

Vol. 70

June 27, 1900

No. 26

THE PRESBYTERIAN.

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PHILADELPHIA
NEW YORK.

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Revision a Probable Failure.

We have been somewhat surprised that the revision of our Confession of Faith is regarded as a pretty sure failure by some of our exchanges, which formerly advocated it, but which are now bent upon securing a new creed. The Interior is quite persuaded that the present movement to change the Westminster Standards will not succeed. It says "No attempt should be made at revision. This is regarded as in every aspect undesirable and unnecessary, and would in all probability fail. There is a religious reverence for the Confession that would be offended by any cutting or reconstruction." This is well put, and means a good deal, considering the source from which it comes.

The Michigan Presbyterian seems to be of a like opinion, when it declares: "The plans of revisionists are likely to fail for several reasons. Some want very radical changes and some merely verbal alterations in some objectionable expressions. Some want a new creed instead of the Confession of Faith. Some want a brief new creed as a supplement to the old Confession. Some believe that a satisfactory revision of the present Confession can be made. It may be accepted as true that an overwhelming majority in our ministry and eldership will vote against any radical revision. It also seems clear that a large majority favors some revision." Our contemporary thinks the only possible way to prevent a miscarriage of the movement is for the "Presbyteries, if they desire, to ask for one or both of these plans: a brief supplementary creed, and also for a conservative revision." But there will be almost as much practical difficulty along this line of action as in any other, as some Presbyteries that desire a few verbal changes are opposed to a new creed, and others that want a new creed take little or no stock in slight Confessional amendments. Divided sentiment between revisionists and short creedists is likely to kill both movements.

But there is another factor to be considered. A considerable party in our Church would like to have the previous revision-report sent down to the Presbyteries for adoption. They regard it as the best thing possible along Calvinistic lines, and many favor it, and it alone. But there are a number of facts that militate against its success at the present time. 1. It is weighted with the odium of having been tried under favorable conditions, yet having failed. 2. It proposes too much for some revisionists, and too little for others. 3. It has lost the enthusiasm of the first love for it. 4. It retains many of the objectionable features about election and reprobation, to which many of our ministers seriously demur. 5. It is hard to warm over old fare. 6. Ardent new creedists will have none of it, but would have the old document remain as it is, but as the Interior maintains, with a "new statement of doctrine," to which "alone ministers and elders should be required to subscribe." 7. The times have changed since the revision-movement of ten years ago, and many who favored it then, do not to-day. 8. Those

who voted against it, when previously submitted to their consideration, have not, at least apparently, changed their views as to its unadvisability.

As far as we can read the surface indications, we do not find as much desire for revision, or even for a new creed, as we noted years ago. The spontaneity is almost gone out of it. It is largely a warmed-over affair. It has also now associations that are not in its favor. When first started there was no Briggsism and Smithism involved in it. It was undertaken within Calvinistic lines. There had been no doctrinal disturbances. It meant the fewest possible alterations. Now it stands associated with much radicalism. Those who inaugurated it this time were pronounced liberalists. It is true, many sound men, and numbers identified with the conservative side during our Church trials, have since joined in it in the hope of removing some false and odious constructions placed upon some Confessional statements, but it still remains an undisputed fact that almost all those who sympathized with Briggsism and McGiffertism and advanced theology are the warmest and loudest in favor of large creedal changes, or of an entirely new creed. All this tends to cause many ministers and elders to fear it, or discount it, and to hold on to what we have, believing that it has stood us in good stead in past agitations, and that it will help us to weather the doctrinal storms of the future.

A still further consideration operating against the success of the present revision movement is the growing feeling in the Church that we have had enough of Confessional agitation, and should get down to more solid and aggressive work. The past ten years have been trying and testful years, and the beginning of the new century ought not to be disturbed by disputes over either the old, or a new, creed. Rest is needful for adjusting ourselves to arising conditions of Christian activity. We have a thoroughly tested system of doctrine and polity, and the call seems to be to push the cause of Christ in all possible directions under the old "blue banner."

Nor must the silent force of a conservative eldership be overlooked. We note an increasing sentiment among the rank and file of our working laymen, to let well enough alone, and give ourselves to pushing forward the practical work of our Church. There are those who talk and feel that ministers are giving too much time and thought to revision or to a new creed, and not enough to the more pressing questions of the day. They feel that the old Church should be talked up, not down, both as respects her doctrine and her polity. They find no difficulty in subscribing to her Standards, and they do not see why their ministers should make such an ado over the matter. They are becoming more and more convinced that the present is not the time to revise or set aside the old Confession, but to show more activity and zeal in building up Church life at home, and for extending Christ's Kingdom abroad. When it comes to voting in the fall, many who thus think and feel will array themselves on the anti-revision and anti-new creed side.

The Lord is My Strength.

Hab. 3 : 19.

By George D. Gelwicks.

"The Lord is my strength" when temptations assail,
The help he has promised me never will fail;
The storm-clouds arise, and my eyes may grow dim,
I never shall fail if I cling close to Him.

"The Lord is my strength;" I need a strong arm
Upon which to lean in the time of the storm;
The powerful hand that controlleth the sea
Is waiting to serve as a guidance for me.

"The Lord is my strength;" Lord make me strong
To conquer temptation, to battle with wrong!
And then, when the conflict is o'er, bid me come,
And rest evermore, in my heavenly home.

Address at Dedication of Monument to Rev. John Boyd.

By Rev. Dr. Wm. H. Roberts.

Monuments commemorate principles more than men. It is the cause for which one stands, rather than personal achievement, which merits from mankind enduring memorial. This is peculiarly the case in connection with the monument just unveiled. He whose name is written thereupon served in the ministry but little more than a year, and being found faithful in a few things was translated to the upper Kingdom. But though engaged in the proclamation of the Gospel but a brief period of time, he was the first minister concerning whose ordination by an American Presbytery there exists an undisputed record. Foremost he appears to have been in that long line of faithful ministers of Jesus Christ within the United States, upon whom the hands of Presbytery have been laid in consecration, and by whose labors the Presbyterian Church has become a mighty power for Christ and his truth.

The Presbyterian Church at the time of the ordination of the Rev. John Boyd, was a body strong of purpose, though weak in numbers. It consisted of about twelve ministers, twenty churches and fifteen hundred communicants. Not only was it weak in numbers, but it was also in disfavor in the larger part of the land. Persecution was a frequent accompaniment of the lives of its ministers and members in the Colonies controlled by the Episcopalians, and they were repeatedly driven out of the New England Colonies in the holy name of religion, by the dominant Congregationalism. Only in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware were they in possession of liberty of speech and action. But though few in number they were resolute in their maintenance of great and glorious principles alike in Church and State. They early declared their adherence to the doctrine of the independence of the Church from control by the State. They steadfastly upheld the right of every human being to both civil and religious liberty. Growing steadily in numbers from year to year, they bore a permanent and decisive part in all the movements which secured the true welfare of the colonies, and at last resulted in the establishment of the American Republic. And more than all they fearlessly proclaimed the great doctrines of grace in every portion of the land and aided materially in making the United States a Christian nation. The monument stands, therefore, for fidelity to the rights of man and the truth of

God, on the part of men who were in the minority at the first establishment of this great people, but who through their persistent love of, and devotion to, the truth in their successive generations, at last saw their principles recognized as the foundation principles of the Nation.

The early ministers of the Presbyterian Church, of whom John Boyd was one, were not all from Scotland and the North of Ireland. In the original Presbytery there were in addition men of English and Welsh extraction. Early in the seventeenth century, also many Germans of the Reformed faith, settled in Pennsylvania and New York. In the latter section of the country, further, the Dutch who were the first settlers, were also Calvinists in doctrine. Differences in language and in minor matters have availed until to-day, to keep separate the brethren of the Reformed churches from those of the Presbyterian name; but they all have maintained in their respective organizations one faith and one system of church government, and always in the history both of the country and of the Church, have been loyal to the great principles of civil and religious liberty. Time forbids that a just tribute should be here paid to all Calvinists, who in this land have contributed by their labors to the welfare of the Church and Nation.

Among the many specific lines of thought which might be developed in connection with this celebration, three are presented.

Popular Government in the Church.

First of all, it is worthy of note that the Presbyterian Church has emphasized during the two centuries upon American soil, popular government in the Church. In the Old World at the time of John Boyd's ordination, outside of one or two lands, such as Scotland, the people had no voice in ecclesiastical affairs. The heritage of God was ruled over by arbitrary despots, claiming the name of the New Testament Bishop, and exercising over the Church an authority which Christ had refused to his apostles. Against hierarchical church government the early American Presbyterian Church always maintained a resolute and successful opposition. Its fidelity to New Testament principles is one chief reason why no Protestant Church in this country is a true hierarchy, and why the people have in our evangelical churches a voice in the decision of all important matters.

In the Presbyterian churches, the will of the people has found continuous expression through their representatives, the ruling elders. These officers of Christ's Church, represented on this monument by the name of Walter Ker, have been in all the history of our churches, a force for truth and righteousness and an efficient power for Christian work of incalculable value. Co-operating with the ministry many of them have served Christ faithfully in every generation, and efficiently taught and practiced the principles of popular church government. As against Congregationalists, they uphold the unity of the Church; as against Episcopalians, they declared the right of the people to govern themselves, through ruling elders as their representatives. As against Roman Catholics, they insisted upon the sole headship of Christ in his Church, and as against the Friends or Quakers, they steadfastly maintained the right of a Christian people to secure both their civil and their religious liberties by all the resources within their power, and in the

last resort by the force of arms. These characteristics are to-day dominant in the life of American Protestantism and influence to a considerable degree, even the Roman Catholic Church. Further, upholding thus the scriptural and republican model of the Church, the Presbyterian Church became the mother of this Republic. The Presbytery which ordained John Boyd was the first national representative popular assembly for government on this Continent, and ante-dated, by nearly seventy years, the Continental Congress. Because John Boyd and other men of like faith and spirit have lived and wrought upon these shores, therefore, to-day, are we a free nation, a representative Republic, a government of the people, by the people and for the people. And for the same reason are the Churches of Christ in this land freer stronger, more popular in government, more loyal to the Word of God, and more efficient in the Lord's Work than Christian churches in any other lands.

A Definite Creed.

The second line of thought deals with the fact that the Presbyterian Church has always been a Church with a definite creed. John Boyd and those who labored with him at the foundations of things, were men of strong convictions in religious truth. Their lives illustrate the fact that one man with convictions is worth a thousand with mere opinions. The Church of which they were a part reflected in its organization and history the strength of their adherence to the system of doctrine which they believed to be contained in Holy Scripture. Uncompromising Calvinists in religious belief, the members of the Presbytery which ordained the minister whose life we commemorate, were no mere association of Christian ministers for purposes of fellowship, but formed a vigorous and efficient New Testament Church Judiciary. The existence of a Constitution is recognized in the earliest records. It is true that it was not until 1729 that ministers of our Church were required to subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith, but this is no evidence that the Church did not believe in and loyally maintain the doctrines of the Westminster Confession prior to that date. There were those in our Church during her early history who were opposed to subscription to a creed, and those persons having made known their views, the General Synod of our Church spoke out on the subject in clear and definite terms and required subscription to the Confession from every minister, from 1729 forward. The evidence is clear, further, that the subscription which was required by the General Synod was of the *ipsissima verba* kind. During the larger part of the eighteenth century ministers of our Church were expected to sincerely receive and adopt every doctrine of the Westminster Confession, with one or two exceptions authorized by the Synod. It is true that in the Constitution adopted in 1788, a less rigid form of subscription was adopted, and that ministers and other church officers are now pledged to subscribe to the Confession simply as containing the system of doctrine taught in Holy Scripture, but the Presbyterian Church has never held that this subscription is to a loose theology, or only to the general principles of Christianity. The subscription is to the Calvinistic interpretation of the Word of God, and above

all other things to the loyal acknowledgment of that Word as the supreme and infallible rule of faith and conduct. In all its generations, the Presbyterian Church in America has insisted upon loyalty to the Calvinistic system of doctrine, and because it has believed that system to be clearly taught in the Word of God. Loyalty to the Word of God involved for Presbyterians loyalty to the Confession of Faith. It is only as those facts are clearly grasped that Presbyterian Church History can be understood, and the mission of the Presbyterian Church in the world can be rightly appreciated. It is not claimed that Presbyterians have a monopoly of loyalty to the Word of God or of Calvinistic Doctrine. There are other denominations as true to Holy Scripture as the Presbyterian, and the Baptist Churches equally with the Presbyterian, maintain the larger part of the great doctrines of grace. But the Presbyterian Church has, in the providence of God in all the religious history of the United States, taken a foremost part in the upholding of what it believes to be sound doctrine, and in particular in the maintenance of the doctrine that the Word of God is inerrant and infallible, the binding law both for individuals and churches. And the beneficent results of the firm stand of our Church in these lines of Christian action are widespread and generally acknowledged. Further, this very loyalty to the Word of God and to the Westminster Confession of Faith, has been a distinct power for good in the history of the Presbyterian Church itself. This was manifested on a majestic scale on two memorable occasions. Twice this Church of ours was divided and twice re-united. Whatever the causes of division, they are not important to the matter in hand. The important thing is that the centrifugal forces at work in the Church were less powerful than the centripetal forces of sound doctrine. The Westminster interpretation of Holy Scripture was the power above all others which in 1758 and 1869 drew together the branches of the divided Church and made of twain again one. There is no unity so mighty as that of faith.

The noble past gives hope for a noble future. However divided, the Presbyterian Churches with one exception still hold to the Westminster Confession, and all are loyal to Holy Scripture. If ever the various branches of the Presbyterian family in America are to come together in one, the union will be upon the basis of previous reunions, the common Confession of Faith. The creed of John Boyd and Walter Ker, the creed of the reunions of 1758 and 1869, the creed of the great majority of Presbyterians in this present, will be the creed of the future National Presbyterian Church. The Westminster Confession still lives, and is as potent as ever to bestow the blessings of a true unity upon American Presbyterians.

An Evangelistic and Educated Ministry.

The third matter to which I would direct thought on this occasion is the fact that the Presbyterian Church has always stood for both an evangelistic and an educated ministry. A scholarly ministry filled with the spirit of Christ has been for two centuries the glory and the strength of our churches. A pulpit without scholarship is a pulpit from the human standpoint without authority; and a ministry which lacks the missionary spirit, can-

not use that richest gift of God to his Church, the power of the Holy Ghost. Our churches have always rejected alike unsanctified learning and pietistic ignorance as among the qualifications of religious teachers, and have insisted in addition that preachers of the Gospel shall approve themselves as called to their great work by the Living Head of the Church. Learning, and the evangelistic spirit as a result, have been two of the abiding characteristics of the Presbyterian ministry. They have made that ministry mighty both for the maintenance of the truth and for the extension of the Kingdom of Christ. As we think upon the record of the growth of the Presbyterian Church in this land, we cannot but feel that there is providential significance in the fact that the first existing record in connection with the proceedings of our chief Church Judicatory, should be the record of the examination of the Rev. John Boyd, with a view to his ordination; and that his lecture was entitled, "De regimine ecclesiæ," and that the text of his sermon was John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." The Church of Christ and the power of Christ unto salvation, were fitting themes for the first ordination by an American Presbytery. From that hour the Church has moved forward along these lines, led by a ministry which has made effort in every generation to be, as true servants of Christ, workmen not needing to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, and earnestly and efficiently proclaiming the message of salvation. Our Church, because of its learned and Christ-called ministry, has been a truly evangelistic Church, correctly appreciating the Gospel and pushing the work of evangelization, according to the need in every quarter of the country. John Boyd was the ecclesiastical ancestor, short though his life was, of the many men who, under God, have wrought wonders of salvation in these United States. In one branch of our Church alone, the apostolic band of twelve has grown to 7,400 ministers, and the score of churches have become 7,700 in number. The communicants number more than one million, and the gifts in a single year for missions and benevolence amounted to more than three millions of dollars. The total of these contributions for the spread of the truth, during the closing century, amounted to more than \$87,000,000, and the converts added to the Church numbered more than 2,200,000. To-day, as we look upon the Presbyterian Church, with its widespread institutions in the United States, with its vast missionary enterprises at home and abroad, with its highly organized schemes of benevolence, with its officers and members in large part rightly appreciating the mission of the Church, and seeking to fulfil all duty, let us acknowledge the debt of gratitude which the Church owes to those men, dead and living, who through two centuries have steadily upheld the banner of the cross within our borders, carrying it forward with the advance of population in every year, rejoicing to serve him who is the divine Saviour of sinners, and living and dying in the faith which finds its source and sustenance in him who century after century accomplishes in the earth the counsel of his own Almighty, gracious and holy will.

I close with a quotation. Next to the name of Washington in our history as a nation, stands the name of

Lincoln. Speaking above the dead at Gettysburg, our martyred President said, "We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to their unfinished work." This sentiment should be within all hearts. Here there should be a renewal of vows to the Church of which Christ is the Head, and above all to the great Head himself. Here there should be the purpose of a renewed devotion to the New Testament principles of Church Government, to the system of faith contained in Holy Scripture as it finds expression in the Westminster Confession, and to the continuance and maintenance of an educated and consecrated ministry. This monument summons us and all Presbyterians to loyalty—loyalty to the Church, loyalty to the Church's creed, loyalty to the Christian ministry, and above all loyalty to the Great Head of the Church, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him for all the past, in all the present and for all the future, be the glory.

Shall We Abolish Subscription?

By Rev. W. B. Noble, D.D.

As a solution of the problem of Revision, the Outlook, in its issue of June 2d, proposes that the Presbyterian Church should abolish the subscription to the Confession of Faith required of her ministers and elders, and let admission to the Presbyterian ministry depend merely on examination by the Presbytery.

The Confession of Faith, it would have us believe, is not really the Standard of the Presbyterian Church; subscription to it counts for nothing; therefore, subscription may be abolished and the whole difficulty of the situation be relieved.

Or, stated more fully: "The Westminster Assembly's Confession of Faith," it says, "is the Standard of the Presbyterian Church in this sense only: that every Presbyterian elder, whether a ruling or a preaching elder, is required before ordination to answer affirmatively the following constitutional question: 'Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?'"

But if "in this sense only," then in no sense at all is the Confession of Faith the standard of the Presbyterian Church; for, says the Outlook, "no man is admitted to the ministry merely because he gives an affirmative answer to this question." The examination by the Presbytery which every candidate for the ministry is required to pass, is after all the real test. "And if it is the real test, why not make it also the formal and the only test? Why not in other words abolish the subscription altogether, and leave admission to the Presbyterian ministry to depend upon the examination by the Presbytery?"

If it be objected, (as it doubtless will be), that this course would deprive the Presbyterian Church of all Standards, the Outlook answers that in fact it would bring that Church back to the standard of Protestantism, and to that which the Confession of Faith itself declares to be the only Standard of faith and practice. "The Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture would remain the standard of the Presbyterian Church as it now is, and it