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## Contributors and Correspondents

### CONCERNING SOIREES.

While the social element in our nature is universal, and all but omnipotent, it is also ever found craving alike for exercise and enjoyment, and while there is an ample and appropriate field for both, yet there are few things among our ecclesiastical economies that more require the continued care and circumspection, both of Christian pastors and people, than the right regulation of this element in those so-called sacred socialities, sanctified amusements, and religious-entertainment—Soirees. True there can be no harm and may be much good, in the abstract idea of Christians eating and drinking socially together, and while there can be no doubt but that the Primitive Christians had their social gatherings called *agapas*, yet it cannot be denied that the abuse of these even in the apostle's time met with their unequalled denunciation, fill in spite of all, growing worse and worse, the Council of Laodicea in the fourth century forbade eating and drinking in the house of God altogether.

Although such a state of things has been, and may yet be again, we would by no means assume, far less assert, that soirees in themselves are wrong—they are a power, but like every other power, they are a power for good only when rightly directed, and in consequence great care is required in their management when held in connection with religion, lest they degenerate into a species of amusement—the tendency of which is to depress the tone of piety, and deprive those who attend them of all their higher social benefits. We readily acknowledge that the social, the cheerful, and even the tasteful are not only all sanctioned but sanctified by religion, than which there is nothing more social, cheerful and tasteful. Yet we cannot deny that not infrequently we have witnessed clerical exhibitions at soirees, which though approved and applauded by many, yet by which our taste as men and our sensibilities as Christians has been more than offended. When we affirm as we must heartily do, that

"Religion never was designed To make our pleasures less."

we at the same time do not forget that religion sets aside many of the lower and lesser so-called worldly pleasures, as unbecoming to it and unworthy of us, if not injurious to us, and substitutes others so immeasurably superior as to dispose us readily to give up the lower and the lesser for the higher and the greater, as we would give up the drop for the fountain, or the feeble taper for the full beaming sun. In all soirees then in connection with religion, it should ever be seen too, that religion with all its special social cheerfulness, yet with all its seriousness and sanctity should ever preside and impart all its blessings to every soul, so that, as it usually the case, while there may be many unconverted persons present, they may see how happy Christians can be together, not by being beholding only to their amusements, or descending to the gross or the grotesque, as if religion could or did impart no happiness of its own; but by showing them that the only real and lasting happiness is that which religion does impart—a happiness true in its nature and elevating in its effects. The way to commend Christianity and win the ungodly thereto, is not by showing that when we want to be happy we must for the time discard religion altogether, and show by our manifestations that our happiness is heightened in degree, in proportion as it is distant from religion, and thus giving them too much reason to conclude that our religion is only a form, and Christianity a sham. A Christian should even show that he has a fountain of bliss embedded in his very being, and at the same time show, that it can be gotten and enjoyed by others.

It is unfortunate, however, that this is not always the case, and more so, when at soirees any of the solemnly set apart teachers of Christianity, so far forget their position and profession as to play the buffoon for the occasion, and unscrupulously mingle up the sacred and the silly in stale jests and petty comicalities in order to make the multitude gape at his oddities and earn for himself the unenviable cognomen of the clerical clown of the community. See such an one for instance, rise on the platform of a soiree; behold the egotistical attitudes he assumes, the airs he puts on, the fancied witticisms he throws off, with all these fantastical and much-meaning tuggings and hoistings and stretchings which bespeak his consequences, and foreshadow his greatness ere yet he begins his speech. Conscious that he is invited because he is so witty, he, under the burden of his gifts and glories, rejoicingly accepts the situation as the man of the meeting. He has gotten the idea that he is not only an excellent actor but a born humorist as well, and that he is generally held to be a very clever and a particularly funny fellow, yet in nine cases out of ten he is regarded as a consummate egotist and a shallow fool. True he treats you to a number of comical oddities, fancied jokes and preposterous puns, the point and the pith of which you oft fail to discover. Yes, as he often not only makes fun of himself but a fool of himself, he gains his end in the abjections which follow, although he may not have the sensitiveness to feel, or the gumption to discern, unless he is told, whether the

laugh is with him or against him. He regards himself as speedily great on the subject of "the ladies," and considers his wit as exceedingly brilliant, and like in "taking them off" and pulling them on," so that wherever he is trotted out, the ladies are all agog to gather and to garner up the wonders of his wit. As years go on his speeches gain in length as they lose in pith, while his unscrupulous commingling of the sacred and the silly in one unseemly mélange, lead people off to look at his serious utterances, through the medium of his silly effusion, and to thus tempted even to laugh at what is meant even to make them weep. So much is this of the case that sensible people instinctively wonder how any man, and especially a minister of the Gospel of the Lord Christ, should so far forget himself, his position and profession, his Master and his ministry, as to be found willing for such a reward, to make such a public and a painful exhibition of himself.

But as Solomon says, there is a time to laugh, and as the Creator has endorsed man with a sense of the ridiculous, why should not ministers, as well as others take advantage of it to serve their purpose; true, if this is all that is wanted, most assuredly the monkey would far outstrip the man, and for any one to ape the monkey, I ignore the man is neither very pretty nor very praiseworthy. Again, it may be said that without such those who get up soirees could neither draw the multitude nor make them pay. To this we would say that it is unfortunate for the prosperity and progress of any congregation should be dependant on such aids, and that the church which Christ purchased with his blood should not have in it the elements of self-existence. Still further it may be said that probably we have not the power to discern wit, perceive a joke or relish an anecdote, and that denouncing all such, we would make our own defects the standard of other people's capabilities. We by no means boast of our powers of penetration, but we always think that we can discern qualities but only when they exist; and not only so, but we hold that on such occasions true wit, telling jokes and pointed anecdotes, whether original or selected, and when not too often repeated, become some of the most effective weapons that the platform orator can wield, but like all other weapons they must be wisely selected and judiciously wielded, seeing, however, that we have in this world, shadows and substance, wheat and chaff.—*Verbum Sap.*

### HOURS WITH A CHURCH COURT.

#### VIII. NOON TIDE.

In thinking over the sentiments that are often found afloat, both in written and spoken speech, and endeavouring to make out their prevailing drift, there are three very noticeable elements or tendencies in particular, all out of harmony with those outstanding lessons which we have noted, and against which, Christian people, to be consistent, need to be on their guard, as regards their entire church relations to each other, as organic bodies. These are power, full hindrances to the full growth of our Christian brotherhood, and to the proper development of Church life, in its many blessed uses in the world. And they are traceable, we believe, either to a want of just and enlightened views as to the real meaning of a church, as an organized Society in the world, or to a want in the cultivation of the beautiful graces of the Christian life.

1. There is ultra-liberalism. Its sentiments are liberal enough to bear down with one mighty sweep, every barrier that at the present hour keeps in separate organization all the diverse churches of the Protestant world, whether they be the same in principle or no. Sometimes it views them all as very much the same; at others it regards them as not the same, but yet, as fit to act together in our corporate body as if they were. It strikes us, as the result of frequent observation, that many common Church goers, simply from want of thinking very much about the matter, regard them as pretty much alike, unless in some small matters of detail. "Do they not all preach the same gospel? Are they not all seeking the same end? Are they not all striving to reach the same point?" They seem to forget the fact that there are very different ways in which men may seek the attainment of the same end—that they may seek it in such a way as to fail in reaching it, and even if they do attain to it themselves, they may do considerable harm in the meantime by the error which they countenance, throwing hindrances in the way of others reaching it as well as they. There may be doctrinal differences standing in the way of those churches, all acting consistently together as one organic body. And to overlook or ignore such a condition of things, is virtually to endeavour to convert two creeds essentially different in their nature into one; and thus in some degree at least to give equal weight to truth and error—two things which were ever intended to be made one, and cannot be made one. Or even where no such doctrinal differences exist, there may still be differences in government and forms of worship, if mixed together in one Chris-

tian community, which would not be conducive to the order and edification ever to be sought after as an indispensable thing.

Our forefathers have handed down to us the legacy of a number of separate church communities, in which we can easily recognize both some points of resemblance, and some points of difference of considerable account. We revere those forefathers, as men of piety and discrimination, who had weighty work to do and did it faithfully, according to the light which they possessed. Whether they were always right in their separations, we shall not venture to say. Charity at any rate bids us to be chary of condemnation. It lies with us, their posterity, to consider whether, separate as we find ourselves to be, we are on principle ready for amalgamation in one organic body, with any one or all of these. And looking at the matter thus, it is manifest, that with regard to some of them, however it may be with others to whom we bear a closer affinity, no such readiness has yet been reached. Each manifestly has a distinct mission of its own, as things exist. It is by fulfilling that mission faithfully, acting on its own convictions, following where its own light directs, that it will do most service in the long run to the whole. Thus each may give something to the others. Thus they may all reach a common meeting point by and bye, where as one even organically, they may start on a more glorious career. Meanwhile it is the part of all to cherish with assiduity a unity of heart and aim, and to act in harmony—hand in hand where their interests are on. As to the individual, it is plain that, taking things as they are, he is called upon to connect himself with that body of Christians with which he has the closest affinity in his views and feelings, as these have been affected by his understanding intelligently of the sacred records, and not with another. A Methodist will say, "I am a Methodist because I am a Christian." A Presbyterian will say the same. All very well, but if a man become a Methodist in outward connection, when he is not one by conviction, or in his religious sentiments, he is then not one because he is a Christian, but because he is wanting as a Christian; if so far as he is untrue to his convictions. Again, as to a single church, it is needless to entertain the idea of uniting with all protestant denominations in one great body, until it can unite with its nearest neighbour. To speak after the manner of a well-known adage, Charity begins with those nearest our own doors. 2. There is false traditional sentiment. Tradition is evidently a great power in human life, and helps us to understand many interesting and curious grivings of sentiment and usage, to which people are often very wonderfully attached. That power, as experience goes to show, is often a highly beneficial one, from which, among other things, we infer that, within certain limits, it has a legitimate place in moulding our opinions, and directing the current of our sympathies. What comes to us in this way, is a claim that links us with the past in a form that touches us most forcibly, that appeals strongly to the most sacred feelings of the human breast; and thus not infrequently renders powerful aid in keeping men to their moorings, when otherwise they might be in danger of drifting away from these by the force of some overwhelming tide. It is like the pious lessons learned on the parent's knee, in early childhood, which serve as a powerful stimulus to sustain men amid abounding temptations, or to bring the wanderer back from his wanderings to the hallowed ways of religion, in which his father trod. No wonder that the sentiment which it inspires in many minds, is treasured as a sacred thing—when one remembers the associations which it calls up to memory, and with which, in a manner, it identifies its possessors. We love to feel that we are in accord with worthy ancestors, some of whose names are as household words, and whose thoughts and achievements, to the tales of which we oft have listened, form those whom we have learned to reverence, have cast a witching spell over us in our more reflective hours. And as a natural result of this, our strongest attachments easily run in the directions of those whose sympathies are in this respect like our own. At such an altar in the history of nations, patriotism offers of its best, and draws its finest inspirations. Great names held in esteem, stirring traditions generally touching us at the core, home associations combining with these, kindle it into a flame, and keep it aglow in the bosom of successive generations.

"When men would do a deed of worth, The wonder of the listening earth, They look to those and turning tread, So sanctioned on the tyrant's head."

Around such a hearth, as well, the family history of churches is formed in no small degree. Possessors of a common sacred heritage, with which all that we are wonderfully bound up, we feel drawn together by a tie that is not easily dissolved. So far traditional sentiment is to be revered. Tough it not rudely, it is holy ground. Destroyer, "Spare that tree, touch not a single bough."

But there is a false traditional sentiment, which sometimes takes the place of the true. The dead form is taken from the living thing. The honey is turned into poison. Holy attachments are made the

occasion of thwarting the proper outflow of the divinest sentiments of the human heart. Surely that sentiment is false, if it hinder a man's advance, when great principles are to be promoted, or if it incline him to disregard the claims of the present living, issues and interests; or if it prevent him from going hand in hand in Christian fellowship with others, who are to all intents and purposes the same, as to the ground on which they stand, as himself. If some of those who are gone to rest, and around the memories of whom our holiest traditions cluster, were again to appear among us, would they not say, if they found us lingering at such an empty tomb, "It is not here, it has risen,—it has gone before you." Yet people are sometimes very fond of lingering in a kind of dream land, while the busy world around them is moving on, ever presenting fresh problems to be grappled with—fond of sitting brooding by the fire, while the spirit is moving forward under another form, united to the altered conditions of the hour. In this false traditional sentiment, we have, we believe, the explanation to a large extent, of the rank growth of ultramontanism in the Church of Rome. We have also the source of that exclusiveness, which prevails so largely in the Anglican communion, as a characteristic feature of her position, and the encouraging of which we regard as one of the greatest mistakes she has committed, ever fettering her movements in any endeavour to adapt herself to the many-sided necessities of humanity, and largely shutting her off from the heart sympathies of not a few who are led to differ from her in some important things. Still further, it seems to us, this same sentiment has much to do with the existence at this present moment of so many distinct denominations among the Methodists, for which the American Continent is so famous. For our part, we confess ourselves at any rate unable to perceive what great principles are sufficient to account for so many different branches of the family. As we have studied John Wesley's life and character, we would hardly think him ready to give the sanction of his name to so numerous a hive. And yet again, and coming nearer home, we own this sentiment as having too much to do in prolonging the divisions in the Presbyterian family in the mother land, when the most of them were all but ripe, ripe as it was considered on the principle of the many, for a peaceful living together under one roof; while we know, as a matter of experience, the many hindrances which it has thrown up to prevent the coming together, into one great body, of all the branches of the Presbyterian Church, in the land in which we live, the negotiations for which, notwithstanding all hindrances, are now so happily drawing near a successful termination. Little growths of this false sentiment readily shoot up side by side with the other; but they must be kept in check by their possessors, if no aid is to be given to anything like schism. Their one effectual antidote, under any form, is more of religion's living power, maturing into abundant fruitfulness, the best of the graces, which is ever far-reaching in its sympathies, and in the presence of all rival claims, is concerned with the enquiry, "what will thou have me to do?"

3. There are what we may designate humanizing modes of thought.

By these we understand all such as are due to circumstances in the individual history alone, or to natural idiosyncrasies in the individual mind, or to arbitrary tendencies in education—such as are not based on the unchangeable relations, in which we stand to the divine author of all, and the inherent adaptations of Christianity to the wants of the world, and the free and natural outgrowth of the religious life. Such are out of harmony with the lessons we have named, and a hindrance to their realization, because they are out of harmony with the very fitness of things. And history has many illustrations of the fact, since the foundations of Christianity were laid. There were the gnostic tendencies, which sprang up at such an early date, and introduced into sacred things "the oppositions of science falsely so called." There were the Pagan tendencies, which sought, by adopting Pagan usages, to make "the Christian institutions more palatable, though far less suitable, to heathen ignorance." There is the mistaken sentiment in the Church of Rome, which places tradition on a level with the sacred writings. There are, also, we believe, the modern ritualistic tendencies—so-called. Schisms naturally spring out of these, because they would give an elasticity to the Christian institutions, which does not belong to them, and makes them so far as it goes, what they were intended to be. A similar result must ever follow, whenever these institutions are either made too elastic or too narrow; for in either case there is a repellent force brought into operation, in the one case to free themselves of foreign elements, in the other to have unfettered operation. Christianity in its simplicity draws together, otherwise it divides. By such modes of thought it also happens frequently enough that it is in the "reactive bearings of great principles rather than in those principles themselves, that our paths begin to diverge, sometimes running far apart, sometimes in opposite directions, in some unimportant Church concerns. Intention in the main may be laudable enough; the motives cherished may be worthy of deepest regard; yet all the while there may be no secrecy of errors of judgment in operation, serving as effectual hindrances to the fellowship so much to be desired. Prepossessions of a prejudicial kind, partial, or one-sided glimpses of things taken for the whole, opinions too hastily formed, deductions of reason clung to with an intensity as great as if they were the truths of supernatural revelation. These come from a kind of schooling, which has its source in human

imperfection, and are also out of harmony with the very genius of Christianity; therefore they also tend ever to divide. If the brotherhood of Christians is to have its full power, and expand into its perfect beauty, so far as is attainable at present, it must be by modes of thought being supreme, which are in harmony with its own spirit and genius, and which are the fruit of its own heavenly influence. It must have been so in the early time, when it could be said of Christians, "See how they love another." Memoriz.

### A Remonstrance.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir,—The inconsistency of some Clergymen in regard to Union is at least amusing if not worse. For instance, in the Township of Nottawasaga the Rev. A. McDonald who voted for Union, has taken a strange and unseemly way to show his desire to have Union cemented in brotherly love. For eighteen years back, the members and adherents of the Canada Presbyterian Church have their own place of worship at Duntroon, and for the last two years only has Mr. McDonald held fortnightly services in the Township Hall at Duntroon. The Canada Presbyterian Church will have their own pastor, the Rev. J. R. S. Burnett ordained and inducted to the united charge of Duntroon and Nottawasaga on Wednesday first. Yet knowing all this Mr. McDonald chooses to call a meeting at his own residence for the purpose of concerting measures for having a Church built for him at Duntroon. Now I would ask if this displays a spirit of Union? Surely not. With Union so near at hand I apprehend you will agree with me that Mr. McDonald is to say the least of it acting very unwisely. Our church is quite sufficient for the wants of all in this section, and although Mr. McDonald is quite aware of this fact, he has entered the field to stir up discord among a class of people who have hitherto acted in harmony. I offer no further comment but will just say in conclusion that it is to be hoped Mr. McDonald will cease his attempts to undo what the left hand what the right hand has done.

Yours truly,

UNION.

### Wellpark Free Church—Induction Services.

The Free Presbytery of Glasgow met yesterday within Wellpark Church for the purpose of inducting the Rev. R. M. Thornton, B.A., of Canada, to the pastorate, in succession to the Rev. Dr. Adam, who has been appointed to the secretaryship of the Home Mission Board. The Rev. Mr. M'Leschlan presided and preached on the occasion. Thereafter the new pastor was introduced to the congregation, who gave Mr. Thornton a hearty welcome. A congregational soiree was held in the same in the evening. The Rev. Dr. Adam presided; and on the platform were the Rev. Drs. Buchanan and Brown, the Rev. Mr. Thornton, Dr. Wilson, Bailie Millar, Mr. John M'Lauren, and the members of session and deacons' court. To a over, the Chairman after some preliminary observations, proceeded to say that he was sure they would unite in welcoming Mr. Thornton to the pastorate of the church with most cordial feelings. He knew, he said, the congregation well, and he was persuaded that these feelings thoroughly pervaded all the members, and he might be allowed to say that he entered into them very warmly himself. Though it was at his suggestion that Mr. Thornton first preached to the congregation, all the subsequent steps were taken by the members without influence on his part; but he could not forget that in that innocent way he really took the first step that had led to all the happy results that had followed. Though his position in the congregation would be henceforth to a large extent a nominal one—it would not permit him to interfere in the least degree in their affairs, and he certainly did not intend to do so—yet he did maintain a certain connection, which he felt was one of great interest. He could not but rejoice that he was being succeeded by one whom from all he had learned was well fitted to carry on the work of the Lord in the congregation, and to raise it, as he hoped he would do, to a higher position than it had ever yet occupied. Mr. Downes, in the name of the ladies of the congregation, afterwards presented the new minister with an elegant pulpit-gown and cassock. Mr. Thornton fittingly returned thanks, acknowledged the responsibility of the position he assumed in undertaking the spiritual oversight of about 700 souls, claimed the sympathy and assistance of the members in the work which lay before him, and expressed gladness that in coming to this city and the congregation, he had not come to a cold, dead and lifeless Church and community, but to a community which had been refreshed, revived and quickened by the gracious influences of God's Holy Spirit. Subsequently the Rev. Dr. Adam was presented by Bailie Millar with a beautiful service of silver plate, the gift of the congregation, who thereby desired to express their respect and affection for the rev. pastor. The testimonial was suitably acknowledged. Other addresses followed. The congregational choir sang several anthems very sweetly in the course of the evening.—*Glasgow Herald, Dec. 4th.*

The *Quillan Expositor* says: We are glad to notice the excellent character and efficiency of the Congregational singing of the Presbyterian Church here. The anti-organists could not get hold of a better or more practical argument in support of their peculiar opinions than this, where the whole congregation is the choir, and where the majestic human voice finds so full a scope.