

Stanley, with the dry statement of the Nicene or Apostles' or Athanasian Creed, this thrilling earnestness of the Westminster Confession of Faith gives us the very living heart of Christianity. 2. The Confession of Faith is the only great Creed which asserts *the freedom of the human will.* "God alone is Lord of the conscience and hath left it free"—is the trumpet-note of freedom sounded in the Creed of Presbyterianism. It has been asserted that "liberty of conscience," and "the freedom of the human will" were first affirmed by some of the later and smaller sects. This is a blunder due to ignorance. As the historians Motley, and Macaulay and others have proven, the principle of Freedom of Conscience arises necessarily out of the Reformation principle. "It was first formally asserted and set forth by the Presbyterian Church of Holland." William III., of Orange, who finally got it recognised in England, owed it to his Presbyterian upbringing.

GOD AND MAN.

In its relation to Man's Salvation the Presbyterian faith is that of the New Testament, of St. Paul, of Augustine, of the Reformation. In this it is identical with the Articles of the Church of England, but it discards "Baptismal regeneration." It was Calvin and Presbyterianism that first destroyed and flung away the awful theory that Baptism is necessary to salvation. The Presbyterian faith, on this matter, briefly put is:—Salvation is by Grace of God, in His fatherly love for the sinful. God, out of His free unmerited grace, accepts and acquits the sinner who casts himself on that grace offered to him in the atoning love and obedience and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God's Son. In keeping with this great-Reformation doctrine of "Justification by Faith" the Presbyterian Church holds (as Schaff says) "a mild Calvinism," which asserts "the Sovereignty of God's Grace in Salvation in keeping with the freedom of man's will," and with the need of a Divine atonement made for man the sinful, and *regeneration* for man whom sin has made spiritually blinded and disabled. As against the cold and withering assertion of man's own sufficiency, made by "Unitarianism," the Presbyterian Creed, in common with the Catholic Church of God, affirms the need of a redemption and a Holy Spirit.

In the modern setting of the Presbyterian Church Creed, it is expressed thus:—the doctrine of Election of Salvation and of the Sovereignty of God's grace "is held in connection with the truth that God is not the author of sin, and that the liberty of second causes and of man's will is not taken away; and further, that God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, and that He has, in His love provided a salvation sufficient for all, adapted to all, and offered to all in the Gospel." It is this union of the doctrine of God's sovereignty and grace, with man's freedom which has given a distinct tone to Presbyterian character and manhood, and has made it, as even a hostile historian confesses, "the most valuable element in national life."

CHRISTIAN ORDINANCES.

In common with the voice of Christendom, the Presbyterian Church declares that while there is "a Church spiritual and invisible," of which God alone can judge, the "visible Church" consists of "all believers and their children." Presbyterians hold "believer-baptism." That is, they hold that baptism is the declarative "sign" of membership in the visible Church of God, and a "seal" to those who truly believe, of membership in the Church "invisible and spiritual." Therefore, they administer baptism to the "children of believers." It is a declaration that they are not Satan's children, but are in "God's family" unless by their own after wilful acts they reject that family relationship. The Presbyterian Church holds this view on the certain ground of Scripture, of proselyte baptism in God's Old Testament Church, of the example of Christ, who recognised children as belonging to the Church, and of the early Apostolic age, in which children were certainly baptised. The Presbyterian Church, also, in Calvin's words, regards it as immaterial whether the mode of baptism be "affusion," or "sprinkling," or "immersion." But they protest against the necessity of *immersion*—(1) as unscriptural; (2) as contrary to the custom of the Apostolic Church; (3) as contradicted by the discoveries in the "Catacombs," which show us that children were baptised, and that it was not usually by "immersion;" and (4) as contradicted by Bible phraseology, which pictures to us always the spiritual cleansing as a "pouring" or "sprinkling" as the mode of cleansing from "consciousness of sin," and "washing of the body as with pure water." In Palestine and the East, washing by immersion is unknown. Moreover, the early Baptists in Germany and England did not practice it.

THE TREE AND ITS FRUITS.

Presbyterianism appeals to me because of the noble manhood and womanhood it produces. Where in all the Reformation Churches can one find such heroic figures as Luther,

Zwingli, Calvin, Bucer, Melancthon, William the Silent, John Knox, Coligny, "the noble and beautiful Huguenot," Arnold the Waldensian, the Covenanters, Richard Baxter and Calamy and the first era of Puritanism?—"of whom the world was not worthy." More than all other Churches, the Presbyterian Church has been "pale with martyrdoms;" has testified its faith in Christ "by a heroism beautiful and strange." "I am proud to belong to this heroic Church,"—said the late heroic Emperor Fred. III. of Germany,—"its martyrs are in every land!"

In the modern age, the same spirit marks its progress. "The Presbyterian Church,"—said the late Professor Dörner, of Berlin,—"is the muscular system of Christianity. Wherever the call is to dare and do for truth, this Church is in the van." This fact is seen even in the recent "Totalisator" fiasco. While other Churches hung back hesitating, it was the Presbyterian Church that "rained a snowstorm of petitions" on the astonished Parliament, and changed the destiny of our colony.

HOW IT GROWS.

In the United States of America this is remarkably seen. The Presbyterian Church is not, numerically, the largest in that Republic. Statistics are: Methodists, 3,552,000; Baptists, 3,400,000; Presbyterians, 2,150,000; Protestant Episcopal (Angl'n), 400,000. But the astonishing thing is that, *in influence, in character, in national and public weight of manhood*, the Presbyterian Church outweighs all others. The greatest American journals—the *New York Herald*,—lately growled:—"these Presbyterians are still running the United States of America." It is Dr. Parkhurst, the Presbyterian clergyman, of New York, who has recently beaten the "Tammany ring," and cleansed the municipalities of New York and Chicago. Men like Abraham Lincoln, General Harrison, Grover Cleveland, etc., show the stamp with which Presbyterianism has impressed America. Of President Harrison's Cabinet all but one were Presbyterians! Of Grover Cleveland's all but three And these Presbyterians are Christians.

I respect the Presbyterian Church because of its *generosity*. Canon Robertson, in his "Tables," has proven that the Presbyterian Church is the most generous of the Churches. In particular its average of *ministerial stipend* is far higher than that of any other Church. A Church's spirit may be tested just by this! So Dr. Martineau, the eminent Unitarian, has recently said,— "The Presbyterian Church has presented to the world an example of Church organization the most brotherly, the most beneficent, the most Christian." And Dr. Maclaren of Manchester, the eminent Baptist preacher, says: "In Church Government I am a Presbyterian." The Presbyterian Church, as it demands an educated and decently supported ministry, has spread somewhat more slowly, in new lands like America, than some other forms of Church life. But its power is that, wherever it comes, it builds up an *abiding character* in the people: "The only hope for the Negro race in the Southern States," said recently President Biddle (the most intelligent educated Negro in the South) "is that the Presbyterian Church should seize hold of them, and give them something of its *solidity of thought and character*."

The Presbyterian Church is pre-eminently a *Missionary Church*. Professor Lindsay, at the recent General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, said: "More than a fourth part of all the missionary labor and danger of the Protestant Church of God falls to the lot of the Presbyterian Church." He was not including in this what is done by the Lutherans.

In numbers, I need not say, that the Presbyterian Church is by far the largest Protestant Church in Christendom. Including the Luthren Church, it embraces more than half of all Protestantism. Excluding Lutheranism, the Reformed Presbyterian Church embraces some 30,000,000 adherents. But I must warn readers against the exaggerated "statistics" usually given in Church "Year Books." "Statistics can prove anything"—alas! The highest authorities, viz., *Behm and Wagner*, set down all Protestants at 130,000,000. Very well. When, according to the same tables Presbyterians (Reformed) are given at 30,000,000, and Lutherans (Presbyterian) at 40,000,000 it behoves other denominations to be modest in stating their statistics.

I write all this with a sense of shame. If, as a recent Australian *Handbook* asserts, of the (nominally) 400,000 "Anglicans" in Victoria only 60,000 "go to church," and if, out of 172,000 "Presbyterians" only 70,000 "go to church," and if the same state of things is true, proportionately as regards all the Churches, then it becomes us, instead of glorying in our respective Church organizations—to take to ourselves "shame and confusion of face," because of our unworthiness, our egotism, our loyalty to our respective "denominations," rather than our loyalty to Christ. It was loyalty to Christ that made the self-forgetful trueeness of St. Paul, and of the Reformation, and of all that has been beautiful and brave in Presbyterianism.