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PSALM FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

FAIRER of morning lights appear, Thou blest and gaudy day, On which was born our Saviour dear! Arise and come away!

INDWELLING SIN AND CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

THE BELIEVER'S FILIAL RELATION TO GOD.—ITS PRIVILEGES AND CLAIMS.—PERFECT MATURITY NOT A PRESENT ATTAINMENT.—ARMINIAN ERROR BEGGING THE QUESTION.

THE BELIEVER'S FILIAL RELATION TO GOD.—ITS PRIVILEGES AND CLAIMS.—PERFECT MATURITY NOT A PRESENT ATTAINMENT.—ARMINIAN ERROR BEGGING THE QUESTION.

From the time when being a wretched and helpless outcast infant, or as the believer after Paul may be ready to say of himself, *an abortive*, the emphasis of helplessness, God in sovereign grace takes him up and makes him His own (Ezek. xvi. 8; i. Cor. xv. 8) he is a son of God under the training of his Father in Heaven. He does not stand to God merely in the relation of a subject to a sovereign, to whose clemency he owes the pardon of all his offences, and to whose goodness he is indebted for daily favours. He is, indeed, and can never cease to be, a subject. But he is far more. It is conceivable that we might have owed nothing more to the mediation of Christ than the rectification of our subject-relation to God. And the obligation would have been unspeakably great. That, instead of being criminals under sentence of death, we should be justified in virtue of our union with Him, who, being made sin for us, cancelled our condemnation by His death, and rose as our justified head, were a privilege which we could never adequately appreciate. But, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us that we should be called the sons of God," I. John iii. 1. "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God," John i. 12. While the believer does not, in being made a son, cease to be a subject, he has as a son privileges and claims that do not pertain to him as a subject. He is now under paternal law, the law of his Father's house, which includes all the precepts of the moral law, and which is also called the law of Christ, because of the high obligation to obey it constituted by the Elder Brother's obedience unto death. But high as is the obligation to obedience to the paternal law, the breach of it does not involve the consequences which the breach of the sovereign's law by a subject does. It does not constitute the offender a criminal or involve forfeiture of his filial standing. It is not a crime demanding just retribution, apart from all regard to the interests of the offender; but a fault calling for chastisement in his interests, apart from regard to all other interests. And God, in raising the believer to the rank of a son, gives him claims of a very important kind, such as a subject has not on his sovereign. As subjects we have no claims on God except those of strict justice; but as a man's son has a claim on his father to the education and the training adapted to his capacities and his prospects, so, as sons of God, believers have a claim to the training that is fitted and necessary to make them eventually worthy in all respects of their Heavenly Father—a training which includes paternal correction. No intelligent Christian will misunderstand this representation of filial privilege and claim. We are less than the least of God's favours. We have in our natural state, as criminals, no claim to any good at the hand of God. But for our sin, not only would we have been exempt from evil, but we may well suppose God's goodness would have moved Him to reward man's retention of his integrity, by bestowing upon him good to which he had no claim in strict justice. Such a supposition is a reasonable inference from the fact that it has pleased God to redeem us at great cost from the condemnation and curse of the law of our essential subject-relation to Him, and to make us His sons and daughters. In raising us of His free and plenteous grace to this high relation He makes Himself, in the fine and pregnant expression already quoted, a debtor to His own faithfulness.

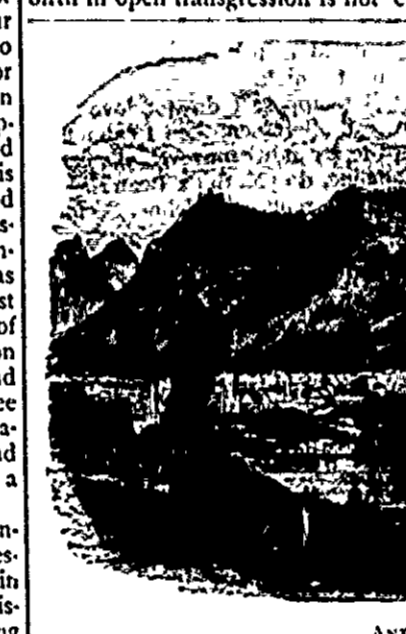
conceived in the mind, allowed, that is, or imperfectly resisted in thought. We leave these questions with those who "through the Spirit are mortifying the deeds of the body." But we cannot but think there must be at least some serious misapprehension on the part of the man who believes that God sees nothing in him that His grace has yet to suppress or remove.

THE REVISION OF THE CONFESSION OF FAITH.

BY FRANCIS L. PATTON, D.D., LL.D., PRESIDENT OF PRINCETON COLLEGE.

The Presbyterian Church is organized on the twofold basis of doctrine and polity. Both are essential to the preservation of her identity, but doctrine is the more important of the two. We maintain that our form of government is agreeable to the Word of God and we disallow the claims of prelacy; but we have no *jure divino* warrant for the details of our polity, and it is very commonly held among us that organization is not of the essence of the visible Church. The Westminster divines may have valued polity more than doctrine—it is a matter of no moment; they were wrong if they did, and the Presbyterian Church is wise in not following their example. Her habitual conservatism regarding her doctrinal symbol is seen in the fact that while the Form of Government has been repeatedly amended, and the Book of Discipline has been re-written, the Confession of Faith—save in the case of marriages of affinity—has remained unaltered since its adoption in 1788.

been entered into with the caution that should be expected, and with a proper appreciation of the serious nature of the undertaking? I fear not.



ANTIOCH IN SYRIA.

It can hardly be doubted that in a matter so serious as the revision of the Standards these differences will reveal themselves. It would be better, therefore, to defer the work of revision until a better understanding is arrived at regarding the legislative powers of the General Assembly. The short and easy method which some have of appealing to the decision of the United States Supreme Court in the case of the Walnut street church as settling all questions that may be raised regarding the constitutionality of the Assembly's proceedings, is not safe.

But the subject of Revision must be dealt with on its merits, and I have referred to these constitutional matters only by way of preface. The Confession of Faith was made by fallible men and is fallible. Infelicities of expression, defects and excesses of statement, as well as faults of emphasis, are justly chargeable to it. It was written under polemic conditions, and was designed to meet the theological exigencies of the time. Hence its strength and its weakness; its strength, for its dogmatic statements were forged in the fires of controversy, and its definitions speak to us in every word of the Church's

fight with error; its weakness, for there is a change of perspective in the course of a few generations, and the controversies of one period lose their relative importance in the periods succeeding. A confession of faith seems after a time to lack balance and proportion of parts, for old topics lose some of their prominence from the fact that each generation has its own problems to deal with. It is not denied that the Confession could be improved. Some of the space now given to the Pope might very well be devoted to that modern compound of Hegel and Schleiermacher known as the doctrine of the Christian consciousness. It might profitably be stated that the witness of the Spirit is not intended to justify and give countenance to rationalistic subjectivism in dealing with the inspiration of the Scriptures. Along side of the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification might be placed that of the moral influence theory, which resembles it and is just as bad; and the neo-Romanism that speaks of future probation and the believer's incomplete sanctification at death would find its appropriate place in an amended section on Purgatory. But a revision of the Confession is not desirable to serve even these important ends. When we consider the danger of unsettling opinion, of disturbing old anchorages, and of being obliged, when the work begins, of going further than we intended, it is better to act upon the maxim, *Quies non movet*. There is nothing in the conditions under which we are living that calls for a new creed, or a revision of the old one. We are living through a period of theological unrest; but there is nothing epoch-making in the books that men are writing or the events that are happening. There is no dogmatic crisis upon us that calls for the reconstruction of theology and new definition. Dogmatic theology, on the contrary, is neglected. It is not denied that there are men among us who, by making free use of the materials already existing in the Confession, are abundantly equal to the task of preparing a more compact, a more logical, and in some respects a more satisfactory Confession. But they cannot write two hundred years of history into it. They cannot secure for it the veneration that is accorded a symbol that tells the story of our civil and religious liberty. Think of what went into the making of that symbol. Think how that symbol has gone into the making of this land, and remember that the Protestant Reformation, the Long Parliament, and the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers are events that are not likely to be repeated.

These are *a priori* reasons against revision. They are reinforced by the fact that the Confession of Faith is not a formula in common use and intended as a manual of devotion. It is not imposed upon the people. It is received and adopted by the ministers and elders of the Church as the Confession of their Faith. These presumptions against revision are further strengthened by the terms of subscription. The Confession is not accepted *in ipsissimis verbis*; if it were it might be necessary to give relief to burdened consciences by a declaratory statement, or by a revision of some of its parts. It is received and adopted as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Word of God. There is no need of misunderstanding here. No one doubts that the Confession teaches a system of doctrine. Every one knows what that system is. To accept the Confession of Faith in the terms of the ordination vow is to say that the Calvinistic system is taught in the Word of God. In accepting the Confession one is not simply assenting to the doctrines common to all Christians, nor is he accepting any one phase of Calvinistic doctrine as distinguished from some other phase. The general practice of the Church, the negotiations that led to the Reunion, the decisions of the Assembly, and the subscription formula itself, all show that subscription to the Confession implies (1) acceptance of the Calvinistic system, and (2) freedom of belief within the limits of that system. There is no doubt that there is an area of tolerated divergence from the Confession of Faith. How large that area is will depend upon the degree of readiness there may be in the Church to move the ecclesiastical courts, and upon the decisions reached in the court of last resort. Historical students may tell us what the Church has thought upon the subject, and dogmatic theologians may tell us what the Church ought to think; but it is only as the General Assembly decides concrete cases in appellate jurisdiction, and the principle of *stare decisis* may be supposed to govern subsequent deliverances, that the area of tolerated divergence can be defined.

(To be continued.)

ANTIOCH IN SYRIA.

Mission Work.

LETTER FROM MR. GOFORTH.

SECOND TOUR IN HONAN.

The first tour in Honan was made last Autumn. It was then simply a tour of inspection. Therefore, we could not test the temper of the people. The tour just completed is the first serious attempt to gain a foothold in North Honan. Six months ago the China Inland people were driven from Honan-fu and Hwai Ching-fu, two cities in the northern part of the province. This intelligence did not tend to comfort us. We knew that they had the advantage of knowing the language well, but we had with us the advantage of medical skill. Our plan for this visit was to go to a city, treat the sick, preach and sell books for a few days, then pass on to another, hoping in this way to induce the people to invite us to return. Chang-te-fu was reached on the evening of September 27th. We sought the most commodious inn and gave notice of the object of our coming. The first to call was a military official lodging at the inn. He proved to be the commander of 8,000 troops, and well known in official circles. He was kind to us during our whole stay at Chang-te-fu, and made us known to many of his friends. As a proof of his interest we might mention one instance. We had occasion to send a messenger back to Lin Ching. Being strangers, we failed to find one, but our military friend came to the rescue, secured a man for us and advanced his family enough money to do till his return. He also invited us to visit him at his home next year in a city thirty miles to the west. During our five days stay at Chang-te-fu the Doctor treated about four hundred of the sick. Of these well-nigh fifty were from the official and literary class. The wealthiest man in the city came for treatment. On the eve of our departure for another city the last to send for medicine was a mandarin.

We had gained official favour beyond all expectations at Chang-te-fu, but a surprise awaited us at Hsuiin, the next city visited. During the first day the mandarin's three sons and several other officials called and gave us an invitation from the mandarin to visit him at the Yamen and see some of the sick. We consented, the official cart comes for us, and we are soon ushered into the mandarin's presence. He is so pleasant that we find no difficulty in feeling at ease. The Dr. prescribes for the mandarin and another official, then a little maid of ten summers is led in. The foreign healer had been too long in coming to save the little maid's eyes; two years earlier and this pretty little girl could have been saved from the bondage of blindness.

The mandarin had also asked to see our books, so we took the Bible in English and Chinese, and told him how that it was God's Book for the world, and that already it was translated into about 300 different languages. Afterwards I read to him our commission, Mark xii. 15 to the end, the Ten Commandments, etc. Some instances of his favour might be mentioned. He showed us many of his ancient curios. Two days after the first visit he invited us again to take dinner with him at the Yamen. Knowing of our intention to visit the temple-crowned mountain east of the city, he sent a man up to prepare tea for us. His eldest son came several times, as he said, to hear the Gospel, and while in Tao Kou, a city six miles from Hsuiin, the mandarin being in town on business, sent his card and enquired how we were getting on.

The mandarin of Hua Hsien eight miles from Hsuiin, Hsien, or two miles from Tao Kou, sent for the Doctor to see his wife, who was dangerously ill, and again while at Wei-hui-fu, the last city visited. The official callers are not few.

(Continued on fourth page.)

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