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CORRESPONDENCE.

Letter from Rev. Dr. Dabney.

LONDON, Sept. 21st, 1880.

Messrs. Editors.—We reached London, on our return, last Thursday. Our experience verified the usual remark, that even those who are sea-sick no where else must be so on the English Channel. A night passage, doubled in length by head winds and rough water, made us both wretchedly sick. But we are again in the metropolis of the English world; and although utter strangers, we begin to feel almost at home, in a town where people speak our mother-tongue. On the 30th of September, we sail from Glasgow, in a swift steamer; and I hope to be at the Seminary and at work by the middle of October. The furlough so kindly given me by the Trustees will still lack six weeks of ending. But knowing that the Seminary has opened, and that my colleagues are proceeding under disadvantage from my absence, I cannot consent to prolong my stay.

Spurgeon and his Work.

When the Sabbath came, I proposed to the young Americans with me to go, of course, to hear Spurgeon. The weather was, as usual in London, execrable. So our best philosophy was, to argue: "Now we shall have an opportunity to compare Mr. Spurgeon's rainy-day congregation with his fair-weather one." Well, it compared very favorably; there were three thousand people present; his full number being five thousand. But we were doomed to another disappointment. When the hour arrived, a youthful looking person, very much like one of our licentiates, appeared on the rostrum, and having begun the devotional services, read a note from Mr. Spurgeon, excusing himself on the ground of severe sickness. He had been ill week before last, had regained enough strength to preach the last Sunday, and was now sicker than before. The young gentleman who appeared in his place was his son; he officiated with good sense and propriety, reminding us of his father, in voice and method, somewhat as the moon of the sun.

These "returns of the clouds after the rain," coupled with Mr. Spurgeon's severe sufferings in previous winters, suggest the fear that his splendid work is near its end. This sorrowful thought again suggests a question which strongly illustrates a principle of Church government. *Who is to take up Mr. Spurgeon's work when his own strong hand is palsied?* This work is a great deal more than that of a popular pastor only. The Tabernacle church, with its more than three thousand communicants is a small part. There is the Spurgeon press, if I may so call it, with its weekly journal, *The Sword and Trowel*, and a multitude of subordinate prints; there is the Stockwell Orphan Asylum; there is the Pastor's College, with one hundred and ten students, supported chiefly by the college; one hundred and thirty-two new missionary churches, and thirty-six thousand communicants. Now, Mr. Spurgeon would say, doubtless, the strength of all these is in their unity; and his personal energy and will are, now, the unifying force. When that is gone, the Baptist denomination are "Independents;" their order can consistently offer no unifying power to Mr. Spurgeon's enterprises. Hence, it is probable he will feel a strong inclination to attempt the transmission of his personal influence, in some form, to a successor. This individual, while in name a simple Baptist minister, will be, in effect, a prelate, performing diocesan functions, without episcopal responsibilities. He may inherit Mr. Spurgeon's disinterested purity and equity, or he may not. If the transmission is made a system, then, according to the order of fallen human nature, it will not be long before the successor will appear, who will not be a Spurgeon in purity. Then all the evils of prelacy will be developed; and that, out of the most anti-prelatic of systems. Thus one extreme generates another! But were Mr. Spurgeon a Pres-

byterian, he would not meet this difficulty and danger. Presbytery and Synod would scripturally and safely present the unifying power. His great work would be conserved and carried on, to the blessing of his country and the world.

Secret of his Success.

You will remember the predictions which were so freely made in the early years of his enterprise, against its permanency. It is gratifying to know that his power in London and Great Britain has not waned as that of so many pulpit stars has; and that so long as health continues it will not decline. To what is this long lease of extraordinary power due? Manifestly, not to ability as a preacher, relatively so transcendent as would solve the question. Mr. Spurgeon is a good preacher; an excellently good preacher; with just the excellencies which do not attract the crowd powerfully. He is not sensational; he does not startle or amuse by violating proprieties; he indulges no novelty of speculation; he preaches no politics; he sticks to the gospel, and usually preaches in an expository strain, with faithful and close personal applications of the truth. That is to say, he is the kind of good preacher, of whom you and I have heard several, in our own little churches at home.

Now, so far as Mr. Spurgeon's success is true, spiritual success, the efficient cause is, of course, to be found in God's spirit, working through him. God has been pleased to use him extensively. But God customarily uses his instruments according to their instrumental adaptation. To me it seems that Mr. Spurgeon's permanent success is to be accounted for, under God, in two ways. He is not only a good preacher, but a good organizer. He has endless industry, a strong will, capital good sense, and the talent of command. He controls men. He energizes men.

Aping of Rome.

I believe that the other reason for his permanent success is to be found in the consistency and wisdom with which he has stuck to the absolute Protestant simplicity of his initial measures and worship. He began in a "dissenting chapel." Now that his work is famous, popular, rich, powerful, he is wise enough to keep it the same. The Tabernacle is still but a "dissenting chapel," with no pomp of ecclesiastical architecture, not a trace of mediæval, papal ornament, not a bit of stained glass, no "floral decorations," no organ, no choir, nothing at all which either the world or the prelatist may say, is a loan from, or an aping of, the prelacy he condemns. Therein, you may be sure, is his wisdom and his strength. The other great Protestant movements were either but partially reformed from the "rags of popery," as the Anglican and the Lutheran, or else they have, at least, done things which lay them liable to the charge of going a hankering after some of those "rags" again. Look at the Presbyterian Churches, at even the Wesleyan, which, in the days of its poverty and simplicity, had such a grasp on the masses. But now that it has gotten rich and grand, in our great cities, it has built itself gothic cathedrals, has the floral shows, the choirs, the grand organs, the exclusive pews, and consequently it has no more hold on the masses in those places than the rest of us poor sinners of the older denominations.

Some one will say: The things mentioned are none of them *mala per se*. How, then, can they be obstructions? Why thus? We begin by demanding the ear of the public to this thesis: Popery is a corruption of Christianity, and must be reformed. We declare that the primitive, apostolic Christians not only had no pope and no mass; but that positively, they had no surplices, no choirs, no instrumental music, no saints' days, no prayer books, no pews. We turn learned antiquaries to prove (very thoroughly,) that their singing was all congregational, and their praying all extempore. Thus we begin. But when we have gotten rich and genteel, and want to be fashionable, we go to borrowing surplices, and choirs, and organs, etc., etc., from whence? The world knows very well that it was Popery which introduced all these (harmless?) things; we had proved that thoroughly. But Popery is the great corruptor. The world asks, very reasonably: If these reformers of Popery are in earnest, why cannot they be satisfied with the modes of worship which, they are certain, were the ones established by the apostles? If these reformers really wanted the scriptural religion, as they say, why would not the primitive form suffice them? The question is unanswerable. So, the world takes up a contemptuous opinion of our honesty; it concludes, first, that we have proved Popery to be a very different thing from the Bible; and second, that we, after all, have the same hankerings with the papists; that the difference is only one of degree in the downward progress.

In a word, Popery did invent and add all these (harmless?) things. She did it to meet appetencies of the carnal mind, which, if not sinful, are certainly not spiritual. In that market she can always

beat us. Our humanly invented ritualisms never compete with hers successfully. They are borrowed from her; they are poor, pale imitations of her "original, genuine" article. All they do for our fashionable *attachés* is to cultivate a desire (call it æsthetic, or what you please, it is not spiritual,) which we cannot fully satiate, but which Rome can. We are acting precisely as the mother would, who was resolved that her darling boy should never risk his neck on horseback; and should therefore provide him with a wooden hobby-horse, with an imitation bridle and saddle, and artificial mane and tail. Of course that only makes the boy half crazy to get on the back of the real, "live" horse; which he is sure to do, as soon as dear good mamma's back is turned. Mr. Spurgeon is too wise to raise children for prelacy and Rome in this way. He honors his own primitive Christianity. He honors his own declarations as a religious reformer. This is one great reason why he keeps all he gets, and maintains the vigorous distinctiveness of his work.

Europe presents another instance of the folly of all these borrowings. The cities in the Popish States are all supplied with Anglican chapels. In every one of any importance, is the house of worship, the English rector, the English liturgy, and a little congregation of English residents and tourists. These institutions have shown themselves abundantly impotent to preserve English Episcopalians from lapsing to Popery; and I am yet to hear of the first bornpapist they have ever led to the light. As the instruments for extending Christ's kingdom in popish lands, they seem futile. The reason is explained above. High-Church ritualistic episcopacy appears to the papist but a poor imitation of his own religion. He says: If I want that sort of thing, why should I run after foreigners, for their pinkback wares, when I have the genuine gold at home?

Faithfully yours, R. L. DABNEY.

The Presbyterian Council.

PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 4th, '80.

Messrs. Editors.—The second grand Council of the Presbyterian Churches of the world has closed its sessions, and almost all the delegates have left the city to visit the college of New Jersey, preparatory to a final dispersion to their fields of labor in this and foreign lands. Thus ends the most remarkable meeting of men which has taken place in our city since the great Exposition of 1876. An Exposition this also has been of the character and products of Presbyterianism. An Exposition remarkable for mental force, moral sweetness, and spiritual dignity. Great men there were from every quarter—Cairns, Calderwood, Rainy, Bruce, Blaikie, Flint, in one magnificent cluster from Edinburgh, Watts from Belfast, Graham from Liverpool, Monod from France, and a host of greater and lesser lights from America, Italy, Bohemia, Greece, China, Japan, India, Australasia, and the "utmost parts of the earth." No lack was there of delegates to a Council organized on the generous plan of not only caring for delegates upon arrival, but also paying the expenses of the journey thither. This munificence insured not only a free Council but a vast programme.

The Attendance

was all that could have been anticipated or desired. For ten days crowds knocked at the doors of the Alliance. Few, if any, tokens of weariness were perceptible in the long sittings—and then only because of inability to hear speakers. And yet there was no special attraction to the multitudes—no parade, no pomp—no show of banners. The long sessions were occupied with offering of simple prayers, singing of devout hymns, and reading of carefully prepared papers. Only these three instruments, prayer, praise, preaching, were used to draw the multitude. Thank God! these are enough still. No need to call in the intervention of liturgies, gymnastic music, sensuous architecture. The simple truth is still sufficient to arouse men, to feed men, to fire men. If this Council has shown anything clearly it has been that Psalms which voice real praise, prayers which breathe conscious need and reverence, and men who devote themselves to the highest concerns of society, and act as if they never meant to lose them from view—will draw men and women—will fill empty pews—will give true success. The papers which made the most impression—the men who hushed most quickly the buzzing crowd were those who trusted most to the power of simple truth. Without being invidious, I may mention illustrations of this in the deep impression Cairns made by his paper on Vicarious Atonement, Flint on Agnosticism, Witherspoon on Retribution, and Boggs in a few brief remarks on the former paper.

The Southern Church

was well represented in the Council, though we missed the voices of those best known in the North—Hoge and Robinson and Palmer. Yet the calibre of the Southern delegates was superior, and showed that the younger men now rising

up in the Southern Church are worthy to succeed the great names now so identified with her history. The paper of Rev. T. D. Witherspoon, D. D., of Virginia, was one of the strongest, keenest, most scholarly papers read before the body. The short speeches of Rev. W. U. Murkland, D. D., of Baltimore, always commanded rare attention, and were models of pointed, refined oratory. So also did Rev. W. E. Boggs, D. D., show himself most capable in the difficult art of saying a great deal in five short minutes.

A fine spirit of unity pervaded all the meetings. True, marked differences of conviction, and philosophy, and science appeared! Otherwise we would have had a most stupid Council. But along with this splendid divergence of thought and feeling, there was a formless, impalpable mystic unity of brethren. It broke out in the songs, breathed in the prayers, animated the speeches. Is not this the unity—the only unity we will ever arrive at in this world or the next? Not on the outside but in the inside—not of form but of spirit, an impalpable principle of love for the common Christ—a silent diffusive temper that makes itself felt in all thought and action, and which binds all Christians together in a fundamental brotherliness of heart and hand and brain, and in that deep catholicity of feeling by which we can reverence others and love them even when we differ from them.

The Attitude of the Alliance Toward Science

was especially judicious and prophetic of good result. It was a fatal blow to any Church if young men, educated as they now are, revelling in the intoxication of new scientific truths—feeling themselves debtors to science for a great part of the joy, excitement, and equipment of their intellects; felt in any form the tokens of hostility on the part of the Presbyterian Church to science. Not a sharp thing, not an acrid thing was said even about the abnormal developments of science. They also were treated as products of the human mind, which it is idle to deal with but by intellectual means. Presbyterianism will do herself vast benefit by this attitude of hospitality to all legitimate science. It is a grand tribute to her inherent strength that she can afford to give the human mind the fullest and fairest chance, willing to take the field against all comers, using no hard names, misrepresenting no views, meeting opponents with arguments and not revilings, and answering "Science falsely so called" with science truly so called.

If there is any regret which remains at the end of the Council, it is that we were not permitted to hear more discussions from the lips of our distinguished Scottish visitors. Here, indeed, is the only criticism that it is in our heart to make respecting the whole meeting, and it is that sufficient provision was not made for discussions of able delegates. The Providence of God does not often bring together such men from such different spheres and stations. What conferences we might have had if the giants had but roused themselves! What light might have been flashed out from the heart of the themes that are of the deepest and most vital moment to all mankind. As conducted, the discussions, which might have been the most fruitful portion of the Council, were the most barren. Something of this was doubtless caused by a fact over which the Council could have no control, viz., the modesty of the truly great men of the Council. Rev. John Cairns, of whom John Stuart Mill said that he might have been the greatest philosopher of Great Britain had he given up Theology—a grand simple soul—was scarcely heard in discussion. Principal Rainy, the ecclesiastical leader of Scotland, champion of many a fierce battle, never once drew his famous claymore from the dialectic sheath, but sat unmoved amid the struggle about him. A Council equalling that of 1880 in the high standard of papers read, but giving a far larger place to free and earnest discussion and providing for the projection of its noblest minds upon the consciousness of the crowds, and the Church were indeed perfect. May such perfection be realized at Belfast in 1884!

L. M. C.

PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 11th, '80.

By the courtesy of the Pennsylvania Railroad the delegates and their friends attendant upon the Presbyterian Alliance, were enabled to enjoy a most delightful excursion to Princeton, New Jersey. The weather was most propitious, and the usually quiet college town overflowed with hospitality to the visitors. Under the conduct of Prof. Green, the guests were guided to the Seminary chapel, where Dr. McGill made an address of welcome on behalf of the school of the prophets. The Doctor is now senior Professor—the last survivor of the six original Professors who shaped the theological character and gave fame to the institution. As was to be expected the Professor gave a brief resumé of the Seminary's history, touchingly alluded to its honored dead, and emphasized the distinctive position of Princeton Seminary in relation

to the theological novelties of the age. No need however to insist on the conservatism of Princeton theology! It is conservatism itself. Princeton has added to her theological faculty a man conversant with the whole modern spirit of criticism and capable of meeting its destructive assaults. Thus while McGill is hugging the old to his heart in the presence of the distinguished company, the new is asserting its power in the call of Prof. Patton to a chair in the institution. Thus Princeton is arming itself to meet the spectre which is already filling the British Churches with fear and trembling, and which is beginning to lift its head on this side of the water—the spectre of disbelief in the antiquity and inspiration of the Bible. And if Princeton or any other theological school would be able to put down this spectre it must make haste to put a little less emphasis on the old and more on the new, live less in the past and more in the present. The appointment of Dr. Patton is a departure in this direction, and a promise that Princeton means to keep alive a quick sympathy with the demands of modern theological thought.

Leaving the tasteful chapel for an examination of the seminary grounds and buildings, visitors beheld on every hand tokens of innovation and progress in the material prosperity of the institution.

But the college must also be visited by the excursionists, and from the seminary we were conducted to the First Presbyterian church, where Dr. McCosh extended a most hearty welcome to the visitors, among whom were many of his own pupils instructed by him at Belfast as well as Princeton. Dr. Main, of Edinburgh, made a happy response, and Marshall Lang, of Glasgow, followed with remarks which elicited hearty applause from the college boys—bore evidence of warm sympathy with the student class. Naryan Sheshadri, the celebrated Hindoo convert, in Hindoo dress, followed with a short and apposite speech. After the speech-making was ended many of the delegates visited the cemetery, probably the most distinguished in this country, in which reposes the dust of Jonathan Edwards, Aaron Burr, and others. A very satisfactory dinner followed at the University Hotel. I was rejoiced to hear from Dr. McCosh assurances that the drainage which caused the death of seven young men had been rectified, and that this sad calamity to the institution had not deterred young men from the college but that the classes are as full as usual.—Everywhere there is token of prosperity in the college. Grounds have been enlarged, a great number of new buildings erected, and professorates doubled, and endowments vastly increased. Three hundred thousand dollars have been bestowed on the institution this year. A fitting reception to the delegates' visit was the reception at the house of Dr. McCosh.—Through an avenue of magnificent elms we made our way to the President's residence—the finest Chancellor's house in the world. The home of the distinguished President was indeed worthy of a visit, and a fine illustration of the honor in which this venerable Scottish philosopher and scientist is held in America. The reception closed the day's enjoyment, and with warm acknowledgments of the hospitalities of Princeton, the Council took the train for Philadelphia. L. M. C.

More Learning than Wisdom.

Prof. Robertson Smith, whose extraordinary treatment of the Scriptures has occasioned so much discussion in Scotland, is criticised by a leading London literary weekly for his lack of caution and dogmatism in his recent article, "The Hebrew Language and Literature, in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The critic thinks it was written hastily, and that it is lacking both in accuracy and form. Prof. Smith, in speaking of the writer of the *Chronicles*, says: "He no longer thoroughly understood the old Hebrew sources from which he worked." This manner of speaking, the critic thinks, is "of questionable propriety." We think, it suggests the idea that a learned man may have so much conceit that he is in danger of being considered remarkable for his lack of wisdom. This literary critic confirms the view recently given by a correspondent of the *Canada Presbyterian*, who writes:

"I have said that I knew Professor Smith, and I repeat that I know him about as well as one can know another—that is, so far as his mental capacity is concerned. A more self-sufficient man I never knew. A better read man I never met. But he lacks the modesty that is content to wait until it is assured of truth before taking it for granted. He can never go but *per saltum*. If he lives long he will yet be I am convinced, one of the best theologians of the day, one of the best Biblical scholars of the century. But, before then, he will have outgrown the faults of his training, and have become a humble Christian, content, notwithstanding his great erudition, to sit as a little child at the feet of the Master, who taught, nearly nineteen hundred years ago, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.'"—N. Y. Observer.

Unitarianism in a Nutshell.—A Boston Unitarian minister recently gave the following answer to the question, "What do Unitarians believe?" We quote it from the *Congregationalist*: "They believe that eighteen hundred years ago, in Bethlehem of Judea—nothing in particular happened."

Eighteen years ago. says the *Foreign Missionary*, the first Protestant church was organized in Rio Janeiro, and two persons received on confession. Since that time nearly three hundred have joined this one organization, mostly converts from Rome.

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