

T H E

Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanters.

VOL. V. *DECEMBER, 1867.* No. 12.

THE PHILADELPHIA UNION CONVENTION.

OUR religious exchanges have furnished us with pretty full details of the proceedings of this assembly. As our Synod, wisely we think, declined to send delegates, our Church was not represented. We wish a note to be taken of this by those who know little about us, that we may have neither the praise nor blame of what some, called Reformed Presbyterians, did, or did not, in that meeting.

That there was a great deal of good feeling in the Convention, is very manifest. Earnest men met together for an important end, and labored with praiseworthy zeal to promote it. The one object was the Union of the Presbyterian Churches, and this object they kept before them in all that was done. Thus going earnestly to work, it is not strange that in the proceedings and the result there was great harmony. But we must doubt whether a meeting characterized by a measure of enthusiasm is the right place to form a basis for any social superstructure, and especially for the church of Christ. When men are impelled by a conviction that a fragmentary condition of the church is the greatest evil that can befall her, and when they are fired by a zeal to heal her divisions on any terms, they are likely to forget that truth is dearer to Christ than peace, and then the danger is that they will sacrifice the former for the latter. In most of the speeches in the Convention the feeling was manifested that principles held to be scriptural, embodied in standards, and exhibited to the world as a sacred trust received from Christ, might and should be sacrificed for the sake of visible ecclesiastical union. And this is a fair construction of the Basis of Union adopted, which we here insert:

I. An acknowledgment of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

II. That in the United Church, the Westminster Confession of Faith shall be received and adopted, as containing the System of Doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; it being understood that this Confession is received in its proper historical, that is, the Calvinistic or Reformed sense.

Whilst the Committee recommend the foregoing basis of doctrine, they wish

truth, they grope in the darkness, and are often content at last to give up all search in the unfounded and unscriptural hope, that at some time grace will find them and drag them into salvation and heaven, as the captive is bound by his pursuers. They need to know that grace has *already* found them; that here it is, all around and about them; that it is grace with which they have been striving; that grace speaks from the word and from the cross; that it calls by the conscience and the Spirit of God; that it brings good for present need, help for repentance and for faith, life for present living as well as life in the hour of death. They need to have this conviction wrought within them, so that at all times and in every way, for all spiritual good, for regeneration, for repentance, for faith, for all true service, they shall, and must, depend upon the grace of God, and upon that alone. They need to understand, that salvation is from God; that eternal life, begun here and continued hereafter, is of grace; root and branch, and flower and fruit, all are of grace, and grace of God. And then forced to the uttermost of self-renunciation and of self-abasement by this truth, they need to know that a sincere prayer is the key that unlocks for any soul the treasury of such transcendent blessing. Thus taught, the sinner will learn that grace is not a thing afar off, but a thing to be laid hold of here and now; that it is not a thing to be feebly hoped for, or to be feared, with despondent tremblings, but a blessing brought to the soul by the Giver of all good, so that the sinner may come boldly to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need.

Therefore, may we thus preach grace to the sinner, grace which for its other name has—Christ. We can strive to present to his mind and heart this vision of its nature. We may preach grace for all wants of human souls, to lead them from darkness to the light of God to make their weakness strength, and to turn sinners unto the faithful following of Jesus Christ. Grace is given for this ministry, wherein we are ambassadors for Christ, praying of sinners in Christ's stead that they be reconciled to God. Preaching this gospel of reconciliation, we would bring forth the headstone thereof, with shoutings, crying, "Grace, grace unto it;" and before this power of the Lord Jesus Christ shall the great mountain become a plain, and souls that have groped in darkness shall behold a light shining "on the path which leads them to the Lamb."

SYRIA MISSION.

LETTER FROM REV. R. J. DODDS.

LATAKIYEH, October 1st, 1867.

DEAR BRETHREN—Your letters still come regularly and are always received with pleasure. The last received is under date of August 23d. By the same post we received bills for salary for the half year now commencing. We had received a few weeks before a remittance of £230 for our Mission buildings.

We have at length (since receiving your last letter) decided to take

charge of Aleppo and its dependencies, but we shall be obliged to work for about a half a year to come from Latakiah. Our enterprise of building here, taken in connexion with certain clouds which at present hang over our work among the Nusairiyeh, make it desirable to keep our force unbroken here for some time to come. Domestic circumstances make it unadvisable for either of our families to undertake the journey to Aleppo any time before the winter, and in the winter such a journey for a family of little children is so nearly impossible that nothing but absolute necessity would justify it. And in addition to all this, they have a regular moving time in Aleppo, as you have in your American cities, which falls in April; and it is almost impossible to get houses at any other time. But this is the less to be regretted as we have excellent native helpers both in Aleppo and Idlib, who, with such oversight as we can give them, can for six months to come carry on the work very well, as they have carried it on for nine months past. And while it is every way desirable that one of us should be on the ground as soon as practicable, it is an important principle in carrying on a mission, to train native helpers to shoulder as much as they are able, not only of the labor but of the responsibility of the work.

We have not yet decided which of us is to go to Aleppo. Of course it must be either Mr. Beattie or I. Whoever goes will have a lonely and dreary time of it till a reinforcement comes; still we would rather wait till the year after next for a reinforcement, than be reinforced next year by an unsuitable man.

I have alluded to troubles bearing upon our work among the Fellahin. About midsummer the country was startled by the murder on the highway of a Turkish soldier who was transporting provisions from this place to Jebelch, a town some eighteen miles south of us on the sea-coast. This murder was followed up by a series of other murders extending over a period of two or three weeks, some of them committed, like the first one, between this place and Jebelch, and others on the same road still further south. These outrages were justly attributed to the Fellahin, and about two months ago, the Pasha of Tripoli, under whose jurisdiction this part of the country lies, came to Jebelch to apply a remedy to these disorders. His first measure was to send out the troops under his command to burn and pillage a few villages on the skirts of the mountains. B'hamra, where we have our Mission premises, was one of the villages pillaged, and those burnt were the villages lying nearest to it all around. Two of the houses in which we had schools suffered in the raid, both being pillaged, and one of them burned. The burning of the latter was no particular loss to us, for it was not ours, but belonged to a Fellah who had given us the use of it for a school. The school-books from both of them were carried away by the soldiers and sold by them for what they would bring. There was no violence done to our Mission premises in B'hamra, but there, as in the other two places, the people were filled with consternation and took to flight, so that the school there, like the other two, was broken up for the time. The people of B'hamra soon returned to their homes, but they, like all the rest of the Fellahin in the mountains, have ever since been so unsettled with terror, that up to this time they have had no heart either

to return to their daily occupations, or to send their children to school. They are every day apprehensive of being driven by another raid from their homes. The people of the other two villages—at least those of them who sent their children to our schools—are mostly refugees in the higher parts of the mountains. Nor is their terror wholly groundless; for what I have told you is only a little of the indiscriminating severity of the Pasha.

A few days after the burning of the villages about B'hamra, brother Beattie and Dr. Metheny went up to the mountains to see what had been done, and after ascertaining the state of the case went to Jebeleh to call on the Pasha, and ask reparation for the losses of three of our teachers, whose houses had been pillaged like those of their neighbors, and complain of the appropriation by the soldiers of our school-books. This was the first that he had heard of our schools, and he seemed to regret that they and the teachers had suffered in the general calamity, and to be disposed to make up the losses sustained both by the teachers and the Mission; and to that end he took down the names of the teachers and of the villages in which the schools were situated, and asked brothers Beattie and Metheny why they had not put up some sign at the schools, by which they might be known. The brethren also tried, at the request of the chieftains of the district in which our work in the mountains mainly lies, to arrange a meeting in our house in B'hamra between him and them, with a view to an adjustment of his claims upon them, to which he readily assented, but was almost immediately prevailed on to withdraw his assent and reverse his good purpose by the evil counsel of his dragoman, who was present. This was very unfortunate; for the chieftains, if he had met them in B'hamra, were prepared to deliver up to him the most noted robber of all that part of the country; the same man, I have reason to believe, who was the principal actor in the first murder in the summer, that of the soldier between Latakiyeh and Jebeleh. But it was destined to be otherwise, and this robber and murderer is still at large, hiding himself in the fastnesses of the mountains. Failing thus of their main purpose, namely, that of opening a way for the adjustment of the difficulties between the Pasha and the chieftains of our district, they—bro. Beattie and the Doctor—returned to B'hamra, having gained nothing but fair promises, that thence forward our schools should be respected, and that compensation would be made to the teachers for their losses. After their return to B'hamra they took his hint and set up at two of our schools—those most likely to fall in the way of the troops—white banners inscribed, *medrasat el Amerikan*—"American schools," and then came home to Latakiyeh. Before they left B'hamra, however, the Doctor received a letter from the Pasha, showing that since they had parted from him, he had imbibed a spirit quite hostile to the schools. In this letter he desired to be officially informed whether these schools were on property of our own, or whether we had taken houses of the Fellahin and called them our schools, whether we had any regular authorization from the Government for our schools &c., and intimating that without such authorization it was not allowable to have schools in the mountains, especially in such times of rebellion and disorder, &c. &c.

The Dr. made no reply till he had other occasion to write to him. This change in the Pasha's feelings toward us and our schools was no doubt partly owing to counsel received from our enemies; but the way was prepared for it by a disaster which befel him and his troops the next morning after the interview which the brethren held with him. On the morning referred to, he marched his troops out of Jebeleh long before daylight, for another raid—not on B'hamra and its neighborhood this time, but on a large village called el-Boodeh, about three hours south of B'hamra and quite out of our district, a village able to muster about 200 muskets. When he arrived at el-Boodeh he called a parley with its principal inhabitants, who made all necessary professions of loyalty and submission, only asking time to pay up their arrearages of taxes. He professed to accept their submission, but demanded four lads, sons of their chief men, as hostages for their fidelity. They delivered to him the hostages as required, and as soon as he had the hostages in his hand, he ordered the inhabitants to retire from the village, that he might march his troops into it and out of it again, to indicate at once his assertion and their acknowledgment of the supremacy of the Sultan. They retired from the village, whereupon he entered it with the troops and set fire to it, and shot the hostages. In the mean time the villagers were joined by some Fellahin from other places, when they attacked the Pasha and his troops, routed them, and sent them flying toward Jebeleh. The Fellahin say that they were provoked to make this attack by the killing of the hostages; the Pasha says that they commenced the attack first, and so forfeited the hostages before he shot them. It is possible that the attack was provoked by the firing of the village, and that the Pasha did not order the boys to be shot till he saw that an attack on him was intended; but even in that case it was rather barbarous to shoot down four half-grown lads as forfeited hostages. The troops lost some twenty or twenty-five killed, six cases of ammunition, and one piece of cannon; and when they got to Jebeleh they rested there—or rather staid in mortal terror for about ten days, till they received reinforcements from Hamath, on the other side of the mountains.

Now when the Doctor called on the Pasha with Mr. Beattie the day before the engagement at el-Boodeh, he had his repeating rifle with him—Spencer's, I believe they call it—and the Pasha after the engagement was so humiliated and exasperated that he was ready to believe any crazy suggestion that promised any mitigation of his disgrace; and whether at his own or some other person's suggestion, he soon got it into his head that the Doctor had lent his rifle to some of the Fellahin for the occasion; or else—so he seems to have reasoned—how could the Sultan's troops have been so terribly defeated by a few mountain villagers?—and from that day to this, the Doctor and the Pasha have been anything but good friends.

Well, in the course of ten days the Pasha got reinforcements; but he was still afraid to make a second attack on el-Boodeh till he had recruited his forces from some four or five tribes of the Fellahin themselves, taking from every tribe that furnished recruits, three or four boys as hostages for their fidelity, as he had taken from the people of

el-Boodeh before. Thus strengthened, he ventured up a second time, but found nobody to fight with, as they had all fled to the fastnesses of the mountains; whereupon he contented himself with burning what was still left of the rebellious village, setting fire to five other villages in the same district, giving the deserted houses up to plunder, driving off the cattle to be sold for the benefit of the Sultan's treasury, and cutting down all the fruit-trees in the neighborhood. It took several days to accomplish all this. I was in B'hamra while all this was going on, and it was a distressing thing to witness the terror which these measures inspired in the Fellahin all around me. In this raid two of the fugitive people of el-Boodeh fell into the hands of some of the Fellahin who were with the troops, and were delivered by their captors to the Pasha, who caused them to be shot—each one receiving a whole volley—and then blown from the mouth of a cannon.

It is now more than a month since the latest of the events which I have described, and there has been up to the present time no more bloodshed, nor burning, nor pillage of any consequence; but a great number of the Fellahin captured—all of them men of mark in respect to their standing in Fellah society, comprising almost all the chieftains of the mountains—captured by stratagems of different kinds. Some eighty such were a few days ago sent off prisoners to Tripoli in a Turkish frigate. It is not certainly known what is to be their fate; but I suppose that some of them will be executed, and the rest sent into exile, without much regard to their guilt or innocence of crimes against the public peace. Some of those who have been thus sent away have been inveterate enemies to us, and our converts, and our schools, and our whole work; others we would gladly see back in the mountains again. The Pasha is now in Latakijeh, and he has rented a house here; so I suppose he is going to stay with us a while longer. What else he will do before we have the pleasure of bidding him good-bye, I cannot tell. In the mean time, not a Fellah in the plain or in the mountains breathes freely, or sleeps soundly. They are oppressed with a vague and undefined terror.

Our two schools in the plain have not yet been affected with these troubles, but have all the while been going on prosperously as heretofore. In the mountains we had four, including one which had just been started a month when the troubles commenced. These have all been arrested for two months, and are not likely to resume their course till the terror in that region has somewhat abated. Of course all these painful occurrences are designed to prepare the way for the introduction of the Redeemer's kingdom among the Fellahin; but how soon their tendency in that direction may be distinctly manifested, or what may be their immediate bearing upon our work,—whether favorable or unfavorable,—it is impossible to foresee. We must wait upon the Lord. One thing is certain; that if these prisoners who have been shipped off do not return, their removal will at one stroke break up the feudal system in the Nusairiyeh mountains, and wholly change the frame-work of society there; and this must ultimately facilitate the evangelization of these poor heathen. I have told you this long story, partly to give you some idea of the way in which justice is administered in the Turk-

ish Empire; partly to awaken in you a more hearty sympathy with the Fellahin; and partly that you may understand that, feeling as we do, for all the wrongs of a down-trodden people for whose salvation we are laboring, we have spent a very painful summer. Would to God we felt a proportionate concern for their spiritual destitution and danger.

Nor has the case of the Fellahin been the only weight upon our minds during the past season. From the time when the Aleppo question was first presented to us, till a few days ago, when we came to a final decision in relation to it, we have been constantly under a painful anxiety, lest, on the one hand, we should undertake what we could not hope to be able to carry through, or, on the other hand, disregard a divine call to an important field of labor. In short, we have long labored under a most painful anxiety to know whether God was calling us to labor in Aleppo or not. At one time in the summer, when we learned that our Mission was not reinforced at last meeting of Synod, we were pressed so hard with an apprehension of our inability to stretch our hand so far, that we wrote to the Missionaries of the Central Turkey Mission of the American Board, asking them to take up the Arabic work in Aleppo. Receiving a negative answer from them, and the Macedonian cry still continuing to come to us from two or three people in Aleppo, we awaited your answer; and when we understood from your last letter how anxious you were for the enlargement of our field, and that you would undertake to furnish the necessary funds, and reinforce us as soon as possible, the case became clear, and we hesitated no longer.

We have also been much straitened for want of funds this summer. This is in a great measure our own fault. When we sent you our estimates in the spring, we asked for \$800 for "school purposes,"—an unusual phraseology which we cannot blame you for misunderstanding. You understood the \$800 which we asked, to be for the Mission buildings; we wanted it for Mission expenses, and have suffered for want of it. About the last of July our building fund run out. We had to shave ourselves of the last cent that we could spare—and more than we could spare—to replenish it. Then it was at the last ebb again before the next remittance came; and if the Dr. had not been making money off and on, we would have been obliged to turn off our workmen in the heat of our work, and dismiss our school teachers; and even then must have either starved or borrowed. The \$230 came when we were just at extremity. In the mean time we were indebted for time and labor, &c., and the time had come to buy tiles for the roofing of our building, and to order the provisions which we bring for our families for the winter from England, and we were in arrears with our teachers in Aleppo and Idlib; so that the \$230 went in about three weeks, and was all gone before our bills for salary came; so that we have had the utmost difficulty in getting along from the time of the receipt of our bills till we could get them turned into cash, although it was not much more than a week. Still the Lord has kept our heads above water, and we are just now in easy circumstances. But we will be ashore again about mid-winter, if you do not immediately make large remittances to us for Mission expenses. We have received but \$30 for Mission expenses from America since I returned to Syria; whereas our Mission

expenses have been unusually large this year on account of the work in Aleppo and Idlib. I suppose the smallness of your remittances for this purpose has been owing, in part, to a misapprehension, under which I find, from your report to Synod, you have been all the while laboring, viz: that our schools among the Fellahin are self-supporting. No doubt your mistake in this matter has grown out of some obscurity in some of our letters, but it needs all the same to be rectified. These schools are so far from being self-supporting, that the Fellahin do not pay a cent for them; and there is not a Fellah in the mountains or on the plain, who would pay a cent a year to have his children taught. Even in Jendariyeh, which we consider our most useful school, the parents will not even buy paper for their children to write on; and if we would insist on their doing so, they would unhesitatingly give up the school, rather than buy paper. When we pay the teachers' wages, and supply books, paper, ink, pens, slates and pencils gratis, the Fellahin solemnly believe that they are still doing us a favor, instead of receiving a favor from us, when they send their children to school. We may have said in some of our letters that our schools in the country cost but little; and this may have given rise to the misapprehension; but this means that a single school costs but little; the wages of a teacher in the country villages averaging only about \$8 (in gold) per month. But the aggregate expense of five or six schools is considerable. At New Year's we had four schools in operation out among the Fellahin, costing in the aggregate for teachers' wages about \$32 per month in gold. At the time when the Pasha commenced to turn things upside down, we had six schools, costing in the aggregate for teachers' wages, about \$42 (in gold) per month. The expense for school-books and stationery is inconsiderable; but it still amounts to something in the course of a year. Then we opened a little Mission book store, which we stocked at an expense of \$100 or \$120. Then we hired a young man to sell books, and teach Miss Crawford, at about \$7 per month. Altogether our outlays here for Mission expenses since New-Year's must have been well up to \$400. Besides that, we have laid out in Aleppo and Idlib up to this time, about \$430 in gold. The Dr. will likely be sending his semi-annual financial statement by next post, and he will state accurately these expenses, which I am only giving in round numbers; but my statement is exact enough to warrant you in forwarding immediately for past and prospective Mission expenses, a remittance of about £200 sterling, or at the very least—no, not any less; for as soon as we open our schools in Latakiah, we must bring much more expensive teachers than those whom we employ among the Fellahin; and we must have at least three of them. We intend when we open our schools in town to make the pupils—at least the more advanced ones—pay for their tuition; still, for a good while at the first introduction of the pay system, the scholars will be so few, that their tuition fees will not much relieve our expenses.

We are getting well on with our building. The local government in the early part of the summer made every effort to stop us, but they have not hitherto succeeded, and I think they have quite given up the attempt; at least we have seen no signs of opposition for about two

months. We hope to have the mason-work done in about two months, if no unexpected hindrance comes in our way. In the mean time the carpenter-work is going on too. We have laid out on it up to this time just about \$3,000. It may require some \$300 more to finish it. That is about as near as any one can calculate in this country the expense of a building beforehand; and nearer than any one in Latakiah, except ourselves, could have calculated it. It is altogether the most economical building that has ever been put up in this town. I think I wrote to you before we begun, that to get things which we need for our work would cost \$3,000, exclusive of the purchase of the ground. A considerable part of the expense of the ground was for a share in two lots, which were partly owned by persons who would have deprived us of a necessary right of way, and we shall hold this only till we get the roads that we want, and then we shall sell it out again. In building we had to consider not only the present but the prospective wants of the Mission, and provide not only what we need now for school-rooms and for public worship, but also all that will be needed for the accommodation of a boarding school when that is called for, as it will be, in the course of our work. And in the mean time, what it comprises in excess of the necessary accommodations for public worship and day-schools, will supply ample accommodations for one of the Mission families, and so will bring to the Mission treasury a revenue equal to what one of us pays for house rent; which will be a very large interest on the sum by which the whole thing will exceed the stipulated cost of \$3,000.

But we cannot wait till the building is finished to open a girls' school; for Miss Crawford has now such a knowledge of the Arabic, that with a native girl to help her she can very well go to work. On a journey which I hope presently to make to Aleppo, I hope to get her the help which she needs, and I trust she will be at the head of a little school in the course of a few weeks. But my letter is so long that I am ashamed to write any more. We all unite in kind regards to you all. Grace be with you.

On behalf of the Mission, R. J. DODDS.

CAUSES OF FASTING.

WHILE there is great cause of thankfulness, reasons why we should lift the voice of praise to God, there are at the same time many reasons why we should be humbled before him; for with us there are sins against the Lord our God.

1. The goodness of God enjoyed in his providence has not been improved to the manifestation of his glory, by a heartfelt devotion of ourselves to his service. The neglect of opportunities of doing good imposes upon us the duty of humbling ourselves under God's mighty hand.

2. The means of grace, personal, family and public, mercifully continued with us, are not improved with the diligence and care which God's appointed ordinances, for enlightening, sanctifying and building us up in our most holy faith, urgently demand.