

THE PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY.

NO. 25.—JULY, 1893.

I. NATURAL RELIGION AND THE GOSPEL.

ASSUMING that theology is a science, and that it pursues the method of definition adopted by all sciences, that is to say, one derived from the object-matter about which they are concerned, we define it, with others, to be the science of religion. But religion, comprehensively taken, is easily distributable into two kinds: natural religion and evangelical religion, or, briefly, redemption. The latter member of this division is the gospel. These are the only two schemes of religion that God has given to man. The first was communicated to Adam in innocence, the latter to Adam and his race in sin. The gospel, specifically considered, has been developed in great dispensational forms contradistinguished to each other, not as to their essential, but as to their peculiar and distinctive features; but, generically considered, it is as a scheme of religion contradistinguished to natural religion. It is, therefore, interesting and important to ascertain the relations which subsist between natural religion and the gospel; and we propose to indicate their points of similarity and difference. What are the elements of natural religion? How do they come to be incorporated into the gospel? And what are the peculiar and differentiating elements of the latter scheme?

I. Their points of similarity.

1. Some of their contents are alike. Taking it for granted that the articles which will be enumerated are, in some sense, embodied in the gospel, the question will be whether they were component parts of natural religion.

(1.) The doctrine of God's existence. It cannot be supposed

III. THE WAY OF PEACE.

THE union of all Christians in one organic whole is the hobby of extreme liberals and extreme high churchmen. Perhaps no more visionary scheme has ever been broached by sensible men. For ourselves, we eschew hobbies altogether. But if we had one, we would prefer a cordial understanding and a warm fraternal feeling among all who believe in the common Saviour. We regard the idea of one organization of free Christians, coëxtensive with the world, as a wild dream, which a few sober moments will suffice to dissipate. If it were prelatical, no building would hold the assembled bishops. If it were governed by a representative body, where could they deliberate? To our apprehension, the scheme would be impracticable without a Pope or a Grand Lama.

This objection will, of course, be met with a disclaimer. We will be told that an actual assembly is not contemplated. Nothing but a league of churches reduced to one pattern is desired. It does not seem to have reached the brain of these agitators of union, that this is not union at all, but mere uniformity. An army of soldiers in various array may be one, if the command is one. A million of men in similar dress, but under different commanders, and aiming at different objects, would not be a unit in any proper sense.

The abolition of sects, and the reduction of all Christians under one type, is the true name of this pretentious scheme. It is conformity, and not union, and the great objection to it lies in this: That similarity in externals may exist along with great diversity of views. Men of all sorts of religious principles may be gathered under a single banner. They may look alike, and, in many things, act alike, but if they were asked a vital question in religion, they would give very different responses.

In respect to the essentials of Christianity, every intelligent reader may know that the large evangelical denominations in the United States are nearer together than the parties that make up the Church of England. Immediately before Mr. Wesley's day,

that church was in a very low spiritual condition, very indifferent to doctrine, but firmly united. The bond seems quite strong yet, but great doctrinal dissension has sprung up, and differences that would destroy any American sect now divide it into a number of parties that are mutually repulsive.

But the proposed organic union would not even secure that apparent oneness. Ecclesiastical bodies separated by oceans and by the equator may be alike, but cannot be one. But that which is urged in America is uniformity in a few particulars, with endless diversity in others. Except in those few points, all the existing provisions for actual unity are to be sacrificed, and we are to be contented with likeness in one or two features dictated by one party. A union that actually promotes diversity, and destroys nearly all the ties now existing, would be the beginning of Bedlam.

In a discourse delivered in Trinity Church, New York, Doctor Morgan Dix, referring to this subject, gently but wisely rebuked the reckless clamor of some of his brethren. Allowing for the usual tone of his class towards other Protestants, his words are timely and judicious. Seldom has an authority of such eminence in his circle used such language. He says: "There is no good reason why our bishops should have jurisdiction over any congregations or aggregations of people who are not in need of this church. Such bodies have a right to exist; and friendly relations might be established with them, and *communion in holy things might be maintained.*" This looks like religion and business.

Common sense, as well as true Christianity, assures us that a recognition of other sects as legitimate and valid, and friendly relations and intercommunion between all who hold a common saving faith, are the real spiritual union needed by Protestant Christians. Common sense ought to satisfy the historic episcopate, after vainly expending libraries of learned labor, and acquiring centuries of unfavorable experience, that the theory for which they chiefly contend has no prospect of gaining popular assent. The world has outlived the "legitimate" succession of kings. There is not a throne in Europe to which anybody recognizes a divine title independent of the people. And, with equal truth, it may be said that the "legitimate" succession of diocesan bishops

as rulers over any portion of the church, by virtue of descent from the apostles, is a superstition which the robust understanding of free communities can no longer tolerate.

Aware of the hopelessness of the effort to convince the majority of Protestants, the hierarchy in the United States and England recently offered their quadrilateral scheme for the actual acceptance by other bodies, without conviction, of their episcopate, evidently hoping that, in course of time, the theory would be gradually adopted. It now appears to be realized, as Dr. Dix admits, that the scheme cannot succeed; and the hierarchy is plainly advised of a far more reasonable and fraternal policy. When we consider the relative numbers of the parties, and that the theory of the apostolic succession is repudiated by all Protestants except a part of the Episcopal, English-speaking body, in Britain and the United States, the practical necessity of some less repulsive scheme of union should begin to be felt.

Never before has the Christian church more profoundly yearned for a healing of its divisions, and a limitation of its controversies. Extremists may clamor as they please for unification, on the basis of theories which many centuries of argumentation have failed to establish; but the general sentiment of intelligent Christians, the world over, calls for a union of hearts and hands on the basis of loyalty to our common Lord. This is the test reiterated by Saint John, the last of the apostles, in his epistles. No one can read them carefully without perceiving that the bond of union is *love* to a divine Christ, and to all his people. This involves a profound regard for his word and sacraments, but does not exact any acceptance of theories which necessarily divide and distract his people.

In view of the imperative obligation resting upon all Christians to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," we stand amazed at the persistence of small minorities, from age to age, in divisive principles which cannot be deduced from the word of God without violent constraint. In our own day, those conditions of unity which rest upon uninspired tradition, and antagonize the tenor of the sacred canon, appear so grotesque and unreasonable, that one cannot avoid a certain repugnance to naming them. It

is beneath the dignity of argument to entertain the inquiry, whether the true under-shepherds and sheep of Jesus Christ have, for centuries, occupied the open field, in full sight of the fold, and averse to enter its precincts. Using another illustration, it is a severe tax upon most understandings to believe, on the strength of a theory, that in the army of the Lord a vast majority of the officers are serving without valid commissions, and that the ranks are filled with soldiers illegally enrolled. Is it credible that, at the Reformation, the great bulk of the Protestants, escaping under the influence of an open Bible from papal tyranny, committed the crime of schism, whilst those of England alone remained loyal to the true apostolical succession? Was the English Reformation so free from court influence and political management as to secure a purer exercise of consciences than was enjoyed in other countries?

The high-church theory, in fact, forces its advocates into countless absurdities which reason long ago grew weary of refuting. One of the most glaring was exhibited at the triennial convention at Baltimore, in October. It was gravely debated by the two parties, whether or not the Mexican mission is a lawful undertaking. In plain terms, it was warmly urged by some of the bishops that courtesy towards the sister Church of Rome in Mexico forbids a Protestant Episcopal mission for the conversion of the people. Thus, we find that party, even in the American church, distinctly recognizing the territorial claims of the Church of Rome to ecclesiastical sovereignty over kingdoms and republics alike. There is no mistaking of the assumption underlying the shameful position. The Roman hierarchy in Mexico has *exclusive* right to occupy the soil! Protestant missions among the benighted masses of its population, generally quite as ignorant of the gospel as the Chinese, are an unwarranted intrusion upon territory belonging, by the divine appointment, to the Roman Catholic Church!

It does not appear that this ascription of sacred territorial sovereignty to the pope, within the limits so jealously guarded by the "Monroe doctrine" of the American government, was sustained by the House of Bishops. But it was not condemned. A grand opportunity was presented for that body to declare its Pro-

testant principles, but it was not embraced. The public is left in doubt how far in the backward road towards Rome they have proceeded. We think it is due to the public that this question should be solved. The attention of our vast Protestant non-episcopal majority in the United States has been urgently called to a proposition for union with the Protestant Episcopal Church; and now, at the same time, we find the body that makes the offer divided indistinctly on its relations to the papacy. The American people are not allowed to know the numerical proportion of sound Protestants and virtual Romanists which it embraces.

We have a profound conviction that in all this our brethren of that church, both in England and America, especially in the lay membership, are misrepresented by the hierarchy. They are Protestant to the core, and if the restraints of an inherited conventionalism were removed, and the heart of the church could express its sentiments, it would speak out unequivocally. The intermediate position could not be maintained for a day, if the people of that communion were once aroused to assert themselves.

The English throne is Protestant by the settlement of the house of Hanover. No feature of the British constitution is more rigid. The English *people* would not return to the papacy to save the hierarchy or the peerage. But surely the American feeling on the subject cannot be less distinct. We are positively sure that an overwhelming majority of the membership in the American Episcopal Church would, if allowed a free expression, and formally summoned to utter it, place themselves clearly in the Protestant ranks. We draw the line explicitly between the *people* of that communion and the hierarchy. In the face of all appearances, our confidence in their fidelity to the principles of the Reformation remains unshaken. They are probably not aware of the situation. They do not realize the significance of the policy of the high-church party in the clerical ranks. It is hidden from their eyes that they are virtually committed by an equivocal policy, not only to ecclesiastical complications of a dangerous character, but to principles at war with our national institutions. How many of the upper house agree with Bishop Paret in regarding the territorial rights of the Roman Church in Mexico as para-

mount to the claims of the gospel, remains unknown. But we Protestants and American citizens *ought* to know whether the territory of the United States also belongs of divine right to a prelatical body. This is claimed at Rome by right of discovery. But even if her claim be ignored, her English heirs may hold that no Protestant denomination not subject to their sway is justifiable in occupying this domain. A recent writer of this class, in *The Church Union*, in so many words declares that all baptized persons rightfully belong to the jurisdiction of the bishops of his church. Lay baptism is recognized as valid, and the claim, therefore, amounts to a proclamation of *rebellion* against most of the Protestants of the United States. But this would be childish indeed, if we could be assured authoritatively that the claimants are few and insignificant. The attitude of the church is, unfortunately, such as to warrant the impression that *aggression* upon other Protestants is the studied policy of the ruling class.

The attitude to which we refer is two-fold. It consists of *non-recognition* towards Protestants whose religious principles are to a great extent approved, and *recognition* towards Roman Catholics whose religious principles were largely repudiated in the English Reformation. Now, we maintain that this attitude is necessarily aggressive in the wrong direction. It offers fraternal relations formally with a party that is the professed object of spiritual abhorrence; and it presents a hostile, repulsive front towards another party with which the hearts of the people are bound by the ties of a common faith.

Intelligent Episcopalians will excuse us for restiveness under such circumstances. As true Protestants and free Americans, the great body of them are placed in a false position of antagonism to their own dearest principles. They are made to appear unbrotherly and arrogant towards their fellow-Christians of other Protestant communions around them, and in ecclesiastical sympathy with that corrupt church which their fathers renounced at the stake. But, in addition to all this, they are committed, to some extent, to affiliation with a system directly hostile to our democratic institutions. The Romish hierarchy is the deadliest enemy of political freedom known to the civilized world. It is the great de-

fender of *prerogative* against popular rights wherever it wears an honest face. A Protestant denomination that quarrels with its natural allies, and leans towards the Roman system, is out of harmony with the traditions of the American people.

Doctor Dix has evidently found the way of peace. His words may be contrasted with those of Bishop Doane at the laying of the corner-stone of the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine. The latter laid emphasis upon the notion, far more fanciful than scriptural, that the stone work of that edifice symbolized the historic episcopate as the corner-stone of Christian unity. This conceit is the very point at which the party lines of that church diverge, the one leading towards Rome, and the other towards Geneva. A narrow tenet, rejected by at least twenty to one of the Protestants of our time, and absolutely devoid of scriptural support, is gravely announced on this impressive occasion as the basis of that harmony which it has, more conspicuously than all other causes, tended to destroy! We do not exaggerate. The dogma referred to has no following in continental Europe. Little more than half a million of Americans, all told, adhere to it, even nominally, in the United States. That number would cover all the high-church party in this hemisphere, except Catholics. There are doubtless forty-five millions in this Union who repudiate it. In Great Britain nearly half the Protestants are actually arrayed against it, and the other half is divided between its advocates and its opposers in a proportion not yet determined. We hazard the opinion that less than one in twenty of all Protestants would sustain Bishop Doane's proposition as a scriptural doctrine.

But we are just as positive on another point: That the scriptural warrant for such a dogma is fading continually out of the mind of the church, as a mere conceit of a mediæval party that cannot live out of the narrow circle of old English tradition. Episcopacy may survive, as a human institution, and possibly be adopted, here and there, in various nations, as they are evangelized; but the doctrine that visible and united Christianity cannot exist without it, is doomed to die, precisely as the divine legitimacy of the Stuarts and the Bourbons has disappeared from the sphere of European politics. Nothing can be more foreign to our Ameri-

can mode of thought than the assumption of a right, in church or state, to rule a community by a close corporation divinely commissioned. This is the favorite doctrine of the party represented by Bishop Doane. We believe a free vote of his denomination would at this hour bury it out of sight forever.

We turn, therefore, with hope to the significant discourse of the venerable rector of Trinity Church. Two timely concessions are made by him just after the adjournment of the triennial convention of 1892. The failure of the quadrilateral overture to other Protestant bodies had been recognized, and this fact seems to have suggested to Dr. Dix the pacific tone which it breathes. He distinctly admits the corporate authority of other denominations, and approves of coöperation and intercommunion with them. We incline to the opinion, not only that this policy is strictly in accordance with the letter and spirit of the gospel, but that the American Episcopal Church would lose nothing by its adoption.

The hierarchy, in their desperate attempt to secure their end, have ceased to insist upon most of the peculiar features of their system, and have reduced their *ultimatum* to four points, of which Bishop Doane proclaims the historic episcopate to be the chief corner-stone. Actual union is shown to be impossible. Actual assimilation is no longer demanded, except in those four points, and, of those, three are subordinated to one, which is the principle of monarchy by divine right in the church of God. This is emphasized as necessary to a visible organism. But the idea of visibility is urged with an earnestness altogether unwarranted by the Scriptures. There must be unity, and that unity must be visible. All this is explicitly taught by our Lord and his apostles. But that the kingdom of Christ is visibly one in its subjection to a close spiritual corporation, imposed upon it for all time, is a proposition of unspeakable extravagance. The Bible gives it no countenance, and plain sense declares that the *body* is visible in the same manner with the head. Christ is no longer seen in the flesh, and yet he has promised to manifest himself to his people. What right have we to assume that the church is manifested in any different sense? If Christians everywhere recognized one

another, and exhibited to one another the true graces of the Spirit, their oneness in Christ would be manifest, and in that sense visible, to all observers. "One flock and one shepherd" constitute Christian unity, but the one shepherd is conceded to be the spiritually present Christ, and the great multitude of his disciples, loving and tending one another for his sake, must be the flock. This literal rendering in the Revised Version commends itself to all scholars, and to the heart of the church. True Christians visibly constitute one flock under the one shepherd, not by virtue of subjection to a hierarchy, but by spiritual recognition and harmony. The more they "speak the same things," and are "perfected together in the same mind and the same judgment," the more manifest will their unity be. Subjection to one prelatial order utterly fails to secure this end, as the distracted state of the Church of England at this day abundantly shows.

The many millions of Protestant Christians, waiting from age to age for some sign of yielding the claim of supremacy on the part of the comparative handful who distinctly hold to the historic episcopate, would greatly rejoice to find the views of Doctor Dix generally embraced by his clerical brethren. The relative number which they represent may be small, but in most other respects their isolation has always inspired regret rather than contempt. The sovereign airs of the pope, looking down from the Vatican upon all human governments as inferior upstarts, may well excite derision. But the Church of England and her daughters have a recognized standing that commands our veneration and regard. Every evangelical body respects the validity of her orders. The heart of Protestantism beats with fraternal affection for her membership. We are grieved at her attitude, on account of its interruption of Christian charity. We complain of it as the persistent error of our brethren, who constantly refuse to meet us on purely scriptural ground. When a high authority among them uses such language of conciliation as we have quoted from Doctor Dix, we must be excused for an expression of relief and hope.

The way of peace in the Christian dispensation is the plainest of all duties to a Bible-reading people. Civilized nations have long learned the wisdom of mutual respect and forbearance, and

Christian denominations ought not to be behind them. It would be contrary to the sentiment of the entire Christian world to limit saving faith to any one sect, or to consign to perdition large bodies of sincere followers of Christ. But nothing could be more inconsistent than to unite with this broad charity the dogma of an exclusive churchmanship, by which a line is drawn that throws out of fellowship the great mass of credible disciples of the common Lord. A patriotic army would lose a great deal of its order and efficiency if a single division should adopt a banner inscribed with reproach and insult towards the rest. How weak such a force would be in the presence of the enemy! But the high-church party in the Anglican communion marches continually under a flag that declares the orders and sacraments of other Protestant bodies invalid. To reconcile this assumption with a good standing in the sight of heaven, enjoyed equally within and without the line, we find impossible. If personal salvation is not affected by one's relation to the church, the justification of an exclusive posture is undertaken in vain.

If there is abundant salvation outside of prelatie churches, it becomes a patent folly to stand loftily aloof from the rest of the Christian world. Non-conformists are either within the covenant of mercy, or not. Those who believe they are not are bound to lay aside all conventionalism, and labor night and day for their conversion. That this zeal is wanting, all observers are aware, and the conclusion is unavoidable that the theory of the exclusive party has survived the spirit that gave it birth.

Let us suppose the views and sentiments of the rector of Trinity to be adopted by his church, and the Baptists to abandon their position on intercommunion. It is obvious that the aspect of the Protestant cause would be far more hopeful. The various denominations that hold substantially the same faith would then be free to treat one another with Christian courtesy and consideration. They would occupy the same communities without jealousy or interference. A small population would not necessarily be cut up into little dependent congregations, but cheerfully united under one organization. Modes of government and worship would be no longer regarded as vital, but be entertained as fair questions

to be determined in the light of the Scriptures, in subordination to the great principles in which all agree.

We do not indicate a state of perfect harmony, but one of better understanding, and more general recognition of the relative importance of fundamental truths. We do not propose a fusion of all evangelical denominations into one, but a general acknowledgment by all that the church is one, as the necessary result of the union of its members with Christ by faith. We do not expect all denominational effort to be abandoned, but the discussion of such questions to be conducted in a fraternal spirit, all having the same supreme aim, to conform the churches as closely as possible to the will of God as revealed in his word. There is nothing in the scheme to prevent the evangelical ministers of a locality, where the spirit of the gospel admits of several, meeting in brotherly conference, as is often done now, and advising one another on points of practical interest. Every impulse of the Christian heart, by the summary logic of love, would lead the Saviour's true disciples to share together at convenient times the emblems of his death.

Our sincere appreciation of the Protestant Episcopal Church is the motive that prompts this faithful protest and earnest entreaty. Between Protestantism and Romanism we are like a legislative body in which a single member holds the balance of power. His own party friends would triumph if he would yield. It sometimes happens that the obstruction is due to unreasonable persistence in error by an individual otherwise estimable. Great principles are under consideration, and vast interests are at stake, and yet the one man keeps all in jeopardy by extreme tenacity of purpose.

The question is sometimes asked, Why does not the majority break the deadlock by conceding the demands of the small minority? It is urged that the principles of Protestants generally are more flexible than those of the Anglican Church, and might be yielded at a lighter sacrifice. The suggestion is easily answered. The principles of the Reformation which justified separation from Rome cannot be defended by a body that makes the historic episcopate coördinate with the Bible and the sacraments.

Were all Protestants to adopt that dogma, they would drift inevitably into the bosom of the papacy. If the hierarchy is of sacramental importance and sanctity, the old church has claims and prerogatives superior to any others. The Reformation was a revolt against a priestly combination which coerced the faith of the people. The emancipated conscience of Christendom cannot safely return to the edge of the vortex from which it has been delivered.

It is a great mistake to suppose that a principle is to be estimated by the tenacity of its adherents. The conscientious opposition of those who reject the historic episcopate is quite as respectable and sacred as the obstinate bigotry that affirms it. Protestantism is a protest against certain positive sacerdotal pretensions that have for ages been advanced by the historic episcopate of Rome, and the Anglican claim sustains the validity of that order by which those pretensions are still urged, whilst the validity of all other Protestant orders is ignored. The followers of Luther, Calvin, Knox, and Wesley oppose the assumption of a divine prelatie authority derived from Rome, *on principle*, and this principle is just as sacred in their eyes as its opposite. The negation of a preposterous claim is no less a duty than is a positive requirement. Americans hold that their rejection of monarchy is entitled to a loyal devotion as honest and earnest as ever bound the subject to his sovereign; and we Protestants maintain our rejection of a priestly order usurping a paramount authority over the church, as a necessary part of our loyalty to our Divine Master. If prelatie supremacy be a sacred dogma, the freedom of Christians is another, and the conflict bids fair to be interminable.

But the prelatie theory is not a scriptural doctrine. Its advocates know that it mainly rests upon *tradition*. The peace for which we plead is a scriptural requirement of infinitely greater importance than human inventions. It may be realized by renouncing excessive confidence in tradition, and consenting to refer all such questions to the infallible tribunal of the word of God. If the Scripture is not decisive, no exclusive hypothesis that destroys the peace of the church can be successfully defended.

JAMES A. WADDELL.