

## REMARKABLE LETTER FROM JAPAN.

The following remarkable letter and memorial from Japan will doubtless surprise many who are not aware of the wonderful rapidity with which the Japanese people have been receiving Christianity, and of their quickness and intelligence as a people. The "United Church of Japan" has, it appears, received hindrance and discouragement from a very unexpected quarter, namely, some of the very societies and teachers from whom the people had first received Christianity. The letter is addressed to Professor Griffis, formerly for years a missionary in Japan, and author of "The Empire of the Mikado," and is accompanied by the following memorial:

"To the Christian Missionaries in Japan, the following is respectfully submitted:

"In the third month of the year of our Lord 1872, the whole body of native believers, having assembled at Yokohama, after mutual consultation, with one accord established the first Native Christian Church of Japan. This Church, without concerning itself in the least with any of the sects of the different foreign countries, simply makes the Bible its only rule of conduct, and depends alone on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We therefore regard those whose principles exactly accord with the Bible as the servants of Christ and our brothers. And whosoever, not regarding sects, but pitying and helping the immaturity of our infant Church, teaches the pure and perfect truth of the Bible;—every such person will be welcomed as our minister.

"In all sincerity, then, we ask of the foreign missionaries and believers in the holy doctrines of Jesus that, in the name of our Lord alone, and taking the Bible as the rule of conduct without regarding your sects or harboring malice among yourselves, but working amicably together, you would pity this our weak little Church, and help its insufficiency, and would exert your strength so as soon to bring the people of this whole land under the grace of the salvation and the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ. The above is the genuine expression of the whole Church.

"Respectfully submitted in behalf of the Japanese Christian Church.

"The above is a true copy of the article adopted by the Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ in Yeddo and Yokohama at their meeting, January 16, 1874. OSHIKAMA, NAZAYOSKI, and SHINOZAKI KINOSAKI, Council of Translation."

The following is the letter which accompanies it:—

Takee Hasha, a member of the Protestant Church in Yokohama and Yeddo, sends the following letter to the believers of the various denominations of the American Protestant Church.

Brethren, I pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you may have grace and peace.

To begin, as respects the original organization of our Protestant Church here. It was organized independently of the various denominations, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. It makes the Holy Scriptures its rule of faith, and is a company of believers who meet together for religious conversation and prayer. Being organized independently of the various denominations, without regard to nationality or sects, accepts whoever teaches according to the Holy Scriptures as our pastor. Those who are benevolent for Christ's sake, ought therefore to assist this work. Though there are many different sects in the world, all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who believe and observe the Holy Scriptures and the articles of Faith thence derived, are regarded by us without distinction as brethren of the same Church.

Now, many of the missionaries of the different Churches of Europe and America say, "The Japanese Church is without strength. It is like a child not yet able to walk, therefore we will establish schools, help the poor, and thus assist the Church here." To do this, they would divide the Church already organized, and reorganize it according to the rules of the Churches in their native lands, and thus compel the Church here to become sectarian. If it should not obey, we are told that they will prevent those missionaries who have already taught us from teaching us in the future.

Besides those who act thus, there are other missionaries who say that to give the Japanese Church freedom, to nourish it as it is now established, is in harmony with the Holy Scriptures, and for the benefit of the inhabitants of this land. Our Church here, in the first month of 1874, on account of this difference of opinion, met in the original church of Yokohama and

decided not to alter the original constitution of the Church, accepted at the time of its organization in 1872. Therefore, those missionaries who wish to divide our Church and attach it to their societies say our Church is a new sect, and keep aloof from it. Moreover, they say, if there are missionaries who will aid and teach the Japanese Church thus established, money will not be sent to them from the Churches of their society in their native land; and not only so, but such missionaries will be tried and expelled from the Church as persons who have violated its rules. In the conflict of opinion here, one favors and another opposes the (union) movement. We, in the midst of this, when we hear, are much troubled and perplexed, because many missionaries who have met with us in the same church, and sat with us, are all at once separated from us; and several missionaries who have taught us are on account of this action of our Church, in danger of being discharged by the Churches of their native lands. This is something at which we grieve and wonder, the more so because there are the Catholic and Greek Churches, very different from the Protestant, and very contrary to the Scriptures, which yet are united in the name of Christ, and endure hardships for His sake; much more should Protestants, though divided into sects, unite in essentials. The missionaries who proclaim the truth have no other duty but to proclaim the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This I firmly believe. Hence, to say that one will help the Church if it is sectarian, and if not, will even take away its teachers and forbid those who may be disposed to aid, is not this perverse, and a reason for astonishment?

I have spoken on this subject to the Greek priest Nicolai, and to the Catholic priest Arenbuser. They told me that the sects of the Protestants were like the branches of a river very numerous, and hence very weak and abusive of each other. When I heard this, I thought they both, from ecclesiastical bigotry, were slandering the Protestants, whose doctrines I believe. But now, before our eyes, some Protestants, in accordance with the opinions they advocate, labor to divide or distract or wind down our Church. But though we are weak, we will, without regarding anything else but the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Scriptures, firmly protect our weak little Church. This is what we from our hearts have promised to do, not holding our lives dear to us. Some one will say, the Japanese Church does not obey, the American Church, and in case it does not receive its aid, what will it do if it is persecuted and opposed by the Government or by the Pagans? And again, has it power to punish offenders when they arise in the Church? Again, who will send money to help the union Church? And again, who will ordain the ministers? Why take anxious thought of this? I am not troubled by any of these questions. When the Government or the Pagans persecute the Church, we will avoid them and not fight against them. Being without strength, we will commit the matter to the Lord. If a member of the Church commits an offence, the minister, elders, and members in assembly will discipline him according to the Scriptures and will not employ authority (power) or the fear of man. Though there is no ministry to ordain our minister among those who oppose the unity of the Church, there will be, no doubt, found some one on the face of the earth who labors for the sake of Christ, who will do this for us. Therefore, I am not concerned about these things. I think to give money to build up a sect is not giving for the sake of Christ, who will do this for us. Therefore I am not concerned about these things. I think to give money to build up a sect is not giving for the sake of Christ, and teaching sectarianism is not teaching in the name of Christ. Those who ask the above questions appear not at all to teach and help for Christ's sake, but appear to be concerned about their own reputations and livelihood, and are anxious to court favor with the Home Churches. This discussion of the above four questions in Japan gives occasion to the Catholics and Greeks to laugh, and is much to be regretted. As to the divisions into sects in America, and want of union there, though the object of their faith is one,—this is because believers have come from various countries, hence there are different customs and peculiarities of church organization. From the foundation of the country, these divisions existed. The divisions are said not to be contrary to Scripture, but time has proved them to be of human origin and injurious. In our country the people are stubborn and uncivilized, yet it is a homogeneous race inhabiting

our country. From the time of the settlement of this country, until now, the people had no true teaching, but have dwelt in darkness. Now, for the first time, the true way (doctrine) is heard, and now is the time when the people may be received into the favor of Christ. The missionaries of the Society should take the twelve apostles preaching to the gentiles, as their models, and without working to build up their separate Societies, labor for Christ, and, adhering to the Scriptures, establish one religion. Would not this be best? Some one will say "There is evidence of the difficulty of establishing a united church, not at a distance, but before our eyes. Look at Buddhism." I reply Buddhism, is of human origin, not only, but originated some thousands of years ago, and among barbarians. Hence when a learned man appeared, he added another sect,—thus putting human invention on the top of human invention, and at last both origin and end are lost in confusion. Why does any one compare the doctrines of the Lord Jesus Christ with this kind of Paganism? Oh, as to the preceding discussion and the arguments of teachers prejudiced in favor of their societies,—by what verse of what chapter of the sacred Scriptures are they maintained? I do not doubt the teaching of learned men from civilized countries, but my mind is darkened, and I cannot find the *proof* of what they say. Hence, I ask you, my teachers, to show my letter to your brother teachers, and then let each one open his mind without reserve, and impart to me. I am not employed by the native Church to write this, nor do I write to help on the discussion among the foreign missionaries, nor do I write to oppose the fanatic foundation of churches on a denominational basis, but it is because I want to know from my heart whether our Church is rightly established or not, therefore, I ask you, my instructors, that you would consult with distinguished men from all quarters, so that I might receive the advice that is true and good. I want our Church to improve. I beg you, therefore, my instructors, to commiserate our weakness and ignorance, and exert yourselves to compare various views and communicate them to me. Respectfully, TAKEE HASHA. To Rev. Mr. Griffis, Dr. McArtee, and others.

The following comment has been added to this letter by one who has been a devoted labourer in the missionary cause in Japan. "That converts to Christianity from heathenism should take such independent, intelligent, and decided action upon a question that the church, through so many ages has been divided upon,—that such tacit but severe reproof of the narrow, selfish policy that controls much of the missionary labours in heathen lands should come from one who, for only a few months has been a disciple of Jesus, are certainly facts that should not be hidden." Certainly, the unconscious saure of the letter might well lead home Christians to consider whether the present undivided state of the Church of Christ is really a *necessary* evil, as we have been told so long; and above all whether these divisions, which do not seem included in the charge to "preach the gospel to every creature"—should be allowed to bewilder and confuse the minds of those who are emerging from the darkness of heathenism into the light of the gospel of Christ which teaches "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism." We believe that the Presbyterians of the United States have favoured the foundation of the United Church of Japan, and surely every Christian heart must hope that the infant Church will grow till it embraces the whole Japanese empire in its life-giving influence, and that it may long be spared those divisions which have so long weakened the hands and cramped the efforts of the Churches at home.

## CHILDREN OF THE CHURCH.

MR. EDITOR,—It will be thought by some that I have a great deal of assurance to write again on the above subject after your severe critique on my presumption for daring to step out of the rut worn deep by all good churches for ages past, but evidently first formed by the Romish Church when she invented the dogma of transubstantiation, for the Greek Church, which is as likely to have followed apostolic practice, has retained infant communion until the present day; and, although no evangelical church has adopted it, yet you must be aware that many eminent writers have advocated it.

It has not been proved that the system I recommend is unscriptural, but that it is contrary to conservatism. A dangerous reed to rest upon. For it