

THE MONTHLY RECORD

OF THE

Church of Scotland,

IN NOVA SCOTIA, NEW BRUNSWICK, AND ADJOINING PROVINCES

VOL. XXXII.

FEBRUARY, 1886.

No. 2.

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning."—Psalm cxxxvii. 5.

OUR CATECHISMS AND CONFESSIONS.

The Rev. Dr. Van Dyke has some able remarks on the value and use of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, from which we extract the following:—

"They are a charter of our liberty, as well as a safeguard of our orthodoxy in regard to many points of doctrine. They do not teach that the word "day," in the record of creation, means a period of twenty-four hours; they leave open also, the question whether the creation of living forms was immediate, or through a long series of developments. They do not teach the doctrine of infant damnation, or anything which contradicts the opinion that the sacrifice of Christ has removed the guilt of original sin from the whole human race. They do not teach the doctrine of predestination in any such sense as makes God the author of sin, or does violence to the will of the creature, or takes away the liberty and contingency of second causes. They do not teach the mechanical theory, nor any other theory of inspiration. They declare that the scripture contains and are the Word of God, but do not define the process by which they became so. They do not teach the doctrine that God is reconciled to man, nor that he needs to be reconciled; but they teach that "Christ executeth the office of a priest in his once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and to reconcile us to God." (Shorter Catechism, Q. 25.) The gift of a Saviour

did not procure, it manifested, the love of God. The advocates of the New Theology, crude and vague as their protestations are, have some excuse for them, in teachings which represent the Father, who gave his only begotten Son out of his eternal and infinite love, as being appeased and turned from hatred to love, by the sacrificial sufferings of that Son, or by our acceptance of him as our Saviour. But this is not the doctrine of our Confession. Hatred towards anything but sin is not a divine attribute.

As we claim a peculiar completeness for our Westminster Confession and Catechisms, we claim also for them a special educational value. We think our shorter Catechism stands pre-eminent for the clearness and comprehensiveness of its doctrinal statements, and especially for the accuracy and scripturalness of its expositions of the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. We esteem it superior, in these respects, to both the Heidelberg and the Episcopal Catechisms, though we are not insensible to their great value. Without attempting a full discussion of this strong point, we will only record something of what experience has taught us as to the use of the definitions in our catechism on the instruction of enquirers and candidates for admission to the Lord's Supper; and especially of those who have been so blessed as to learn the catechism in childhood. How easy it is to deal with such souls when the fire of God's Spirit has kindled upon their Christian knowledge. Take the defini-