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I.

PROGRESS AND POVERTY.

THE title of Mr. George's well-known work is enough to explain its popularity. It is not only an inquiry into the cause of industrial depressions and of increase of want with increase of wealth, but it purports to have found the remedy. A medical student, when leaving college, is often told to have faith in himself, not to look perplexed or doubtful when he has made his diagnosis, but to give his prescriptions with an air of cheerfulness and assurance. Your patient is likely to have faith in you if you have faith in yourself, whereas if you tell him that there is nothing wrong with him, or that there is no remedy for his trouble, he is not unlikely to betake himself to the first quack who comes along, laden with sympathy and a panacea. Undoubtedly, Mr. George has faith in himself and in the remedy he prescribes, and he has succeeded in inspiring his followers with a like faith. His views have been subjected to criticism from many sides, but he would probably say to-day what he said in 1880 in the preface to the fourth edition of "Progress and Poverty."—"There has been nothing in the criticisms they have received to induce any change or modification of these views—in fact, I have yet to see an objection not answered in advance in the book itself." The language of his followers about the book is even more extreme. "To the law and to the testimony" is their cheerful watchword on every occasion. Start a difficulty or submit a case, and the answer is, "Read 'Progress and Poverty.'" When this has been done, and still light does not appear, "Read 'Progress and Poverty' again," is pretty sure to be the next prescription, and the next. A gentleman who undertakes to answer criticisms made

## A PLEA FOR AN AMERICAN ALLIANCE OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES.

THE Alliance of the Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian system is to meet in London in August of the present year. This Alliance has accomplished great good in bringing the Presbyterian and Reformed forces of the world into union for the accomplishment of world-wide objects. But there are matters of interest common to the Reformed and the Presbyterian Churches of America that cannot be brought before the International Alliance. It seems to me that an American Alliance is needed for the accomplishment of these purposes. It is true that there is an American branch of the Executive Commission of the Alliance, but it is doubtful whether this Commission could undertake the work that is proposed.

There are imperative reasons why the American Protestant Churches should enter into closer union. I am in favor of the organic union of all the Churches of Protestantism, so soon as such a union can be accomplished in an honorable manner on the basis of historical achievements, and in the mutual recognition of the various legitimate types of doctrine, government, and worship of the great Protestant bodies. I am prepared to sacrifice everything that is not essential in order to accomplish such a union. But there seems little hope of its accomplishment at the present time. It is all the more important, therefore, that we should set our forces toward something that is in the same direction and is easier of accomplishment.

The Presbyterian and Reformed Churches are so near to each other that it would seem easy to bring them into closer union. I would advocate the organic union of all of these bodies; I think that such a union is feasible, and that it will certainly be accomplished in a not very remote future. If the several branches of Presbyterians can be united in one great body, and the two great branches of the Reformed Church should combine as the result of the conferences now in progress, we might hope for the organic union of the Presbyterian and the Reformed bodies at a date not far ahead. But in order to accomplish any of these desirable things considerable changes are necessary in the Forms of Government and Orders of Worship of the different bodies. Much greater liberty in the mode of worship and in the construction of Presbyteries and Synods will be required, and a different mode of representation in the supreme courts, if not the establishment of Provincial Assemblies, and triennial or biennial National Assemblies. All this will take time, even if the spirit of union should pervade and control all of these bodies and induce them to become more generous and tolerant, and willing to recognize a considerable variety of doctrine, government, and worship, in order to accomplish the much-desired unity.

But leaving for the present these more comprehensive plans for organic unity, there seem to be no sufficient reasons why the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches of the Continent of America should not combine in an Alliance,

meeting once in two or three years. Such an Alliance should be constructed after the model of the International Alliance now in such successful operation.

It is an interesting fact that an Alliance was made between the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, the Associate Reformed Synod, and the Reformed Synod in 1786, and it accomplished great good for some years. But unfortunately it was not continued. The difficulties in the way of such an Alliance do not now exist.

Such an Alliance should be composed of the official representatives of the several Presbyterian and Reformed bodies. I have little confidence in the undenominational and unsectarian conferences, which are organized by small committees of good and zealous men, but who have no more authority to call such conferences than any other set of men. Such conferences can never be regarded as representing any one except the committees that call them together, and those who take part in them. They do not carry much weight in the community or the nation. But an interdenominational Alliance, composed of the official representatives of all the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in the United States and Canada, would have greater weight and more influence upon the public mind in America than any body now in existence. Its proceedings would attract great attention, would absorb public interest, and its deliverances would have a powerful influence upon the faith and the morals of America.

Such a body should not have any executive or judicial power. It would not be the supreme court of the Churches adhering to it. But it would afford a centre of unity and a basis for co-operation in many a good work.

The matters of common interest to the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches of America are very many. A conference and a discussion of them would not, perhaps, lead to definite action in such an Alliance, but might lead to common action in the supreme courts of the Churches that would constitute the Alliance.

The meeting together of brethren so close to one another in their views of doctrine, Church government, worship, and morals, would have the effect of strengthening them all by the sense of the greater weight of influence behind them. It would also have the effect of broadening them, removing narrow, sectional, and denominational prejudices, and imparting a more tolerant temper and catholic frame of mind.

The most important practical works of the International Alliance have been three: (1) A quickening of the interest in Presbyterian History; (2) combined efforts to sustain the feebler Reformed Churches on the Continent of Europe, and (3) the movement for co-operation, union, and consolidation of Presbyterian and Reformed missions in foreign lands. These are three great practical achievements of the International Alliance of the Reformed Churches. There is work of a similar kind that an American Alliance may do.

(1) Special effort should be made by the combined forces of the Reformed Churches in gathering and preserving the sources of the history of the Churches in America. No one can appreciate the need of such a comprehensive move-

ment who has not himself engaged in historical search and observed how the most important documents have narrowly escaped destruction, and how many irreparable losses have been made. Moreover, the cultivation of the historical spirit is the pathway to catholicity and reunion.

(2) The American Churches have a special duty to Mexico, the West India islands, and South America. There should be a combination of our forces, not for the establishment of a dozen or more rival missions in the same field, but for the establishment of a Reformed Church in these southern parts of our Continent which might receive the combined support of all the bodies that should constitute the Alliance.

(3) But the most important work of such an Alliance would be the co-operation of all of these Churches in the great work of Home Missions in its various phases. It is a waste of energy for any one of the Churches that should enter into the Alliance to come into competition with its fellows in the organization of rival churches in the mission fields of our country. The field is so vast that there should not be the slightest waste. Co-operation in Home Missions is as important as Co-operation in Foreign Missions. It is my belief if the matter could be fully and freely discussed in such an American Alliance, and a Committee of Conference should be appointed as the fruit of such a discussion, that a plan of co-operation could be devised that would remove the most, if not all of the difficulties, in this field.

There ought also to be co-operation in the establishment of institutions of learning, academies, colleges, and universities, so that they may not conflict with one another by being too thickly planted in one region, while other regions are left destitute. Co-operation through such an Alliance would lead, in many cases at least, to a better distribution. Our Churches will soon have to endow and sustain academies and classical schools for boys and girls, and a co-operation of all the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches is of great importance before we enter upon this great work.

The work among the Germans now carried on by the Reformed (Dutch) and the Presbyterian Churches seems to fall more properly to the Church which is German in origin, as the work among the recent Dutch settlers belongs to the old Holland Church. Co-operation through an Alliance would prevent friction, and put all this work in a better shape. It may also in the future be found wise to commit the work among the Freedmen to the Southern Presbyterian Church, while the other branches of the Church sustain them with contributions, instead of establishing rival congregations. Doubtless there are difficulties here as in most other things, but it is certain that free discussion in an Alliance might pave the way to considerate action that might greatly improve the situation. The work among the American Indians and the Chinamen needs similar measures of co-operation. I believe that such an Alliance might accomplish a work of blessing exceeding our highest hopes and dreams.

In the present condition of our country, it is often necessary for the Church to express its convictions upon great moral and religious questions that have social and political bearings. The deliverances of the religious bodies lose



their effect on account of our divisions. But if all the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches could be united in such an Alliance, the effect of such deliverances upon the public mind, the press, the Legislatures of the States and the Congress of the United States would be greatly enhanced.

Such an Alliance to my mind would also be a step in advance toward the better thing, *organic union*. It would mediate and prepare the way, and prevent those abrupt transitions and hasty, inconsiderate unions which are generally only productive of new divisions and schisms.

We raise the question whether the time has not come to establish an American Alliance of the Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian system.

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