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CORRESPONDENCE WITH OTHER CHURCHES.

The General Assembly, upon mature consideration "*discontinued, for the present,*"—"the interchange of Delegates with the General Association of Connecticut." Two grave reasons are assigned for this act; namely, that the Connecticut General Association of 1854, had formally attacked the character of the General Assembly, in a manner that could not be overlooked; and that there was such reason, as the Assembly could not pass over, to believe that the Association was unfaithful, if not unsound, touching the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Religion—the doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement being specified. It can hardly be doubted that either reason was abundantly sufficient to justify the act performed: for it is hard to imagine what obligation could rest on the Assembly to continue an interchange of Delegates, with a body of persons, who are officially both uncivil and false in their speech; or who are either unsound or unfaithful as regards the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. If the Assembly had acted with an equal degree of spirit and consistency twenty-five years earlier, it would have been all the better.

The Assembly of 1854, refused to appoint a Delegate to the General Synod of the German Reformed Church. The action of the Assembly of 1855, on the subject was to the following effect. The proper committee, after considering the subject, reported reasons why it had declined to nominate any Delegate; and this part of the Report was stricken out by order of the Assembly. Afterwards the committee, nominated Delegates; and their Report was put on the docket. At a subsequent session, the nomination was taken into consideration; and then laid on the table. The very last act of the Assembly, before the order for its dissolution, was a refusal to reconsider the vote laying the nomination on the table. No reasons are recorded, for any of these acts. The general result was, that the Assem-

[For the Critic.]

MISSION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH—DR.
BRECKINRIDGE'S MISSIONARY SERMON.

A Discourse, published by the Board of Missions, and therefore generally circulated and read, can hardly be regarded as furnishing a subject for ordinary criticism or review. Still it may not be without interest to give expression to a few thoughts suggested by the reading, and to call more particular attention to what may strike us as worthy of note. Many things conspire to give an unusual interest to these utterances. The time, the circumstances, the occasion, and the character and position of its author, would command unusual attention—even if not deserved by the matter and manner of presentation—all of which must excite, in the reflecting mind, some intensely interesting thoughts upon this subject. It is not our object to attempt so much to follow out these, as to suggest such as arise of a more practical nature.

The zeal of the Church in the work of Missions may be regarded in this age as the surest index of the state of her piety. But it is important that this zeal should be according to knowledge, and that she should understand clearly whence her obligation arises; and it is the discussion of this point in this discourse that strikes us as peculiarly appropriate and forcible. It can be briefly summed up as follows:—All our duties, individually or collectively, have their origin in our immediate relation to Christ and to his Kingdom—and the peculiar duty of the Church and of each individual is determined by Christ's law only, and by the circumstances of our lot, the times in which we come to the Kingdom. But as there may be, and ordinarily is, more or less obscurity in relation to our peculiar duty, faith is essential to enable us to follow the Divine guidance, and perfect fidelity in our lot is the only ground upon which we have any right to expect either security or success, for the guidance and direction is of the Lord, who has in a remarkable manner raised up instruments in all ages for his work, who has brought us into his Kingdom for a purpose which if we fulfil, we obtain the crown, but if we omit, we shall be cut off.

This argument, closely and logically wrought out in this discourse, seems to us to exhaust the subject in its application to Christian duty, in any and every circumstance in which we can be placed. As our duty is varied infinitely by varying circumstances, it can be determined by no rule of expediency of human wisdom or of feeling, but by *Faith*, which will lead us to follow Christ, whether to do or to suffer, whether in prosperity or adversity; for as the preacher remarks, "It is only by faith that the Church of God can walk, even in light; only by faith that she can ever live in darkness."

We have not time to follow to any extent the application made by the preacher, nor is it necessary, as, if the principle be thoroughly admitted and felt, the application will follow. For to feel this

trust, this dependence, is the evidence of the deepest piety—to understand it fully is the most complete enlightenment of the Spirit; to attempt to act it out is the highest act of faith, and will be owned and blessed by the great Head of the Church.

We are the more struck with this argument, as it coincides in its results so nearly with the point made in a sermon before the Board of Foreign Missions, in New York, in May last—that being drawn entirely from the internal constitution and nature of the Church and Kingdom of Christ—while the reasoning before us is applied particularly to her external relations. But the point reached is the same, namely, that Faith alone will enable the Church to maintain her proper relation to her Head, or to discharge her relative duties to the world around her. And it is the more striking, that two discourses should have been delivered by the authors of the two alluded to—almost simultaneously arriving so conclusively at the same result by different lines of argument. We must refer those wishing to pursue this matter further, to the latter discourse as published by the Board of Foreign Missions.*

This view of duty applies with peculiar force to the work of Missions; and we must express our gratification at seeing it argued upon that ground. It is too low a view of that work, to present it as at all a debateable matter, whether the Church, or any member of it, shall engage in it or not. It even lessens the force in no small degree, to urge it mainly on the ground of the importance of the work, or the encouragements that may urge us to it. The first great question for the Church should and must be, "Is it the Lord's work?—Does He call us to it?" Then, whether great or small, whether pleasant or arduous, whether promising or unpromising, she is bound to go forward to the extent of her ability, as He may direct. It is of *Faith*, and not of sight. And in our humble opinion, on no other ground but that can the Church ever be brought up or held up to her whole duty in her present position. But acting on that principle she cannot fail, if she really be truly the Lord's Church.

It must be manifest to any thoughtful observer of the course of events in the Church for some time past, that all the discussions which have arisen relative to the nature of the agencies to be employed by the Church, and the method of their operation in carrying on the Missionary work in all its forms, have their chief significance and value from their bearing upon this great idea, viz: that the Church, in her modes of action, just as in her Faith and in her form of government, must conform closely to God's Word; that all the work she has to do addresses itself to the Faith of God's people; that so far as concerns the things which the Church purposes to do it may be said, "whatsoever is not of Faith is sin," for it will lead immediately to the sin of carnality in the Church, and grieving the Holy Spirit of God. As Dr. Breckinridge expresses it here, in the terse and precise manner so peculiar to him: "The Church must not only go where the rule goes, *but stop where it stops.*" If the

* A Discourse for the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, by Rev. Stuart Robinson.

questions which have been raised in our Church, and of late so freely canvassed, reach no farther than—as some suppose—to the comparative expediency or in expediency of different methods of operation, then we are free to admit, it is a useless agitation,—and therefore hurtful. If however, these questions reach, as we think it manifest they do reach, to these fundamental points, of whether the Church shall engage in any work beyond that which Christ hath given command to the Church, as Church, to do, and to do which we have in our age a country “come to the Kingdom ;” then it is a very grave question, one which must be agitated, or the Church is undone. Or if it be a question again, whether even in the choice of method and means for carrying on the work, the Church may in her wisdom devise means and agencies beyond those already ordained of God in his Word—then also it is a most grave question, and should be intensely agitated. Such agitations, however they may seem to obstruct and hinder the Church in her action, are struggles for the very life of the Church. The world was made to believe, that the agitation growing out of the denial of the right of the Church to ordain rites and ceremonies, was a useless agitation about trifles—yet even the class who revile all such strifes, as unworthy of religion, must now see that, in that struggle against the authority of the Church to ordain rites and ceremonies, was clearly involved the very life of the Church. Is it any more a usurpation of the prerogative of the Head of the Church to ordain rites and ceremonies, than to ordain agencies and methods of action? But we had no design here to enter upon the argument, but merely to fix attention upon the principles which are so powerfully and eloquently illustrated in this discourse, as underlying the whole question of the Missionary movement of the Church.

The application of this view to our own Church, in determining its mission and its work, is full of solemn and important thoughts. This is presented in the third and fourth general heads of this discourse, in regard to the present condition of the world, and of the cause of Christ in our own land. That our Church has an important—we may hope a most glorious mission—can hardly fail to strike any one who has pondered closely her history, or who will consider her present condition and prospects. For her to feel and to know this, and to feel and understand why it is so, and whence her strength must come, is to give some hope that she may have grace given her to stand faithfully in her place and fulfil her mission, even to the end. On this subject of the peculiar mission of our Church, Dr. Breckinridge has the following words, full of truth and meaning:

“ There is a mission and a lot common to the whole Church of God ; but there is, besides, a mission and a lot peculiar to every part of the redeemed host ; and amongst the rest a mission and a lot for our Presbyterian Church in the United States. Where the truth of God is most pressed and imperiled—there is her place. Where the battle rages most fiercely, there men look for her banner. Where the enemies of God thirst most ravenously for Christian blood, there let her be ready to offer her own freely for Christ’s sake. Thus has the mission of our fathers been, always. Thus is our mission to-day. Thus will be the mission of our true successors, to the end of time.”

As our limits are nearly reached, we will close our notice of this discourse by quoting somewhat fully from the closing appeal, which coming from this source, and as is intimated, spoken probably for the last time from that position, in view of all the circumstances, have peculiar force:

"I know this Church well. I have known it long. From my youth up I have sat under the shadow of her altars, where my fathers had worshipped for many generations; and for five and twenty years I have gone in and out in the presence of her great Assemblies. I have sat, from my childhood, at the feet of the great leaders amongst us; and have seen them, one by one, pass away—and others raised up by God to sit in their vacant seats. Things were not always as you see them now. I have seen this Church on the very brink of ruin. I now behold it in abounding prosperity. I have seen the hand of God deliver this Church, when the help of man had failed. And the same mighty hand conducts her still, along her glorious way. To-day a purer, more united, more powerful Church exists not on earth. All the efforts she ever made are as nothing beside the efforts she can make now; all the triumphs she ever won are but intimations of the triumphs she is now capable of winning."

"I speak to you in the name of the great dead, whose ashes, as yet, are hardly cold. I beseech you, in the name of the scattered remnant whom the inexorable stroke of death still respects. I charge you in the name of our covenanted God—our Saviour and yours. See that ye keep this great Church steadily on her great career. See that ye conduct her steps in the fear and power of God. See that ye transmit to those who will follow you, her name untarnished, her garments unstained, her faith unpolluted. I call yourselves to witness—I appeal to posterity to judge between us—I invoke our common Lord and Master to take note, that ye receive it a glorious and a blessed Church, in the midst of which Christ dwells—and that ye are bound to deliver it up in like estate, when your warfare is accomplished. It is not that I distrust you, that I speak thus: for I do not. It is because I know that great prosperity is full of great perils, and that the good of my country, the salvation of my race, and the glory of my Saviour, are deeply staked on the fidelity of this Church, and of you into whose hands her guidance is now come of God, for such a time as this."

We cannot close this brief notice without expressing a regret that the circulation of such publications is not more general. We are convinced that but a small portion of the active reflecting mind of the Church have the opportunity to procure them. We speak this from our own experience, as from the large issue of this and similar pamphlets, we had felt sure they would be put in reach of all, at any rate, in our Church, who might wish to procure them; but we have been forced in several such cases to procure them of some minister. We could wish to see such publications in the hands of every thinking and earnest man in our Church.