

THE PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY.

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I.

THE REVISED CONFESSION.

THE Northern Presbyterians have published their Revised Confession of Faith, and it is proper for other Presbyterians, not of that communion, to review the changes which have been made, with a view to ascertaining whether they are alterations in the mere superficialities or in the substantive body of the Calvinistic system. The hilarity with which the revision has been received by such diluted Calvinists as the Cumberland Presbyterians, together with the promptness and enthusiasm with which they offered organic union on the basis of these changes, awakens apprehension, and calls for cautious examination.

An inventory of the changes which have been made will show that the Northern Presbyterians have, (1) explained their former doctrine of Predestination, (2) interpreted their doctrine of the salvation of Dead Infants, (3) restated their doctrine of works done by unregenerate persons, (4) amended their doctrine of Oaths, (5) withdrawn their charge that the Pope of Rome was Antichrist, (6) added a new chapter on the Holy Spirit, (7) and added a new chapter on the Love of God, and Missions.

We are not going to take up these points in detail, but elect, for animadversion, the changes which seem to affect the integrity of the Calvinistic system.

We quote now the new language which is the basis of our fault-finding:

VII.

THE IDEA OF BEAUTY INHERENT IN THE WESTMINSTER STANDARDS.

A GREAT many have a misconception of the science of the beautiful, with its allied conceptions and emotions. Such consider things beautiful only when they are pleasing to the sense of sight. To them a rose, or a face, or a picture is beautiful only when, through the sense of sight, pleasant emotions are awakened in the heart.

Although the province of this science is not very definitely fixed, and there is still some ambiguity about the meaning of the term *æsthetics*, arising from its etymology and various uses, yet the above conception is regarded as far too limited, and out of harmony with man's actual experiences.

It was Baumgarten, the noted German writer on the science of the beautiful, who argued, that as truth is the end and perfection of pure knowledge, and good the end and perfection of the will, so beauty must be the supreme aim of all sensuous knowledge.

But, as we have already affirmed, it is using the term, we think, in a far too limited sense to confine it to this comparatively narrow class of sensations and perceptions.

To have anything like an intelligent conception of this science, it must be viewed subjectively as well as objectively, and all the leading metaphysical, as well as empirical problems, must be considered.

Since the time of Socrates down to the present, almost every age has had its champion of this science, and it is extremely interesting to note the diversity of opinion among these writers as to what really constitutes the beautiful.

It is not surprising to know that it was among the Greeks, a people so productive of noble *æsthetic* creations, that the first

speculations on the science of the beautiful arose. Plato tells us that the beautiful was made a special department in their teaching.

Socrates was the first of the Greeks who so formulated his speculations as to give to the world a clear and intelligent statement of his theory concerning this interesting science.

From the time of Socrates down to the present, with all the writers in this field of speculation, one great question has been clamoring for an answer, viz.: What really constitutes the beautiful?

Now it is the purpose of this paper, as is suggested by its subject, to show that the various answers made to this question, by the different writers, are all strikingly applicable to the Westminster standards.

I. In the first place, Socrates, if we accept Xenophon's account of his views in the *Memorabilia*, regarded the beautiful as coincident with the good, and both of them resolvable into the useful. With Socrates, then, a thing is beautiful just in proportion as it is useful. According to this theory a thing is beautiful in so far as it serves some rational end, whether it be the security or the gratification of man. Indeed, Socrates is reported as having gone to the extent of saying, that pictures and other purposeless works of art, when used to adorn a house, hindered rather than furthered enjoyment, because of the space they took from useful objects. From this it would seem as if he did not regard the gratification of man's æsthetic nature, through the sense of perception, as being worthy of a place in this science. With him only that which is useful is worthy of being called the beautiful.

Now it is not our purpose to consider the correctness or incorrectness of this theory, but only to mention it so as to show that the Socratinian idea of the beautiful is applicable to our standards.

If a thing is beautiful because it is useful, then certainly the idea of beauty, looked at from this standpoint, is inherent in our standards.

But this suggests another question, viz.: Wherein consists the usefulness of the Westminster Standards? The answer is seen in

the fact that it is the bond of union with the largest Protestant denomination the world has ever seen. There are at least thirty million Protestant Christians in the world who hold to the Calvinistic system of theology and Presbyterian polity as formulated by our Standards.

But some argue that a large number is no decided test of strength or usefulness. To decide this point, however, in this particular case, it will be necessary to ask, What is this large body of Protestant Christians doing to execute the last will and testament of our blessed Lord?

The commission to evangelize the world is the one great work of the church, and the church that is not actively engaged in world-wide evangelization is not worthy of the name. So we ask, What is this Calvinistic body of Protestant Christians doing to carry out this one great purpose of the church?

Statistics, which are worthy of our consideration, show that at least one-fourth of all the mission work that is being done in the world is under the supervision of, and supported by the Calvinistic churches.

If, then, this great body of Christians is doing more to realize the primary purpose of the church than any other Protestant denomination, and the Westminster Standards is the bond of union with these Christians, then certainly their mission is a very useful one.

And, according to Socrates, if a thing be beautiful just in proportion as it is useful, then the idea of beauty is largely inherent in our Standards.

II. In the second place, when we study the science of the beautiful as held by Aristotle, we find that with him a thing is beautiful just in proportion as it is definite or determinate.

He viewed the question of the beautiful from the scientific rather than the metaphysical standpoint. He was the one Greek who set forth the ends of the fine arts as the vehicles to the mind of the ideas and delights of beauty.

Unlike Socrates, he almost drew a fine line of demarcation between the beautiful and the good. Also in the *Politics* he seems to set the beautiful above the useful.

With him the universal element of the beautiful is the definite or determinate.

Now we believe that this Aristotelian idea of the beautiful is clearly applicable to our Standards.

According to this theory, then, any production like our Standards is beautiful when it speaks with no uncertain sound.

You may read after the world's greatest literati, and you will find no more definite or determinate statements, which are worthy of man's consideration, than the statements of our own Standards.

Take, for instance, the answer to the question, What is the chief end of man? "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever."

No question of greater importancè can possibly be suggested to the mind of man than this, and all the books which have ever been written upon this subject by the philosophers and sages of all the ages, have not added one jot or tittle to this definite and determinate statement as found in the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

Take again the blow aimed at the monstrous doctrine of polytheism. In all the monotheistic theology of the world you cannot find a more definite or determinate statement than that found in the Westminster Standards, viz., "There is but one God only, the living and the true God." At one blow, in one short, definite and determinate statement, this doctrine is forever settled, so far as Calvinists are concerned.

Abishai, desiring to slay Saul when he was at the mercy of David, said, "Now, therefore, let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time." As there would have been no need of Abishai giving Saul the second blow, so there has been no need of the Calvinistic world giving the second blow to the monstrous doctrine of polytheism, for long since its carcass has decayed upon the desert sands of time.

Again, we find that one of the most stupendous facts in all the universe is the fact of sin. From the time of Adam down to the present it is a fact that every age, every nation, and every individual has had to face.

And one question, viz., What is sin? has ever called for an answer. But while men have spent much time in speculating upon this question, no more definite answer has ever been made than that made by the fathers of the Westminster Assembly, viz., "Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God."

So we might go on and single out almost every subject treated of in these Standards, and we believe that it would be clearly seen that they are definite or determinate statements.

If, then, Aristotle be right in saying that a thing is beautiful just in proportion as it is definite or determinate, we are certainly justified in claiming that the Aristotelian idea of beauty is inherent in our Standards.

III. In the third place, according to the theory of Baumgarten, the principal element in the beautiful is strict imitation.

After the days of Plotinus, the great Alexandrian mystic, there was little speculation on the science of the beautiful until we come to the modern writers.

And among the modern writers, Baumgarten, the German, was the first who undertook to reduce this science to anything like a complete system of philosophy. With him, as truth was the object of logical knowledge, so beauty was the object of æsthetic knowledge. He did the world a great service in making the distinction between the provinces of logic, ethics and æsthetics. And in his speculations on æsthetics he concluded that as nature was the highest embodiment of beauty, so art must seek as its highest function the strictest possible imitation of nature. Holding to this theory, we see why it was that he made STRICT IMITATION the principal element in the beautiful. With him a picture was beautiful just in proportion as it conformed to that which it was supposed to represent.

Now, we believe that this theory of the beautiful, as held by Baumgarten, is also applicable to our Standards.

Just here the question arises, Of what are the Standards a representation? The purpose for which the Westminster Assembly was convened was to give to the world a picture, or a perfect representation, of the great teachings of God's Word. As this

was the primary purpose of the Westminster Assembly, then the Standards as formulated by that Assembly, according to the theory of Baungarten, are beautiful just in proportion as they give us a perfect picture, or complete representation of that Word.

This we believe has been done to a more perfect degree in the Westminster Standards than in any other system of doctrine yet given to the world. By even a casual study of our Standards, in the light of the proof-texts, it will be seen that every one of the great fundamental features of God's Word are imitated. While it will not be necessary to make specific comparisons to justify this claim, yet we cite you to a few points to "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." The Standards teach salvation by grace, and the Bible teaches, "For by grace are ye saved through faith."

They emphasize that salvation is the free gift of God's love and mercy in Christ, and the Bible emphasizes the fact that, "God hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." The Standards teach a FREE salvation, and the Bible teaches that salvation is "the GIFT of God." They teach a present salvation, and the Bible declares that, "He that believeth on Christ hath everlasting life." The Standards teach a complete salvation, and the Bible declares, "Ye are complete in him." They teach an everlasting salvation, and Christ declares, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish."

The Standards teach that God "embraces the sinner in the arms of unchanging love," and the Bible declares that nothing "shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." They teach that God's child is secured by the bonds of an everlasting covenant, and the Bible declares, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of my peace shall not be removed, saith the Lord."

The Standards teach an "unclouded prospect of final victory for the redeemed," and the Bible tells us of "an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved

in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." They teach us that God's love was from everlasting, and God himself declares through his Word, "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

So we believe that this imitation would be seen if we would compare with the Bible every truth as set forth by our Standards. Nor do we wonder at this fact when we consider the circumstances under which these Standards were formulated. Every Monday morning the members of the Assembly were required to make anew the following vow, "I do seriously promise and vow, in the presence of Almighty God, that in this Assembly, whereof I am a member, I will maintain nothing in point of doctrine but what I believe to be most agreeable to God's Word." And to the end that they might know what was "most agreeable" to God's Word, much time was spent in prayer. A prayer oft repeated by George Gillespie, the youngest, yet one of the ablest of the members of this Assembly, was, "More light, Lord! More light, Lord!" The remark of Dr. C. A. Briggs concerning that Assembly is perhaps true, "Such a band of preaching and praying ministers as gathered in the Westminster Assembly the world had never seen before." Then, as we all know perhaps once every month, throughout the five and a half years of its sittings, an entire day was given to fasting and prayer. These words then from *The Creed of Presbyterians*, in such a discussion, come to us with peculiar force, "All that training the most complete and thorough, learning the most profound and extensive, intellect the most acute and searching, coöperation the most wide and helpful, labor the most intense and protracted, could do to make our Standards the most perfect mirror of Scripture truth, was done."

If, then, we hold with Baumgarten, that strict imitation is the principal element in the beautiful, we are forced to conclude that the Baumgartian idea of the beautiful is inherent in our Standards.

IV. Passing over Kant, who was perhaps the next to give us an original philosophical treatise on the beautiful, we come, in the fourth place, to consider Schelling's theory. With him, the

principal element in the beautiful was a perfect relationship between subject and object. According to his theory there must be a definite existence of subject and object, yet they do not exist independently of each other. The subject and object may be conceived of as two poles, such as the two poles of the magnet, each having its own definite existence, yet inseparably joined by the magnetic bar. So it has been truly said that "According to Schelling's philosophy of art, the ego must succeed in actually perceiving the concord of subject and object, which is half disguised in perception." According, then, to his speculations, it is through the "creative activity of the artist that absolute beauty reveals itself in a perfect relationship between subject and object." Accepting this theory of the beautiful as advocated by Schelling, we see that it also is applicable to our Standards.

When we look into those Standards, we find that three of the greatest objects considered are God, Law, Eternity, and over against them three of the greatest subjects considered are Man, Duty, Destiny. And upon a careful consideration of these objects and subjects, we find that while they have a definite existence, they are as inseparably joined in Christ as the two poles of the magnet, in the magnetic bar. God the object and man the subject are thus connected, for Christ is very God and very man. Law the object and duty the subject are thus connected, for Christ came to fulfil the law, and at the same time to set man a perfect example of how he should discharge his duty to both God and men. So also eternity the object and destiny the subject are thus connected, for while eternity is wrapt up in the very being of Christ, man's eternal destiny is settled by his relationship to this Christ. We believe the same will be found to be true if we consider other subjects and objects emphasized by our Standards. So, then, according to the science of the beautiful as set forth by Schelling, we see that the idea of beauty is inherent in our Standards.

V. In the fifth place, according to St. Augustine, Hegel and Hutcheson, the principal element in the beautiful is harmony. With them the cause of beauty is not any simple sensation from an object, as color or tone, but a certain harmony among the parts,

or to use Hutcheson's own words, "Uniformity amidst variety." In perfect sympathy with this theory, Hegel defines the beautiful as "Unity of the manifold," or a mutual dependence of parts. And in the expression, "Omnis porro pulchritudinis forma unitas est," St. Augustine taught that unity or harmony is the form of all beauty. We believe that this theory of the beautiful is also applicable to our Standards, for by a careful study we see that there is a perfect unity or harmony of all the parts. For instance, the whole plan of redemption is in perfect harmony with man's need. Our Standards, as a perfect mirror of God's Word, picture man as dead in trespasses and in sins. And being dead, he is unable to help himself, or devise any way of escape. So if man is ever saved it must be through some outside agency. In other words it must be of grace. And salvation by grace is the salvation that is taught by our Standards, so we see that the plan of salvation they offer is in perfect harmony with man's actual condition or need.

We see also a perfect harmony between God's justice and his mercy. Our Standards speak with no uncertain sound in regard to God's justice. They tell us that he is an holy God, and that he cannot look with any degree of complacency upon sin. They teach us that God's very nature demands that sin be punished. But these same Standards tell us that our God is a God of mercy; that he delights in showing mercy unto the children of men. And in order that he might be just, and yet exercise mercy, or in order that there might be perfect harmony between God's justice and his mercy, he sent his only begotten Son into the world that he might take man's place under the law, and assume all the liabilities that come to him as the result of having violated that law.

In doing so Christ was obedient to the law, he suffered under the law, and died under the law. Not only so, but in this obedience, and suffering, and death, he met the penalty and removed the guilt. So in the awful tragedy enacted upon Calvary, God's justice was fully satisfied, and the floodgates of his eternal mercy were opened for man. Like God's Word itself, our Standards emphasize these two great truths, and thus preserve the harmony of these two great attributes of God's nature. So, then, if accord-

ing to this theory, harmony be the principal element in the beautiful, the idea of beauty is inherent in our Standards.

VI. In the sixth place, Lord Shaftesbury tells us that the principal element in the beautiful is spiritual enjoyment. According to his speculations, the principle of beauty is not perceived with an external sense, but with an internal or moral sense. He says that it is this moral perception which affords man his only delight, namely, spiritual enjoyment.

This theory we also believe to be applicable to our Standards. We might ask, What is it that affords spiritual enjoyment? The answer is found in the great fact of spiritual assurance. But another question arises here, namely, What is the ground of our assurance? The answer to this question is found in the great fact of our covenant relationship with God the Father. Our Standards clearly teach the method of grace by covenant. When we consider the covenant of redemption, or the covenant between God the Father and God the Son, we find that the one great condition of the covenant was the perfect satisfaction of Christ for his people. But did Christ fulfil that condition? Did he make a perfect satisfaction for his people? When we go to Calvary, and there see the work that he did in fulfilling the condition of the covenant of redemption; when there upon that consecrated spot, sitting as it were under the very shadow of the cross, we catch the full meaning of the atonement, we see that he did make a perfect satisfaction for his people. That atonement was both Godward and manward in its effect. It was Godward in that it reached up and satisfied divine justice, and it was manward in that it reached down and purged away man's guilt. Then, when we consider the covenant of grace, or the covenant between God and his elect people, we find that the one condition of the covenant is faith in Christ who is the Mediator of the covenant. Then, if I have fulfilled the condition of this covenant; if I have centred my faith in Christ who is the Mediator of this covenant, I may have the blessed assurance of this covenant relationship with God the Father. It is only in such a relationship with God that we can fully appreciate the words of Christ when he said, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall

any man pluck them out of my hand." And it is only in such a relationship that we can say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Now these are the great fundamental truths of the Westminster Standards. They emphasize as do no other theological teachings man's covenant relationship with God. It is this covenant relationship which is the solid ground of our assurance, and out of this spiritual assurance comes our spiritual joy. If, then, according to Lord Shaftesbury, spiritual enjoyment be the principal element in the beautiful, the idea of beauty is certainly inherent in our Standards.

VII. In the seventh place, we find that Hogarth, Hemsterhuis, and Herbert Spencer, claim that that which affords the largest number of ideas, in the smallest possible compass of space and time, constitutes the principal element in the beautiful. Hogarth, in his *Analysis of Beauty*, names six elements, and the second of these, which is the one perhaps upon which he places the most emphasis, is "variety in as many ways as possible." And Spencer says that the highest possible form of beauty is that which carries into activity the greatest possible number of emotions. These theories seem to be in perfect accord with that of Franz Hemsterhuis, the Dutch writer of the eighteenth century. While he admits that all knowledge comes through the senses, yet he maintains that the only faculty of true knowledge is an internal sense, or the soul. And the soul desiring immediate and complete knowledge, and being limited in its activities by its union with the senses, which are themselves incapable of simultaneous action, strives to gain the greatest number of ideas in the shortest possible compass of space and time. Just in proportion as this effort of the soul is successful will knowledge be attended with enjoyment. From this he argues that as the highest possible measure of delight is given by beauty, so beauty in turn may be defined as that which affords the highest possible number of ideas in the smallest possible compass of space and time. In a peculiar sense do we believe that this idea of beauty is inherent in our Standards. So familiar are we with these Standards, especially

the Catechisms, that it will not be necessary to burden one with concrete illustrations to justify this claim. Yet so strikingly true is this of one answer in our Shorter Catechism we cannot refrain from calling attention to it. We refer to the answer to the question, What is God? "God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth." This remarkable answer, given in prayer, as an answer to prayer, contains but eighteen words, yet it introduces the reader to twelve distinct ideas, almost as many ideas as there are words, yet stated in a form which, for beauty and elegance and grace, bids defiance to the pen even of a Chaucer. We believe that if one would carefully search through all the literature of the world, one could not find another sentence which affords so large a number of distinct ideas in so few words as is found in this sentence. This is true, we believe, but, perhaps, in a more limited degree, of every statement in our Standards. If, then, these speculators in the science of the beautiful be right in claiming that the principal element in the beautiful is that which affords the largest possible number of ideas in the smallest possible compass of space and time, then we are certainly justified in believing and asserting that this idea of beauty is inherent in our Standards.

VIII. The last two speculators in this field of science we will but briefly mention, as their theories are somewhat akin to theories already discussed.

In the eighth place, Reid seemed to consider the idea of the beautiful from a purely spiritual standpoint. He held that beauty exists in objects independently of our minds. With him a thing is beautiful just in proportion as it is perfect for the end for which it was created. The earth was created as a dwelling place for man, and just in proportion as it is perfect for that end is it beautiful. The Bible was given as a revelation of God's will to man, and just in proportion as it is perfect for that end is it beautiful. So the Westminster Standards were given to the world as a systematic statement of God's Word. And as an evidence of the fact that they are perfect for the end for which they were created, we remind you of the fact that for over two

hundred and fifty years, more than one-fifth of the Protestant Christian world have regarded them as the most perfect statement of Scripture truth the world has ever known.

Being, then, perfect for the end for which they were created, we may justly conclude that Reid's idea of the beautiful is inherent in them.

IX. In the ninth place, Sir William Hamilton, in his lectures on Metaphysics, claims that a thing is beautiful just in proportion as it occupies the imagination and understanding in a free and full activity. This element of the beautiful we believe is also applicable to our Standards. For what subjects will occupy the mind in a freer and fuller activity than the thought of God, his being, his attributes, duty, destiny, heaven, hell, and man's individual responsibility to God as well as to his fellow man? These, and other subjects which might be mentioned, all clearly emphasized in our Standards, call upon man to dig to the lowest possible depths of understanding, and climb to the sublimest possible heights of imagination. So we conclude that Sir William Hamilton's idea of the beautiful is also inherent in our Standards.

In this review, commencing with Socrates, five hundred years before Christ, we have brought you down to the present, by making a brief study of the principal element of the beautiful as held by thirteen of the leading philosophers of the world, and in every case we have seen that what each individual philosopher thought to constitute the principal element in the beautiful is strikingly applicable to our Standards. In the light, then, of this very interesting fact, we may assert with justifiable pride that the idea of beauty is inherent in our Standards to a degree unsurpassed, if indeed equalled, by any other system of doctrine yet given to the world. We are not surprised, then, at hearing John Morley assert that "Calvinism has exalted its subjects to a pitch of heroic moral energy that has never been surpassed." Or Froude when he asserts that "Whatever exists at this moment in England and Scotland of conscientious fear of doing evil is the remnant of the convictions which were branded by the Calvinists into the people's hearts." Or of Wilson, when he declares that "The world has never known a higher type of robust and sturdy

manhood, nor a gentler, purer, or more lovable womanhood than have prevailed among those people who have imbibed the principles of the Calvinistic creed." Says Henry Ward Beecher, "They tell us that Calvinism plies men with hammer and chisel. It does; and the result is monumental marble. Other systems leave men soft and dirty; Calvinism makes them of white marble to endure forever." Says John Richard Green, "It is in Calvinism that the modern world strikes its root, for it was Calvinism that first revealed the worth and dignity of man."

Why could such assertions be made by men, some of whom were not in sympathy with Calvinistic theology? The answer is found in the fact that the elements of true beauty, as held by the world's best thinkers in all ages of her history, are inherent in the Standards of Calvinistic theology.

In the language, then, of Dr. Smith, "With a past rich in glorious achievement, and a present marked by world-wide extension, and triumphing missionary enthusiasm, the future of the Presbyterian Church is radiant with promise. Who can doubt that through historic development, through centuries of special experience, through stern battles with relentless enemies, as well as through the silent sweeter nurture of his love, God has constituted the Presbyterian Church one of his elect agencies in the fulfilment of that gracious purpose which includes not ourselves only, but the whole world."

While the history of the past is glorious, let us not be satisfied with that history; but with hearts thrilled with the consciousness of our matchless heritage, keeping step with the music of heaven's orchestra, and fighting under those Standards which we believe to be the most perfect mirror of Scripture truth, let us go forth as loyal soldiers of the eternal King to conquer the world.

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