

THE OLD CHURCH CREED.

"—Ask for the old paths."—Jer. vi: 16.

MCGINNESS & RUNYAN.
PRINCETON, N. J.

1879.

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PREFACE.

By the Old Church is meant that ancient and primitive institution, the polity of which existed in the Synagogue and the doctrines of which were exhibited by Christ and by his apostles. The simplicity and morality of this church have been sacrificed by both Catholic and Reformed ; its simplicity by such doctrines as the tripersonality of God, and its morality by such a doctrine as that first taught in the sixteenth century as to the justification of believers : a doctrine unknown to Augustine, and utterly opposed to all the literature of the first fourteen centuries after Christ.

If God, in our day or hereafter, unbury the simplicity of the faith, Christianity will be a different religion, and will shake off the scandals that infect her, in a new career of prosperity and usefulness.

JNO. MILLER.

Princeton, Jan. 18, 1879.

CHAPTER I.

Righteousness.

I.

The highest good for God or man is righteousness.

II.

Righteousness is a name for all moral excellence, or for the character of those who love the Lord their God with all their might and their neighbor as themselves.

III.

Loving the Lord our God with all our might means loving righteousness; for righteousness is that for which we love God: and loving our neighbor as ourselves implies a desire for the welfare of every creature. Benevolence and the love of righteousness, therefore, make up all moral excellence.

IV.

Sinfulness is the character of those who do not love the Lord their God with all their might and their neighbor as themselves.

V.

A sin is any emotion which is lacking in love to God and man.

VI.

Outward acts are neither righteous or sinful except in their emotions.

VII.

Sinfulness is the greatest evil in the universe.

CHAPTER II.

Conscience.

I.

The mind as it loves righteousness and hates sinfulness is called conscience.

II.

Each sin impairs conscience.

III.

An impaired conscience makes the condition of sinfulness.

IV.

Total depravity is not a total want of conscience, but only a partial want of it ; for the least want of conscience affects us totally ; because it darkens every faculty, and stains every act.

V.

Conscience is the highest revelation of God to man.

CHAPTER III.

The Bible.

I.

The Bible is a book written by man but inspired by God.

II.

Inspiration was in sundry times and in divers manners ; but the result of inspiration is a book true throughout and full for the purposes of salvation.

III.

Salvation is the restoration of conscience. It must be by the power of God. It must be made possible by a redemption. And though righteousness would be binding even if there were no God, yet it has pleased that Great Sovereign not to restore without a knowledge of himself, and without some sense of the great redemption. The Bible is that book which gives the knowledge which is appointed for salvation.

IV.

The Bible is not inspired except in Hebrew and in Greek, and with the canon as in King James' version.

V.

Conscience is a higher revelation than the Bible because it reveals righteousness, which is the highest good in the universe. The Bible could not be read profitably without conscience, and God could not be worshiped. Both God and the Bible

find the highest evidences of their claims in an enlightened conscience.

VI.

Whether there be a Bible at all we have a right to judge; and also whether there be a God; but when by an enlightened conscience we have found a Bible, we are not to sit in judgment upon every part of it, any more than upon every part of the creation. It is direct from Heaven, and above the authority of men. The Old is equally inspired with the New; and fragmentary difficulties are to be borne, rather than arrogantly solved by rash and impatient rejection of the text.

CHAPTER IV.

God

I.

God is the only self-existent being; a conscious person; infinitely perfect; creator and upholder of all beside.

II.

Creation is of two kinds, out of nothing, and out of other creatures. The instance of the first is the whole created universe, and an instance of the second is this world fitted in six days to be the abode of man.

III.

Upholding and creating have much in common and are by the same power. Upholding is carried on in a beautiful order which men call nature, or else by acts which break up that order and are called miracle ; but in either way God is equally direct, and has but one plan, and but one law of eternal wisdom.

IV.

It is neither by upholding or creating that God gains a right to govern. If God were not holy we might break out of his dominions, and rightly return to nothing if we knew the way.

V.

The righteousness of God is like the righteousness of man, love to our neigh-

bor being in Him benevolence to His creatures, and love to God being in Him love to righteousness: for we ourselves love God solely for His righteousness.

VI.

Righteousness being God's highest good; that is to say the welfare of others and the promotion of holiness being his highest motives, God is either defeated in his highest motives, or else this universe is the holiest and happiest possible at each period of time.

VII.

Righteousness being God's highest good, God, who is omnipotent and omniscient, could have had but one plan from all eternity, and that is his divine decree, by which he has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

VIII.

The man who so speaks of the sovereignty of God, and so paints his having done all things for himself, or so makes

his chief end to be display, as to obscure the idea that his chief end is to do right, is profane and blasphemous inasmuch as God has no right to govern except as he is holy, and no possibility of being holy except as he makes his being so his highest good.

IX.

If God is made to be our governor, and we are made to be governed by him. not by any principle of sovereignty like creation or ownership, but by the possession of holiness, it follows that he is bound to use all those instruments of government which, in the nature of things, advance the holiness of the universe. Such an instrument is punishment.

X.

If righteousness is the highest good and sinfulness is the greatest evil, righteousness is its own best reward and sinfulness is its own worst punishment. But over and beyond these more immediate consequences it is also true in the nature of

things that two other punishments are useful to discourage sin ; one is that sin increase sinfulness, and the other that it lead to suffering.

XI.

If God use the instrument of punishment, as he must do for its effect upon the universe, he must do it equably and by an iron law.

XII.

Vindicatory justice is the language that expresses this. Retributive vengeance is not a trait like benevolence, primordial and self-explained, but it is to be explained by benevolence and the love of righteousness. If punishment is a necessary means, God's holiness will have to accept it, and that is what is meant by his vengeance ; and man's sinfulness will have to incur it, and that is what is meant by guilt and final damnation.

XIII.

If sin promote sinfulness, and sinfulness deserve suffering, there would seem to be

no natural end to retribution. One sin might suffer and be expiated; but long before that could happen, others would be committed. There is nothing, therefore, to interpose to what seems the Bible doctrine of eternal sinning.

XIV.

If punishment in this life is of the body and of the soul, analogies leave us nothing to expect but that it will be of the like mixed nature in the world to come.

CHAPTER V.

Man.

I.

By our own conscious thinking we become aware of a being whom we call man.

II.

By the word of God we learn that he was created righteous and in the persons of a single pair.

III.

By the sin of that pair they lost righteousness, that is they became sinful.

IV.

By their becoming sinful all mankind except Christ have been made sinful also : by nature, just as a bad acorn comes from a bad oak ; and by justice, for nature in all sentient things must be fixed by the rectitude of God.

V.

The Bible and all other writings, when they say that men sinned in Adam, or died in him, or suffered in their federal head, or had his guilt imputed to them, or were cursed in his apostacy, can rightfully mean but one thing, that Adam sinned and all mankind by nature and by justice were made sinful by their father's sinfulness.

VI.

Why it is by justice we are not altogether competent to know. Conscience has a consciousness of sin, and conscience has a

consciousness of righteousness; and it sees the evil of one and the excellence of the other. But conscience has no consciousness as to punishment. Punishment is an instrument in nature and not an original demand of the soul. How to use punishment must be chiefly understood by God. Punishment in the way of suffering is all that man meddles with. Punishment by further sinfulness and punishment by children's sinfulness is high above us. We are bound to see the evil of our sinfulness; for that is an affair of conscience; but we are not bound to understand all the consequences of sinfulness, for that is an affair of the higher administrations of God.

CHAPTER VI.

Christ.

I.

If holiness be the highest good and sinfulness the greatest evil God would be sin-

ful if he did not remove sinfulness wherever holiness would permit.

II

Holiness would always permit if sinfulness were not a punishment for sin.

III.

God has devised a plan by which he himself can be punished for men.

IV.

Incapable of being punished as God he has become one with a man, that the man might suffer, and that the God might give worth to the suffering, and make it an atonement for all mankind.

V.

The man who has become one with God is entirely a man; body and soul, finite and dependent; and is to remain corporeal and created through eternal ages.

VI.

The God who has become one with man is the infinite Father, simple and single, called also the Holy Ghost, the Son being

the man begotten with the God incarnate in him, and remaining such, God and man, in two natures and one person forever.

VII.

This Son of God, called also our Lord Jesus Christ, has two persons, if a person is defined to be that which has one consciousness and will and mind; for the Son has two consciousnesses, omniscient and ignorant; and two wills, sovereign and dependent; and two minds, eternal and created. Two persons, therefore, thus defined, are in Jesus Christ; one praying to the other, one answering and granting the request; one sacrificing to the other, the other accepting and applying the atonement; the man leaning upon the God, and the God supporting and sanctifying and inspiring the man. But if a person is defined to be that which is one forensically and monarchically and in the communion of one Spirit, which is the more proper definition, then Christ is but one person; one in court, one as king, and

one as loved and worshiped ; standing as one person for man, and speaking as God, eternal Godhead reigning in both natures.

VIII.

Though it is the man that prays to the God, yet it is not the man without the authority of the God ; and though it is the God that accepts the man, yet it is not the God without the work of the man. The God and the man, therefore, are interdependently made necessary, and are united as the one Redeemer.

IX.

When we speak of men as punished and guilty on account of the sin of Adam, we do not mean either punished or guilty in a common sense ; but we mean punished and guilty in a very peculiar sense ; to wit, that Adam sinned and we justly are born sinful. So when we say that Christ was punished and guilty on man's account, we arrive at the meaning of these words in the same way, that is by the recorded consequences.

X.

Christ was not so punished for men as that all men are counted as punished, and escape by a general redemption.

XI.

Christ was not so punished for men as that some men are born sinless, and escape by an entire redemption, sin never having dominion over them.

XII.

Christ was not so punished for men as that any men, unless it be idiots or infants who die, escape at any time by suddenly becoming sinless.

XIII.

Christ was not so punished for men as that any men at any time are lifted in any degree out of their sinfulness without their own will or effort in the work.

XIV.

Christ was not so punished for men that any man begins to be lifted out of his sinfulness without the influence of the truth,

or ordinarily without some knowledge of Christ and earnest seeking to him for his salvation.

XV.

Just as the imputation of Adam's guilt means simply that Adam sinned, and by nature and by justice men are bred sinful from him, so the imputation of Christ's sufferings means simply such a redemption as opens the way to such a salvation as we see actually recorded in the word of God.

XVI.

Such a salvation as we see actually recorded in the word of God began with the saving of Christ. He was bred of Adam ; and, though born of a virgin, that was only to give him up to the God who begat him, for complete and immediate sanctification. His mother was sinful. He inherited what we are to call "infirmity." He would have inherited sinfulness but for his own anticipated sacrifice. He was counted saved before he actually made

redemption, just as Job and all the Old Testament saints. And then he was generated righteous, just as we are re-generated partially righteous, and by the same gracious Spirit. He was "the first begotten from among the dead" as the base of all other spiritual begettings; and was kept, as we are kept, by purchased grace under the influence of the truth and by his own struggle and faith, notwithstanding his rightful claim to Deity. He was horribly tempted. This was his trial and his agony; increased many times by the desertion of his Father. The God, united with him, lessened upon him the influence of his grace: till the man was horribly tortured; shuddering over the abyss of sin; resisting unto blood; and though crying out at the last, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" yet never utterly forsaken, but winning with amazing venture the battle against sin; never sinning; and making his undeserved pains a satisfaction for himself and for the wicked.

XVII.

It is the sufferings of Christ that are imputed to men for pardon, and not his righteousness that is imputed for merit. Christ needed his own righteousness to make his sufferings undeserved. God even in his infinitude as God has no redundant righteousness. If Adam had stood, it would have had a meaning (in a constrained sense) that Adam's righteousness was imputed to us: and as Christ did stand, it might have a sort of meaning that our share in the covenanted promises might be called a merit, and our benefit from his obedience might be talked of as that obedience imputed to us. But such is not the language of the Bible. Nor need it be. For just in proportion to our being pardoned are we made sinless; and our being made sinless means, of course, our having the grace of a righteousness of our own. It would have been better for the church if there had been kept upon her lips the Scriptural terms of pardon and atonement.

XVIII.

The sufferings of Christ which atoned for men were whatever he endured, but especially and as almost the whole, the torment of temptation.

XIX.

The sufferings of Christ were such an entire satisfaction for sin that whosoever has them finally imputed to him owes to them all pardon, and heaven and its eternal blessedness.

XX.

The sufferings of Christ were such an entire satisfaction for sin that no devil can be saved, because sinfulness is the just consequence of having sinned; but any man can be saved, because the just consequences of having sinned have been satisfied for in his case, and need not be endured.

XXI.

Yet the sufferings of Christ did not so satisfy as that we must not, after the ex-

ample of Christ, work out our own salvation ; and that the grace that moved him to resist unto blood, must not be exerted upon us in the way of our own endeavor.

XXII.

Some men do not make the requisite endeavor.

XXIII.

Some men, therefore, have plainly not been moved by the necessary grace.

XXIV.

Some men have not been moved by the necessary grace, not out of arbitrary sovereignty, but for good reasons in the government of heaven ; reasons good in the very nature of the case. For, though God made the plan, and created the men, and is an omnipotent Jehovah, yet nevertheless, inexorably, some men's cases, under the rules of grace, are impracticable and impossible as cases for redemption.

XXV.

The condition of our redemption is our becoming better in the present life.

XXVI.

The condition of final salvation is our being found better at the end.

XXVII.

As lost men are growing worse, saved men, when they first grow better, do so instantly, and as a signal change.

XXVIII.

This change as wrought by man is called repenting, converting, believing and making to ourselves a new heart. As moved upon us by grace, and therefore wrought by the Almighty, it is called regeneration, conversion, quickening and raising from the dead. As gradual afterward it is called justification, sanctification and cleansing. As betokening sonship it is called adoption; and as it is purchased, redemption, pardon, atonement, expiation and reconciliation with the Father. All these are partial. They are all contingent. And they will all be lost, unless the man who has been the subject of them is persevering on the day of death.

XXIX.

The condition of growing better is as inexorable as the condition of perfect righteousness on the part of Adam.

XXX.

Conversion is all of grace, but it has pleased God to move us to it only in the present life, and under the influence of the truth.

XXXI.

Though he might have converted us otherwise, yet it has pleased him that we should acknowledge Christ, and know of his gospel. Hence it is that we are converted ordinarily through the means of faith. We come to him by common faith when we pray and entreat for our conversion ; and it becomes saving faith just when love or hope or penitence or good works become saving, that is when it becomes moral, or when, by an altered conscience, it partakes of the general change at our regeneration.

XXXII.

It is a ruinous mistake to pitch upon faith of all the acts of a better life and not remember that it is itself an act of a better life, and never saving till it has been born a holy faith, out of a quite new light upon the conscience; a faith, therefore, in the turpitude of sin, and in the excellence and holiness of Christ as a Redeemer. Common conviction, driving a man to a personal trust in a doctrinal Redeemer,—panic or remorse, taught to dismiss itself by trusting to a theoretic rescue, never saved any one, but has damned many, and is a worse snare than shrift or baptism.

XXXIII.

The Roman Catholic definition of faith as saving only when it becomes loving, is in this respect exactly Scriptural, and ought never to have been dismissed from among the symbols of the people.

XXXIV.

Pardon, like sanctification, is contingent and partial. We are pardoned just as far

as we are sanctified, and we continue pardoned just as long as we continue better men. Sanctification is the chief part of pardon, because pardon is nothing unless it relieves the curse, and sinfulness is the chief curse for sin. When sanctification is complete, which will be at the resurrection, pardon will have become complete, and misery and sin will have disappeared together.

XXXV.

Grace has a growth like a vine or like a mustard seed. It is our duty to cherish this growth by prayer and faithful living, which are themselves of grace. It is a horrible crime to quench the Holy Spirit. A man may be so established in grace as to be in no danger of falling back unto perdition.

XXXVI.

Justification is not an imputing of righteousness but a sanctification and a cleansing. Luther ought never to have separated these sister terms. They are all

putative; for we are not really clean or holy, but only less sinful. The Reformers oscillated to an extreme as they swung away from what they called self-righteousness. Justification is the great gift of character, with its earnest of future growth. To teach the opposite is to wound the church. And there has been no excuse for it; for Augustine never taught it, nor did the literature of fourteen hundred years. The Scriptures are uniform with those back centuries. We have, imputed to us, the sufferings of Christ. We have, imparted to us, a righteousness of our own. And to make a duality in redemption does not increase its graciousness, but sadly deadens our own exertion to be righteous.

XXXVII.

Justification by faith is the same as sanctification by faith. Both are Scriptural expressions. Faith is an instance of holiness, just as any other holy or righteous work; and we are justified by faith much

as we are sanctified by love, or ennobled by courage. We are justified by faith, therefore, in one aspect of it, just as we are justified by works. But in another aspect we are justified or sanctified by faith as tracing a history. The gospel is preached to common faith. Common faith sets in motion prayer and a striving to be better. Christ hears these prayers, and common faith is turned into saving faith: but in its becoming saving, it adds to its faith-character, which is pleasing to God, the same moral character as love or good works or any of the graces of the Spirit.

XXXVIII.

The heathen will be saved if he is a better man at death; but that he ever is, has small encouragement from what we see, and must be due to gleams of mercy left in his Pagan superstitions. To say that he has a right to mercy is to say that all men would have had a right if Christ had never come; which would be to abrogate the whole necessity of ransom. God

saves all he can consistently ; but that he can save consistently only on conditions clearly appears in the very cost of our salvation.

XXXIX.

Helplessness under the preaching of the gospel means nothing more than disinclination. Grace is necessary, but necessary to change the will. Whoever will can be saved.

CHAPTER VII.

Death and Resurrection.

I.

The whole of man is mortal, and there is no life between death and the resurrection.

.II.

Resurrection will be of the whole man and of all the dead, and will be upon the return of Christ to judgment at the last day.

III.

Those who died penitent will wake to perfect and eternal righteousness, and the impenitent to eternal sin.

IV.

No sin will ever be punished beyond its desert, and righteousness will have its wealth at the judgment by the measure of grace it attained in this world. Misery and happiness will be proportioned to the character of the soul.

V.

A ghost life between death and resurrection is a relic of Paganism, without warrant from the word of God, and filled in, as a penalty for fable, with the weakest conceits of the Greek and Roman systems of superstition.

VI.

The Virgin Mary is but the dust of sepulchres; and masses for the dead and invocation of the saints and relief from purgatory are but dreams of the idolaters.

It is appointed to all men once to die, and after that, instantaneously to each. will seem to come the trumpet of the judgment.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Church and its Ordinances.

I.

The Church is the body of professed believers and their children.

II.

It is the duty of all men to repent of sin, to believe in Christ, to join the church, to attend its ordinances, and to use it as an instrument of usefulness.

III.

By way of figure the church is sometimes spoken of as the body of true believers. This Bride of the Lamb and body of Christ must not usurp the name to the neglect of the outward organization. The outward organization is the divine ordinance. It is of very ancient date,

and was instituted afresh by the Redeemer. Christ's people are bound to find out the model. For though wrong polity, like wrong doctrine, may be pardoned, yet the victims of it suffer loss. The ransomed are never so properly the church as when they have found out its lines, and have planted themselves on the basis of the apostles.

IV.

The officers of a church are Presbyters and Deacons.

V.

Presbyters are of two kinds, those who rule, and those who rule and preach.

VI.

Each church should choose one or more preaching presbyters and a bench of ruling presbyters, who, in addition to other separate duties, shall sit as a Council for the government and care of the congregation.

VII.

Each church should choose deacons, who, under the direction of its Council, are to gather, hold and disburse its charities; and also, if it please the church, to become incorporate. and to hold other property. There should be a Deacon's Court, which is to consist of the presbyters and deacons meeting together, and which is to determine such plans for the church (subject to the Council) as shall increase and extend its charities.

VIII.

Above the Council should be a Presbytery, consisting of one preacher and one ruling presbyter of each church within a convenient boundary. This Presbytery shall ordain preachers, and shall dismiss or discipline them; shall be a court of appeal from the decisions of Councils, and have a controlling oversight of the churches within its bounds.

IX.

In every Presbytery there should be a preaching presbyter appointed over the

vacant spaces within its bounds, who, with such a Council as the Presbytery may assign, shall plant new churches, and remain their pastor till they become self-sustaining; employing, as any pastor may, such assistants as he needs in the preaching of the word, but retaining such episcopal oversight as a settled pastor has over his established congregations. This was the office that Titus held in Crete, and should be restored to the modern Church.

X.

Above the Presbytery should be a Synod of one preacher and one elder from each church within the bounds of several Presbyteries.

XI.

Above the Synods, as they multiply, there should be a General Council, consisting of commissioners from Presbyteries.

XII.

These courts are of review and control for the whole church ; the Synod, or, if there be more than one, the General Council, having the final appeal.

XIII.

This outline, derived from Scripture, should govern the church in drafting her Form of Government.

XIV.

The Ordinances are of divine appointment, and consist in assembling at the church, preaching and reading and attending the Holy Word, prayer and praise and almsgiving, marriage and funeral solemnities, and the administration of the sacraments.

• XV.

Preaching is to be under the control of the pastor or bishop of the church, who may introduce unordained exhorters into his place with the consent of his Council. A Council may license lay-readers or ex-

horters in their own particular congregation ; but not without the consent of the minister, or, where there is none, of the Presbytery.

XVI.

Almsgiving is an act of worship, and, like prayer and praise, should be a part of the devotions of the sanctuary.

XVII.

Marriage is of the unmarried ; and it is of one man to one woman ; and it must be outside of certain scriptural degrees. It can be annulled by adultery or desertion regularly proceeded against in a court of law, or, in the absence of a court of law, by the Council of the church. But the desertion must be wilful, and the adultery after the marriage. If these principles are observed, a divorced party may marry, if it be not the one that was impleaded in the crime.

XVIII.

Sacraments are so called from their involving a solemn oath. This oath is taken

by Christ and by other parties to the rite. The oath taken by Christ is conditional, and the condition is the faithfulness of the other party. Sacraments are not effective for good except as men keep them, and except also as they are special ordinances, which, like prayer and like alms-giving, may be expected specially to bless those who docilely obey the Master. The doctrine of those who give them an efficacy beyond this, so that the eucharist feeds even the unthinking, and the water poured upon a child blesses him even without the faith of the parent, is a pestilent heresy. The sacraments are to have no eminence above other ordinances, except as they are more solemn, or as the nature and variety of the rite may involve more of the truth, or enlist more of our faith to grasp the promises of the Almighty.

XIX.

There are two great promises which are absolute; one is that as we repent we are forgiven, and the other that if we are

faithful to our children they shall be brought into the kingdom. The two forms of baptism are seals of these two covenants. They must both be by the hands of a minister, that Christ in each case may be represented in the act. Christ in adult baptism sets his seal to the salvation of the man, and in infant baptism to the salvation of the child ; but in either case a seal must be set by others, and unless that other seal holds, Christ is not held by his seal, and has departed out of the sacrament.

XX.

By the emblem of water baptism sets forth the great doctrine of cleansing ; so that it is a sign as well as a seal, marking the distinct gift which is promised by the Redeemer. If it was ever ministered by immersion history does not make it clear ; and its whole treatment in the word of God would stamp us as idolatrous if we insisted upon such an administration.

XXI.

The Lord's Supper is a memorial of Christ, and exhibits our fellowship in his sacrifice.

XXII.

Besides this it is a seal, and, in this case, a promise of Christ that we shall go on to feed upon his grace, and to partake of the benefits of his blessed ransom. Here, as in baptism, Christ must be represented by a minister: But there is the same utmost need of remembering that Christ is not present in the rite in any sense in which he is not present in prayer or in which he is not present in work or in alms-giving or in any gracious exercise; save only as the rite may be more solemn, or as an act may be more specially appointed or may unite many separate acts, or may stir by emblematic tokens profounder faith on the part of the worshiper.

XXIII.

Discipline is a means of grace, and its methods should be prescribed in a book

framed by the authority of the church. Prayer must be both public and private, and, in either case, it is right for both minister and people to have some written forms. Singing should be as truth-telling as the sermon, so that it can be both followed and understood. The music is of no value except to impress the truth. So that listening to the music without the truth is an irreverence; and poor music is a gross wrong on the part of the officers of the church, and a gross neglect of one of the most important instruments for our impression. The Church should have its own Book of Hymns, and there should be a Directory of Worship that the people may become attached to one habit in all our churches. The Constitution of the Church, therefore, should consist of a "Creed," "Form of Government," "Discipline," "Directory of Worship," and "Book of Hymns;" and there should be optional forms of prayer, for sacramental, funeral and marriage occasions.

XXIV.

The Constitution of the Church may be altered by an act of the highest court if approved by two thirds of the Presbyteries and by the highest court again after the approvals have been sent in.