

Doctrinal Fidelity.

Written for the Review.

The Presbyterian Church is undoubtedly one of the most powerful moral and spiritual forces in the world. Her membership, everywhere, embraces men, whose character and influence witness forcibly to the lofty dignity and broad sympathy of that system of truth by which they are controlled.

They are ever among those who lead public-spirited movements, and are to be relied upon being an earnest, helpful and progressive force amidst the many difficulties and perplexities of social and national life.

Nor are they behind any other people in loyalty to every principle that makes for national well-being, including civil liberty, social philanthropy, brotherly kindness and charity.

While all of these qualities are generally conceded, yet, strangely enough, here and there the idea seems to prevail, that the loyal Presbyterian is necessarily one who is rather bigoted in his views and intolerant in matters of religious belief—a greater mistake was never made. On the contrary, as every one knows well, who has considered the great fundamental truths upon which this Church has built her system of doctrine there is no other denomination of Christian people, which has adhered more firmly to every truth that provides and conserves the fullest exercise of Christian liberality and tolerance. Loving liberty themselves, as an inalienable Christian right they have ever been among the first to champion the fullest freedom of thought and conscience among themselves, and to grant the same to others.

The Bible, and the whole Bible, is the religion of Presbyterians, Jesus Christ is the great and supreme Head, and under Him and in Him, all are brethren.

The system of doctrine has been designated Calvinistic, yet not, as suggesting in any way that Calvin invented it, but simply indicating that among all modern advocates of the truth his method was the most profound and able. The strength of his great personality gave form to but did not create his system. His weight pressed the seal of faith down upon the Church's heart, but the device upon that seal was none of his—it was God's in Jesus Christ.

Never was greater misapprehension received, than that the tendency of Calvinistic theology is to develop a severe and rigorous set of men who are deaf to the claims of a needy humanity, or intolerant of opinions held by brethren of other Christian denominations. So far from being worthy of the charge of sectarian bigotry and narrowness, the Presbyterian has too often failed to give sufficient prominence to the distinctive doctrines of his Church in the presence of other denominations—he has been reluctant to declare certain truths vital to his own Church, lest these being misunderstood should prove stumbling-blocks to those not fully understanding their nature.

Too many devout believers in the solid doctrines of our Church are only found explaining our system of belief when questions are made concerning it—and so it happens that, in many places the younger generation of Presbyterians is not able to give a reason for the faith that is in them. We should be sorry, indeed, to suggest anything that would lead to un-Christian disputation and yet we do feel the necessity of every Presbyterian taking a courageous and loyal stand on the side of his own noble Church and her strong doctrinal teaching. It has been sometimes urged, that when Presbyterians undertake to bring souls to Christ, they omit to mention their doctrines, and this has been construed to indicate that such doctrinal truths are unsuited to the great masses of the unconverted and especially to the more ignorant among them. This is a totally unwarrantable inference and is also a most unfair one. Surely, if any system of truth is well adapted to the saving of a lost humanity, then truly that one has the pre-eminence which embodies in its entirety the great saving principles declared in the Bible without any deviation therefrom,—this the Presbyterian system of truth undeniably does. That many have refrained from more aggressively stating their grand doctrinal truths, does not indicate any fear on their part that the ground work of the Faith held is unstable, but points rather to that kindly considerateness that would not

unnecessarily offend any one, who as yet has not seen eye to eye on many of these great doctrines. That there are matters difficult of explanation is a fact which no sane man would deny. This is to be expected, since the Infinite Being, in His nature, purposes, and acts, enters into our consideration. Still, the doctrines distinctively Calvinistic, are no more difficult of explanation than are any other cardinal doctrines held in common with all other evangelical churches. The doctrine of Election is not more mysterious than that of the Eternal self-existence of God, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, or the blessed truth of the Trinity. Concerning these the great fact always remains, that God Himself, in His own wisdom, has revealed them for our acceptance. The Bible, God's word, declares them to be facts, let men reason against them, theirs is but a finite method, do they speculate, still their horizon is bounded by human thought. Why then should any one fear to boldly stand by the grand doctrine of Election—God declares it, God does the electing—it is His own SECRET work, according to the counsel of His will and for His own Glory. Similarly with predestination. If any, of another denomination, desire to know how man can at once be a free agent and yet at the same time be predestinated, let him explain fully and freely how three persons can be but one person, or how our blessed Lord can be both GOD and MAN, or the existence of evil and its tolerance by an Omnipotent God who cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence. The absurdity of making stumbling-blocks of Election and predestination both of which are essential to a just conception of God and at the same time accepting implicitly the other doctrines of Grace which are just as mysterious, and which as far surpass the powers of man to explain, is most obvious.

All good Presbyterians are justly proud of their church and may well be so, but there is need of a more constant and courageous setting forth of these great principles of Christian truth.

These are Bible truths— to conceal them is to be false to the Master and His commands. Our duty is to let the light shine, with God's blessing its power is assured, and the result will be to His glory and to the good of men.

A Permanent Anglo-American Court of Arbitration.

At a conference held at Sion College, London, Jan. 14th, the Bishop of Durham, Dean Farrar and Canon Wilberforce, representing the Anglican Church, Cardinal Vaughan of the Roman Catholic fold, Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, President of the Free Church Congress, Dr. John Clifford, President of the London Nonconformist Council, Rev. Dr. Matthews, Secretary of the Alliance of Presbyterian Churches, Rev. Dr. John Brown of the Congregational Union, Dr. Adler, the chief rabbi, Lady Henry Somerset, President of the W.C.T.U., Mr. W. T. Stead and others of like quality met to further the cause of human brotherhood by setting on foot a movement intended to create a Permanent Court of Arbitration for Anglo-American disputes. They signed a declaration expressing their deep conviction that "all English-speaking peoples, united by race, language and religion, should regard war as the one absolutely intolerable mode of settling the various differences of the Anglo-American family"; that "any appeal to the arbitrament of the sword in disputes between English-speaking nations is reprehended by the conscience of the race," and that, therefore, without expressing any opinion upon pending controversies which may be regarded as *sub judice*, they hoped that the British Government would recognize that the present is a fit occasion for giving effect to the resolutions in favor of arbitration passed by the House of Commons and by the United States Congress." They determined to proceed to secure signatures to the declaration—the essence of which we have given—from as many of the influential citizens of Great Britain as possible, to hold meetings and special services throughout Great Britain, to enlist the press in behalf of the movement and to present the declaration when signed to the British Government. Action similar to this is now being taken in the United States at various points. Dr. Gray