

T H E

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HISTORY OF SCHISM IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.*

THE Presbyterian Church was visibly one in the middle of the seventeenth century. Her outward unity consisted in professed agreement in the doctrines of revealed truth—the practical exemplification of a scriptural system of government and worship—and subjection to God in covenant engagement. Where these are, there are the elements and constituents of that visible oneness that should characterize the church redeemed by the blood and animated by the spirit of Christ. Diversity of views as to what is the truth, whether arising from a rejection of any part of it, or from the mixing of error with it; whether from corruption of the government and worship that Christ has instituted in the church, or the disregard of federal deeds by which the church is bound to her Head, are disintegrating forces the tendency of which is to deface the beauty and break up the unity of the church. Christ has enjoined the duty of preserving the church entire in her outward organization, and he has appointed the means of attaining that important end. “Speaking the truth in love, grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” Eph. 4 : 15, 16.

The Presbyterian Church is not *now* visibly one. In the name Presbyterian it is not intended to include all the denominations of Christians that in their government conform, in some degree, to the Presbyterian model. In tracing the history of ecclesiastical divisions, we propose to confine ourselves to the Church of Scotland and her descendants, and the task which we have undertaken is to ascertain how that unity which was at one time her glory and her strength has been broken up—by which process she has be-

* Lecture delivered by appointment of the “Presbyterian Historical Society,” before the Reformed Presbyterian Synod, Allegheny, June 20, 1862, by Rev. Thomas Sproull.

and character to our national existence. How sadly deficient in point of morality and religion has been, in general, the character of those whom the people have delighted to honor! How often have they been elevated to positions of honor and trust under the promptings of mere party spirit, utterly ignoring those higher qualifications without which good laws and a faithful administration of the government could not be expected!"

Instead of "formal recognition" we would say "any recognition," for it needs but good eyesight and the document before us to see this. But this is "a streak of light"—a good acknowledgment. When the whole land comes to feel as does this Synod, reformation will soon come.

The First Synod of the West: "We have *not*, as a nation, *practically* recognized with sufficient distinctness the authority of God in the administration of human affairs, and as the consequence, the nation has become demoralized—a part of it is in open rebellion against the lawfully constituted authorities of the land—others sympathize with this wickedness, and the Ruler of Nations is calling our sins to remembrance by his terrible judgments."

We would be pleased to see this Synod giving its testimony for Christ's claims, and also making a frank acknowledgment of the defects of the Constitution—its irreligious, and we must say, its atheistic character.

Now, while we are compelled to believe that a large proportion of the people of the North are yet far from perceiving clearly the causes of God's wrath, and far from manifesting a spirit of repentance, we gladly recognize, in the utterances which we have recorded, some glimpses of light in these times of darkness—some evidences that God's rod is working, not without some promise of good to the land. We are encouraged. Witnesses are rising up—many for human rights, many for God's; some for the claims of the Messiah—many against the sins of the land, some against its constitutional sins.

INTERVIEW WITH THE PRESIDENT.

Our readers are aware that the Presbyteries of Pittsburgh and New York appointed Rev. A. M. Milligan and Rev. J. R. W. Sloane, respectively, to visit the President of the United States, and lay before him the views of the Church in relation to what should be done to save the country in its emergencies and trials. The following is the address which, in the fulfillment of their task, they presented to the President. In the "special dispatches" to the *Pittsburgh Gazette* of December 12, is given the outside impression of the result of the conference. Some notes of the interview, prepared by the brethren themselves, may be expected in our next. Below we append the paragraph of the dispatch referred to above:

"Revs. J. R. W. Sloane and A. M. Milligan, of the Old School Covenanter Church, called on the President to-day, as a delegation from their Presbyteries, to urge him to steadfastly adhere to his proclamation of freedom. They had an interview of over an

hour, and came away highly gratified with the results of their conversation. Mr. Lincoln assured them that he believed emancipation was the only salvation of the country, and that there could be no peace till slavery was abolished, and that he meant to stand by his proclamation. This assurance is the more gratifying, as, within a week or two, numerous circumstances have led to the fear that the President was becoming weak-kneed on the subject."

To his Excellency Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States :

We visit you, Mr. President, as the representatives of the Reformed Presbyterian, or as it is frequently termed, "Scotch Covenanter" Church—a church whose sacrifices and sufferings in the cause of civil and religious liberty are a part of the world's history, and to which we are indebted, no less than to the Puritans, for those inestimable privileges so largely enjoyed in the Free States of this Union, and which, true to its high lineage and ancient spirit, does not hold within its pale a single Secessionist, or sympathizer with rebellion in these United States.

Our church has unanimously declared, by the voice of her highest court, that the world has never seen a conflict in which right was more clearly wholly upon the one side and wrong upon the other, than the present struggle of this government with the slaveholders' rebellion. She has also unanimously declared her determination to assist the government by all lawful means in her power, in its conflict with this atrocious conspiracy, until it be utterly overthrown and annihilated.

Profoundly impressed with the immense importance of the issues involved in this contest, and with the solemn responsibilities which rest upon the Chief Magistrate in this time of the nation's peril, our brethren have commissioned us to come and address you words of sympathy and encouragement; also to express to you views which, in their judgment, have an important bearing upon the present condition of affairs in our beloved country, to congratulate you on what has already been accomplished in crushing rebellion, and to exhort you to persevere in the work until it has been finally completed.

Entertaining no shadow of doubt as to the entire justice of the cause in which the nation is embarked, we nevertheless consider the war a just judgment of Almighty God for the sin of rejecting his authority and enslaving our fellow men; and are firmly persuaded that his wrath will not be appeased, and that no permanent peace will be attained, until his authority be recognized and the abomination that maketh desolate utterly extirpated.

As an antislavery church of the most radical school, believing slavery to be a heinous and aggravated sin both against God and man, and to be placed in the same category with theft, piracy, murder and adultery, it is our solemn conviction that God, by his word and providence, is calling the nation to immediate, unconditional and universal emancipation. We hear his voice in the thunders of war, saying to us, "Let my people go." Nevertheless we have hailed with delighted satisfaction the several steps which you have taken in the direction of emancipation. Especially do we rejoice in your late proclamation, declaring your purpose to free the slaves in the rebel States, on the first of January, 1863; an act which, when carried out, will give the death-blow to rebellion, strike the fetters from millions of bondmen, and secure for its author a place among the wisest of rulers and the noblest benefactors of the race.

Permit us, then, Mr. President, most respectfully, yet most earnestly, to urge upon you the importance of enforcing that proclamation to the utmost extent of that power with which you are vested. Let it be placed on the highest grounds of Christian justice and philanthropy. Let it be declared to be an act of national

repentance for long complicity with the guilt of slavery. Permit nothing to tarnish the glory of the act, or rob it of its sublime moral significance and grandeur, and it cannot fail to meet a hearty response in the conscience of the nation, and to secure infinite blessings to our distracted country. Let not the declaration of the immortal Burke in this instance be verified: "Good works are commonly left in a rude and imperfect state through the tame circumspection with which a timid prudence so frequently enervates beneficence. In doing good we are cold, languid and sluggish, and of all things afraid of being too much in the right." We urge you, by every consideration drawn from the word of God and the present condition of our bleeding country, not to be moved from the path of duty on which you have so auspiciously entered, either by the threats or blandishments of the foes of human progress, nor to permit this great act to lose its power through the fears of its timid friends.

There is another point which we consider of paramount importance, and to which we wish briefly to call your attention. The Constitution of the United States contains no acknowledgment of the authority of God, of his Christ, or of his law as contained in the Holy Scriptures. This we deeply deplore as wholly inconsistent with all claim to be considered a Christian nation, or to enjoy the protection and favor of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is above all earthly rulers. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the one Mediator between God and man, through whom alone either nations or individuals can secure the favor of the Most High. God is saying to us in these judgments: "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth; serve the Lord with fear. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that trust in him." Psalm 2:12. "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." Isaiah 60:12. This time appears to us most opportune for calling the nation to a recognition of the name and authority of God, of the claims of Him who will overturn, overturn and overturn, until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

We indulge the hope, Mr. President, that you have been called, with your ardent love of liberty, your profound moral convictions manifested in your Sabbath proclamation, and in your frequent declarations of dependence upon Divine Providence, to your present position of honor and influence, to free our beloved country from the curse of slavery, and secure for it the favor of the Great Ruler of the Universe. Shall we not now set the world an example of a Christian state governed, not by the principles of mere political expediency, but acting under a sense of accountability to God, and in obedience to those laws of immutable morality which are binding alike upon nations and individuals?

Praying that you may be directed in your responsible position by Divine Wisdom, that God may throw over you the shield of his protection, that we may soon see rebellion crushed, its cause removed, and our land become Immanuel's land, we subscribe ourselves, in behalf of the Reformed Presbyterian Church,

Yours, most respectfully,

J. R. W. SLOANE,
A. M. MILLIGAN.

"GENIUS, intellect, imagination, taste and sensibility, must all be baptized into religion, or they will never know, and never make known, their real glory and immortal power."