

British Churches to a better mutual understanding. The Free Church, the Irish Church, the United Presbyterian Church, the English Presbyterian Church, and, I may add, the devoted Welsh Presbyterian Church (with which I have been brought into providential connection of late years), would all, I believe rejoice to meet their sisters who have emigrated to America, and in doing so they would meet with, and learn to love, one another.

I saw abundant evidence that the Presbyterian Churches have a more commanding position in the United States than they have in this country. I am aware that both the Methodists and Baptists have a greater number of adherents; but the Presbyterians (always with the Congregationalists of New England, who are half Presbyterians) have a much larger share of the intelligence and social and political influence of the country. Looking at our own country, how very few Peers (I know only three)—how very few members of the House of Commons (I suppose a little above a dozen)—how few of the literary men of London belong to the Presbyterian communion. In America, I found Presbyterians occupying high positions in all departments. It is well known that their illustrious President, Abraham Lincoln, attended the Presbyterian Church; his Attorney-General (one of the most interesting men I ever met) was an elder of that Church; and when I was in Washington, the President of the Senate, who is Vice-President of the United States, belonged to the same communion. I give these merely as examples of what you will find over all the Union. It is not difficult to find the cause of the difference between the two countries in this respect. In the New World there is no such thing as a fashionably endowed Episcopacy silently and gradually drawing away our young men and women of the upper classes from the faith of their fathers by means of universities, schools, and social influence. Put us all on a footing of equality; let Presbyterianism have its fair place (and it asks no more), and it will be able to contend intellectually and socially with any other denomination. But this is not the precise inference I mean to draw from this difference between the two countries. The fact comes before me as pointing to the difficulty which lies in the way of the union of the Presbyterian Churches in Great Britain and Ireland. It is a noteworthy circumstance, which we would do well to ponder, that wherever there is no Established Church—all over the United States, in Canada, in Australia, and New Zealand—the orthodox Presbyterian Churches are virtually, are visibly one.

Meanwhile, I see no reason why the various Nonconformist Presbyterian Churches of Scotland, England, and Ireland, should not hold a conference like the American Churches, or enter into communion, as the Colonial Churches have done. I do not despair, as events in Providence roll on, to find the good men of the Established Church of Scotland looking to such an organisation with feelings of intense interest, and prepared to consider whether there might not be a plan devised of healing all the divisions of the Old Church of Scotland, and exhibiting the unity in which she appeared for ages after the Reformation.

3. I am persuaded that a visible demonstration of oneness on the part of the Presbyterian Churches in America, and Great Britain with her Colonies, will have a powerful influence on the Reformed Churches of the Continent. It is all well that we receive deputies from these Churches, and allow them to beg among our congregations; but we should do something more. We ought to give them our moral support in the view of the nations. My occasional runs on the Continent have left on me the deep impression that the cause for fear there does not lie so much in the strength of Romanism, as in the weakness of Protestantism. The Romish system is, no doubt, still strong, and capable of a fearful death-struggle; but after the defeats it has suffered, and the humiliations to which it has been exposed, its security of life lies mainly in this—that there is no strong living power to oppose it. Superstition will never be put down by infidelity, which only disgusts our nobler and finer minds, and alarms the timid to drive them back to their old faith; and the Protestant Churches are in most places seriously trammelled by State restraints, and by being so much bound up with an unbelieving world, and even an avowed rationalism. We know what the Evangelical Alliance, by its moral weight and its deputations, has done in rescuing persons from the tongs of persecution. We know how these Churches have felt themselves strengthened and encouraged by the meetings of the Alliance in Geneva and in Amsterdam. It was with most painful reluctance, an urgent appeal being before us from the Continental brethren, that we should hold the next meeting in some of their cities, because they would be helped by it, that I seconded the motion to have the next General Conference in New York. I was reconciled to this course by the conviction, that by bringing Continental Christians into closer acquaintance with Americans, we should be able to bring a new influence to the aid of the struggling Continental Churches. But as the Evangelical Alliance is prevented by its constitution from interfering with ecclesiastical arrangements, it is evident that a combined Presbyterian organization could do for the Reformed Churches, which are Presbyterian, what a mixed Alliance could not undertake, especially in securing for them that free synodical action for which they are panting, and thus indefinitely widening the sphere of their action.

4. Not must we forget our Presbyterian missionaries settled among the heathen. It is all well that they should be encouraged by letters from their churches and committees at home, but this, after all, is distant cheer. They would surely feel it to be a precious privilege, if they could meet for consultation and communion in the country in which they conduct their arduous work. I rejoice to hear that there is a proposal of presbyterial union among our missionaries belonging to different countries in India. Such intercourse and intercommunion among the daughters will react upon the mother churches and help to remove obstacles to a closer union. We see this already in our Colonial churches which have come to an understanding, while the British churches remain alienated, and will, I believe, shame us into closer fellowship, in spite of our denominational prejudices.