

*Presbyterianism
in U.S.A.*
S J Baird

PRESBYTERIANISM.

A DISCOURSE

ON THE SCRIPTURAL AND LIBERAL CHARACTER OF THE GOVERNMENT

OF THE

Presbyterian Church in the United States;

ITS UNEXCLUSIVE SPIRIT; THE SIMPLICITY OF ITS WORSHIP,
AND THE CHARACTER OF ITS TEACHINGS.

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Philadelphia, October 3, 1849.

The REV. JOEL PARKER, D. D. }
Clinton Street Church. }

REV. AND DEAR SIR:—The undersigned having listened to your discourse on the characteristics of the Presbyterian Church, take this opportunity to express the warm approbation with which it was received by ourselves and indeed by the whole congregation.

We cannot doubt that its clear statements, and its full delineations of the principles of our church, as well as the catholic and kind spirit with which other churches were alluded to, will render its perusal a source of gratification to those who heard it, and a means of useful and extended information to the community.

We therefore respectfully solicit a copy for publication.

With sentiments of warm regard,

We remain, yours truly,

James Bruen,
A. V. Parsons,
N. B. Thompson,
David Milne,
Richard H. Townsend,
Alfred Fassitt,
W. E. Whitman,
Geo. L. Ashmead.

Wm. S. Pierce,
Benj. W. Tingley,
C. S. Wurts,
Lemuel S. Fithian,
Clem Tingley,
G. W. Fobes,
B. B. Comegys,

TO MESSRS. James Bruen, Hon. Judge Parsons, N. B. Thompson,
David Milne, and others.

GENTLEMEN:—Your kind note requesting a copy of my discourse for the press was duly received. Believing that the subject has been too seldom brought before the community by the clergy of our church, and, that the members of our own congregations have given too little attention to the distinctive features of Presbyterianism, and hoping that the publication may induce abler pens to present the subject in a more extended form, I cheerfully place the manuscript at your disposal.

Accept my acknowledgments for the consideration with which you have been pleased to treat my humble endeavors to serve you, and believe me to be

Your devoted friend and pastor,

JOEL PARKER.

Philadelphia, October 9, 1849.

PRESBYTERIANISM.

These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.—I. TIM. III. 14, 15.

These words plainly indicate that the apostle Paul attached great importance to that organization of the pious into a community known as the Church of God. Omitting every thing like an analysis of the whole text, I shall assume the great value of the church as the basis of this discourse. The most important object of contemplation in heaven is God. The object most worthy of our regard on earth is the church. Our first attention is due to our Creator and Redeemer. Next to him the church, "The bride, the Lamb's wife," is secondary to nothing.

But what is the church? To this it may be answered generally and briefly, that

The church is a divinely constituted social organization embracing all Christians.

But, the term Christians like the word church, possesses more than one signification. We sometimes mean by it those who are truly pious, and sometimes include in the designation all that are nominally such.

So, we speak of the invisible church as comprising those and those only who are united to their Savior and to one another by a genuine piety. We also speak of the visible church including the whole body of professed Christians of every denomination. This last named body, in an important sense one, may be contemplated in separate portions, distinguished by geographical localities, by varieties of ecclesiastical arrangements, and diversified shades of faith and modes of worship.

That portion of the church catholic or universal which has commanded our preference is, for the sake of a convenient distinction, denominated "the Presbyterian church of the United States of America."

Carefully avoiding whatever is invidious towards other denominations, I shall endeavor to set forth, in as clear a manner as I may be able to do, the reasons we have for attachment to our own church.

These reasons are all found in its distinctive character. I admit, indeed, that a great portion of the characteristics of our church belongs equally to all churches which hold evangelical doctrines; a still greater portion belongs to such as maintain the parity of the clergy, and a greater resemblance still exists between ourselves and our Congregational brethren, and other organizations strictly Presbyterian.

The first feature of our church to which I would invite your attention, is

THE SCRIPTURAL AND LIBERAL CHARACTER OF ITS GOVERNMENT.

Let me specify the elements of which it is composed. They are the clergy and the ruling elders. Of the clergy we maintain that they are all equal, and that their authority is derived from Christ himself. We agree with Archbishop Whately, that "the sacramental virtue," (a thing the existence of which we deny,) even if it were transmitted from apostolic hands, and through them to their successors, cannot be shown to have had an unbroken descent down to our times. Yet, there has doubtless been a succession of an order of men denominated Christian Ministers, each generation of which has been approved by the generation immediately preceding them, and in this way, the ministry may be traced back, as the church itself can be, to the immediate disciples of our Lord. But the authority of the ministry is derived directly from Christ. The Christian minister is called of God to his work. When the Spirit has called a man to this holy office, the church echoes the voice of her Lord. "The Spirit and the bride say come." The candidate presents himself, and the ministry, or the Presbytery which, by its plurality, represents the whole body, ordains him and receives him into their number and fellowship. This "laying on of the hands of the Presbytery" conveys no mysterious influence. The Presbyterian church does not believe in a sacramental grace conveyed by a sacred rite. On the contrary it maintains that such observances are only appointed symbols designed to express in a striking and effective manner an important truth, and that just as baptism

expresses a reliance upon the sanctifying Spirit as the cleansing power that washes the soul from its pollutions, so, the imposition of the hands of the Presbytery upon the head of him whom they receive as called to the sacred office, designates their trust in that anointing of the Spirit which must call and qualify the true minister. It is, also, a public recognizing of the individual before the whole church in his ministerial office.

Consistently with these views the perfect parity of the clergy is maintained. If one minister possesses more influence than another, it is only as one private member of the church exercises a more distinguished influence than some of his brethren. It is because he possesses a greater degree of learning or more distinguished gifts, or a heavenlier piety. We hold that in the ministry we have but one master—that Christ is our Bishop, and “all we are brethren.” The ministry thus constituted is the primary element in the government of our church.

Another element is that of ruling elders. In enumerating the several denominations of persons in the church, on whom its edification depended, the apostle Paul names, as distinct from various classes of teachers by him specified, one which he calls “governments.” In another place he speaks of elders who “ruled” without “laboring in word and doctrine.” These officers we denominate ruling elders.

It is evident that the object of these officers was the spiritual edification of the people. “They were in-

tended to instruct them in the knowledge of divine truth, to inspire them with pure principles and spiritual affections; to form their individual and social habits to practical holiness and moral order; in one word, to render them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

While such is the object of the ministry and eldership, the pastor or bishop of the congregation and the elders which have been elected by the people and solemnly set apart to the office, constitute together the primary court of the church. Of this court the pastor is moderator or president, and one of the elders is appointed by themselves as secretary. The body thus constituted and denominated the Church Session is charged with the duty of providing for the instruction of the congregation, the religious training of the young, and the discipline of erring members. It is governed in its proceedings by a code of laws adopted by the whole church, and is required to keep a written record of its proceedings, which record is subject to the review and control of a superior court. It has power to admit members to sealing ordinances, to exculpate and protect those who are unjustly accused, to admonish such as may be reasonably expected to be reclaimed by gentle means, to suspend from the communion of the Lord's supper gross offenders, and to sever incorrigible members from their connexion with the church.

Every trial is open and public. A fair record is required to be kept of all the proceedings, and parties interested are entitled to a copy, at their request,

without charge, save only the expense of transcribing. If through the imperfections or biasses of this court or any part of it, any person feels himself aggrieved by its decisions, he has the right of appeal to the superior court or the Presbytery.*

The Presbytery is constituted by the bishops of several churches and one ruling elder from each. Before this court a bishop may be arraigned, and any layman, after having passed through his trial in the court below, may claim the right of a new hearing on an appeal from the Session.

The Synod is a union of several Presbyteries, and is in every respect only a large Presbytery and a court of appeal from the individual Presbyteries comprised in it.

The General Assembly is differently constituted. It is a representative body, in which the Synods are not represented, only as they are represented by the delegates from the Presbyteries of which they are composed. This is the highest court in the church. It may devise means according to its wisdom, only within the prescribed limits of the constitution, for promoting the interests of the whole church, exercise a review and control over the Synodical records, and issue finally all complaints or appeals from the courts below.

It is not pretended that we have an apostolical warrant for these four courts constituted in this exact form. But, we do maintain that the principles involved in this organization are all found in the primordial church as described incidentally in the New Testament. The

parity of Christian ministers is plainly asserted. Bishops and elders or presbyters are acknowledged by all scholars to be the same. The same persons are in different places called by each of these names. There were elders that ruled well who did not labor as preachers. The churches consisting of different congregations acted in unison, and assemblies representing the whole were convened to concert measures for promoting the general good.

Such a government is eminently popular and liberal. No man can be tried but by his peers. If prejudice has unfortunately been permitted to exercise sway, the injured party can remove the cause to a higher and an impartial tribunal. No great interest can be sacrificed by the tyranny of an individual raised high in office above his brethren. The dangers of ecclesiastical ambition are diminished by the representation of the people in the eldership. There would be a little more perfect popular representation, it is true, if our church, like the Presbyterianism of the Reformed Dutch Church, elected its elders for a limited term, thus securing rotation in office in the session. Indeed, such an arrangement has been made by some of our churches, and the General Assembly when discussing the subject at its last session did not pronounce it contrary to the principles of our government. Without that feature our church possesses more analogies with our excellent confederated representative republic than can be found elsewhere, and if rotation in office in the eldership were introduced as a general usage, our

church would move with our political government, *pari passu*, two free federative republics, one spiritual, the other temporal, neither infringing on the rights, or curtailing the privileges of the other.

II. A second reason for attachment to our church is found in

ITS UNEXCLUSIVE SPIRIT.

We do not speak of this as *necessarily* growing out of Presbyterianism. There certainly have been, at some periods and in some places, Presbyterian churches that have displayed a spirit of exclusiveness and bigotry; but it is so certain and so obvious that our organization does not possess this spirit, that we never heard of any one who is acquainted with its character that does not more incline to charge it with going to the opposite extreme.

In the disbursement of charities for objects of public benevolence the Presbyterian church with which we are connected contributes a greater amount for promoting in union with other churches our common catholic Christianity, than it gives for advancing the institutions of our own church. Examine our contributions to the Bible and Tract societies—to the Sunday School Union, and other associations in which we have no denominational control, and compare the disbursements with those of the other denominations, and it will be seen that ours are much larger in proportion to our means, and in proportion to what we do for ourselves, than any other church, except it may be our Congregational brethren. Then, if you compare

our distinctive denominational efforts with those of others, you will perceive that we do less that bears favorably and directly upon advancing our own church.

While other churches have their own "book concerns," their associations for the circulation of their prayer books and books of discipline, their "Boards of Publication" for circulating a religious literature in accordance with their particular church; and while almost every other church has its "Doctrinal Tract Society," the Presbyterian church in the United States stands alone in all these particulars. It has no organization for disseminating its own peculiar views, except alone those institutions which have for their object the raising up and sending forth preachers of the gospel. We do not mention these things to reflect discreditably on other churches, but simply to show what it plainly indicates, namely, that our church is conspicuous and almost alone, in chiefly devoting its energies and its funds, (and they are not less than those of others) to objects of a common catholic interest. Nor do we ever exclude those of other evangelical churches from the privileges of our own members and ministers. We count our brethren of other churches as members of the church, and acknowledge them as members and ministers of the church of Christ. While several of these churches decline giving letters of dismission from their communion to ours, we make no difference. We dismiss one of our members to a Baptist, an Episcopalian or an old school Presbyterian church, in precisely the same

form and with the same affectionate confidence as though we were dismissing him to one of our own denomination. So, when we receive a member from another denomination, we never re-baptize him, nor do we when we receive a minister re-ordain him. On the contrary, we practically acknowledge the ordinances of all evangelical churches as equally valid as if they had been performed by ourselves. We are as free and as cordial in asking a Baptist or an Episcopal clergyman to assist us officially in administering the Lord's supper as in asking a pastor of one of our own churches, and that too when we know that their principles, as not allowing us to be duly authorized ministers, will not permit them to reciprocate the courtesy or to receive the communion at our hands.

These statements ought not to be considered invidious, because we do them the justice to say that these denominations are sincere. They really think that we have no reasonable claim to be considered a church of Christ. The one really supposes that we have never been baptized. The other as fully believes that our clergy are unauthorized as not having been ordained by a diocesan Bishop.* If we bear with our brethren

* It ought, in perfect justice, to be confessed that there are individual instances of exception to this remark—individuals whose private feelings would lead them to acknowledge in every way Presbyterian clergymen as ministers of the Lord Jesus; some such even now admit, in words, that "Pious Presbyterian ministers are true ministers of Christ." They decline official intercourse with them only because their church requires them to do so. Certainly no one can fail to appreciate the amiable and charitable feelings of such men, and all must allow that

while they will not allow us to be a church of Christ, and while they deny the validity of our ministry, is it

though their principles may differ from ours in respect to the propriety of yielding to human authority in a matter of such high import as the open and official acknowledgment of those who are officially equal in the church universal, still it is the undoubted right of Episcopalians to act freely on their own principles. We are conscientious in welcoming them to our pulpits, in opening our churches, and inviting them to stand with us in the same sacred desk in advocating the great interests of the "Bible Society" and other objects belonging to the church at large. When they accept these invitations we are more than gratified, we are assured that the most kindly influences are exercised upon an unbelieving world. Multitudes are made to feel that the genuine Christian union existing between our respective churches is much greater than it would sometimes seem to be. With perfect fairness we allow that they are equally conscientious in making and sustaining canons that preclude them from any official intercourse with us. They are not *obliged* to recognise us openly as ministers, or to treat our churches as fraternal bodies; and we ought, undoubtedly, to be thankful to the God of all grace that he has inclined many pious clergymen in that communion, with great humility in a *private* way, to acknowledge the validity of our official acts, and many more of the *people* to treat us with all the courtesy due to Christian ministers. Besides it is beneath our true dignity to complain of the manner in which the clergy of that church may choose to esteem us in comparison with themselves. Our commission is not derived from them, but from Christ. The people at large can never be made to feel that we are losers personally from not being acknowledged by them as standing on an official equality with them. A loss is indeed sustained by our common Christianity, but, so far as individual churches suffer, it falls most heavily upon those who decline a mutual recognition and compel an apparent schism. Those who exercise the most liberal charity will enjoy the richest blessings. The Presbyterian church, then, ought not to grow weary of her position. She ought rather to rejoice in those sentiments of charity expressed by the devout Watts, "I find," says he, "a strange pleasure in discoursing of this virtue, hoping my very soul may be moulded into its divine likeness: I would always feel it inwardly warming my heart; I would have it look through my eyes continually, and it should be ever ready upon my lips to soften every expression of my tongue; I would dress myself in it as my best rai-

asking too much if we beg to be permitted without offence, to declare that we glory in the distinction of

ment ; I would put it on upon my faith and hope, not so as entirely to hide them, but as an upper and more visible vesture constantly to appear in amongst men ; for our Christian charity is to evidence our other virtues."

I cannot conclude this note without extracting a passage from the writings of a living Episcopal clergyman, whose praise is in all the churches, prelatical and anti-prelatical, I mean the Rev. John S. Stone, D. D., of Brooklyn, New York. In speaking of the evils of schism, of which he had presented a just and glowing picture, he concludes his discourse with the following sentiments expressed in his own happy and vigorous style. Let such views once prevail in that church, and she will soon take the position which we trust she is destined one day to assume ; she will be among the foremost in a free unexclusive reciprocity of Christian and ministerial fellowship. If the extract is a little prolix the reader may be assured that it will repay perusal.

"It is of high importance to settle, so far as we may, the question ; How may these evils be cured ?

"In asking this question, I now take these evils and their cause as facts. I go not back to the inquiry ; who made all our schisms ? It is enough to know that they have been made by many hands, and with many motives ; that a departure from the Episcopacy is but one among a thousand of this evil's springs ; that, in many if not most of the schisms which have happened, both sides have been more or less in fault ; and that, in some cases, the separation has been justifiable, in so far as it has been forced on the separating party not only as the lesser of two evils, but as the only possible resort this side a traitorous abandonment of truth, of conscience, and of Christ. It is enough for us to know these things. Our main business is with the facts themselves, and not with their origin. The facts exist : they are evils ; and yet, they are curable evils : How may they be cured ? This is the only reasonable question now before us.

"To this question, then, I reply. They are to be cured, not by attempting to obliterate all the dividing lines which have been drawn through the Church ; they are probably too deep ever to be obliterated in this world ; but by outliving, overcoming, and extinguishing the spirit in which they were engendered, by which they are cherished, and from which they draw their chief power for mischief. In the view which

being free to say that we do most fully and cordially acknowledge them as true churches of our common

the Bible gives of schism, as a rent or wound in the Body of Christ, which is His Church, it is plain that we must cease to regard and speak of non-Episcopal communions as not belonging to the Visible Church. It is not by pronouncing this decision over them, while we ourselves are inquiring after a way of union with Rome, that this deep-seated evil in the Church is to be cured. In the first place, the decision itself, however fond some may be of uttering it, is unfounded, and does but embitter those whom we ought to win. They are not out of the Church. The very schisms between them and us are in the Church. They are but the wounds in this visible Body of our Redeemer; and the spirit in which some treat these wounds, does but inflame them the more, or make them bleed the more profusely. And in the next place, the union with Rome, with the idea of which many have become so deeply enamored, does but provoke her derision, so long as we refuse to acknowledge her infallibility and to submit to her supremacy. This whole course, therefore, can but make us hated or pitied on the one side; and despised or ridiculed on the other. We must quit it, or make the spirit, as well as the name of schism, indelible!

"In looking on the visible Body of Christ, all wounded and weakened as it is, some act as if they thought its cure were to be effected by continually thrusting into its wounds the rough and rusty irons of their exclusive and excluding claims. It will not do. It can but aggravate the evil, and bring on all but death. Were I to urge a remedy, it should be this. If these wounds are to be probed at all, let it be with nothing but the Spirit's soft and healing ray of Life: for the rest, let a mollifying preparation of kind offices and peaceful deeds be laid on to remove all inflammation, and to induce a healing state. Then lay across the wounds the adhesive bands of love, draw the parts gently but closely together, and leave the inward, healing life of the Spirit to perfect the blessed work. Then, the still remaining scar-lines from the name of schism would not be disfiguringly deep; while the poison virulence of schism would all be gone; the Body of Christ, whole and sound again; its many parts and its many members, bound in living union, each helping each, and all made one in perfect, generous, holy sympathy! God send His Spirit from on high to speed this divine recovery of His Church!

"In this mode of cure, I recommend no indifference to important and

master, and their ministry as being equally valid with our own?

All that we claim for ourselves is, that we are a little in advance of them in escaping from the influence of the exclusiveness and bigotry of an age whose uncharitable features are fast disappearing. We do not imagine that the church is to be restored to its more perfect visible unity by all other churches coming

distinctive truths and principles, even though they be not fundamental; no blending of other outward institutions with our own; and no breaking down of our own, by way of showing our respect for others. What I mean is this; that every part of the Church should freely acknowledge that all the other parts belong, as really as itself, to the visible Body of Christ; that each should then fill his providentially appointed lot with peaceful and toilsomely active love; and that all, with consenting prayer to God, should seek the residue of the Spirit in its fulness, and labor to 'grow up into Christ in all things, which is the Head.' This, I believe, is God's way to heal the wounds in His Church; and, in this way, alone, can 'the whole Body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, make, in the measure of every single part, an increase of the Body unto the edifying of itself in Love.'

"This gracious consummation the writer and his reader may never live to see. But it is not a chimera, a thing to be talked of, but not hoped for. It is God's purposed blessing to His Church. It waits to descend; and we may labor, and should seek to hasten, or to realise, its coming down. In doing so, we are drawing in a line with all God's plans and influences, and not at cross-purposes with both His Gospel and His Spirit. In all main, essential truths, all Christians may, as the apostle expresses the idea in a passage already quoted, 'speak the same thing, and be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.'" Perfect uniformity of opinion in all things, especially in all things touching outward institutes, was never intended of God, and can never be enforced, or secured by man. The great, vital sun-truths of the Gospel—these are the only ones that can be made to shine, in the main, alike on all minds; and it is by feeling the shining of these alone, made quickening by the Holy One, that all Christians can be melted into the oneness of love, and made fruitful in the blessings of peace and truth."

to us and being absorbed into the body of the Presbyterian church, but, we do most devoutly trust that every church of Christ will come to enjoy that unexclusive and catholic spirit with which God has blessed our beloved church, and that then the attrition of the various church organizations produced by their frequent contact, will wear away the repulsive asperities which now exist, and all will grow into one holy catholic communion. Then, a kind spirit and mutual counsel, and fervent prayer, will remove unimportant differences and magnify important resemblances, till the church composed of various elements shall be like a richly cultivated language formed by a combination of numerous tongues, each one of which has contributed something to the magnificent result.

III. A third reason for attachment to our church is

THE SIMPLICITY OF ITS WORSHIP.

The public worship of God in the Presbyterian church is not conducted by a prescribed liturgy. It cannot be supposed that Paul kneeled down on the shore, when he parted with his friends at Tyre, and read a prayer from a book ; or, that Paul and Silas used a prescribed form when they prayed at midnight in the prison at Philippi. "The Lord's Prayer" forms no objection to our usage, because it is not given in the same words by the different evangelists, as it doubtless would have been, had it been intended as a prescribed form. Besides, it contains no clause asking for blessings in the name of Christ, which our Savior himself solemnly enjoined upon his church, before he

withdrew his personal presence. In the subsequent inspired history we find no allusion to this form of prayer, nor any reference to either *saying* or *reading* of prayers, both of which modes of expression are natural for those who employ precomposed forms. Socrates and Sozomen, respectable ecclesiastical writers of the fifth century, both declare that, in their day, "no two persons were found to use the same words in public worship." And Augustin, who was nearly their contemporary, declares in relation to this subject, "There is freedom to use different words, provided the same things are mentioned in prayer."

In forming the "Directory of public worship," our church regards the holy Scriptures as the only safe guide; therefore, she does no more than to recommend a judicious arrangement of the several parts of the public service, throwing upon the pastor the responsibility of preparing himself for a proper and edifying performance of those acts of worship which shall be suited to the ever changing wants of the congregation. We do not pretend that our church is perfect in this respect.

A limited amount of liturgical service somewhat analogous to that of the Reformed Dutch Church, might possibly be introduced with advantage. If the Commandments were read in every Lord's day morning service, with responses from the congregation, if the Lord's prayer were repeated in connexion with one general prescribed form of prayer, and if one of the prayers of the communion and baptismal service were

also precomposed, such a limited liturgy, committed to memory, as it would be by the whole congregation, might be edifying to the people, while free extemporaneous prayer by the officiating minister would adapt our service, as at present, to varying circumstances, and render it accordant with the instructions of the sermon. Our objection is not so much to a liturgy, as to being bound altogether by prescribed forms. We love the freedom of our worship, according to which a sudden calamity occurring at the very hour of service might be improved by appropriate worship, and the sentiments awakened by any particular strain of instruction may be suitably directed.

IV. I mention a fourth reason for attachment to our church.

THE INFLUENCE OF ITS TEACHINGS.

Under this designation may be comprised the doctrines taught and the style and proportion of its religious inculcations.

We believe that instruction is the great instrument of Christianity. Our Savior is the light of the world, and men are sanctified through the truth. We believe that worship and a due cultivation of the religious sensibilities are vastly important, but that just conceptions of the plan of salvation and a clear view of the principles by which men ought to be governed, are of primary consequence, as indispensable to securing a right *quality* of worship and real acceptance with God.

Hence, we aim at securing the most thorough edu-

cation of the Christian ministry. There is not a more thoughtful and manly class of writers—writers that think more profoundly and discuss great questions more earnestly, than the pastors of our church. We are accused of being too intellectual, and of neglecting too much appeals to the feelings of our congregations. It may be that we are chargeable with neglect. Certain, it is, that we do not possess the warmth which such a cause and such a Master may properly demand. But, still, we claim that an increase of devotional sentiment ought not to detract in the least from the acumen employed in our discriminations, or the earnestness of our discussions. One great reason for the superior success of the Presbyterian clergy is because their sermons are thoroughly elaborated, and lay hold of the popular mind with a manly vigor. If we do not appeal with sufficient warmth to the feelings of our people, the remedy is not to teach less clearly and earnestly. A more suitable exhortation for us is that of our Savior, “These things ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone.”

But we must refer also to the nature as well as to the mode of our teachings.

The doctrines of the Presbyterian Church are Calvinistic. They are so called, not because Calvin invented them. They were the doctrines of all the leading reformers; of the Waldenses, for five or six hundred years before the Reformation; of Augustin and the primitive church, and especially are they distinctly exhibited in the word of God. This system of

doctrine is clearly set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the larger and shorter catechisms.

Without pretending to expound at this time fully, the great principles more amply unfolded in the standards of the church, we may say, briefly, that the Presbyterian church maintains, that since the fall of Adam, and in consequence of his lapse, all men are naturally destitute of holiness, alienated entirely from God, and justly subject to his eternal displeasure. The plan of man's recovery from this state is, from first to last, a system of unmerited grace. The mediation of Jesus Christ, including his instructions, his example, his sacrifice on the cross, his resurrection, ascension, and intercession, are the means of bringing men back to God. Yet these means would be without efficacy, if there were not revealed to man a gratuitous justification through the merit of our Savior's sacrifice, and if the Holy Spirit did not by his own invisible agency cause sinners to accept a free pardon and salvation. Hence the provisions of mercy are gratuitous, not only depending on the sovereign grace of God, but, the disposition to accept these provisions is produced by a sovereign interposition of the divine Spirit.

It is evident, from scripture and from daily observation, that all are not saved ; and consequently, that it was not the original purpose of Him who never changes his plans of operation, to bring all to repentance and faith in the Redeemer. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." "All the dispensations of his grace, as well as of his

providence, and amongst the rest the effectual calling and salvation of every believer entered into his plan from all eternity." "Yet, so as that thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established." It is undeniable that these views may be perverted, and misrepresented, and rendered odious by drawing inferences from them which Presbyterians do not allow. For such perversions those of no creed are responsible. If we might refer to a single argument in which the distinguishing peculiarities of the doctrines of our church are most triumphantly maintained, it should be that masterly homily of the apostle Paul, or rather of the Holy Spirit dictated to the apostle as his amanuensis, comprised in his epistle to the Romans.

Whatever odium has been cast upon the Presbyterian church for holding Calvinistic doctrines, it ought to be remembered that the honor of bearing it does not belong to them alone. It belongs to all the Reformers, to the symbols of "The Synod of Dort," "The Heidelberg Confession and Catechism," and the "thirty nine articles" of the established church of England, and of the Episcopal church in this country. If the English church has fallen into such a spiritual state that the Earl of Chatham was justified in saying, "We have a popish liturgy, a Calvinistic creed, and an Arminian clergy," and if the churches on the continent of Europe have sunk to a lower condition because a vigorous dissent has not infused a little spiritual life into the establish-

ments—surely our Presbyterian church is not worthy of very severe censure for keeping alive, at the same time, the doctrines of Calvinism and the spirit of piety.

We have made these statements, Christian brethren, not for the purpose of exciting a spirit of vain-glorying. On the contrary they suggest a deep reproof of our lukewarmness. God by his holy providence has given us a remarkable church organization and character. Somebody has exercised self-denial and zeal, and offered fervent prayer, as a means of enstamping such a character on our beloved church. Yet as individuals you and I may neglect to honor and extend it. I go farther and assert, that we are very far from exercising the earnest zeal which we ought to put in requisition for its advancement. We believe that our church is eminently scriptural and liberal in its government. We believe it to be remarkable for its unexclusive and antisectarian spirit; we believe that its worship is free and simple, and that its character as a teaching church is high. That it is earnest and thorough, intellectual and faithful; and that it unfolds those great doctrines which have always been “the power of God unto salvation” with extraordinary fulness; and yet we are not doing by any means as much to extend its influence as we should do.

While we may justly continue our co-operation with sister churches, does not consistency and fidelity demand that we awake to a new life in extending an organization so excellent and so blessed of God hither-

to? Ought not each of our churches to labor to establish itself with a special reference to the work of planting new churches? Let us not deceive ourselves. Let us not flatter ourselves, that if in our charity we aid others and neglect our own organization, our principles will spread of themselves. No, brethren, if this unsectarian, catholic spirit, and this simple worship, and pure doctrine and earnest mode of teaching, are worth any thing, they must not be neglected.

It has been said that it is the natural result of our unexclusive and liberal spirit that our own church should make feeble progress. That if we will extend our church, we must claim for it the distinction that it is "*the church.*" We must deny the validity of the ministry of all that are not Presbyterially ordained. We must make all our church arrangements in such a manner as shall imply that none are in the true fold except such as adopt the Presbyterian standards; that our clergy must not exchange pulpits with the clergy of other churches. That we must change our whole policy, and become as distinguished for our sectarianism as we now are for our liberality! Far removed be the day when the Presbyterian church shall cherish sentiments like these. Nor can such a policy be at all necessary to a prosperous growth. God will be with us and enlarge our influence for good, if we will rest simply on his truth and grace. Let us cherish then a warm regard for that branch of the church catholic with which we are connected. While the Lord's hosts are going forth under the conduct of their glorious

leader, let the Presbyterian squadron be found in the high places of the field, doing battle valiantly against sin the common enemy, emulous only to excel in a noble daring, and still increasing its force for greater achievements. Our principles are right. We have only to act wisely in propagating them to augment the power for the invigoration and the multiplying of our churches. Then, in answer to our fervent prayers the Lord will help us, and we shall be enabled to exclaim, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, he will save us: this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."