

# British American Presbyterian.

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## Contributors & Correspondents.

### THE PROBATIONER'S SCHEME.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir; Striking as you well know is the order of the day. I hope the Printers "strike" will not make you under the necessity of striking off any of the names originally on your subscription list. The withholding of your paper for so many weeks, was a great disappointment to many of your readers, and would no doubt strike some of those who could not understand the reason forcibly with the idea that you have failed in your honorable enterprise in connexion with the publication of a Presbyterian paper for British America. I hope you will not become terror stricken—either with what people may say to you about the non-appearance of your excellent paper for so long, or about the complexion of it when it does appear. That communication in a late issue on the Probationer's Scheme, was rather provoking, at least to the first father's office. It strikes me that the writer has dealt some hard blows to more than one or two parties. In that communication—to be followed up, I have no doubt by others—a blow has been struck at the whole arrangement for the supply of our vacant pulpits. The entire plan apparently needs re-consideration, the open and wanton violation of law argues the necessity for a change somewhere, either on the part of those who make, or those who execute the law.

It is a fact that sessions are doing what Presbyteries are forbidden to do in the matter of the supply of vacant pulpits. I have heard it said that the greater includes the less. If the Presbytery is forbidden the session is. Have offending sessions been dealt with by their respective Presbyteries as they have deserved? So far from that, it would seem that Presbyteries too are guilty to some extent. The law is a dead letter. Better that the clause were struck out. It does not answer the purpose intended. As long as probationers and ministers are eligible for calls, they will be heard even in the best vacancies, whether they are at the disposal of the Committee or not. This will be the case until we are prepared to say to congregations—You must not permit any man to enter your pulpit with a view to a call who is now without charge, and whose name is not on our probationer's roll. Until this is done and congregations comply, every probationer and minister without charge will not put himself at the disposal of the H. M. C.

Something more about some other facts of the same scheme at a future time.

In the mean time, I am &c.,

LIBERTOS.

### THE RELIGIOUS NEWSPAPER.

(Communicated.)

One of the most striking features of our time is the wonderfully rapid growth of the newspaper press. It is now used to disseminate information of all kinds and upon all subjects. It has become an indispensable necessity for organizations that would make their wants or claims known to the public. It is a favourable sign of the time, and full of hope for mankind, that religious bodies, though amongst the most conservative of all, now largely avail themselves of the religious newspaper press. They must do it to be abreast of the times. No one needs to be told how much the success of the Free Church movement, especially in its early stages, owed to the newspaper press. The old Catholic movement has its organ. In the United States there are published no fewer than four hundred and seven religious periodicals. Some of the very best of these are in the interests of Presbyterianism. The Methodists, Baptists, and Bible Christians of Canada, have each their weekly organ. But when it is attempted to establish one in the cause of Presbyterianism in Canada, only a few rally heartily around it, and others manfully set to work to put up objections.

Some say we did not need a weekly paper. This cannot be because we have ready a sufficient supply of them, or because we have any organ which answers the place of a weekly paper. If every town in the country which pretends to be living and wide awake, commercial,

agricultural and manufacturing; if religious bodies, smaller than we are, or larger, feel it a necessity to have a weekly journal, and are able to support it—why cannot we support one, and how do we expect to hold our ground without it? We have no ways of making our principles known that other bodies have not, on account of which we can do without an organ. Men do not know them intuitively, so that it is quite unnecessary for us to make them known and defend them. We must content ourselves to come down from our high horse, and use the same means to obtain success that others do. If our principles are worth holding, they are worth advocating, and the sooner we advocate them in that way which common sense and experience show is the most effective, the better for ourselves and the better, we believe, for the country also. It may look like a very grand thing to have such sublime faith in our principles as to imagine they don't need the usual vulgar means of making them known through a newspaper, but sensible men will laugh at our folly.

Others again object that a paper only promotes strife. Very good, gentle souls these are. Very great objections to thunder storms these people have, they frighten them so. Sometime they are frightened even by their own shadow. They have a special fondness for that benediction, "Blessed are the peaceful." What they call peace is stagnation, the silence of death. Of course all these very nice, loving people take their political papers. They live at such peace among themselves, they are never ruffled by the slightest breeze of strife. O no! This would only be a valid objection if a religious newspaper created more strife than others do. This we deny. Surely an honest difference of opinion, and the earnest, or even strong expression of that difference is not necessarily strife, or should lead men of common sense and especially of Christian feeling, to think less of each other. It is only by sifting principles, or each others opinions fairly and fully and frankly stating results, that truth is arrived at. We have had too little friendly rubbing down of each others irregularities amongst us, and provided that contributors are only gentlemen, not to say Christian enough to avoid personalities, frank discussion of all matters affecting Presbyterianism and the moral welfare of the country must be attended with good. But upon the principle of avoiding what some call strife, consistency would require that all legislative bodies should be abolished. There would be no more deliberations upon the subject of Union; the British House of Commons would become a thing of the past; and our Assembly would not meet next June.

Some, again, are very much afraid that by taking this paper they may encourage Sunday newspaper reading. But surely that is not the fault of the paper. A religious newspaper will not insist upon being read upon the Sabbath day any more than any other paper. If the sight of a newspaper is too strong a temptation for any weak brother, it is an easy matter to put it out of sight altogether for a day. Some people, not a few indeed, have a strange and stupid superstition about religious reading served up in the shape of a newspaper. It is quite right, even on Sunday, if it is in the shape of a tract, or a magazine, or that of our own Record, but to read it in a paper is a sin, more or less heinous in their sight. This is pure superstition. And the people who object to a paper on this ground are grossly inconsistent as well. These same persons, with such tender consciences, can go from the most earnest sermon, from the most sacred religious services, from the House of God, and talk a little over their business, their prospects and plans, take a stroll out to see their cattle or how their turnips are growing, but to take a religious paper in their hand on the Sabbath would be a wicked violation of that day. It is well to preserve the appearance, at least, of consistency in making objections to take a religious newspaper into our homes. The abuse in this, as the abuse in anything else, is no argument against its rightness. It would be strange not to let in the air and light into our houses, lest by a chance in so doing we might see a cobweb, or get our olfactory nerves disturbed by any disagreeable odour. The objection against a religious newspaper just mentioned is not a whit more rational. On the contrary, the benefits are great and obvious, and if we are to hold our own in our rapidly growing and enterprising country; if we are to have the weight due to a powerful body in all the public questions coming before the country; and if we are to make that progress in the future, which the admirable adaptation

of Presbyterian principles to the genius and spirit of the civil and political institutions of the country, as well as their conformity to the Word of God, entitles and qualifies us to make, a weekly religious denominational paper is simply a necessity.

## FOREIGN MISSIONS.

### MISSION PROSPECTS MORE CHEERING IN CHINA.

Rev. Mr. Baldwin, of Foochow, China, writes of the change taking place in that country, respecting the "poison reports" which were circulated against the missionaries, which for a time placed their lives in jeopardy, and greatly obstructed their work. He says:—

"The excitement about the *poison pills*, or poisonous mixtures, extended to *Yungfoo*, as well as to other districts, but has already subsided for the most part. Some of the Chinese converts were annoyed by the rude treatment of the heathen in the streets—reviling, cursing, and jostling them, and in a few instances, inflicting blows. But we can believe, with persecuted Paul, that these things 'have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel.' The bubble having burst, the people will better understand the spirit of the Gospel, and of its promoters and believers. The multitude may long continue to hate it, still the excitement, and its manifest groundlessness, tend to draw and fix attention. They find that the poisoning story is a ridiculous humbug, and that Christians, after all, are honest people. So the Gospel will come in, by the lives it has removed as well as by its own truth, as an influential antidote to the fear of 'poison.'"

## EGYPT.

The United Presbyterian Mission in Osiout, Egypt, is in a most prosperous state. The Rev. Mr. Watson writes:—

"The number attending divine service on every Sabbath morning has been very encouraging, and the attention to the exercises all that could be desired. The nightly meetings during the week have sometimes been small, but much larger than they would be in America in a congregation of the same number of communicants. . . . The sacrament of the Supper was appointed first for November 12th, but had to be twice postponed for the accommodation of the villages. It was finally agreed to hold it on November 26th, the previous Saturday to be kept as a day of fasting and prayer."

On Sunday an unusually large congregation assembled—they say 500—among them some bigoted Copts and some Moslems. All seemed, however to give good attention as I preached from that precious text, 'Ye are complete in him, and the occasion seemed to remind me of preaching in America more than any other in my experience. It is a glorious privilege to have five hundred persons to whom to proclaim salvation in this land of ignorance and wickedness. It was a precious season. Some were deeply moved. The Master had come and revived us. The following is a view of the 'ingathering' since October 25th in this region: New members admitted on profession, 46; children baptised, 8; native pastors ordained and installed, 1; churches organized, 1; elders ordained, 2; deacons ordained, 8."

## DO YOU KNOW IT?

- Do you know that the vows of God are upon you?
- Do you know that the worth of life is the good we do?
- Do you know that some one is following your example?
- Do you know that your piety may unconsciously decline?
- Do you know that the prayer meeting needs you?
- Do you know that you can slight the Lord's Supper?
- Do you know that Christ enjoins secret prayer?
- Do you know that all your property belongs to God?
- Do you know that you forfeit your hope by indolence?
- Do you know that your Sunday vacant seat looks bad?
- Do you know that, if backslidden, Jesus will forgive you?

Private prayer has been likened to a golden chain, whereof one end is tied to the tongue of man, and the other end to the ear of Deity.

## THE PRESBYTERIANS.

For solid worth, steady resolution, endeavor to do good, intelligence and integrity, the Presbyterians are not excelled by any other people. They are attached to their own sect, but are not narrow and clammy; they give largely to their own institutions, and are generous to those of other denominations, and readily do more than any other body of Christians, except the Congregationalists, for general Christian enterprises, unsectarian in character. They have the ablest and best educated ministry in the land, and a membership which constitutes the backbone of the nation, and a credit to the cause of our Redeemer. We thank God for the Presbyterians.—*N. Y. Baptist Union.*

## DR. HOLLAND ON THE UNITARIANS.

We suppose it must soon be a matter of common observation that as soon as a Unitarian clergyman really begins in earnest the work of saving men, he begins to drift toward the evangelical view of Christ. So long as Unitarianism works among the refined and the highly educated, even they if are politely selfish, it gets along very well, but the moment it is called upon to present the motives of reformation to the wicked, the brutal, the degraded, it finds itself impressively weak. The man who preaches nurture, and culture, and development to a congregation of brutal men and vicious women, preaches that which every man and woman before him knows to be nonsense. There is not one of them who does not need to be saved, and who does not know that the process of salvation involves a revolution, or reformation, or regeneration a change, possibly, that combines all these processes. They are weak, and need help; they are sinful, and need pardon; they are lost, and need to be saved. To tell such that a "Hebrew philosopher" who pretended to be inspired and to teach with authority, but who was in reality only a good man, can save them, is to feed starving men with chaff. The wicked, degraded, selfish world we live in can never be under very great obligations to a religious teacher who laughs at the phrase "A change of heart." As soon as a man realizes the necessity of such a change for himself and the world he realizes the necessity of holding as the central figure of his religious system something more than a Hebrew philosopher. Only his God can be his Saviour, and his Saviour must be his God.—*Scribner's for April.*

## NORTHERN AFRICA.

Romans, the famous German explorer of Africa, has lately been entertaining and instructing his countrymen of Berlin by a series of popular lectures on his explorations of Northern Africa, which he thinks, with proper treatment, might again be turned into the paradise that some portions of it were under the Carthaginians and Romans. He has found on the Gulf of Sidra, west of Tripoli, the site of the garden of the Hesperides and the river of Lethe, and he has a strong desire to see his countrymen eating the golden apples so famous in ancient story. He declares that Central Africa is as rich as India, and that a grand highway to the Kingdom of Soudan might easily be constructed across the desert from a port to be established on the site of ancient Carthage. He would encourage German emigration thither, and thus found an independent colony that might in time be a nucleus for operations that would turn all Central Africa into a German India. To this end the Germans have already a strong foothold in the friendship now existing between Emperor William and his sable majesty of Soudan, to whom the German ruler recently sent some magnificent presents, which were received with all the pomp and circumstance that the African monarch could command. Bismark and all his countrymen are listening most seriously to these stories and suggestions, and are beginning to feel that their mission is to regenerate Africa and open it to the civilized world. This would be a great task, but the Germans understand Africa thoroughly, for their scholars and geographers have been quietly exploring it for the last twenty years, and are now no strangers to its hidden recesses and secluded treasures.—*Scribner's for May.*

"Oh, dear sir," says Brainard, in writing to a friend, "do not think it enough to live at the rate of commonplace Christianity."

## Random Readings.

A cunning man over-reaches no one half so much as himself.—*Henry W. Beecher.*

Selfishness is that detestable vice which no one will forgive in others, and no one is without himself.

God asks no man whether he will accept life. That is not the question. You must take it. The only choice is how.

Sow an act, and you reap a habit; sow a habit, and you reap a character; sow a character, and you reap a destiny.

A grasp of the hand, a smile, a word even, is often enough in God's hand to change the entire course of life, to save a soul from death.

Some one was praising the public schools to Charles Lamb and said, "All our best men were public-school men. Look at our poets: There's Byron, who was a Harrow 'boy'—'Yes,' interrupted Lamb, "and there's Burns, he was a plowboy."

Dust can fly only so far above the road; and birds which fly high enough, never have it on their wings. So the heart that knows how to fly high enough escapes those little cares and vexations which brood upon the earth but can not rise into that purer air.

Izaak Walton, speaking of George Herbert's mother, says she governed her family with judicious care, not rigidly nor sourly, "but with such a sweetness and compliance with the recreations and pleasures of youth, as did incline them to spend much of their time in her company, which was to her great content."

Before you ask a favor of any man, just consider three things. First. Can you not avoid it? Second. Can the one you apply to grant it? Third. Would you, if your places were reversed, do for your friend what you ask him to do for yourself? It is well to think of this, as it may change the whole question.

The ambition whose last aim is worldly fame or temporal success, grasps a fruit that turns to ashes in the hand. Better would it be if genius would aim at accomplishing what it can in God's service and for man's good.—"seeking only," as Sir Thomas Browne says, "to be found in the records of God, rather than in the chronicles of man."

A man without decision can never be said to belong to himself. He belongs to whatever can capture him; and one thing after another vindicates its right over him, by arresting him while he is trying to go on. Such infirmity of spirit confesses him to be made for subjection, and he passes, like a slave, from owner to owner.—*Poaster's Essays.*

The first act of Divine justice in the infant church at Jerusalem was to punish covetousness. And yet the church has never dealt with this sin as it should. Who ever heard of a man being disciplined for covetousness? For other sins men are cast out of the church; but in this sin, which the Bible calls idolatry, they live and die without one honest rebuke.—*Hall.*

## DE QUINCEY.

It is singular that De Quincey, possessing as he did such mastery over language, never attempted to adapt to the comprehension of his listener. He addressed an illiterate porter, housemaid, or prowling beggar, on the most trivial subjects, in the same precise and measured language as he would have addressed a Cambridge professor on a disputed point in metaphysics, or Porson on a classical emendation. In this respect he differed much from Dr. Johnson.

Mrs. Gordon has preserved a specimen of the style in which he (De Quincey) was wont to address her father's housekeeper, when giving her directions as to the preparation of his food; and did it come from any less friendly source we should take it as a caricature or parody. He simply wanted his meat cut with the grain or fibre, instead of across it, and this is the way he conveyed to her that fact:—"Owing to dyspepsia afflicting my system, and the possibility of any additional derangement of the stomach taking place, consequences incalculably distressing would arise; so much, indeed, as to increase nervous irritation, and prevent me from attending to matters of overwhelming importance, if you do not remember to cut the mutton in a diagonal rather than longitudinal form." No wonder that the simple Scotchwoman exclaimed to her mistress "that 'Mr. De Quincey would mak a grand preacher, though I'm thinking a hantle of the folk would na' ken what he was driving at.'"—*Evening Mail.*