

THE CHRISTIAN MIRROR.

MONTREAL, THURSDAY, FEB. 9, 1843.

THE RELIGIOUS ANNIVERSARIES.—Those interesting anniversaries were held on the 24th ult. and subsequent evenings, in the American Presbyterian Church, according to appointment; but as we have not been favoured with any account of the proceedings of the respective meetings, we must content ourselves with a few general observations.

The church was literally crowded on each evening, and a very deep interest appeared to pervade the assembled multitude—who listened with almost breathless attention to the numerous eloquent and forcible addresses delivered by the ministers of the different evangelical churches of the city and surrounding country. Two important features struck us as characterising those anniversaries, which must have proved sources of unmingled delight to every pious mind—we mean, first, the uniform evidence manifested of the prevalence of Christian love, unity, and friendly feeling among the ministers of different communions who so ably advocated the interests of those noble institutions—clearly showing that bigotry and narrowness of soul form no part of their character, and that all differences of opinion on minor and non-essential points can be laid aside, when union in the great enterprise of the world's salvation, is called for. The other feature to which we have alluded, and which strongly marked every address delivered, was the recognition of the great evangelical doctrine of experimental piety—the necessity of being “born again,” and the privilege of every sinner assuredly knowing for himself that his sins, which were many, are all forgiven him.

As the Reports of the different Societies will be forthwith printed and circulated, it is unnecessary for us to say any thing more than strongly to recommend their candid and prayerful perusal—being fully persuaded that the object of their publication will be thereby greatly promoted.

We have been informed that a Debating Society, composed of pious individuals, has lately been established in Montreal; and that, at one of its late meetings, the subject was discussed, whether the existence of those sections into which the Christian Church has been divided, has been productive of beneficial results. The following admirable speech of the lamented Cookman, which lately appeared in the *New York Christian Intelligencer*, may throw some light on this deeply interesting subject. At all events, its perusal has afforded ourselves much pleasure, and cannot, we are persuaded, be read without interest.

CHRISTIAN UNION.

BY THE LATE REV. G. O. COOKMAN.

THE following appeared in the *MAGAZINE OF THE REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH*, for April, 1829, shortly after its delivery. It will be new to most of the readers of the *Christian Intelligencer*, and be read with interest by all. The respected author was one of the passengers who perished in the ill-fated steam packet *PRESIDENT*.

Extract of a Speech, pronounced before the Young Men's Bible Society of New-Brunswick, N. J., by the Rev. Mr. G. G. Cookman, of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It is spirited, full of sound sense, and highly interesting.

Time was, when for a Presbyterian minister and a Methodist preacher to appear as joint advocates in the same common cause, would have been a crying wonder; but, sir, thank God! the age of sectarian bigotry is passing away—“Ephraim is ceasing to vex Judah, and Judah Ephraim.”

I am well aware also, that many well disposed persons have imagined that the surest method of silencing infidelity, would be for the Christian Church to effect a union in doctrine, to lay aside their peculiarities of religious opinion, and amalgamate into one uniform mass of sentiment and action.

Against such principles of Christian union you must permit me, sir, this night, as an individual, to enter my decided protest. Such union, at present, I should consider unscriptural—calculated to defeat the purposes for which it was intended; in a word, to promote the spirit of infidelity, and injure the cause of vital godliness.

I grant, sir, that on one ground we may all agree without respect or qualification—I mean in the universal circulation of the Holy Scriptures. “The Bible,” says Chillingworth, “is the religion of Protestants;” and it is the positive duty of all Protestant Christians to unite in its distribution, without respect to sect or party. But, sir, notwithstanding this concession, I hold fast by the original assertion, that all union which involves any surrender of conscientious views of religious truth, would be pernicious, and promotive of the spirit of infidelity.

And, sir, on what ground is this assertion maintained? Why, that truth, being in its own nature unique, simple, and indivisible, holds no communion whatever with the changeling and contradictory varieties of human error, and therefore, in the present defective state of the human understanding, and of the human heart, it is safer that the Christian Church should be divided into parties, conscientiously differing in, but zealously maintaining points of doctrine and practice. For whatever delightful changes the millennial day may elicit, of this I am certain, that in the present degenerate condition of the world, the existing order of things is more favorable to the discussion and development of truth, the detection of error, and a friendly provocation to love and good works among the various bodies of professing Christians, than any such union.

Permit me to offer an illustration of the principle. Let us suppose, sir, that you are an honest Presbyterian, and I an honest Methodist—that is to say, we each conscientiously believe our own principles to be right. Let us suppose that we are engaged in a friendly debate on the respective merits of our doctrines. An infidel standing by, cries out, “Gentlemen, you are both wrong.” Well, sir, what is to be done? A fourth person interferes as mediator between the parties. “Brethren,” says he, “the scruples of the gentleman standing by, arise from your contradictory views of the divine truth. Now make a union; lay aside your sectarian peculiarities; be liberal, and think and speak alike. Suppose, sir, we agree. Is the infidel convinced? What says he now? “Gentlemen, I am now doubly convinced you are both wrong, and I charge you both with a want of principle and courage, in not maintaining and defending what you believed to be the truth.”

What, then, is the amount of the argument? We say, let each sect and party maintain its own distinctive position, and pursue its own plans of operation, in its way, to the very utmost. Let us agree to differ. We are none of us infallible. It is possible we may all be a little wrong, for it is as natural for man to err as to breathe. But how are we to set each other right? By the silent quiescent neutrality of a nominal union? Nay, sir, in such a motionless reservoir, the waters of life would stagnate. Let them rather run and encounter the winds of opposition and the rocks of controversy, and they will clear, and purify, and sparkle. Truth never did, nor never will lose any of its power, by open and liberal discussion, even on religious points. Give it an open field and fair play, and it shall overthrow the empire of infidelity, and conquer this world of sin.

Let then the Bible be the rallying point of Protestant Christians. Let them dispute for truth, not victory; let the God of peace preside in every controversy; yet let all be conducted in the unity of the spirit and in the bond of peace. Let each go to his post of duty, and without interfering or quarrelling with his neighbor, do his utmost under his own particular standard; let there be no strife, for we are all brethren, and the world is large enough for us all.

The union, then, which I would propose, would be a union in spirit, rather than a union in doctrine; let each party of Protestant Christians make its own distinctive efforts in its own way, rather than a promiscuous union of the general mass. For, sir, depend upon it, David will not fight in Saul's armor, and we can no more make men act precisely alike, than we can force them to think precisely alike. Will you allow me, sir, another illustration in confirmation of these views of Christian union? When we look abroad upon the signs of the times, I think we shall see the religious as well as the political world on the eve of convulsion and conflict. Thank God the Christian world has heard the trumpet of alarm: they are mustering for the battle, and by one simultaneous effort they are coming up to the help of the Lord against the mighty; and never, since the days of the apostles, was there so general a movement as at the present crisis. The leaven of divine truth is powerfully operative through the varied enginery of the Bible, Missionary, Tract and Sabbath School Societies. There is a shaking among the kingdoms, and the world feels the earthquake shock. Nor, sir, are the principalities and powers of darkness asleep—they have taken the alarm. Infidelity and Antichrist have sounded the trumpet through all their hosts, and never since the days of the French Revolution, has there been so much activity and determination among the enemies of the cross, as at this present moment.

I believe, sir, we are on the eve of a general engagement. Now, sir, borrowing the allusion, will you permit me to marshal the Christian army on those principles of union I have endeavored to sustain. Let then, our Bible Societies, with their Auxiliaries, be a line of forts established along the enemies' frontier, as bulwarks of defence. Let them be military magazines, well stored with spiritual weapons and Gospel ammunition; general rallying points for the whole army, and strongholds, from whence our missionary riflemen may sally forth on the enemy. Let our Sabbath Schools be military academies, in which the young cadets may be trained for the battles of the Lord. Let the Tract Societies be so many shot-houses for the manufacture of that small, but useful material.

Having thus, sir, disposed of the outworks, let us endeavor to arrange the army.

Suppose, sir, for example, we begin with the Methodists; and as they are said to be tolerable pioneers and excellent foragers in new countries, and active withal, I propose that we mount them on horseback and employ them as cavalry, especially on the frontiers.

As our Presbyterian brethren love an open field, and act in concert, and move in solid bodies, let them constitute our infantry; let them occupy the centre, in solid columns, and fight according to Napoleon's tactics, in military squares, ever presenting a firm front to the enemy. Our Baptist brethren we will station along the rivers and lakes, which we doubt not they will gallantly defend, and win many laurels in the lake warfare. Our brethren of the Protestant Episcopal Church, shall man the garrisons, inspect the magazines, and direct the batteries.

But, sir, we want artillery men. Whom shall we employ? The light field pieces and the heavy ordnance must be served. I propose, sir, that we commit this very important department to the Dutch Reformed Church; and, sir, may they acquit themselves with a valor worthy of their ancestors, when the proud flag of De Witt swept the sea, and the thunder of Van Tromp shook the ocean. And now, sir, the army is arranged. We have one great Captain, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose orders we are all bound to obey. Our standard is the cross, and “Onward!” is the watchword. Let us give no quarter, we fight for death or victory.

At the same time let us preserve our original order. United in spirit and design, let us be distinct in movements. Let not the cavalry, infantry, and artillerymen mingle in one indiscriminate