

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

THE CATHOLICITY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

BY REV. F. P. AMFREL, M. A., MONTREAL.

(Continued.)

The first half of the seventeenth century was a dark period for Protestant Europe. Bohemia, full of gospel light, refused to recognize its Austrian ruler and called the Presbyterian Elector Palatine to the throne. The whole power of the Papacy was hurled against the devoted land of Huss and Jerome, which called in vain for assistance to the Lutheran princes of Germany. They were more jealous of Calvinists than of Rome. James of England was implored to help his son-in-law, the Bohemian king, but his tastes lay more in the way of writing books on the divine right of kings than of battling manfully for the truth. But Presbyterian Scotland out of her poverty sent aid to the Bohemian Church. Meanwhile, Count Mansfeldt and the brave young Christian of Brunswick continued the struggle till death removed them; Christian of Denmark carried it on feebly for a time, and with ill success; and then, with a heart above his Lutheran creed, the great Gustavus Adolphus took the field against downtrodden Protestantism. It is not my province here to describe the victories of Leipsic and Lutzen which have immortalized the name of the gallant and pious Swedish king, nor, though worthy of double honor, is it his catholicity that I wish to exhibit, for he was no Presbyterian save in so far as a Lutheran merits the name. But among the bravest of his blue-coated warriors, that joined in the battle hymn and bowed their heads in prayer, that stood like a wall of adamant against the furious charge of Pappenheim's horse, and, with sword and pike, drove Wallenstein's invincible infantry in terror from the field, were the Presbyterian soldiers of the Scots Brigade. Henderson and Hepburn and little crooked Leslie, who afterwards became the general of the Covenant, were there, with many more stout officers, whose epitaphs unknown to fame may be read in Swedish churchyards to-day, or who carried back to Scotland the name and the memory of their royal hero Gustavus, or whose forgotten dust lies beneath the sod on the fields where they fought so well for liberty. Men may call them mercenaries if they please, but theirs was not the spirit of the mercenary. The discipline of Gustavus was strict in the extreme. No plundering was allowed in his Christian army; and morning and night each regiment formed hollow square, facing inwards where its chaplain stood, to hear the word of God and lift up the heart in prayer. Mere mercenaries would have been ill at ease in such a host. These Scottish warriors fought and bled and laid down their lives far from pleasant Forth and Clyde, from Tweed and Tay, and the heather hills of their native land, as a practical witness to Presbyterian catholicity.

We cannot claim for the Presbyterian Church of post-reformation times in all its sections the full spirit of toleration that now prevails in the Protestant world; yet it showed itself more tolerant than any other branch of the Protestant Church which was ever in a position to exhibit the spirit of persecution. Where shall we look for instances of intolerance—to Scotland? No man suffered death for his religion there, at the hands of or by the instigation of the Church. To Switzerland? The one solitary case of Servetus, cruel and indefensible as the action was, is made to do duty as an argument against Calvinism and Presbyterianism that Churches in whose skirts is the blood of many martyrs should blush to name. When fugitives from the Marian persecution fled first to Denmark and then to Lubeck and Hamburg, sorely distressed, and in inclement weather, the Lutheran divines drove them forth to sea again on account of their Presbyterian faith and polity, calling them the martyrs of the devil. When was it heard that Presbyterians did the like? Have they not ever with open arms welcomed the persecuted? I admit that the Presbyterians of England were in many respects harsh, although it was no wonder, since oppression will drive wise men mad, and the Puritans had had their share of the evil things of this world. But it is a great mistake to think with Stoughton and other partial writers that independency lies at the root of England's toleration. Independency never possessed the power of being intolerant but once. It reigned supremae for a time in the New

England colonies, and inflicted miseries there on Baptists and Quakers that find no parallel in British Presbyterian history. For the times in which they lived, of all men the most tolerant and the least addicted to the sword of persecution were those who professed the Presbyterian name.

I have no time to speak as I should of Presbyterian Missions. In the middle of the sixteenth century Geneva began a mission to Brazil, and in the beginning of the seventeenth, Holland commenced a more successful work in the Dutch East Indies. Early in the eighteenth century the Society for propagating Christian Knowledge arose in Scotland. Among the many good works supported by this Society one is worthy of special mention, the mission to the Delaware Indians carried on by Horton, the Brainerds, and Jonathan Edwards. Thirty Lenape boys who could answer every question in the Assembly's Shorter Catechism in 1745, long before Christian missions had taken hold of the Church's conscience, were a tribute to the far reaching sympathy of Presbyterians not to be despised. Ireland and the Highlands were fields of Church extension that the Scottish Church assiduously cultivated. The North American colonies, peopled in part by representatives of the Presbyterian Churches of Germany, Holland, France, Scotland, and Ireland, and aided in every section by the Scottish Church, I leave to a future lecturer. Who shall fix the limits of Presbyterian Missions at the present day. There is no quarter of the globe unoccupied, no heathen nation of any note overlooked, no Israelite community or apostate Christian Church unvisited by the Presbyterian missionary, save those in which and to whom other evangelical denominations minister. Switzerland and France, Germany and the Netherlands, with the greater Churches of Britain, her colonies, and America, are all engaged in this noble work; and when we consider the talent, zeal and piety enlisted in the cause, and the vast sums of money expended for its advancement, it must be confessed that, if the creed of the Calvinist be narrow, his heart is very large.

I think I have demonstrated that in its conception of the Church and in the practical influence of that conception, the Presbyterian Church is at least second to none in catholicity. I propose now to glance at the last part of my thesis, namely, the constant recognition in the Church of our Presbyterian faith and polity, and their wide diffusion from reformation times to the present day. Calvinism is nothing new. It is the old doctrine of the Church, received by intelligent Bible reading Christians from apostolic days, acknowledged by the early œcumenical councils, and notably that of Ephesus which condemned the heresy of Pelagius. In most of its essential features it was set forth by Augustine in the fifth century; homologated, among many others, by the Venerable Bede in the eighth; defended by the learned and pious Anselm in the eleventh; and maintained as the true doctrine of the Church by the great Aquinas in the thirteenth. But, as it became the doctrine of the reformers before the Reformation in many parts of Europe, and as Romish doctors who held it opposed the newly invented dogmas of Rome, the infallible Church virtually declared its past experience of truth to be heresy, and fell into the Pelagian errors of the accommodating Franciscan Scotists. As for Presbyterian polity, I trust I shall not be trespassing on another lecturer's ground by referring to authorities in episcopal churches who freely admit our claim of Scriptural warrant and primitive order. There are many fathers in whose writings it is either deliberately stated or plainly implied that no such distinction as episcopacy recognizes between presbyter and bishop was known in the early Church. Jerome, the editor of the infallible Vulgate and the contemporary of Augustine, is one of these; and his language is most unequivocal and explicit. In the twelfth century two famous works appeared which formed the basis of all Systematic Theology and Ecclesiastical Law. Peter Lombard was the author of the first, and Gratian of the second; names that Rome holds in high honor. Both of these writers, the latter indeed quoting the words of Jerome, are equally clear as to there being originally but two orders in the Church, those of the presbyter or bishop and the deacon. Religious bodies like the Culdees and Wickliffites held the same view; and among the many witnesses for this truth appears one who, though claimed by the early Vaudois as the greatest of their bishops, seems never to have severed his connection with Rome, Claudius of Turin. This apostolic pastor of the ninth century protested

against every erroneous doctrine and practice that Rome's development theory had sanctioned in his day, and maintained the original parity of bishops and presbyters. No Church of the Reformation, with the exception of the Church of England, and perhaps the little Church of the Moravian Brethren, ever allowed the scriptural warrant for diocesan episcopacy, and in the former Church it was opposed by the large Puritan party. The Scandinavian branches of the Lutheran Church, in opposition to the advice of their German brethren, retained an episcopacy similar to that of the Episcopal Methodists in this country, but were careful to assert that the institution was of human not of divine appointment. And if you seek to know what is the opinion of candid and intelligent Church of England theologians on the point, I would refer you to the commentaries of the late Dean Alford and Bishop Ellicott upon the Pastoral Epistles, in which they take the same ground as Jerome and Claudius, Lombard and the Reformers universally.

Romanists have often asked the question, "Where was your Church before Luther?" The able and instructive lecture delivered here last week presented us with a picture of primitive Christianity, struggling for existence through the dark ages in many lands. The majority of Protestants cannot trace their ecclesiastical ancestry however, through any of these witnesses for the truth in Iona and Languedoc, the Waldensian valleys and Bohemia. Our sad answer to Rome must be "Our Church before Luther was just where yours was; we came out of the same corruption in which you are pleased to remain." The western Church down to the time of the Reformation, with all that is good and all that is bad in it is ours. The fathers were many of them far astray on some points of doctrine, not excepting Augustine and Jerome, and the school-men ran a race in error compared to which patristic movements were slow in the extreme; but we will not give up a single one, not even the mendicant monks and Dominic Guzman the Inquisitor, for even from the ragged ranks of his Dominicans, or dogs of the Lord, came earnest hearts and minds that sought after God and battled for the truth and laid the foundation of the better Church that honors their memory. We may read the Confessions of Augustine and the Imitation of Thomas a Kempis, recite the creeds and sing the *Te Deum* as the churchiest of the churchly, not in a proud spirit of exclusiveness, but because it were a lie to our catholicity to call them the property of another rather than our own. But, says Rome, where is your identity with that old Church? exhibit it in some way. A schoolmaster was once lecturing to his scholars on the subject of personal identity. "Our bodies," he said, "change completely every seven years, our minds alter and our circumstances, yet we are the same individuals. Let us illustrate this by a well-known figure. You had a knife once, a two-bladed one. The pins that fastened the blades in their place and bound the parts of the knife together became loose, and the great blade fell out and was lost. You had a new blade put in. The spring at the back became feeble and worn, and you replaced it with another. One of the sides of the handle fell away, and a new side took its place. So, by little and little, you changed every part of your knife; still it is the same knife." But a small boy with an earnest face whose sceptical look had puzzled the master, rose in his seat, and said, "Supposing I were to find the old blades, and springs, and sides of the handle, and pins, and were to put them all together again, what knife would that be?" History has not recorded the answer to that question. I repeat what I have elsewhere written upon this subject: the Church is the knife. In the first century it was whole and sound; but in the second one of the blades, called the spiritual nature of the Sacraments, became loose, soon fell out and was lost. In the third century, the side of the handle nearest this blade, called the true gospel ministry, began to shake, and at last was superseded by episcopacy and sacerdotalism. The spring at the back of the missing blade, which was the truth concerning the kingdom of the meek and lowly Jesus, dropped away in the fourth century, and in its place came, in time, the rise of the temporal power and the spirit of persecution, which was strengthened every year. The fifth and sixth centuries were the grave of the other side of the handle called the simplicity and universality of worship, which gave place to a gorgeous ceremonial and vicarious religion. This led to weakness in the spring adjoining. Before the eighth century it fell, and was superseded