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*BROWNING AND THE BIBLE.

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It is safe to say that no other book has had the influence upon the literature of the world that the Bible has, and it is also safe to say that no other literature shows this influence to the same great degree that our English literature does. From Anglo-Saxon times to our day, English writers have been using the Bible as a treasury of material to an extent that is astonishing. My purpose, however, this evening does not allow me to give a roll of these writers, interesting though that would be. To particularize would be well-nigh endless, for the sense of duty toward man and God is the bone and flesh of English books in their age. My object is merely to study the influence of the Bible in the work of one poet.

As time goes on it is becoming evident that Browning has a message for our generation not to be found in the pages of any of his contemporaries, and that he has a special claim on our gratitude and reverence as the most virile and spiritually awakening mind in modern English poetry. But Browning is more than that. He is the great Christian poet of modern times. He has caught the inner spirit of the Christian faith as perhaps no

*An address delivered in the Presbyterian Church at Davidson College at the annual Bible Society meeting, 1915. In preparing the address for publication, no attempt has been made to remove the traces of preparation for oral delivery.

***"THE FEDERATION OF AMERICAN PRESBY-
TERIANISM."**

*By the REV. THORNTON WHALING, D. D., LL. D., President of
Columbia Theological Seminary.*

Mr. President and Brethren of the Chicago Presbyterian Social Union:

The Presbyterian climate of Chicago, Illinois, is similar in many respects to that of Columbia, South Carolina. The ecclesiastical luminaries which stud your sky bear familiar names, and surely they represent principles which are neither novel nor of "private interpretation." South Carolina gave you your Bryan, and Tennessee furnished Vance, and Kentucky contributed Hardin and Hobson, and Mississippi loaned you Boyd, and time would fail me to extend the brilliant catalogue which would sound almost like calling the names of the heavenly constellations, but doubtless all these sons of the South brought with them the warm and sunny climate of their native Presbyterianism, and just as certainly they found here on the spacious shores of the great lakes as generous and genial a Presbyterianism as that of the fair land from whence they came, though you will pardon me for thinking that nowhere do the birds carol as in Carolina, and that there are no kindlier skies under which to be born than those which approach the horizontal blaze of the Southern cross. Chicago is truly a city "set upon a hill which cannot be hid," for its foundations are laid deep in the solid globe itself and the nations pour their "glory and honor" into it, although not even your most patriotic citizens would claim that you had managed in the past to exclude altogether "whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie." But the elect of many sections have been subsidized to build this mighty metropolis of the Northwest. I will give you

*An address delivered in February, 1914, before the Presbyterian Social Union of Chicago, in the Fourth Presbyterian Church, of which the then Moderator of the Northern Assembly, Dr. John Timothy Stone, is pastor.

an example: The County of Rockbridge in Old Virginia, which nestles between the Allegheny and the Blue Ridge Mountains and has, as is claimed, more Presbyterians per square acre than any other county in these United States, and all of them of the strong and sturdy Scotch-Irish type, sent you more than three-fourths of a century ago an emigrant who carried in his head an already perfected invention which transfigured the fields of the Northwest and made them the granary of the world and created this splendid city with its teeming thousands; his mechanical genius will be immortalized in the name of his reaper and his beneficence will be equally immortal in the great theological seminary, which is the chief ornament of the Presbyterianism of Chicago, and which bears the name of the Scotch-Irish Presbyterian emigrant from Rockbridge, Va.—the McCormick Theological Seminary—a bulwark of that aggressive, progressive and rational conservatism so well symbolized in the stalwart figure of its munificent founder.

As the waters of half the continent empty into your chain of matchless lakes, so the nation's and the world's best has flowed without stint into this great center of modern life, and whosoever came has been stamped and branded with your type of Americanism, has been made over again after the image of your *ideal Chicago*: that real city of God which in some measure now is, but which is surely yet to be by the side of these crystal waters, for the vision of seers and saints is not an empty dream, but is a prophecy and a proclamation of the purpose and the plan of God. Your imperial city, in the transforming and unifying work it has wrought upon the diverging types and polyglot peoples which make its population, is an illustration and a parable exhibiting the effect which our America has wrought upon the different and often hostile types of Presbyterianism derived from the Old World, from Ulster and Scotland, from Germany and France, from England and Holland, from Bohemia and the Palatinate; for two hundred years of history in the New World has democratized and Americanized and de-Europeanized these types until their real spiritual affinities and native and intrinsic appetites have a chance to assert

themselves. My old professor in Church History, Dr. Philip Schaff, used to say, in speaking of the numerous Presbyterian divisions in Church History, that nobody except the Omniscient One could remember them and nobody but a Scotchman could understand or sympathize with them. To-day the most tasteless and dreary chapters on Church History are those which try to re-tell the rationale of these divisions, and nobody really knows them, except the professor of Church History, and he for only one day, as the result of sitting up all night to prepare to teach this subject to his class the next day and then he straightway proceeds to forget them as all other wise men do. Scotchman and Hollander, Huguenot and Ulsterman, Bohemian and Swiss, and if there be any others are all one to-day in that generous and catholic Presbyterianism which contains the essence of all these types and which does not propose to excommunicate any of them in order that one arrogant type may usurp the function of furnishing the model into conformity with which the others must be forced by the violence of a pressure which may squeeze the life out of one.

Our American Presbyterianism to-day is one, it has come at last into the undoubting and luminous consciousness of its oneness, and the time has also come to give that unity formal expression and fit embodiment. And there is one word which spells the secret of its successful accomplishment and that magic word, with whose meaning we are all so well acquainted, is the word "Federation." The problem for Presbyterian statesmanship to-day is the task of the "Federation of American Presbyterianism." This Federation involves a two-fold spiritual process:

First, Integration. The mistake of past ecclesiastical biologists is that they sought to make integration universal and all inclusive, instead of definite, specific and only partially inclusive. They sought to make every cell of our Presbyterianism exactly like every other, and if they had succeeded they would have had a very low grade organism, like the mollusk or even a jellylike mass of protoplasm; but if they had planned integration only, within carefully defined limits, the cells might have

varied to any degree consistent with the plans of the organism, building highly specialized organs or parts differing much from each other, and the result would have been a high grade organism symbolized by the majestic lion or the imperial eagle. We have tried integration heretofore on the protoplasmic or mullusous basis, let us try it now after the fashion of the lion or the eagle.

(a) Doctrinally, the field for integration must be limited because we agree only in the generous Calvinism of the Westminster Standard, and differences emerge when we press into the field of dogmatic subtleties or theological niceties, which many of us would regard as great and necessary improvements, but which will prove non-integrable from the wider standpoint of our whole Presbyterian Church. The maximum of integrable doctrine cannot be more than the Westminster system; the minimum might be made less by constitutional amendment.

(b) Ethically, the field is far wider, there is well-nigh absolute unanimity in the department of the Christian or biblical ethics. No one, North or South, East or West, has agitated for a revision of the ethics of Jesus or of the Scriptures as contained in our symbols. The significance of our absolute oneness here, as furnishing a basis for formal and visible union, cannot be exaggerated. We could never dispute as to what ought to be in duty done, although we might occasionally differ as Presbyterianism doubtless will do, till the "last syllable of recorded time" as to what we ought to believe.

(c) In ecclesiastical praxis or practices, whatever historical variations may still persist, there has come about a singular unity in the view of the Church as the organ for bringing in the Kingdom of God and the interpretation of its mission, as Missions, Home and Foreign, and the demand for integration here is as big as the world's religious needs and as insistent as the home missionary demands of this world-central and world-controlling republic.

The opportunity for a co-operative or federal union, doctrinally, ethically, ecclesiastically, by our American Presbyterians, cannot be concealed by the "vain repetitions" which

recite the dead shibboleths of a buried past, mumbling ancient formulae from between decayed teeth and wrinkled lips. Most of us are not entombed amongst the ashes of by-gone centuries, but are really living amidst the vital issues of the twentieth century, and God has no disturbing interrogation mark with which to arouse us that hugs us more tightly than the question, "How is American Presbyterianism to get together?" The answer is, "Federation." The illustration and the demonstration which convinces and silences opposition is our own Federal Republic. We need not explain Federation with these United States unrolled like a scroll before every citizen, emblazoned with luminous commentary upon the meaning and the application of the federal principle. For more than a hundred years we have boasted in our schools and our pulpits, in our books and from our professors' chairs, that from our ecclesiastical polity was furnished the principles out of which this imperial republic was wrought. Apply these same principles as they are incorporated in that most immortal of all human compositions, the Constitution of the United States, to the forces of our American Presbyterianism, and the problem is solved. For four long and bloody years you fought to keep this Federal Union from being shattered into fragments; sure the argument must carry force with your minds and hearts to use these same deathless principles to bring the shattered fragments of our Presbyterianism into a Federal Union, which will preserve all the rights of the weak and give to the strong the sublime privilege of bearing the infirmities of the weak.

The second, Spiritual Process is "Differentiation." The higher the organism, the greater the difference in the organs and constituent parts. The effort to secure absolute uniformity reverses the normal processes of development and would substitute degeneration and devolution for evolution. Progress consists in the transformation of "indefinite and incoherent homogeneity" into "definite and coherent heterogeneity"—to seek the invariable uniformity of a universal homogeneity, is to travel the road of despair and death. Largeness, liberty, and life is found in the frank and generous recognition of dif-

ferentiation as a necessary part of the divine order of growth. Federation need not demand that any differences shall be surrendered, may indeed provide that further differences shall develop and differentiation become more and more complex. To illustrate, I should be unwilling to surrender any of the distinctive principles for which the Church of which I am a minister stands. I believe that Church has distinctive principles of which she has been divinely made the trustee. The spirituality of the Church, as a supernatural institute, forbidding "entangling alliances" with any civil polities, is in a peculiar sense our heritage. You will pardon me for saying that I verily believe that the Theological Seminary which I serve in the chair of Theology represents the most progressive, up-to-date and rational type of Calvinism which has been developed in the history of the Christian Church—wrought out by Thornwell, and still further developed by Girardeau, through them progressive Calvinism has spoken its most advanced message to the world. Building on the inspiration and infallibility of the Scripture, accepting cordially the Westminster system, it still uses the light of the best philosophy of our day to construct its doctrinal scheme. You may think it provincial in me to believe these things, and it would be still more provincial to insist that you should believe them too. But, excuse me, would it not be equally provincial for you to insist that I had no right to believe these things and ought to believe just like you do? (We must both remember that differentiation is the order of growth and of nature and of God.)

Columbia is planted by the Congaree, whose musical waters flow neath the city's shadows to the sea; we prefer our gentle and quiet river to the majestic Ohio or the lordly Mississippi, or strange as it may seem to you, to your great inland sea, but it would be the last reach of audacity were we to insist that our fellow countrymen should labor to make over again the Ohio, the Mississippi, and Lake Michigan after the pattern of the Congaree; but, may I add, that it would be provincialism in just the same degree for our fellow countrymen to urge that we must re-fashion the Congaree to make it a fac-simile

of the Ohio or the Mississippi or even a miniature of your mighty lake. You have your differentiation, we have ours; both differentiations ought to be preserved; we must not demand that you should surrender yours; you should not demand that we surrender ours. Our integration must take place in a region not barred by our differentiation, and there is a fertile empire doctrinally, ethically, and ecclesiastically which beckons us to enter in and to possess the land in the name of the Federation of our American Presbyterianism. For more than forty years we have halted and hesitated on the borders of the promised land. Shall we ever have the courage and the faith to boldly enter in?

In closing, may I prophesy, that it is not an idle dream nor a vain ideal, but a golden hope cherished first in the heart and purpose of God, and then transferred to the aspirations of His children, that the morning of a new day is beginning to dawn, when a fresh and larger baptism of the Spirit of Christ shall usher in a more splendid reformation, in which all the churches shall be uplifted to the Mount of Vision from which they shall then see the meaning of our Lord's intercessory prayer that His people may be one, even as He and His Father are one; and in the light of His Spirit's illumination may we all come to see the modes in which our Lord would have us bring together the long sundered, the too-long divided churches of our American Presbyterianism. Amen and amen.