

THE PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY.

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I. THE CONTRA-NATURAL CHARACTER OF THE MIRACLE.

NONE but the maintainers of a rigid process of evolution, enforced by a law of blind, immanent necessity, would deny that man has degenerated from his primitive condition. He has fallen from the estate of holiness and happiness in which he was created into one of sin and misery. That being admitted, it is obvious that the scheme of religion which he originally possessed is now utterly inadequate to his wants. The law which it contained as a rule of action has been violated, and its condemning sentence renders impossible an acceptable obedience to its requirements. So far as that scheme of religion is concerned man is doomed.

On the supposition that God the Moral Ruler were willing to reveal to sinful man another scheme, not merely legal but redemptive, as a directory of faith, a guide of life and a basis of hope, it would be just, if not indispensable, that its credentials should be so clear as to admit of no reasonable doubt. They ought to be not so much deductions from speculative premises however apparently well-founded, as phenomenal facts easily apprehended by consciousness, or immediate and necessary inferences from those facts, and therefore of equal validity with the original data themselves: the concrete results of observation and experience, or good because logical consequences from them. While the revelation itself is to be proved, its proofs ought to be as nearly as possible autopsistic.

IV. THE SPIRIT OF PRESBYTERIANISM, AS DEVELOPED IN MODERN HISTORY.

There is nothing so thoroughly misunderstood by the world as the Presbyterian system. The more spiritual the object, the less likely is it to be comprehended by the carnal mind. It may read like a paradox, to affirm that the most efficient factor in modern civilization and the advancement of true liberty has been that ecclesiastical power which was inaugurated by John Knox and his associates, at the beginning of the Reformation, on scriptural principles, and has continued to this day to lead and regulate the conservative progress of social development. The apparent paradox is, however, in our humble judgment, a sound proposition readily demonstrable from history. A denial of its truth would betray the ignorance or the prejudice of the objector.

The younger class of readers especially need to be reminded of certain facts bearing upon this assertion, that are generally lost through the presence of worldly interests and the influence of fascinating literature calculated to warp, rather than inform, the judgment. One of the most efficient causes of the errors and ignorance referred to, has unquestionably been the habit in popular authors of entertaining their readers with caricatures of piety as exhibited in the idiom and conduct of the less cultivated classes. Nor can it be denied that the English Church has exercised a dominant and prejudicial influence in English history. Its position, its wealth, its learned leisure and its overbearing assumptions have given it a disproportionate share in the formation of modern opinion. The Presbyterian body has never been able to compete with such a rival in any field but one—the field of popular education and religious instruction of the masses of the people.

The posture of the Presbyterian Church has been, from the first, one of difficulty and danger. At every juncture, when it has been true to its own principles, it has encountered the hostility of the world. It has stood as a break-water between priest-craft and state-craft, from the days of Knox until now. The confusion of

Scottish history, from the Reformation to the Revolution of 1688, is simply due to this triangular conflict, in which the Kirk sought to maintain its spiritual independence, of the arrogant hierarchy on the one hand, and the unprincipled and sordid aristocracy on the other. Many mistakes were, of course, committed. The spiritual power of the church was often transcended, and she was tempted, on occasion, to employ intrigue or force to frustrate the designs of her enemies. But a candid examination will satisfy any honest inquirer that the end in view was never entirely overlooked, and that this end was, not worldly power, but the establishment of the kingdom of Christ.

The signal mistakes of this church are among the most conclusive proofs of its unworldly spirit. Amid all the conflicts of factions in Scotland, the Kirk continued to contend for the preëminence of the spiritual over the temporal, and yet insisted upon an unbroken allegiance of individuals to the crown, the government and the laws of the country. But general history has utterly failed to record the extent of her sufferings under a succession of tyrants. The moment when King James VI. of Scotland became also James I. of England, was the beginning of a series of trials far exceeding any in the past, throughout an era in which this church was a prime agent, a suffering witness, and a bleeding victim. Third parties are seldom successful until the two principal contestants are exhausted. This was signally illustrated under the Stuarts. The despotism of James I. culminated under Charles I., and the Long Parliament of England was forced into resistance by successive acts of arbitrary power. Civil war began, and the remainder of the Parliament, forsaken by the cavaliers, being opponents of the king, became gradually divided into two parties—the republicans on the one hand, inclining towards independency in religion, and the advocates of a limited monarchy, on the other hand, inclining to a church establishment analogous to that of Scotland. Hence the popular and historical names of these parties became stereotyped in English history as Independents and Presbyterians. Generically they were Parliamentarians in respect to government, and Puritans in reference to their rejection of prelacy.

It is well known that the Scots were allied with the English Parliament during the first stage of the conflict, and that their army of observation was stationed in the north of England until the royal power was overthrown. The king, to escape from the toils of his enemies in England, fled in disguise to the Scottish camp, in the vain hope that the loyalty of the northern kingdom would facilitate his return to power. But the army of Scotland, guided by popular sentiment at home, could not be persuaded to restore him to liberty and the throne without guarantees which Charles would not give. Scotland stipulated for the payment of her forces before they should retire, and when this was done, right or wrong, she surrendered the royal captive to the English commissioners. This act has been laid at the Presbyterian door by prejudiced parties ever since, as one of perfidy and treason. The money has been put in this scale, and the king in that, and the unwarranted conclusion drawn that the one was the price of the other. There is no evidence whatever that this was the case. The king was, however, held and transferred as a prisoner, and the true question relates to the right of the people of either nation to restrain him. All civilized people now agree that a nation is not under moral obligation to submit to a tyrant. Restraint of some kind was the only alternative. The king might have given guarantees, but refused, and he was thus surrendered to the English authorities to be dealt with as events might determine. Right or wrong, the deed was to this extent done, and here the responsibility of Presbyterianism ends. It is responsible for resistance and for restraint of the king, and for steadfast opposition to oppression from church or state; but it is not responsible, as a malicious literature avers, for the unexpected events that followed. The criminality and folly of the republican faction in the English army, in its overthrow of the Parliament, its usurpation of judicial power, and its trial and execution of the king, are all readily admitted; but surely no honest critic can charge these atrocities upon the Presbyterians, who alone stood in the way of their perpetration, and had to be removed by force before such outrages could be accomplished. There is no serpent-poison more concentrated or more noxious than the slander, so generally propagated from

age to age, that the Presbyterians of Scotland and England were implicated, as a body, in that stupendous crime. The whole mass of documentary evidence utters an unbroken testimony to the fact that the Presbyterians of that age, in both countries, were equally averse to prelacy and independency, and no less opposed to republicanism than to an unlimited exercise of royal prerogative.

Had the Presbyterian party been either openly or secretly inclined to the military usurpation that followed the retirement of the Scottish army, it is evident that they would have betrayed some satisfaction at the result. Cromwell's administration was eminently conciliatory, and all parties who quietly submitted enjoyed a toleration in religion which they had no reason to expect. It is strange, but true, that this usurping power, so unscrupulous in matters of state, was centuries in advance of its time in its recognition of the rights of conscience. Milton, in one of his most violent pamphlets, thus speaks in the spirit of the nineteenth century on this most important theme: "The covenant enjoins us to endeavor the extirpation, first of popery and prelacy, then of heresy, schism, and profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness; and this we cease not to do by all effectual and proper means. But these divines might know that to extirpate all these things can be no work of the civil sword, but of the spiritual, which is the word of God." This is noble language from Cromwell's secretary, and worthy of a far better cause than that which he was serving under a military dictator whom the people had had no voice in elevating to power. Personally, Cromwell was better than any of the Stuarts, and his administration was milder, purer, and more glorious than theirs, but his title was acquired like the booty of a highway robber, and his legacy to the people was an era of oppression, corruption, and degeneracy. Under the gentle sway of this usurper the most restive parties in all three kingdoms were the Presbyterians. Instead of countenancing violence and enjoying religious indulgence, we find them giving Cromwell more trouble than all others of his subjects, not by seditious conduct and breaches of the peace, but by perpetual and constantly reiterated protest against the whole method of the pending revolution. They were beyond measure

indiscreet, but it was the indiscretion of men who sought to imitate the ancient prophets by denouncing the crimes of the rulers of the land in terms of intense abhorrence. It was the indiscretion of men who could not be enticed by any form of indulgence or flattery to appear, even by silence, to approve of atrocious crime.

That which Presbyterians must ever regard as the greatest aggravation of their cruel treatment by the Stuarts, after the restoration, was the royal ingratitude. It was the Scottish nation, the Presbyterian Protestants of Ireland, and the Long Parliament of England, restored by General Monck, and consisting chiefly of the very men whom Cromwell had expelled on account of their advocacy of a constitutional monarchy and a Presbyterian church, that blindly recalled the king to the throne of his fathers. Let it not be forgotten that Charles II., with a large majority of the prominent actors in all these stages of the restoration, had signed the "SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT," by which they were sworn to sustain both liberty and order in church and state. And the world should not ignore the fact that the subsequent affliction of the true "Covenanters" was, in the main, the work of republicans and royalists who had been members of the League. The Presbyterians were crushed between two mill-stones, and the men who did the crushing are historically impaled as a generation of perjurers! The Presbyterians were so unworldly and unsuspecting as to rely upon the royal word of the unprincipled king and the honor of the corrupt politicians around him, and, before a year had elapsed, they found themselves writhing under the heels of a coalition of traitors, who were countenanced and sustained in all this cruelty and wickedness by a vindictive hierarchy.

Every age witnesses the occultation of some important truth. It is necessary for some hand to bring it back into the field of vision. This is one of the lost facts of history. The Presbyterians of Great Britain and Ireland were, previous to their emancipation at the Revolution of 1688, *a third party, and an intermediate section of the Reformed Church*, far behind some of the Independents in apprehending the rights of conscience, but far in advance of the Stuarts and their adherents, in appreciating the necessary limits of human authority in civil and religious affairs. They

were the most honest, the most consistent, the most persevering, of all parties or sects, and for these reasons it was their lot to suffer more severely than all others at the hands of despotism, whether hereditary or usurped.

All history may be challenged for a nobler example of christian magnanimity than that exhibited by the great body of Presbyterians in Great Britain and Ireland, when James II. inaugurated his diabolical scheme to overthrow the Protestant Episcopal Church established by law, and reinstate popery in its place. It will be remembered that this royal miscreant, from considerations of mere policy, included Protestant Dissenters in his indulgence, and thus gave them a welcome ease from the oppression of a Protestant government and hierarchy. But whilst they rejoiced in a sense of relief, they were guilty of no unseemly exultation, and cordially united with the Established Church in extending to the Prince of Orange a warm and loyal reception. The occasion was obviously presented for a display of a spirit of triumph, when they saw their late persecutors yielding up ignominiously their places of power and wealth for the benefit of their Romish successors. But the conduct of the Presbyterians generally at that crisis was marked by a noble dignity and disinterestedness, and stands out in glorious contrast with that of the hierarchy. There was no vindictive triumph, but we find them heartily coöperating with the bishops and clergy in rescuing the established churches of England and Ireland from the toils of popery, and contenting themselves with establishment in Scotland alone. William III. was governed as much by policy as by piety in reference to ecclesiastical affairs; but he had been trained in the school of Dutch Presbyterianism, and although an Erastian, was far more enlightened and liberal than any preceding king. To him and the wise councillors around him is undoubtedly due, under providence, that general abandonment of persecution which has marked most subsequent administrations under the British crown, and the diffusion of more enlightened views of religious liberty, not only in those islands, but in every part of the world where Protestant civilization prevails. And especially do we see the fruit of this great revolution of human thought in these western commonwealths, where the rights of

conscience are guaranteed in all our fundamental laws. History proves that, in every crisis, the English hierarchy has resisted to the utmost every advance towards this blessed result, whilst the Presbyterians have generally been found arrayed in support and defense of measures tending to a more enlarged liberty in church and state. They have sometimes erred in excessive enthusiasm for their principles, and thus incurred the reproach of fanaticism. Their oppressors, on the other hand, have erred in excessive devotion to power and place, and heartless indifference to the conscientious scruples of Dissenters. The difference lay between an exaggeration of right principle by one party, and a want of it in the other.

This statement would appear harsh but for notorious facts. It is signally illustrated in the events that occurred in Ireland after the advent of William of Orange to England. The Presbyterians of Ulster had not bound themselves to James II. by solemn oath of supremacy, but only accepted his deceitful indulgence to papists and themselves. They could therefore consistently make common cause with the Established Church in welcoming the new king. They flew to arms, and, by their heroic defense of Londonderry and Enniskillen, contributed their full share to the success of the revolution. Their representatives visited the prince in England at the beginning with open congratulations, and their ministers did not hesitate to pray in his behalf. They were conspicuous as rebels, and did not show any shame for their intelligent choice.

How was it with the Irish hierarchy? History informs us that, a few months before the battle of the Boyne, several of the Episcopal clergy of Dublin and its vicinity had appeared before King James with an address of loyalty to him, and the same persons visited King William in his camp after the battle with a similar address to the latter. The addresses are extant, and are said to be of about equal fervor towards the two rivals. All this was from a body of clergy who had subscribed "that it was not lawful, upon any pretense whatever, to take arms against the king." This declaration plainly condemns the Prince of Orange and all his Protestant followers who had been in arms at the date of the first ad-

dress, and requires the logic of a Jesuit to reconcile either address with christian morals.

The contrast on this and a number of subsequent occasions between the two parties, is such that every generous and upright heart must recognize it. It is a shame to withhold due credit from the suffering party, and to use national history for the purpose of justifying a system of ecclesiastical policy chargeable with so many enormities as was the English hierarchy. This is even now constantly done both in England and the United States. Those who enjoy literary leisure, and are not engrossed by works of righteousness, are too apt to incline to the dominant party, and to pay an undue homage to the mitred class, who have figured so long in British aristocracy and exhibited a conspicuous disdain towards the humble clergy of another style, who have been far more faithful and earnest in behalf of the civil and religious rights of mankind. This we say, however, with thankful recognition of the services rendered to the same cause by a large number of churchmen. The criticism applies to none in our day whose consciences and tastes recoil from the abuses of the past.

The great fact which we seek to present intelligibly and impressively to the reader is the comparative *purity of the Presbyterian denomination from the Erastian and secular errors of some other bodies of christians*. Among the evils attending a church establishment, there is none more corrupting than that of *patronage*—an abuse happily unknown to American Protestants. The more spiritual part of the Presbyterian churches in Great Britain and Ireland had been sorely tried, under the Stuarts, by bitter persecution; and under William III. and Anne, to the moment of union between England and Scotland, they had suffered intensely from a different cause. The policy of these sovereigns, however tolerant towards dissenters, was in the highest degree unfavorable to the spiritual independence of the two established churches. The Church of England basked and rejoiced in the sunshine of royal favor, whilst the Presbyterians of Scotland were compelled by their principles to protest, on many occasions, against the restrictive measures of the government. But through the wise moderation of King William, they had secured one great measure

of reform which promised the richest spiritual results. Patronage had been completely abolished, and the people of each parish rightfully invested with the choice of their pastors. It seems incredible in this age that such a system as that of patronage could have endured so long among a christian people with Bibles in their hands. The right of presentation to a multitude of benefices, even in the Presbyterian Church, had been enjoyed for generations by a great variety of secular persons and corporations, and the congregations were deprived of their inherent privileges as subjects of the kingdom of Christ. At the time of the union, in 1707, the Kirk of Scotland was happily rescued from this prolific source of heresy and corruption. Lay patrons could no longer fill the pulpits of Scotland with men of questionable faith and character, and it was at least possible for the church to advance in spiritual improvement. This was the actual status when the union was consummated, which embraced a solemn covenant, securing to the Kirk its rights and privileges. It is painful to record the fact that, in open violation of this sacred covenant, the united Parliament in 1712 rapidly, ruthlessly and infamously passed an act restoring this abominable abuse in the Scottish establishment, in spite and contempt of the opposition of the Scottish people. A blacker crime has rarely stained the legislation of a civilized government. The reader may perhaps inquire how such an act could be perpetrated. The question is easily answered. Many unprincipled men had been introduced into the Kirk by the lay patrons under the Stuarts. King William consented to the abolition of patronage, but insisted upon retaining in the establishment a considerable number of prelatists and Jacobites who were the undoubted enemies of both himself and the church. This was in pursuance of his fixed policy of toleration. He conceived that his throne would be strengthened by endeavoring to conciliate all classes of dissenters, and therefore exacted of the Presbyterians of Scotland, who were his most cordial supporters, a reluctant consent to retain such of these incumbents of parishes as maintained a decent deportment. A considerable party in the church was therefore already organized in 1712 in support of the treacherous proposition to restore the law of patronage.

But it still remains difficult to understand how a British Parliament could be induced to perpetrate an act so cruel, unjust and impious. All presumption would, as a matter of course, be against it. History, however, records many things which reason would pronounce incredible. It declares that this same British Parliament did not hesitate afterwards to tax the American colonies without their representation or consent, and for eight long years to seek to impose a tyrannical yoke upon millions of the sons of Britain as well entitled to freedom as themselves. It declares that in our own day that enlightened body has had the meanness to sanction the act of its government compelling the Chinese empire to admit into its ports a product of its Indian dependency which that empire desired to exclude as pernicious and fatal to the well-being of its subjects. The black catalogue of similar outrages upon human rights might be prolonged to weariness. But let it suffice to affirm, summarily, that not only the British Parliament, but the American Congress, has, on some occasions, knowingly and brutally trampled upon the rights of weaker parties which the law of God had forbidden to be touched.

It should be remembered that the union had exerted a pernicious influence upon the nobility and the politicians of Scotland. Both classes had become Anglicanized by the change of capital from Edinburgh to London. A more courtly and compliant form of religion readily commended itself to the wealthy and titled attendants upon the worship of the metropolis, and from that day to this the aristocracy of Scotland has followed that of England in preferring the ecclesiastical system of the latter. Worldly considerations of one kind have influenced the peerage, and still other motives have warped the views of the politicians. The latter class of public men easily discovered that the English Church was far less obstructive and much more manageable than the Scottish Kirk. It need not, therefore, occasion any great surprise that even as early as 1712 the British Parliament was ready to destroy so sacred a provision of the act of union as the law against lay patronage. A legislature strongly biased in both houses against the Presbyterian Church, and notoriously corrupted by the vices of the times, was ripe enough for an act of perfidy, and needed only a favorable occasion to commit it.

The result of this shameful restoration of a most abominable abuse was to introduce again into the Church of Scotland a growing element of a character more remarkable for worldly culture than for religious principle. Moderatism, the euphemistic designation of spiritual laxity or indifference, acquired a predominance in the establishment which long continued to bring forth its characteristic fruit in rationalism and intolerance. Not until our own day did the reviving spirit of evangelical piety begin with effect to assert itself in the councils of that church.

No more dramatic scene, or one more forcibly illustrating the true spirit of Presbyterianism, ever appeared in the annals of modern christianity than that of 1843 in the streets of Edinburgh. For several years past a series of painful collisions had occurred between patrons and congregations in different parts of Scotland, leading to violent agitation in church and state, and attended with unbounded excitement and disorder of the public mind. It is not difficult, however, to state the one principle in which the strife originated. The laws of the Church of Scotland required a call to be made out by the heritors, elders, heads of families, and parishioners of a parish, and forbade that any pastor *should be intruded on any congregation contrary to the will of the people*. These laws were professedly founded on spiritual principles and scriptural authority. They could not be repealed or neglected without unfaithfulness to Christ, the supreme head of the church. The law of patronage, reimposed upon the church by the state, in obvious violation of the terms of union, was regarded by the former as valid only in reference to temporalities. The moderate party, however, predominated in some Presbyteries, and these proceeded on several occasions to induct the nominees of patrons, on the call of small minorities of the people, in spite of their protest. The Synods and Assemblies deciding such cases on appeal in favor of the people, the intruding parties brought their claims before the civil courts, and they ultimately reached the House of Lords. These courts decided the question against the church, as might have been expected, and the shameful scene was several times witnessed by the free Presbyterian people of Scotland, in the memory of many now living, of mercenary ministers being forced upon

unwilling congregations by a demonstration of arms. In the Assembly of 1843 a majority of the God-fearing members of the body, finding all hope of fair dealing from the civil power utterly lost, seceded with dignity from the establishment, and constituted the Free Church of Scotland. This grand event forms an era in the history of the modern church. The self-sacrifice of the Free Church was the salvation of Presbyterianism in Scotland, and led to an early repeal of the odious law of patronage.

We have referred to it for the purpose of developing with historical distinctness the leading feature of a system of church polity which now, with more emphasis than ever, asserts among us its divine origin. We mean nothing less than this, that in all its history in Scotland, England, Ireland, and the United States, Presbyterianism, consistently held, has refused to acknowledge loyalty in spiritual matters to any sovereign but Jesus Christ, and has chosen rather to suffer than to submit to the dictation of the state. In reference to civil questions, its principles are unchangeably settled in the Westminster Confession of Faith, in which it is declared that "Synods and councils are not to intermeddle with the civil affairs which concern the commonwealth," except for certain specified purposes clearly within their jurisdiction. And it is no less distinctly affirmed, that no party in the state shall interfere with the spiritual functions of the church, of which Jesus Christ alone is the living head. It was for these unalterable principles that the immortal band of ministers and elders, members of the Scottish General Assembly of 1843, in solemn procession abandoned the Establishment, with all its properties, dignities, and revenues, and to secure spiritual liberty renounced all further connection with the British government.

The Presbyterians of Great Britain were backward, it is true, in surrendering a claim to support from the state. The Independents were far in advance of them as advocates of absolute separation, for the obvious reason that they never had enjoyed the advantages of an Establishment. But we insist upon the historical proposition, that the Presbyterians have ever been in the lead as the fearless and faithful champions of the great principle most distinctly announced by themselves, that the secular and spiritual

spheres in society are altogether diverse in nature and function, and the kingdom of Christ cannot be subordinated to any temporal authority or influence.

With such antecedents, the Presbyterians of the new world were providentially prepared for their conspicuous appointment to direct and mould the free institutions of the United States. Through their commanding influence in the counsels of the founders of the republic, the same great principle for which they had contended and suffered in the old country became engrafted upon the constitutions of the new. The secular power was prohibited to control or contaminate the ark of God with its unhallowed hand, and in consequence, to-day a multitude of christian sects are enjoying a complete independence.

It is the plainest of all corollaries that this independence is mutual. If the church may not meddle with politics, politics ought to be excluded from the church. Under republican institutions the difficulty lies in preventing the intrusion of party feeling into ecclesiastical assemblies. Under such an influence the church may easily be betrayed into action glaringly inconsistent with its own cherished creed. The question of loyalty has often presented itself to Presbyterian councils, and it has been shown that this church has always refused, as a branch of the kingdom of Christ, to acknowledge allegiance to any potentate or commonwealth. It has, however, been often solicited by rival claimants to the crown to determine the allegiance of its members. The reader has been reminded that, *as an established church*, she has decided such questions in a spiritual sense, and with a high regard to the authority of God and the rights of the people. But in the United States the question of loyalty has assumed another aspect, and the conscience has been embarrassed by the conflicting claims, not of *dynasties*, but of *interpretations of the constitution*.

The Presbyterian Church, although established in Scotland by law, refused to sustain the authority of Charles II. and James II., on the ground that neither of them could be trusted without some restraint upon the prerogative. In the United States she was induced by the pressure of a *political party*, at the beginning of our civil war, to decide the allegiance of the citizen, by *assuming* the

correctness of an interpretation of the constitution which had been honestly disputed from the origin of the union. Her posture during the wars of the Stuarts was that of neutrality without compromise, until neutrality was made impossible by the designs of a popish king. But the Presbyterians of the United States failed in our civil conflict to abstain with due consistency from "meddling" with the question of *primary allegiance*, on which the founders of the government themselves differed in opinion, and violated their own principles by deciding in favor of one of the contesting parties. In other words, they assumed the principle so long repudiated, that an Assembly *may* "meddle with civil affairs that concern the 'commonwealth'" in the most vital point, which is the allegiance of the citizen.

The Southern Presbyterian Church owes its existence to this unfortunate assumption of a power of interpretation which even the Supreme Court of the United States had never directly exercised. During the war, and after the peace, this body of Christians remained separate from the mother church in painful antagonism. Time softened the asperities of a bloody strife, and at length, with the view of restoring fraternal relations, the Southern Assembly adopted for itself, and proffered to the other Assembly, a mutual retraction of all offensive expressions, without demanding the abandonment of any principle. The Assembly at Springfield, Illinois, instead of an unreserved adoption of the resolution as sent, appended to it a declaration that the political action of preceding Assemblies was not included.

From that day, the status of the two bodies has continued friendly, but apart. But it is now proposed by certain brethren in our own church to take another step, and in some way consolidate the two bodies. To this many others object, and we reiterate the objection, that the Northern Church declines to "recede" from her erroneous principle, affirmed in repeated action, to the purport that synods and councils may, under political pressure, determine for the members of the church to what civil government their loyalty primarily belongs! This claim of jurisdiction is, in our judgment, a gross departure from the true historical position of the church, and an insuperable bar to organic union.

Absolute consistency is not to be expected in any ecclesiastical body. The Southern branch of the American Presbyterian Church has not claimed a faultless record. But, in the matter of *principle* adopted and generally acted upon, she claims to represent the historical church of our fathers in a strict interpretation of the Confession, and a complete separation from secular governments and political parties.

Presbyterianism has the honor of literally fulfilling the Scriptures in its past experience: "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." Arbitrary sovereigns have ever found it an obstruction to their selfish designs. Corrupt politicians have long learned that it could not easily be flattered or intimidated. A frivolous world has denounced it as sour and repulsive, and some of its sister denominations have striven hard to banish it from Christendom. In spite of opposition, jealousy, and defection, it has made a wonderful progress in the van of civilization, and especially here in the western hemisphere its mission is obvious—to serve as a prime factor in the recovery of the world from sin and death. The defense and diffusion of the truth as it is in Jesus is its proper aim, and this result depends, under God, upon our fidelity to the principles of our fathers, so carefully derived from the Scriptures undiluted by tradition. Among these principles there is none more distinctly peculiar to the Presbyterian Church than this pronounced unworldliness, which has marked its entire history, involved it in unspeakable troubles, and constituted both its weakness and its strength.

We assume as indisputable that the life of our Lord is the safest policy of his people. The church must stand related to "the powers that be" precisely as he stood. "The children are free," as he himself declares, and compliance with the demands of the civil power is conceded only to avoid offense. (Mat. xvii. 27.) It follows necessarily that the christian church is bound by its allegiance to Christ to preserve, as far as possible, a meek and charitable independence, and avoid with the utmost care all suspicion of subserviency to the policy of the world. The members of an ecclesiastical body may, of course, exercise all their rights as citizens in political associations, but in church courts the para-

mount dignity and sovereignty of Christ cannot be surrendered.

Whatever inconsistencies may be discovered in the records of various Presbyterian councils, one thing is clear beyond dispute, that the adjudication of questions of loyalty cannot be a function of a church not connected with the state. And no amount of party zeal can justify the church in any of its branches in exercising an authority never conveyed to her, by precept or example, from her divine head. The time has come for all Presbyterian bodies at least to unite in condemning, *as contrary to our principles*, all interference with the political views of their members.

It is claimed, in defense of the action of the Northern Church, that it was justifiable, on the ground that disloyalty to the Union had a *moral* aspect. It was, they say, morally wrong to sustain secession voluntarily. But that is the question. Was it morally wrong for Englishmen to sustain the Prince of Orange before James II. had abdicated? The best patriots and christians of that day held that they were released from their allegiance by the misconduct of the tyrant, and the Revolution of 1688 settled the principle that the people who have set up a dynasty may take it down, if, in their judgment, the implied covenant has been violated. Now the people of each state, by their suffrages, set up the Union over its territory as the "supreme law" on these same conditions, and they were to be the judges, otherwise their condition would be worse than before. The people of the seceding States may have erred, but all men now know they were conscientious, and no moral question existed to justify censure from the church. It was indeed a change of dynasty by popular vote, within the bounds of each State, on the ground of forfeiture; and the church could not denounce it as immoral without imputing a mystical sanctity to the Union similar to that claimed for the Stuarts by the non-jurors of England. Two questions were before the mind of the citizen: 1, A *political* one, whether the Union had forfeited its claim to allegiance; 2, A *moral* one, whether disunion was justifiable. No church had a right to determine the former, and the latter settled itself as soon as the political fact was ascertained. The moral

question could not arise in the Assembly without first "handling" the political one. It is undeniable that the Assemblies reflected the political opinions of their constituents, and would not have voted secession a crime if they had not before voted for the exclusion of slavery from the common territories by civil law.

The facts by which we must be guided in reference to *organic union* are, therefore, briefly these: The understanding reached by the two churches in 1882 resulted, as was designed, in "fraternal relations." That very act, by its terms, reserving to each body *its distinctive principles*, erected a bar to fusion which has never been removed. It is a principle with the brethren of the Northern Church that the Hamiltonian theory of the Federal constitution was the true one, and the Union indissoluble so long as the stronger section may choose to maintain it, whatever may be the fate of the weaker. From this position, and its moral corollary, they will never recede. But organic union, whenever accomplished, must make that principle *ours*, notwithstanding the impossibility of reconciling it with the Confession of Faith or the fundamentals of civil and religious liberty.

Finally, there is *no necessity* for fusion arising from political conditions. We have no connection with the civil government, and there is no call for an American Presbyterian Church in which our own distinctive principles must inevitably be lost in the overwhelming majority of those who reject them. We have seen no affirmative argument for organic union of any weight whatever, except that very political reason which we repudiate, that *a restored union demands a restored church*. We utterly reject the suggestion. Fraternity has been restored, and that ought to suffice. The fact that the Union has been consolidated by the sword is no reason for the amalgamation of the churches. Coercion has no part in the construction of ecclesiastical bodies. But, if both force and obligation are wanting in the premises, we may urge with confidence against the proposed fusion the gulf that lies between the two bodies in reference to the political scope of church authority and the unsettled question of the social fusion of races. The mere verbal adoption of one creed cannot bridge that gulf, for the obvious reason that an unrestrained majority may at any time

assume that a "moral question" has arisen sufficient to justify the most revolutionary political action. The prayer of our Lord that his people might be one, relates to a union of a spiritual character, and cannot be fulfilled by any visible union whatever, either universal, or continental, or local. It is not a fusion on paper, but a fusion of hearts. It does not look to the national organization, but to universal brotherhood.

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