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## Central Presbyterian.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

### Organic Union.

HAMPDEN SIDNEY, VA., May 9, 87.

Rev. C. R. Vaughan, D. D.:

My Dear Brother,—Although you have not asked "my views on the recent discussions touching our fusion with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America," as you have solicited and published in the *Central Presbyterian* a letter from Rev. R. L. Dabney, D. D., on this subject, it is surely not an unwarranted intrusion in the humblest member of our Church who may differ from you and your correspondent to address you in this public manner.

Dr. Dabney seems to glory in his unchanged and unchangeable views. Every argument he has advanced on this subject, he thinks, holds good now. There are some men whose views never change. They are to be pitied. Certainly they are not fitted to be guides of others. The qualities necessary to this kind of stability are as unfavorable to the investigation and ascertainment of truth, as are "shallowness," "sham-charity," and other pleasant little epithets which Dr. Dabney generously applies to those who differ from him.

But this great question is to be decided, not by the *ipse dixit* of any man or any set of men, "be they wise or otherwise," but by the good sense and piety of the Church as a whole, and I believe there is enough of both among our people to enable them to reach a conclusion very different from that arrived at by you and your correspondent.

The most prominent and indeed the necessary impression produced by the reasoning of Dr. Dabney is, that he has lost faith in Presbyterianism, and is fast verging towards independency or some other form of church government. Hear him: "Does not church history teach us that every Presbyterian church in Christendom has bred such corruptions as have compelled, or should have compelled righteous secession." This is a most astonishing statement to proceed from its author, and is certainly very different from anything taught by him in Union Theological Seminary in the earlier part of his career as a Professor of Church Government and History. I believe that it is not true, and that Dr. Dabney has allowed his passion to hurl an indictment against our time-honored and divinely instituted Presbyterianism, and that unless he has gotten some "new lights" since he went to Texas, he will be ready in cooler moments to recede from a position into which he was hurried by the stream of invective in which he thought best to indulge. But suppose it is true, as stated: what then? Dr. Dabney's conclusion is that we had better remain a separate Presbyterian Church, and this, apparently, on the ground that our bitterness and narrowness and seclusion may save us from the corruptions which have afflicted and rent other Presbyterian bodies. But this inference is wholly illogical, and is a surprise, coming as it does from a professor of the noble art of reasoning. Any socialist ought to see that the legitimate conclusion from Dr. Dabney's premises is that Presbyterianism is *per se* a pestiferous thing, and ought to be abandoned. We, as a Church, believe that God is in history and that in his providence He never contradicts his word, and if we are maturely convinced from the facts of the past (as Dr. Dabney seems to be) that Presbyterianism "breeds such corruptions" as "to compel righteous secession," so that there is no case to the contrary in the past throughout Christendom, then we may be very sure we have been mistaken in our interpretations of the divine Word, and that our Methodist or Episcopal or Congregational brethren are near-

er right than we. We may also be quite sure that however we may segregate ourselves from others, this virus of corruption and inevitable secession which, according to your correspondent, dwells in Presbyterianism, will sooner or later rend and destroy us. Dr. Dabney's argument proves too much; more than he on sober second-thought will allow. He has permitted his passions to get control of his judgment, and has discredited himself as a guide. We in Virginia believe, and many of us were so taught by Dr. Dabney himself, that Presbyterianism is a divinely instituted system; that as such it is a good thing, and that history thus testifies in regard to it. We believe further that one of the cardinal principles of Presbyterianism is the unity of the Church in the sense that so far as is practicable the oneness of the invisible Church ought to be set forth and displayed in the Church visible, and therefore, we hold that unless there are reasons to the contrary which can be derived from grounds much more Christian than bad blood and bad logic, contiguous bodies of Presbyterians which are in substantial agreement in their views of doctrine and polity, ought to unite organically, and thus present to the world an illustration of that oneness for which our Lord prayed. Some of us, therefore, regard it not as a question of expediency but of duty to promote this object by all legitimate means, and we are not to be deterred from going forward in this direction patiently and perseveringly by any such taunting and depreciating style of address as your correspondent sees fit to use. Our position is this: We are Presbyterians; as such we are bound by allegiance to God, to the Church, and to the souls of men, to seek union with those of like faith and order, and we intend to do it. Dr. Dabney and his following may run his bastard historical Presbyterianism with its corruptions and secessions, and they are welcome to it. We will take the genuine article as we find it in the New Testament, and invoking the blessing of the divine Spirit will carry it out according to the methods indicated by its author, trusting to God for his help and grace.

Having now, as I believe, demolished the stronghold of Dr. Dabney's article, and having shown one feature of true as opposed to spurious Presbyterianism, I pass on to notice briefly some questions of fact and to inquire whether the learned Doctor is more fortunate in dealing with facts than with logical reasons.

1. He tells us that the Northern General Assembly passed political and offensive deliverances. Be it so; they have withdrawn everything personally offensive, and have given reasons, satisfactory to many unprejudiced minds, why they cannot repeal their political deliverances. Furthermore, they assure us that they stand squarely on the doctrine of the Confession of Faith in regard to the relation of Church and State, and this is exactly where we as a Church stand. Ought not this to be deemed sufficient? If not, it would be proper to confer with them further about it.

2. But Dr. Dabney alleges that union of churches means "ecclesiastical amalgamation with negroes," and indulges in much unnecessary rhodomontade on this theme. For who is there who wants a union without preliminary discussion and mutual understanding and agreement on this and perhaps other points? Of this thing Dr. Dabney may rest assured, viz: Our Northern brethren have just as good common sense and as much real piety as we; they are just as anxious to conserve and extend the kingdom of God, and as ready to adopt methods proved to be wise by experience. The hot-heads among them are impracticable and unreasoning, just as the same class are among us, but the great mass of their ministers and elders and people want to find out what is best and wisest and most productive of God's glory and the good of mankind. Now, I think, it can easily be shown that the best interests of the negroes demand that they have separate church organization, that their normal development requires it, and that when left to themselves, they themselves prefer it. And just here it is germane to remark that Dr. Dabney mistakes the position of our sister Southern Churches (the Methodist and Baptist) towards the negroes. It is not true that these churches "require them (the negroes) to have their own separate ecclesiastical inclosure." On the contrary, unless my memory wholly deceives me, serious efforts were made by these churches to retain the negroes under their control, but it was found impracticable, because the negroes themselves preferred ecclesiastical independence, as they always will and always ought, when they are strong enough to stand alone. As for our Southern Presbyterian Church, Dr. Dabney surely knows that it is her settled policy, enunciated at Atlanta, as a temporary expedient, until the time comes for a separate colored organization, to receive negro preachers and churches into our Presbyteries with full ecclesiastical rights. Such men as the late J. M. P. Atkinson, D. D., Maj. T. J. Kirkpatrick, and multitudes

of others as good and true, approved this policy, and one of our Texas Presbyteries, with whose members Dr. Dabney meets in Synod, has two such colored ministers on its roll, as recorded in the minutes of the last General Assembly. The Doctor evinces a degree of prejudice against the negroes, which it is hoped he does not feel, but he is very unjust in attributing it wholesale to Southern Christians and to our own Church. I believe that our people want to do what appears best under the circumstances. It does appear best both to the negroes and to us that wherever they are strong enough they should be organized into separate churches and ecclesiastical courts, but where this is not the case they are universally received into our churches when they desire it, and generally into our ecclesiastical courts. This, I believe, is a fair representation of the attitude of Northern Presbyterianism and Christianity towards the negro, and it is certainly much more Christian and nearer the Scriptural standard than that given by Dr. Dabney.

3. But your correspondent is dreadfully afraid of what he calls the "Yankeeizing of our pulpits, education, literature, and manners." What is the exact meaning of this is hard to find. If he means such Yankeeizing of our "pulpits" as was done before the war, when the North gave Virginia such men as Dutton, Plumer, Foote, Moore, Armstrong, Van Zandt, and Hodge; and to South Carolina the gifted Howe and the elder Palmer, the noble father of B. M. Palmer, D. D., and Brackett, and to Mississippi that glorious man J. B. Stratton, D. D., of Natchez and to these and other States multitudes of others, then I say in the name of God and of the people of the South, let them send down their men as fast and full as the trains can run. We have room for them and they will do us good, and if union will expedite their coming, by all means let us hurry up union, for we shall be greatly gainers thereby. In our turn, we will send them our Alexanders, and Huges, and Hoyts, and Houstons, and Thomases, and numbers of others, and the exchange will be good for both, as it ought to be; and the church and the country, North and South, will be benefited, and God will be glorified thereby, which is the great point we ought to seek. As to the Yankeeizing of "our education, literature, manners," I am inclined to think that Dr. Dabney is guilty of a bald paralogism just here, which is adapted rather to awaken prejudice than to inform the understanding, for how can the Yankees Yankeeize us in any of these particulars, unless they have something to communicate which is so much better than what we already have that it will commend itself to our judgment for adoption. Has Dr. Dabney grown so perfect in "education, literature, and manners" that he is not willing to learn even from a Yankee? I trow not. I have not seen the latest catalogue of the Texas University, but the last one I did see showed that this aspiring institution was greatly indebted to Yankee authors, and even the learned Professor of Moral Philosophy did not wholly disdain the use of Yankee books in his classes; and this is as it should be, for if a blockade were established against Yankee educational and literary works and influence, we of the South would be in an evil case. It is also doubtless true that there are some people in the South who would suffer no detriment in "manners" by applying themselves with patience and docility to the example and instruction of some in the North. When a man or church has gotten too big or too pure or too anything else, to learn from a Yankee, or African, or Hindoo, who is capable of helping him, they have gotten too big and pure for practical purposes.

4. Dr. Dabney further declares that the Northern Presbyterian Church is unsound in doctrine and morals. This is a question of fact. I do not believe it. Nor does any one with whom I am acquainted, who has had opportunity to know the Northern Church personally. For myself I have heard scores of their preachers and I have never heard a syllable of unsound doctrine from one of them, but the truth of God as fully and clearly expounded, as it can be by human lips. It was apprehended by many that the union of the Old and New School Churches would have this effect, but it was told by Rev. Dr. John Hall, of New York, in the year 1869, that after having observed closely and dispassionately, as a stranger anxious to know the truth, he could discover no such state of facts, and that he believed the body as a whole, with here and there possibly an exception, to be thoroughly sound and orthodox. The same testimony was given me by the late Dr. Plumer shortly before his death. My own observation, though much more limited, corresponds with theirs, and I believe that the Northern Presbyterian Church is as sound an ecclesiastical body as any on earth, the Southern Church not excepted. I wish it to be distinctly understood too that I include morality along with doctrine in my definition of what is necessary to constitute either a Church or an individual sound and orthodox. I have no sympathy with Dr.

Dabney's diatribe against the Northern Church in regard to lax morals when compared with us righteous people of the South, and it cannot be maintained with due regard to the facts of the case. It is the result either of ignorance or passion or prejudice.

5. The only other point of material importance which Dr. Dabney brings up is one, as stated by him, adapted to frighten the timid and unwary but will not much influence people of collected judgment and steady nerve; it is the jeopardy in which, he thinks, all the property rights of the Southern Church will be put by a union with the North. It is hard to believe that Dr. Dabney himself is as much affected by this consideration as he seems. The pitiable state of things drawn from fancy in regard to what may occur in the history of Union Theological Seminary, when some Yankee and negro trustees come up from the Synod of North Carolina to Farmville and demand control of the institution must be intended as a lug-bear and not as something that either may or will occur in fact; for Dr. Dabney very well knows that no supreme court on earth can ever divest the Synods of Virginia and North Carolina of their property rights in the seminary under their present charter until the Synods themselves shall both have become so hopelessly corrupt or divided as to elect men as trustees who will be base enough to divert it from the purpose for which it was founded. Dr. Dabney knows all this perfectly well, and yet he felt himself justified in frightening the unthinking old ladies of both sexes, in and out of the ministry in these two Synods, and doubtless he has succeeded in some cases. But such success is not success, for when time for reflection has been had, and the facts are made known, these dear good people will find that they have been fooled, and will not be likely to be caught in such a flimsy net again. Surely, my dear brother, the following considerations ought to have weight in opposition to the red-hot sky-scraping of Dr. Dabney: (1) This may be one of the questions which it would be eminently proper to confer about and settle before a union of the churches is entered on. (2) There is not a piece of church property in the South, no matter how it is deeded at present, which cannot, on application to the courts be made secure to the parties to whom it properly belongs. (3) We cannot always live as if we were in a state of siege. It will not do to look on our fellowmen as enemies and to accustom ourselves to regard our fellow Christians as frauds, tricksters, and men lying-in-wait for us. The war is over. It is time for us to look about us and see how the Presbyterian Church can be made most effective in our common country. It is proper to inquire whether a union of forces, a real union in thought, in heart and in hand will not accomplish more for the divine glory and the good of our people than the divisive measures so strenuously urged by your correspondent. Passion ought to be put aside. Reason, enlightened by truth and the facts of the case, and sanctified by God's spirit ought to be our guide. Under this leadership, many of us will have to put off prejudice, shall be necessitated to change our opinions and perhaps to submerge some personal preferences, but it will be good thus to act under such inspiration, for we ourselves shall be blessed while we help to bless our Church and land. To me it is apparent that the most important thing to be done for Presbyterianism and Christianity in the South, so far as our denomination is concerned, is the union of the Northern and Southern Churches. I think the General Assembly soon to convene ought to deal with this question carefully, patiently, prayerfully, hopefully, and joyously. There ought to be no undue haste; no unwise holding back. The conservatives and the progressives ought to try and see "eye to eye and face to face." No selfish advantage ought to be sought, and no snap-judgment taken. The real sentiment of our people ought to be ascertained and expressed. Sooner or later the union will come, must come, should come. I would be glad to see it next year, but I am willing to wait, so long as there is a considerable minority opposed. But as for the influence of bad blood and Yankee-phobia and war recollections and illogical reasoning and mental phantasmagoria which are attempted to be palmed off as arguments, it ought to be given place to "by subjection, no, not for an hour."

With best wishes for you and deep concern for all the great interests involved in the settlement of this important question, I remain, with assurances of fraternal regard,  
Most truly yours,  
RICHARD MOLLWAIN.

The Christian religion is a sober and reasonable thing in itself, and should not, by the ministers of it, be made to look wild or senseless.

When shall I be pleased with myself? Never till I am pleased with God.

### The Synod of Brazil.

The Rev. John W. Dabney applied to East Hanover Presbytery for a dismission to unite with the Presbytery of Rio de Janeiro, which is to constitute a part of a proposed Synod of Brazil. In replying to a communication of his Presbytery asking farther information as to the ecclesiastical status of the proposed Synod of Brazil, Mr. Dabney writes:

"I cannot give our Presbytery the desired information in a better form than by translating the passages of the printed 'Plan of Union,' adopted by the Presbytery of Rio de Janeiro at its meeting in 1885, which relate to this point. The Plan of Union proposes:

#### 'OF THE ORGANIZATION.'

Sec. 1. 'The Presbytery of Rio de Janeiro will be dissevered from the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.'

Sec. 2. 'The ministers in Brazil who belong to the Presbyterian Church in the United States together with the churches in their charge will be dissevered from their respective Presbyteries.'

(NOTE.—'It would be better that these should be formed into a Presbytery or Presbyteries.')

Sec. 3. 'This done, they shall meet, together with the ruling elders delegated by the churches, in a place and on an occasion previously determined, and shall constitute themselves into a Synod, which shall be called The Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Brazil, and will have under its jurisdiction all the Presbyterian churches actually existing in the country and which may come to be organized in the future by the Presbyteries belonging to the Synod, or which may come to be aggregated to them' (the Presbyteries).

Then follow several other paragraphs relative to matters that are proper to a Synod, and afterwards we have the agreement about the relations between the Brazilian Church and the foreign churches which actually sustain, or in the future may come to sustain, missions in Brazil.

Sec. 1. 'The churches abroad will select the work of evangelization which they wish to support or aid in the country, provided that nothing be done contrary to the expressed wish of the highest court of the Church in Brazil.'

Sec. 2. 'They will appoint their agents (or local committees) for the administration, in the part which pertains to them, of the said labors, and for the expenditure and fiscalization of the pecuniary aid which they furnish.'

Sec. 3. 'The said agents, whether ministers or private members, will belong respectively to the Presbyteries or churches within whose limits they reside and labor, as sec. 2, chap. XV., of the Book of Order determines. The foreign churches will have no ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the churches in Brazil.'

Now it seems to me that these quotations will sufficiently manifest to Presbytery what it is that we contemplate doing, and will assure it that we ministers and missionaries of the Southern Presbyterian Church are neither going into connection with the Northern Assembly, nor are going to commit our home church to any initiation of 'organic union.' We propose to constitute a strictly *Brazilian Church*, and to do this both the representatives of the Northern Assembly and we of the Southern make concessions."

#### For the Central Presbyterian.

### Atlanta Presbytery,

At an adjourned meeting held at Atlanta, Ga., May 12th, licensed Mr. Frank Cowan to preach the gospel. Mr. W. P. Hemphill, a ruling elder in the Griffin church, was also received as a candidate for the ministry.

The following action was taken with regard to an overture to the General Assembly, adopted at a previous meeting:

Whereas, several absorbing and exciting subjects will be before the approaching General Assembly; and whereas, the overture of this Presbytery in reference to a certain criticism of the last General Assembly by its Permanent Clerk is misunderstood as an attempt to remove him from office; therefore—

Resolved, That while this Presbytery is still of the opinion that the criticism referred to deserves censure, it nevertheless reconsiders its action adopting the said overture, and instructs the Stated Clerk not to send it up to the Assembly.

JAMES STACY,  
Stated Clerk.

### TROUBLES OF HIGH CHURCHMEN.—

On a recent Sunday morning rather an extraordinary scene was witnessed at St. John the Baptist's Church, Liverpool. The vicar, as he entered, was seen to carry a lighted taper in his hand. He immediately lit the candles on the altar. The church wardens, who were sitting in front of the chancel rails, stepped forward and put out the lights. The vicar lit the candles a second time, and as soon as they were lit the church wardens advanced and blew out the lights. The vicar did not light them a third time. The service then proceeded without "altar lights."

It takes three weeks to perform the marriage ceremony in Japan.