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# THE Presbyterian Quarterly.

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No. 47--JANUARY, 1899.

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## I. THE PRESBYTERIAN BULWARKS OF LIBERTY AND LAW.

It is a striking and memorable coincidence that while in the City of Philadelphia the Presbyterian Synod of New York and Philadelphia, in 1787, was discussing and amending the report of Witherspoon and his associates, and seeking the best possible embodiment of Presbyterianism as an organized, representative and constitutional government, the Constitutional Convention was also at the same time, in that same city, debating and determining the best form of government for the new Nation. Led by Witherspoon, whose blood still tingled with the thrill of the hour when he signed the Declaration of Independence, the Synod took the Confession of Faith in hand, and without any scrupulosities of reverence for it as a venerable symbol, and in absolute indifference to possibilities of patch-work, stripped it of every vestige of Erastianism, and ordered a thousand copies of the Plan as thus amended, printed for distribution among the Presbyteries, "for their consideration, and the consideration of the churches under their care." In the next Synod, 1788, after further amendment and full discussion, the whole Plan was finally adopted as "The Constitu-

tion of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America."

Thus the government of the Presbyterian Church was made consistent in its entire and absolute separation of Church and State. The completed work became a bulwark of Christian liberty, and it stands to-day four square to all the winds of Cæsarism and the Papacy.

But these Presbyterian Fathers did more than this. They made a luminous and comprehensive statement of "the general principles" by which they had been governed in the formation of the plan. These principles are basilar and structural—they enter vitally into our government and discipline. They are at once its foundation and its vindication. For the clearness and comprehensiveness of this declaration of principles, which constitutes the first chapter of our Form of Government, for its balance and poise, for its grasp of fundamentals, for its truths whose very statement when once understood, makes them seem almost axiomatic, for its safe-guarding of sacred rights, for its just limitations put about liberty to keep liberty from license, and for its equally just limitations put about power to keep power from tyranny—for all this, and also for the lofty spiritual tone and the calm judicial temper pervading it, I know nothing to match it, of its kind and within the same compass, in all literature. It has been too much hidden under a bushel. In a ministry of forty years, I have never once heard it publicly referred to. In the histories I have consulted, it is passed by with the barest mention. It is my desire, in this article, to make it as a city set on a hill, that it may give light to those who are yet in darkness as to Presbyterian Government and Discipline, and that it may more widely do what its authors hoped it would when they gave it to the world, viz.: "Prevent those rash misconceptions and uncandid reflections which usually proceed from an imperfect view of any subject."

These Fathers of American Presbyterianism were “unanimously of opinion :”

First. “That God alone is Lord of the conscience; and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship.”

This supreme assertion of freedom of conscience is taken from the bosom of the Confession of Faith, where it had been placed by the Westminster divines when they wrought out the doctrinal standards in the famous Assembly of 1643. Our American Presbyterian Fathers copied it from the Confession, and lifted it to the foremost place in the Form of Government, where it leads the brilliant galaxy of principles for which many have died, and millions more have been willing to die. It is our immortal Presbyterian Declaration of Independence. It matches and surpasses Thomas Jefferson’s world-famous manifesto, “That all men are created equal, and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Let me repeat this first principle of Presbyterian Government: “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship.” To this the Fathers added in this same first section the following irresistible sequitur: “Therefore, they consider the rights of private judgment in all matters that respect religion as universal and inalienable. They do not even wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power further than may be necessary for protection and security, and at the same time be equal and common to all others,”

True to this declaration they swept everything out of the Confession that looked at all like union of Church and State. And they made clean work of it. Not a vestige of the union of Christ and Cæsar was left. No King but

Christ. No vicar of Christ, usurping lordship. A conscience free from all commandments of men that are not commandments of God. The right of private judgment in matters of religion inalienable. Nay, more—no alliance with the State whatsoever—no aid to any religious constitution by the civil power save in the protection of rights common to all. That is to say, no public money for sectarian use.

These are the ringing words by which the Presbyterian Church irrevocably commits herself to the crown rights of her Lord and King. The principle is held by other evangelical faiths. But it has been given a rare historic setting by Presbyterians; notably when the Free Church of Scotland, in 1843, left her earthly all rather than bow to the behest of civil magistracy, and her four hundred ministers turned their backs upon manse and glebe and benefice, surrendered an annual income of at least a half million dollars and boldly walked forth to be God's freemen. And notably again, when the American Presbyterian Church placed this principle first and chief of all in the charter of her God-given rights—set it as the crown jewel in her diadem of Christian loyalty and liberty.

I need hardly say to you that there are portents of a coming time when we and other faiths of God's free hosts, may be obliged to stand for this principle as with faces of steel and consciences incarnate, against a wily, grasping, ecclesiasticism, whose history is black with the record of her usurpation of powers that belong to our Lord and King alone.

I pass now to a consideration of the second principle affirmed by the Fathers in the first chapter of our Form of Government.

They are unanimously of opinion :

Second. That, in perfect consistency with the above principle of common right, every Christian church, or union

or association of particular churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its communion, and the qualification of its ministers and members.

This statement seems almost axiomatic. It is the common law of organization. Safe-guarded interests are impossible without it. The bride of Christ must keep her robe unsoiled. She has a God-given stewardship. Shall anybody be admitted to her communion? Shall she put her imprimatur on every veriest tramp that claims to be commissioned of heaven to preach the Gospel? How could she keep her peace, or care for truth which Christ has committed to her, if she flung her gates and her pulpits wide open, and let the whole motley world in to her communion and her ambassadorship, without condition and without limitation! If terms of church and ministerial fellowship are to be made at all, who shall make them and determine their nature and spirit, if not the Church herself, in the light and under the law of that Word which Christ has given her. It is true that in the exercise of this right, any particular church, or association of churches, may err, "in making the terms of communion either too lax or too narrow." But even in this case, said these Presbyterian Fathers, "they do not infringe upon the liberty or rights of others, but only make an improper use of their own."

Now what are the terms of communion imposed by the Presbyterian Church? Looking into the New Testament record of the early Church, she found only one condition of church membership, viz: belief in the Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour; and that, and that only, she has placed at the door of her communion. She demands no assent to an extended creed. She presses no questions about a system of doctrine. She seeks to know simply whether the applicant for admission to her fold is a Christian—a loving, obedient disciple of Jesus Christ. If he be that, he is welcome to all the privileges of her Church membership. Any true child of God,

of whatever name or creed, may come knocking at the door of the Presbyterian Church and asking, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" and the swift answer shall be, "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest." He may have imperfect views of Christ, he may stumble at the Trinity, he may have doubts about the mode of baptism, he may be an Arminian as to the decree, or a Pelagian as to the human will, or a Lutheran as to the Lord's Supper, or a Sabellian, a Swedenborgian, a Congregationalist, a Prelatist; no matter. Has he the spirit of Christ, and does he believe there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby he can be saved? Then the Presbyterian Church says his place is within Christ's visible fold; and without a question as to his orthodoxy in any other regard, she opens wide her doors to welcome him. And her ground and warrant for this is, that, according to the Scriptures, there should be no conditions of church membership, which are not conditions of salvation. Surely the Church should receive to her fold anybody that she has reason to believe Christ would receive to his. What possible right have we to make it harder to get into the Church than it is to get into heaven?

This is no new, no individual opinion—outside judgment to the contrary notwithstanding. It is the historic position of the American Presbyterian Church. In the Adopting act of 1729, more than one hundred and fifty years ago, when the question of subscription to the doctrinal standards was up for settlement, while the Synod claimed the right, and avowed the necessity, of demanding of the ministers an assent to all the essential and necessary articles of the Confession of Faith, it made this distinct avowal concerning all applicants for admission to church membership; viz: "We are willing to admit to fellowship in sacred ordinances all such as we have ground to believe Christ will at last admit to the Kingdom of Heaven."

Thus we build no wall about our communion that Christ has not built. Our banner is inscribed with "Whosoever believeth, let him come." We bar out no Christian because of his intellectual doctrinal conviction. Instead, therefore, of our being bigoted and narrow, as is often charged, binding a rigid creed on the brow of every believer as a condition of church membership, there is scarcely so broad and free a communion in all the ranks of evangelical Christendom.

But still further did our Presbyterian Fathers lay down the principles of church government.

They are unanimously of opinion :

Third. "That our blessed Saviour, for the edification of the visible church, which is his body, hath appointed officers, not only to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments, but also to exercise discipline for the preservation both of truth and duty."

They agree with the Westminster divines of a century and a half before them that, "The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of church-officers, distinct from the civil magistrate."

On the ground of antecedent probability they would reach this conclusion. The government of God's Church would seem to be too vital a thing, of too vast concern, and covering too many interests to be left to the varying caprice and prejudice of even regenerated Christian men. Christ came to establish a kingdom. But a kingdom implies government. And a government without a form of government is impossible. Christ surely did not set up a kingdom, only to leave it with no regulative principles and no officers of rule, without order and without law. This would be to leave it a mob.

But these men were not content to rest so important a matter on the mere warrant of antecedent probability. So

they searched the New Testament Scriptures to ascertain the kind of government Christ left his Church. They found clear record of the following facts: that there were authorized rulers in the early Church; that these rulers were elders; that elders and bishops were identical, the titles being used interchangeably; and that there was a plurality of these elders or bishops in a church. And they came with overwhelming and unanimous conviction to the conclusion, that the government of the New Testament Church was a government by elders.

The record is unmistakeable. He that runs may read. The persons we meet oftenest in the inspired account of early church organization and activity are the elders. They come into view everywhere. There were elders in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 15:11); elders in the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:1); elders in the Church of the Dispersion (I. Peter 5:1); Paul and Barnabas, on returning from their first missionary tour "appointed elders in every church" (Acts 14:21). Titus in Crete "appointed elders in every city." What were the duties of these elders? Just what they are now in the Presbyterian Church. They were rulers—officers of government. Paul in his letter to Timothy charged that the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor (1 Timothy 5:17). In his letter to the church at Rome, while speaking of different gifts in the Church, he says—"He that ruleth," let him rule "with diligence" (Rom. 12:8). In his letter to the Thessalonian Church, he speaks of those that were "set over them in the Lord" (Thes. 5:12). In his talk with the elders of the church at Ephesus, he says, "Take heed to all the flock, in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops" (Acts 20:28). In the letter to the Hebrews, Christians are bidden to "remember" and "obey" and "submit to" those in the church who "had the rule over them" (Heb. 13:7-17). But ruling was not all. They were to "watch in behalf of souls" (Heb. 7:17). They



were to "speak the Word of God" (Heb. 7:17). Paul bids the elders of Ephesus "feed the church of God" (Acts 20-28). Peter exhorts the elders to "tend the flock of God, exercising the office of bishop." James tells the Christians of the Dispersion, "Is any sick among you, let him send for the elders of the church." And Paul in his letter to Timothy commends especially those of the elders who "labor in the Word and in teaching."

This is the New Testament doctrine of the eldership. These following things lie on the very surface of Scripture, viz: There was a plurality of elders in every church, even in the small mission churches; these elders all ruled; they were officers of government; they watched over the flock of God; they exercised the functions of a Bishop; and some of them, at least, not only ruled, but preached the Gospel, "labored in the word and in teaching." Surely our Presbyterian Fathers had a right to say, "The Lord Jesus Christ as King and Head of his Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hands of church officers." And for naming these officers "elders" they had a "thus saith the Lord."

But still further, in laying down the fundamental principles of church government, these Presbyterian Fathers are unanimously of opinion:

Fourth. "That truth is in order to goodness; and the great touchstone of truth, its tendency to promote holiness; according to our Saviour's rule, 'by their fruits ye shall know them.' And that no opinion can be either more pernicious or more absurd, than that which brings truth and falsehood upon a level, and represents it as of no consequence what a man's opinions are. On the contrary, they are persuaded that there is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty. Otherwise it would be of no consequence either to discover truth, or to embrace it."

This admirable principle never had better expression.

The Church of God is put in trust of God's truth. But what profit is it that we keep his truth, if it is of no consequence what a man's opinions are, and there be no inseparable connection between faith and life. Paul's terrific arraignment of men was that they had "exchanged the truth of God for a lie." The consequence of that exchange was, that they became "vain in their reasonings" and "their senseless heart was darkened." Of course all truth is not in order to goodness. The truth of the Copernican theory of the universe, or of the circulation of the blood, or of the correlation and conservation of force, or of a problem in mathematics, may be accepted or denied without making a man the better or the worse. But this is not the kind of truth these men of God were talking about when they were laying down the fundamental principles of church government. They meant the truth of revelation, the truth of God's Word, the truth that vitally touches life, and harnesses itself to the human will, and goes down into character. It was with this clear limitation, they said, "Truth is in order to goodness, and the great touchstone of truth, its tendency to promote holiness."

The principle needs no proof. Its statement is its demonstration. Under the conviction of this principle, they are unanimously of opinion :

Fifth. That "it is necessary to make effectual provision that all who are admitted as teachers be sound in the faith."

Here we see a marked and important difference between terms of admission to the Church and terms of admission to office in the Church. Ready as our Presbyterian fathers were to receive into church membership any and all whom they had reason to believe Christ would admit to heaven, they nevertheless thought it necessary to make effectual provision that the officers of the Church, to whom is entrusted the teaching and preaching of the Word, be sound in the faith. The reason for this necessity is not far to seek.

The Presbyterian Church stands for a certain system of doctrine and a certain form of government. She believes God's word teaches that system of doctrine and authorizes the government; she believes that these are nearer the mind of God as revealed in the word, than are the systems of doctrine and governmental forms of other evangelical faiths, and she believes the differences are so important, and affect Christian character and church efficiency so vitally, as not only to justify her separate and continued existence as a branch of the Church of Christ, but also to bring her to the maintenance of her faith with a mighty constraint of conscience.

This is her reason for being the only ground of her separate existence. If she has nothing distinctive in faith and government which she thinks her Lord has put her in trust of she is guilty of schism, of dividing Christ's body without cause, and she ought not to maintain her separate organization, no, not for an hour.

But her martyrs have not died for nothing. She has not fought with the wild beasts of tyranny and intolerance, and yet had no stay and courage from her great truths. She has not grown oaks without congenial soil. She has gone through two and a half centuries thinking in her heart of hearts she saw in Holy Scripture some doctrines of sin and grace and some principles of government that needed to be embodied in a system, if all God's truth were to be told and used in making Christ's kingdom come. So she wrought out her Confession of Faith and her Form of Government and published them to the world. Who shall question her right to do this? Nay, who shall challenge her duty to do it. And conceding her right and her duty to confess her faith, who shall challenge her right to guard and keep it? And by what better way can she keep it than by "making effectual provision that all who are admitted as teachers be sound in that faith"?

Clearly wolves must not be given the liberty of the flocks of God. Pulpits must not be open to false teachers, privily bringing in sects of perdition, denying even the Lord that bought them. This goes without saying. But more goes with it, that needs to be said and said with emphasis. When men come to the Presbyterian Church seeking the solemn sanction of ordination to her offices, or of admission to her ministry, she surely has a right to know their attitude towards her doctrine and government. Her doctrine is embodied in her published Confession of Faith.

So, one of the questions to be asked of all men before they can be enrolled as office bearers in the Presbyterian Church and accredited as her duly authorized official teachers and preachers, is this:

“Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures?”

The Confession of Faith is the doctrine of the Word of God as interpreted by the Presbyterian Church. She has embodied it in a system. She believes this system is taught in the Holy Scriptures. She asks for no *ipsissima verba* subscription. Many specific detailed statements might be doubted, or denied, without affecting the integrity of the system. But three historic phases of belief are unchallengeably included in this Presbyterian Confession of Faith. First, the evangelical system, common to all evangelical churches of whatsoever name and embracing the doctrines essential to salvation. The extremest advocate of liberty of subscription would not for one moment contend that any true church of Jesus Christ could demand less than this. Neither the Presbyterian Church, nor any other Christian church, could ordain to her ministry an atheist or an infidel, without denying the Lord that bought her.

But the system of doctrine in the Presbyterian Confession, embraces also the Protestant system, as opposed to

the Roman Catholic. And neither here can there be any doubt as to the right of the Presbyterian Church or any other Protestant Church, to demand as a condition of entering her ministry, an acceptance and adoption of the Protestant system, as contained in her Confession of Faith. Not without treachery to the Head of the Church could she ordain one who leaned to altars and crucifixes and the worship of the Virgin, and the real Presence, and the infallibility of the sovereign Pontiff.

But still another system of doctrine is in the Presbyterian Confession of Faith. It is commonly known as the Reformed or Calvinistic System. This system, first of all, exalts God, places Him on his eternal throne, in active, undivided, unconditioned sovereignty. It humbles man as a sinner and smites him with a sense of spiritual impotence. But it glorifies him in Christ as a believer, to which glory it declares him chosen of God in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, and effectually called in the fullness of time, and the eternal realization of which has been made forever sure to him, so that once in Christ, he is always in Christ, and can never perish.

It is this system, as well as the common evangelical system and the common Protestant system, Presbyterianism has embodied in her Confession of Faith; and it is this, as well as the other two, which she, in her exercise of government, demands assent to, and adoption of, before any one can enter her ministry. Has she a right to place this condition at the door of entrance to her official stewardship of the mysteries of God?

We might better ask—Has she a right to do otherwise? Can she do otherwise without betraying her trust? This Calvinistic system of doctrine is her peculiar testimony. This, and her form of government, are the justification of her existence. To witness to this strong doctrine of God and sin and salvation she was especially set. She *believes*

that the system in all its essential and necessary parts, is in Holy Scripture, a sacred and important part of the trust of truth God has committed to his Church. Belief in it has helped her make two and a half centuries of no mean history. In this soil of doctrine and in this air of liberty she has grown her oaks. It is no wonder she loves and keeps her faith.

Suppose now an applicant appears for admission to her ministry, who is manifestly a true believer, accepting the Scriptures as the Word of God, and bowing in joyful obedience to Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord. He is asked the usual question: "Do you receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures?"

He answers, I receive and adopt the Confession as containing the evangelical and the Protestant system of doctrine, but I cannot adopt its Calvinistic system, for I do not find it in the Scriptures.

Clearly this is no case of a man challenging the crown rights of Christ. Instead, he joyfully crowns him Lord of all. This is no case of a false teacher, bringing in damnable heresies and denying the Lord that bought him. He will preach no word that will drown men in destruction and perdition. For he believes with his whole heart in all the doctrines of the Gospel essential to salvation. But he does not believe in the Calvinistic system of theology. In other words, he is not a Presbyterian. For the Presbyterian Church does believe in the Calvinistic system. It has the indorsement of her scholarship, her conscience and her heart, as God's own truth to which she owes much of her iron nerve and rootedness, and which has led her, in the strength of her high thought of God, "to prefer rather to be ground to powder like flint than to bend before violence." Yet she is to receive this man, though he does not and will not receive the truth she holds as her peculiar her-

itage. She is to enroll him in her ministerial ranks, and he is henceforth to preach in her pulpits, be installed over her churches, minister at her altars and feed her flocks. In God's name, she cannot do this inconsistent thing. It would be a label that told a lie; a house divided against itself; a suicide by self-contradiction.

But in thus taking care that her faith be kept, she is doing neither the one nor the other of two things with which she is often charged in this matter of safe-guarding her ministry. She thereby imposes no faith on other men's consciences. She simply stands for her own Confession. And she thereby casts no reflection on the applicant she declines to receive. She simply recognizes the fact, as our Presbyterian Fathers declare in this same section of fundamental principles, that "there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ." Thus she blends a broad Christian charity with tenacious doctrinal conviction. She knows that a great proportion of Christendom, endowed with learning, and rich with men of keen intellects and consecrated hearts, whose reverent study of God's Word, and whose enthusiastic devotion to Christ it would be folly to question, do not find the Calvinistic system in the Word of God, and do not believe it *is* the Word of God. In other words, perhaps the majority of those who love Christ, obey his will, fight his battles and hope for heaven only through his cross, do not believe as we do, who stand for Presbyterian government and Presbyterian doctrine. This should make us, not less inflexibly loyal to our faith, but charitable in judgment, and not swift to deny that those whose walk with God we dare not question, yet who do not look out of our theological eyes, may have as much of heaven's light on their Bibles as falls on ours.

But I must pass to speak of another principle set in this first chapter of our Form of Government by the Presbyterian Fathers. They are unanimously of opinion :

Sixth. "That though the character, qualifications and authority of Church officers are laid down in the Holy Scriptures—yet the election of the persons to the exercise of this authority, in any particular society, is in that society."

They thus declare for the right of suffrage, assert the autonomy of each individual church, and make the government of the church representative. And thus a cardinal feature of Presbyterian Church Government gets its complete expression, viz: A government under a written constitution and administered by elders as representatives of the people. It is neither autocracy nor democracy. It has neither hierarchy nor oligarchy. Its elders are taken from among the people, are chosen by the people, and they rule in the interests of the people. It is therefore, in the highest and best sense, a government "of the people, by the people and for the people."

Presbyterians believe that all power in the church is vested in the people. They hold that the people have right to a substantive part in the determination of all questions of doctrine, discipline, order and worship. Christ, the King and Head of his Church, has vested power of government in his Church. Who are his Church? Bishops? Prelates? Elders? No. The universal priesthood of believers—the whole body of believers in Christ Jesus. These are the Church. Hence, power vests in them. The Holy Spirit is the source of all power. And the Holy Spirit is given, not to the Apostles alone, not to their so-called successors alone, nor to any church officers alone, but to the entire Church. The Presbyterian Church, therefore, stands for election of officers by the people, and her suffrage is as wide as her communion. Whoever has a right to the Lord's table, man, woman or child, has a voice in the government of the church. Woman suffrage and minor suffrage, as well as manhood suffrage, are her usage and her law. Hence there is no government on earth, of



Church or State, more fully and completely representative.

Church power relates to three things : First, to matters of doctrine. The Church must interpret God's law and frame her creed as based on that law. Second, to matters of government. She must determine, in the light of God's Word, her own form of government. Third, to matters of worship. She must determine, subject to the written Word, the rules for the ordering of worship. Now if church power covers this wide field and all power vests in the people, then back to the people at last must come every question of doctrine and government and worship. So the Presbyterian Church believes. Every member of her communion votes. These votes elect the elders. These elders rule. We freely move in the grooves of law, for we make the grooves. If we do not like them, we need not break them. We can change them. The process is slow and long and guarded, as it ought to be. Changes in any constitution, but especially in the constitution of the Church of God, should not be made in a spasm. But they can be had, and by the people, if the people will.

I pass now to the seventh and last of the underlying principles framed by the Fathers and set in this marvelous first chapter of our Form of Government.

They are unanimously of opinion :

Seventh. That all church power, whether exercised by the body in general, or.....by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative ; that is to say, that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners ; that no church judiciary ought to pretend to make laws, to bind the conscience, in virtue of their own authority ; and that all their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God."

Thus we are reminded that in the last resort the constitution of the Presbyterian Church is the inspired and infallible Word of God. The final question with every Presbyterian conscience is, What saith the Scriptures ? "Synods

and Councils may err," frankly say these men of God. Human standards, even as interpretations of Holy Scripture are fallible. The Presbyterian Church does not claim that she has any authoritative court of Christ, of which it can be said, "When it speaks, God speaks." We call the standards of doctrine and government and worship, the Constitution of our Church. And so they are, but only in a modified sense. They are the subordinate standards. The court of final appeal is the Word of God. "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, and man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or tradition of men."

We reach now the last section of this matchless chapter. It is the beautiful, magnificent and irresistible corollary from the seven preceding scriptural and rational principles.

The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America are unanimously of the opinion:

Eighth. That if the preceding scriptural and rational principles be steadfastly adhered to, the vigor and strictness of its discipline will contribute to the glory and happiness of any church.

And here follows the closing sentence that should be written in letters of golden light over the door of every judiciary of our beloved Zion.

"Since ecclesiastical discipline must be purely moral or spiritual in its object, and not attended with any civil effects, it can derive no force whatever but from its own justice, the approbation of an impartial public, and the countenance and blessing of the great Head of the Church Universal."

Bare majorities would never have passed extreme measures in our church, the knife of discipline would never

have cut clean through the whole quivering body of our church, and the bitterness of strife would often have been drowned in a deluge of patience and good will, if the spirit breathed in these words had always dominated in our Presbyteries and Synods and General Assemblies.

And this does not mean a boneless, pulpy, flabby theology. Much less does it mean a peace purchased at the price of any truth of God. It means a spirit that can keep the balances amidst the profoundest agitation of great debate; that will at any cost hear the other side and all of it; that will believe the positive statements and frank disclaimers of a brother in Christ, rather than even its own fallible inferences; that has learned something from the old battles with which the bride of Christ has been torn and rent, the issues of those fierce strifes often having proved that they were mainly wars of words. Would to God that across our seven-jeweled crown of church government, placed here by the Fathers over the very threshold of our Palace of Law—would that across this seven-jeweled crown of government might be set in immortal brilliants to be known and read of all the Presbyterian host, this ever memorable truth: "Ecclesiastical discipline can derive no force whatever but from its own justice, the approbation of an impartial public, and the countenance and blessing of the great Head of the Church Universal."

I have thus passed in review the seven great principles that enter vitally into the structure of Presbyterian polity. I have called them the seven jewels in our crown of government. They might well be named our seven great bulwarks—bulwarks alike of liberty and of law.

With these we face the foe, and in the name of the omnipotent Jehovah, fling down our challenge to the world, the flesh and the devil. We blaze their names upon our battle-scarred banner, and joyfully bear them aloft before our bannered host: Christ's lordship of conscience; wide open communion; heaven ordained officers, with parity of

rule ; inseparableness of truth and duty ; guardianship of truth ; universal suffrage ; and Holy Scriptures the last appeal. These are indeed bulwarks of liberty and bulwarks of law.

How they stand for liberty. They declare for the inalienable right of private judgment and enthrone the conscience as free from the doctrines and commandments of men, and to be bound by no man-made laws that are not also the laws of God. They swing wide open the door of church communion ; and, like heaven's door, whosoever believeth may go in thereat. They unchurch no Christian. They shut no one out of God's banqueting house who loves Jesus Christ. They put a ballot in every hand that takes the bread and wine of communion ; and the ballot may be cast by man, woman or child, in the fear of God for the government of the church.

But this large liberty is no license. See how these bulwarks stand for law. They declare for officers of rule and instruction authorized by Christ, the King, "for the preservation both of truth and duty," to preach his word, administer his sacraments, and shield his flock.

They brand as pernicious and absurd the opinion that degrades truth to a level with falsehood, by making it of no consequence what a man's opinions are.

And giving truth its regnant, transcendent place in God's Kingdom, they safe-guard truth by providing that all teachers of truth shall be sound in the faith.

And above all, they enthrone Christ, not only as Lord of the conscience, but King of his Church and Lord of all, upon whose shoulder government is, whose name is the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end, King of kings and Lord of lords, who is far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, Prophet, Priest and King,

Saviour and Head of His Church, containing in himself by way of eminency all the offices of his Church. How could there be lawless license under such acknowledged Kingship, with Word of God as infallible rule, and officers of Christ bound by ordination vows to keep and guard the published faith as containing the system of doctrine taught in Holy Scripture?

Law and liberty, therefore, hold their balanced and coordinate place in the government of our Church. We have "superiority without tyranny," "parity without confusion," "subjection without slavery." We voice the unity of the Church in our graded assemblies of elders, but neither in Session nor Presbytery, nor Synod nor General Assembly, does any officer come to pre-eminence of power or jurisdiction.

Such a Church must needs have stood for civil, as well as religious, liberty. Who that reads can doubt it? History is ablaze with the record of Presbyterian fidelities in the battles against oppression.

Her Kingship of Christ and liberty of conscience and election by the people, commit the Presbyterian Church to civil liberty as naturally and inevitably as the sun commits the day to light and cheer.

So, too, is she fore-pledged to education by the very logic of her systems both of government and doctrine. By the law of Christ her King, power rests in the people. Popular election of church officers, necessitates intelligence. A blind ballot is a deadly weapon. A sufficient number of them means possible revolution any hour in Church or State. Hence Presbyterians have always been, by preference and conviction, patrons of the school. Students flocked to Geneva and Calvin. Bancroft says, "Calvin was the father of popular education and the inventor of the system of free schools."

If now, under these principles, we have ever been intolerant, or hedged God's free communion about with extend-

ed and rigid creed, or betrayed truth by laxity in ordination, or usurped powers vested of Christ in the people, or substituted our fallible Confession for God's infallible Word, or disciplined where the discipline got no force, either from its own justice, or from the approbation of an impartial public, or from the countenance and blessing of the great Head of the Church, it is because we have been false to our far flung battle cry.

If, drunk with power, we loose  
 Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe—  
 Such boasting as the Gentiles use,  
 Or lesser breeds without the Law—  
 Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,  
 Lest we forget, lest we forget.

But surely the times are not quite ripe, simply for Gospel lullabies. We still are confronted with illusion and mendacity. Men are still preaching doctrines of devils. Intolerance no longer builds bonfires to burn dissent; but it lurks still in high places, wearing sheep's clothing.

The battle is not over. We shall long be in need of intellects that can "pierce to the roots where truth and lies part company." We shall still have abundant service for men of the Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego sort; men who can walk into the fire, and though their flesh quiver, their hearts will not; men who, though they are crushed down will rise again; whom, though they may be splintered and torn, no power on earth can bend or melt—stalwart, strong oaks. And the centuries show that there is a soil and an atmosphere congenial to this fixed conviction and deathless courage. It is the soil of Presbyterian doctrine, and the atmosphere of freedom that sweeps through all our structure of Presbyterian government, where liberty and law lock hands, and ever walk together in a goodly and godly fellowship.

In our loyalty to these historic and heaven-honored symbols of Presbyterian doctrine and government, let us praise God and shame the devil. They are red with the blood of

martyrdom. They chronicle multiplied victories of conscience. In all their essentials they are truths of God.

“Shame to stand in God’s creation  
And doubt Truth’s sufficiency.”

Let us be swift to recognize the bannered hosts of other faiths who make Christ King and crown Him Lord of all. Let us give them cheer as they fight and pray, and let us thank God for their victories ; but with a dear and deathless regard, let us stand by the beloved old Church whose name we wear, and whose doctrine and government we have solemnly before God and man accepted and adopted, and let us give to her through all the years our prayers and tears and toils.

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