

THE ATLANTA ASSEMBLY AND FRATERNAL RELATIONS.¹

To the Editor of the South-Western Presbyterian :

I DESIRE to review calmly, but firmly, the proceedings of our late General Assembly at Atlanta in instituting new and more intimate intercourse with the Northern Assembly. This review I must preface with a few points :

1. To the plea that "it is an impropriety for any one to reopen this question after the Assembly has *settled it*, and *unanimously*," "I give place by subjection," no, not for a moment. With what face can those use this plea who have themselves just *unsettled* and reversed the more unanimous position of every Assembly since 1870? I say, "more unanimous," for the unanimity of the last action was only on the surface; and, as I shall show, was not a real consent to the action taken, but a sort of helpless accord in the conviction that the Assembly had entangled itself in the meshes of its own indiscretions. The members who voted for the action are not satisfied with it. Dr. Brown, its defender, is not; certainly the church is not: as is evinced by the fact, that of our six weeklies, four, without concert, promptly dissented. To assume, in the face of this fact, and of the great, broad, solemn ground-swell of disapprobation now pervading our church, that he who respectfully dissents is a disturber of the peace of our Zion, is a statement I cannot assent to.

2. To stigmatize old and honest servants of the church as "wranglers," because they choose to do their duty to her in the advocacy of her vital principles, is a trick rather too stale, and too frequently connected with the tactics of deserters of their own principles, to deter such as me. Nor do I permit any one to represent my position as one of unforgiving hate, in contrast with their new departure as Christian love and charity. With what seemliness can this come from men who, some years ago,

¹ A letter to the Editor of the *South-Western Presbyterian*, which appeared in that paper August 3, 1882.

professed to stand by us in defending the independence, the principles, and the honor of our church? They may if they choose paint themselves as then acting from mere spite; they must not paint me so. I then made the distinction clear between the resentment naturally awakened by Yankee persons and civil powers, assailing my personal property, civil rights, life and family—and their outrages did justify the highest resentment—and the moral opposition, required by duty, to *the attacks made by their church courts on Christ's truth and church*. The former sentiment we sought to suppress, in the exercise of the duty of Christian forbearance. The latter resistance we neither had, *nor have now*, any more right to suppress than we have to expunge a precept out of the Decalogue. Let this be remembered!

3. Nor shall I, for one, be deterred by the indecency of being called one of the "old war horses," as though the quarrel were ours only. If age, if a fidelity to the Southern church, which has imposed many toils, cares and sorrows; if long experience in her history and service, have deprived us of those common rights of free speech and argument possessed by all elders, and even members, then this taunt may be proper.

4. In view of the high principles involved, the argument that "since the politicians have come together, and the business men coalesced, it is high time the churches came together," is almost too thin to require answer. It overlooks several essential points. Our subjection to the same government with our former assailants is the result of force; our religious affiliations must be voluntary, or else are worthless. Business relations imply no sanction of, or responsibility for, the other party's theological or moral principles. In arranging with Brown or Jones to sell boots, or tallow, or calico, I should not endorse either his politics, or his theology. The kind of affiliation now required of us with Northern Christians does imply such endorsement of their doctrine and ecclesiastical principles; and without this, is dishonest.

5. Our Assembly and Presbyteries ought not to have taken the initiative. It was derogatory to their own self-respect, consistency, and good name. Take Dr. Brown's constant showing, which is that on which the Assembly professed to act: that the Northern Assembly had foully libelled us; that ours, acting with

the extreme of Christian forbearance, had disclaimed retaliation, but made an *amende* for the libel the sole condition of restored confidence, and had said, whenever you are ready with this, here is our hand. That the defamer should distinctly refuse this simple *amende* and abide stubbornly in this refusal; all this leaves for us one only attitude, which is to wait, and be silent. For us to go farther, and initiate another request for the *amende* so insultingly withheld, is more worthy of a spaniel than of a Christian. It implies a falsehood, *as though it were we*, the injured, *who were responsible for the scandal*, instead of them, the injurers. It converts our position, before so Christian and manly, at once into one cowardly and cringing. It was in the worst possible taste and judgment for any Presbytery to overture the Assembly to this step; and it was a great *faux pas* in the Assembly to take it.

But a greater one was the "concurrent resolution," so-called, which makes our church hypothetically confess a sin which she never committed, and which she has always held she never committed. She is made to say that, *provided* she has defamed and libelled the Northern church, she withdraws it; provided the Northern church, if it has defamed us, will withdraw her slanders. One thing is plain to any honest mind, that a manly individual, in the parallel case, would scorn such a basis of adjustment. The parable is analogous. For Dr. Brown says emphatically that our assertions of wrong action against the Northern church *were true*, and not libellous. He quotes Dr. Humphrey as declaring that we have never libelled or reviled his Assembly. It is vain for one to attempt to cover the crookedness of this action by pleading that our "*if*" does not specify any particular libel of which our Assembly was guilty. If it does not imply some sin of that sort in our Assembly, it is insincere. If it does, it is a sinful libel of our past Assemblies. This pretended brotherly reconciliation is vaunted as very Christian and lovely. What sort of a reconciliation is that to which insincerity and false accusation of our own brethren is the essential step? The apostle's plea was, "First *pure*, then peaceable." This new-fangled love makes itself *impure*, in order to be peaceable.

6. It was my privilege and honor to oppose the deceitful entanglement of our church in the "Pan Alliance." The events

at Atlanta show that I was right; for it is very plain to the clear-headed observer, that all those who were involved in that affair have found themselves embarrassed and "handicapped" now, in their efforts to adjust the new relations with this slandering "ally." But this by the way.

FRATERNAL RELATIONS.

Approaching now the centre of the subject, let us disentangle "fraternal relations" from the confusion designedly thrown around it by our Northern assailants. For twelve years they have been pleading for the "restoration of fraternal relations." The plea is deluding; because *fraternal relations have been all the time existing on our part towards them, except as ruptured by them.* What are "fraternal relations?" *The relations existing between Christian brethren not in the same denomination—* as between us and Lutherans, us and Southern Methodists, etc. These we have never withdrawn from Northern Presbyterians. They consist in ministerial and Christian communion, Christian charities and hospitalities, recognition of their sacraments, and, in general, of their standing as a valid branch of the church catholic. Hence the reply we should have made to the demand, "Restore fraternal relations," ought constantly to have been: "*You have them already, unless you please to rupture them on your side.*" And in restoring fraternal relations, in full form, to the Northern Presbyterians, without any amends or reparation, the moment they stopped cursing us, our Southern Assemblies showed a Christian forbearance and Christ-like spirit never surpassed on this earth; a spirit which I, for one, shall never hear disparaged without protest; a charity which, with any fair mind, would forever acquit them of the charge of spite in maintaining their righteous attitude on a wholly different point.

CORRESPONDENCE BY DELEGATES.

That other point, wrapped up under the foreign name of "fraternal relations," is the demand that we shall enter into a *special intercourse with the North, by annual delegates.* This is wholly another matter. It has a perfectly distinct, historical meaning. The Old School Assemblies, before the war, maintained fraternal relations with every valid, however imperfect, branch of the visible church. It kept up the particular inter-

course by annual delegates with very few—only the most orthodox Calvinistic Congregationalists, the Dutch Reformed, and the Secession churches. And the recognized meaning of the intercourse was this: *it testified to a special harmony of doctrine and ecclesiastical principles between that church and ours.* It was a badge of virtual unity of principle. Thus, for instance, when the New School Assembly seceded in 1838, our Old School Assembly, while recognizing her valid church character and all the duties of fraternal charity toward her and her people, absolutely refused to keep up this special intercourse by delegates with her. To do so would have traversed our righteous and obligatory testimony against the partial errors of New Schoolism. It would have been a criminal self-contradiction, or else betrayal of the position of truth in debate between us and them. So now. This special intercourse by delegates if not deceitful and dishonest, should mean virtual unity of principles.

But the Northern church chose to destroy that unity, both in doctrine and church order. By the Spring resolutions of 1861, she saw fit to introduce into her church government a principle of spiritual despotism essentially popish—the invasion of the right of members to follow their own consciences in questions wholly extra-scriptural and merely political. (Thus defined by Dr. Hodge himself). This was dreadfully aggravated by the circumstances, which showed it an attempt to pervert the sacred powers of Christ's church for dragooning free citizens into the support of what history will stigmatize as an aggressive, revolutionary, partisan faction, with the most lawless and mischievous aims. This popish element of church order was signalized, moreover, by such mournful events as the persecution of the sainted McPheeters; the virtual sanction of the invasion of their own St. Louis Presbytery by a provost marshal; the *ipso facto* orders, this invasion of the rights of the Kentucky Synod. And the fundamental departure from Presbyterianism is jealously retained and asserted by them to-day, as we shall see.

Next came the corrupting of their doctrinal record, by their fusion with the New School. The amount of this mixture was, that the Wesminster standards, while held as the symbols of the amalgamated body, might be so explained in it as they had been actually explained in either body. The meaning of this is, that any New Schoolism, which was countenanced or permitted in

the New School body, should be entitled to tolerance in the mixed body. So Dr. Hatfield construed it at once, and the Fusion-Assembly at once endorsed him by making him one of its most important officers. This has made the mixed church *responsible for all the doctrinal errors* for which our wise fathers of 1838 separated themselves from the other branch, and for which they inexorably refused the special recognition of correspondence by delegates for thirty years. So that I now stand precisely where the Old School fathers—Miller, Alexander, Baxter, Hodge, Breckinridge, Plumer, Thornwell—stood on this matter. It was of this surrender of doctrinal purity that Dr. Hodge said, "If the truth be lost, all is lost." "But," one will say, "Dr. Hodge stayed with them!" Yes; inconsistently he did; he felt he had nowhere else to go. But we are in possession of a precious and blessed independence, given by the special favor of Providence. We *have* somewhere else to *stay* than in this "broad church." Does any one dream that Dr. Hodge would have left such a position as ours to go into a mixed body of which he intimated that, in losing pure truth, she had lost all?

But, it is said, this mixed church has become marvelously Old School and orthodox. See how it disciplined Prof. Swing, and Dr. John Miller, and Mr. F. Moore, etc., etc.! True; because these bold, candid men compelled the result, by attacking propositions held as fundamental to their theology by New School men as by Old School men. That means nothing. Is there a Presbytery in that mixed church which will dare to do what a Presbytery in the Southern church (Columbia Presbytery) has just done—mark the *New School theory* of effectual calling with judicial censure? They would as soon blow up their Assembly hall with dynamite! When I see pronounced New School men professors in their seminaries; when I see a known Socinian lecturing on doctrine by the invitation of another; when I hear the prevalence of merely negative preaching in their churches, I cannot stultify myself by according them orthodoxy. No! their body exists by the tolerance of doctrinal errors, which our fathers could not tolerate. Hence, it cannot be righteous for us, under a pretext of fraternity, to make that special recognition of them which, if it means anything historically, means, we avouch, *unity of doctrinal* and ecclesiastical principle.

INIQUITOUS LEGISLATION.

Once more. Their assemblies—not individuals only—formally legislated against us libels, than which none more extreme, malicious and unfounded were ever uttered against Christians innocent of them; of rebellion and treason against our most honored members; and of heresy, schism and blasphemy against our church itself.

“Oh! but these are virtually matters of the past,” it is said. “The Northern church does not now believe any of these libels, nor hold these tyrannical principles in earnest. They were the incidents of a time of intense excitement—excitement which made us Southern men say pretty hot things too.” And when we reply, “Then let them simply withdraw and disclaim,” the answer is: “Oh! it isn’t Christian and generous to insist so stubbornly on their openly eating their humble pie; since we know that in their hearts these violences are disclaimed, we should not stickle.”

To this I reply: there is no man who would more cordially assent to this than I would, if there were a word of truth in it. Were there any secret sorrow for the libels, or rectification of the unpresbyterian theory of church power, no one would be further from sticking for a mere form of *amende*. But while there may be, as we hope, a great softening of anger, *there is no change of theory and tyrannical principle*. And this is the saddest part of the history—the one most solemnly necessitating our continued testimony against their error of principle, that now, seventeen years after the end of the war, now, amidst the calmness of assuaged passion, this powerful church stands to its obnoxious principles more unanimously than in May, 1861, when these principles compelled our separation. This I prove, 1, By their cautious, tenacious refusal of any disavowal, when pointed to it. 2, By their embodying in their own Church Digest, as a rule, of the popish and tyrannical decision of the United States Supreme Court in the famous Walnut Street Church case. The amount of this decision was, that all lay Christians shall, like lay papists in popish countries, hold their rights in ecclesiastical property at the mere will of a usurping ecclesiastical head authority, without any appeal to the courts of justice in their country. This ruling, so essentially popish that the very civil courts of the country have refused to conform

to it, the Northern Assembly greedily embodied it, and it *stands to-day* as their church-law. 3. Their recent Assembly at Springfield *unanimously declared*, that the usurping principles of the Spring resolutions, and their successors, must stand. The usurping Assembly of 1861, whose action necessitated our protest, lacked sixty-six of being unanimous. Here, now, are the plain, stubborn facts. Let no man attempt to pooh! pooh! them away. It is little short of moral obliquity to do this. Do we ourselves *adopt* the *tyrannies*, the virtual union of church and state, enacted in the Spring resolutions? Do we now approve them? Or have we become simply fatigued with the duty of defending God's truth and the church's rights? There is no other explanation. Let no one say, "Oh! this is raking up an antiquated dead issue." The Springfield Assembly unanimously assures us of their purpose to keep it alive! Let no one say: "Oh! but the Confederacy is dead, and this doctrine, though tyrannical, can never again have a practical application." I reply, first, who knows whether it cannot, except the Omniscient? All church history teaches us that it is not for man to say, "This truth of God, henceforth, has no more practical use." It is profane; the church's only duty is to testify, and keep on testifying, for all the truth God has given her.

But, again, there is no truth more likely to have a burning application again—not probably in the south, but in some other part of the United States—at an early day, than the truth overthrown by the Spring resolutions. He is a shallow man indeed who deludes himself with the thought, that political revolutions are completed and settled here, when everything shows that we have but passed the first act of the tragedy; that in seventeen years two Presidents have been violently murdered in time of peace; one forcible *coup d'état* has been carried through, setting aside the elective will of the nation; chronic corruptions of suffrage and administration exist all the time, absolutely inconsistent with settled, constitutional government. Why, a revolution is liable to blaze out any day, and, then, the true conservatives who wish to stand by the constitution are liable at once to be coerced by another General Assembly, which shall again choose to assume that the new usurper is "the power of God to us for good." For instance, at the late *coup d'état* alluded to, Northwestern (not Southern) Democrats were within a hair's

breadth of asserting their right to uphold the people's election against force. Suppose they had done so? Then the General Assembly of the day would, we presume, have declared, in their infallibility, that for free citizens of sovereign States to resist the *coup d'état*, though in defence of the people's rights in a legal election, was the "wicked rebellion" prohibited by the apostles. And, then, the Northwestern Presbyterians would have been compelled, like us, to preserve their rights, and we should have had a third Presbyterian Assembly, and a third division; and the fiery contributions of bitterness, hate, and bloodshed made again, by Christ's usurping church, to another unfortunate civil war. And all this the country actually "grazed" six years ago; missing it by a hair's breadth! A dead issue? It is the most living issue that exists, and the most pregnant with mischief and woe, and the loss of the spiritual liberty of Americans.

I sum up my position, then, as being exactly what the position of the Old School fathers, Alexander, Miller, Plumer, *et al.*, was from 1838 and onward; *except*, that where they had one valid and imperative reason for declining this special correspondence by delegates I have three. I have, first, the same ground of doctrinal discrepancy they had, viz.: the connivance at New Schoolism. I have, second, the departure of the Northern Assembly from spiritual liberty by the popish usurpation of the Spring resolutions and their sequels, which I have shown to be of the gravest and most fundamental character. I have, third, a fearful indictment of rebellion and treason, unjustly hurled at our Assembly. And now, let it be noted, that this reasoning disconnects itself wholly from the rise and fall of the late Confederacy and all its interests and passions. It was the rise of the Confederacy—with which our church, as a church, had nothing to do—which was made the occasion and pretext of the usurpation of spiritual power by the Northern Assembly. That was all. Whether the Confederacy was a good or a bad thing, it does not here concern us to argue. It was an earthly institution, with only secular interests and concerns. It is with the spiritual rights of Christ's people in his spiritual kingdom that we here have to do. It is the invasion of them we have to resist conscientiously. This duty has no connection with the institution, whose rise happened to be the mere pretext and circumstance of the usurpation.

USURPATION MAINTAINED.

It has been argued by our recent innovators: "We find the sentiment of our church has correctly settled down on this position: that, when once the obloquies thrown at us have been withdrawn, differences of doctrinal and ecclesiastical *principles*, conscientiously held by the Northern church, ought to be no bar to the resumption of these closer and more special relations by interchange of delegates." This is supposed to be very clear, Christian and conclusive. I assert that it is utterly erroneous and illogical. The fact that the erroneous principles against which we conscientiously feel compelled to testify *are sincerely held* by the other party, is *the very reason for refusing*, instead of granting, this special intercourse. If his assertion of them were a mere whiff of petulance, this would render the assertion of them comparatively trivial; we could the better tolerate it. But it is because this powerful church does seriously, earnestly, conscientiously (with misguided conscience), calmly, assert these grave departures from Presbyterianism as we devoutly hold it; it is for this very reason the case assumes the gravity, solemnly necessitating our denominational protest and testimony. That is the common sense of it. And this is *confirmed by the whole historical attitude of the Old School church*. Thus, with the German Reformed, the Lutheran, the Moravian, the Protestant Episcopal, the Methodist, the Immersionist branches of the visible church catholic, our Assemblies always maintained fraternal relations; but they never did, and never would have maintained with them that special intercourse by annual delegates which they kept up with, for instance, the Dutch Reformed Church. Now, did we decline this interchange with the great Methodist churches, for instance, because we held that *they were not sincere* in holding that modified Arminianism which separated them partially from us? What an infinite absurdity is this? Did we thus stately insult our Methodist brethren with the innuendo, that *their* honest doctrinal testimony was a pretence? No; it was because we knew that their modified Arminianism was, and is, honestly held by them, with all the sincerity of a pious—though, as we believe, erroneous—conviction; it was for *this very reason* we felt, and now feel, bound to keep up our testimony by withholding from them this special intercourse. And they understand this. And they honor

us for it. And they are too much Christian gentlemen to be guilty of teasing and worrying our Assemblies to enter into a special intercourse which would express a falsehood, in symbolizing a doctrinal unity which both parties know has no existence. But is this any rupture of real fraternal relations between us and the Methodist brethren? None whatever. We bear our testimony in this mild, forbearing form. They bear theirs against what they, with equal honesty, believe to be our hyper-Calvinism. But on all other points we are brethren; and we can press our congregational enterprises side by side, in the same towns and neighborhoods, without strife, each doing good in our own way. Why cannot Northern Presbyterians, near or among us, if they still feel bound in conscience to maintain their anti-Presbyterian principles on these grave and momentous points dividing us, behave in the same way, and let us alone? That would be good manners. In a word, *they have chosen*, they say conscientiously, *to disrupt and destroy that unity of doctrine and order of which the interchange of delegates is the emblem.* Then we can't help it; only we have our duty to perform as a witnessing church, which we propose to do in the mildest form possible. To destroy the unity by their own deliberate action, and then ask the badge of it, is neither good manners nor morals.

Another argument for changing the righteous attitude of our Assemblies has struck me with astonishment. It is in substance, "that the old men who were actors in the separation of 1861 are nearly all dead and gone; that the new men who will soon govern the church were not actors in that division; and, therefore, it is time, or will soon be time, to drop the old testimony." I ask myself, What absurdity is this I hear? Does truth grow old? Do vital principles become antiquated? If these men would come out and say out aloud, that the popery of the Spring resolutions, the semi-pelagianism of New Haven theology, the legislated slander of an innocent church, are all sound Presbyterianism; that the men of 1861 were wrong in testifying against these vital departures, then I could understand. But when our opponents assure us unanimously that their church asserts two out of these three departures to-day, just as before, I see not what on earth the coming of a new and the going of an old generation of the friends of truth have to do with the

cessation of our testimony. I thought that God's Word promised, "In place of the fathers shall be the children;" that the performance of the interesting duty was a part of the sacred inheritance of believers, until God is pleased to terminate the witness-bearing by converting the errorists. According to this notable argument, as soon as Luther and Calvin, on one side, and Eck and Leo X., on the other, were dead, the Protestants and Papists ought to have gone into "fraternal relations." As soon as John Wesley on the one side, and Whitefield and Lady Huntingdon on the other, were dead, all the Evangelicals in England ought to have flowed together and declared that Arminianism and Calvinism came to the same thing. The truths at issue were Whitefield's truths, forsooth, instead of God's truths! Equally absurd is the argument now.

THE ASSEMBLY OF 1875.

My next remark is, that our Assembly is now realizing the bad consequences of its erroneous position assumed in 1875. It then, under the guidance of its commissioners to the Baltimore Conference, compromised the two stronger thirds of its basis of action, when it declared that the errors of doctrine and order perpetuated by the Spring resolutions and their sequels, and by the unguarded recognition of New Haven theology, should be no barrier to the resumption of the more intimate relations, but only the unretracted libel on our church. The sophistical argument for this unfortunate position was as follows: that for any betrayal of the principles of Christ's kingdom the Northern church was not responsible to us, but only to Christ; that they were responsible to us only for their libel of us; that hence, if they would only withdraw that, it was no business of ours to deal with them about the other defections.

But it is the simplest solution in the world, that this is the true statement: "Both Northern and Southern churches are responsible, in all things, to *Christ their Lord*, and not to each other; we, as a witnessing church, are responsible to Christ for bearing our testimony, in appropriate ways, against all error; just as they are responsible to him, not to us, for teaching any error." The argument I criticise is refuted by every usage and act of the older and sounder Assemblies. Why did they always withhold correspondence by delegates from the Lutheran, the

Methodist, the Immersionist churches? Because they had libelled the Assembly? Not at all. But because they marred, in some particulars, Christ's truth. Again, the position of our Assembly in 1875 had an aspect of great unseemliness about it. It seemed to say, that we cared much about our personal repute and little about the honor and principles of Christ's kingdom and the spiritual liberty of his children. We said to the assailants of Christ's rights, we will condone all that, without any reparation or rectification at all, provided you will restore our personal good name. This was unseemly and unfaithful to our Master. We are now reaping the deserved chastisement in the pitiable entanglements of the hour. For once more, we ought to have foreseen that, by waiving our two clearer and more disinterested bases of action, we were exposing ourselves to be entrapped at any time by a partial or deceitful withdrawal of personal obloquies. I warned my brethren, from my obscure position, of these dangers, but nobody listened to the warning. Our church might have been solidly placed like a man on a good three-legged stool; our Assembly of 1875 saw fit to throw away two of the legs, and leave the church in an unstable equilibrium, like a man attempting to poise himself on one leg; just as I foresaw, this subsequent Assembly, acting on this partial, sophistical basis, has met this cruel embarrassment. It finds itself seemingly committed, pledged in advance, to accept any sort of *amende* for the personal obloquies that professes to be sincere, and to restore the special intercourse by delegates. But yet the personal obloquies are, and always were, so logically related to the ecclesiastical usurpations of principle that the two must inevitably go together. If the Spring resolutions are Presbyterianism, then General T. J. Jackson and I *are* rebels. The two are inseparable, premise and conclusion. Hence it was always a logical solecism for our Assembly of 1875 to say: The Northern Assembly may hold the former, if she will disclaim the latter, and we are satisfied. She cannot hold the former and disclaim the latter without falsehood. Thus our Assembly prepared for itself the pitfall in which it is now writhing; pledging itself to accept an *amende* which was *necessitated to be deceitful* as an *amende*. Thus the way was prepared for all the tortuous involutions of the "concurrent" and the "explanatory" resolutions. We are taught by this experience

that we should have stood squarely on the three bases, where the Assembly of 1870 placed our church. It was, in substance, this: no injuries of our persons, however real, justify in us any retaliation or revenge. That is all out of the debate. We, of course, extend fraternal relations to all branches of the church which can be recognized as *valid* branches of Christ's catholic, visible church. As such we hold the Northern Presbyterian Church; for though we are sorrowfully necessitated to regard it as an erring, we do not hold it as an apostate church. But as to this special correspondence by delegates, historically expressive of substantial unity of principle, we cannot go into it, *for three reasons*; of which the two foremost and more weighty ones are, that the church has admitted some serious doctrinal license, and has invaded the spiritual liberty of Christ's people in a vital point; and the third, less cardinal, but still sufficient reason, is that she has formally slandered the good name of our church which it is our duty and right to defend—at least by this the mildest form of protest. That was the sound, consistent, Christian position where the Assembly of 1870, through the able hand of Dr. Palmer, placed our church. Well would it have been for her had she stayed there, until God's Spirit and providence had blessed her testimony, as the means of teaching all American Presbyterians to come sincerely back to the right. That was the mission given her by the orderings of Providence and the Word of God.

WHAT IT MEANS.

And this leads us to the well-known manner of the *amende*, wherein the Northern Assembly first agreed to call itself a slanderer—which it had been—on condition we would call ourselves hypothetically slanderers—which she and we knew we had not been. And this avowal, thus purchased, was then modified by an "explanation" which did not "modify;" that whereas five separate charges—disloyalty, treason, schism, heresy, blasphemy, had been first laid against us, the *amende* shall extend to the last three, but shall not extend to the first two! Now, there are sundry unhandsome traits of this action, which, were our people clear-eyed, would render it entirely nugatory. *First*, It was to be "concurrent action," saying the same thing for us, *mutatis mutandis*, which we had said for them. But *our Assembly had appended no pendant*. *Second*, This Assembly made official

communication only of the first resolution, which, without its fatal pendant, sounded satisfactory ; thus leaving our Assembly, so far as they went, ignorant of what followed, and liable to act generously, and adjourn in ignorance of what they had really done and really pledged to us. It was to the chance action of a person, action unofficial and unauthorized, that our escape from that trap was due. *Third*, In withdrawing the withdrawal they really left the grievance of the unrestricted libel substantially unmitigated. It will be said, the charge of "blasphemy," for instance, is and remains squarely retracted. Yes ; but that was a part of their railing which never did mean anything—which nobody believed to be true when uttered—which always was harmless to our reputation. Everybody knew that it was the mere foam on the angry lip. It was the charges of rebellion and treason—which had meaning and practicality in them—which really had (false) power to shade our good name—which endangered our necks and our estates, and our franchises ; which those Assemblies "explained without modifying," by the amiable recommendation to the Federal government to hang us. And it is these charges, which we are now informed, in the good year 1882, are not withdrawn ! Let us state a little parallel. My Christian neighbor gets angry with me, and publishes two charges on me : one, that I, being an officer of that institution, had embezzled a trust fund belonging to Union Seminary ; the other that I had, witch-like, ridden to Presbytery on a broomstick above the moon. I have been for years dealing with him precisely as our Saviour directs in Matt. xviii., but he has always refused any *amende*. At last he sends word that he is ready to join me in a general, square *retraxit* and reconciliation. After I have honestly shaken hands on this, he says, by way of "explanation without modification," "Now mind, my *retraxit* is to be understood as extending only to that tale about the broomstick." Well, this practically ruins it all ; for the charge left against me was the damaging, and the only damaging one. Unfortunately it has not been found impossible for a parson to embezzle trust funds, and the charge that I had done so is not intrinsically incredible, apart from my known reputation. But the charge of riding on a broomstick nobody had ever credited ; it had always gone for nothing and been understood as meaning nothing more than that my neighbor was "blind-mad" when he

said it. In just such a state this Springfield action leaves us: the charges of heresy and blasphemy never were nor could be credited. The men who made the charges were all along concurring with the rest of the Presbyterian world, to which they made them, in saying, that "Southern Presbyterians are well known to be the most conservative doctrinally, and most exemplary and strict, of the Presbyterian family of churches." But it was their representation of us as rebellious, insubordinate factions which had power of damaging our good name. It is these which are, expressly, *not withdrawn*. *Fourth*, The saddest part of the story is the obvious *motive* which caused the Springfield Assembly to attach the fatal pendant to their *amende*. It was very clear that the motive was secular and political; the fear to offend the political sentiments of their constituents at home by even seeming to surrender or modify the tyrannical and popish principle of the Spring resolutions. And now the *New York Observer* tells the plain truth, though by the use of those euphemisms which the *Observer* so well understands. In plain English, that Assembly passed the "Herrick Johnson resolution" because it believed that the home people of their church still hold that deadly usurpation so passionately as to be indignant with even a seeming relaxation of it, even to gain the coveted reconciliation. And that Assembly passed it *unanimously!* This tells the sad story—that politics still rule in that church; that really the breach of principle is not healed at all; that the very central error which disrupted the church at first is still unanimously held in that Assembly; that the same reason exists for our maintaining our conscientious testimony, and our ecclesiastical independence. Well, it is sorrowful; but it is not our fault. The last way in the world to remedy this state of things is for us to waver in our right position, and thus sophisticate and mix the truth with the error.

Mr. Calhoun once said to a brother senator, when the Senate was proposing to act on a statement made known only by a dispatch, "Never act on a mere telegram; it gives only the central fact, without any background by which to construe it." Well would it have been for our Assembly if it had observed this wise caution! The unhealthy *animus* which prevailed in the Assembly is betrayed by the fact that it did so unhesitatingly take this critical action on a short telegram!

Much has been said of the marvelous unanimity of the Assembly. If we may believe the statements we hear, the real amount of this unanimity was, that the members *were*, indeed, nearly unanimous in the conviction that they were hopelessly entangled in their own indiscretions, and so saw no way to help themselves. But very few seem to be really *satisfied with the result*.

THE PECUNIARY QUESTION.

We are told that much was also said about the necessity of our conciliating the help of Northern Presbyterians, to overtake the work of meeting the incoming immigration into the South with our Presbyterian gospel. Glowing references were made to the influx into Texas, the mushroom growth of mining and manufacturing towns in the South, and to the prospect of a larger influx in the near future. Then, it was exclaimed, that here was a huge work for our weak, poor, Southern church to do; that it was *utterly Utopian, hopeless, impossible*, for her to do it unaided; that she must gain the help of Northern Presbyterianism, in men and money, or make a disastrous failure in the task; and that, in order to get these, we must establish these intimate relations. One writer exclaims: "We have but one seminary open, with forty-five students and eleven or twelve licentiates for the year. It is simply out of the question for us to do it unaided."

Let us look intelligently at this. If Presbyterianism is to be built up in our fields with Northern resources, the first question to be asked is, Which Presbyterianism? Do we ask our "Northern brethren" to give all this money, and these men to build up the Presbyterianism which they persistently and conscientiously denounce as rebellious and treasonable (now no longer blasphemous)? They are a shrewd generation. This it seems is the hope, that the "miller will turn the water off his own mill-wheel." The emptiness of that hope is sufficiently obvious, and, indeed, the impertinence of our pressing it. "Good Brother, Northern Miller! our wheel grinds for a different concern from you; our aim is to get all the grist in this part of the neighborhood away from your mill. So, good brother, turn your water off your mill-wheel on ours!"

But again, this plan of engaging the Northern help professes to approach that church in the equitable and loving, instead of

the rival spirit. Then it is impertinent and unfraternal, in demanding of them that they shall do all their own work and a part of ours; while, in fact, *we are better able to do all of ours than they are to do all theirs*. We are indulging a lazy hallucination here, unjust to them, degrading to ourselves. We have talked about the impoverished South and the "great and rich North" until we are blind to plain facts. The Northern church is more powerful than ours, in number of ministers, churches and communicants, and in wealth—perhaps five or six times more powerful. But she has *far more than four times the influx of new population to evangelize on her hands*. Has she not eight times as much? If she, with sixfold strength, is able to do her sixfold—or eightfold—work, why cannot we, with our smaller strength, do our smaller work? If she is not able, then, in calling her to do ours, we are causing her to neglect her own, which is a sin. This is the healthy view to take of our duty, to *imitate the energy* of the Northern church, if indeed she does overtake her vast work; and not to seek, in this lazy, cowardly way, to divert her resources from the places they are so needed, to supplement our stinginess and laziness. The singing of this song is the sure way to emasculate our church. Experience has also proved, as I shall show, that just in proportion to our independence of Northern help and control has been the fruitfulness of our church in doing its own work. We are in danger of cheating ourselves into a criminal apathy, by thus talking as if the North had everything and we were helpless beggars. Here are two sons, one four times as large and strong as the other. The father has given the small one, because he is small, twenty pounds to carry. But he has also given the other *more than one hundred and twenty pounds*. And now the little fellow cries that he is so little he cannot carry his twenty pounds, but must have his big brother to "tote" for him, "because he is so big." What he needs is a sharp taste of the birch, to make him do his work and stop whining. For shame! Let the Southern church reopen her seminaries, and give her sons to the ministry, and give the money for her Home Missions. She is more able to do it this day than the Northern church is to do all the larger work God lays on her hands.

In this connection, it is instructive to note how this paralysis of our own resources and lagging behind our own tasks synchro-

nizes with this relaxation of the spirit of honest independence in our church. When was it that the promising impulse and progress of our work received its first check? Precisely at the time when we began to "let down" our testimony, to tamper with entangling "alliances," and to "bill and coo" with our unrelenting accusers. It is precisely since then that our number of candidates began to decline, and the expansion of our tasks to outgrow our energies. What else would any one expect who understands human nature? To cry, "Oh, we *can't* do it;" "Oh! the work is too large for us;" "Oh! we must have Northern help!"—this is the sure way to drug the consciences of our own people, and to enervate their Christianity, by encouraging them to lean on other people's crutches.

FUSION.

One more topic remains: the *tendency* of this special intercourse to undermine the very existence of our church, and prepare the way for a fusion with the Northern Presbyterians. Some (as Dr. Brown) exclaim that this apprehension is visionary; he does not know of even a "scouting-party" in favor of it. Others cry, "Sh—sh! The subject is too ticklish to handle. The very way to precipitate fusion is to talk about it." Now, I reply: is the loyalty of our ministers to their own church, is its independence and existence, thus precarious? Then is this head of my argument more fearfully true than any, even the most apprehensive, had argued! But I mean to speak, on this head, the words of truth and soberness; *the truth* can never be mischievous.

First, Our late accusers, now comrades, all cry, with confidence, that a long step toward fusion has been taken; that the last step is now near and easy. See the *Interior, New York Observer*, etc., etc. They are shrewd people; they are "cute."

Second, They make no bones of saying "out aloud" that they intend to use this new intercourse diligently and solely as a means to bring about fusion. When Dr. Brown says, "No! it is merely the establishment of decent, pacific relations between two churches, which are, and are to remain, independent," our "Northern brethren" utterly flout and flier this. They snap their fingers at him. They assure him that they will show him the other result, and that very soon. Now, I do not remark on

the manners or morals of this declaration. I merely ask, what is the infatuation, in view of the known pertinacity of these people, of our establishing this intercourse, of our opening to them this door, unless we desire and design fusion? I had, let us suppose, a neighbor, whose character I never considered safe. He has been teasing me for a social access to my family, to which he is not entitled. He has kept up a complaint that I am a bad neighbor in this matter. At last I give way weakly, and establish the social interchanges, as I say, "solely to show good neighborhood; nothing more, Oh no!" Yet I know that the fellow habitually and openly boasts of his purpose to marry my chaste, innocent daughter; declares to his boon-companions that this is his sole end in demanding social relations with my family; and that he designs to use them for this alone! And yet, knowing all this, I give him the chances he desires. And, by way of explanation, I publish to my neighbors this resolve of myself and family: "*Resolved*, That Blank is not to be allowed, in any event, to marry our daughter." Certain it is, my neighbors would only judge me in my dotage.

Third, This intercourse may, honestly, not have been intended to lead to such fusion; and yet its logical result is fusion. So the Northern papers have already expounded it. I have shown that the historical usage and meaning of correspondence of delegates is a recognition of *virtual unity* of doctrinal and ecclesiastical principles. If this unity does not exist, the intercourse is dishonest. If it does, why not fuse? That is their argument. Grant the premise, and the inference will tell, even on reluctant minds. It is the premise which is erroneous and perilous, and should not have been granted.

RESULTS OF FUSION.

Thus this matter derives its gravity, not from its intrinsic importance, but from its tendencies and consequences. In itself it would be trivial, and would merit little discussion. If this interchange of delegates was what Dr. Brown understands it to be, only "for the nonce," to be followed by no usage, to be done as an end of debate, and not repeated, then it would remain trivial, and I should not have troubled the church with any caution. But knowing perfectly well that Dr. Brown is "reckoning without his host" in this thing, that the Northern Presbyterians,

and his own brethren, who have pressed him to this acquiescence, mean it otherwise, I am bound to utter that caution. I must, then, beg every thoughtful friend of Christ's cause and truth, and of the salvation of souls in the Southern half of the United States, to pause, and remember what fusion would mean.

It means, then, in the first place, the *division* of our once happy and harmonious church. For, let every man rest assured, that there will be a large body of our eldership and membership, clear-eyed, self-respecting, loyal to Old School Presbyterianism, immovable, who *are never going to be traded off* to the corrupters of American Presbyterianism and slanderers of their fathers' virtues. [And this suggests the crowning argument against this Atlanta movement; that, under pretence of ending contention with the errorists—whom it is our duty to contend with—it makes strife with our own brethren, with whom we should be at one as we profess.]

It means the unobstructed triumph, among American Presbyterians, of the virtually popish and tyrannical principle of the Spring resolutions, and consequent usurpations, with the mischievous and inflaming applications it is likely to receive in future political collisions.

It means that we surrender our tenure in all our church-property to that new, popish rule, devised by a radical Supreme Court, and greedily embodied in the Digest of the church.

It means that we acquiesce in becoming doctrinally a "Broad Church," to the extent of tolerating, in the same communion, both the extremes of strict Calvinism and New Havenism, to such extent as the two "branches" of the Northern church tolerated either, between 1838 and 1869.

It means that we surrender our new Book of Church Order, with all its improvements, and go back to the old book which we had so resolutely discarded.

It means that we surrender our well-considered committee system of evangelism, and go back to that old board-system, which Dr. Thornwell refuted in 1860 at the Rochester Assembly.

It means that we admit a "rotary eldership," thus surrendering our scriptural doctrine of the qualification and call of the ruling elder by the Holy Ghost, and his true ordination by his Presbytery, and placing ourselves at this half-way house of Congregationalism.

It means the immediate collapse of our seminaries and evangelistic agencies, under the alien management of a great *omnibus* church; so that, in place of the \$75,000 for Foreign Missions, and \$58,000 for Home Missions, etc., which we gave last year to these enterprises, in the trusted and beloved hands of Drs. Wilson and McIlwaine, we should give the year after the fusion, to the mistrusted, alien, abolitionized, sectional agencies in New York, about \$20,000 and \$15,000 respectively, with a tendency towards a farther annual decline. In 1860 the Presbyteries now enrolled in the Southern church are credited by the Assembly's Minutes as having contributed to Domestic Missions \$48,264, and to Foreign Missions, \$39,348. In comparing these amounts with the present contributions to these objects, two things must be remembered. One, that the Southern churches, now generally poor, yet contributing \$75,000 to Foreign Missions, were then exceedingly rich. The other is, that many churches, as in Kentucky, East Tennessee, etc., then connected with the South, are now Northern Presbyterian. These figures illustrate the progress made by the Southern church in virtue of its independence.

It means, of course, that we must imitate the church which absorbs us, in the ecclesiastical amalgamation with negroes; accepting negro presbyters to rule white churches and judge white ladies; a step which would seal the moral and doctrinal corruption of our church in the South, and be a direct step towards that final perdition of Southern society, domestic amalgamation. And the time would come in the South—yea, in the North also, as it found itself encumbered with this gangrened limb—a mulatto South, when all who had lent a hand, under the prompting of a puling sentimentalism, to this result, would incur the reprobation of all the wise and good, in terms as just, and as bitter, as those visited on Benedict Arnold.

For, let any man look on the negro character calmly, and he will see that the introduction of any, the smallest, element of negro rule into our church, means moral and doctrinal relaxation, and ecclesiastical corruption, poisoning the life-blood of our churches, just in degree as it is extended. The sentimentalist may exclaim; Why cannot a negro be converted? Cannot a negro become learned? Yes; possibly he may; but, if converted, *he will not be perfect*; and as sure as nature, one of

his remaining imperfections will be his race feelings. Sentimentalists may shout that "Christianity knows no castes;" that "all caste-distinctions are unchristian"—which I here denounce as scripturally and historically false—but whether we will or not, the negro is going to keep himself a caste, as to Southern Presbyterians. And in every issue where the rival and opponent of white Southern Presbyterianism is going to attack principles dear to us, the negro is going to side with that assailant. Witness the fact that, in all secular issues, he infallibly sides with the assailant of all vital Southern interests, even when the negro is thereby hurting his own interest. And this he does, usually, with a regularity exactly proportioned to his professed "culture." Once more, negro Christianity may foster in them personal virtues in individual actions; but I observe that never yet has negro religion elevated the best of them to that stage of conscience so vital for a ruler in a free, constitutional, spiritual commonwealth like our church, which *prevents wrong-doing in associated actions*, where the responsibility is veiled by forms of law and combination of many agents. I know some very good Christians among them—sincerely devout, prayerful, diligent, chaste, charitable, educated, intelligent, wholly above individual larceny. But I have invariably seen the best of these, as partisans, concur actively, without qualm of conscience, in the foulest and most putrescent party actions by which the South has been disgraced. Such is the average, Christianized intelligence and conscience of that race at this time. Merge our churches with the North, and *at once* we poison the noble Synods of North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia with the infusion of the black "Synod of Atlantic;" with the prospect of the similar corruption of our whole Southern church.

Once more, fusion with the North would mean our betrayal of our righteous testimony against the rationalistic and skeptical features of modern abolitionism—a testimony which is now faithfully sustained by our church alone in Protestant Christendom. This abolitionism the Holy Spirit has expressly condemned in 1 Timothy vi. 1-5, characterizing it in the sternest language as arrogant, perverse, mercenary, slanderous and false; and he has *expressly legislated*, "From such withdraw thyself." Many, if not the majority, in that Assembly defiantly profess that abolitionism; and the only legislation the Assembly itself has taken

about them was *to denounce us* for protesting against it as Paul required us, as "heretics and blasphemers." So that such fusion would be a flying in the face of God's express command.

A SUGGESTION.

What plan, then, do I propose? I say, first, *Hold fast to our independence*, as our sheet-anchor from ecclesiastical shipwreck. And, to this end, repudiate *every* entangling alliance that endangers that independence. Next, let Dr. Brown, as he has been appointed to go, go to the next Northern Assembly. But let him first stop at our Assembly in Lexington, and fortify himself with strong instructions. And let these instructions be such as these: that he is to say to the Northern Assembly, "I am here according to the agreement of 1882, *NOT to establish* that intimate annual intercourse by delegates, which historically signifies a unity of principles which you have yourselves disrupted, but to signify, what has been true ever since 1865, that there is an end of strife between us, except as you make it; that we have no revenges; that we recognize you as a church of Christ; that as such we wish to observe fraternal relations; *which are*, the exercise of Christian charities, the interchange of ministerial and Christian communion, and the recognition of your church order. That this declaration made for the nonce suffices, and will not be followed by annual delegates." Dr. Brown might also very well intimate to them that we perceive the crookedness of their Springfield action; but that, desiring to give the above testimony, we have chosen, in a spirit of magnanimity, to pass it by for this time. *But by no means let Dr. Brown ask for an explanation of their explanation.* The only result of this would be confusion twice confounded. For these skilled adepts at the art of "explaining without modifying," retracting and then taking back their *retraxit*, would be sure to find words which would plunge Dr. Brown and us into a perplexity worse even than his present. No, we have had enough of that; we have been badly enough bitten; we had better not try to find out whether the animal meant to bite, by putting our hand into his mouth again.

Then, for the rest, we should go on our way, minding our own business. We should observe precisely the same relations we do towards the Southern Methodists or Lutherans. If any

Northern Presbyterian ministers or elders wish to come to us, who personally hold that sound position held by Dr. Charles Hodge as to the usurpations of their Assemblies, and as to New School defects of doctrine, we should receive them, though in their secular opinions anti-Confederates like Dr. Hodge. If their laity choose to come to us, even uninstructed and blinded as to these defects of Northern Presbyterianism, we should charitably receive them, provided they will coöperate peaceably; just as we would receive a layman with Arminian opinions, under the apostolic rule: "Them that are *weak in the faith* receive ye;" hoping to win them to our truer Presbyterianism. If some, ministers or laymen, who are *ex animo* dissentients from our truer Presbyterianism, go about organizing churches on Southern soil, of their faith, let them do it. The responsibility is theirs. We have no more mission, as true Presbyterians, to prevent it than we have to prevent semi-Arminians from organizing Methodist churches beside ours. We are sorry they do not see and teach the whole truth. But it is no business of ours to prevent their proceedings. That belongs to God.

Thus I have "shown mine opinion." It is only the judgment of one single presbyter, with no right of dictation to his brethren; but it is honest. And I am confident every impartial reader will see that it is logically consistent, scriptural, and therefore safe.