

"WHITHER ARE WE DRIFTING?"

(SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE.)

To the Editor Presbyterian Review.

SIR,—Some of your correspondents are asking why provision has been made in the Presbyterian Book of Praise for closing the hymns with Amen. So far they all speak of it as a weak imitation of the Anglican Church. I have before me the Hymnal of the Presbyterian Church (North) of the United States, the Hymnal (Draft) adopted by the United Presbyterian, Free, and Kirk of Scotland; the Church Praise of the Presbyterian Church of England, and used also in the Australian Presbyterian Church; the Home and School Hymnal of the Free Church of Scotland; the Hymnal used by the Congregational Churches in Britain, and others of other denominations, and every one of these closes the hymns with Amen. Would it be seemly on the part of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, in the praises of the sanctuary, to cut itself off from the goodly fellowship of such churches? Why does "Covenanter" close his prayers with Amen? If he has not forgotten his Catechism, he will tell me it is "in testimony of his desire, and assurance to be heard he says, Amen." Has he no assurance to be heard when he praises God, and therefore deems it weak and nonsensical to close his hymn of praise with Amen? Even Covenanter must have noticed that almost invariably the ascriptions of praise and glory to God in the epistles and work of Revelation are closed with Amen. The Presbyterian Church errs in good company when it errs with Paul and Peter and John and the Church in glory. It is sincerely to be hoped that Amen in the New Presbyterian Book of Praise will help to bring before all our congregations the precious fact that our hymns are largely prayers presented to God in song, and that in singing them we present them "in testimony of our desire, and assurance to be heard and we therefore say, Amen."

Yours, etc.,

CONSISTENCY.

Editor Presbyterian Review.

DEAR SIR, I have been quite interested in the letters regarding the New Book of Praise which have appeared in the "REVIEW." That Book of Praise serves a two-fold purpose. It opens a door for the man with objections in his nature to give expression to them. He can either object to something in the book, or something not in the book, but which should be, and also, in the breadth of his sympathy with objections, to object on general principles. For example "Covenanter" objects to sitting in prayer with bowed head, as well as to singing "Amen" at the close of the hymn. In imagination I took a peep into "Covenanters" home, and was shocked to find that more than half the prayers he offered in that most sacred of all circles were offered in the sitting posture. I saw him and his family gather around their frugal board, and he asked God's blessing in a prayer of some length upon their food. Horrible to relate they were all sitting! Then at the close at some length he returned thanks again, all sitting. Of course if "Covenanter" and his family were reverently to stand around the table while the blessing was asked, that would be "a weak imitation of Anglican practices," so to get away from everything which savors of the Anglican way of doing things he goes crashing through his own theories of seemliness and reverence in his approach to God in prayer. I hope "Covenanter" will adopt the Anglican practice of reverently standing in prayer at the blessing asked on the daily bread.

I am a loyal Presbyterian, and so try very hard to make myself believe that we used to have the true purity of worship in the service of the sanctuary. But when I read in one of the Epistles about the people saying Amen in the service, I wonder who introduced the closure and forbade all congregational prayers such as the early church had—bade even the saying of Amen at the close. What General Assembly (I should rather ask what Apostle) determined that all praying in the service of the sanctuary should be SOLO PRAYING? Is solo praying more to be commended than solo singing. If it is to edification for one good man to thank and praise God in prayer, all the congregation following in silent thought, where is the sin in another good man giving thanks and offering praise to God in song all the congregation following in silent thought.

Is it not safe to follow David in matters of this kind? I turn to the Psalms and find that a number of them were intended to be sung as solos by the leader of the service of sacred song. Otherwise, what means "Hear this all ye people" at the beginning of the 40th, and "Give ear O my people" as the opening words of the 78th? Of all men the psalm singer should be consistent and admit that solo singing is eminently scriptural for David himself practised it. Believe me, dear Editor, one who tries to be scriptural and consistent, and a true

PRESBYTERIAN.

CONSCIENCE.

M. S. MERCER.

For the Review.

Conscience is that faculty of the mind by which we realize we are under moral law. It is not an arbiter of action nor a judge of right and wrong. Its office is fulfilled in asserting responsibility and obligation. A rule of conduct is not a matter of conscience. The constraining power of conscience is to choose to do right. We bear in our actions, thoughtless or considerate, full responsibility to the perfect law and this obligation conscience discloses. Our thoughts, choices, and intentions take their moral character from the sense of oughtness that arises in the mind to fulfil the whole law. To exemplify in conduct the knowledge of its requirements. Were conscience an arbiter of action every man's judgment would be a rule unto himself, and conscience as many sided as opinions of mankind; until conscience asserts itself there is no teaching right and wrong. It does not arise in every mind under the same conditions, nor at any certain age nor under special training, but once it has arisen life ever afterwards assumes a serious nature and no thinking can dispel its presence, nor lessen its imperative *ought*. Conscience is one and the same in all minds as a disclosing faculty.

To say that conscience condemns or approves of our individual actions is to Deify a faculty, is to make man a prime lawgiver to himself, is to destroy universality of right conduct and leave every man to the satisfaction of his own judgment. This is a popular view, but in its ultimate resolution conscience becomes the convenience of selfish vacillation. The conduct of one it will affirm, the conduct of another condemn in the like act. Paul persecuted the Christians and believed he was doing God's service. Satisfaction came from following the commands of the law—conscience was alive in Paul before his conversion; he was under the imperative *ought* but the rule of his life was less than the perfect law he afterwards learned and followed. Knowledge of the perfect rule of conduct brings with it increased individual responsibility.

Because of the disclosures of conscience it is impossible to think oughtness out of choices, actions, or intentions. Conscience thus imposing obligation to live up to the highest standards of rightness and knowledge of the perfect law being acquired there is no escape from responsibility.

The great question then is, what is the perfect law? A comparison of all systems of morals stamps the ethical teaching of Christianity as the only rule without spot or blemish. It is the only standard to which the human mind can add nothing. It is complete as disclosed in the life of its great Exemplar. To the mind acquainted with the requirements of this law conscience says, the *ought* of your existence is nothing less than compliance with its provisions. Constant striving to meet its demands is the surest cure of selfish prejudice and false teaching.

Conscience is that faculty of the mind that discloses individual responsibility to the moral law.

TENDERNESS.

Tenderness does not mean weakness, softness, effeminateness. It is consistent with strength, manliness, truth and bravery. It does not show itself alone in the touch, but in unselfishness, thoughtfulness, considerateness, forbearance, patience, long suffering. But however it shows itself, it is as the bloom on the peach, as spring showers on the earth, as the music of the angels stealing down on the plains of Bethlehem. You may not have much of this world's wealth to distribute, but you may give something better and spend a useful and beneficent life, if you will practice this lesson of shedding around you the grace of human tenderness, in word and act, and by the spirit of your life.—F. B. MEYER.