

THE PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY.

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I.

THE REVISED CONFESSION.

THE Northern Presbyterians have published their Revised Confession of Faith, and it is proper for other Presbyterians, not of that communion, to review the changes which have been made, with a view to ascertaining whether they are alterations in the mere superficialities or in the substantive body of the Calvinistic system. The hilarity with which the revision has been received by such diluted Calvinists as the Cumberland Presbyterians, together with the promptness and enthusiasm with which they offered organic union on the basis of these changes, awakens apprehension, and calls for cautious examination.

An inventory of the changes which have been made will show that the Northern Presbyterians have, (1) explained their former doctrine of Predestination, (2) interpreted their doctrine of the salvation of Dead Infants, (3) restated their doctrine of works done by unregenerate persons, (4) amended their doctrine of Oaths, (5) withdrawn their charge that the Pope of Rome was Antichrist, (6) added a new chapter on the Holy Spirit, (7) and added a new chapter on the Love of God, and Missions.

We are not going to take up these points in detail, but elect, for animadversion, the changes which seem to affect the integrity of the Calvinistic system.

We quote now the new language which is the basis of our fault-finding:

VIII.

SENTIMENTAL REASONS FOR PRESBY- TERIANISM.

IN this era of universal enlightenment, when no denomination of the Christian Church has the temerity to assert for itself the exclusive right to dispense the ordinances of God, the rationale for membership in one denomination rather than another is shifted from the attenuated argument of visible continuity to scriptural and sentimental reasons.

Waiving the more forceful arguments of Scripture that indisputably substantiate the Presbyterian polity and dogma, the writer would present for the consideration of those who are already Presbyterians a series of sentimental reasons why they should unflinchingly cling to the church of their fathers.

(1) Presbyterianism was born in the convulsive period of the Reformation. Luther, the destructive hero of the hour, with sledge-hammer blows, burst into a thousand fragments the visible church, and left it, from a world-wide point of view, without organism and without power. Then Calvin, the constructive genius, penetrating, painstaking and with unparalleled power of detail, presented Presbyterianism to the world as the scriptural organism, perfect for doctrine, perfect for polity. The Reformation needed Presbyterianism. Presbyterianism was the Reformation religion that could be ground to pieces but not destroyed. Every convulsive period of the world's history projects into being individuals and institutions that are indispensable to human progress, and they are immortelles in God's garden of the ages.

(2) Presbyterianism from the period of parturition to the present time, has been the martyr church of every land. Born in convulsion, nurtured in martyrdom, the blood of her blue banner bearers has crimsoned every country. The suppressed screams of her Waldensian heroes, still echo and reëcho in the valley of

the Vaudois. The Huguenots, whose history written in blood, via St. Bartholomew and the Revocation of Nantes, were Presbyterian in polity, Calvinistic in dogma, Coligny in character. Bushels of Covenanter blood is the Caledonian response to Presbyterian principles. Every highland loch and lowland lake is tinged with Scotland's gift to "conscience' sake." Hungary and Holland, Palatinate and Portugal, Switzerland and Spain, all have their quota of heroes who have bared their breasts to pontiff and prelate, in defence of Presbyterian principles.

(3) "By their fruits ye shall know them" is the Master's method. See some of the fruits that insist upon her right to live and be loved. She has resisted to the point of victory the tyranny of prelaticism. Presbyterianism, not prelaticism, is to be the dominant ecclesia of the twentieth century. She has unshackled the slave in every land, and stood for a civil liberty that knew no king save the King of Kings. She has uplifted the illiterate of every land, and stood for a literacy as widespread as humanity. An educated ministry means an educated constituency. She has advocated a world-wide evangelism, and shown her faith by furnishing money and men for every heathen land. She has shown the fitness of her polity and preaching for every kind of man. The practical Japanese, the plodding Chinaman, the philosophic Hindu, the African, Indian and Esquimaux, as well as all the civilized nations of the earth, have found in Presbyterianism a form of church suitable to their environment and temperament. She has produced individuals of overtowering proportions in every field of human endeavor. The names of preëminent Presbyterians are innumerable. Calvin and Kuyper, the theologians; Coligny and William of Orange, strategists and statemen; Guizot and Carlyle, literati; Hampden, Pye and Patrick Henry, patriots; Dawson and Kelvin, scientists; Moss and MacCormick, inventors; Chalmers and Talmage, pulpit orators. And on and on. She has evolved communities of cultured citizens, famous for sobriety, integrity and intelligence. It is almost an adage that the best people are Presbyterians, and the Presbyterians are the best people.

(4) "I know what I believe" is the battle cry of the Presbyte-

rian host, and she has always formulated her faith in clear-cut creedal statements. Her creed makers may have erred, but they have never equivocated. Believing a dogma meant formulating the dogma, however distasteful to the carnal mind. The Presbyterian Church is a creed church. It is an easy matter to find out her faith. Every elder, ruling or teaching, accepts the same system of truth. This unity of belief develops a denomination-ism, not sectarianism, that is homogeneous and harmonious.

(5) The fact of her creed throws the Presbyterian Church on the defensive, and as a matter of history her whole career has been one of attack and defense. The world, which hates Christianity as a religion of supernatural origin and influence, strikes the Presbyterian Church, when it would destroy the book of revelation. Violent attacks on the doctrine of inspiration are covertly made by fighting the faith of the Presbyterians. When the Bible is attacked, it is Presbyterianism to the forefront, or the forces of the faithful falter. When weak-kneed Christianity wavers in its loyalty to God, it is the Presbyterian doctrine of "his sovereignty" that suffers. Presbyterianism is forced from time to time to shatter the shibboleths of the enemies of God who wage war only for the apotheosis of man. The right to live is wrapped up in the fact of living, for only the fittest could have survived the four hundred years of incessant warfare that has harried the Presbyterian host.

(6) The history of Presbyterianism is resplendent with glory. She, with an humble origin, unaided by earthly potentates, has grown gradually from insignificant numbers to the point where her members are more numerous than any sect in the Protestant sisterhood. And her four hundred years of growing have accumulated a history that stirs the pride and fixes the affection of those conversant with her career. Her religious literature, devotional, theological, exegetical, ethical, or philosophical, is unparalled in the realm of thought. Her literati have affected human thought, and levied it within religious lines for centuries. Her scientists and soldiers, sailors and statesmen have been and are "statues of liberty enlightening the world" in every haven of humanity. Her propaganda has "girdled the globe" and filled the earth with

heroes and heroines, who have lived and died in imitation of the Master. Her universities and schools are famed far and wide for accurate and aggressive scholarship. Her ministers, learned and elegant for generations, have impressed their Christian characters upon the multitude, and lifted the world to loftier living.

(7) Presbyterianism is tolerant and wide-visioned. While sect after sect is posing as the repository of divine grace, and arrogating to itself an exclusiveness in its dispensation, Presbyterianism from its inception has stood for the tolerant and now universally accepted view that all sects, however diverse in ritual or dogma, that hold to the essentials of Christianity, are part and parcel of the visible church of Christ. This liberalism has ever made Presbyterianism first in interdenominational work. She finds in every division of the army of God Christian patriots battling for those principles of Christ that are the heritage of all Christianity. Presbyterianism has poured out its money and men for the maintenance of interdenominational Bible societies, tract societies, Sunday-school societies, endeavor societies, missionary societies, and all institutions of whatever name, that have as their function the development of Christianity. Presbyterianism glories in the statement of Moody that eighty per cent. of the money for interdenominational work comes out of Presbyterian pockets. Presbyterianism is as jealous of the good name and success of Methodism or any other ism that stands for a triumphant Christianity as she is for her own.

(8) A strong sentimental reason for Presbyterianism is her international character. Presbyterianism is the only international Protestantism. Episcopalianism is English, Lutheranism is German, but Presbyterianism is international. The Roman Catholic is sometimes said to be the only universal religion, but it can be said, without fear of contradiction, that wherever you hear the rubric of the prelate, you hear the preaching of the presbyter. In the United States there is a striking object lesson of this universality, for here the gospel is preached from Presbyterian pulpits in almost every tongue. In scanning the Minutes of the General Assembly, you see Scotch, Welsh, English, Dutch, Irish, French, Italian, Bohemian, Scandinavian, Alaskan, Ger-

man, Portuguese, Spanish, Slavonic, Chinese, African and Japanese churches in this land of polyglot. In this cosmopolitan church there is strength and beauty. Presbyterianism will in the end "cover the earth as the waters cover the sea."

(9) Her foundation is indestructible. "Every heresy in doctrine or morals works itself first or last into a frenzy against Calvinism" (or Presbyterianism), but as the waves of the mad sea recede from Gibraltar and lose themselves in the bosom of the great deep, so the frenzies of her foes are lost and she lives on. The victor of any contest is laurel crowned, but the victor of this contest, will be crowned with a diadem of jewels from the tiara of the Christ-King.

(10) Her future is glorious. "The crowning day is coming" is the stimulus of heroes in every sphere of action. The truth shall prevail was the inspiration of past Presbyterianism, and however dark the way, forging forward was her work, and, unwearied, her heroes were ever looking for the day of triumph. The triumph is at hand. Presbyterianism battling for the truth is her past record; Presbyterianism battling triumphantly will be her future. Now like an army that has reached vantage ground she exults in anticipation of greater victories. The dream of Calvin is to be fulfilled, a Pan-Presbyterianism, a world-wide organism for Paulinism pure and simple. Popery and Presbyterianism are to wage for the victory. In every land it is to be priest or presbyter. Those who have a vision, know that the victory is to the four and twenty elders.

The obligation of the age for the ages is that every Presbyterian cling to his church with an inexpressible devotion, for it means the speedy girdling of the globe with the gospel of the God-man. Disloyalty or desertion now means delay to the consummation of the long looked-for and long longed-for period of millennial peace.

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