

THE
Reformed Presbyterian
AND
COVENANTER.

THOMAS SPROULL,
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EDITORS AND PROPRIETORS.

"Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."—Phil. 3:16.
"Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."—*Jude*.

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THE

Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter.

Vol. I.

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No. 1.

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.

come divided into so many organizations, and where lies the blame of her present abnormal state. And this is not a merely curious inquiry; it is a subject of practical importance, that forces itself on the attention of every one who grieves for the divided condition of Zion, and is desirous for the restoration of ecclesiastical harmony and peace.

We have said, that about the middle of the seventeenth century the Church of Scotland was in possession of all the elements of unity and was in fact united. The reaction in 1638 against Episcopal intrusion culminated about ten years after in the church adopting the whole system of doctrine, order and worship prepared by the Westminster Assembly, and binding herself thereto by covenant obligation. That period is called the Second Reformation, and to it the descendants of the church are wont to look back with some degree of pride of such an ancestry, and at the same time with regret that the high expectations of the noble men who accomplished that reformation have not been realized. The lamentation of Jeremiah over the broken and desolate condition of the church in his day is appropriate now. "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street. What shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach is like the sea; who can heal thee?"

We state here what will be confirmed by facts as we proceed, that divisions in the Presbyterian Church are the results of departure from the ground on which the church stood when she was formally one. That the position of the church, as then defined by her Confession of Faith, her Forms of Worship and Order, and her Covenants, has been to some extent left by many of the Presbyterian bodies, themselves admit. They do not admit the necessary conclusion that therefore they have made schism in the church. Maintaining that in the points where they have made changes, they have advanced beyond the attainments on which all were united, they do not hesitate to lay the blame of schism on those who refuse to follow them. The injustice of the imputation does not rest entirely on the fact that their changes are not improvements. Terms of agreement solemnly ratified are not to be set aside by a part of those who entered into them, on the ground that better can be substituted for them. And it is manifestly unfair to charge the fault of making division on those who believe and who act in their belief, that "the old is better." The adoption of the platform on which unity was established was the act of the whole church, and to the whole church alone belonged the power to nullify the act or release from its obligation.

But if it be a fact that these changes are in a retrograde direction, then those who made them have neither justification nor apology. No sophistry can screen them from the sin and odium that justly fall on schismatical acts. To every candid mind they will appear the manifest cause of the ecclesiastical disunity now so much regretted. And the divided condition of the church will

have a moral as well as a logical aspect, not merely as a result of adequate causes, but as a great wrong demanding immediate repentance and reformation. "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you; and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." Jer. 3: 14.

What, then, were the principles of the Second Reformation, the abandonment of which, in whole or in part, disturbed the unity of the church and brought her into her present divided and unnatural state? They were, 1. That Christ is the alone Head of the church, who has appointed her government and worship, and has made her independent of the civil power. 2. That it is the duty of nations to acknowledge the authority of God and to rule by his law. 3. That nations, as well as the church, should enter into covenant with God and bind themselves to obey him in all things. 4. That between a Reformed nation and the church, there should be an agreement to guard their mutual independence, and promote their mutual interests.

The first movement that resulted disastrously to the integrity of the church was made by the civil power. The Scottish parliament in 1637 entered into an agreement with the Duke of Hamilton to raise an army for the purpose of restoring Charles to the throne. To accomplish this, concessions were made wholly at variance with the rights of the church. Persons who were the known enemies of the Reformation were admitted into the army. In this way, as is truly said by a historian of the times, "the Covenant which was the basis and foundation of the union between the two nations would be destroyed, while it was pretended to raise an army for its support." (Crookshanks.) The movement proved to be a disgraceful failure. A favorable result immediately followed. At the instance of the church, the parliament passed the Act of Classes, by which all persons disaffected with the Reformation were excluded from places of power in the state and in the army.

The attempt by the Scottish parliament, after the death of Charles I., to place his son on the throne, was the entering wedge of division in the church. The entire overthrow of the army raised to carry out this design, by Cromwell, defeated for a time the design. The parliament ascribed the defeat to the operation of the Act of Classes, by which some who were of note as military men were excluded from the army. This led to the repeal of the act. Now for the first time the church became divided. A part approved of the resolution repealing the act, and were called Resolutioners; another part protested against the repeal, and were called Protestors. Cromwell, during his Protectorate, would not allow the General Assembly to meet, and a formal separation did not take place. But the Restoration, as it is called, of Charles II., with his determined opposition to the Protestors, widened and perpetuated the breach. During the following twenty-eight years the Protestors endured all that revenge and malignity could inflict, while the Resolutioners were favored, many of them going any

length required of them to please the king and his obsequious parliament.

The question is a proper and pertinent one, Which of these parties adhered to the original principles of the church, and stood in the position that she occupied while her integrity remained undisturbed? It may be replied, without danger of contradiction, the Protestors. Indeed, we have not seen any condemnation of their course that did not condemn the fundamental principles to which they adhered, as well. Schism first showed its unsightly visage in the true Reformed Church of Scotland, in a departure by some, under a pressure by the civil power, from the true exemplification of principles openly professed, and to which all were, by Solemn Covenant, pledged.

The Revolution of 1688 was an event of great importance to the church as well as to the nation. Had those who claimed to hold to the attainments of the Reformation been united and firm, what was lost by preceding defection might have been recovered. But history records the humbling and painful truth, that the breach was further widened—that those who had taken the first step backward were easily persuaded to take other steps in the same direction.

It is susceptible of the clearest proof that the Establishment, as it is called, of William and Mary, was on the ruins of the noble superstructure erected not quite half a century before. Leaving other things out of view, in that settlement, Erastianism, against which the Reformers had struggled for nearly a century, with the earnestness of men who were contending for their dearest rights, not only recovered a foothold, but became firmly seated in the Church of Scotland. This none will deny. And was not this in violation of the most solemn engagements? How the Established Church of Scotland, or any of the bodies descending from her, beyond or on this side of the Atlantic, can claim to be the descendants of the church of 1649, is marvelous. The church, at the time just mentioned, procured the repeal of the laws establishing patronage; the Established Church, forty years later, restored patronage to the place from which it had been dislodged. Let that Establishment be right or wrong, and there are but few Presbyterians who will defend it, the fundamental principles of it are so much at variance with those asserted when the independence of the church of the civil power was achieved, as to leave any claim to identity with it destitute of the shadow of a foundation. The revolution church was a schismatic church, though protected by the power and sustained by the resources of the nation. And it does not in the least relieve her of the undesirableness of the position, that she still professes to adhere to the Westminster Standards. There are many sad instances of a practice at variance with a profession. And can there be a more palpable case of this kind, than for a church, whose supreme judicatory cannot meet but by the authority of the civil power, to declare that "there is no other Head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ." (Con. Faith, chap. 25.)

If, then, the church, as established after the Revolution of 1688, stands on a different platform from that which the church occupied in 1649, by no process of reasoning can she be proved to be the same church. But if not the same, she is in a state of separation. By those acts which changed her position, she constituted herself a *de novo* organization. She voluntarily relinquished her independence, for which, as indispensable to her honor and safety, the Reformed Church had successfully contended. In place of standing erect in the consciousness of her freedom from all restraints by the civil power, she is found crouching at the foot of the throne, awaiting its pleasure, to perform the high spiritual functions assigned her by her Head. What two things more unlike than the church that refused the crown to Charles II. until he had sworn the covenants, and the church that accepted an establishment from William and Mary, without requiring the repeal of the act Rescissory and the restoration of the covenants to their original place in the fundamental obligations by which rulers and ruled were bound to one another.

But if the Established Church of Scotland, by the concessions she made to the civil power, separated herself from those who contended in principle and practice for all the attainments of the Reformation, then all bodies descending from her are in the same condition. It was not to be expected that the disturbing element in the church would be at rest when the first rent was made. Disintegration is a progressive process. Less force is required to break a part into smaller fragments than was needed at first to separate that part from the whole. The operation of this principle is not less certain in moral than in physical subjects. There are generally some persons who do not see the wrong or the danger of the first diverging step, who take the alarm nevertheless when it is attempted to take others in the same direction. Unable, as is usually the case, to arrest defection, they determine not to proceed in it. The correctness of these remarks is exemplified in the history of the Established Church. Not all who agreed to that establishment were disposed to yield to the civil power the full extent of its arrogant demands. The course of the church, in her assemblies, was far enough from being a smooth one. The secession that took place in 1733 was caused by the carrying out of the principles of the Establishment. The forcible intrusion of the presentees of patrons on congregations was more than could be endured by those who had any regard for the liberties of the church. Those who seceded seem not to have had any clear view of the source of the evil, and did not retrace their steps till they found the point from which the church had so far diverged. They attempted to dry up the streams while the fountain was still allowed to flow. Their withdrawal from the Church of Scotland, and their constitution of the Associate Church, did nothing toward removing the evil of schism and restoring the visible unity of the church.

We find, at the present time, the descendants of the Church of

Scotland in several religious communities all claiming the Presbyterian name. They all own a relationship to the mother church. The inquiry is every way a natural one, if they are all her legitimate children, why are they found constituting different ecclesiastical families, and living in separate households? To come to a correct conclusion with regard to this inquiry, we must bring into the examination the principles on which the church was united in the time of her greatest purity. To the extent that any of these bodies now hold and exemplify those principles, their claim to be of the true succession is sustained. On the other hand, to the extent of their relinquishment of those principles is their claim to that honor impaired. The correctness of these tests none can reasonably deny. By them, then, let these claims be tried and settled.

Do all the Presbyterian bodies hold in their integrity the Westminster Standards? To say that they do not, is only to assert what they will nearly all admit. The Reformed Presbyterian Church alone contends that "the doctrine of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, are agreeable unto and founded upon the Scriptures." All others have either altered certain parts of the Confession, or they receive it with an explanation that entirely changes its meaning. In the act of the Church of Scotland approving the Confession, her General Assembly declared that "after mature deliberation they did agree and approve said Confession, as to the truth and matter, judging it to be the most orthodox, and founded on the word of God." A rejection of any part of this formulary of doctrine, thus so solemnly approved, is a departure from the original position of the church, and tends directly to that ecclesiastical disunity with which she is now so disfigured and weakened.

Remainder in next No.

OUR LOCUST PLAGUE.

In the military disasters we have suffered since the rebellion of the Slave States, there seems to be a striking similarity in their general order and character to the Plagues of Egypt. The nation is the guilty Pharaoh holding the slaves in bondage. The rebel slaveholders, with their *serpent rod* of secession, are the Moses and Aaron sent of God to compel emancipation. By the bloodless siege of Sumter, the serpent rods were all consolidated in the insatiate maw of South Carolina, which henceforth is the leader, and rallies the Confederate rebels for infuriate war. The river was turned to blood at Bull Run, where our fugitive-slave-returning armies were disastrously routed, and many slain. Then followed, in the ensuing year, five minor calamities, in which can clearly be seen and traced their analogies.

Our seventh reverse, answering to the hail storm, began with Banks' retreat before Jackson, and terminated with M'Clellan's

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No. 2.

HISTORY OF SCHISM IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

Concluded from page 6.

WITHOUT entering into a detailed comparison of the position of the various Presbyterian churches at the present time, with that held by the church before she was rent by division, we propose briefly to show that, with the exception already made, these positions are not coincident. The simple and comprehensive proposition contained in the answer to the second question of the Shorter Catechism asserts the principle, that men in all their relations are bound to obey the revealed will of God. "The word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him." The only rule is a perfect rule; it admits of neither substitution nor supplement. From the application of this rule no condition nor relation of life is excepted. In the state as well as in the church—in public as well as in private affairs—with regard to the duties of rulers as well as of subjects—there is no rule but the word of God. To this point our fathers labored to bring the Reformation; and to this point it attained when the Westminster Standards were adopted, and by Solemn Covenant the nation and the church pledged themselves to perform their whole duty to God and to one another.

But do the churches hold to this great principle? We know that the second question in the Shorter Catechism retains its place in that manual in all Presbyterian churches, and as an abstract principle, they profess to believe it. We know, also, that injustice would be done them were it maintained that they wholly disregard it in practice. At the same time it must be said that in one important part of morals this rule is excluded from its place as supreme and directive. By what church are civil constitutions and enactments that are not in accordance with the revealed will of God, declared to be void and without binding force on the conscience? Where do we find, in ecclesiastical deeds, a warning

against incorporating with any government that places the will of the people above, or on a level with the revealed will of God? It would be easy to show that an enlightened and consistent application of the principles held forth in the Standards and the federal deeds of the Church of Scotland would require this to be done. And the conclusion is irresistible, that a failure to do this is fatal to any claim of identity with the church in her constitution as exhibited in those Standards and deeds. It is no forced inference from the fact of an approval by any church of her members incorporating with a nation that owns neither God nor his law, that she does not believe that a nation is under indispensable obligation to do so; it is a logical necessity. And as all the churches in the land do approve of such incorporation, the Reformed Presbyterian Church alone excepted, they are in the position of sectaries, and not that of the original Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

It was a principle of the second Reformation that entered into the constitution of the Church and was essential to her unity, "that Christ is the alone Head of the church, and that he has made her independent of the civil power." On this principle there is among all Presbyterians professed agreement. But we have already seen that this principle was practically ignored in the church established after the Revolution of 1688. And the vicious effects of that establishment have reached to all the churches that have been formed out of the church then established. Erastianism is the direct opposite of the principle stated above; and the Erastianism of the Establishment has transmitted its taint to these several bodies, whether on this or on the other side of the Atlantic. The correctness of this affirmation will appear from the following incontrovertible facts. First. These churches have not disclaimed and condemned that Establishment. Second. In Britain and Ireland their members have political fellowship with the nation that infringed on the prerogatives of Christ, and that continues its usurpation of a power that belongs to him alone. Third. In this country, in most cases, they refuse to take cognizance of such official acts of their members who hold offices in the government as are in violation of the law of God. This Erastian invasion of the liberties of the church in claiming for civil functionaries exemption from ecclesiastical accountability so far as their official acts are concerned, is traceable to the same source with an actual assumption of authority over the church. Fourth. Some of these churches hold ecclesiastical fellowship, and all of them are in civil connection with those who, under severe penalties, forbid the ministers of Christ to execute the commission that he has given them. "Preach the gospel to every creature," is his command, which his ministers are not suffered to obey in so far as those who are held as slaves under the constituted authority of the nation are concerned.

In all these ways there is a practical rejection of the great truth that the church is free and independent of the civil power, and subject only to Christ her Head.

To any one acquainted with the history of the Reformation in Scotland, it is not necessary to prove that covenanting entered largely, as an element, into the means by which the church reached the high position to which she attained. The duty of the church and of the nation to bind themselves by federal obligations to God, was clearly maintained and often exemplified. The church when united and standing erect in her purity and fidelity to Christ, was a covenanted church. Nor did she fail to teach the scriptural truth, that moral persons, whether civil or ecclesiastical, are bound by their federal engagements, after the individual persons who entered into them have ceased to exist on earth. The moral person lives in the successive generations of those who once covenanted, and are held as really bound to all that is moral in the bond as those who first entered into it.

Where did the church of the Revolution take her stand with regard to the Covenants, National and Solemn League? Unquestionably not on a covenanted platform, but on the rejection of the Covenants and their binding obligation on the church and on the nation. The Scottish Parliament had passed, under Charles II., an act rescinding the Covenants, and that act was not repealed by the nation when the church affiliated with it in accepting the Establishment. The Covenants carefully guarded the church against the encroachments of the civil power, but this hedge, already broken down by a faithless parliament, presented no hindrance to the aspirant to the throne of Scotland. And the church seemed too glad to receive the favor of the crown to press as the condition of accepting the professed friendship of the nation, the restoration of her ancient liberties. The Revolution Church of 1690 is not and from the first was not identical with the Reformed Covenanted Church of 1649.

Did the churches that separated from the Established Church of Scotland return to original covenanted ground? Did they place themselves squarely on the platform which the whole church occupied before her unity was disturbed, and when the Reformation was at its height? It is only by the affirmation of these inquiries that a claim of identity can be made good, and the charge of continuing the division produced by the Establishment accepted in 1690, be shown to be groundless. And in order to this it must be made appear that these bodies repudiated and condemned all the concessions made to the civil power as the conditions of that Establishment. It must be made manifest that the whole covenanted uniformity, as defined in the Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Form of Government and Covenants, was embraced by the Revolution church, in order to identify her with the original covenanted Presbyterian Church. That this has been done will not be affirmed by any of those churches that take exceptions to parts of the Confession of Faith, or that object to the obligation of the Covenants, whether in things civil or ecclesiastical.

It was also a principle that entered into the creed and practice of the church, and was essential to her unity, that between a re-

formed nation and the church there should be an agreement to secure their mutual rights, and to promote their mutual interests. To co-operate with the nation in advancing in every proper way the physical, moral and religious welfare of men, was a work in which the church employed her most earnest efforts: She desired to go hand in hand with the nation, in benefiting men and glorifying God, each in its own sphere, and each refraining from intruding on the domain of the other. The dogma that religion has nothing to do with politics was then unknown, or if known it was condemned. The Church of Scotland knew where lay the golden mean between Erastianism and Romanism—between encroachments by the nation on the liberties of the church, and the assumption by the church of authority over the nation; and that mean was far enough from being coincident with an unlimited toleration. The church never claimed to herself the power to tolerate error or sin, and as little did she concede it to the nation. She claimed the right to determine from the infallible Standard what were the ordinances of government and worship that Christ had appointed, and to dispense these not only unmolested, but sustained and supported by the civil power. To the nation she conceded the right, under God and according to his law, to manage and regulate all civil affairs. It was thus by a definite agreement that the church and the nation bound themselves to God and to one another, to carry out to their accomplishment the ends respectively of their organizations.

Is this the position now occupied by any of the churches which have sprung from the Church of Scotland, as established in 1690? On no other point has there been a wider departure than on that which defines the mutual relations of church and state, as settled by the church in her standards and covenants. This departure is admitted and justified. By the churches generally, this is claimed as an advance in reformation. The question as to the truth of this claim, lies now out of my way. The claim itself is all that is needed to prove that a change has been made from the original position of the church. Nor is this merely in word, it is in deed. In this land, all these churches are satisfied with the utter ignoring of the church by the nation. In the practical rejection of the claims of the church for which she earnestly, and for a short time successfully contended, to be protected and sustained, in doing the work of her Head and King, they acquiesce. What is this but to depart from original ground, and assume a new position?

The conclusion to which we are brought by this induction is, that schism began, increased and is perpetuated in the Presbyterian Church by departures from the fundamental principles held and maintained by the church when she was one and united. And it seems too evident to require argument, that it is only by those who have made the separation, returning to their former position, that the breaches can be healed and visible unity restored.

It cannot have escaped the notice of those who have pondered the facts brought out in this lecture, that the question that has

been especially the disturbing element in the church, and tended to her disunity, is that connected with her relation to the civil power. It was in this quarter that the first schismatic movement originated. The Scottish Parliament, in violation of constitutional principles, had admitted irreligious men to power, and part of the church acquiesced. Hence arose the sectarian party called the Resolutioners. The interference with the church's independence in 1690, and her submission to this interference, changed her position and placed her on a new basis. The Associate Church was the result of earnest and honest men escaping from civil encroachments which they were powerless to resist. The Burgher oath, a civil matter, subsequently divided this body. The Free Church of Scotland was the result of the aggressions of the civil power, on what remained of the liberty of the church after the establishment. This question of the relation of the church to the civil power, settled more than two hundred years ago, but unfortunately soon after disturbed, has frequently reappeared to the great damage of ecclesiastical peace and unity. All attempts to keep clear of it by refusing to the church the right to treat of civil questions, has been unavailing. Like some evil genius, it has haunted the courts of the church, a potent agency of strife and division. Its latest exploit was to break into two parts the largest Presbyterian body in the country—the Old School Presbyterian Church. At the touch of its wand, the adhesive properties of the church lose their power, and that which seemed to be a compact body becomes a friable and disintegrated mass.

It is worth while to inquire how it is that this question, more than any other on which men take different sides, has been so fruitful of schism and division? To answer it, prophecy affords some assistance. We are told, Rev. 12:9, that the issue of the conflict between Michael and the devil was, that "the devil was cast out of heaven into the earth." This took place at the time of the Reformation from popery. "On the earth," that is by means of earthly power, the devil has ever since that time carried on a warfare with the church. Treachery and cruelty are his chosen weapons, and he uses them as seems best suited to accomplish his purpose. Exciting suspicion against the church as a dangerous element in a nation, he has often succeeded in stirring up the ungodly to exterminate her from the earth. Failing in this, he employs his utmost skill to render fruitless any attempt of the church to reform the nations. Disguised as an angel of light, he tries, and often with success, to persuade good men that it is beneath the church, and unworthy of her, to interfere at all in political matters. And though he has not fully succeeded in imposing on the church this shameless lie, yet he has generally found some in the church to take his side, and to maintain his slavish dogmas, to the disturbance of ecclesiastical peace. And then with an effrontery unequaled in the record of impudence, they lay the blame on those who are aiming to accomplish the end for which the church exists—the glory of God and the good of men. Let it

be known—let it be remembered, and let it be proclaimed on the house-tops, that not those who make religion to bear on men's political duties, are accountable for ecclesiastical strife and disunion, but those who withstand and oppose them.

It is high time that the churches should deal with this question of schism in the church, in all its breadth and magnitude. What has the religious community gained by abandoning first principles and loosening the church from her moorings, to be driven by every wind and tossed by every wave? What if after all our forefathers were right, in contending that the church should be in league with the state, and both in covenant with God? If they were, then just in so far as these principles have been given up, there has been a loss of an element of unity and strength, and what might have been a useful ally, has become a rival or an enemy. It was no friend that produced schisms in the church, and the civil power, in so far as it has done this, has acted a hostile part. In the hands of bad men this has been its constant tendency. The church would consult her best interests, were she to make a determined and united effort to rescue this potent agency from the hands of wicked men, imbue it with the spirit of the Bible, subject it to Christ, and then co-operate with it in promoting the welfare of men, both civil and religious.

And there are encouraging indications that this will be done: God is speaking to the churches in this land in his providence, as well as in his word, and he is making his voice to be heard. The silence with regard to national sins and national duties that so long prevailed, is at length broken. The Presbyterian Churches have ceased to be the apologists of the nation for its constitutional neglect of God, his authority and law. The judgments sent on the land, point with unerring distinctness to these fundamental evils, as the cause of the Lord's controversy. His voice is to the city, and the men of wisdom begin to see his name. They know the rod, and him who hath appointed it. From thousands of pulpits the call is made to the nation to honor God and obey his law. The religious press reiterates the call. In the supreme judicatories of the churches, with an earnestness and a unanimity most cheering, the sin of the nation is pointed out and rebuked. These are hopeful indications for those who love both the truth and peace. They are tokens that the time is not far distant when the nation shall be brought to see its duty to God, to men and to the church. They almost realize to the hearing of faith, the joyful fact long since announced by the evangelical prophet: "The watchman shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing, for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion."

This most auspicious change, as its consummation draws nigh, meets a determined resistance. By avowed enemies without, and disguised enemies within, the church is opposed in all her efforts to bring men in their civil relations to the scriptural standard. Power usurped and abused is ever yielded with reluctance. "The devil has great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short

time." The nations, too, are angry. Ungodly men are enraged that their claim to rule the world by prescriptive right, should be denied. They know, too, the power of a united testimony for the truth, and it is their policy to keep the church divided against herself. Through the agency of those who have a name in the church, but who love politics better than religion, that testimony has been greatly weakened. But it shall nevertheless prevail. The church must and she shall, with a voice that the clamor of venal politicians will fail to silence, demand that this hostility to her Head and to herself shall end. The true friends of the Redeemer shall not be always subjected to the tyranny and cruelty of those who live on the spoils of humanity. The church shall be visibly one, standing on the platform of the whole truth, as long ago sworn to and maintained. And the church and the nation shall co-operate, each seeking the welfare of the other. "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." "The envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim," Is. 11 : 13. "They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten," Jer. 50 : 5. "Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land; for great shall be the day of Jezreel," Hos. 1 : 11.

"O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord."

NATIONAL SINS THE SOURCE OF NATIONAL CALAMITIES.

"Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed." Isaiah 10 : 1.

THE interjection translated "woe" in this verse, is used almost exclusively by the prophets. It has three meanings: one of sorrow, occurring only twice; another of exhortation or attention, occurring three times; and a third of threatening, in which sense it is used in every other instance. The whole context plainly shows that this last is the meaning of the word in the verse before us—that it here expresses God's threatened judgments. This threat is made against those "who decree unrighteous decrees"—literally, decrees of iniquity. The word rendered "unrighteous" means primarily, nothingness or vanity, and thus comes to designate what is utterly worthless and vile. The persons threatened are, in the first instance, the unjust legislators of the ten tribes, who had enacted wicked laws—laws that defied the authority of God, and trampled on the rights of men. The same threatening denunciation is hurled against those that write "grievousness which they have prescribed;" that is, those judges of the kingdom of Israel who judicially delivered and recorded sentences unjust and oppressive, though