

# The American Presbyterian.

New Series, Vol. V. John Weir 15 July 69

\$3 00 By Mail. \$3 50 By Carrier.  
50cts Additional after three Months.

PHILADELPHIA, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1868.

Mississippi Evangelist, No. 1163.

Ministers \$2.50 H. Miss. \$2.00.  
Address:—1334 Chestnut Street.

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## SINGULARITY OF FAITH.

There ever has been, and for ages, perhaps, there will be, a singularity in the position of the true believer. The call addressed to the father of the faithful, summoning him from his country, from his kindred, and from his father's house, rings through the ages, and is heard in much the same significance to-day as it was then. Most extraordinary and unlike all extant examples was the conduct of Abraham. While great migrations were taking place all over the world, and the ancient foundations of kingdoms and empires were being laid by "mighty hunters" and enterprising men of the world, the childless Abram, in his old age, with his nephew Lot, went forth at the divine command, not knowing whether he went; he came out, not only from his own kindred, but from all the idolatrous world, to found a people and to obtain a country for the purpose of maintaining and handing down to latest times the truths and the institutions of religion. His object drew a broad line between himself and all the worldly colonizers of his day. His mode of seeking that object, without arms or worldly accessories, illustrating the strength and simplicity of his faith, made the peculiarity of his position still more marked. He was a pilgrim and a stranger on the earth. Nay more. He was singular among those who show zeal for the establishment and present success of the kingdom of God on earth. He waited a quarter of a century, in unshaken faith, for the first-remotest event in the long series needed for the fulfillment of the promise. He lived and died without owning a foot of the soil, save as a burying place, of the promised land. He showed, indeed, that the final object of his faith was no mere earthly development of the kingdom of God. "But now," says the writer of the Hebrews, chap. xi: 16, "they seek a better country, that is a heavenly." The mere expectation of the earthly glory or success of the divine kingdom could not explain the steadfastness of the faith of men who could have no share in that prosperity. They "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Wherefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city."

How true it still remains that the act of faith makes the believer a singular person! He comes out from the mass of the world, as truly as Abram came from Ur and from Haran. He becomes an "emigrant" (Hebrew) from the Mesopotamia of worldly ease and idolatry, and a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth, finding no permanent, satisfactory resting place, even in the earthly Canaan of the Church. Sometimes he must imitate Abram by a literal forsaking of home and kindred and father's house. Of one thing he may be sure: he will find himself placed by his faith in positive antagonism to some of the prevalent tastes, opinions, maxims and practices of the world. At some time, at many times in the life of faith, it will be necessary to take an attitude of marked opposition to what is fashionable and popular among men.

It is of the very nature of faith to link the soul to an object above the world, and singular in the world's estimate. Faith is the activity of the spiritual principle, which cannot be satisfied with present, common, worldly objects, and which reaches out after an object that can bestow spiritual good. Abram knew that all the worldly movements going on around him, fashionable and popular as they were, could not satisfy the wants of man, who, in his inner heart, longs for the seed of the woman to bruise the Serpent's head. His faith kept alive in man this hope, which natural corruption and the serpent himself are continually laboring to overwhelm and render unpopular. And while sin abounds, those who now cherish faith in Him who was to come, must be singular among the masses, who are led and blinded by worldly desires, by passion, by selfishness and sense. The believers' interests are in the spiritual nature of man. They desire the salvation of the soul from guilt and sin and hell, through a Redeemer. In the favor and friendship and communion of God through the Spirit of His Son; they find their true and their highest pleasure. The most precious words of consolation, and the most solemn declarations of authority, they find in the Word of God. Even beyond the triumphs of the kingdom of Christ on earth, they look and long for the city that hath foundations whose builder and maker is God; they wait, with earnest expectation, for the manifestation of the Sons of God, for the adoption, a resurrection of the body.

He who dares not be singular is not fit to be

numbered among the followers of faithful Abraham. He who refuses to encounter the disapproval of the fashionable world, the love of popularity, the frown and estrangement of friends and family, must not expect to accomplish anything in the service of the Master. There are fair-weather Christians, who seem, like Lot, to have chosen the path of the faithful, but who, when trial comes, prefer the tents of ease in the fertile but godless vales of Sodom, rather than the continued march through unknown tracts at the call of duty.

Singularity, not needlessly assumed, but resulting from the consistent, prayerful following of gospel principles, always accompanies great achievements for God. Men who are not afraid to be marked by the world's disdain, are needed for the serious work of the world. How like Abram in faith, in purpose, and in the work they accomplished, were the Pilgrim Fathers! Like them, like Abram, like Moses, we must really come out from a wicked world and dare to be singular, if we would save our souls and contribute to advancing the spiritual welfare of mankind.

## SACRAMENTAL GRACE AND THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION.

The last war-cry of the obstructive party in the Old School Church is "Give us the Standards, pure and simple, as the Basis of Union. Away with safe-guards which mean nothing, which are a nose of wax in the hands of each party to the contract. We know what the Confession is, and means, and what union on that Basis implies. Who knows what union on the Assembly's Basis implies?" Such is the burden of the Pittsburgh Circular movement, by which many men, not themselves obstructives, have been deluded—we can use no milder word—into cooperation with a plan, whose result will be the temporary and possibly final defeat of the Re-union movement.

We might very well take exception to the expression "the standards, pure and simple," as conveying an utterly false impression at the outset. That is a platform upon which the Old School never stood. Dr. Hodge himself assures us, that if it were the law of the body that assent should be required to every statement in the Westminster Confession, the Old School Church would not hold together for twenty-four hours. The terms of ministerial communion prescribed by the Constitution require assent to the Confession, not purely and simply, but as embodying "the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures," which is something very different. It has been urged that the proposed Basis which is to be expressed in the above words, will be more acceptable to Presbyterians of the minor Branches (or twigs) of the Church. But the new term is just as objectionable to them as the old one was. They would not, nor would any of the British Presbyterian Churches, except the U. P. Church of Scotland, admit to ministerial standing one who could go no farther in his acceptance of the Standards than is required by the question prescribed in the ordination ceremony. The organ of one of our Psalm-singing Churches confesses that it can see no difference between "system of doctrine" and "substance of doctrine."

In a word, none of our Old School brethren really propose to adopt "the Standards, pure and simple" as a Basis of Union, either among themselves or with us. They ask us to accept simply the old formula prescribed by both churches in their "Constitutional Questions," a formula which just carries us as far away from "the Standards pure and simple," as do the clauses in the Assemblies' Basis, which they find so objectionable. Those clauses add nothing and take away nothing from that formula. Taken in connection with the concomitant deliverances of the two Assemblies, they give it a definite and explicit meaning, guarding against excessive rigidity on the one hand, and excessive laxity on the other. They furnish a Basis of Union alike equitable and practicable, a Basis on which we insist as the only one before the Presbyteries, and on which we trust our Church will insist as her ultimatum on this vexed question.

Behind all this out-cries for "the Standards, pure and simple," there lies an assumption of an entire accord between the theology of the Confession and that taught at Princeton, and the other Seminaries of the Old School Church. We are not disposed to concede the truth of this assumption on any point. Even on the head so recently mooted by *The Western Presbyterian*, the "Federal Headship" doctrine, Princeton takes but half the Westminster doctrine and leaves half. The Westminster divines set themselves to combine two theories,—the old Augustinian realistic doctrine of actual identity, and the then new-fangled Cocceian federal doctrine of a legal identity, existing between Adam and his posterity.

Prof. Shedd and other modern realists, like Calvin, take the first half of the doctrine; Dr. Hodge accepts the second; Dr. Breckenridge tries to accept both and, in true Westminster style, to sit on two stools. And yet the Princeton men continually talk as if the Confession were their private property, though when called on to prove property, they have (like Hodge on the *Romans*) to stick in a "putatively" here, a "legally" there, and a "forensically" elsewhere.

But let us look at another side of the Westminster theology—the doctrine of the Sacraments. This question is one whose importance, until a very recent period, has been much less than in the times of the Reformers. It was discussed with such fury in the earlier days of the Protestant Churches that one might have almost expected this sacrament of Christian love, this feast of charity, by the common consent of mankind and in the interests of Christian charity, to be at once and for ever abolished. Subtlety of distinction, vehemence of spirit, the zest of scholarly research, and all that can give an interest to controversy seem to have been so lavishly employed, and in time so utterly exhausted, that men ceased to wrangle through utter weariness with the contest, and in such a barrenness of soul, as laid the churches open to the first inroad of rationalism. Of the four prevalent theories, we shall speak only of the two which found a place in the Reformed or Presbyterian Churches. The oldest of these, that of Zwingli, regards the Sacraments not as the channels of a supernatural divine grace, but simply as outward symbols and witnesses of the reality of that grace. Baptism is simply an outward sign, by which children are admitted to the fellowship of the visible Church, not having in itself, nor being associated with any purifying influence. The Lord's Supper is simply a memorial feast, designed by its solemn associations and simple rites, to bring the truths of the gospel before our minds, and by its transmission from age to age, to witness to the reality and historic truth of the redemptive work of Christ. If this doctrine is the oldest, it is also the most widely disseminated. It is, so far as we know, held by every branch of the Presbyterian family, wherever the English language is spoken. It is taught in their books, enforced in their tracts, proclaimed from their pulpits, scattered broad-cast by their press. Every attempt to make more than this of the sacraments is frowned upon, as is sufficiently evinced by their attitude towards the High Church parties in the German Reformed and Episcopal Churches. "And," perhaps our "Standards-pure-and-simple" friends would add, "it is avowed in our Confession and Catechisms."

1. Before proceeding to ask what the teachings of our standards on this point are, let us note what the probabilities of the case, in a historical point of view are. For many people take this matter for granted, and look upon all questioning of it as purely absurd.

It is not probable in view of the historical facts that the Westminster Confession teaches our current Zwinglian doctrine. (a.) The Church of Scotland, up to her adoption of the Westminster Standards had a Confession of her own, one of such an origin as to command her highest respect: The Scottish Confession of 1560, sometimes called "John Knox's Confession." In that document Zwinglian doctrine receives very full and emphatic notice. It says:

We utterly condemn the vanity of those that affirm the sacraments to be nothing but naked and bare signs; no, we assuredly believe that by baptism we are engrained in Christ Jesus, to be made partakers of His justice [righteousness], whereby our sins are covered and remitted; and also that in the Supper, rightly used, Christ Jesus is so joined to us that He becometh very nourishment and food to our souls; . . . this union and conjunction, which we have with the body and blood of Christ Jesus, in the right use of the sacraments, [is] wrought by the operation of the Holy Ghost, who by true faith carrieth us above all things which are visible, carnal and earthly, and maketh us to feed upon the body and blood of Christ Jesus, which was once broken and shed for us, which is now in heaven, and . . . and yet notwithstanding the far distance of place . . . yet we most assuredly believe that the bread which we break is the communion of the body and blood of Christ; &c.

Such is the statement of the faith of the Church of Scotland at the date of the assembling of the Westminster divines. It is not a statement of Zwinglianism, for it condemns as "vanity" our current doctrine. It is a statement of the opposite Reformed doctrine, or of Calvinism, and will save us the trouble of setting that belief before our readers in our own words. Now, are we to suppose that the Scottish Church changed her belief in the twinkling of an eye,—that on the evening of the day on which she adopted the Westminster Standards, she accepted doctrine which in the morning she had denounced as "vanity"?

(b.) None of the Reformed Churches with whom she held close communication, and whom, in the Westminster Assembly, her commission-

ers insisted on as models of what a Reformed Church ought to be, held that Zwinglian doctrine of the sacraments. Our current doctrine was confined to German Switzerland. Reformed France and Germany united with Holland and Geneva in teaching the Calvinistic doctrine contained in the above extract.

(c.) The great philosophic revolution which made the Zwinglian doctrine popular—the establishment of the philosophy of "common sense" by John Locke,—was not accomplished until Puritanism had become Dissent and the Stuarts were about to yield the throne,—not till long after the Westminster Assembly were in their graves.

II. The phraseology and doctrinal statements of the Westminster Standards are Calvinistic, and not Zwinglian. What we mean by "Calvinistic," the reader will note is expressed in the extract given above: by Zwinglianism we mean our current explanation of the sacraments as mere symbols and memorials. The Westminster Confession teaches us that the sacraments are "holy signs and seals of the covenant, . . . instituted . . . to confirm our interest in Christ." It tells us that "There is in every sacrament a spiritual relation or sacramental union between the sign and the thing signified," &c. It speaks of "grace conferred by" and of "grace exhibited \* in or by the sacraments rightly used," of an "efficacy" which "depends not on the piety" of the minister, "but on the work of the Spirit and the word of institution, which contains . . . a promise of benefit to worthy receivers." So, the *Larger Catechism* teaches us that a sacrament is designed to "exhibit [i. e. apply, as in the Shorter Catechism,] unto those that are within the covenant of grace the benefits of his mediation to strengthen and increase their faith and all other graces;" &c; also that "the parts of a sacrament are two . . . an outward and sensible sign, . . . an inward and spiritual grace." Both catechisms enumerate the sacraments among "the outward and ordinary means," which "are made effectual to the elect for their salvation" and "whereby Christ communicates to His Church the benefits of His mediation."

The Confession calls Baptism "a seal of ingrafting into Christ;" but that it attaches the idea of spiritual efficacy to this now eviscerated term, is seen by the rest of the chapter (xxviii) where "grace and salvation" are said not to be "so inseparably annexed to it as that no person can be saved and regenerated without it, or that all baptized are undoubtedly regenerated,"—statements which correlate of which any reader can supply for himself. It further speaks of "the efficacy of baptism," as not tied to "the time of administration," and affirms that "the grace promised" is really "exhibited [applied], and conferred by the right use of this ordinance" upon the elect. The *Larger Catechism* requires us to "improve our baptism by consideration of the nature of it, and of the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed thereby."

On the Lord's Supper the teaching is still more explicitly Calvinistic. The Confession enumerates as among the ends sought in its institution "the sealing all benefits of Christ's sacrificial death unto true believers" and "their spiritual nourishment and growth in him." Nay—tell it not in Merceburg nor whisper it in Oxford!—the Westminster divines teach the REAL PRESENCE OF CHRIST'S BODY AND BLOOD in this sacrament, fencing in that statement with the usual Calvinistic safe-guards: "Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament, do then also inwardly, by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally, and corporally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified, . . . the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally, in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet as really, but spiritually present to the faith—as the elements to the outward senses." So, too, the Catechisms.

These quotations are quite sufficient to show that the authors of the Westminster Standards held the Calvinistic doctrine of efficacious sacramental grace,—that they taught a real connection between the outward ordinance and the workings of God's Spirit,—that while they did not absolutely confine it, on either hand, by declaring there was no grace without the sacrament or no sacrament without grace, they yet held that the sacraments were in ordinary cases the means of grace, the channels by which it was imparted to the souls of the elect. They held to a regenerating efficacy in baptism and a real presence of the body and blood of the glorified humanity as well as the omnipresent divinity of Christ, in the Eucharist.

How much may be said in defence of these doctrines we shall not now inquire; nor yet how \* Used here in the old sense, which it still retains in medicine, as equivalent to "applied."

Of the "Standards-pure-and-simple" people. We have every reason to be declared that mass of all the Presbyterian integrity of the divines would have hesitated to assent, would "impair the scriptural figment of a truth" with what with Adam, or any other those who which the systematizers of Standards Princeton may deem essential to the edifice? If one may pick and choose not another?

There is another aspect of the case of far greater practical importance. We live a day of sudden and stupendous ecclesiastical revolutions, which have been brought about—some by those who contemptuously reject the doctrinal statements of the fathers,—some by those who profess a superstitious reverence for them. It is in keeping free from either of the tendencies—in avoiding alike the looseness of the Broad Church, and the rigidity of the narrow Church, that the safety of Presbyterianism lies. The great "Church and Catholic" revival which has largely revolutionized the Reformed Church of England, the Lutheran Church of Germany and America, and Denmark, and the German Reformed Church of America, gives warning of a not impossible danger to us also. There are signs enough on every side, on this and the other side of the Atlantic, that the peculiar aesthetic temperament to which it appeals is no stranger among us. To idolize a Confession of Faith which embodies so largely the sacramentarian element as does that of Westminster, is to strengthen the hands of our minor Puseys, Grantwigs and Nevins, to make sure their success in revolution. The tendencies toward ritualism and ecclesiasticism are plain enough to any one who has read the signs of the times. Their advocates will ask for ten years to be tolerated; for ten more they will ask equality; and before the generation has passed, they will demand the mastery. Are we prepared to help them by our outcry for "the Standards, pure and simple"?

Religious Intolerance is not quite dead yet, as recent events in both hemispheres show. In Spain, a schoolmaster is imprisoned for teaching his pupils Protestant doctrine; in Portugal a British subject is subjected to a vexatious prosecution for holding meetings among the Romanists. In Bavaria an editor is imprisoned for saying that the Church's holidays are too numerous and foster indolence. In Morocco the Sultan has to interpose to prevent the Jews from being as ruthlessly butchered as are unionists or negroes in Texas. In Chili the priests stir up "lewd fellows of the baser sort" to assail the missionaries of the American and Foreign Christian Union. In Texas a member is prosecuted before his church for radicalism, in taking office under the military authorities, and failing to appear, is expelled.

A movement has been set on foot to establish a church in Raleigh, N. C., in connection with the Northern O. S. Assembly, and at the first meeting in the Hall of the House of Representatives \$500 was raised for the purpose. The *North Carolina Presbyterian* stigmatizes this as "a political rather than a religious movement" and "cannot find language in which to express [its] condemnation of such wickedness."

Dr. N. L. Rice has accepted the Presidency of the College of the "Declaration and Testimony" Synod of Missouri, although as *The Western Presbyterian* shows, he voted for and defended the very measure of the Old School Assembly, on which that famous manifesto poured out vials of wrath. To save his consistency he denies the right of the Church to decide the question of allegiance, as between two hostile governments, and yet holds that it "is her right and duty to bear witness against rebellion," which is nothing, but the setting up of a new government in opposition to the lawful one.

"The Wickedest Man in New York" (so called) has at last, it is announced, closed his low dance-house, and turned it into a sort of Magdalen Asylum, a prayer-meeting having held in it last Sunday evening. We are glad after been all the trouble taken over his conversion, that it has not proved a mare's nest.

In the Mary Anne Smith abduction case, the priestly kidnappers, not content with trying to ruin the reputation of the girl whom they have imprisoned among bad characters in the Newark "House of the Good Shepherd," have been amusing themselves with forgery: They have published as hers, letters, which the girl could not possibly have written, and which even the secular Press stigmatizes as falsehoods.