which the Church of the Middle Ages undoubtedly exerted in important respects, both on society in general, and on the relations and intercourse of nations, but by a brief historical reference to show that it is not in the literal unification of the Methodist bodies—however desirable this may be in itself in whole or in part—that we are to find the true secret of their being or becoming "a bond of brotherhood among the nations." A careful balancing of considerations would, probably, convince us that this function is best performed, other things being equal, by that system which combines with fixed central

principle, elastic facility of adjustment in non-essential matters.

2. A philosophical inquiry would especially lead us to ask as to the working of the central ideas of Methodism. No doubt all dogmatic truth is important, and no doubt as our theologians delight to assure us, Methodism embraces its entire circle, *quod semper, quod ubique, et quod ab omnibus.* But as a matter of fact, each denomination in prosecuting its special mission, pushes some special truths to the front. In this Methodism does not much differ from others, and in her popular theology lays emphasis on those Divine ideas which alone can be made the basis of a rational scheme of brotherhood. One blood flowing in all veins; one ever-available sacrifice for all sin; one sublime relationship awaiting all; one sublime relationship, there being in Christ Jesus "Neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free"—Himself being all and in all;—it is the Church which firmly grasps these lofty and ennobling, yet, in a true sense, the popular doctrines, and which makes not the matter of occasional statement, and carefully qualified acceptance, but the very life-blood of its teaching, which one might say logically constituted itself "a bond of brotherhood."

3. The inquiry should extend to the life which inter-penetrates and animates the forms and formulae of the Church. Dogma may be unquestionably orthodox, striking its roots down into the profoundest depths of catholic antiquity, and yet be a very dead and barren thing. Are there not missionary members of this Conference who could tell us of even great historical Protestant communions, with right noble confessions and symbols, yet themselves so corpse-like that the most careful auscultation cannot detect in them the faintest pulse of spiritual life? Such churches have no power for the promotion of human brotherhood. Fraternity for our purpose means friendliness, and hearts cannot be bound together by a cold faith of the head. The church which is to do anything worthy of record for this great cause must teach a truly spiritual philosophy; must constantly echo the voice of the Son of God, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," must be, in short, not simply a system of polity, or a set of doctrines, but such a Divine life revealed in its members as shall completely dispel the monstrous fiction of the philosophers, that Divine truth is essentially unknowable. So long as Methodism does and is all this, so long she works in the direction of the brotherhood of man.

The question how far these presumptions have justified themselves in actual history I can do little more than raise. Indeed, what I have said applies to brotherhood within nations, or brotherhood between individuals of different nations, rather than brotherhood between or among nations. My argument—pardon me, it is an argument; you do not know how hard it is to apply the forms of syllogistic reasoning to a poetical phrase—supposes several things. In the first place it supposes nothing at all respecting nations ruled by despots save to omit them from consideration entirely. Next it takes it for granted that in constitutionally governed countries, where the people are the fountain of power, the action of governments is a fair average reflection of the popular sentiment and will. It also assumes that Methodists understand their political rights and privileges, and "knowing, dare maintain them."

Conclusion next week.

CORRESPONDENCE.

LOCKPORT MISSION.

DEAR EDITOR.—We are approaching the end of our stay on this mission. As we survey the years gone, we are anew impressed with the responsibility of our work. Our hearts gladden in the memory of what God hath wrought. We have seen the tears of penitence, heard the cry for mercy, and then the rapturous burst of song from souls, free indeed, because the Son had made them free.

It has been ours to mark the development of religious principle expanding to a larger life. As a natural result Sabbath schools and social services are sustained among us. In two years we have seen six hundred and forty dollars paid on the church. One hundred dollars yet remain, after the payment of which, our church here will be free from debt. Death has been busy in our midst, so that we have often been called to the bedside of the dying and to the open grave. At the one, we have felt that it is

"Jesus can make the dying bed,
Feel soft as downy pillows are."

While at the other, standing amid the memorials of resurrection power we have cried "O grave where is thy victory!"

In this connection we wish to state that in May last Bro. Hugh McLearn, of Little Harbor, who had passed man's allotment, coming in from a neighboring house, expressed himself as feeling strangely and without a struggle or a sigh fell asleep. "The righteas bath home in his death."

Ira D. Swanson passed to his reward on the 25th of June, in the 82nd of his age. Under the ministry of the Rev. J. G. Briggs he was led to Christ, in whom he found a personal Saviour, and was enabled to cry,

"The Spirit answers to the blood,
And tells me I am born of God."

His Christian life was marked by such a faith as ever brought him into living contact with his Saviour, from which flowed large and hallowing influences. Through long weary months he waited, wondering, sometimes, if he would meet death triumpantly. When his feet

were in the valley, dying grace was given. And, just as the western sky for a moment flushed in the golden rays of the setting sun, the bright orb of his young life went down to its last setting, radiant the while, with glory eternal; and to his fond father, bending low o'er the couch of his dying boy, he said, "I am rich," "Glory to God in the highest." Then came the end. The tide ebbed beyond its flowing;

"The spirit from its clay released,
Soured upward to the giver, God."

Augusta, beloved wife of Wm. E. McLearn, died of consumption, Aug. 25th, in the 33rd year of her age. She was converted under the ministry of the Rev. E. Wasson. By a consistent life she evinced the peace and power of Christ in her soul till called to the fuller joy and larger life beyond the river. Her death was sudden. Without sign of his coming the messenger entered her home, seeming only to say, "The Master hath need of thee. Amid the gathering shadows her pathway grew bright with the beautiful light of God," and worn by a fever about which she never murmured, she passed quietly away to the rest beyond.

This one by one the warriors fall in hope of an immortal crown. Anew we address ourselves to the work of this our last year on this mission, while fervently we plead,

"Breathe on us Lord and say
The Holy Ghost receive."
WM. BROWN.
Lockport, Oct. 8, 1881.

TWILLINGATE, N. F.

The following letter is copied from the *Twillington Sun*:

DEAR SIR,—A visit to Herring Neck Circuit has increased our admiration for Green Bay and the lovely scenery of the northeastern part of the island, the whole of which is wild, grand, sublime. On board the good steamship *Plover* you feel very safe though sailing among the greatest dangers. The "voice of many waters" often reminds the voyagers of the presence of sunken rocks that have defied the roll of Old ocean for many years; yet there is such perfect confidence in the ability of Capt. Blandford and his officers that instead of fear there is a thrill of pleasure as the emotions are stirred with the awfulness of the scene. The voyage from Cape Fogo to Twillingate most pleasant. Passing through the islands in the night the eye and mind are charmed. To look upon and delight in the loveliness as seen in the firmament above, and on the sea and among the islands on such a night, and in such a place leads the devotional mind to adore the eternal Maker. The Northern Lights, like scrolls of gold and unfolding light, moving with swiftness as on the wings of the wind forward and backward, and forming an arch of the greatest perfection in mid-heaven, under which the steamship seemed to pass as if formed for our special pleasure, looked magnificent.

Reaching Twillingate, about one o'clock, a. m., Wednesday, we passed a very wet day, comfortably and agreeably, at Rev. T. W. Atkinson's. Thursday we crossed the Beach from Little Harbor with Mr. Jasper Dunland, an old and honored resident of that place, who is always ready to help the minister of the Gospel on the way to do his Master's work, and Mr. George War, a young disciple, both of whom may the Lord greatly reward. Passing through a narrow "tickle," we rode, over one mile and a half of smooth, land-locked water, altogether free from the roll of the ocean, and reached our destination. Remaining with Mr. Edgerton a short time, from whom we received a hearty welcome, we tried to do what good we could. We noticed many things to cheer and give much hope. Change Islands would have been visited but a strong wind coming early on Saturday morning prevented us doing so. Our face was then set for Twillingate, to meet the *Plover* on her return.

Sunday was a beautiful day—a day on which the soul is drawn to God. We preached on the South side in the morning, at Little Harbor in the afternoon, and on the North side in the evening. Large congregations gather in each church.

Looking at the stone which marks the spot where the mortal remains of the sainted William Marshall lie, we notice that the date of his death is 1846. Thirty-five years ago he labored as the first Methodist minister stationed in Green Bay. The buildings and congregations testify to the power of the Gospel as preached by Methodist ministers since then.

Taking the work done at Twillingate alone it is marvellous; yet it is only a part of the whole accomplished in Green Bay.

The new church has a good position and will be filled with an influential congregation. The present superintendent will be especially remembered. Another minister is required; only one thing is in the way—Funds. It is to be hoped the officials will see their way clear to promise at least \$275 and then apply to the Conference for an additional minister. Having shown such a spirit of liberality in providing funds for the new church, it is to be hoped that the spirit which is Christ-like will be still shown; that all the young men will delight to give to God as they are blessed with means to do so, considering the honor there is in giving to the Lord.

Leaving Twillingate on Monday evening, after a good passage, with pleasant companions, we reached Bonavista on Tuesday at noon, thankful for all the mercies of a kind Providence.

Yours very truly,
J. EBBRE.
Bonavista, Sept. 16, 1882.

BREVITIES.

The nearest approach to a brute that man can make is to become a mere creature of appetite—a feeder, a toper.

As the parent swayed the rod of correction, he said, "I feel much worse than you do, my son." "Then why don't you change ends?"

The clam has a larger mouth, in proportion to its size, than a human being, yet a clam never talks about its neighbor.

The wrong men always get rich. It is the fellow who has no money who is always telling you how much good he would do with it if he had it.

Lavater said, what it will do us no harm to ponder upon, that "he who purposely cheats his friend would cheat his God if he could."

A bride is reported to have lately said: "I told all my friends to have my name put on my presents, so that if divorced George should not be able to claim them."

The New Orleans *Picayune* has little faith in "the oldest inhabitant" who lets his imagination play in the open lot formerly occupied by memory and reason.

"I always take a front seat." So said a good Baptist brother the other day in speaking of the prayer meeting. Reader, go and do likewise, thus putting yourself where your pastor wants you and where you can "do the most good."

The man who sits down on the road to success and waits for a free ride will get left.—*Whitehall Times*. And the man who jumps on the tailboard of some one else's success will be greeted with the cry of "whip behind!"—*New Haven Register*.

It is a singular fact that the Bible stands in the way of the bad man, and never in the way of good men. If we have not broken the law we would as soon meet the sheriff as anybody; but the criminal would much rather meet some one else.

A bright little girl was sent to get some eggs, and on her way back stumbled and fell, making sad havoc with the contents of her basket. "Won't you catch it when you get home," though," exclaimed her companion. "No, indeed, I won't," she answered, "I've got a grandmother."

Sunday-school teacher (about to comment on St. Paul's direction for conduct of men and women during divine service): "Now, do you know why women do not take off their bonnets in church?" Small boy: "Cos they ain't got looking-glasses to put 'em on again by."

A learned man has said that the hardest words to pronounce in the English language are "I made a mistake." When Frederick the Great wrote to the Senate: "I have just lost a battle, and it's my own fault," Goldsmith says: "His confession shows more greatness than his victories."

Science tells us there is here a survival of the fittest. Doubtless this is so. So in the future there will be a survival of the fittest. What is it? Wisdom, gentleness, meekness, brotherly kindness and charity. Over those who have these traits death hath no permanent power.—*H. W. Warren, D. D.*

Does not our age suffer from a disease of reading—lectomania? What with newspapers, periodicals, primers, cheap literature, literary revolutions, is it not time for many to ask, "Am I not reading too much; remembering, writing, observing, thinking, feeling too little?" The epidemic increases. At many times the best way to read is not to read.

A pretty anecdote about Queen Christina of Spain is related by Mrs. Lucy Hooper in the *Philadelphia Telegraph*. A short time ago a foreign lady of rank, who was conversing with her Majesty respecting Spanish manners and customs, asked the Queen how she could endure to sit through a bull-fight. "Ah!" said Dona Christina, "you know I am very near sighted, and whenever I go to a bull-fight I always forget to take my eye-glasses with me."

"Have you spoken to pa about that yet?" anxiously inquired the eldest daughter of her indulgent mother. "No, my child, not yet, your father is too busy with his creditors to think of pony phaetons and rascal harness to match just now." "Both the creditors!" was the snappish reply. "That's just what your father is doing, my dear. After he has compromised at fifteen cents on the dollar, you shall have your turn-out."—*New Haven Register*.

"A man who is not ashamed of himself need not be ashamed of his early condition. It happened to me to be born in a log cabin, raised among the snow-drifts of New Hampshire, at a period so early that when the smoke first rose from its rude chimney and curled over the frozen hill there was no similar evidence of a white man's habitation between it and the settlements on the river of Canada. It remains still exist. I make an annual visit. I carry my children to it to teach them the hardships endured by the generations which have gone before them. I love to dwell on tender recollections, the kindred ties, the early affections, and the narration of incidents which mingle with all I know of this primitive family abode."—*Daniel Webster*.

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